



NBRI REPORT NO. 16

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS IN NIGERIA: CASE STUDY OF LAGOS STATE FOR 1989

Foreword

Road traffic accidents in Nigeria have reached such an alarming level that urgent remedial action must now be evolved to reduce them. Past efforts to reduce the high level of road traffic accidents were frustrated by lack of information on the factors which contribute to the accident process. This undesirable state of affairs was due mainly to the current and uninformative method of recording road traffic accidents by the Nigeria Police. This method was developed by the Police for purely criminal purposes and was of very limited value in understanding the accident process. To rectify this situation, the Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute, after a long period of perseverance, was able to undertake a pilot study of road traffic accidents in Lagos State in 1989. A report of this study is described in this report.

The unique feature of this study was the development of a road traffic accident (RTA) recording format which covers the main factors which influence the occurrence of road accidents and which is also adequate for Police use. The data, obtained by use of this new RTA form, are analysed by means of a computer programme developed for this purpose. The analysis has revealed some important and disturbing trends which can now be directly addressed to improve road safety in Lagos State.

This report is essential for study by all involved in road safety not only in Lagos State but also in Nigeria as a whole.

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1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nigeria is one of the countries with the highest rate of road traffic accidents (RTA) and fatality in the world. These accidents lead to huge human and material losses at colossal costs to the nation. The identified causative factors have been variously and collectively linked to an integrated interplay between various elements which include driver/pedestrian characteristics, conditions of the road, vehicle and environment. A critical study of this interplay will provide useful information on the trend of road traffic accidents for planning purposes.

In Nigeria, there is a dearth of reliable and comprehensive RTA data to aid in the development of effective counter measures to the myriads of problems associated with road traffic accidents. This may not be unconnected with the existing accident reporting system. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has the statutory right to collect RTA data in Nigeria but mainly for litigation and prosecution purposes. Invariably not many cases are reported as parties involved in some accidents settle their disputes without involving the Police. Also some cases settled out of court are not reported. In addition, the information available at the Federal Office of Statistics are insufficient and too sketchy to allow for meaningful and comprehensive analysis and interpretation. Thus, existing remedial measures to RTA in Nigeria have not been very effective as they are usually ad-hoc in nature and characterised by non-enforcement of laws. Indeed, there is a school of thought which holds the view that existing remedial measures to RTA in Nigeria are usually directed to the wrong targets. From the foregoing, it becomes essential to develop a more effective accident reporting format which will generate data and information that would be useful in minimizing the

occurrence of road traffic accidents.

1.2 Objective

The primary objective of this project is to scientifically study road traffic accidents in Nigeria starting with Lagos State with a view to identifying the nature, type, trend, frequency, causes and effects as well as the socio-economic impact of road accidents. Adequate RTA data and information for research and litigation purposes will be generated and their analysis will lead to the design and implementation of appropriate measures that may include correcting driver/pedestrian behavioural characteristics, remedying design defects in vehicles and roadways, and revision of road monitoring strategies by law enforcement agents.

This study will be conducted on a continuous basis and it is hoped that the accident reporting format developed at the Institute will be adopted for accident reporting in Nigeria.

1.3 Literature Review

It is the general opinion of observers and researchers that the road traffic accident (RTA) rates and fatalities in Nigeria ranks amongst the highest in the world (1,4,5,6). This is supported by available statistics. For example, deaths by RTA in Nigeria has been increasing over the years and second only to deaths resulting from gastroenteritis (4). The contribution of RTA to total deaths rose from 38.9% in 1967 to 60.2% in 1974(1), and this trend has been increasing up till 1982 after which it became erratic. It has been reported that between 1974 and 1983, the number of accidents increased by 110.6%, total casualties increased by 57.1% and human population increased by 27.2% (7). Studies have also shown that Bendel, Oyo, Kaduna, Anambra, Imo, Lagos and Ogun States have individual fatality averages exceeding the national average put at 11 per

100,000 population (4). All these and other available data, albeit inadequate, show that RTA has become a serious national malaise.

The impact of RTA on social and national life is indeed grievous. Apart from the high death rates, there are damages to properties and human lives. The cost to the nation is colossal. A study has shown that the total cost of RTA is almost 1% of Gross National Product (GNP) of developing countries.

The formulation of effective measures to combat the disturbing increasing rate of RTA requires a conscientious effort to generate reliable RTA statistics. The current recording/reporting system of the Nigeria Police Force, which is the only government body with statutory right to collect such information is to say the least, inadequate and sketchy (2,5) as they are designed for litigation and prosecution purposes. The RTA recording system should be updated and made more comprehensive so as to generate adequate information that will lead to the formulation of more rational and scientific counter measures. Various formats have been proposed (5,6,8), but any meaningful format will have to be developed in consultation with the Nigeria Police Force which is the organ to record RTA.

1.4 Scope of Work

This is a systematic study designed to cover the whole of Nigeria starting with Lagos State.

The scope of work involves the development and printing of RTA form acceptable for research purposes and police use. Through the effective liaison with Lagos State Command of the Nigeria Police Force, the RTA forms are used in recording every traffic accident occurring within the state by police officers normally in charge of recording traffic accidents. The completed forms are forwarded to NBRRI on a monthly basis for computer analysis and drawing up of recommendations and appropriate remedies.

2. DATA ACQUISITION

2.1 Design of RTA Form

A Road Traffic Accident Format was initially designed by the Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute (NBRRI) on the one hand and the Civil Engineering Department of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on the other hand under a NBRRI – sponsored joint research project (6). After due and favourable consultation and liaison with Lagos State Command of the Nigeria Police Force, the RTA format was modified to provide information for research purposes.

The RTA format is characterised by coded information to facilitate computer analysis. The coded information highlights among others the following aspects namely, the time and location of accidents; road condition and environmental characteristics, vehicle involvement and maneuverability; pedestrian, passenger and driver involvement and casualties by age, sex etc. A copy of the RTA Form is presented in Appendix 1.

2.2 Completion of RTA Forms

After a successful rapport with the Lagos State Command of the Nigeria Police Force by NBRRI, a three-day training programme was held in February 1989 for two police officers from each of the 36 police stations under the Lagos State Police Command on the effective completion of the RTA forms. The police officers were those normally and officially assigned to RTA reporting. It was emphasised during the training that the transfer of such officers to other beats should be avoided or at best kept at a minimum. This was to guarantee continuity of the programme.

2.3 Data Collection

RTA forms are forwarded to the