

**AUTO-MOBILE ACCIDENT CONTROL AND NIGERIA FEDERAL ROAD SAFETY CORPS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE COMMERCIAL DRIVERS' EXPERIENCE**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Road traffic accidents lead to death and disability as well as financial cost to both society and the individual involved. The causes of road traffic accidents are not just human error or driver negligence. Unfortunately, Nigerian highways are arguably one of the worst and most dangerous in the world. This paper therefore provides a critical analysis of the commercial drivers' assessment of auto-mobile accident control and Nigeria Federal Road Safety Corps. A sample of three hundred commercial drivers purposively selected from fifteen motor parks in Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode and Sagamu, Ogun State took part in this study. A self-developed instrument was used for collection of data. Four research questions were raised and tested. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Multiple Regression Analysis. Findings revealed that the roles of the FRSC on auto-mobile accident control and management was perceived good by the drivers. Also, the FRSC public enlightenment programme to an extent has enhanced positive attitude among road users, while the total variance accounted for by the FRSC public image on the behaviour of commercial vehicle drivers is 15.1% ( $R^2 = 0.151$ ,  $F = 4.712$ ,  $P > .05$ ). This study concluded that road traffic crashes are predictable, could be prevented, and that whatever change we are clamouring for must start from every one of us – drivers, law enforcement agents, and government alike.*

**KEYWORDS:** Commercial drivers, auto-mobile accident control, Nigeria, Federal Road Safety Corps

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Over the years, there have been dramatic changes in human behavior especially with the wave of globalization, modernization, and information communication technology which tries to close the gap between people and cultures. However, this has influenced the extent to which people travel from one place to another. The need for vehicular and human migration has created serious safety and risks concerns by the government, the motorist, the public and the general society especially in Nigeria as a result of crash injuries and damages arising from transport behavior. Nigeria, with a total land area of 910,771 square kilometers and human population of about 167 million, is the most populous country in Africa, and the 7th most populous nation in the world. Its large land mass and burgeoning population correlate with its high level of vehicular population estimated at over 7.6 million with a total road length of about 194,000 kilometers (comprising 34, 120 km federal, 30,500 Km, State and 129,580 km

of local roads). Nigeria ranked as the country with the second largest road network in Africa in 2011. Its population density which varies in rural and urban areas (approximately 51.7% and 48.3% respectively) translates to a population- road ratio of 860 persons per square kilometers indicating intense traffic pressure on the available road network. This pressure contributes to the high road traffic accidents in the country (FRSC, 2012).

Road traffic accidents occurs when a vehicle collides with another vehicle, pedestrian, animal, road debris, or other stationary obstruction, such as a tree or utility pole (Jacob, 2010). Road traffic accident therefore is an issue of great global concern as it has emerged as the single greatest source of death all over the world. In the developing countries where the number of motor vehicles relating to population is generally much lower than in the developed countries, fatalities from automobile crashes are higher. It has been shown, for instance, that accidents in developing countries cost almost one percent of these countries Annual Gross National Product utilizing scarce financial resources they can ill-afford to lose (Akpoghomeh, 1998).

The Nigeria situation however, has reached such an alarming proportion even to the point of sheer frustration and near helplessness. Nigeria continues to feature in the bottom half of World Health Organization country rankings of road traffic accidents. The country's 149th ranking in 2009 out of 178 member states indicates the hazards associated with road transportation in a country is largely dependent on its road network for economic, social and physical activities. Worldwide, road traffic accidents lead to death and disability as well as financial cost to both society and the individual involved. There is generally increasing incidence of morbidity and mortality rates of road traffic accidents. Road traffic accidents injure people every day, more so in developing countries like Nigeria, Ovwori, Onibere and Asalor (2010). The enormity of the problem is not appreciated hence enough policy action to address the menace remains a nightmare to the authorities and agencies concerned.

The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) was established in 1988 with the great responsibility of advocating, educating, identifying road-users' risk induced behaviors and punishment of road traffic offenders (FRSC, 2007). This commissioning was as a result of the continuous increase in the trend of road accident on Nigerian roads and highways. However, the public enlightenment unit of the FRSC is charged with the responsibility educating the public especially drivers on the use of highways and the necessary precaution for safety drive.

To achieve this objective, Onuha and Akinyemi (2012) affirm that several strategies have been used and are still being used by the FRSC public education officers to educate road users in general and drivers in particular on the rules guiding road usage and the consequences of flagrant disobedience of traffic rules and regulations. These strategies as identified by Sani (2005) include organization of workshop/seminars/lectures and drivers' improvement courses, carrying out rallies at motor parks, literacy campaigns inculcating in the road users the knowledge of the highway traffic code, playing of jingles on radios and televisions among others.

### **Road Accidents and FRSC**

Oyeyemi (2003) concludes that Road Traffic Accidents constitute a major cause of death and loss of property in the country, depleting the workforce of the nation and rendering victims and their relatives to suffer severe psychological trauma. Billions of naira worth of property including human beings, most of them belonging to the productive age group is consumed through automobile fire incidents on the roads due to accidents. Different accident statistics have been presented by a number of stakeholders to underscore the adverse effect of road traffic accidents on the economy.

Kalilu (2008) reported cases of RTA from 1960 up to 2006 indicate that there were 967, 618 crashes with 1,159,642 casualties. He argues that there was a drastic and sharp reduction in the reported cases of road traffic accidents in 1988, the year that the Federal Road Safety Corps was established. Just about a decade (1980-1989) before FRSC was established, road traffic accident records were on the increase. The challenges of road traffic accident necessitated the decision of the Federal Government to establish a Lead Agency with specific responsibilities to address the wanton destruction of lives and property on the highways. This became necessary because the nation lacks capacity to provide advance rescue services to handle emergency arising from road accidents. Furthermore Oyeyemi (2003), argued that most victims of RTA who could have survived during road crashed die as a result of poor handling, timing or even badly managed pre-hospital trauma life supported services. The worst scenario is when such crashes occur at night in the country, which hampers prompt search and rescue process due to poor visibility. There is also lack of necessary cooperation from the public and private hospitals that are not favorably disposed to receive victims of road crashes and provide them with the desire Medicare with dispatch.

Olagunju (2009) observes that lack of efficient and effective traffic law enforcement has been responsible for several accidents in the country especially among motorcycle operators. Olagunju notes further that participants at a one day workshop on motorcycle operations in Nigeria, organized by the Federal Road Safety Corps in March 2006 expressed dismay at the level of disobedience to traffic rules and regulations by the riders. The conduct of these commercial motorcyclists characterized by poor knowledge of traffic rules and regulations, engaging in drugs and use of mobile phones while riding resulted to many motorcycle accidents.

Nwachukwu (1998) posits that the observance and enforcement of road safety laws and regulations has contributed positively to the significant reduction of loss of lives and property on the roads. He further states that these laws and regulations have suffered violent abuses from motorists and unscrupulous members of the public as well as misinterpretations. According to Nwachukwu (1998) the idea of the Mobile court is to facilitate the trial of road traffic offenders thereby ensuring discipline on the highways. The author recognizes that these rules and regulations if well observed and adhered to would reduce road hazards.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The recurring auto accidents in Nigeria appear to have defied solution in spite of the concerted efforts of the FRSC and other stakeholders to reverse the trend. Researches have equally shown that the government and people of Nigeria are deeply concerned about the

continuing high rate of road accidents and the unnecessary consequential waste of lives and properties. Equally, a lot of funds are wasted yearly to reduce the trends of road accident on Nigerian roads and highways. For instance, Idoko (2010) submits that Nigeria loses three billion naira every year to road crashes and that road crashes cost Nigeria 13 percent of her Gross National Product (GNP). This loss undoubtedly inhibits economic and social development. This paper therefore provides a critical analysis of the commercial drivers' assessment of auto-mobile accident control and Federal Road Safety Corps in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

Four research questions were raised to guide this study. These are:

1. How do the drivers perceive the roles of FRSC on auto-mobile accident control?
2. To what extent has the FRSC public enlightenment programme enhance positive attitude among road users?
3. To what extent has the FRSC public image promote positive road usage behaviour among commercial vehicle drivers?
4. Would there be any difference in the behaviour of car and bus drivers based on FRSC public enlightenment programme?

### **METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design:** A descriptive survey design of an ex-post-facto type was adopted for this study.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques:** Multistage sampling technique was adopted for the study. Participants for the study were three hundred (300) road users that drive different types of vehicles. These people were purposively selected from fifteen motor parks in Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode and Sagamu, Ogun State, Nigeria. They were made up of 181 bus drivers (60.33%) and 119 car drivers (39.67%). The age range of the participants at the time of data collection was 24 to 61 years with a mean age of 35.8 years and standard deviation of 9.13.

**Measures:** The demographic information sheet was used to assess participants' information based on age in years and years of experience in driving. The research instrument for the research was self-developed tagged "Auto-Mobile Accident Control and Nigeria Federal Road Safety Corps Questionnaire" The 30-item self-developed questionnaire was constructed in five-point likert format measured along 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Validation of Instrument:** The instrument was validated by giving it to experts in instrument development to examine and assert its suitability and appropriateness regarding the item content and purpose of study. A reliability test using the test retest method was also carried out to determine the reliability of the instrument. The results produced a reliability coefficient of 0.81.

**Procedure:** The researchers with the help of five other assistants administered the questionnaire on the participants. The data collection lasted four (4) weeks. The completed inventories were thoroughly checked to ensure that they were properly filled. All the inventories were returned. Thus, 100% success of inventory administration was recorded.

**Data Analysis:** The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results were tested for at the 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table 1: The public perception of the roles of FRSC on auto-mobile accident control**

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev
Public perception of the roles of FRSC on auto-mobile accident control	300	5.00	120.00	78.63	10.81

**Source: Researcher 2016**

Table 1 reveals the public perception of the roles of FRSC on auto-mobile accident control and management with a mean score of 78.63 (65.5%), which revealed that the roles of the FRSC on auto-mobile accident control and management was perceived good by the drivers. This is because it is more than 50%, and much more higher than the minimum score of 5 which is 4.2%. It could then be deduced generally from the outcome of this results on the roles of the FRSC on auto-mobile accident control as perceived by the driver may be as a result of rapid response of the FRSC to accident victims and sobriety checkpoints. This result is in tandem with the report of Kalilu (2008) that there was a drastic and sharp reduction in the reported cases of road traffic accidents with the few years of inaugurating the FRSC. Though, the increase on road traffic accident recorded today has something to do with the attitudinal behaviour of stakeholders – drivers, FRSC officials, the public, and the government.

**Table 2: Summary of One-way Analysis of variance on FRSC public enlightenment programme and positive attitude among road users**

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between group	107.586	1	107.586		
Within group	3874.298	298	13.001	8.275	.000
Total	3981.884	299			

**Source: Researcher 2016**

The calculated value of  $f = 8.275$  which is greater than the critical value of  $f = 3.84$  indicates that the FRSC public enlightenment programme to an extent has enhanced positive attitude among road users. The implication of this finding is that if the FRSC enhance their methods of public enlightenment programme, there is all indication that more Nigerians will be more knowledgeable on the use of roads, the dos and don'ts of driving, and be more conscious of safety while on the road either as a driver, passenger, or when crossing the road as a pedestrian. The outcome of this study lend credence from that of Onuka and Akinyemi (2012) which

reported that the FRSC public enlightenment programme has improved commercial vehicle drivers' habit/behaviour on roads. Also, Chidoka (2009) affirmed that FRSC have conceptualized, designed and implemented various public education programmes which cut across language, cultural and religious barriers. And the introduction of the public education programme was seen as an innovation that will improve drivers' behaviour on roads and highways, thus, improving driving culture of drivers.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis on the influence of FRSC public image on road usage behaviour of commercial vehicle drivers**

Regression Analysis	Analysis of Variance					
	Source	SS	Df	MS	Beta	F
R = 0.389	Regression	91.049	1	91.049		
R <sup>2</sup> = 0.151	Residual	5757.658	298	19.321	0.269	4.712
SE = 7.654	Total	5848.707		299		

**Source: Researcher 2016**

Results presented in Table 3 show the influence of FRSC public image on road usage behaviour of commercial vehicle drivers. The total variance accounted for by the predictor variable (FRSC public image) on criterion variable (behaviour of commercial vehicle drivers) is 15.1% (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.151). Analysis of variance shows that this value is significant (F = 4.712, P > .05). Therefore, 15.1% of the total variability in behaviour of commercial vehicle drivers on road usage is accounted for by FRSC behaviour public image.

**Table 4: Independent t-test analysis of differences in the behaviour of car and bus drivers based on FRSC public enlightenment programme**

	N	X	Sd	Mean Diff.	Df	t-cal	P
Bus driver	181	78.45	13.07				
Car driver	119	77.97	15.96	0.48	298	1.431	<.05

**Source: Researcher 2016**

Results in Table 4 indicated no significant difference in the behaviour of car and bus drivers based on FRSC public enlightenment programme (MD = 0.48; t=1.431; P <.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in the behaviour of car and bus drivers based on FRSC public enlightenment programme was sustained by the outcome of this study. This finding corroborates previous studies that of that many drivers (most especially commercial vehicle drivers) behave irrationally on roads as they overtake at all odd spots and some even emerge from the side of the road to the main road without bothering about their own lives or those of the other road users (Idoko, 2010, Onuka & Akinyemi, 2012). The drivers' irrational behaviour while on the road includes overloading, reckless driving, impatience, dangerous overtaking, ignorance of traffic rules and regulations among others (Oyeyemi, 2003; Balogun, 2006; FRSC, 2007; Chukwu, 2007).



## CONCLUSION

It is no more a news that road traffic accidents in Nigeria are one of the most serious problems in need of pragmatic solution. Yet this problem has been difficult to address probably because of the country's level of development. Therefore, this paper provides a critical analysis of auto-mobile accident control and Nigeria Federal Road Safety Corps in Nigeria from the drivers' point of view. The outcome of this study revealed positive roles of the FRSC on auto-mobile accident control which may be as a result of rapid response of the FRSC to accident victims and sobriety checkpoints.

This study concludes that road traffic crashes are predictable, prevented, and no matter how good or bad our road is, no matter how sound our vehicles are or policy made, if our mentality and behaviour fail to change for better; road traffic accidents will continue to be on the high side. Therefore, whatever change we are clamouring for must start from everyone of us – drivers, law enforcement agents, and government alike.

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