

Road traffic accident (RTA) is a common disaster in Bangladesh

Ahmad sadek¹, Elias Bin Akber², Nashid Tabassum Khan³, Sumon Mutsuddy⁴, Mohammad Mahbub-UL-Alam⁵

Abstract

Bangladesh is beset with many problems and the root cause of all problems is over-population. Road accident is one of them and now a days it has become national catastrophe or crisis for every citizen of the country. Everyday road accident is taking away enormous innocent lives ruthlessly. Whenever we turn over the newspaper pages everyday, we find such types of unexpected road crashes news. Day after day we are becoming helpless to the street accidents. Now it is the greatest concern for Bangladesh to reduce death tolls and injured people which are being occurred for sudden road accidents. It has even become dreadful to walk on the busiest roadside in the urban areas Bangladesh. There are many causes of road accidents in recent years; which increase during Eid & Puja vacation. The aim is to determine causes, responsibility and advocate preventive measures.

Key words: RTA, victim. developing world; Causes, prevention.

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For Authors Affiliation, see end of text.

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Introduction

A road accident refers to any accident involving at least one road vehicle, occurring on a road open to public circulation, and in which at least one person is injured or killed. Intentional acts (murder, suicide) and natural disasters are excluded¹. Most factors involved in RTA are created or controlled by man. Man initiates the process that may yield a RTA by travelling. He or she may travel as a pedestrian, as a passenger in a vehicle or as the operator of a vehicle. To these extents, such a person bears some responsibility even if passively so as a passenger. A high proportion of accidents is directly blamable on man. In developing countries, road transportation is beset with a myriad of problems ranging from roads in dangerously poor conditions² through road-unworthy vehicles to drunken and uncaring drivers^{3,4} and pedestrians^{5,6}. Worldwide, the number of people killed in road traffic crashes is estimated to be 1.3 million, with another 50 million injured each year. More than 85 percent of these casualties and 96 percent of total child deaths, occur in low and middle income countries. Road traffic deaths are predicted to increase by 83 percent in low-income and middle-income countries (if no major action is taken) and to decrease by 27 percent in high-income countries over the next 20 years⁷.

At least 2,297 people were killed and 5,480 injured in road accidents in the last six months, 2018 a sharp rise in the death toll compared to the same period last year, said an organisation campaigning for safety in the transport sector. National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and

Railways (NCPSRR) in a report said casualties in road mishaps has increased by 18.35 percent and the number of accidents increased by 8.6 percent. The report was prepared on the basis of reports in 22 national and 10 regional dailies and eight online news portals and news agencies. The 2,297 victims, including 315 children and 292 women, were killed in 1,983 accidents between January and June 2018. Last year, a total of 1,941 people, including 261 children and 262 women, were killed and 4,794 injured in the first six months. Severe increases RTA in June month alone, 333 people were killed and 632 injured in 265 accidents in June 2018. Of them, 120 were killed in the last eight days that included Eid holydays. The number of deaths was 133 during eight days including the Eid holidays last year. Carrying people on trucks and roofs of buses caused deaths in many cases⁸ which was figure 1. It's a big alarming sign for all citizen of Bangladesh.

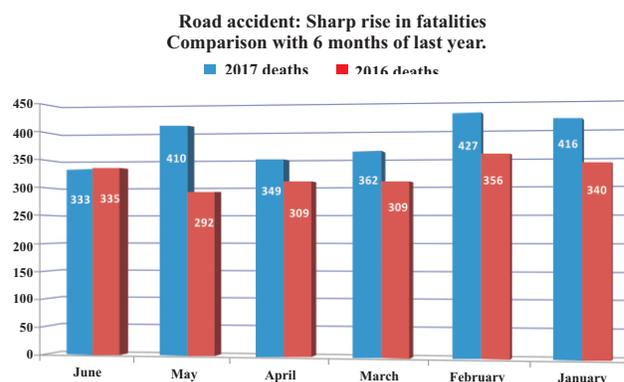


Figure 1: RTA Sharp rise in fatalities comparison with 6 months of last year.

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Causes of RTA & Discussion

No individual is responsible for causing road accidents singly. There are various reasons for occurring road crashes in Bangladesh

1. Defective Parts of Vehicle

As Bangladesh is a low income and several problematic country, it has more than 70% of defective vehicles running on the road that easily carry goods and passengers. It is dangerous for the country's people who are always travelling in these dangerous vehicles, can face death at any moment of time in their life. About approximately 30% of road accidents, occur for this reason. The vehicle owner do not willing to repair their vehicles on regularity basis as in our country there are rules but their (rules) enforcement is really absent. We divide or classify this cause into three further causes.

- Defective Brake & Steering
- Bad Quality Tires & faulty light
- Windshield Wiper Not Working

2. Driver

One of the major problems in Bangladesh is that a large percentage of drivers have had no training and are using forged licenses. These illiterate road drivers are unable to understand traffic rules and sign- syndrome of road traffic management. Much of these can be ascribed to the mal-practices involved in issuing licenses. There is no rigorous application of required standards of performance in granting driving licenses. A Bengali daily has drawn attention to the fact that about 90 percent of the driving licenses in Dhaka city are fake. This is perhaps one of the most important one of all causes. It is not only a question of poor driving and skill; it is more a question of reckless driving specially by the bus and truck drivers. On the highways, the bus and truck drivers are seen to be engaged in a deadly competition to overtake one another by accelerated speed. Depending on this cause we break down the causes as in follows-

- Tiredness & Illness
- Drunk & careless
- Disability
- Fake license & lack of proper training
- Excessive speed & failure to see Pedestrians
- Using mobile phone & adjusting radio while driving
- Loss of Control of Vehicle & driving in wrong ways.

3. Vehicle

Most of the buses and trucks of our country carry more than or sometimes double or triple of its capacity. This leads to

most of the accidents. Another concern of road accident is the rapid increase of the vehicle in our country. In 1990, the total number of mechanized vehicles on road was 221,526. In 2000, the number rose to 427,156. Thus the number almost doubled. The compound growth rate works out at about 7 percent. The types of mechanized vehicles include car, buses, micro-buses, truck, auto-rickshaw, jeep, taxi, tractor, motor cycle, trawler and others (BBS, 2000). Of these, the highest growth in percentage was in case of microbus (2,119%), followed by auto-rickshaw (200%), motor cycle (88%), car (80%) and truck (55%). The sub causes of the main cause vehicle are⁹

- Overload
- Rapid increase in the number of vehicle & Incorrect Maintenance of Vehicle.

4. Environment & Weather Condition

Bangladesh is a tropical country. Its three seasons namely Summer, Rainy and Winter are more prominent out of six seasons. Specially road accidents occur in Rainy and Winter seasons. In Rainy season roads are very slippery and wet on which drivers can not control the vehicle. With these slippery roads heavy winds add that create more dangerous situation for road accident. On the other hand in Winter season, the weather becomes more cloudy. In that situation drivers are not able to see the roads properly or other vehicles, pedestriains passing the road. The classifications of weather condition are-

- Rainy & heavy winds
- Cloudy

5. Road Condition

In the developing world context, the road is a major factor in RTA¹⁰. In Bangladesh there are no specific trends of repairing the roads. Most of the roads are cutting down or in under construction in Rainy season. It is also a matter of concern that a road may be cut for several times in a single year. Also the roads are not of sufficient span to pass the two vehicles at a time. Many of our roads do not have the cover of manholes that also creates accidents frequently. Broken roads, bending roads, one lane-road are common in our roads which make the roads more dangerous for driving. By considering these factors we classify our road condition as-

- Narrow Road & Defect in Roadway (hole)
- Under construction
- Poor road surface & wet or slippery due to rain/flood.
- Bend / winding roads & step hill
- Poor maintenance of road & one lane-road with divided carriageway.

6. Traffic System

Outside the city there are hardly found the traffic sign and signals. Also within the city most of the signals are either defective or not in use by both the traffic polices and drivers. But in our country, there is a little enforcement of the rules of the traffic system. Poor traffic management and enforcement are most visible in the streets of metropolitan areas. While much of it can be attributed to dereliction on the part of the traffic police, it is also true that vehicle drivers as well as pedestrians contribute in no small measure to road accidents. Most vehicles do not obey traffic signs or wish to be regulated. A vast majority of pedestrians do not like to use over-bridges or under-passes built at a huge cost to ensure their safety. The classification of the cause of traffic system are-

- Lack of sign & signal
- Poor traffic management & inadequate traffic police

7. Others

Mobile-phone use while driving

Between 70 – 80 % of RTAs (Road Traffic Accidents) occur on highways and rural roads. Up to 70% of road accidents are pedestrian alone. Inaccurate Speedometers are also a factor for road accident in Bangladesh.

- Measurement- inaccurate speedometer
- Pedestrian- carelessly crossing the road

In established democracies, victims of road traffic accidents have access to redress when factors responsible for an accident are identified^{11, 12}. Agencies that own uncovered manholes or drainage facilities are held accountable for mishaps that are traceable to their facility. With rapidly advancing frontiers of global democratization, trauma is expected to pose legal problems on responsibility and liability. Compensation claims are expected to rise with new interpretations and forensic analysis^{13,14}. Furthermore clinicians attending to RTA victims are exposed to litigation for alleged negligence^{15,16}. From the foregoing, liability for Road Traffic Accidents lies between man and government. On balance, developing world governments, being responsible for ensuring that vehicles that ply public roads meet certain minimum standards and being solely responsible for the construction and upkeep of roads, must accept the greater responsibility for the carnage on the roads.

Conclusion

Road traffic accidents RTA are a preventable scourge¹⁷. With man's invention of the wheel, the death knell has continued to

toll for many, who are often innocent, but who may happen to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. The global forecast has indicated that over the next 10 years developing countries like Bangladesh will experience an alarming increase in road accidents and casualties (but we are already facing the problem). Pedestrian-vehicle conflicts are clearly the greatest problem with significant involvement of trucks and buses. Children are highly vulnerable in the traffic situation compared with many other countries of the world. There is urgent need and scope for improving the road safety situation by implementing an effective and coordinated safety policy and actions which require significant improvements in relevant sectors viz. better enforcement, better roads (including the treatment of accident blackspots) and improved public education programmes with the introduction of newly-developed measures and approaches.

Authors affiliations

1. *Dr. Ahmad sadek, Associate professor & Head Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Army medical college, Chittagong.
2. Dr. Elias Bin Akber, Associate professor & Head Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Army medical college, Comilla.
3. Dr. Nashid Tabassum Khan, Associate professor & Head Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Z H Sikder womens Medical College, Dhaka.
4. Dr. Sumon Mutsuddy, Assistant professor & Head Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Chittagong. medical college, Chittagong.
5. Dr. Mohammad Mahbub-UL-Alam, Associate professor (c.c) Department of Community Medicine, Popular Medical College, Dhaka.

*For Correspondance

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