Road traffic accidents in South Africa: challenges and solutions

Modipa Mmakwena *(a)*

*(a) Tshwane University of Technology, 2 Aubrey Matlakala St, Soshanguve, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa*

**ABSTRACT**

Road traffic accidents are a major, but neglected global public health problem, requiring intensive efforts for effective and sustainable prevention. Of all the systems that people must deal with daily, road transport is the most complex, and the most dangerous. Road safety is an issue of national concern, considering its magnitude, gravity and the consequent negative impacts on the economy, public health and the general welfare of the people in South Africa. Road traffic accidents are a collective responsibility and all major stakeholders need to play their role in road safety and ensure that road users are safe whenever they are on the road. One of the major challenges for road traffic authorities in preventing road traffic accidents in South Africa is the inability of road users to understand and interpret the rules of the road and this contributes to a high rate of fatalities on the road. This qualitative article adopted the non-empirical research design: Systematic review. This study is completely based on the secondary data. A systematic review was done in detail for the collected literature. The key findings indicated that road users do not obey the rules of the road: jaywalking, speeding, driving and walking while impaired contribute to a high rate of fatalities on the road. The findings further indicated that law enforcement officials are not enforcing the law consistently which compromises the road safety project. Based on the findings, the author provided possible recommendations such as providing road safety campaign throughout the year; capacitating law enforcement officials with resources to prevent road traffic accidents.

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**Introduction**

Road traffic accidents remain one of the leading causes of death around the world. Human factor is a major contributing factor towards road traffic accidents as many road users are not following the rules of the road. World Health Organisation (2018), stated that more than 90% of road traffic deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries and road traffic injury death rates are highest in the African region. Furthermore, even within high-income countries, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be involved in road traffic crashes.

Road traffic authorities are given a mandate to ensure road safety on the road but this task is compromised by corrupt activities within the law enforcement agencies which compromise road safety project. It is important for the Department of Transport, together with all its agencies to work towards vision zero in order to prevent road fatalities. Vision Zero calls for the unified vision of zero deaths or serious injuries on the roads. For this vision to be realised, it should be shared by all members of the community, especially in South Africa where many road deaths are reported on a daily basis. Everyone must be united under the common belief that prevents loss of life and serious injury because of traffic crashes, is unacceptable (Bicycle Transportation Alliance, 2015). Effective deterrent and publicity measures, such as a combination of police enforcement and public education campaigns can motivate road users to change their behaviour, if they are concerned with being caught and having to deal with the consequences. This concern is driven by the perceived probability of being caught and the efficacy of the penalty (Australian Transport Council, 2011). Because many drivers believe their risk of crashing is incredibly low, fear of penalties is often more effective than the fear of being involved in a crash. However, measures to inform and educate road users about risk factors and to motivate longer lasting behaviour modification are also required.
This single fact is backed up by both local and international statistical figures which, flawed as they are, agree that travelling on South African roads is a gamble against time (Arrive Alive, 2014). They face the likelihood of fatalities every time they travel to work, walk to the grocery store, or simply take a stroll around the block. Horrific collisions reach the headlines of various local news publications on a frequent basis, from trucks overturning on top of family cars to informal taxis colliding with school buses and killing children and pedestrians. In September 2020, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/74/299 “Improving global road safety”, proclaiming the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, with the ambitious target of preventing at least 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030 (World Health Organisation, 2023). The resolution invites all member states to set their own national road traffic casualty reduction targets for the decade and calls for the implementation of road safety activities, particularly in the areas of road safety management, road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behaviour, road safety education and post-crash response. Road traffic accidents are a collective responsibility and all stakeholders need to play their role in ensuring road safety. This article aimed to analyse the challenges associated with road traffic accidents in South Africa and provide practical solutions.

The National Road Traffic Act encompasses all road traffic matters that apply uniformly throughout South Africa. It prescribes national principles, requirements, guidelines, frameworks and national norms and standards that must be applied uniformly in the provinces and other matters dealt with in Section 146 (2) of the Constitution. It consolidates land transport functions and allocates them to the appropriate sphere of government. Road Traffic Management Corporation is mandated to provides, in the public interest for cooperative and coordinated strategic planning, regulation, facilitation and law enforcement in respect of road traffic matters by the national, provincial and local spheres of government. It is the responsibility of RTMC to formulate strategies which could help in overcoming road traffic accidents as road users are dying on the roads. The major problem towards road traffic accidents is human factor, in South Africa, the Road Traffic Management Corporation (2021) identifies contributory factors to fatal crashes as human factors (85%), road and environmental factors (9%) and vehicle factors (6%). According to the statistics released by RTMC, it shows that a major problem to road traffic accidents is human factor. Road users are unable to understand and interpret the rules of the road as some of the road users acquire the driving licenses through corrupt activities and this kind of practice it compromises the road safety project as road users are unable to understand the rules of the road. It is a fact that road traffic fatalities in South Africa are unacceptably high and they place an enormous burden on families, society and the economy in terms of lost productivity capacity, lost skills, as well as pain and suffering of survivors, the next of kin and loved ones who are left without breadwinners. The problem in this country is that the streets were historically designed for speed, to help cars go as fast as possible in terms of delivering goods and fighting crime (Arrive Alive, 2014). Motorists are taking advantage of that and putting other road users, such as pedestrians, at risk of being involved in road traffic accidents. This is why many cities around the world are lowering their speed limits in their most densely populated areas (Walker, 2018). South Africa should follow in their footsteps, as many road users are killed on the road by motorists who are driving at a high speed, even in their own communities. Some even drive at a high speed and some take part in racing in unprotected environments. Speeding is one of the major contributory factors, as many motorists drive at high speed in residential areas. They do not even follow the rules of the road. In cases where road signs indicate to motorists which speed is suitable in residential areas they do not follow the rules and many accidents happen in many parts of South Africa. In most cases road traffic accidents involving pedestrians; speeding and alcohol are the main contributory factor according to Arrive Alive (2014). Pedestrians are the ones who suffer a lot because of this behaviour, and it can be changed if relevant strategies are put in place, as this problem includes all road users. Road safety is a shared responsibility. Achieving lasting change in road safety will require the government, industry, and the broader community to work together. It will also require significant improvements in the way the government and other organisations manage the safety of the road transport system (Australian Transport Council, 2011).

The methodology utilised in this study was qualitative in nature. The collected data was sourced from relevant sources and also analysed contextually without necessarily involving any quantitative techniques. The researcher read an overview of the literature on this subject from March 2022 to July 2023, this was done to examine the following facets; to analyse the challenges associated with road traffic accidents in South Africa and be able to provide practical solutions to curb fatalities on the road. Predicated on the nature of data required in this study; the presented discourse relied mainly on secondary data sources in the process of amassing germane information. In this process, documented and archival data were extracted from regime gazettes, texts, periodicals and other pertinent sources. Data generated from these sources were condensed and critically analysed through content and context analysis where germane and concrete information were distilled from the collections. The deductive synthesis was consequently applied in this process. Synthesised outputs from the analysis are presented as different sections in this study in accordance with the set-out objectives of the discourse.

**Factors contributing to road traffic accidents**

**Speeding**

Most of the road traffic accidents are mainly caused by speeding, and therefore pedestrians do not stand a chance of surviving if struck by a motor vehicle. The general speed limits in terms of the South African National Road Traffic Act, 1989 and its regulations are: 60 km/h on a public road within an urban area. 100 km/h on public roads outside an urban area which is not a freeway and 120 km/h on freeways. The increase in speed multiplies the risk of accidents and the severity of injury during an accident (Saxena et al., 2014). Furthermore, a vehicle moving at high speed will have greater impact during a crash and therefore will cause more injuries to other road users, such as pedestrians. The ability to judge the forthcoming events also gets reduced while driving at a faster speed,
which causes error in judgement and finally a collision. It is known that road trauma rates increase with distance from major cities and this is due to several factors, including higher speed environments leading to more severe outcomes in the case of a crash, vehicles with lower safety standards, poorer quality infrastructure, and less enforcement activity (Government of South Australia, 2016). Visibility of traffic police officials on the road play a major role as most of the road users obey the rules of the road when they see officials on the road and the inconsistence in terms of how traffic police officials enforce the law is questionable, because you will see some drivers not getting fined for violating the rules of the road due to bribing officials. Road users usually only modify their behaviour at the enforcement site or where they perceive the risk of apprehension is the greatest. Once the road user believes that the enforcement threat is no longer present, their behaviour soon reverts to pre-enforcement levels. The problem is that there are not enough policing resources to cover the entire road network and road users understand that the risk of apprehension at any time is very low. Hit-and-run collisions, in which the driver involved in the collision leaves the scene before the arrival of law enforcement officials, are a unique type of traffic violation while many traffic violations, such as running a red light, or speeding, increase the risk for, or the damage from a collision, hit-and-run is a post-collision violation. Furthermore, the driver’s decision is a question of damage control rather than damage prevention and to reduce hit-and-run violations, the state must impose legal sanctions to deter drivers from leaving the scene prematurely (Arrive Alive, 2017). Case study of reckless and negligent driving from department of Justice

In the case of Ndlanzi v The State (318/13) [2014] ZASCA 31, the appellant was charged in the regional court in Johannesburg on multiple charges, including one count of murder, read with the provisions of s51(2) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 105 of 1997, reckless or negligent driving of a motor vehicle, failure to stop his vehicle after an accident, failure to ascertain the nature of the injury sustained by any person(s) and failure to render such assistance to the injured person(s), as he was capable of rendering. The appellant was convicted on all the counts and sentenced as follows (Southern African Legal Information Institute, 2014)

i. Ad Count 1 (murder) – 15 years’ imprisonment.
ii. Ad Count 2 (negligent driving) – 12 months’ imprisonment
iii. Ad Count 3 (failure to stop the vehicle after a collision)
iv. Ad Count 4 (failure to ascertain the nature and extent of the injuries sustained by a person after the collision); and
v. Ad Count 5 (failure to render assistance to an injured person after the collision).

It is important that law has prevailed in this case; so that it can teach other road users to obey the rules of the road and respect other road users. Some of these behaviours are perpetuated by corrupt practices from law enforcement officials because in some cases when you caught driving at high speed, motorists turned to bribe the officials and not get the infringements. The effect of corruption is not only a loss of state revenue. When corrupt officials allow motorists who speed, or who are driving vehicles that are not roadworthy, to proceed with their journey, the consequences for other road users are potentially disastrous. A breakdown in public trust of the integrity of traffic officials is also likely to result in an increase in lawlessness among road users. Studies on crime in South Africa revealed that corruption was most evident in encounters with traffic officials, followed by the police, and then during interactions with officials over employment opportunities. This supports the perception that corruption is a problem in local government traffic departments, municipal police services and the SAPS, and highlights the discretionary power of some of these officials. For example, the public largely interacts with traffic officials on the road where the actions of corrupt officials are difficult to monitor (Arrive Alive, 2018).

**Distraction**

In recent decades, distraction among road users has become a growing concern. Much like drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and riders also experience distraction, placing them at risk for a traffic collision. These road users are particularly vulnerable given the lack of external protection in the event of a collision. With the rapid emergence of technologies such as smartphones, portable entertainment systems, navigation systems, voice-activated interfaces, touchscreen displays, and other in-vehicle devices, distracted road use is expected to become more prevalent (Chan, 2016). Furthermore, the potential for environmental distraction is also on a rise as the traffic environment becomes more complex, with increasing numbers of vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, signs, advertising billboards, and other visual information. Nowadays, with the popularity of electronic devices such as navigation systems, smartphones, and other in-vehicle systems, the number of factors triggering distracted driving is increasing, making distracted driving one of the significant causes of traffic accidents (Liang, 2020).

Distracted road users contribute to high rate of road traffic accidents globally and it is also prevalent in South Africa where many road users are killed on the road due to distraction. The inability of road users to adhere to the rules of the road with regard to the use of cell phones, driving while impaired, walking while impaired and all other means of distraction while on the road is a major problem in South Africa. Road users should be focused on the road and follow the rules of the road and avoid other aspects which could derail their journey and lead-up to fatality as it is the case on South African roads (Modipa, 2022).

In recent years, it has been found that the problem does not always lie in what the road user can or cannot do but what he/she actually decides to do and the crucial issue is therefore to understand what motivates road users to commit an act, which puts both themselves and others at risk. Road usage is about taking decisions and those decisions should protect all the road users but with an increase with the usage of technology while on the road, road users find themselves at risk of being involved in road traffic accidents as they are distracted on the road and this could associate with many factors of distraction. The result is that drivers or pedestrians using a phone
to talk, text, or browse the internet are less able to stay in the appropriate lane, detect any changes around them and respond in time and drivers talking on the phone are also more likely to exceed the speed limit and not maintain a consistent speed (Youth for Road Safety, 2022). In recent years, the growing use of mobile phones and other technologies in cars has led to increased interest in the problem of driver distraction among policymakers and researchers. Driver distraction is understood as a form of inattention and has been defined as the diversion of attention away from activities critical for safe driving toward a competing activity, which may result in insufficient or no attention to activities critical for safe driving (Regan, Hallet and Gordon, 2011). Furthermore, the sources of driver distraction can reside inside or outside the vehicle, be technology-related or otherwise traffic-related or not, and be self-initiated or imposed upon by the situation or circumstances while the sources of distraction may take many forms, there are four basic types of distraction: visual distraction (e.g. looking away from the roadway), auditory distraction (e.g. responding to a ringing cell phone), biomechanical distraction (e.g. manually adjusting the radio volume), and cognitive distraction (e.g. being lost in thought). Young drivers in the age group of 16-30 years are revealed to be most at risk for a distraction-related collision and possible reasons for this include a high inclination to use electronic devices and lack of driving experience (Chan, 2016). Furthermore, research also indicates that young drivers are particularly susceptible to the influence of peer passengers in the vehicle. In light of these findings, preventive measures to reduce distraction, such as education programs and awareness campaigns, should be aimed at new and young drivers and more should be done by academic practitioners in terms of conducting research on distraction and find possible solutions for road safety as stipulated in the Decade of Action for Road Safety as road traffic accidents are preventable.

**Alcohol**

Alcohol is a substance that reduces the function of the brain, impairing thinking, reasoning and muscle coordination, all these abilities are essential to operating a vehicle safely and as alcohol levels rise in a person’s system, the negative effects on the central nervous system increase (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2021). Furthermore, alcohol is absorbed directly through the walls of the stomach and small intestine then it passes into the bloodstream where it accumulates until it is metabolized by the liver and a person's alcohol level is measured by the weight of the alcohol in a certain volume of blood and this is called Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC). The increasing number of road traffic accidents can be attributed to the increased rate of substance abuse (Bibi, Awan, Waseem, Shaikh, Samad and Mal, 2020). Furthermore, the increased abuses of substances like alcohol, hypnotics and stimulants have led to increased rate of fatal and non-fatal road traffic accidents. Driving under the influence of alcohol and any psychoactive substance or drug increases the risk of a crash that results in death or serious injuries. In the case of drink-driving, the risk of a road traffic crash starts at low levels of blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and increases significantly when the driver's BAC is ≥ 0.04 g/dl (World Health Organisation, 2023). Furthermore, in the case of drug-driving, the risk of incurring a road traffic crash is increased to differing degrees depending on the psychoactive drug used. For example, the risk of a fatal crash occurring among those who have used amphetamines is about 5 times the risk of someone who hasn’t. It is widely recognised that drink driving is an important risk-increasing factor and contributes too many road deaths. With great certainty, the real number of alcohol-related road casualties is higher than reported in the official statistics. Better insight into reporting procedures is of the utmost relevance to arrive at comparable and reliable data (International Transport Forum, 2023). Alcohol causes very obvious alterations in behaviour, as it affects almost all the physical skills that are needed for safe driving. It can interfere with attention, perceptual functioning and motor skills, as well as in decision making while driving (Alonso, Pastor, Montoro and Esteban, 2015).

Additionally, drinking impairs the ability to drive and increases the risk of causing an accident. The effects of alcohol consumption on driving-related functions are modulated by some factors, such as form of consumption (regular or infrequent), expectations about their consumption, and expertise in driving and driver’s age (Wall and Karch, 2023). Furthermore, the increased risk of accident starts at a lower blood alcohol level when drivers are inexperienced or they are occasional drinkers, and begins at a higher blood alcohol level when these are more experienced drivers or regular drinkers. Drunk driving claims one person’s life approximately every 50 minutes which adds up to 10,000 lives lost every year and these incidents are preventable, but still happen and the pressing matter is that motorists decide to get behind the wheel while drunk and cause serious accidents with other motorists, motorcycle riders, and pedestrians (Mattar, 2021). Furthermore, there are no excuses for drunk driving, which can have severe consequences and endanger others’ lives on the road, as a result of alcohol impairment, motorists may make mistakes that they would not otherwise, including speeding, failing to obey traffic laws, not using turn signals or headlights at night, or failing to see pedestrians in crossing areas.

**Inadequate law enforcement**

Traffic officials are playing vital role in road safety by enforcing the law and this task require officials who are committed and dedicated to their responsibilities as their actions would determine whether the project of road safety is successful or not. In many cases in South Africa, traffic officials are caught in soliciting bribes from motorists and this contribute to inconsistencies in the road traffic authorities as some motorists get away by not getting infringements but their actions in some instances prove to be detrimental as accidents could happen form such behavior. It is of great importance to ensure visible policing on the road, especially on weekends when many accidents happen, and strengthening road safety campaigns to encourage safety on the roads. The law is there and it needs to be effectively enforced by ensuring that law enforcement officials are well trained and have the necessary skills to deal with pedestrian fatalities. It is not only the responsibility of law enforcement officials to ensure road safety, it is also the task of all road
users to ensure that they follow the rules of the road. Many severe road crashes are preventable, and history provides evidence that the right interventions could make a significant positive impact (Australian Transport Council, 2011). Law enforcement is a key component of efforts to ensure safe and secure travel options and it also has a role to play in setting policies, raising awareness about safety issues, influencing behaviour and social norms and reinforcing and supporting educational and engineering programs and strategies (Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Centre, 2017). Arrive Alive (2017), noted that effective traffic enforcement is the most important requirement for road safety. Law enforcement agencies could have the best rules of the road, but if these are not enforced effectively, the country will continue to have an increase in fatal accidents on the roads. If there is no respect for the rule of the laws of the road, the road will be an unsafe place. Arrive Alive (2017), noted that traffic enforcement is threatened by the crime of corruption, and it is important to understand the nature of such corruptions and the strategies to fight this evil. The existence of policies is not enough; the enforcement makes the difference. Enforcement operations may also reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities, although these outcomes are harder to track. In addition to their safety benefits, these operations tend to generate positive feedback from citizens, and may reveal related safety issues; for example, many drivers who fail to yield to pedestrians may also be speeding, distracted, or driving while impaired.

It is evident that enforcing new laws and policies does not translate into compliance. Reduction of road traffic accidents can be achieved if road-user compliance improves. Speed enforcement will remain essential if the speed problem is not solved in a structural way by road design, engineering measures and in-vehicle technology (European Survey of Road Users Safety Attitudes, 2016). Furthermore, the efficiency of speeding enforcement is enhanced if the handling of fines for detected violations is largely automated and efficiency is also higher if the vehicle owner and not the vehicle driver is held liable, since it is easier and faster to identify the owner than the driver.

The problem arises because road users do not comply voluntarily. Consequently, this forces the application of law enforcement techniques. The literature indicates that increasing and sustaining enforcement increases the chances of reducing road accidents and fatalities (Mphela, 2011). According to the House of Commons Transport Committee (2015), if enforcement is going to be effective as the number of dedicated road policing officers continues to fall, the use of technology is essential. For example, speed cameras are an important and effective part of the technology toolkit. However, the deployment of speed cameras needs to be done in an evidence-based way that achieves better road safety. Average speed cameras could contribute to overall speed limit compliance, and reduce the impression that motorists are unfairly caught out by speed cameras. Further deployment of average speed cameras (ASC), which are generally better received by motorists than traditional fixed speed cameras, should be considered (House of Commons Transport Committee, 2015).

The success of enforcement is dependent on its ability to create a meaningful deterrent threat to road users (Zaal, 1994), as quoted by the European Survey of Road Users Safety Attitudes (2016). To achieve this, increasing surveillance levels are introduced to ensure that perceived apprehension risk is high, as is rising penalty severity, and that procedures are in place to enable a quick and effective way to punish road traffic regulations violators. Traffic laws must be known and accepted by road users (European Survey of Road Users Safety Attitudes, 2016). However, knowledge about traffic rules is a necessary, but not enough of a condition for compliance. Sanction as a mechanism for getting people to obey the rules has a much greater effect when that sanction is compatible with the norms, values and the sense of justice held by the citizens themselves. Thus, they are more likely to obey the rules they consider being important (European Survey of Road Users Safety Attitudes, 2016). It is important for law enforcement agencies to enforce the law consistently and ensure that road users follow the rules of the road whenever they are on the road, and as a result many lives could be saved on the road.

**Partnership theory of crime prevention**

Crime prevention comprises of strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including the fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes (Kruger, Lancaster, Landman, Liebermann, Louw and Robertshaw, 2016). Public safety partnerships are typically dominated by law enforcement agencies and tend to focus on enforcement and order maintenance strategies, with limited attention to the role of the community or other agencies in the prevention of crime (Rosenbaum, 2003). Understanding the reasons why partnerships come into being will help to predict their level of success. Partnerships emerge in response to specific incidents or problems, a recognized need for community-wide or regional planning, and/or new funding opportunities (Rosenbaum, 2003). Partnership is about fostering relationship between stakeholders, in order to achieve some common ground and in the law enforcement field, there is also a desire for change caused by the problems of perceived lack of policing in terms of preventing road traffic fatalities, especially to pedestrians in the delivery of police services, which regularly produces a cry for better police community partnerships (Aldrich, 1979; Alpert and Moore, 1993).

The judged ineffectiveness of traditional reactive police methods, which opens the door for problem-oriented policing and prevention models; and the absence of a coordinated, criminal justice system to handle public safety issues, which has frustrated those seeking effective justice and deterrence (Bailey, 1986). The Criminal justice system cannot, by itself, solve the complex problem of road traffic fatalities in our society. Resources from outside the system are desperately needed, as well as new ways of thinking about these problems from the inside (Lavrakas, 1985; Rosenbaum, 1986, 1988). In a nutshell, given the multiple and complex causes of road traffic fatalities, especially to pedestrians and a growing chorus of scholars, argue that a new approach in needed, one that tackles these problems from multiple angles, applying a multitude of strategies. This line of reasoning has been used to justify the creation
of anti-crime partnerships or coalitions. A group of organizations that can bring distinctive but complementary skills and resources to the table and can produce coordinated and targeted responses to public safety problems (Rosenbaum, 2003).

It is important for the Department of Transport, together with all their agencies, to work together with communities to counteract this problem of road traffic fatalities whereby the country has spent lot of money on the victims of road traffic accidents through the Road Accident Fund (RAF). It has a negative impact on the economy and families of the affected victims as it leaves children without parents or their loved ones. This theory helps in terms of creating a working relationship between the department and its stakeholders and it must also pay special attention to the inter-organisational capacity to respond to problems with creativity, intensity, and/or coordination of interventions (Rosenbaum, 2013). Enforcement strategies require careful planning, including community input and endorsement. To achieve this, the police and the community must have a solid working relationship built on mutual respect and trust (Ramirez et al., 2000). Law enforcement efforts to encourage citizen participation are typically limited in scope. The police, when they do reach out to the community, would like citizens to serve as their “eyes and ears”, but not to become too serious about strategic planning or crime control initiatives (Buerger, 1994; Friedman, 1994; Rosenbaum, 1988, 1998b). Strong leadership is considered the key to successful partnerships, it also engages in a range of activities, including prioritizing and defining problems, analysing the target problem, reviewing the literature for best practices, designing new intervention strategies (action plans), coordinating the implementation of these strategies, monitoring partnership effectiveness and adjusting to feedback received from the environment (Rosenbaum, 2003). Research suggests that success with implementation and group maintenance is associated with good leadership (Bailey, 1986; O’Sullivan, 1977). Community safety receives attention in South Africa’s primary strategic framework for development, the 2012 National Development Plan (NDP). Chapter 12 (Building safer communities), sets out recommendations aimed at improving the functioning of the criminal justice system and at protecting vulnerable people, such as women, the youth, as well as rural communities. The NDP acknowledges that an integrated approach to safety and security will require coordinated activity across a variety of departments, the private sector and community bodies, and it encourages community activism and responsiveness (National Planning Commission, 2012). By 2030, people living in South Africa should feel safe and have no fear of crime. They should be safe at home, at school, at work and they should enjoy an active community life, free of fear. Women should be able to walk freely in the streets and children play safely outside. The police service should be a well-resourced professional institution, staffed by highly skilled officers who value their work, serve the community, safeguard lives and property without discrimination, protect the peaceful against violence and respect the rights of all to equality and justice (National Planning Commission, 2012).

The importance of well-coordinated law enforcement is crucial in achieving national development plans in relation to community safety and to develop a sense of trust among stakeholders involved in road safety or community safety because one death is too many and the community at large is affected by these unfortunate circumstances. The visibility of law enforcement on the road plays a vital role in terms of preventing crime, for example hijacking of vehicles in South Africa is very high when compared to other countries. According to statistics released by the South African Police Service in March 2017, a total of 12 743 vehicles were hijacked in South Africa between April 2016 and December 2016 – that’s 14.9% more than in the 2015/16 financial year (Wheels 24, 2017). As a result it put other road users at risk of being involved in road traffic accidents, because in other cases, criminals fleeing from law enforcement officials and they will not follow the rules of the road. They flee because their target is to ensure that the stolen vehicle is placed where they will be able to sell it without police finding it and it also endangers vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, because of the speed they drive at in order to get the vehicle to a safe place for illegal trading.

Traffic enforcement made law enforcement activities more visible, and thus it served as a general deterrent to crime and law enforcement managers must determine how best to deploy officers for traffic enforcement (US Department of Transportation, 2013). Furthermore, maps that compare accident locations with enforcement activities may help to identify a disparity between the nature of the problem and the countermeasures and it can help to provide a fact-based picture of where crime is occurring in a community, thus helping to balance citizen perceptions. Road deaths and injuries are preventable where a wide range of effective road safety interventions exist and a scientific system approach to road safety is essential to tackle the problem. This approach should address the traffic system and investigate interactions between vehicles, road users, and road infrastructure to identify solutions (Gopalakrishnan, 2012). To send strong messages to offenders of traffic violations, it is important to ensure that the security cluster works in a way that they could win all cases of traffic violations and send the offenders to prison, as these impact negatively on the economy of South Africa, while the victims of road traffic accidents are left suffering, because their breadwinners were taken away by lawless road users.

**Findings and discussions**

**Road users not obeying the rules of the road**

Disobeying traffic rules is a serious criminal offence which can result in the person being found guilty in a Court of law and subsequently fined, having their license suspended or even imprisonment in severe cases. Research findings indicated that road users are not adhering to the rules of the road by using excessive speed, being distracted, jaywalking, unroadworthy vehicle, poor road infrastructure, driving and walking while intoxicated. Crashes are associated with having no tolerance on the road, getting easily irritated, expressing aggression or hostility towards other road users, not being able to cope with stress or not being able to control emotions. Road users usually modify their behaviour at the enforcement site or where they perceive the risk of apprehension is the greatest. Once the road user believes that the enforcement threat is no longer present, they disregard the laws of the road and this
contribute to high number of fatalities on the road. The problem is that there are not enough policing resources to cover the entire road network and road users understand that the risk of apprehension at any time is very low. The most unfortunate thing is that road users do not learn from their mistakes on the road. Most of the road users are quite aware of the general rules and safety measures while using the roads, but it is only a part of road users which cause accidents and crashes. The main cause of accidents and crashes are due to human error. The following are common behaviour of humans which results in accidents: Over-speeding, drunken driving, distractions to road users, red light jumping and avoiding safety gear, such as seatbelts and helmets.

Inadequate law enforcement

The ever-growing number of road traffic crashes and related deaths, demonstrate that the current systems for combating traffic offences have proven to be inadequate, given the fact that no less than 12 700 people die on the roads annually (almost 38 per day), road safety should clearly be a national priority (Arrive Alive, 2018). Furthermore, the level of “unsafety” is related to the degree of lawlessness on the roads, which is too high and can no longer be tolerated. Traffic offences, reckless, negligent, inconsiderate, aggressive, and arrogant driver behaviour, also encourage road rage to a large extent. Law enforcement agencies could have the best rules of the road, but if these are not enforced effectively, the country will continue to have an increase in fatal accidents on the roads. If there is no respect for road traffic laws, the road will be an unsafe place. Visibility of traffic police officials on the road play a major role as most of the road users obey the rules of the road when they see officials on the road and the inconsistency in terms of how traffic police officials enforce the law is questionable, because you will see some drivers not getting fined for violating the rules of the road due to bribing officials. This is caused by having officials who are not passionate about road safety and this is as a result of allowing candidates who only possess matric certificate to be traffic officials while there are candidates who went to institutions of higher learning to further their studies in road safety but they are not prioritised by road traffic authorities. Traffic officials who lack in-depth knowledge, skills and attitude about road safety will not contribute positively to enforcement of road traffic laws as mechanism of ensuring that road users comply with the rules of the road.

The use of technology in road safety

Advancement of technology in road safety proved to be vital in reducing the number of fatalities on the road as a result of non-compliance to the rules of the road and monitoring of law enforcement officials’ activities on the road. The emergence of advanced technological devices is viewed as one of the easily identifiable distractions for road users. Road users use technology in their vehicles as well as those who are walking on the road, but this type of conduct proved to be disastrous as a split second is all it takes for an accident to happen, keeping your eyes on the road, your hands on the wheel and your mind on your driving remain the most basic and crucial rules of the road for your safety and that of other road users. In recent years, it has been found that the problem does not always lie in what the road user can or cannot do but what he/she actually decides to do and the crucial issue is therefore to understand what motivates road users to commit an act, which puts both themselves and others at risk. Many countries around the world use technological devices to curb fatalities on the road such as breathalyser testing equipments, speed cameras, surveillance cameras, body worn cameras and car dash cameras. This practice proved to be effective as their number of fatalities significantly declined over the years and the evidence collected by these devices can be used in court of law to ensure successful prosecution.

Conclusion

It is the responsibility of road users to ensure their safety on the road by following the rules of the road and law enforcement officials must ensure that they implement the law at all times to ensure consistency and with assistance of technological devices, more can be achieved in terms of halving the number of fatalities on the road as it stated in the National Development Plan emanating from United Nation Decade of Action for Road Safety (2021-2030). Improving road safety requires strong political will on the part of South African government. The history and segregated development within South Africa further necessitate that more should be done for the protection of road users as most are losing their lives as a result of poor law enforcement. With a multi-disciplinary approach and the implementation of global best practices, it is possible to significantly reduce road traffic fatalities by using technological systems. In order to effect a lasting change in the current road safety situation, all of these issues should be vigorously addressed and improved. However, an improvement in the overall situation such as ensuring a meaningful reduction in the unacceptably high percentage of road users who are not complying to the rules of the road should be prioritised by road traffic authorities in South Africa. To increase public awareness of road safety laws and persuade the public to abide by them, government should complement legislation and enforcement with the broadcasting of mass media campaigns. Enforcement interventions should focus on traffic measures that promote a road users’ adherence to traffic regulations, such as regulating driver behaviour and the monitoring of all road user’ s behaviour. The focus to capacitate and provide the required resources to the National Traffic Anti-Fraud and Corruption Unit (NTACU) should ensure that innovative methods are utilised to address high levels of fraud and corruption in the road traffic authorities. Recruitment policies should be reviewed to attract the best and highly qualified candidates who have passion for law enforcement. Law enforcement should not be treated as a recruitment agency where anyone could just join as this type of recruitment allows for political interference, nepotism, bribery, sexual favours and abuse of power.

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