THE ABERRANT BEHAVIOUR OF BUS DRIVERS AND ROAD ACCIDENTS INVOLVEMENTS ON KARAKORAM HIGHWAY: (CASE STUDY OF KARAKORAM HIGHWAY FROM GILGIT-BALTISTAN TO RAWALPINDI, PAKISTAN)

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Abstract: According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), across the Pakistan an average 15 people died every day in road accidents. The 90% of these accidents occurred due to the driver’s fault. The objectives of this research, explore the aberrant behaviors of bus drivers on Karakoram Highway and the precautionary measures to overcome the accidents. The researchers used the qualitative research approach. The data were collected from the drivers, passengers, administrative staff, and traffic police through in-depth interviews (IDIs). The Deterrence Theory, interpreted the current research, which stated that driver’s aberrant behavior can be controlled by formal and informal means. The findings of the study showed that aberrant behaviors of drivers were leading causes of accidents on Karakoram Highway. The majority of respondents were strongly agreed that the accidents on Karakoram Highway are due the driver’s fault. The majority of drivers were inexperienced, young and without driving licenses. These drivers were under the influence of alcohol, drugs, using mobile phones, over speeding, single driver, nighttime driving, land sliding, wearied roads and Conveyed system. The Karkoram Highway is congested, covered by mountain and passed through the edges of Indus River. To overcome the accidents, there is a need to recruit experienced drivers, endured the licensed, renewing physical fitness certificates, two drivers for the single bus' improve communication networking on the Karakoram Highway, avoid overloading and over speeding must be checked.

Keywords: Gilgit-Baltistan, Aberrant Behavior, Deterrence Theory, Karakorum Highway,

INTRODUCTION

According to World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 1.35 million people died every year as a result of road accidents and 90% of these accidents were due to the driver’s faults. These road accidents cost most of the country’s 3% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP 2012). The 93% of the world's fatalities on the roads occurred in low- and middle-income countries, even though these countries have approximately 60% of the world's vehicles. The road injuries are the leading causes of death of children and young adults aged between 5-29 years. Similarly, 20 to 50 Million people suffer non-fatal injuries with many, incurring a disability as a result of their injury (UNICEF, 2008). These road injuries are the economic losses to those individuals who suffered from an accident, their families, and Nations as a whole. Almost, every year, 1.2 million people lost their lives and up to 55 million people faced injuries and disable world widely (WHO, 2011). According to Jacobs et al. (2000) in 1999 almost 750,000 to 880,000 people were dying worldwide due to road accidents and the majority of 85% of deaths was occurring in the developing countries with low
income levels, the approximate, half of them, belong to the Asia-pacific region.

World Health Organization (2011) revealed that 85% of road accidents suffered people were belonged to middle and low income families. These accidents were attributed to many factors, like congested roads, poor vehicle fitness, and human factors, i.e. drug use, sleeplessness, etc. In major cases, 85% of accidents were happening due to human error (Shafiq et al. 2006; WHO, 2012). Similarly, (UNICEF 2008; Christ et al., 2004) stated that, the human factor is considered as one of the most leading factors in an accident and indicates driver malfunctions as the prime factor of road accidents. Similarly, Salmon (2005) mentioned that the reported accidents in the world showed the drivers’ errors contributed almost 75% of all road crashes. In the case of developing countries, human error involvement is more than 70% of all road crashes, which is called the aberrant behavior of drivers (Jacob & Sayer, 1984).

The aberrant behaviors of drivers can be influenced by the social and psychological factors, like, drug use, stress, mood, and sleeplessness. The sleeplessness is a major contributory factor in the road traffic accidents, about 20% of total accidents were related to sleeplessness (Maclean, Davies & Thiele, 2003). According to Maycock (1997) the drivers involved in accidents may be classified by the age, sex, social status, driving experiences and occupational group (Almqvist & Hyden, 1994). On one hand, the external factors also play the contributory role in road traffic accidents and change the behavior of drivers, such as road environment, vehicles’s design, and traffic rules and regulations (Almqvist & Hyden, 1994). The aberrant behavior includes attitudinal, motivational, situational and cultural factors. It also explored the influences of socioeconomic and demographic characteristic on unsafe driving practices. On the other hand, over speeding, drunk driving and not using seat belts was also considered the violent behavior of drivers. According to Elvik et al., (2004) mentioned that there is a strong relationship between high speed and road accidents. When speed goes high the 71% of deaths or injuries are expected and when speed goes down 95% chance to less the injuries and death rates. The speed has also relationship with other violent acts (de-winter et al., 2007). The fact is that the use of alcohol is leading to the increase of speed and also chances to increase traffic accidents 17 times more. Similarly, the night drive also increases the chances of accident rates. One of the study conducted in India, figure out that 90% of drivers who involved in accidents were driving at night time in a sleepy way (Davis et al., 2003). The aberrant behavior of drivers is considered as the most important contributory factor in Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs) in Pakistan. The WHO, figure out 2.69% Pakistanis were died due to road accidents in 2014. This means that every 20th of people died from 100,000. Pakistan comes at 67th number in the list of highest road accident rates in worldwide. The statistics about accidents showed that number overtaking lines is 15%, and not stop the vehicle when the sign of stoppage is blinking in signals was 52 % in Pakistan and around 5565 fatalities per year from the government registered vehicles (Downing, 1985). In Pakistan, urbanization is increased from 28% in 1981 to 32.5% in 1998, (Imran & Low 2005), which shows that every third person is living in cities, which means a large number of traffic flow on roads. Due to urbanization, a large portion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) allocated to the transport and communication system in Pakistan. “The transport and communication sector in Pakistan
accounted for about 11% of the GDP, 16% of fixed investment, 6% of employment and about 15% of the public sector development Programmed” (The Urban Unit, 2018).

According to the Country Report on the Measure on Road Safety (CRMRS), the statistics about the accidents that careless driving, 28.5%, dozing at wheel 18.1%, improper crossing by pedestrians 8.6%, Tire burst 7.1% and over speed 5.5%. The National highways and Motorway Police’s official data accounted that an average 15000-16000 people die in Pakistan due to traffic accidents annually, whereas large portion of accidents were caused by the human error. This number is higher as compared to other developing countries, like in Iran the rate of accidents is 23%. The developed countries also face the road accident on daily basis, in the UK 3298 accident reported per year (WHO, 2009). The consequences of these accidents were injured, disability and death of people between the age of 15 to 44 years are common (GOP, 2007).

On the other hand, road accidents push the poor families in extreme poverty due to the loss of breadwinners, and negatively brown up consequences on the GNP of the country, 100 billion rupees, that is approximately 2% of the GDP lost annually. The Naatanen & Summala (1976) stated that the high involvement of young drivers in a violent act is due to inexperience; risk taking behavior, risk exposure motives of show off their driving style. On the other hand, the experienced drivers were also involved in road accidents, due to socioeconomic and psychological pressures.

In Pakistan, roads were categorized into three sections, National Highways and Motorways, Provincial roads and district roads. Although, there is no any transport policy approved in Pakistan, however, the federal and provincial governments tried to draft at their levels, but could not make any solid transport policy. In 1997, the Chartered Institute of Transport (CIT), formulated the transport policy for Pakistan. Then, after in 2010, with the help of the World Bank, a National Transport Policy (NTP) was drafted and sent to provincial levels. But, it couldn’t be functioned, due to lack of human capital, technical assistance and financial resources. The roads are considered as the main inland transport in Pakistan; almost road transport carries 90% of all passengers and 96% of the total freight (WHO, 2011). According to the government of Pakistan (GOP), the country has 2, 60,000 km roads, out of this 60% roads are paved and the rest is unpaved. In the year 2010, the numbers of vehicles were increased 13% per annum, in the cities of Pakistan, like Karachi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, etc., (Imran 2010). According to the World Bank (2006), in Pakistan, the rate of traffic on roads was increased 711 % from 1999 to 2003.

The aberrant behavior is common among the government drivers in Pakistan; Qureshi (2011) stated that the government number plate vehicles violate the rules and regulations of traffic due to political and administrative influence. The majority of government vehicles were driven by the children of officers, who were mostly young and unprofessional, so their involvement in road accidents becomes too high. The United Nation Development Program (UNDP, 2012) has estimated that 63% of populations of Pakistan are under the age of 25 years. Younger drivers have a more risky attitude as compared to the experienced individuals. Similarly, the subject of road safety in Pakistan is at the initial stages. Pakistan lacks the human capital, road safety knowledge, and financial resources to implement mega road safety projects. However, to reduce the accidents on roads, the following precautions will be adopted;
use of seat belt while driving, reduce the speed in public places, always drive at day times which minimized the number of injuries and death. According to Peden et al., (2004) said that non use of seat belt has increased accident chances double. They have suggested that the usage of seat belt contributes 40% to 65% reduced the fatalities and lessen the accidents 43% to 55 %.

But, in Pakistan, there is no any check and balance to fasten the seat belt on every highway, including Karakoram Highways, like the compulsion of a helmet on a motorcycle.

In Pakistan, the majority of public transport drivers are uneducated and they have limited knowledge about traffic rules and regulations. Most of them do not have driving license, and unaware of driving rules and regulations. While driving, they neglect the rules, overtake from wrong side, ignores the traffic lights, slow driving in fast track line, ignore line making, take drugs while driving, all these related to aberrant behavior of drivers (Mayer, 2005). The statistics from 2010 showed that 332 people lost their lives while, 27264 were injured in less than a year due to careless driving, over speed, usage of drugs and wrong U-turns. This shows that the road safety records of the country are worsening; because the police does not not reach at the accident place and do not carefully record the actual cause of accidents on the accident spot. The major accidents were happening due to inexperienced drivers who were driving without licenses. There is no any proper mechanism of issuing licenses in Pakistan, especially for the public transport drivers. Whoever, having sources in the police and the administration, can be easily obtained a commercial or heavy traffic vehicle driving license, even without any physical and driving test (Winter et al., 2007).

In Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), public transports are owned by both private tour agencies, and the Government of Gilgit Baltistan (GOP). The majority of people use buses and coaster to travel from one place to another, especially long route like Gilgit to Rawalpindi and Karachi through Karakurum Highway. The Karakoram Highway is one of the longest routes, known as the 7th wonder of the world, which is constructed in 1979 by the Chinese government. The road started from Kashgar and end up in Rawalpindi. This road is congested, passing through the edges of Indus water, and the top of the highest mountains. Accidents are considered as normal on the Karakoram Highway, where on a daily basis, accidents are reported. Every kind of transport is available on the Karakoram Highway, like buses, coasters, rental cars, etc., However, the buses are considered as one of the major public transport used by the people of Gilgit Baltistan to travel Rawalpindi and back to Gilgit-Baltistan. People travel with both government and private tour agencies, i.e. NATCO, Mashaburam, K2 Tours, the Silk Routes, independent Coaster Services and rental cars. The Northern Area Transport Corporation Organization (NATCO) is owned by the Government of Gilgit Baltistan (GoG) and the private travelling corporations are owned by private corporations. Before joining the driving profession, drivers were gone through some sort of driving training from a professional driver, who not only teach them to drive on the long routes, but to train them how to repair the parts of the vehicle in the event of bad breaks. Most of the drivers were poor and belong to poor families. Their driving was influenced by their socio-economic conditions. Present study conducted on the Karakoram Highway, by Aziz & Saeed (2005) stated that 70% of drivers were
admitted that their attitude towards driving are influenced by the economic pressures.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Theory of Deterrence stated that, a person can avoid aberrant behavior, and criminal act, if he or she knows the negative consequences and permanent sanctions of that specific act (Mayer, 2005). According to the theory, there is a relationship between the law breaking/ violent act and punishment by the state authority. So, the punishment has positive impacts on the on the controlling of aberrant or violent behavior. For the study, if drivers know the causes and consequences of their act, then they avoid doing an aberrant act. Abridge et al., (2004), the author has specified two main types of deterrence: specific and general deterrence. In general deterrence, when the punishment is reduced, the drivers were motivated toward aberrant act, on the other hand, in general deterrence, when the authority, punish the offenders, the offensive act will be minimized and the offenders advice others do not act violently and discourage the aberrant behavior among the drivers. In specific deterrence the punishment was applied indirectly, while in general deterrence, the authorities, i.e. police, law enforcement agencies etc., punish the offender. In both of the cases, the aberrant behavior can be controlled by formal and informal means. These forces act as preventive measures through which the driver’s aberrant behavior could be controlled.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the study are as under:
1. To explore the reasons of road accidents on the Karakoram Highway.
2. To examine the views of the precautionary measures to overcome the road accidents on the Karakoram Highway.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers utilized qualitative methodology with an ethnographic research design to explore the phenomenon “Aberrant Behavior of Bus Drivers and Road Accidents Involvement on Karakoram Highway: (from Gilgit to Rawalpindi). The inclusion criteria of respondents were defined before the visit into the field. The respondents of the current study were drivers, passengers and administrative staff. The researchers selected four (04) well-known Travel agencies through systematic random sampling. Approximately, there are Eight different travel agencies providing transport services to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The researchers were designing the open ended interview guide to collect data from the relevant respondents. The respondents were noted down in the interview guide and record the interview in audio forms. The researchers divided the interview guide into the three sections. The first section consisted of the socio-economic status of respondents and general information about the travel agency, working experience, age, income, wages, and nature of duty, etc. The second section included questions about the aberrant behavior (causes of accidents) related, variables that how drivers were involved in road traffic accidents. The factors were; physical and mental fitness, usage of drugs among the drivers, vehicle speed, and fitness of the vehicle. The final section was comprised of how to reduce the road accidents on the Karakoram Highway.

Thereafter, the researchers converted the collected data into the specific themes, interpretations and explanations were done to explore the issues dimension. Researcher applied narrative analysis and make associated themes with related content and presentation in the described format.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
The Demographic Information of Bus Drivers

The data showed that the average age of drivers is between 25-45 years. The minimum driving experience require to drive buses on the Karakoram Highway is six years. The drivers are driving buses from Gilgit to Rawalpindi and back to Gilgit on a regular basis. The average monthly income of drivers is fifteen thousand to eighteen thousand with free meal during travel at the local hotels. Usually, the drivers drive at night shift. The approximate the distance from Gilgit to Rawalpindi is around 16-18 hours on one side with the Canwavi System (The police stop buses at the same place when all reached there they free them all together) due to security issues on Karakoram Highway. According to 45 years old driver said, “I left school at the age of 14 and start driving with my uncle; I’m driving a bus from Rawalpindi to Gilgit on Karakoram Highway since 2005. We have a fixed salary, with meals and commission on every trip”.

Causes of Road Accidents on Karakoram Highway

The driver errors contribute 75% of all road crashes in Pakistan (Salman, 2005; Jacob & Sayer, 1984; Shafiq et al., 2006), however, stated that this figure reached to 85% in Pakistan, where accidents were caused due to driver faults (Shafiq et al., 2006). The driver errors mean careless driving, drug use while driving, over-speed, wrong overtaking, sleeplessness and high speed. Similarly, Elvik et al., (2004), there is a strong relationship between high speed and road accidents. When the speed goes higher the chances of death goes to 71%, and when speed goes down 95% there is less chances of accidents and death rates. A passenger said that “majority of government drivers (NATCO) were using drugs while driving on the Karakoram Highway, when we asked them, they show aggressive behavior. The NATCO drivers have dealt with special hotels on the Karakoram Highway, they stop on those hotels with the passengers. The hotel owner offers them free food and free marijuana (Alcohol)”. The reason behind the aberrant behavior is due to political support and the government influence Qureshi (2011), and NATCO is owned by the Government of Gilgit Baltistan. One of the driver gives his consent during informal discussion that, “I have more than 13 years of driving experience on the Karakoram Highway, without taking alcohol, and CHAR(S) (A kind of drug mixed inside the cigarette). I didn’t drive properly. You never find a single driver who drives on the Karakoram Highway from Rawalpindi to Gilgit without alcohol and chars”. After taking drugs, they drive fast and careless manner which ultimately leads to accidents. Another study showed that the use of alcohol is leading to the increase of the chances of accidents 17 times (Winter et al., 2007). According to the Country Report on Road Safety, in Pakistan, 28.5% accidents were due to careless driving, and 5.5% accidents caused due to over-speed and 7.1% were due to Tire (wheel) burst. The majority of respondents were agreed, the NATCO, the driver uses drug while driving and drive with over speeding.

When it comes to the Coaster and Rent a Car, the majority of respondents were given their consent that; these vehicles were owned by a single owner or the individual drivers. They did not afford two drivers on the long route due to low return. Similarly, WHO (2001), 85% of road accident suffer people belong to the low income group. The distance from Gilgit to Rawalpindi is around 16-18 hours single side, where the single drivers cannot drive properly. The drivers mostly felt sleepy while driving on the Karakoram
Highway, which caused accidents. The Police Officer, said, “These coasters and rental cars are owned by a single owner, so they do not afford more than one driver for a long journey from Gilgit to Rawalpindi. This leads to sleeplessness and fatal road accidents. The major cause, these coasters and rental car owners unable to renew quarterly the physical fitness certificate from the National Highway Authority (NHA). The majority of drivers were unprofessional and untrained, and frequently non-stop drive on the Karakoram Highway without any proper rest and sleep. The reason behind this act is to maximize the outcomes and their rate of commission, which caused a higher rate of accidents on the Karakoram Highway”. A study conducted by Aziz & Saeed (2005) and stated that the bus drivers admitted that their attitudes towards driving are influenced by the economic pressures.

To some extent respondents were shown their satisfaction on private tour agencies, like Masherbrum, K-2 and Silk Route tours. These companies re-new their physical fitness certificate on time, have experienced drivers and proper check and balance on drivers’ movements. Currently, Masherbrum tours have offered new luxury buses and all were driven by experienced drivers. The same selection criteria were there in private tours that minimum 7-8 years of experience for induction of drivers, but in many cases, the private tour owners adjust their relatives. On the other hand, these private buses overload the goods in the passenger buses on the Karakoram Highway, which is more dangerous and it also increases the risk of having an accident. One of the Admin staff of Mashbrum said that “we have inducted experienced drivers from Punjab to our new automatic buses. They are held more than 25 years of driving experience”. On the other hand, a passenger said, “The old buses of Mashbrum have inexperienced drivers, most of them were relatives of the owners”. The drivers, selection either government or private agencies were mostly done with political and reference basis. Most of them do not even have a driving license. These people get the licenses through the use of political power and whoever, having sources in the police and administration can be easily obtained a commercial or heavy traffic vehicle driving licenses, without any physical and driving test (Winter et al., 2007).

Another important cause of accidents on the Karakoram Highway is due to abnormal weather conditions and inevitable convoy system (police, stop all the vehicles at a distance place three to four and collectively free them due to security reasons). The Karakoram Highway is passing through the high mountains and among all the private and public transports, abnormal weather conditions appear frequently. A rain often leads to blockages due to landslides from mountains in hilly areas. It becomes very risky to travel during such precarious situation. Mostly, the buses were travelling at night times. The chances of landslides are higher at night time. On the other hand, due to prevailing law and order situation, drivers have to reach to the convoy timing, and often lead to accidents. There is no proper communication system available on the Karakoram Highway, due to which these blockages go un-noticed. In Pakistan, the majority of public transport drivers are uneducated and they have limited knowledge about traffic rules and regulations, while driving they neglect the bad weather, and drive without side lights, which leads towards accidents and 8.6% accidents due to bad weather (Mayer, 2005).
Precautionary Measure to overcome the Road Accidents on Karakoram Highway

According to Peden et al., (2004) use of seat belt and avoid driving in bad weather can reduce chances of injuries, fatalities and accidents, 40% to 45%, but on the Karakoram Highway, there is no law to fasten the seat belts and restriction to drive in bad weather, like on motorways. In Pakistan 2010, with the help of the World Bank, a National Transport Policy (NTP) was drafted which is sent to the provinces, but it could not be functional, due to lack of human capital, technical knowledge and economic resources. The roads are considered as a main inland transport in Pakistan; almost road transport carries 90% of all passengers and 96% freights (WHO, 2011). Thus, it is imperative for the government of Pakistan to draft a transport policy on the Karakoram Highway to minimize the road accidents. One of the police officers said, “I observed many times that the coaster and rent a car have single drivers. The majority of these drivers were young and non-professional. Secondly, very less buses have found the physical fitness certificate. Thirdly, there is no any single communication system on Karakoram Highway to coordinate among the China Pakistan Economic Corridor Police. Finally, there is no check and balance on the speed limit like on the motorways in Pakistan. The important aspect is to make a task force for the Karakoram Highway, who ensure the passenger’s safety and maintain security and communication system”. There is a police force on the Karakoram Highway name of China, Pakistan Economic Corridor Police (CPEC Police), but they did not play an effective role to overcome the accidents and passenger’s safety. The China, Pakistan Economic Corridor Police is creating more problems for passengers and drivers during checking and security clearance process at check posts. The police did not take strict action against the NATCO drivers. One of the passengers said, “The NATCO is owned by the government of Gilgit Baltsiatn, and covered almost 60% of all passengers and 90% of goods, etc. The majority of drivers are non-professional and less experienced, recruit on political and reference basis. The induction policy should be on merit basis. The driver behavior is not good towards general passengers. On the other hand, the drive careless attitude, and from their action, it was clear that the property is not their own. To overcome such accidents once should take strict action against drivers and take the public opinion as well. Similarly, the security forces do not take any action against the NATCO administration due to administrative and political influence”.

The above mentioned themes are showing the respondent’s demographic information, causes of accidents and precautionary measures to overcome the road accidents. Although, there is a need to spread all information in public for safety and protect families from Truma.

CONCLUSION

The aberrant behaviors of drivers have strong relationships with road accidents on Karakoram Highway, where accidents are commonly experienced on a daily basis, however, many travel agencies are providing their services to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. According to the data, the results showed that major accidents were happening due to the driver’s mistakes and almost drivers were non-professionals, uneducated and over age and belong to the poor economic background. In major cases the driver’s faults were a contributory factor of accidents on the Karakoram Highway. The chances of accidents increase when drivers take drugs, drunk, sleeplessness, unaware of the
meteorological conditions, rules and sign boards, negligence towards vehicles maintenance, overloading of passenger and inexperienced drivers.

To minimize the road accidents on the Karakoram Highway by taking following precautionary measures; to hire experienced and professionals, ensured drivers have appropriate driving licenses, renewing physical fitness certificates of the vehicle, at least two drivers' must drive in a single trip, implement rules and regulations through strong communication networking on the Karakoram Highway, ensure overloading and speed issues must be in control.

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