

A Qualitative Study of Community Perceptions of Speeding and Road Safety in Agona Swedru, Ghana

Abstract

Road traffic accidents (RTAs) continue to be a grave public health concern, particularly in low- and middle-income countries such as Ghana. Community perceptions of this issue are still being investigated, despite the fact that speeding is a significant contributor to RTAs. This research employs a qualitative research design to investigate the attitudes of the community towards road safety and racing in Agona Swedru, Ghana. A total of 89 respondents were purposively sampled. This encompasses pedestrians, licensed commercial and private vehicles, and local leaders who participated in semi-structured interviews. Additionally, thematic analysis was implemented to analyse the qualitative data.

The study's findings suggest that economic constraints among commercial drivers are a contributing factor to speeding, while infrastructural deficiencies, such as the absence of speed barriers and appropriate signage, exacerbate road safety risks. Despite the widespread recognition of road safety regulations, compliance remains low due to corruption and insufficient enforcement. The failure to confront the socio-economic realities of the local community resulted in the perception that public awareness campaigns were ineffective. The study suggests a multifaceted approach to road safety that includes the implementation of context-specific public awareness campaigns, the enforcement of speed regulations with greater vigour, and infrastructure improvements.

Keywords: Road safety, Speeding, Perception study, Agona Swedru, Policy recommendations

Introduction

Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs) are recognized as one of the important threats to public health as well as socio-economics globally, especially in developing countries like Ghana. According to the World Health Organization (2018), RTAs rank among the top three causes of death around the globe. Unfortunately, vulnerable road users within Low- or Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) are more affected by this disease than others. In Ghana, the concept of road safety is multifarious in character, covering infrastructure deficits, behavioral patterns, and systemic enforcement challenges (Gyimah, 2020). These are more evidence-based interventions aimed at solving the cause of RTAs and RTAs consequence, which demand local solutions [8-10].

It has been established from the report that speeding is a major cause of road accidents in Ghana (Odonkor, Mitsotsou-Makanga, & Dei, 2020). Lack of strengthening such regulations becomes inadequate within cultural norms and public ignorance concerning speed limits (Hagan, Tarkang, & Aku, 2021). Such circumstances are sever in areas such as Agona Swedru, where urbanization has fast raised activities of vehicles and poor road safety infrastructure (Ametepey, Aigbavboa, & Thwala, 2023). Studies like Boateng (2021) show that the perceptions and attitudes of the community towards vehicular speeding are fundamental factors determining adherence to road safety measures (Boateng, 2021).

This leads to many cross socio-economic ramifications for Ghana due to RTAs: it does not just stop at deaths, but encompasses lots of economic burdens on families and stretched health care systems (Alimo et al., 2022). Worsening road conditions have created a problem that cannot be dealt with just through the use of prosecutorial and educational strategies (Boateng, 2021).

Death is just one of the multi-faceted socio-economic consequences associated with RTAs in Ghana, the others being a drain on family resources and the national healthcare system

(Alimo et al., 2022). Most such efforts in improvement of road safety are focused on prosecutorial and educational strategies, which in themselves are inadequate in confronting the systemic nature of the problem (Boateng, 2021); it is in this sense that a holistic approach integrating community engagement, infrastructure improvements, and improved behavior modifies the recommendation for more sustainable outcomes (Khanani et al., 2021).

This study aims to assess the views of residents in Agona Swedru concerning speeding and its consequences for road safety. The understanding of local attitudes and behaviors that this research shall generate is to inform the design of community-specific interventions that would address speeding's origin and its effects [11,12]. This is in line with demands for sustainable road safety plans that include the particular socio-cultural settings of Ghana (Chen et al., 2019).

It is also aimed to contribute to the increasing corpus of research on road safety in LMICs by underlining the necessity of localized solutions bridging policy and practice. Moreover, it emphasizes the need of include community voices into the design and execution of road safety policies thereby guaranteeing relevance and sustainability in the Ghanaian setting.

Literature review

According to figures published by WHO (2018) and Odonkor et al. (2020), speeding is one of the major contributors of road traffic accidents (RTAs) in the world, affecting more low- and middle-income countries, including Ghana. Indeed, speeding is being regulated, but enforcement is plagued with problems and public ignorance (Boateng, 2021). Understanding the community views regarding speeding would just be important for designing directly impacting, context-specific interventions. It captures the worldwide and Ghanaian perspectives on RTAs from the angles of: the socio-economic burden associated with speeding; the attitude of communities towards speeding; and effectiveness of existing interventions against speeding. Finally, gaps in the literature are thrown light on, particularly

absence of community-centered approaches, thus positioning this study to fill those gaps with respect to Agona Swedru.

Global and Regional Context of Road Traffic Accidents

RTAs are of highest significance as public health and socio-economic issues all over the world responsible for more than 1.3 million deaths each year and millions more injured or disabled (Sherin, 2021). Most of this burden is on low- and middle-income countries, where 93% of global RTA fatalities occur, although these countries have only 60% of the world's vehicles (WHO, 2018). The above-mentioned facts invoke the urgent call for sustainable and inclusive road safety interventions (Bezerra, 2019).

Everywhere globally, speeding has also been recognized as a major cause of RTAs, although the effects are aggravated in areas that do not have sound enforcement mechanisms and road safety infrastructure (Sherin, 2021). In this connection, the UNGA in 2020 adopted Resolution A/RES/74/299 on halve global road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030. This calls for a wholesome approach, which integrates SDGs into road safety strategy (UNGA, 2021).

The situation of road safety in sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana, can be described and defined in terms of increased urbanization, poor infrastructure, and socio-cultural issues affecting the behavior of road users (Bezerra, 2019; Odonkor et al., 2020). The most significant of these factors is speeding and leads to a high fatality rate on roads which have no efficient maintenance and little enforcement of regulations on speed (Ametepey, Aigbavboa, & Thwala, 2023). These problems tend to be magnified by not providing public awareness or participation, making it imperative for context-specific interventions.

Road Safety in Ghana

According to Gyimah (2020), arising public health issue, road traffic accidents (RTAs) in Ghana greatly influence early death and disability (Gyimah, 2020). Still one of the main causes of accidents, speeding makes a major share of deaths on the nation's roadways

(Odonkor, Mitsotsou-Makanga, & Dei, 2020). Notwithstanding laws such the Road Traffic Act 2004 (Act 683) and the National Road Safety Authority (NRSA), enforcement problems remain. Inaccurate execution of road safety measures and weak institutional competence compromise their efficacy (Boateng, 2021).

As seen in Figure 1, Ghana's road network is a linked system of roads connecting important cities such Accra, Kumasi, Tamale, and Takoradi. Although these roads help with movements and economic development, their conditions can worsen road safety concerns. In regions such as Agona Swedru, poorly maintained roads, minimal signage, and insufficient infrastructure create a dangerous environment for road users. In areas with heavy vehicle traffic and pedestrian activity, where the hazards of accidents are increased, this is especially alarming (Ametepey, Aigbavboa, & Thwala, 2023).

Figure 1: Highway road network in Ghana



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana_Road_Network

A major part of Ghana's road safety issue is also cultural and behavioral elements. Social factors, financial constraints, and little knowledge of the repercussions of dangerous action all help to impact public perceptions of speeding and traffic laws (Hagan, Tarkang, & Aku,

2021). For instance, commercial drivers may put profits before safety, which fuels regular reckless driving and speeding. Figure 2 shows the human and socioeconomic cost of inadequate road safety policies in Ghana, therefore highlighting the terrible consequences of such conduct following traffic accidents.

Figure 2: Road accident in Ghana taking over 400 lives



Source: <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/401-die-in-ashanti-region-road-crashes-90-due-to-human-error.html>

Limited progress has come from attempts to solve these problems by means of enforcement programs and instructional efforts. Boateng (2021) contends that although prosecution and education are vital, they are not enough to address the road safety situation facing Ghana. Rather, a whole strategy including behavioral modification, community involvement, and infrastructure development is required.

Speeding and Its Implications

Speeding, with its impact especially severe in nations like Ghana, where enforcement and public awareness are often insufficient, continues to be a major contributing factor in road traffic accidents (RTAs) globally (Boateng, 2021). Higher vehicle speeds have repeatedly proved to raise the chance of collisions as well as the degree of subsequent injuries or deaths.

Speeding has a major contribution to the startling road mortality rates (Odonkor, Mitsotsou-Makanga, & Dei, 2020) observed in Ghana.

Views about speeding in Ghana are largely influenced by socio-cultural elements. Societal conventions, financial constraints, and poor public knowledge on the effects of too high speed define driving habits most of the time (Boateng, 2021). For example, many commercial drivers often break speed restrictions in order to increase the daily number of trips they can make, thus they give financial advantages first priority over safety. Furthermore aggravating the issue is a prevalent ignorance of road users about the risks of speeding (Hagan, Tarkang, & Aku, 2021).

Though weak in Ghana, enforcement plays a vital part in reducing speeding. Although speed restrictions are in existence, their efficacy is limited by variable and usually poor application of these rules. Some places have seen initiatives including speed cameras and police roadblocks, but they are not sufficiently distributed to provide a deterrent impact (Hagan et al., 2021). Furthermore, corruption among law enforcement departments might compromise these initiatives by letting drivers avoid fines by bribes or other unofficial ways.

Public awareness initiatives aiming at teaching people the perils of speeding have been launched. Still, their influence is limited, especially in rural and peri-urban regions where literacy rates could be low and infrastructure for distribution is poor. Many times, these initiatives fall short in their purpose as they neglect to address the underlying reasons of speeding, including economic constraints and poor road infrastructure.

Dealing with speeding in Ghana calls for a multifaceted strategy. It is imperative to improve the enforcement of speed rules together with culturally customized awareness efforts. Reducing speeding behavior can also depend much on infrastructure enhancements such speed bumps and unambiguous road signs.

Community Perceptions of Road Safety

How communities perceive road safety, particularly speeding, will inform policy-making for interventions. Perceptions strongly determine how road users will interpret signage, comply with rules, and interact with existing infrastructure (Khanani et al., 2021). In Ghana, where culture and socio-economic factors influence the driving behavior, this dimension also needs to be considered to delve into the deeper causes of road traffic accident (Boateng, 2021).

Residents of peri-urban areas such as Agona Swedru believe that speeding is an inevitable tradeoff between time and money. The need to earn income in the shortest time possible often justifies such overspeeding by commercial drivers, even if it means compromising safety (Hagan, Tarkang, & Aku, 2021). However, for pedestrians and other road users, speeding is equated with danger, with the frequent accidents and nonexistence of necessary infrastructure like pedestrian crossings or speed bumps as significant issues for attention (Khanani et al., 2021).

Perceptions are molded by visible gaps in enforcement and road infrastructure. Most of the people comment on the part of corruption and resource undesirability influencing traffic rules; most of them still feel that the law enforcement actions lack justice and efficacy (Boateng, 2021). Lack of road signs, malfunctioning traffic signals, and well-kept roads all have a part in determining a shared sense of vulnerability among road users (Ametepey et al., 2023).

Awareness creation has not yielded desirable results as far as changes in perception are concerned mainly because it does not take into consideration the socio-cultural and economic situations in which road users find themselves. For example, in certain campaigns advocating against the dangers of speeding, it does not highlight why people sped in the first place—the economic pressures enforcing the driving behavior (Boateng, 2021). Thus, it becomes very likely that residents will see these campaigns as divorced from their real lives, meaning they are less likely to be effective in encouraging compliance with road safety regulations.

Methodology:

This qualitative researched study aimed at determining community perceptions about speeding and the effects thereof on road safety in Agona Swedru, Ghana. It was under taken over a period of three months, from 6th September to 8th December 2024, during which semi-structured interviews were administered to elicit in-depth knowledge from 89 purposefully selected respondents including licensed commercial and private drivers, pedestrians, community leaders and road safety officials.

Interviews ran for some 30-45 minutes, and they concentrated on speeding perceptions around awareness of the rules and suggestions for improvement. Data was collected in convenient locations and conducted both in English and local languages, as appropriate, to accommodate translation. All interviews were audio-recorded after obtaining participants' consent to ensure accuracy. Thematic analysis provided broad themes such as "economic pressures influencing speeding," "enforcement gaps," and so on. Ethical clearance has been completed, and all participants were guaranteed confidentiality. This will therefore open up new avenues for informed critical intervention in sustainable road safety provisions for Agona Swedru.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographics details of respondents

Category	Demographic Group	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group	Age 18-25	15	16.85%
	Age 26-35	25	28.09%
	Age 36-45	20	22.47%
	Age 46-55	15	16.85%
	Age 56 and above	14	15.73%
Gender	Male	50	56.18%

	Female	39	43.82%
Occupation	Commercial Drivers	30	33.71%
	Private Drivers	25	28.09%
	Non-drivers	34	38.20%
Education Level	Primary Education	10	11.24%
	Secondary Education	30	33.71%
	Tertiary Education	20	22.47%
	No Formal Education	29	32.58%

Source: Compiled by author

From Table 1 above, the study involved 89 respondents, categorized by age, gender, occupation, and education. The largest age group was 26-35 years (28.09%), followed by 36-45 years (22.47%). Those aged 18-25 and 46-55 each accounted for 16.85%, while 56 and above made up 15.73%. Males (56.18%) slightly outnumbered females (43.82%). Non-drivers formed the largest group (38.20%), with commercial drivers at 33.71% and private drivers at 28.09%. Regarding education, secondary education was most common (33.71%), followed by tertiary (22.47%), primary (11.24%), and those with no formal education (32.58%). This diverse representation ensures the study captures varying perspectives on road safety in Agona Swedru.

Theme 1: Perceptions of Speeding

Respondents consistently highlighted speeding as a significant issue affecting road safety in Agona Swedru. Many attributed speeding to economic pressures, particularly among commercial drivers who aim to maximize trips and earnings. For example, one respondent noted,

“Drivers speed because they want to make more trips before the day ends. The more trips, the more money.”

This finding aligns with existing studies on the economic motivations behind reckless driving behavior in developing countries.

Perceptions of risk were another key element. While most respondents acknowledged the dangers of speeding, some downplayed its risks, suggesting that experienced drivers could “handle” higher speeds. This perception reveals a cultural normalization of speeding, which undermines the community’s ability to collectively prioritize safety.

Pedestrians and non-drivers expressed heightened concerns about the lack of speed-calming measures, such as speed bumps and pedestrian crossings, which exacerbate the risks of speeding. A respondent stated,

“There are no clear signs or bumps on most roads here, so drivers do as they please.”

This underscores the infrastructural gaps contributing to the prevalence of speeding in the area.

Respondents noted speeding as a serious problem, frequently connected to commercial drivers' financial constraints. This is consistent with the results of Boateng (2021), who observed that commercial drivers in Ghana prefer speed over safety motivated by financial means. In peri-urban locations, drivers often ignore speed restrictions in order to maximize daily revenue, Hagan et al. (2021) also underline "Drivers speed because they want to make more trips before the day ends," a respondent said, reflecting these financial demands and the acceptance of dangerous conduct.

Views of risk connected with speed differed as well. Some respondents said the risks exist, but others minimized them depending on drivers' apparent skill. Studies by Ametepey et al. (2023) which shown that society views in Ghana sometimes hamper road safety programs align this cultural acceptance of speeding with As Bezerra (2019) emphasizes, reaching lasting reductions in road traffic accidents requires tackling such cultural elements.

Respondents' worries also clearly included the absence of infrastructure and speed-calming strategies. Key causes of dangerous situations reported by pedestrians and non-drivers as lacking speed bumps, appropriate signs, and pedestrian crossings were absent. These results complement research by Alimo et al. (2022), who contend that, especially in peri-urban areas, poor infrastructure increases the hazards presented by speeding. A respondent's comment, "There are no clear signs or bumps on most roads here, so drivers do as they please," emphasizes how urgently infrastructure changes are needed.

Theme 2: Awareness and Compliance with Road Safety Regulations

Awareness of road safety regulations among respondents varied. Licensed drivers, particularly those with formal education, demonstrated higher levels of awareness compared to non-drivers or those with limited educational backgrounds. However, awareness did not always translate into compliance. For instance, several drivers admitted to speeding despite knowing the legal speed limits. One driver remarked,

"We know the speed limits, but enforcement here is weak. If no one is watching, why not go faster?"

Enforcement gaps emerged as a recurring concern. Many respondents described law enforcement in Agona Swedru as inconsistent and susceptible to corruption. This perception weakens the deterrent effect of penalties for speeding. As one respondent put it,

“Drivers can just pay their way out of trouble if they are caught speeding.”

Additionally, community members expressed skepticism about the impact of road safety campaigns. Most viewed these initiatives as ineffective due to their generic nature and failure to address local contexts. A respondent commented,

“The campaigns don’t connect with us. They don’t understand why people speed in places like this.”

Respondents' awareness of road safety rules differed greatly; licenced drivers were more knowledgeable than non-drivers overall. Still, many drivers acknowledged to ignoring speed restrictions, hence this awareness did not always convert into compliance. Odonkor et al. (2020) similarly noted that understanding of laws does not ensure obedience, particularly in settings where enforcement is lacking. A driver's comment, "We know the speed restrictions, but enforcement here is weak. "If no one is watching, why not go faster?" points out the gap between awareness and action.

A frequent motif was enforcement difficulties, with respondents characterizing law enforcement as erratic and prone to corruption. This is consistent with the results of Khanani et al. (2021), who observe that systematic corruption reduces the efficacy of traffic laws in Ghana and other sub-Saharan African nations. Weak enforcement gives the impression of lawlessness, therefore lessening the deterrent power of fines for speeding.

Public awareness initiatives infuriated community people as well as they felt they lacked relevance and removed from local reality. Boateng (2021) contends that as generic road safety programs neglect to address the socioeconomic and cultural elements impacting driving behavior, they usually fail. One responder said, "The campaigns don't appeal to us.

Emphasizing the requirement of customized treatments that speak to community realities, they lack understanding of why individuals speed in settings like this.

Conclusion

This study revealed important issues and possible treatments by looking at community opinions and perceptions of road safety and speeding in Agona Swedru, Ghana. The results showed that speeding actions are much influenced by economic demands, especially for business drivers. Although drivers' knowledge of road safety rules was very good, compliance remained poor because of insufficient enforcement and inconsistent penalties. Particularly for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users, infrastructural shortcomings include the lack of speed bumps and pedestrian crossings aggravate road safety hazards.

In view of danger, anomalies surfaced whereby some respondents normalized speeding as they thought experienced drivers could control faster speeds. The acceptability of speed in culture compromises initiatives to encourage responsible driving. Many respondents also judged public awareness initiatives useless as they limited their influence by failing to address local socioeconomic reality.

The research advises a multiple method to handle these problems. First, reducing speed and enhancing safety depend first on infrastructure enhancements like correct signs and speed bumps. Second, supported by community-led monitoring to lower corruption, enforcement systems have to be enhanced by consistent and open application of fines. Third, public awareness programs emphasizing on the economic and cultural elements impacting road user behavior should be customized to local settings. Combining these activities will help Agona Swedru's road safety to be much improved, therefore supporting more general initiatives to lower road traffic accidents in Ghana.

Consent

As per international standards or university standards, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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