



Understanding the role of superstition in the perception of crash risk in Ghana

Kofi Adanu^{1*}, Steven Jones¹, Thomas Ojo², Ethel Atefoe³

¹ Alabama Transportation Institute, The University of Alabama, USA

² Cape Coast University, Ghana

³ University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ghana

*lead presenter: ekadanu@ua.edu

Multiple factors related to roadway characteristics, vehicle condition, and human errors contribute to the occurrence and severity of crashes. Many previous research efforts have also observed correlations between crash prevalence and regional economic and sociocultural factors. While these regional factors may be indirectly associated with crashes, they reveal important information about the perception of risk and general safety culture of the people in that society. An integral part of the sociocultural setting of societies is their belief systems. Various societies of the world have their own beliefs and superstitions. The belief that daily physical events are attributable to some supernatural forces may be reflective of how the people perceive their roles in the occurrence of traffic crashes. Superstitious beliefs run so strongly in some societies that the occurrence of multiple fatal crashes at a specific location may be viewed as punishment for some wrongdoing, and as such, may require the performance of rituals to avert future occurrences. Such superstitious strategies often hold up the search for engineering countermeasures, allowing the problem to persist and lead to future crashes. The notion in some societies that man has little or no control over the outcome of his actions is consequently critical in understanding how transport system users view their role in crash causation and even in accepting responsibility for their risky actions. This paper therefore explores an indigenous knowledge approach to understanding the prevalence of belief in superstition as a traffic crash factor in Ghana. The proposed approach would help in the development and implementation of appropriate location-specific and culturally adapted crash countermeasures.