



Predictors of engagement in distractive activities to walking in Accra, Ghana

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Abstract

Background: Walking is vital for reducing cardiovascular and obesity-related diseases. Improved walking environments contribute to urban renewal, social cohesion, improved air quality, and reduced traffic noise. Increased walking is associated with an increased risk of road traffic crashes and injuries, especially in car-oriented societies where traffic enforcement is poor, and pedestrians' needs are neglected mainly in roadway design and land-use planning. Africa has the worst rate of pedestrian crashes and fatalities, with the most pedestrian collisions occurring when pedestrians are crossing or in the middle of the road. A fundamental risk factor for pedestrian crashes is walking distracted in the road environment.

Aim: A plethora of evidence exists on driver distraction (mainly talking and texting while driving a vehicle) (WHO, 2011). However, there is a dread of evidence of pedestrian distraction, particularly in Africa. As rightly opined, distracted walking is more likely to be higher in countries with a greater mix of traffic or less controlled crossings. Similarly, the risk of vehicle-pedestrian collision is proportional to the number of motor vehicles interacting with pedestrians, as evident in most African countries, including Ghana. A fundamental risk factor for pedestrian crashes is walking distracted in the road environment. This paper uses a quantitative methodology to examine the predictors of engagement in distractive activities to walking in Accra, Ghana. This study offers important insights into distractive walking in an urban environment in a developing country and policy-relevant interventions for targeting distracted walking.

Method: The study setting was in Accra, Ghana's capital city and coincidentally the country's most populous city in terms of human and vehicular population. The study surveyed 400 pedestrians (a convenient sample) within Accra's Central Business District (CBD). The study employed descriptive (frequencies and ranking) and inferential (multivariate logistic regression) statistics to analyse the data. The logistic regression model was composed of all the independent variables and the output was presented as Odds Ratio (O.R.) using a 95% Confidence Interval (CI). The study observed all ethical issues (including anonymity and confidentiality) during and after the data collection exercise.

Result: We found that listening to music, making or receiving phone calls, and conversing with other people while walking are the main distractive activities to walking. The logistic regression



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model found sex, age, marital status, and level of education as significant predictors of engagement in distractive activities to walking.

Conclusion: The study has shown that sex, age, marital status and level of education are significant predictors of engagement in distractive activities to walking. Respondents identified as males, unmarried, aged and with lower educational attainment (Junior high school) were more likely to engage in distractive activities to walking.