



Comparing national road safety culture among bus drivers in Norway and Ghana

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Background

Road crashes represent a serious public health problem. Recent data shows that 1.4 million people die each year on the world's roads, and between 20 and 50 million people sustain non-fatal injuries (WHO, 2022). Thanks to traditional safety strategies targeting safety behaviours, technology and infrastructure, the number of road fatalities has steadily decreased (Elvik, Vaa, Erke, & Sørensen, 2009), but there is still considerable room for safety improvement. One important crash risk factor not currently addressed by traditional road safety interventions is poor safety culture (Nævestad and Bjørnskau, 2012, Ward et al., 2010).

Since safety culture is by definition shared, it must be related to social units. The safety culture perspective has traditionally been ascribed to organizations, and since professional drivers are part of organizations, they can be subjected to traditional safety culture studies and interventions. Organisations are, however, not the only sociocultural unit influencing the road safety behaviours of professionals. Several factors that could influence road safety culture are national (e.g. traffic rules, the police enforcing the rules, driver licensing, and driver education). For these reasons, we could expect the existence of different national road safety cultures (cf. Nævestad et al., 2019). In addition, we might expect factors related to sector to influence bus driver safety culture (e.g. the focus on safety in different subsectors in bus transport).

Aim

The aims of the present study are to: (1) Examine the influence of national safety culture, sector safety focus and organizational safety culture on the safety behaviours of bus drivers, compared with other explanatory variables (e.g. age, type of transport, working conditions), and to (2) Examine the influence of safety behaviours and other factors (e.g. age, mileage, type of transport) on self-reported crash involvement.

Method or methodological issues

The data were collected through self-administered web surveys in bus companies in each country. Norway and Ghana were selected for comparison since the road safety record of the two countries differs significantly. The road fatality rate of Norway was the lowest in the world in the last seven years (17 fatalities per million population in 2020), the fatality rate in Ghana has been more than 4 times higher (77 fatalities per million population). In accordance with this difference, we hypothesize differences in national road safety culture in the two countries (Hypothesis 1). We define road safety culture as shared norms prescribing certain road safety behaviours, and thus shared expectations regarding the behaviours of others (Nævestad & Bjørnskau 2012; Nævestad et al., 2019), and shared values and attitudes signifying what is important (e.g. safety, mobility, respect, politeness) (cf. Elvebakk, 2015). Based on previous research, we expect a relationship between road safety culture and road safety behaviours



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(Hypothesis 2), and between road safety behaviours and accident involvement (Hypothesis 3). Based on the observed relationships and a discussion of factors influencing road safety culture in the two countries, we suggest measures to improve national road safety culture. The present study is part of the AfroSAFE project.