



TRAFFIC LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ROAD SAFETY COMPLIANCE IN GUSAU METROPOLIS



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Abstract

Previous studies have focused on the impact of traffic violations, attitude of drivers, types of violations, and demographic characteristics of victims. However, researchers have neglected the evaluation of the effectiveness of traffic policing in curbing traffic violations. Therefore, this study examined traffic policing and traffic violations from the perspective of the law enforcement agents in the metropolis. The study adopted the rational choice theory, which states that offenders decide to break the law after juxtaposing the benefits and penalties that would result from the act when committed. Exploratory research design was adopted for the study. Data were elicited from 39 officers of the Federal Road Safety Commission and traffic wardens of the Nigeria Police using in-depth interviews (IDIs). The data were thematically analyzed. Findings show that violation of traffic rules was widespread in the study area. Consequent to traffic offenders' perception of traffic policing as unacceptable regulation, the offenders have foiled traffic rule enforcement in the area through masterminded mob attacks on the law enforcers. Due to foiled traffic rule enforcement in the metropolis, traffic rules were violated without prosecution. The study also found that enforcing fines for traffic offenses was adversely affected by "homeland claim" and poverty. The study concludes that traffic law enforcement in the metropolis has failed to prevent traffic rule violations in the metropolis, owing to strategies adopted by offenders to thwart traffic rule enforcement. Among other things, the study recommends an urgent organization of extensive orientation/reorientation and enlightenment programmes for the drivers in the metropolis.

Key Words: Traffic Offenders; Traffic Law Enforcement; Traffic Rules; Contravention; Commercial Drivers.

Introduction

Road usage is characterized by the enactment of laws designed to make the road safe for users. The rules governing road users make the action of one road user impact positively or negatively on other road users. As the road is being extensively used over the years, concerns over the safety of the road have continued to rise. Traffic laws define behaviours of road users that endanger lives, and consequently proscribe such behaviours. However, the extent to which road users abide by these laws determines how safe the road would be for users. Adoption of safe behaviour by road users through compliance with traffic laws implies that casualties recorded on the roads would be significantly reduced. The essence of traffic policing is to make the road safe and subsequently forestall casualties. However, globally, thousands of lives are being lost to road traffic crashes (RTCs), indicating that traffic policing has not effectively achieved its purpose. In the United States of America (USA), 40 000 lives, and \$80 billion are lost annually due to traffic violation, which is one of the major causes of road traffic crashes (Kaur, 2015).

In Europe, about 1,100,000 traffic accidents majorly caused by violation of traffic laws resulted in the death of about 28000 people and 1,400 injuries in 2012 alone (European Commission, 2013). Goel (2018) found that India is characterized by massive violation of traffic rules. Owing to the spate of traffic crashes that occur in India, Goel (2018) stated that India was the

worst hit country in terms of road traffic fatalities. In African, a study by African Development Bank Group (2013) estimated that about 300, 000 lives are lost annually in African continent. According to Africa Development Bank (2013), road crashes rank 4th (fourth) among the leading causes of death of people aged 5-44 years in Africa. In the same vein, World Health Organization (2015) reported that Africa has the highest record of road traffic death in the world. Over the past decades, incidences of traffic injury and death in Africa, occasioned by traffic violation has continued to rise (Adeloye, Thomson, Akanbi, Azuh, Samuel, Omoregbe, & Ayo, 2016). Official statistics of Ethiopia shows that road crash fatality rate of 144 per 10, 000 vehicles occur in the country yearly (Hordofa, Assegid, Girma, & Weldemariam, 2018). Affirming human factor as a major cause of crashes on the road, Hordofa et al (2018) described road crashes in Ethiopia as man-made disasters. In Nigeria, road transportation is the most popular and widely used mode of transportation (Nwafor & Onya, 2019).

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) over 39,000 people lose their lives annually to road traffic crashes (WHO, 2019). As at 2015, WHO estimated the figure to be 39, 802 and stated that 21.4% of deaths occur per 100,000 road users. Deaths and injuries caused by road traffic crashes (RTC) poses economic disadvantages. This implies that those who could have contributed to economic growth and development of their country, or in providing the economic needs of their families are either killed or rendered permanently disabled. To forestall violation of traffic rules in Africa, adequate enforcement of traffic laws was one of the key recommendations of WHO report (2015). It has been found that law enforcement affects the tendency for people to violate laws (Christchlow, Plumpter, Alidria, Nsubuga, Driciru, Rwetsiba, Wanyama, & Beale, 2016; Obour, Asare, Ankomah, & Larson, 2016). WHO (2015) has also identified efficient enforcement of traffic rules as an antidote to traffic fatalities in Africa, Nigeria inclusive. Furthermore, it has been argued that people's disposition towards an act is influenced by their perception of such acts. Papachristos, Meares, and Fagan (2012) submitted that criminals would obey the law if they believe in the legitimacy and substance of the law.

Motor vehicle operators are more likely to obey traffic laws if they perceive enforcement of traffic laws as strict and typified by certainty of punishment for violators. Conversely, perception of traffic policing as weak is likely to result in commission of traffic violation. In other words, commercial drivers' perception of efficacy of traffic policing with respect to the likelihood of apprehension and offender prosecution would determine the extent of traffic violation. In the same vein, the perception of motor vehicle operators regarding the gravity of punishment for traffic offences is likely to influence commission of traffic violations. Also, the perception of law enforcement agents regarding the existing approach to enforcement of traffic rules and regulations would determine whether it is sustained or not.

A number of studies have been conducted on traffic violation and RTC in Nigeria. For instance, Emenike & Akpu, (2017) studied the impact of traffic violation on transportation in Port Harcourt metropolis. The study found that traffic violation which was common in the study area, adversely affected transportation. On his part, Obakemi (2018) examined the attitude of drivers towards road ethics in Ilorin Nigeria. The study found that drivers' perception of road safety as government's responsibility resulted in noncompliance with traffic rules. These and other studies have neglected the evaluation of the effectiveness of traffic policing in curbing traffic violation. Hence, this study was designed to fill this gap. Furthermore, Gusau metropolis has been neglected with respect to studies on traffic violation. However, in Gusau metropolis, traffic violation constitutes danger to the safety of the roads. Drivers recklessly violate traffic rules, thereby rendering the roads unsafe for users.

From the perspective of the law enforcement agents, the objectives of this study were to examine the extent of traffic rule contravention, the extent of traffic rules enforcement, the effectiveness of traffic law enforcement in deterring traffic violation in Gusau metropolis, and factors militating against effective traffic rule enforcement. To elicit data from the respondents, the following questions were asked:

1. To what extent are traffic rules violated in Gusau metropolis?
2. To what extent are traffic rules enforced in Gusau metropolis?
3. How effective is traffic law enforcement in deterring traffic violation in Gusau metropolis?
4. From your experience in enforcing traffic rules in Gusau metropolis, what degree of sanctions deters traffic offenders
5. What are the factors militating against effective enforcement of traffic rules in Gusau metropolis

Literature Review

Nature, Persistence and Consequences of Traffic Violations

Traffic violations commonly committed in Nigeria violation of speed limits, seat belt violation, red light running, overloading, underage driving, and making phone calls while driving, among others (Oyediran, 2024). The findings of Muhammad, Mukhtar, & Saleh (2015) show that driving without wearing seatbelt, wrongful overtaking, red light running, failure to stop when flagged down by traffic wardens, over speeding, and driving through wrong lanes were the common traffic offences committed by drivers in Dutse, Niger State. To ensure compliance with road traffic laws (National Road Traffic Regulation 2012), agencies such as the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the Nigeria Police (Traffic Division), and the Vehicle Inspection Office (VIO) were established (Tubobereni & Ikiriko, 2019; Jibril, 2025; Bayelsa State Government, 2026). Despite the Nigerian road traffic laws and regulatory agencies, violation of traffic rules remains prevalent in Nigeria (Mmahi et al. 2021). Traffic violations persist due to factors such as interference with traffic law enforcement by individuals who occupy positions of authority, mob actions against traffic law enforcement officers, drivers' perception about traffic rules, corruption among traffic law enforcement officers, and dearth of law enforcement equipment among, other factors (Mmahi, Osisiogu, & Usman, 2021). Also, inadequate driver education contributes to the persistence of traffic violation in Nigeria (Enimola, 2026a). Other factors include poor law enforcement (Enimola, 2026b). Traffic violation is one of the leading causes of road traffic crashes (Inah, Ofem, Abam, Effiom, & Jimmy, 2025; Africa Check, 2026). According to Afolabi & Gbadamosi (2027), road traffic crashes have been widespread in Nigeria. These crashes have resulted in deaths, injuries, and destruction of property. The road transport data published by the National Bureau of Statistics (2024) shows that 2967 crashes occurred on Nigerian roads in the second quarter of 2023, resulting in the deaths of 1,120 males and 289 females. In 2024, 9570 road traffic crashes resulted in the death of 5421 persons (Africa Check, 2026).

Perception of Drivers and Law Enforcement Agencies

Assessing drivers' perception of various methods of police enforcement of traffic rules, Uzoegbu-Wilson (2016) studied commercial drivers' evaluation of traffic law enforcement in Sagamu, Ogun state. The findings of the study showed that the respondents perceived traffic policing, and the enlightenment campaign of FRSC in the area as effective in forestalling traffic violation and RTC. The study concludes that unless attitude towards road usage is positive, RTC will persists, irrespective of good roads, policies made, and use of sound vehicles. By virtue of the tendency for perception to inform behaviour, drivers in Sagamu are likely to comply with road traffic safety measures owing to their positive evaluation of the variables examined in that study. Shaaban (2107) found that respondents perceived red light running

cameras as most effective in deterring motorists from running red lights. This is due to the fear of being caught on camera and subjected to prosecution. Respondents reported that the fine associated with running red light deterred them from committing the offense by virtue of perceived certainty of being caught on camera violating the rule against red light running. In a study of the effect of speed bumps installation in reduction of RTC in selected routes in Ondo state, Chukwugozi (2014) found that motor vehicle operators had negative perception of speed bumps, and were consequently not in support of installation of speed bumps owing to the alleged damage to their vehicles. This indicates that vehicle operators along these routes perceived traffic policing measure of speed control as unwarranted because it could damage their vehicles. In this case, the rationale behind installation of speed control bump is downplayed. Obakemi's (2018) study of the attitude of drivers and motorcyclists towards road ethics at Ilorin metropolis revealed that majority of the respondents perceived road safety as a responsibility of the government and law enforcement officers a perception which negatively impacted compliance. This indicates that these categories of respondents do not believe that road users' (drivers and motorcyclists) manner of road usage can endanger the safety of the road. Some of the offences found by Obakemi (2018) were illegal parking, running red light and violation of use of safety devices (seatbelts & crash helmet).

On the use of seatbelt and helmet, majority of the respondents indicated compliance to avoid punishment and not for safety. The implication of this is that these safety measures would be ignored in the absence of law enforcement official. Rolison, Regev, Moutari, and Feeney (2018) assessed the perception of police officers and motor vehicle operators regarding the cause of RTC involving drivers across age groups. The views of both categories of respondents were in accord as they identified over speeding and driving under the influence of drug or alcohol (DUI) as traffic violations committed by younger drivers, resulting in collision. The respondents unanimously were of the opinion that medical conditions and defective eyesight caused RTC involving older drivers. The perception of police officers in this case indicates that they (police officers) perceive RTC involving young drivers as a product of failure of young drivers to comply with traffic rules, while perceiving RTCs involving older drivers as occurrence beyond the control of the drivers. The likelihood for perception to determine behavioural tendencies is likely to play out in police enforcement of traffic rules among these categories of drivers in this case. For instance, this kind of perception could result in selective testing of drivers for alcohol or other drugs. Having defined young drivers as substance abusers, older drivers may drive under the influence of alcohol or other drugs without being checked by the police.

Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on rational choice theory (RCT). The theory states that individuals have free will to either comply with the law or to contravene the law. According to the theory, break of law is a deliberate act that occurs after careful thought and planning. The offenders decide to break the law after juxtaposing the benefits and penalties that would result from the act when committed. Law violation would occur if the benefits outweigh the cost. Also, the would-be offender would analyze the likelihood of getting arrested and prosecuted for breaking the law. If the situation is characterized by uncertainty of apprehension and prosecution of offenders, the calculating law breaker would break the law. Equally taken into consideration is the weightiness of sanctions. Sanctions or penalties that would discourage contravention of law is such that counterbalances the expected gain (Siegel, 2005).

In analyzing these factors, the offender takes cognizance of the place that the intended crime would be committed, and the characteristics of the targets. With respect to place, offenders tend to choose places that are typified by low risk of apprehension as opposed to places with higher

risk of apprehension. On the characteristics of target, targets that are adequately policed/guarded tend to be avoided. However, targets that are vulnerable are considered suitable for victimization (Hechter, 1997). According to RCT, adequate policing and offender prosecution are key in foreclosing contravention of law (Akers, 1990). Although individuals may have the motivation to commit crime. However, only those who are irrational would break the law if the target is sufficiently guarded, and certainty of offender prosecution is guaranteed. In other words, it is the fear of arrest and punishment that would discourage motivated offenders from breaking the law.

Traffic violation, from the point of view RCT, occurs owing to traffic offenders' perception about traffic policing, after analyzing factors such as the likelihood of arrest of offenders, certainty of sanction, and severity of sanction. If drivers perceive traffic policing as weak, they (drivers) would be encouraged to disregard traffic rules. On the other hand, drivers would be deterred from violating traffic rules if traffic policing is characterized by certitude of arrest and prosecution. Also, the severity of sanction would either encourage or discourage drivers from contravening traffic laws. In this regard, for drivers to obey traffic rules, penalties for traffic offences must be perceived as heavy enough to counterbalance whatever benefits that traffic violation offers.

Methodology

This study employed exploratory research design. The study was conducted among officials involved in traffic law enforcement. These were the Officers of Federal Road Safety Commission, and the Nigeria Police, traffic division. A total of 39 respondents participated in the study: 21 Officers of the Federal Road Safety Commission, and 18 Police Officers. Qualitative data were collected from purposively selected respondents. The qualitative method of data collection was employed to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study by engaging the participants in face-to-face interaction. The adopted qualitative method was In-depth interview (IDI). IDI was employed to explore the views of traffic law enforcement agents who enforce traffic rule enforcement in the study area. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and the Nigeria Police before the interviews were conducted. On this note, the researcher wrote letters to the FRSC and the Police State headquarters requesting to be granted interviews with traffic law enforcers. Upon receipt of the approval to conduct the interviews, convenient dates and time for the interview were agreed upon. The venue for the interviews were the Zamfara State headquarters of FRSC and Nigeria Police. Two (2) trained interviewers conducted the interviews on the agreed dates and time. The duration for each interview session was between 40 and 45 minutes, while obtained data were documented in field notes. The study participants were all males. Sample saturation determined the number of law enforcers who participated in the study. In this case, interviews were conducted until saturation point was reached. Sample saturation was reached after the 29th respondent was interviewed. Among the FRSC Officers, sample saturation was reached with the interview of the 21th respondent. Among the Police Officers, sample saturation was reached with the interview of the 18th respondent. 36 respondents were interviewed using English language, whereas 3 respondents (who preferred to be interviewed in Hausa language) were interviewed using Hausa language. Responses of those who were interviewed in Hausa language were translated in English language.

There were follow-up questions, depending on the response given to each question by the respondents. Data were recorded in field notes, by two research assistants. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was adopted for this study. Maguire and Delahunt (2017), defined a theme as a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research questions. In analyzing the qualitative data, key quotes were highlighted, coded and sorted into

themes, in line with the patterns identified. Patterns within the data were identified and categorized in line with the objectives of the study, and subsequently manually analyzed thematically, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps of thematic data analysis. Using this method, the following steps were taken: themes were identified from the data collected; thereafter, the identified themes were reviewed; this was followed by defining and naming the themes in line with the study objectives; finally, the final analysis was written up. Respondents were distinguished from one another by adopting a coding system involving the use of pseudonyms, category of respondent, place of interview, and type of interview were combined and indicated at the end of each quoted response. Using this coding system, a respondent might be coded as "Gastafo/FRSC Officer/ Gusau/IDI".

Data Presentation and Analysis

Findings of this study are divided into the following 4 sub-themes: degenerating contravention of traffic rules in Gusau metropolis, foiled traffic rule enforcement, contravention without prosecution and Ineffectiveness of weighty sanctions.

Degenerating Violation of Traffic Rules

This study found that contravention of traffic rules in the study area was persistent and worsening, to the extent that the rules were flouted with impunity. Respondents unanimously asserted that traffic violation was not only rampant in the metropolis, but also degenerating, with dangerous driving, traffic light violation, overloading, making phone calls while driving, and driving without licenses among others, as the traffic rule infringements most committed in Gusau. Findings revealed that traffic violators in the study area were recidivist offenders who disregard traffic rules without being deterred by the tendency for arrest and prosecution. A respondent stated as follows:

Violation of traffic rules is a common occurrence in this town. The drivers do not obey traffic rules. They drive in a manner they choose to drive, whether it is in conformity with traffic rules or not. Dangerous driving is a way of life for them; most of them drive without licenses; traffic light is just a street decoration for them because they do not obey it at all; they see making phone calls while driving as a normal thing; overloading is a common practice, and they even carry passengers inside the bout of their vehicles. In fact, there is no traffic rule that they obey [Tokan/FRSC/IDI/Gusau].

Foiled traffic rule enforcement

Owing to the high dimension of contravention of traffic rules, respondents were asked whether strictness has been applied in enforcing traffic rules in the metropolis. In their responses, all the Police Officers and Officers of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), who participated in the study, stated that strict enforcement of traffic rules were initially applied in the study area. However, through mob attacks, drivers in the metropolis deliberately thwarted strict rule enforcement. According to the respondents, drivers in the metropolis engaged in a sustained mobilization of mobs to attack the law enforcers and secure the release of seized vehicles. By virtue of the constant attacks on the Police Officers and FRSC Officers, they (traffic law enforcers) were at first withdrawn from the metropolis and restricted to highways, by the authorities, to forestall further attacks. Consequent upon this directive, law enforcers only operate occasionally within the metropolis. Such occasional enforcement is, however, typified by leniency. Respondents reported that this measure was taken to foreclose casualties. Findings show that the enforcement void created by this situation has exacerbated the extent of traffic rule contravention in the metropolis, as drivers flout these rules with impunity. A respondent explained this situation thus:

We were strict in enforcing traffic rules at first. However, strict enforcement became unsustainable because we were being attacked on a regular basis by the mobs being

organized by the drivers. So, to avoid destruction of lives and property, the authorities deemed it necessary to cease enforcement within the metropolis. Therefore, we were withdrawn from the metropolis, and consequently, our enforcement became restricted to the highways. Subsequently, occasional, but lenient enforcement was allowed within the metropolis [Wufupa/FRSC Officer/IDI/Gusau]

Another respondent – a Police Officers, argued that drivers' reaction to traffic rule enforcement was a calculated attempt to create chaos in order to escape arrest and prosecution. He stated as follows:

...They do not want traffic rules to be enforced. What they want is to be allowed to drive as they want, and to not be charged for breaking the law. The attacks were calculated attempts to thwart enforcement of traffic rules. Unfortunately, they succeeded in their plan [Edilaqo/FRSC Officer/IDI/Gusau]

The above situation indicates that strict traffic law enforcement has been rendered ineffective by the drivers in the study area. However, respondents expressed the view that the effectiveness of strict enforcement in the area is dependent on certain factors that must be addressed. One of the factors identified in this respect was culture. The participants claimed that any aspect of traffic rule that is not in consonance with the cultural beliefs and practices of the people would be disregarded, notwithstanding the level of strictness applied. The participants stated that for instance, motorcyclists in the town resisted the wearing of helmet on the ground that it was against their cultural mode of dressing. A respondent buttressed this, saying:

Generally, strict enforcement is important because there are drivers who would not willingly obey the rules except the enforcers are strict. However, the culture of the people constitutes a problem in this town. No matter how strict you try to be, the drivers here would not obey any rule that is contrary to their ways of life. Look at the case of wearing of helmet, which was made mandatory for motorcycle riders. Attempts were made to enforce it here, but despite the advantages of wearing it, they reacted seriously against it and refused to wear it, because, they said it was against their mode of dressing [Zeutak/FRSC/IDI/Gusau]

Another respondent maintained that traffic violation in the metropolis has attitudinal dimension to it that appears to be common among the commercial drivers. According to him, traffic offenders in the metropolis have negative disposition to traffic rules, because they perceive the rules as unnecessary. Consequent upon this negative disposition to traffic rules, the respondent described traffic violators as recidivist offenders who were not deterred by intensity of enforcement of traffic rules. According to him, the more they are arrested, they more they committed more violations, and until this attitudinal problem is addressed, there would always be recidivists who are not deterred by the intensity of enforcement

Traffic violators in Gusau are habitual offenders. They are not deterred by arrest because arresting them today does not deter them from committing the same infringement tomorrow. There have been occasions where we arrested and enforced fine on them. After paying the fine, the same offenders were arrested repeatedly for the same offence [Zadoga/Police/IDI/Gusau].

In a similar vein, another respondent maintained that for strict enforcement to be effective, adequate enlightenment and reorientation of drivers must be carried out. Otherwise, it would elicit mob action against the enforcers, as it has elicited in the past. This is because they do not know the implications of traffic violation, and consequently perceive strict enforcement as punitive. According to the respondent:

Strict enforcement has not been working in this metropolis. However, it is necessary to continue to be strict in enforcing rules in this place due to the level of noncompliance with traffic rules. Nonetheless, that should be done after adequate enlightenment and reorientation of drivers. If we apply strictness without first of all enlightening the people in a manner that would convince them, there would be mob attack on our men, and destruction of our operational vehicles. What we do here is subtle enforcement to avoid violent attack on us [Dakoqag/RFSC Officer/IDI/Gusau]

Relatedly, another participant argued that “homeland mindset” of the people triggers violence when strict enforcement was applied. The respondent contended that members of the study area have, and exhibit the perception that the area and the State belong to them, and on that note, they should not be policed in a manner that is not acceptable to them. Therefore, strictness in enforcing traffic rules could result in eruption of violence. He asserted thus:

...it has caused commotion in this town. They have this mentality of “it is our State”. So, they believe that because they are in their State of origin, nobody should compel them to act in any manner [Qitin/Police/IDI/Gusau]

Another participant shared the view that under normal circumstances, strict enforcement performs deterrent function. Nevertheless, it is ineffective in Gusau due to interference from people in positions of authority and other prominent people in the town, who prevent prosecution of offenders when arrested. He asserted as follows:

Strict enforcement is not working here because traffic offenders are fond of calling people in position of authority and prominent people in the society to interfere whenever they are arrested. So, even if we become strict, interference from these people would jeopardize it [Akoziu/Police/IDI/Gusau].

Some of the respondents, however, expressed the view that sustained strict enforcement, the oppositions from drivers notwithstanding, would result in reduction in the rate of traffic violation in the metropolis. According to them, drivers would obey the law if they know that traffic violations are not tolerated. A respondent buttressed this point saying:

Constant strict enforcement, no matter the opposition, would work. We cannot continue like this. Traffic rules have to be strictly enforced, otherwise, the rate of violation would continue to worsen. If the rules are strictly enforced, drivers would know that traffic offences do not go unsanctioned. This would make them to obey the rules [Lozaka/Police/IDI/Gusau].

Violation without Prosecution

Would-be offenders may be deterred from breaking the law if law enforcement is characterized by certainty of offender prosecution. In Gusau metropolis, traffic rule enforcement was typified by massive contravention of traffic rules without persecution. Having frustrated law enforcement through mob attacks, the drivers committed traffic offences without fear of arrest and prosecution. According to the respondents, reckless disregard of traffic rules in the study area was traceable to offenders’ conviction that traffic offenders in the metropolis do not suffer the consequences of the offences they have committed. In other words, traffic offenders in the metropolis were neither arrested nor sanctioned for the offences they have committed, due to mob attacks, the law enforcement agents no longer enforce traffic laws. This situation has emboldened the drivers to drive recklessly, driver without wearing seat belt, disregard traffic lights, and overload their vehicles, among others. According to a respondent,

...here, drivers commit traffic offences and get away with it. Nobody arrests them, let alone enforce sanction on them. You can see the magnitude of neglect of traffic rules.

They do not obey any rule, and unfortunately, they are not punished for that. That is why it keeps getting worse by the day [Pete/Police/IDI/Gusau]

Problematic Enforcement of Sanctions

Sanctions are designed to deter offenders from breaking the law. Sanctions could be weighty, mild, or low. Weighty sanction may deter would-be offender from breaking the law, if offenders consider the unpleasant experiences that are associated with weighty sanction. In Gusau metropolis, however, traffic law enforcement agents maintained that weighty sanction for traffic offences would result in mob attacks on the law enforcers. Two factors militating against enforcement of fines were identified by the law enforcers. These were “homeland claim” and poverty. Homeland claim here means that the people of the area oppose being made to pay fines for traffic offences in their home town. According to the respondents, drivers in the metropolis are averse to being penalized for traffic offences owing to the “homeland mentality” they have. Furthermore, the economic condition of the people is such that weighty fines could cause attacks on the law enforcers. The law enforcers noted that despite that the fines for traffic offences are mild, traffic offenders find it difficult to pay due to poverty. Therefore, increasing fines beyond the affordability of offenders would elicit mob attacks. Hence, the amount of money to be paid as fines should be determined with the socio-economic condition of the people of the area taken cognizance of. The law enforcers averred that until these two factors are addressed, enforcement of fines would remain problematic in the area. The participants stated that:

...weighty fine would spark mob attacks here. But if it is moderate, it would be effective. However, the first thing that must be done is to re-sensitize the people of this place [Gabuna/Police/IDI/Gusau]

...the people are poor. The fine should not be increased to the amount that the offenders would find it difficult to pay. They would attack us if that happens, because they wouldn't want their vehicle to be impounded as a result of their inability to pay the fine. As you know, impounding their vehicle implies that their income as commercial drivers would stop until the vehicle is released. This would make them to attack us [Husiot/FRSC Officer/IDI/Gusau]

Besides payment of moderate fine, all the respondents shared the view that imprisonment for serious traffic offences, without option of fine, would deter drivers from violating traffic rules. Nevertheless, the traffic law in operation in Nigeria has option of fine for all the traffic offences, the respondents stated.

Discussion of Findings

This study found that violation of traffic rules was widespread in Gusau. This finding is similar to the finding of Factor (2018) that traffic offences are the most widespread and frequently committed among all criminal and deviant acts. The implication of widespread violation of traffic rules is that road users in Gusau metropolis are vulnerable to injuries, and probably fatalities, by virtue of RTC associated with traffic violation. It also implies that so far, traffic rule enforcers have failed in the mandate of ensuring compliance of drivers with traffic rules and regulations, for the safety of road users. According to rational choice theory, offenders are rational beings who analyze the effectiveness of law enforcement before deciding to violate the law (Siegel, 2005). Law violation would occur if policing or enforcement is perceived to be weak, with low risk of apprehension and prosecution.

From this perspective, it could be averred that drivers in the study area have taken advantage of poor enforcement of traffic rules in the metropolis to massively commit traffic offences. Therefore, the ubiquity of traffic violation in Gusau metropolis is traceable to ineffectiveness of

traffic policing. As the findings show, traffic offenders were barely arrested. A situation whereby drivers are convinced that officials would not arrest offenders would encourage drivers to disregard traffic rules. For drivers to comply with traffic rules, they must be convinced that the risk of detection and apprehension is high. However, this is not the case in Gusau where the nature of traffic policing encourages, rather than discourages traffic violation. At this point, it is worthy to state that lack or low risk of apprehension in Gusau was, in part, created by drivers through perpetration of mob attacks on the law enforcers. To forestall further attacks on the Officers, they were asked to cease enforcement of traffic rules within the metropolis. Consequently, drivers flout traffic rules without fear of arrest and subsequent prosecution since officials have been withdrawn. The decision to restrict FRSC Officers to highways does not only portend danger to the safety of road users, it would also affect the revenue that the government is supposed to generate through issuance of drivers' license. This is because, lack of risk of detection and apprehension would encourage drivers to drive without licenses.

The foregoing shows that within the metropolis, there is absence of risk of detection and apprehension of road traffic offenders, due to attacks on traffic law enforcers, which has resulted in withdrawal of Road Safety Officers from the town. Consequently, the frequency of traffic violation in the metropolis has worsened. This portends danger to the safety of the road, as drivers could take advantage of the enforcement vacuum to flout traffic rules, to the detriment of road users. Furthermore, the fear of being attacked could equally dissuade traffic law enforcers from strictly enforcing traffic rules along the highways where they have been directed to operate. Mob attacks, therefore, constitute a grave threat to the attainment of the mandate of the FRSC (ensuring the roads are safe for users).

In ascertaining the nature of traffic policing that would deter drivers from violating traffic rules, respondents agreed that strict enforcement perform deterrent function. Similarly, Uzoegbu-Wilson (2016a) found that the perception of drivers on the nature of traffic law enforcement determined commission of traffic offences. The law enforcers, however, identified some critical issues that must be addressed for strict enforcement to be effective. As the respondents pointed out, the culture of the people is critical in making and enforcing laws. This is owing to the likelihood for a people to resist policies that they perceive to be against their cultural beliefs and practices. This finding suggests that reorientation is crucial to law enforcement. The issue of reorientation was emphasized by the respondents as a prerequisite to strict enforcement. This is pertinent considering the importance of reorientation in changing the attitude of the people. This means that except cultural and psychological factors in Gusau as regards traffic rules are addressed, strict enforcement would be counterproductive. In this study, the finding that weighty sanction (fines) would not deter traffic violation among Gusau drivers supports the finding on violent reaction of drivers to evade fine payment when arrested for traffic offences. The drivers reacted against the amount of money paid as fines for traffic offences despite that the fines appear to be relatively low. Therefore, increasing the fines beyond the affordability of drivers would likely elicit severe violence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the points of view of law enforcement agents, this study examined the effectiveness of traffic policing in deterring traffic violation in Gusau metropolis. Traffic policing in the metropolis was poor, as traffic offenders massively violated traffic rules without being arrested and prosecuted. The study, therefore, concludes that traffic policing in Gusau metropolis was ineffective in deterring traffic violators. Massive infringement on traffic rules in the metropolis

is there a product of weak traffic policing. In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Owing to the negative perception that commercial drivers in Gusau metropolis have about traffic policing, there should be urgent organization of extensive orientation/reorientation, and enlightenment programmes for the drivers in order to change their perception and attitude towards traffic rules and traffic law enforcement agents.
- ii. To reduce mob attacks on traffic law enforcement agents in Gusau metropolis, automated traffic enforcement should be introduced. This would involve the use of radar guns and cameras to detect traffic rule violating vehicles. Defaulting drivers should thereafter be invited to the court for prosecution. There could also be joint enforcement between Road Safety Officers and armed Police Personnel in order to discourage attacks on road safety officials.
- iii. Increase the risk of detection, apprehension and sanction of traffic offenders through strict traffic policing. This would involve deployment of adequate traffic law enforcement officials and traffic policing devices to ensure that offenders are detected and arrested.
- iv. It is imperative to adopt zero-tolerance traffic policing in Gusau metropolis, in order to change the perception of commercial drivers that traffic policing in the metropolis is weak. In this case, traffic law enforcement in Gusau should be typified by certitude of arrest and application of sanction on traffic offenders, as certainty of sanction deters would-be offenders from committing crime.
- v. Findings show that heavy and low fines do not deter traffic violators. Therefore, fines for traffic offences should be reviewed moderately upward. The fines should neither be low nor high.
- vi. Serious traffic offences such as dangerous driving, drivers' license violation, overloading, and operating a motor vehicle with forged documents should attract sanction of imprisonment without option of fine.

Limitations of the Study

The result of this study may not be generalized beyond the study location due to the sampling adopted for the study. Quantitative study involving a larger sample may be conducted in order to make generalization beyond the study area.

Implications of the Study

Policy: This study revealed the factors militating against enforcement of traffic law in the study area. Knowledge of these would be useful to the policy makers in formulating policies that would address these issues identified.

Practice: This study revealed the strategy adopted by drivers to thwart traffic law enforcement. With this information, traffic law enforcement agents in other locations can adopt measures to foreclose it in their various Commands. Furthermore, the perceptions that drivers have about traffic policing have been brought to the fore. The law enforcers could take cognizance of this and re-strategize to achieve the desired result in discharging their duties.

Theory: Findings of this study supports the assumption of rational choice theory that law breaking is a conscious choice made by the violators. However, it does not support the assumption that risk of apprehension deters offenders. This is because drivers in the study area were not deterred by the risk of apprehension. Rather, they devised a means to evade arrest and prosecution. Similarly, this study found that weighty sanction does not deter traffic violators. Rather, it would elicit mob attacks on the law enforcers. This finding, therefore, does not

support the assumption of RCT that sanctions that would deter offenders are such that are weighty enough to counterbalance the criminal gain.

Research: This research focused on the perspective of traffic law enforcement agents. Other researches could examine the perspectives of other categories of road users such as private drivers, motorcyclists, and passengers. More so, the focus of this study could also be conducted in other cities and towns in Nigeria

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