

Analysis of pedestrian accidents in Sri Lanka

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Road accidents have become a noticeable social problem in Sri Lanka. According to Police records, there are over a 1,000 road accidents per week with 5 to 6 people being killed every day. Among the victims of road accidents, the pedestrian appears to be the most vulnerable road user type. This paper tries to analyze & describe pedestrian accidents in Sri Lanka.

Accident data for this study was obtained from the Traffic Police Headquarters in Sri Lanka for the year 2002 and analysis was done to find out the causes for pedestrian accidents using SPSS Software. According to the statistics, 37% of accident fatalities were pedestrians in year 2002 and most of them had to pay with their life, not because of their fault but often due to the fault of motorist. According to the analysis, only 6% of victims are at fault for the accident and the faulty rate of pedestrians on fatalities was only 5%. This means that the motorist has been responsible for the pedestrian's death in 95% of the cases. Furthermore, the smaller vehicles such as motor cycles and 3 wheelers are those that are more frequently involved in collisions with pedestrians. However, larger vehicles such as light vehicles, private buses & Lorries are mostly involved in pedestrian fatalities. Although, the motor cycle had the highest number of pedestrian accidents, it was ranked in fourth place for fatal accidents. Another alarming concern is that 1 in 11 serious accidents and 1 in 7 pedestrian deaths have been reported as 'hit and run'. Most of these were single vehicle involved accidents. They are mostly motor cycles and light vehicles. Furthermore, it is found that half of pedestrian fatalities have occurred while crossing the road, but not on a marked pedestrian crossing. Another one third of all pedestrian deaths and injuries were occurred while walking along the edge of the road or the shoulder or sidewalk.

In general, it is seen that the bigger vehicle (or road user) is responsible for an accident with a smaller road user. The light vehicle, private bus, lorry and motor cycle are the most dangerous vehicle types. As such, special attention on driving habits of these drivers, which jeopardize the pedestrian, appears to be an important strategic intervention. Controlling speeds through physical measures such as speed reducing devices in areas where there is heavy pedestrian activity and by enforcement methods in other areas is highly recommended to address this problem of speed related accidents. For run away drivers, perhaps fines or penalties should be increased urgently to arrest this trend. The absence of safe walking areas and marked pedestrian crossings are a major cause for pedestrian accidents. Clearing of unauthorized structures, parked vehicles and debris should be made mandatory for all the road authorities.

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