

A Study on Risky Driving Behaviour Among Urban Youth in Coimbatore City

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Abstract—Risky driving behaviour among urban youth has emerged as a critical public safety concern in rapidly urbanising Indian cities such as Coimbatore. With increased access to motor vehicles and evolving socio-cultural dynamics, young individuals are increasingly engaging in unsafe driving practices such as over-speeding, mobile phone usage, signal violations, and driving under the influence of alcohol. This study examines the prevalence, causes, and implications of risky driving behaviour among youth aged 18–30 years in Coimbatore City from a criminological perspective. Using a quantitative research design, primary data were collected through structured questionnaires to analyse behavioural patterns and influencing factors. The study identifies key determinants including psychological traits like impulsivity and sensation-seeking, sociological influences such as peer pressure and cultural norms, and environmental conditions including traffic congestion and weak enforcement mechanisms. The findings reveal a significant gap between awareness of traffic rules and actual compliance. The research highlights the need for stronger policy interventions, effective enforcement, and behavioural change strategies. By integrating criminological theories such as deterrence theory and social learning theory, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of risky driving as a form of deviant behaviour requiring multidimensional intervention strategies.

Index Terms—Risky Driving Behaviour; Urban Youth; Road Safety; Traffic Violations

I. INTRODUCTION TO RISKY DRIVING BEHAVIOUR

Risky driving behaviour has become one of the most pressing issues in contemporary urban societies, particularly in developing countries like India. The

rapid expansion of transportation infrastructure and increased accessibility to motor vehicles have transformed mobility patterns, especially among youth. While these developments have facilitated economic growth and personal freedom, they have simultaneously contributed to a rise in road accidents and traffic violations. From a criminological perspective, risky driving is not merely accidental but represents a form of deviant behaviour involving violation of legal norms and social responsibility. Youth, characterised by their inclination toward experimentation and thrill-seeking, are particularly vulnerable to such behaviours. In Coimbatore City, a rapidly growing urban centre, the problem is exacerbated by increased vehicle density and inadequate traffic discipline.

The introduction of modern lifestyles, coupled with technological advancements, has further influenced driving habits. The integration of mobile technology into everyday life has introduced new forms of distraction, making driving more hazardous. Moreover, the perception of driving as a symbol of independence and social status encourages youth to engage in reckless practices. This study seeks to examine the nature and determinants of risky driving behaviour among urban youth by analysing psychological, sociological, and legal dimensions. It also attempts to position risky driving within the broader framework of criminological theory, thereby highlighting its significance as a preventable social problem rather than an inevitable occurrence.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of risky driving behaviour has attracted significant scholarly attention across disciplines such as criminology, psychology, and public health. Existing literature highlights the multifaceted nature of the issue, emphasising behavioural, cognitive, and environmental factors.

Research by Megarian et al. (2023) demonstrates the role of impulsivity and self-regulation in shaping risky driving behaviour among youth. The study reveals that individuals with high impulsivity and low self-control are more likely to engage in dangerous driving practices. Similarly, Lajunen et al. (2022) identify overconfidence in driving skills as a key predictor of risk-taking behaviour.

Technological perspectives are explored by Ferreira et al. (2026), who examine advancements in detecting risky driving through machine learning. While such innovations offer promising solutions, their practical implementation remains limited. Meanwhile, AlKetbi et al. (2020) highlight the role of distracted driving and mental health factors in increasing accident risks.

Several studies also emphasise the influence of social and cultural factors. Scott-Parker (2017) identifies mobile phone usage and peer influence as major predictors of risky driving across different countries. Morton (2014) further highlights the role of peer presence in amplifying risk-taking behaviour among adolescents.

Collectively, the literature suggests that risky driving behaviour is a complex phenomenon influenced by psychological traits, social dynamics, and structural conditions. It underscores the need for integrated approaches combining education, enforcement, and technological intervention.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design to analyse risky driving behaviour among urban youth in Coimbatore City. The primary objective is to identify patterns, causes, and correlations associated with unsafe driving practices. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to a representative sample of youth aged between 18 and 30 years. The questionnaire included sections on demographic details, driving habits, awareness of traffic rules, and behavioural tendencies. Statistical

tools were employed to analyse the data and identify significant associations.

The sampling method ensured diversity in terms of gender, educational background, and socio-economic status. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the issue across different segments of youth. The research also incorporated secondary data from existing literature, government reports, and traffic statistics to contextualise the findings. Ethical considerations were strictly followed, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. The methodology provides a systematic framework for examining risky driving behaviour and facilitates the identification of key determinants that can inform policy interventions.

IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING RISKY DRIVING

Psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping driving behaviour among youth. Traits such as impulsivity, sensation-seeking, and emotional instability significantly influence decision-making processes. Youth often exhibit optimistic bias, believing that accidents are less likely to happen to them. This perception leads to overconfidence and risky behaviours such as speeding and signal violations. Additionally, emotional factors such as anger and excitement contribute to aggressive driving and road rage. Neurological development also plays a role, as the brain regions responsible for impulse control and judgment continue to mature into early adulthood. This developmental aspect explains the higher propensity for risk-taking among youth. Understanding these psychological dimensions is essential for designing effective interventions that target behavioural change rather than merely increasing awareness.

V. SOCIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Driving behaviour is deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts. Family attitudes, peer influence, and societal norms significantly shape youth behaviour. Peer pressure is a major factor, with youth often engaging in risky driving to gain social approval. Cultural perceptions associating aggressive driving with masculinity further reinforce such behaviours.

Media representations also play a critical role by glamorising reckless driving. Movies and advertisements often depict high-speed driving as thrilling, influencing youth perceptions. Social Learning Theory explains that individuals learn behaviours through observation and imitation. When traffic violations are common and unpunished, they become normalised, reducing the perceived seriousness of such acts.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS

Environmental conditions such as road infrastructure, traffic congestion, and urban planning significantly influence driving behaviour. Coimbatore City, with its mixed traffic patterns and high vehicle density, presents challenging driving conditions. Technological factors, particularly mobile phone usage, have emerged as major contributors to distracted driving. Youth are highly dependent on digital devices, increasing the likelihood of accidents. Poor road infrastructure, inadequate signage, and lack of pedestrian facilities further exacerbate the problem. These conditions create an environment where even minor risky behaviours can have severe consequences.

VII. CRIMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RISKY DRIVING

Criminology provides valuable frameworks for understanding risky driving behaviour as a form of deviance. Deterrence Theory suggests that individuals avoid violations when punishment is certain and swift. However, inconsistent enforcement weakens its effectiveness. Social Control Theory emphasises the role of institutions such as family and education in regulating behaviour. Routine Activity Theory explains that risky driving occurs when there is a convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and lack of guardianship. Weak traffic policing increases opportunities for violations. These perspectives highlight the need for a comprehensive approach combining enforcement, education, and social regulation.

VIII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study reveal that risky driving behaviour is prevalent among urban youth in

Coimbatore. Common practices include over-speeding, mobile phone usage, and non-compliance with safety measures. Statistical analysis indicates significant correlations between risky behaviour and factors such as age, gender, and peer influence. Male youth are more likely to engage in aggressive driving, while awareness does not necessarily translate into compliance. The results highlight a gap between knowledge and practice, suggesting that awareness alone is insufficient. Behavioural interventions and stricter enforcement are required to address the issue effectively.

IX. CONCLUSION

Risky driving behaviour among urban youth represents a complex and multifaceted social problem that demands urgent attention. This study has demonstrated that such behaviour is not merely a result of individual negligence but is deeply rooted in psychological tendencies, sociocultural influences, environmental conditions, and systemic inadequacies. One of the most significant findings is the role of youth psychology in shaping driving behaviour. Traits such as impulsivity, sensation-seeking, and overconfidence contribute to risky decision-making on the road. These characteristics, combined with developmental factors, make youth particularly vulnerable to engaging in unsafe practices. Addressing these issues requires interventions that go beyond awareness and focus on behavioural modification.

Sociological factors further complicate the issue. Peer pressure, cultural norms, and media influence play a crucial role in normalising risky driving behaviour. The association of aggressive driving with masculinity and social status reinforces unsafe practices among young males. Therefore, changing societal attitudes is essential for promoting responsible driving. Environmental and infrastructural challenges also contribute to the problem. Rapid urbanisation, increased vehicle density, and inadequate road infrastructure create conditions that increase the likelihood of accidents. Technological distractions, particularly mobile phone usage, have introduced new dimensions of risk that require targeted interventions. From a criminological perspective, risky driving should be recognised as a form of deviant behaviour that violates legal and social norms. The application of theories such as deterrence theory and social learning

theory provides valuable insights into the causes and prevention of such behaviour. Strengthening law enforcement and ensuring consistent penalties can enhance deterrence and reduce violations. Policy implications of this study include the need for comprehensive road safety strategies that integrate education, enforcement, and technological solutions. Driver education programs should focus on behavioural aspects rather than merely imparting knowledge. Strict enforcement of traffic laws, coupled with the use of surveillance technologies, can improve compliance.

Furthermore, community-based interventions involving parents, educational institutions, and media can play a crucial role in shaping positive attitudes toward road safety. Encouraging responsible driving behaviour requires a collective effort from all stakeholders. In conclusion, risky driving behaviour among urban youth is a preventable problem that requires a multidimensional approach. By addressing psychological, social, and structural factors, it is possible to reduce accidents and promote a culture of safe driving. Future research should explore innovative strategies and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to ensure sustainable improvements in road safety.

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