



## ***A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH; ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS IN SRI LANKA***

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Road traffic accidents have reached an alarming level in Sri Lanka. Thousands of people died and become disabling due to this terrible road traffic accident annually. This study was conducted among 30 victims who met with accidents in 2016 to explore the contributory factors and reasons behind the road traffic accidents and to exemplify the diverse effects of road traffic accidents in the Akkaraipattu Divisional Secretariat division of Ampara district. Primary data were collected using interviews, observations and case studies. Secondary data were gained through records, journals, articles, annual reports and websites. Collected data were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods and presented in a descriptive manner. This study revealed that road users are the main cause of road traffic accidents. Especially driver impairment is the main contributory factor for these accidents. The study found that violation of traffic rules is the most prominent reason (22%) and driving while being sleepy and fatigue is the least contributory reason (8%) for the road traffic accidents. Other reasons are driving at excessive speeds, not wearing helmets, disrespect of the road rules and regulation, driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, and failure to perceive traffic situation. According to the study, negative consequences of road traffic accidents can be classified into three broad categories as physical, financial and psychological effects. People who got major injuries suffer a lot physically and experience difficulties in performing day-to-day activities and most of them are still not fully recovered from their physical impairments. Road accidents create enormous economic hardship due to the loss of family breadwinners. It creates severe financial burden including cost of hospitalisation, long-term care, material damage and production losses. Some of the psychological effects of road traffic accident victims are anxiety and depression. Further, they feel guilty, fear, nervousness, sleepless, angry and irritation. Every life of human beings is precious to the family members and society. Road safety programmes, good policies and planned interventions which include better understanding of the social impacts of road-related deaths and injuries are important to predict and prevent these terrible road traffic accidents in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Accidents, Deaths, Injuries, Road*