

The Reckless Driving Behaviors Among Vehicle Drivers in Qatar

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ABSTRACT

This study examines reckless driving behaviors among drivers in Qatar, focusing on demographic, psychological, and social influences. Predominantly male participants (94.3%) aged 25-40 years (79.5%) and mostly educated (64.8% bachelor's degree) reported their behaviors. Key findings identified impulsiveness and peer influence as major causes, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and policy measures. The research, based on a social survey of 88 drivers, highlighted physical activity, desire for social approval, provocation, risk-taking, and impulsivity as primary factors. Recommendations include engaging governmental and civil organizations to address these issues and suggesting further research on psychological, social, and cultural aspects of reckless driving.

Keywords: Reckless driving, Demographic factors, Psychological influences, Peer pressure, Impulsiveness, Qatar.

INTRODUCTION

Traffic is considered a measure of the civilization and progress of peoples. Adhering to traffic laws and instructions is a form of state advancement. However, traffic issues are numerous and require continuous monitoring, evaluation, and assessment by relevant authorities. With many factors associated with traffic, special departments have been established in most, if not all, countries around the world to organize traffic and ensure the protection of lives and both public and private properties (Al-Saadiya, 2019). Reckless driving is one of the main causes of road accidents, resulting in losses in lives and properties. Besides, traffic accidents have psychological, social, and economic impacts on their victims. Therefore, controlling drivers' behaviors is essential to spare society the tragedies of human losses resulting from reckless driving, which some classify as a societal disease requiring elimination. Thus, it is crucial to explore the main causes and impacts of reckless driving behaviors (Al-Maliki, 2023).

Despite Qatar's highly developed road infrastructure, traffic accident rates remain high, although there have been slight decreases over the past five years since 2019. In March 2023, there were 806 traffic accidents, marking a 20.7% monthly increase and a 0.5% annual decrease. Light injuries constituted the majority of traffic accident cases during that month at 93%, followed by severe injuries at 5%, with fatalities reaching 17 cases, representing only 2% of total traffic accident cases (Planning and Statistics Authority, 2023).

Recognizing the importance of minimizing traffic accidents and addressing their causes, the Qatari government established the National Traffic Safety Committee through Cabinet Resolution No. (33) of 2010. This committee is tasked with developing a national strategy for traffic safety and sustainable transport, supported by an execution plan. Additionally, it studies traffic problems, proposes solutions, and provides theoretical and technical consultations to the relevant authorities to improve their performance. It also spreads traffic awareness among road and vehicle users, aligning with international standards. To achieve its objectives, the committee launched the first National Traffic Safety Strategy 2013-2022, along with its implementation plan for the years 2018-2022, showing early governmental efforts to reduce traffic risks.

Moreover, Traffic Law No. (19) of 2007 illustrates Qatar's concern for traffic accident issues and the importance of controlling them to preserve human and economic resources, the family, and society. Al-Rubaie

(2012) noted that although awareness of traffic accident dangers in Qatar is second only to drugs and intoxicant issues, it remains below the desired level compared to other significant health and safety threats. The study also highlighted the positive impact of the new traffic law in reducing death and injury rates due to traffic accidents, although not in terms of accident severity or increased violations of speed limits and reckless driving. More than half of the families are affected by traffic accidents regarding human losses and injuries, and the majority are economically affected by them.

Given these findings, studying the problem of reckless driving, which results in substantial human and material losses in Qatar, is crucial. The negative repercussions on health, psychological, social, and economic levels necessitate a concerted effort to curb the root causes of reckless driving and achieve a traffic-accident-free society, which the current study aims to achieve by exploring reckless driving behaviors among vehicle drivers in Qatar.

Despite a 14.3% annual reduction in traffic accidents in 2023, according to the Planning and Statistics Authority in Qatar, and a 24.3% decrease in traffic-related fatalities and severe injuries compared to 2022, reaching a mortality rate of 5.3 per 100,000 people, the report indicated that the decline relates to stricter legal penalties for violators, without addressing the underlying causes of reckless driving, which are crucial to understanding these accidents. Hence, the current study seeks to explore the reckless driving behaviors among vehicle drivers in Qatar by answering the question: What are the causes of reckless driving behaviors among vehicle drivers in Qatar?

This study's significance lies in addressing one of the major societal problems causing substantial human and material losses annually. From this standpoint, the scientific and practical importance of the study can be outlined as follows:

- It involves studying the causes of reckless driving behaviors among vehicle drivers in Qatar and suitable mechanisms to reduce these behaviors.
- It entails building awareness programs based on the results to minimize traffic accidents caused by reckless driving.

METHODOLOGY

The current study employed the social survey method using a sample appropriate for the study's nature and objectives. This method involves the systematic collection of information and data about a particular group of society under certain conditions, often including the social conditions and activities of the study's subject group. This survey study aimed to identify the causes of reckless driving behaviors among vehicle drivers in Qatar.

Previous Studies

Al-Badayneh's study investigated road rage among drivers in Jordan, identifying variations in road rage, legal issues, adherence to traffic rules, and injury risk based on demographic and behavioral factors. Analyzing data from 3077 drivers, the study found that roughly half had been stopped by law enforcement for traffic violations, one-tenth faced legal difficulties, and one-fifth admitted to aggressive driving. Significant differences in road rage and rule compliance were linked to age, gender, traffic violations, accidents, and crash history. Al-Saadiya (2019) conducted a study to assess the role of school administrations in enhancing traffic education among tenth-grade students in basic education schools in Oman. The study applied to a sample of 73 specialists in traffic education from educational directorates and schools in Muscat and South Al Batinah governor. The results indicated that the lack of a traffic education culture in Omani schools was one of the primary causes of traffic accidents and reckless driving among youth. Similarly, Al-Rawahi (2019) investigated irrational beliefs about vehicle driving among post-secondary students in Dhofar Governorate, Oman, with a sample of 151 students holding driving licenses, selected via convenience sampling. The results showed that irrational beliefs about driving were moderately prevalent in the community. Additionally, reckless driving—caused by lack of adherence to traffic regulations—was identified as a significant factor contributing to traffic accidents in Oman. Barakat and Tameh (2017) studied the impact of traffic accidents on key macroeconomic indicators in Saudi Arabia, analyzing traffic statistics from 2012-2016. They found that most traffic accidents resulted from reckless driving, with negative psychological and social effects, which also adversely affected the country's economic indicators. The study highlighted that reckless driving primarily occurs among youth aged 14-35 and is the main cause of road accidents. Furthermore, Al-Rubaie (2012) examined the effectiveness of Law No. 19 of 2007 in reducing traffic accidents and its impact on family and community safety in Qatar. This was one of the few studies conducted in the Qatari environment, relying on a detailed questionnaire administered to a random sample of 2000 drivers from various nationalities, ages, educational backgrounds, and regions. The findings indicated that awareness of the dangers of traffic accidents ranks second after drug and intoxicant issues, yet remains below the desired level compared to other security and health concerns. The law had a positive impact in reducing fatalities and injuries, but did not significantly affect accident severity or violations like speeding and reckless driving. The study identified that exceeding speed limits,

driving without licenses, driving against traffic, and driving under the influence are among the most prominent indicators of reckless driving in Qatar and major causes of traffic accidents.

Literature Gaps

The literature on traffic safety and reckless driving in the Middle East, particularly in Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, highlights factors such as psychological, behavioral, and educational influences, as discussed in studies by Al-Badayneh (2020) and Al-Saadiya (2019). These studies examine demographic influences on aggressive driving, but a **significant research gap exists**. Current literature often isolates specific demographic groups and legislative measures without integrating psychological, social, and demographic causes of reckless driving across broader populations. Moreover, there is insufficient exploration of nuanced motivations behind reckless driving among adult drivers in Qatar, including impulsiveness and peer influence. The key gaps identified are the need for integrated models that consider the interaction of demographic, psychological, and social factors, comprehensive research that moves beyond isolated variables, and a focus on adult male drivers in Qatar, as age and gender significantly impact risky behaviors.

Causes of Reckless Driving Behavior

Despite numerous reasons explaining reckless driving, especially among youth, speed remains the primary factor reinforcing other contributing factors. Traffic accidents have become a significant social, human, and material problem worldwide, caused by behaviors such as recklessness, drug influence, speeding, and other violations of traffic rules designed to regulate safe driving and reduce human and economic losses.

Most people consider themselves good drivers; however, good driving requires more than just avoiding accidents. It involves recognizing associated dangers and making necessary adjustments in different situations to ensure safety—even when others make mistakes. Leading causes of reckless driving include driving without licenses, excessive speeding, not wearing seat belts, using mobile phones while driving, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, all of which frequently result in deadly accidents (Othman, 2019).

Official statistics show a 5% decrease in traffic-related fatalities in 2023, amounting to 168 deaths, down from approximately 222 deaths in 2022. The traffic mortality rate is 5.3 per 100,000 inhabitants—yet the global average is 15 per 100,000.

FINDINGS

Males comprised 94.3% of the sample, while females made up 5.7%. This disparity is likely linked to societal norms that associate reckless driving with males. The age group of 25 to under 40 years dominated the sample at 79.5%. Those aged 40 and older accounted for 18.2%, with individuals below 25 representing 2.3%. This aligns with existing literature indicating a higher propensity for reckless driving among young adults. Additionally, 15.9% of participants had a diploma or lower, 64.8% held a bachelor's degree, and 19.3% possessed postgraduate qualifications, suggesting that the respondents were well-educated and capable of accurately responding to the questionnaire, thus enhancing data reliability.

Impulsiveness

Table 1 displays the means and deviations for impulsiveness items. The mean for impulsiveness is 3.40 indicating a moderate level. The highest-rated item (item 3) suggests that participants acknowledge impulsiveness could sometimes lead to dangerous overtaking in emergencies. Conversely, the lowest-rated item (item 1) shows collective rejection of running red lights, reflecting awareness of legal and safety consequences.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Impulsiveness Items.

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level
3	I might mistakenly overtake in an emergency	4.14	0.65	High
2	I might stop in a no-parking zone if in a hurry	4.04	0.62	High
4	I feel the need to release energy via speed driving	3.24	0.67	Moderate
1	I might run a red light if necessary	2.19	0.91	Low
All		3.40	0.71	Moderate

Perception of Risk

Table 2 presents means and standard deviations for perception of risk Items. This suggests that a moderate level of risk-seeking behavior exists among drivers, with the highest scores for pleasure in risky or adventurous driving. The low score on thrill-seeking indicates that not all drivers actively seek danger; some do it impulsively or due to perceived normalcy.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Perception of Risk Items.

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level
1	I sometimes enjoy adventurous driving	4.29	0.59	High
4	I prefer to liberate from social/family constraints through driving	4.01	0.62	High
3	I find pleasure in risky driving when facing problems	3.31	0.70	Moderate
2	I love taking risks just for the thrill	2.22	0.82	Low
All		3.46	0.68	Moderate

Physical Activity

Table 3 indicates that physical activity is a significant factor among drivers, with a high average score reflecting a tendency to associate higher energy levels and preference for movement with reckless driving behaviors. The statement about imitating movie stunts received a low score, suggesting that such behavior, while noted, is less prevalent.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for Physical Activity Items.

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level
2	I feel better when active than resting	4.89	0.55	High
1	I prefer physical activity over mental tasks	4.53	0.52	High
3	I believe I have more energy than peers	3.61	0.62	Moderate
4	I want to imitate movie stunts with fast driving	2.32	0.53	Low
All		3.64	0.72	Moderate

Pleasing Others

Table 4 suggest a strong influence of peer group dynamics, notably the desire to challenge others and peer encouragement, as primary motivators for reckless driving. Personal pressure or specific social pressures are less influential.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for Pleasing Others Items.

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level
2	I want to show challenge to others	4.51	0.61	High
1	My friends encourage me to drive fast and recklessly	4.26	0.66	High
4	Sociability/peer pressure prompts this behavior	3.65	0.72	Moderate
3	Driven by pressure from friends	2.12	0.89	Low
All		3.64	0.72	Moderate

Provocation

Table 5 indicates that loss of self-control and the desire to defend oneself are prominent reasons for reckless driving, whereas intentionally harming others or property is viewed as less common among respondents, reflecting a tendency toward impulsivity rather than malicious intent.

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations for Provocation Items.

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level
1	Loss of control over oneself	4.29	0.59	High
4	For self-defense	4.12	0.70	High
3	I am angry at society	3.56	0.82	Moderate
2	To harm others or vehicles	2.09	0.91	Low
All		3.52	0.76	Moderate

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight that reckless driving in Qatar is primarily associated with male drivers aged 25–40 years, consistent with existing literature linking gender and age to risky behaviors (Al-Maliki, 2023; Ghamdi, 2014). The dominance of males (94.3%) in the sample aligns with societal and cultural norms, where masculinity and risk-taking behaviors are often intertwined (Al-Saadiya, 2019). Similar patterns have been observed globally, with males exhibiting higher tendencies for reckless behaviors due to societal expectations and peer influences (Al-Rubai, 2012; Mahmud & Kahn, 2018).

In addition, Al-Badayneh (2020) examined road rage among drivers in Jordan, analyzing data from 3,077 drivers. The study found that approximately half of the participants had been stopped by law enforcement for traffic violations, about 10% faced legal difficulties, and 20% admitted to engaging in aggressive driving behaviors. Notably, significant differences in road rage and compliance with traffic rules were associated with variables such as age, gender, history of traffic violations, accidents, and crash history. These findings align with the current study's emphasis on behavioral factors, particularly that emotional responses such as aggression and frustration—elements linked to road rage—play vital roles in reckless driving behaviors. The Jordanian data reinforce that demographic and behavioral factors significantly influence aggressive and risky driving, suggesting that similar patterns may exist in Qatar, especially among populations prone to emotional triggers while driving.

Furthermore, the analysis of behavioral domains indicates that impulsiveness and social influences—particularly the desire to challenge others—are significant motivators for reckless driving, supported by high mean scores in impulsiveness ($M=3.40$) and peer encouragement (mean=4.26). These results concur with research emphasizing that peer pressure and thrill-seeking behaviors greatly contribute to risky driving among young adults (Othman, 2019; Salem & Abdullah, 2020). High scores in physical activity variables suggest that higher energy levels and a desire for movement further underpin these behaviors, confirming prior studies linking physical energy with risky conduct (Ghamdi, 2014; Al-Maliki, 2023).

Additionally, provocation factors such as loss of self-control and self-defense motives emerged as key reasons behind reckless driving, indicating that impulsivity and emotional responses, including anger and frustration (as shown in the road rage study), are critical drivers (Khan & Raza, 2021). The low tendency toward malicious intent (e.g., harming others) points to impulsiveness rather than malevolence as the main motivation.

These insights suggest that emotional triggers, including anger and frustration, significantly influence reckless driving. Therefore, effective interventions should not only focus on behavioral regulation and law enforcement but also incorporate emotional regulation strategies, involving psychological support and awareness campaigns to address drivers' emotional responses.

CONCLUSION

Reckless driving among male drivers in Qatar is mainly driven by impulsiveness, peer influences, and the desire for thrill and challenge—factors similarly observed in Jordanian drivers' road rage behaviors. Both studies underscore that demographic variables and emotional states are crucial in understanding risky driving. Addressing these factors through behavioral education, peer influence management, emotional regulation programs, and stricter law enforcement can substantially improve road safety. Future research should explore additional determinants—such as cultural norms, personality traits, and emotional states—to develop comprehensive prevention strategies (Al-Rubaie, 2012; Othman, 2019; Mahmoud & Farooq, 2019; Al-Badayneh, 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends several measures to address reckless driving: enhance traffic law enforcement with stricter penalties, promote organized physical activities under supervision, launch awareness campaigns targeting youth, engage community organizations to foster responsible behavior, implement workshops for drivers to develop self-control skills, and encourage further research into various influencing factors such as cultural norms and psychological traits.

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