Reduction of Road Traffic Accidents in Rivers State:
Behaviour Modification Strategies and Counselling Implications

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ABSTRACT
The rising rate of road traffic accident in Rivers State is highly unprecedented. This paper on reduction of road traffic accident in Rivers State behaviour modification strategies and counselling implications is aimed at highlighting the role and duties of drivers and road users respectively. It looked at the history and duty of the Federal road safety corps, cause of road traffic accidents in Rivers State which include over speeding, jumping red lights, drunken drivers etc. how road traffic accidents can be reduced through behaviour modification like classical conditioning and operant conditioning (i.e. through positive and negative reinforcement) and counseling.

Keywords: Road, Traffic, Accidents Counseling, Behaviour Modification

INTRODUCTION
Rivers State created 27th May, 1967 is one of the 36 States in Nigeria, with Port Harcourt as the State Capital. The State has a total land mass of 11,077km² (4,277 sqmi) making it the 26th largest State in Nigeria. There are 23 Local Government Areas in the State and a population of about 5,185,400 making it the sixth most populous state in the country, considered the second largest Nigerian State by GDP (US $21,073 Million). The state is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, to the North by Imo, Abia and Anambra States, to the East by Akwa Ibom State and to the West by Bayelsa and Delta States (Nigeria Administrative Division City Population, Retrieved 28 Nov. 2014). Transportation in Rivers State is mainly land and water-based with the Rivers State Ministry of Transport responsible for issues and policy on transportation matters. The ministry is located on the 6th floor of the State Secretariat building in Port Harcourt (Google Maps, Google Retrieved 27 Jan. 2015).

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria has an estimated vehicle population of 11,458,370 as at the 1st quota of 2017. Out of which commercial vehicles are 53.89%, private vehicles 44.5%, government vehicles 1.65% and diplomatic vehicle 0.1%. They also recorded that in the Q1 2017 road transport data reported that 2,556 road crashes occurred with speed violation as the major cause according for 42.69% of the total road crashes reported.

Road traffic accidents occur when a vehicle that is moving along a roadway collides with another vehicle, pedestrian, animal, road decres or other stationary obstructions, such as a true or utility pole. The collisions may result to injury, death or damage of properties.

Federal Road Safety Corps Nigeria: A Brief History
Federal Road Safety Corps is the Government Agency with statutory responsibilities for road safety administration in Nigeria. Founded in 1988, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) operates in all Nigerian states as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FRSC, 2012). The FRSC is currently headed by Boboye Olayemi Oyeyemi MFR, MNi whose title is the Corps Marshal the highest rank in the Corps ranking system. Established in 1988, the FRSC is the lead agency in Nigeria on road safety administration and management. The statutory functions include: Making the highways safe for motorists and other road
users as well as checking road worthiness of vehicles, recommending works and infrastructures to eliminate or minimize accidents on the highways and educating motorists and members of the public on the importance of road discipline on the highways.

Road Traffic Accidents on Rivers Roads
Road traffic accidents have been the focus of great international concern, as accidents on the road are the major cause of deaths all over the world. The Federal Road Safety Commission quoted report of the world Health organization in 2012, that in terms of deaths caused by road accidents, Nigeria was the second worst country in the world. Rivers State is highly populated with cars, but the fact remains that our roads are very bad. Road traffic accidents results in the deaths of more 1.2m people worldwide (WHO, 2004), and between 20-50 million people suffer non-fatal injuries. According to Atubi (2012), increased rate of fatal road accident accidents worldwide has been attributed to population, explosion and increased motorization.

Causes of Road Traffic Accidents in Rivers State
Road traffic accident has been an issue both in developed and developing world today. Worldwide, motor vehicle collisions leads to death and disability as well as financial cost to both society and the individuals involved. Most of the road users are aware of the rules and safety measures involved while using the roads but the laxity of the road users causes accident and crashes. Some of the main causes of accidents are due to human errors and they include:
1. Over Speeding.
2. Drunken Driving/Drugs.
4. Avoiding the use of Safety Gears.
5. Use of Mobile (Cell) Phones and other Distractions.

The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC, 2012) noted that 80% of road accidents across the country were as a result of human factor as they noted that over speeding is a major cause of road accidents. Many drivers in Rivers State are very impatient while on the steering they tend to beat at dangerous points which may lead to auto crash and loss of lives. Also the use of drugs and alcohols by drivers is another cause of road accidents. Alcohol reduces concentration, it causes limbs more time to react to instructions of brain, it hampers vision due to dizziness, it incites human to take unnecessary risks. The use of drugs and other medicines also affect the drives driving skills. Sadjere (2008) noted that drivers conveying at motor park very early in the morning drinking local gins and inhaling Marijuana and (or) other stimulants. Another disheartening fact is the use of mobile phones by driver while of driving. This is a major forms of distraction as the act of taking on phone occupies the major portion of brain other things that could cause distraction while driving include adjustment of car stereos, mirrors, watching/reading electronic bill boards. Ignoring traffic signs is also a major cause of road traffic accidents in Rivers State. Drivers tend to jump the red light when they want to beat time and save fuel. The driver that jump red light not only jeopardizes in life but the life of other road users are also at risk. Drivers in Rivers State both private and commercial should learn how to use seat belts. Tricycle (Keke) and bike (Okada) drivers should also use helmets. The use of these safety gears is important as they reduce the possibility of death and severe injury during accidents. Other human errors includes non-adherence to lane driving, over taking in a wrong way (Manner) lack of road signs.

Another cause of road traffic accidents are mechanical errors which majors on faulty vehicles. The smuggling in of second hand cars into the country is very high and most of these cars are no longer road worthy according to international standard. Most of the cars plying Rivers roads are not road worthy, their major faults includes failure of brakes or steering, tyre burst, not head light, brake lights, trafficators and others mechanical defects. It is based on the afore mentioned that Atubi (2009) stated that high prevalence of old vehicles that often carry more people than they are designed to carry, that contribute to the high rate of crashes in less developed countries.
One other major cause of road traffic accidents are technical errors on our roads. Road traffic accidents are reported daily in Rivers State as a result of dilapidated roads, Potholes, eroded roads, merging of rural roads with highways, illegal speed breakers, road diversions, overflow of waters from gutters and drainage system. Environmental error is also another cause of road traffic accidents, and these environmental errors are heavy rainfall, bad weather conditions, oil spill etc. Rivers State is known for its heavy rainfall and when this happens drivers find it difficult to see the road clearly and this can cause accident coupled with the bad roads in the state. Other errors include issuing of driver’s license to unqualified drivers, teenage drivers, street hawking, passengers not waiting for vehicle to stop properly before wanting to embark, animals crossing our highways pedestrians not looking carefully before they cross the road. The FRSC 2012 noted that an adult pedestrian’s risk of dying is less than 20% if struck by a car at 50km/h and almost 60% if hit at 80km/h.

Reducing Road Traffic Accidents through Behaviour Modification Techniques

Behaviour modification is a treatment approach which focused on changing behaviour. B. F. Skinner, a psychologist developed the operant conditioning: this theory stated that behaviour can be modified by consequences and reinforcement behaviour modification is to replace undesirable behaviour. Behaviour modification technique can be used for all ages behaviour modification can be an effective technique used in adults with attention to deficit disorder, autism or oppositional defiant disorder. Behaviourists see psychological disorders as the result of maladaptive learning, they assume that all behaviour is learnt from the environment and symptoms are acquired through classical conditioning and operant conditioning (Akinade, 2012) and these theories can be applied to modify the behaviour of drivers in Rivers State.

Classical Conditioning: This is learning by association. Learning occurs through the association of two stimuli. The theory was propounded by Ivan Pavlov who associated his laboratory dogs with bell. Some drivers are not confident of themselves because they never attended driving schools, so anxiety and tension are written all over them when they are driving. The systematic desensitization in classical condition technique can be used to help people in this category. It helps remove tension and makes the clients (drivers) to be relaxed. Client are thought and encouraged to always be relaxed before and during driving. Similarly a driver who has had accident before in course of learning or driving will have phobia as a result of paired association such client also needs to be encouraged to remove fear and be relaxed.

Operant Conditioning: Operant conditioning deals with reinforcement. The reinforcement could be positive or negative unlike classical conditioning in operant conditioning the participants (clients) needs to be actively involved. The participants are commercial bus drivers, conductors, private car owners, tricycle (keke) and bike owners, pedestrians not exempted. Behaviour that needs to be changed include, how over speeding can be stopped, stop the use of drugs, alcohol and other stimulants while driving, the use of cell phones, the use of safety gadgets, disobeying traffic laws and signs, illegal road blocks, for pedestrians the use of footbridge and jack ways, zebra crossing.

Positive Reinforcement: The National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) and Motor Park Union Executives, should reward commercial bus drivers and conductors who are in their union that has not been involved in any road traffic accident. Rewards should be in form of cash, certificates; plaques or even praises. The Federal Road Safety Corps should also be involved in the reward packages to make the drivers more cautions. Tricycle (keke) and Motor Bike Unions should do same to their union members. Drivers that put their vehicle is good working conditions should also be rewarded to encourage others. Drivers who avoid the use of drugs and alcohol during the period (hour) work should be appreciated, also those that avoid the use of cell phones while driving.

Negative Reinforcement: This is the means of punishing offender who default. Drivers and conductive who do not obey the rules would be punished accordingly. The punishment should come in various forms like paying of fines, seizure of vehicle of drivers who default, seizure of their drivers’ license, and they have been given any award before it should be withdrawn, offenders can also be suspended from the
union. Drivers, who drive recklessly, take alcohol, disobey traffic laws should be punished accordingly. The operant conditioning is a good behaviour modification strategy as it focuses primarily on how individuals operate in the environment.

CONCLUSION
The government of Rivers State has approved a State Road Safety Policy. The policy outlines measures such as promoting awareness, encouraging safer road infrastructure, enforcements of safety laws etc. Recklessness by commercial drivers cannot be over-emphasized, which is even among the private car owners. Therefore anyone found wanting should be dealt with according to the law.

The FRSC (2006) in a report stated 5 ways to avoid traffic accidents.
1. Be a Defensive Driver: Be prepared for anything that could lead to an accident.
2. Be a Courteous Driver: Avoid accidents by begin respectful of all other users, being cautious, maintaining a respectful distance between your vehicle and others. Also do not race against other vehicles.
3. Adjust/Check all your mirrors every 15 seconds.
4. Obey all traffic rules and regulations.
5. Always use your seat belts as this reduces the chances of road accidents.

Counseling can make a huge difference to those suffering the emotional aftermath of a road traffic accident. The counseling session provides a safe to talk about the continuing feelings of panic. Short-temperedness, withdrawal or whatever else is happening for the survivor. Although each person’s response to a road accident will of course be slightly different, there are general patterns that people tend to follow. A counselor can provide information about trauma and how it works on the brain and nervous system. A counselor can also help survivors to identify coping strategies that work for them, and explore different ideas help progress through the trauma recovery process. Without help, some people can stay traumatized, in a state of anxiety, for months or even years. Even a short course of counseling can make a massive impact.

Counseling units should be established in all motor parks in Rivers State and a qualified counseling psychologist kept there.
Counseling units should also be established in all FRSC of the state Rivers State can attain to the barest minimum reduction of road traffic accidents if all these are checkmated.

REFERENCES