

These factors only reflect the most significant causes of road accidents at a given specific time and do not reflect the long-term trend. In order to make long-term policy decisions relating to the prevention of road accidents, it is crucial to analyse the most influential factors and root causes of the trends in road accidents. For ascertaining the possible underlying causes for the trends in road accidents in Sri Lanka, it is important to study the relative trends under different socio-economic conditions, such as growth of population, degree of motorisation, improvement of roads and degree of urbanisation. The analysis by Kumarage et al., (2002) on trends in the growth rate of road accidents since 1980 revealed that all types of accidents reported in each have increased at a greater rate than the increase of population, but have remained lower than the growth in the fleet of vehicles.

Even though past research have focused on analysing the trend in comparison with the growth of accident-related variables, there is scant literature on Sri Lanka, and particularly on statistical and econometric analyses on trends in road traffic accidents and their long-term relationship. Hence, this study opted to focus on investigating the enduring factors that influence trends in road traffic accidents, using advanced statistical analysis. Since past researchers concluded that statistics on non-grievous accidents are unreliable due to the low rate of reporting to the police with insurance claims, whereas grievous accidents are almost always reported and are considered reliable for analysing road accidents, this study focused only on grievous road accidents in Sri Lanka.

Accordingly, the main objective of this study was to investigate the effective and enduring factors that influence grievous road traffic accidents in Sri Lanka. The study firstly identified the main factors of trends in road accidents using the knowledge acquired through the literature survey and brainstorming. Secondly, the study analysed these enduring factors and ascertained their significance in determining future trends in grievous road accidents in Sri Lanka. Thirdly, the study enabled offering guidelines for the necessary interventions and precautions to be taken by the relevant authorities to minimise the tragic consequences of road accidents in Sri Lanka.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers have investigated the trends of road accidents over the years, revealing the risk factors affecting the fluctuations of these dangerous events. Research conducted by Mouyid and Kunnawee (2008) to identify the factors in road accidents through in-depth accident analysis observed that in Thailand, road safety was directly influenced by the rising trend of motorisation driven by the improvement of socio-economic status of the Thai people. Through investigation of cases, they outlined the major risk factors of road accidents, namely, inaccurate risk assessment and late evasive action, the absence of street-light facilities, inadequate lane marking and visibility, which influence the increase in the severity of crashes and the injuries.