

Letter to the Editor

Road rage behaviour and experiences of bus and wagon drivers in Islamabad and Rawalpindi

Madam, Road rage is a term used for verbal abuse or a threat/act of physical harm by either a driver or passenger of one vehicle to the occupants of another vehicle or pedestrians; and leads to serious injuries, death, and economically burdens its victims.¹ Road rage has been postulated to be a psychiatric phenomenon based on high aggression scores in perpetrators, and significant association with illicit drug use.²⁻³ Association of psychiatric illness with road rage has also been empirically demonstrated with psychiatric distress reported in both the victims and perpetrators.⁴ A previous study in Pakistan reported about 30% of university students in the past three months having experienced being shouted, cursed or made rude gestures at while riding a vehicle, among a sample of 532 male and female students.⁵ While about 5% students in that study reported having threatened to hurt someone in another vehicle or threatened to damage someone's vehicle while they were driving.

A cross-sectional survey with convenience sampling was conducted among bus and wagon drivers in Islamabad and Rawalpindi at starting or end stops/locations of various routes; to understand their behaviour and experiences pertaining to road rage, from March 11th to November 14th 2006. An interviewer-administered, pre-tested, structured questionnaire with close-ended questions was used. Only those drivers who had been driving for at least one year were interviewed by a trained interviewer, after obtaining their verbal consent. Cumulatively, 311 drivers were approached, and 305 were interviewed i.e. a response rate of 98%. The mean age of bus drivers was 49.9 ± 6.2 years (range 30 - 66), while wagon drivers mean age was 41 ± 8.1 year (range 24 - 62). On average bus drivers had been driving buses for 25.3 years (range 10 - 44), and wagon drivers had been driving for 17.8 years (range 4 - 36 years). Regarding educational attainment, 69 bus drivers (39.2%), and 17 (13.2%) wagon drivers had no formal education. While 106 (60.2%) bus drivers had ten or less years of education, and 100 (77.5%) wagon drivers had ten or more years of education. The rest in both groups had more than 10 years of formal education.

Among bus drivers, the most common type of road rage experience was someone in another vehicle making rude gestures at them while they were driving; as 156 (88.6%) bus drivers reported experiencing it in the past

three months. For wagon drivers, the almost universal road rage experience was someone in another vehicle threatening to physically hurt them while they were driving, as reported by 125 (96.9%) wagon drivers. Regarding perpetration of the most common road rage behaviours, 159 (90.9%) bus drivers and 123 (95.4%) wagon drivers reported having made rude gestures at someone in another vehicle, while they were driving. Table I lists by commercial vehicle type, the frequency distribution of various road rage behaviour and experiences of drivers, including the difference between the two groups. Among the four types of road rage experiences studied, over 73% bus drivers had reportedly experienced all of them in the past three months.

With the exception of the experience of another vehicle driver, threatening to damage their vehicle, over 86% of wagon drivers reported other three road rage experiences in the past three months. Regarding the perpetration of four types of road rage behaviours inquired into, over half of all bus drivers and over 72% of wagon drivers reported indulgence in the past three months. The only statistically significant differences observed between two types of commercial vehicle drivers were with someone in another vehicle threatened to hurt them or they themselves threatening to do the same. Additionally, compared to bus drivers, wagon drivers were more likely to have threatened to damage someone's vehicle. In response to the question 'do you currently smoke cigarettes regularly' 124 (96.1%) wagon drivers, and 173 (98.3%) of bus drivers replied affirmatively.

Being either a victim or a perpetrator of road rage was quite common in both the bus and the wagon drivers, while smoking addiction was almost universally reported in our study. There were no statistically significant differences between the two types of commercial vehicle drivers in terms of having experienced road rage, with the exception of wagon drivers more likely to have been threatened for physical damage. High proportions of both types of commercial vehicle drivers were involved in shouting/cursing and having made rude gestures at the occupants of other vehicles in the past three months. In order to improve road safety, our results augur for the need to assess the prevalence, correlates and determinants impinging upon optimal safety while driving or traveling in our country, in nationally represented surveys. The results

Table. Road rage behavior and experiences of drivers by type of commercial vehicle.

		Bus Driver (n = 176)	Wagon Driver (n = 129)
In the past three months someone in another vehicle shouted or cursed at me, while I was driving.	Yes	150 (85.2%)	112 (86.8%)
	No	26 (14.8%)	17 (13.2%)
	P-Value	0.69	
In the past three months I shouted or cursed at someone in another vehicle, while I was driving.	Yes	149 (84.7%)	109 (84.5%)
	No	27 (15.3%)	20 (15.5%)
	P-Value	0.96	
In the past three months someone in another vehicle made rude gestures at me, while I was driving.	Yes	156 (88.6%)	120 (93.0%)
	No	20 (11.4%)	9 (7.0%)
	P-Value	0.19	
In the past three months I made rude gestures at someone in another vehicle, while I was driving.	Yes	159 (90.9%)	123 (95.4%)
	No	16 (9.1%)	6 (4.6%)
	P-Value	0.13	
In the past three months someone in another vehicle had threatened to physically hurt me, while I was driving.	Yes	150 (85.2%)	125 (96.9%)
	No	26 (14.8%)	4 (3.1%)
	P-Value	0.001*	
In the past three months I had threatened to physically hurt someone in another vehicle, while I was driving.	Yes	154 (87.5%)	122 (94.6%)
	No	22 (12.5%)	7 (5.4%)
	P-Value	0.03	
In the past three months someone in another vehicle had threatened to damage my vehicle, while I was driving.	Yes	129 (73.3%)	47 (36.4)
	No	47 (26.7%)	82 (63.6%)
	P-Value	0.06	
In the past three months I had threatened to damage someone's vehicle, while I was driving.	Yes	99 (56.2%)	93 (72.1%)
	No	77 (43.8%)	36 (27.9%)
	P-Value	0.005	

The P-values under bus driver column apply to pair-wise comparison between bus and wagon drivers.

* Fisher's Exact Test applied owing to number of values less than 5 in box.

of this observation on road rage in Pakistani commercial vehicle drivers; underscore the need for a mass health education campaign using both print and electronic media towards optimally addressing this morbid behaviour in our country.

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