

# CROSSING BUSY CITY ROADS BY PEDISTRIAN SCHOOL-BOUND CHILDREN: HOW VULNERABLE THEY REMAIN FOR FATAL RTAS IN BANGLADESH!

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**Background** Globally, Road-Traffic Accident (RTA)-induced injuries remain the second leading cause of death in 5–14 years old children. Contrary to safeguarding child's right, RTA constitutes a veritable epidemic among the pedestrian-children, two-third of which occurs in south-east-Asia. We report here the risky practices of reckless-road-crossing among school-children in Bangladesh, being vulnerable and resource constraint.

**Purpose** To explore practices and compliances of road safety and traffic-rules/regulations by the pedestrian school-bound children while crossing busy city-roads.

**Methods** Total 148 purposively selected school-bound children were studied cross-sectionally while crossing busy-roads adjacent to nine randomly-selected school-fringes in Dhaka city using a structured questionnaire.

**Outcome** Of these school-bound children (*mean age:  $9.6 \pm 2.4$  years*), majority (87%) were found to run-off busy city-roads showing no difference in age-groups ( $p=0.122$ ) or sex ( $p=0.164$ ). School-girls were accompanied by mothers (75%) more than school-boys (25%) ( $p<0.03$ ). Around 78% used to cross roads 2–3 times/day, recklessly, even knowing its dangerous-consequences. Alarming, no zebra-crossing/over-bridge existed in 56% and no traffic-police seen in ~half of school-fringes surveyed. More shockingly, most of on-duty traffic-police (69%) showed reluctant-attitude to come forward to assist these children in crossing roads, safely. Nearly 24% of children who had RTA once or twice within the last 12 months, 10% sustained severe and 14% had minor injuries, as informed.

**Significance/Contribution** This alarming scenario demands immediate intervention to save these children from fatal RTAs by concerned departments, instituting zebra-crossing/over-bridge, deploying 'STOP'/lollipop-guides and enforcing low-speed of vehicle near school-fringes. Creating mass-awareness among these children/mothers through periodic education/practical-training on road-safety and traffic-regulations remains imperative.