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Normalised Danger: The Practice of Permitting Passengers to Sit on Goods Loaded onto Vehicles and Tricycles and the Limits of Road Safety Regulation in Ghana.

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Abstract
This study assesses the practice of drivers permitting passengers to sit on goods loaded onto moving vehicles and tricycles as road-safety concern and a potential challenge to the effectiveness of existing legal regulation. Although the practice of permitting passengers to sit on goods loaded onto moving vehicles and tricycles has become normalized Road-use culture in most regions in Ghana, it has become a potential challenge to effectiveness of existing legal regulation; the practice raises important questions about driver responsibility, personal safety, public attitudes and compliance with road traffic laws. Despite various governmental interventions, institutional measures, and amendment of laws to reduce the rate of road crashes, the annual crash rate in Ghana remains a major challenge. The study investigates circumstances in which the practice occurs, the risks it presents to passengers and other road users, and the adequacy of Ghana's legislative and regulatory framework in addressing it. An interdisciplinary mixed-method approach to legal research incorporating a multisite ethnographic design as its principal qualitative component and a questionnaire survey complemented by a purposive interview as its quantitative component was adopted. The study was carried out in Greater Accra, Eastern, Ashanti, Bono, Bono East, Ahafo, Central, Western, Western North, Volta and North East regions. It considers whether existing legal rules adequately address the responsibilities of drivers, transport operators and whether the challenges lie in legal gaps, weak enforcement, social acceptance or a combination of these factors. This literary work argues that effective road-safety laws require more than existing legal prohibitions; it also requires public education, consistent enforcement and interventions responsible to prevailing transport practices. It concludes by identifying measures with the potential of improving compliance whilst reducing preventable risks on Ghana roads to strengthen road safety.

Keywords*: Road safety, regulation, supervision, triangulation, multi-sites triangulation.*

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I. Introduction

Road transport undoubtedly serves as a major means of providing goods and services in Ghana compared to other modes of transport.[1] Road transport is seen as the extensively available and flexible mode of transport preferred by low income earners in Ghana to any other modes.[2] Studies have shown a close link between economic development of a country and road transport.[3] Hence, where the road infrastructure of a country is at its best and provision of goods and services are not interrupted, the country is expected to make good gains from the road sector by way of revenue generation.[4]

[1] S Tawiah, *'Examining the Transportation Management Challenges in Ghana: A Study of Three Selected Companies in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis'* (Unpublished MBA dissertation, Coventry University/Ghana Technology University College 2019).

[2] Daniel Atuah Obeng and others, 'Ghana's railway transport services delivery: A review' (2022) 8 *Transportation Engineering* 100111 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.treng.2022.100111. Accessed 21/05/2023.

[3] K Osei and D Kumah, *Transport Management – A Literature Review* (unpublished paper, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh 2015.

[4] Raymond Asomani-Boateng, Russell J Fricano and Frank Adarkwa, 'Assessing the Socio-economic Impacts of Rural Road Improvements in Ghana: A Case Study of Transport Sector Program Support (II)' (2015) 3(4) *Case Studies on Transport Policy* 355 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2015.04.006 accessed 7 August 2026.

The recent over rising number of road crashes and their attendant consequences is alarming despite the enactment and amendments of requisite laws to ensure road safety on Ghana roads.[5] Despite various governmental interventions, institutional measures, emendation of laws to reduce the rate of road crashes, the annual crash rate in Ghana remains a major challenge. It appears all efforts by experts in the road industry to identify the root causes of these rising road crashes to suggest solutions which led to amendments of road traffic laws in Ghana in 2025 and 2026, are becoming exercises in futility.[6]

Parliament of Ghana acknowledged adequacy of laws enacted to ensure road safety in Ghana but it is worried about the high rate of road crashes.[7]

The visibility of Road Traffic law enforcement agencies on Ghana Road since 2021 to date in their attempts to supervise and regulate road use in Ghana by enforcing these laws has been rendered irrelevant by the annual rise in the rate of road crashes in Ghana which leaves much to be desired.[8]

This development brings to fore the need to question the effectiveness or otherwise of the supervisory and regulatory framework of road use in Ghana. However, supervisors and regulators of road traffic laws attribute the Much of the attempts to forestall the ever-increasing spate of road crashes had been to identify the causes of these crashes and to proffer solutions to the causes without looking that supervisory and regulatory framework of road-use from the perspective of the popular culture of road-use in Ghana.

The hope that technological inventions like vehicles, other vessels for commuting roads and the development of road good networks through science would make the conduct of economic activities on the road flexible, easier and time saving is proving to be dashed. This is because the inventions appear to be a technological curse for the people of Ghana giving the large numbers of Ghanaians who have fallen victims to road crashes on Ghana road.

Further, human factor has been regarded as a leading contributory factor to road crashes in the world.[9] Errors in the nature of fatigue driving, driving with alcohol or drug impairment, aggressive driving behaviour, distracted driving, excessive speeding and non-compliance with traffic regulations have been identified as leading causes of road crashes.[10] This literary work supports the claim by J.K. Annan that gross indiscipline, speeding, drunk-driving, wrongful overtaking, and flouting of road safety signs are the causes of road crashes in Ghana.

Nathaniel Gyimah in his literary work attributed the causes of road crashes to myriad of factors including drunkenness, stress, inadequate road signs, carelessness of road users, speeding, faulty vehicles, road conditions, weather conditions, unskilled drivers, inefficient Motor Traffic and Transport Department (MTTD) personnel, lack of education, and gross indiscipline.[11] He however identified human error as the main cause of accidents in Ghana.[12] The findings of Nathaniel Gyimah on the causes of accidents in Ghana corroborate those identified by J. K. Annan in his literary work.

In a forum organised by the Legal Resource Centre (LRC) in Accra with the assistance of Bloomberg Initiative for Global Road Safe Partnership attended by the then Acting Director-General of National Road safety Authority in the person of Mr. David Adonteng, Mr. Adonteng blamed the raise in road crashes to behavioural

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[5] Timothy Ngnenbe, 'Road Crashes Killed 2,949 in Ghana in 2025, the Highest in 35 Years — Road Safety Authority' (*Graphic Online*, 28 January 2026) https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/road-crashes-killed-2-949-in-ghana-in-2025-the-highest-in-35-years-road-safety-authority.html accessed 7 August 2026.

[6] Citi Newsroom, 'Transport Minister Laments Number of Road Crashes Recorded in Ghana' (*Citi Newsroom*, 13 October 2021)https://www.citinewsroom.com/2021/10/transport-minister-laments-number-of-road-crashes-recorded-in-ghana/ accessed 18 October 2021.

[7] Parliament of Ghana, 'Fatal Road Accident at Atwedie' (1 August 2025) https://www.parliament.gh/floor?dis=146 accessed 8 August 2026.

[8] Starrfmonline.com, 'Parliament Summons Transport Minister Over Rising Road Accidents' (*GhanaWeb*, 6 November 2018) https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Parliament-summons-transport-minister-over-rising-road-accidents-698412 accessed 8 August 2026.

[9] Traffic Safety (Science Serving Society 2004).

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Nathaniel Gyimah, 'Contributing Factors to Road Accidents in Ghana' (2023) 8(1) *Mathews Journal of Emergency Medicine* 48 https://doi.org/10.30654/MJEM.10048 accessed 7 August 2026.

[12] *Ibid.*

factors and population growth.[13] This revelation by the Acting Director-General of NRSA corroborates in part J.K. Annan's claim that population growth and other demographics account for the upsurge of accidents in Ghana but not a worldwide phenomenon.

This revelation by Mr. Adonteng also give credence to the fact that attention needs to tend to road-use culture on Ghana roads.

Culture and Popular Culture of road-use in Ghana

Mathew Arnold in his literary work, he regards culture as a pursuit which involves helping people to become better and wiser by learning from the best ideas ever expressed and written in the world.[14] The knowledge acquired by people should therefore be able to enlighten them to think independently, question what they have always believed, and reconsider habits and traditions they follow without following the established habits blindly.[15]

John Storey stated that culture broadly encompasses the customs, lifestyles, values, beliefs, practices, symbols, and forms of entertainment that are widely shared, consumed and reproduced by members of a society.[16] Therefore, culture reflects the everyday experiences of ordinary people and is continually shaped by changing economic, political, social, and technological conditions.

The sociologist Dominic Strinati regards popular culture as dynamic rather than static, evolving alongside the societies that produce and consume it.[17] From this perspective, it can be said that popular culture represents those everyday cultural practices that emerge from the experiences of ordinary people from how they lived their lives rather than from elite institutions.

The culture theorist Stuart Hall contends that popular culture should be understood as a forum where meanings are continuously negotiated, contested and reconstructed by masses rather than a collection of cultural products consumed by the masses.[18] Therefore, popular culture can be said to reflect ongoing struggles over power, identity and representation within society.

In academic circles, Storey identified various ways in which popular culture has been conceptualised. He stated that popular culture may refer to cultural practices widely favoured or enjoyed by many people. Further, he stated that popular culture is that cultural forms other than high culture. Also, Storey stated that popular culture is mass culture produced commercially for mass consumption. Finally, Storey stated that popular culture is regarded as the authentic culture of ordinary people that develops from everyday social life. Storey therefore argued that popular culture is a contested arena where dominant and subordinate groups negotiate cultural meanings and social identities.[19]

Further, Karin Barber also regarded popular culture as encompassing all forms of cultural expressions primarily manufactured and adopted by wide audience through methods of the modern informal sector.[20] Also, White B. identified popular culture as "encompassing cultural activities that are reproduced on a large-scale and accessible to a large number of consumers irrespective of their ethnic origins".[21]

From the various view-points on the concept of popular culture, it is submitted that no single definition adequately captures the intricacy of popular culture. Dominic Strinati stated that popular culture incorporates indigenous traditions and global influences since societies has become increasingly interconnected through

[13] Legal Resources Centre, 'Speeding Accounts for 60% Road Crashes in Ghana' (7 October 2024) https://lrcghana.org/speeding-accounts-for-60-road-crashes-in-ghana/ accessed 13 August 2026.
[14] Mathew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (Smith, Elder & Co 1869) 8.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (9th edn, Routledge 2022) 5–10.
[17] Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (2nd edn, Routledge 2004) 1–8.
[18] Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular"' in Raphael Samuel (ed), People's History and Socialist Theory (Routledge 1981) 227–240.
[19] John Storey (n 16) 5–16.
[20] Karin Barber, 'Introduction' in K Barber (ed), *Readings in African Popular Culture* (Indiana University Press 1997) 1–12.
[21] B White, *Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire* (Duke University Press 2008).

globalisation and technological advancement, thereby producing new hybrid cultural forms.[22] Consequently, it is submitted that popular culture reflects interactions between global cultural influences and local traditions.

Fiske argues that audiences are not passive consumers of popular culture; rather, they actively interpret, modify and reproduce cultural meanings within their own social contexts.[23]

African popular culture expressions synthesize localized lived experiences with internation networks and cross-border movements. It is through music, athletic events, fashion, communal festivities and spiritual practices that African societies display remarkable endurance and flexibility against the pressures of globalization.[24]

In Ghana, popular culture encompasses a wide range of social practices, including music, dance, festivals, fashion, language, sporting activities, entertainment, nightlife and road use.[25] These practices continue to evolve through urbanisation, tourism, technological advancement and increased youth participation in digital media.[26]

Consequently, road use has emerged as one of the most visible manifestations of contemporary Ghanaian popular culture, particularly through embarking on economic activities, attending recreational events and socialization. These spaces, that is embarking on economic activities, attending recreational events and socialization have been identified as spaces which provide opportunities for individuals to express their identity, establish social relationships and negotiate social status within contemporary Ghanaian society.[27]

Understanding of popular culture is therefore particularly significant for ethnographic inquiry because ethnography seeks to investigate cultural practices within their natural settings. Norman and Yvonne were of the view that rather than viewing popular culture merely as entertainment, ethnographic research examines the meanings participants attach to their everyday activities, the symbols they employ and the social relationships they construct through cultural practices.[28]

Lawrence Friedman explains popular culture in two senses *viz* the ideas and attitudes concerning law held by ordinary members of a society on one breathe. Which means it is what ordinary members of the society perceive about the courts, lawyers and the legal system constitute part of popular legal culture.[29]

On another breath which is a broader sense, Friedman refers to popular culture as the cultural products directed towards a general audience, including books, songs, films, plays and television programmes that concern law or lawyers.[30] The concept of popular culture from the two senses explained by Friedman shows that the concept is not restricted to only entertainment but also involves the ideas, beliefs and attitudes held by ordinary members of a society.

The broader sense of the concept of popular culture provides the approach which makes the conduct of ethnography as an approach for the instant study suitable.

Sosu B. defined Ghanaian popular culture as "cultural productions not specific to any ethnic group, and are produced on the backs of ordinary Ghanaians outside the domains of formal structures".[31] It is submitted that the definition of popular culture proffered by Sosu B. in his literary work includes the of ideas, beliefs and attitudes held by ordinary members of a society as part of popular culture.

It is respectfully submitted that Friedman's broad sense of popular culture is consistent with the notion of popular culture expressed by Barber K., White B., Raymond Williams, John Storey and Sosu B.

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[22] Dominic Strinati (n 17) 11–24.
[23] John Fiske, Understanding Popular Culture (Routledge 1989) 1–23.
[24] Karin Barber, The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics (Cambridge University Press 2007) 1–20.
[25] National Commission on Culture, 'Popular Culture and the 21st Century' (15 November 2020) https://ghanaculture.gov.gh/popular-culture-and-the-21st-century/ accessed 17 December 2021.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] Kojo Arthur, The African Diaspora in the United States and Europe: The Ghanaian Experience (Ashgate 2008) 141–156.
[28] Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (eds), The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research (5th edn, SAGE 2018) 104–126.
[29] Lawrence M Friedman, 'Law, Lawyers, and Popular Culture' (1989) 98 Yale Law Journal 1579, 1580.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] Bismark Sosu, 'Ghanaian Popular Culture: A Reflection of Contemporary Ghanaian Experiences' (Academia.edu) https://www.academia.edu/32813703/Ghanaian_Popular_Culture_A_Reflection_of_Contemporary_Ghanaian_Experiences accessed

In conclusion, from the literary works of Reymond Williams, John Storey, Dominic Strinati, Stuart Hall, Karin Barber, B. White, John Fiske, Lawrence M. and Bismark Sosu and the stand point of the National Commission on Culture of Ghana, popular culture of Ghana may be understood as an assortment of social practices and meanings through which members of Ghanaian societies reproduce, negotiate, reinterpret or sometimes challenge the norms prescribed by formal law.
One such popular culture of road-use in Ghana is the practice of permitting passengers to sit on goods loaded onto vehicles and tricycles.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken by deploying interdisciplinary research approach which involves combining knowledge from different academic disciplines in the synthesis of the research findings.[32] Knowledge from Law, Science and sociology were employed in the process of synthesis to arrive at the research findings.
The research method is predominantly a qualitative study and the findings were complemented with questionnaires administered to experts purposely selected by the researcher and to Respondents in eleven (11) regions of Ghana

Research Design

A multi-site based ethnography was used to study the popular culture of road use in Ghana for close to four (4) years in eleven (11) purposively selected regions in Ghana mostly by observing how roads in these regions are used.

Themes on road use in selected regions were developed based on the participant observations made and analysed descriptively using existing laws on road use in Ghana. The researcher participated in the research as part of passengers in both public and private vehicles purposively boarded and also as a pedestrian on these roads in ten (10) of the selected regions to be able to observe the activities which formed part of road use customs of people living in these regions.

The researcher employed video and photographic observations on road use in these selected regions supported by concise reflective field notes in the multi-sites based ethnography carried out in the ten (10) of the selected regions.

The researcher then proceeded to embark on video observations of activities of road use in one of the regions which had records of the least crash rate in Ghana in 2021.

Prerecorded videos of aerial views of the region's roads as well as prerecorded videos of activities on roads by inhabitants in this region were also observed from sources purposively selected by the researcher to ensure an unobstructive natural environment exist.

The researcher employed video and photographic observations on road-use culture under studied in the last selected region in Ghana supported by concise reflective field notes in the multi-sites based ethnography carried out in that region.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for the research and analysed descriptively. Qualitative data in the nature of video recordings and pictures taken of activities on roads in selected regions in Ghana were collected using video and photographic observations with the use of video cameras from phones, and analysed descriptively.

Qualitative data in the nature of video recordings from secondary sources on activities on roads in selected regions in Ghana were also collected from social media, and activities on Ghana roads observed from these videos and photos were analysed descriptively.

The ethnographical findings in this research were used to formulate questionnaires and administered to Respondents from the eleven (11) selected regions recording the responses and the number of Respondents who gave specific responses.

[32] G.D. Brewer, 'The Challenges of interdisciplinarity.' [1999] 32 Policy Science327-328; Amoah K. Enoch, 'Victim-Offender Mediation: It's Practicality Within The Criminal Justice System Of Ghana.' (LLM, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2018) 177-12.

The data from questionnaires complementing the qualitative data from the multi-site base ethnography were collected by administering the questionnaires to drivers, motor riders, tricycle riders, persons who do not drive vehicles or ride motors, workers from Ghana Highway Authority (GHA), Department of Feeder Roads (DFR), Department of Urban Roads (DUR), National Road Safety Authority (NRSA), Driver Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA), Ghana Police Service (GPS), Motor Traffic and Transports Division (MTTD), Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) and analysed.

III. FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, RELEVANT LAWS AND ANALYSIS

Ethnographic finding

Observations show that drivers and tricycle riders frequently permit passengers to sit on goods loaded in cargo boxes or buckets. Those seated included market women, government workers, and young men and women, appearing comfortable despite the risks. The practice often arises because cargo space is fully occupied, leaving no room for mates or owners of the goods. In overloaded trucks, mates were seen sitting atop goods to monitor loads and prevent entanglement with electrical installations.

Significantly, many of these vehicles passed through police barriers without being stopped, indicating tacit tolerance by enforcement officers. Overall, the ethnographic evidence highlights the normalization of passengers sitting on goods in vehicles and tricycles, driven by overloading and weak enforcement, making it a persistent feature of Ghana's road-use culture.

Triangulation

Pictures from the Field Study

The pictures below show market a woman and men who are both young and adult being conveyed in tricycles whilst sitting on goods in the Cargo boxes/buckets of the tricycles plying Ghana roads. The pictures further show tractors, trucks and tricycles with their Cargo boxes/buckets overloaded with sawn out woods with passengers sitting on the woods whilst plying Ghana roads. The pictures also show a tractor and a truck with their Cargo boxes/buckets overloaded with firewood with passengers sitting on the firewood whilst plying Ghana roads.

The pictures show tricycles and big and mini trucks with their Cargo boxes/buckets overloaded with goods in sacks with passengers sitting on the goods whilst plying Ghana roads. The pictures further show a truck with its bucket loaded with cement blocks with a passenger sitting on the blocks whilst plying Ghana roads. The pictures also show a truck carrying electricity poles resting on the edge of its buck the roof of the driver's cabin with passengers sitting on the poles whilst plying Ghana roads.

The pictures show a truck belonging to a building construction firm carrying plastic water tanks for their business in its bucket with its workers sitting on the tanks whilst plying Ghana roads. The pictures show a minitruck with its bucket loaded with goods and a passenger sitting on the goods whilst passing by a police check point without being stopped or impounded or arrested for the conduct. A situational report on how a collapsed Chereponi-Yendi road bridge which became a matter of concern for residents of Chereponi had been repaired by Ghana Highway Authority was televised and in the footage two vehicles were seen carrying goods on their roofs with passengers sitting on the goods. [33]

None of the tricycles used for carrying passengers in the manner under the theme under consideration shown in the pictures below had a covered body. They therefore subjected the passengers who sat on goods onboard the tricycles to the mercies of the weather. Another situational report on the state of the Tamale-Sevlegu-Walewale highway shows video footage of vehicles and tricycles conveying goods in their Cargo boxes/buckets with passengers sitting on the goods.[34]

[33] Adom TV, 'Yendi-Chereponi Bridge: Residents applaud Highways Authority for swift repair' (YouTube, 5 September 2022) https://youtu.be/F6w5uqzfPlw accessed 10 September 2022.

[34] ChannelOne TV, 'Tamale-Savelugu-Walewale Highway in Crisis – Motorists Demand Urgent Repairs | Breakfast Daily' (YouTube video, 2026) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FmgsgYQbRU accessed 15 February 2026.



Photographic Compilation 1: Vehicles drivers and tricycle riders permitting passengers to sit on goods onboard their vessels plying Ghana roads.
Source: Field work by Author, 2022-2026.



Photographic Compilation 1a: Vehicles overloaded with passengers plying Chereponi-Yendi road.
Sources: Field works by Adom TV, 05/09/2022; ChannelOne TV, April 27, 2025.



Photographic Compilation 1b: A truck driver permitting passengers to sit on goods onboard plying Tamale-Sevlegu-Walewale Highway.
Source: Channel 1 Tv, Feb, 2026.



Photographic Compilation 1c: Tricycle riders permitting passengers to sit on goods onboard plying Ghana roads.
Source: Channel 1 Tv, Feb, 2026.

IV. Discussions

Allowing vehicles and tricycles with passengers seated on goods in cargo boxes to pass police checkpoints reflects tacit endorsement by enforcement officers. Passengers themselves, by not objecting, also acknowledge the practice as part of Ghana's customary road-use culture.

This conduct poses serious risks: passengers without seatbelts can be thrown off during crashes or sudden stops, leading to injuries or fatalities. Drivers behind such vehicles may swerve to avoid fallen passengers, causing skids or collisions with oncoming traffic.

Ethnographic evidence, supported by photographs and videos from situational reports in the Northeast Region, shows that the practice is widespread, involving elderly market women, men, and children. The normalization of passengers sitting on goods, combined with weak enforcement and community acceptance, has entrenched this unsafe practice as a feature of Ghana's road-use culture.

Law

The law permits the issuances of riding licences A1, A2, A3, AP, AG, A4 for motorcycles. (**See Schedule 3, Form D at page 266 of L.I. 2519**)
Where licence A1 is to be issued to riders of mopeds whilst riders of mopeds with or without side car are to be issued with licence A2, and licence A3 is to be issued to riders of mopeds without side cars. (**See Schedule 3, Form D at page 266 of L.I. 2519**)
Tricycles meant for conveying passengers only is to be operated by a rider with licence AP whilst a licence AG rider can operate tricycles meant for conveying goods only. (**See Schedule 3, Form D at page 266 of L.I. 2519**)

Riders of quadricycles or quad bikes can operate these bikes only after they are issued with licence A4. (**See Schedule 3, Form D at page 266 of L.I. 2519**)
The law requires motor riders and pillion riders on motorcycles, tricycles or motor quadricycles or in the side-cars attached to motorcycles should only ride these motorcycles when they wear reflective clothing and protective helmets that are specially designed for use in connection with the cycles; and fit properly with the chin straps properly fastened under their chins. (**See Regulation 109 (1) (a) and (b) of L.I. 2519**)
The law also requires the riders of motorcycles, tricycles or motor quadricycles or in the side-cars should ensure that any pillion rider in or on the cycles who are younger than eighteen years old are made to wear reflective clothing and protective helmets in line with provision of regulation 109 (1) (a) and (b) of L.I. 2519. (**See Regulation 109 (2) of L.I. 2519**)
The law prescribes punishment for contravening regulation 109 (1) and (2) of the Road Traffic Regulations, 2026 by imposing a sentence of a fine of not less than twenty-five (25) penalty units and not more than fifty (50) penalty units or to a term of imprisonment of not less than one (1) month and not more than three (3) months or to both. (**See Regulation 109 (3) of L.I. 2519**)
In respect of organisations running commercial motor, tricycle and quadricycle business, it is required by law that these licensees should organise an annual training programme for riders of motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles operating under these licensees. (See **Regulation 163 (1) of L.I. 2519**)

The law provides that the annual training programme for riders of motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles operating under the licensee should be approved by NRSA and Ghana Police Service. (S**ee Regulation 163 (1) of L.I. 2519**)

The law allows DVLA to suspend or revoke a commercial rider's licence; where the holder of the licence is convicted of reckless or dangerous riding; or the holder uses the motorcycle, tricycle or quadricycle for an unlawful activity; or fails to renew the licence every two years. **(See Regulation 167 (a) (b) and (c) of L.I. 2519**)

In terms of safety measures prescribed by law for commercial motorcycle, tricycle and quadricycle, it is prescribed that an operator of a commercial motorcycle, tricycle or quadricycle should ensure that the number of persons carried on the commercial motorcycle, tricycle or quadricycle does not exceed the maximum number determined by the Licensing Authority; and the commercial motorcycle, tricycle or quadricycle, does not project beyond the outside wall of the outmost rear tyre in any part other than the driving mirror or direction indicators. **(See Regulation 171(a) and (b) of L.I. 2519**)

Also, as part of the safety measures prescribed by law for commercial motorcycle, tricycle and quadricycle, it is prescribed that commercial tricycles or quadricycles should have a covered body. **(See Regulation 171 (c) of L.I. 2519**)

The law requires owners of commercial motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles not to allow persons, other than holders of commercial riders' licences issued under regulation 165, to ride the motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles for commercial purposes; not to allow persons to use the commercial motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles for purposes other than purposes for which the commercial motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles were registered; to insure the motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles against third-party risks in accordance with the National Insurance Act, 2021 (Act 1061); not to undertake structural modifications to the motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles, including the removal of side mirrors, that may affect the safe operation of the motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles; and not to undertake modifications to the exhaust systems or any other noise abatement devices of the motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles to cause the noise emitted to increase above nationally permitted levels. (**See Regulation 173 (1) (a,) (b), (c) (d) and (e) of L.I. 2519**)

The law also prescribes punishment for owners of commercial motorcycles, tricycles or quadricycles who contravene regulation 173 (1) (a), (b), (c) (d) and (e) of L.I. 2519 regarding the contravention as the commission of an offence liable on summary conviction to a fine of not less than twenty-five (25) penalty units and not more than fifty (50) penalty units or to a term of imprisonment of not more than eight months or to both. (**See Regulation 173 (2) of L.I. 2519**)

The law imposes responsibilities on all riders of commercial motorcycle. Among these is the mandatory requirement for riders of commercial motorcycles to desist from riding motorcycles for commercial purposes without valid licences issued by the Licensing Authority. (**See Regulation 174 (1) (a) of L.I. 2519)**

The law further requires riders of commercial motorcycles to desist from giving pillion riders a ride without making available protective crash helmets which conform to the Standards developed under the Road Traffic Act, for use by the pillion riders. (**See Regulation 174 (1) (b) of L.I. 2519)**

The law also requires riders of commercial motorcycles to desist from giving children under six (6) years a ride, unless the children are seated between the rider and an adult pillion rider and are wearing protective crash helmets that conform to the standards developed under the Road Traffic Act. (**See Regulation 174 (1) (c) of L.I. 2519)**

The law requires riders of commercial motorcycles to desist from riding motorcycles without ensuring that protective crash helmets are securely fastened on pillion riders. (**See Regulation 174 (1) (d) of L.I. 2519)**

The law further requires riders of commercial motorcycles to ensure that there is only one pillion rider on their motorcycle at a time; and the pillion rider sits astride their motorcycles subject to good seats. (**See Regulation 174 (2) (a) and (b) of L.I. 2519)**

The law also requires riders of commercial motorcycles to ensure that the seats of the motorcycles are in good working condition and the motorcycles have footrests behind the seat of the rider, which are securely fixed to the motorcycle. (**See Regulation 174 (2) (c) and (d) of L.I. 2519**)

The law also requires riders of commercial motorcycles to ensure that the riding mirrors of their motorcycle are always intact, and they keep their protective crash helmets in a clean, dry and wearable condition whilst ensuring that the rear number plates of the motorcycles are visible at all times. (**See Regulation 174 (2) (e), (f) and (g) of L.I. 2519)**

The law requires that riders of commercial motorcycles should not run red lights at a signalised intersection; or observe the road traffic rules under the Road Traffic Act and these Road Traffic Regulations. (**See Regulation 174 (3) (a) and (b) of L.I. 2519)**

The law further requires that riders of commercial motorcycles should not overtake on the right-hand side of a motor vehicle and in the same lane occupied by a motor vehicle being overtaken; and also refrain from parking in an undesignated area. (**See Regulation 174 (3) (c) of L.I. 2519)**

The law also requires that riders of commercial motorcycles should not carry loads which are not properly secured on the motorcycle; or are more than fifteen centimetres in width beyond the outer end of the handle bars; or extend for more than two metres above the ground; or weigh more than thirty kilogrammes (30Kg) for the motorcycles with carrying capacity of not more than fifty cubic centimetres (50 Cm^3); or project beyond the rear of the motorcycles by more than sixty centimetres. (**See Regulation 174 (4) (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of L.I. 2519)**

The law proscribes motorcycle from allowing any load carried on their motorcycles to drag, dangle, drop, scatter, shift or leak on the road. (**See Regulation 174 (5) of L.I. 2519)**

The law imposes punishment to be meted out to riders of commercial motorcycles who contravene regulation 174 of L.I. 2519 by providing that riders summarily convicted are liable to a fine of not less than twenty-five (25) penalty units and not more than fifty (50) penalty units or to a term of imprisonment of not more than eight (8) months or to both. (**See Regulation 174 (6) of L.I. 2519)**

For purposes of L.I. 2519, "load" excludes luggage carried by a passenger which does not (a) weigh more than twenty-five kilogrammes; and (b) project more than fifteen centimetres beyond the outer end of the handle bars. (**See Regulation 174 (7) of L.I. 2519)**

The law proscribes an operator of a commercial motorcycle, or tricycle or quadricycle from operating the commercial motorcycle, or tricycle or quadricycle without a valid licence issued under the Regulations, using an unregistered motorcycle, tricycle or quadricycle for commercial purposes, using a motorcycle, tricycle or quadricycle that is registered for private purposes for commercial purposes, failing to comply with the safety measures under these Regulations, or tampering with the registration details of or identification markings on a commercial motorcycle, tricycle or quadricycle commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of not less than twenty-five (25) penalty units and not more than fifty (50) penalty units or to a term of imprisonment of not more than eight (8)months or to both. (**See Regulation 177 (a), (b), (c) (d) and (e) of L.I. 2519**)

The law on road traffic regulation prescribes the maximum number of passengers vehicles should take. The proscribes drivers of a taxi, omnibus or other passengers carrying vehicles from carrying passengers which exceeds the number of passengers determined by DVLA to be carried by that vehicle and stated in the vehicle registration. (**See Regulation 186 (1) of L.I. 2519)**
The law further prescribes the considerations to be taken into consideration when DVLA is calculating the number of passengers a passenger carrying vehicle may be permitted to carry. The law provides that DVLA should take into consideration; the standing room available for passengers; and the actual available seating accommodation in the vehicle. (**See Regulation 186 (2) of L.I. 2519)**
The law requires that unless otherwise determined by DVLA, a driver should ensure that proper seating accommodation is available for each passenger. (**See Regulation 186 (3) of L.I. 2519)**
The law prescribes punishment for violating regulation 186 (1) and (3) of L.I. 2519 to the extent that anybody convicted for violating these provisions of L.I. 2519 is liable on summary conviction to a fine of not less than ten (10) penalty units and not more than twenty-five (25) penalty units or to a term of imprisonment of not more than thirty days or to both. (**See Regulation 186 (4) of L.I. 2519)**
The law mandates owners of passenger carrying vehicles to ensure that they have conspicuously written on both sides of their vehicles information about the name the name and registered address of the owner; the net weight of the vehicle; the gross weight of the vehicle; the height and the axle weight of the vehicle, where required by the Licensing Authority; the maximum number of persons permitted to be carried in the vehicle at a particular time; and the contact telephone number(s) of the owner of the vehicle. **(See Regulation 187 (1) of L.I. 2519)**

It is further required by law that the area of the vehicle where the information required by law is to be written must not be less than two and a half centimetres (2 ½ cm) in height and in a shape and colour that makes the letters and figures inscribed thereon legible and clearly distinguishable from the colour of the part where the letters and figures are written or marked. **(See Regulation 187 (2) of L.I. 2519)**

The law requires owners of vehicles to ensure that the paints or markings made on both sides of their vehicles in compliance with regulation 187 (1) of L.I. 2519 is renewed or repaired as often as may be necessary to keep the letters and figures legible and clearly distinguishable. (**See Regulation 187 (3) of L.I. 2519**)

The law prescribes punishment for violating regulation 187 of L.I. 2519 by imposing a sentence of a fine of not less than ten (10) penalty units and not more than twenty-five (25) penalty units or to a term of imprisonment of not more than thirty (30) days or to both. (**See Regulation 187 (4) of L.I. 2519**)

The law proscribes a driver in charge of a taxi, omnibus or other passenger carrying vehicle from contravening or permitting a person to contravene a provision of regulations 181 to 190. **(See Regulation 190(1)(d) of L.I. 2519**)

The law prescribes punishment for violating regulation 190 of L.I. 2519 among others by imposing a sentence of a fine of not less than ten (10) penalty units and not more than twenty-five (25) penalty units or to a term of imprisonment of not more than thirty (30) days or to both as punishment for the offence where the person is summarily convicted. (**See Regulation 190 (2) of L.I. 2519**)

Analysis

Field evidence shows that tricycles used for passenger transport are cargo vehicles without covered bodies, making the practice unlawful under **Regulations 167(a–c), 171(c), 173(1)(a–e), 174(5), and 177(a–e) of L.I. 2519**. Allowing passengers to sit on goods or improvised seats breaches **Regulation 186**, yet enforcement officers often ignore violations, indirectly endorsing the practice. Communities also fail to protest, further normalizing the conduct.

The penalties prescribed: fines of GHC120–300 or 30 days' imprisonment under **Regulation 186(1,3,4)**, are inadequate compared to the financial gains drivers make from overloading. Trials may also result in reduced sentences due to time already spent in custody, lowering deterrence. Similarly, harmonized punishments under **Regulations 181–190 and 190(2)** remain paltry, as the transactional cost of offending is far less than the benefits derived.

It is submitted that despite clear statutory prohibitions, weak enforcement and minimal penalties have entrenched the practice of passengers sitting on goods or improvised seats in tricycles and vehicles. This unsafe conduct has become a normalized feature of Ghana's road-use culture which has the tendency to undermine the supervisory

and regulatory framework on road safety in Ghana. This findings underscore the need for enhanced sanctions, public sensitization on road safety practices and consistent enforcement of road traffic law regimes.

In conclusion, from the ethnographic finding complemented by the field pictures, videos and the responses from the questionnaires administered, and the discussions on the practice identified, the relevant laws assessed and the analysis made above, it is submitted that existing legal rules do not adequately address the responsibilities of drivers and transport operators. Further, the challenges identified as demonstrated through the ethnographic finding complemented by the field pictures, videos and the responses from the questionnaires administered, and the discussions on the practice identified, the relevant laws assessed and the analysis made above lie in legal gaps, weak enforcement, social acceptance or a combination of these factors has led to the perpetuations of the practice. This will in no doubt contribute to the over increasing annual road crash rates in Ghana.

V. Recommendations

The ethnographic study and legal analysis reveal systemic gaps in Ghana's road safety regime which led to the normalization of the practice under scrutiny. To address the state of affairs existing in Ghana, reforms are proposed across legislation, institutional practice, enforcement, and public education. It is the recommended under the thematic areas listed below that the State and its relevant institutions should:

Driver/Rider Training and Licensing

- Introduce continuous refresher courses for all drivers.
- Subject drivers to cognitive and psychological tests beyond DVLA's computer-based exams.
- Censor unauthorized social media content on driving inconsistent with approved syllabi.

Institutional Enforcement and Education

- Strengthen GPS/MTTD surveillance across all times of day.
- Allocate funds to NRSA, GPS/MTTD, DVLA, GNFS, GHA, DUR, and DFR for sustained public sensitization campaigns.
- Allocate funds to NRSA, GPS/MTTD, DVLA, GNFS, GHA, DUR, and DFR to enable these institutions carry out all duties other than sustained public sensitization campaigns.
- Procure body cameras for police/MTTD to ensure accountability.

Legal and Regulatory Reforms

- Enhance penalties under Regulations 181–190, and 233 to fines up to 2,000 penalty units, imprisonment up to five years, or community service.

Road Infrastructure and Safety Measures

- Provide standardized weighing scales at stations and checkpoints to curb overloading.
- Require GSA to set lateral loading limits for vehicles/tricycles.
- Install and operate cameras with night vision and good resolution on trunk, urban and feeder roads on all Ghana roads to monitors road usage at night which should be capable of identifying offending vehicles at night.
- Install microchips in number plates and road use certificates pasted on the windscreens of vehicles to enable easy identification of vehicles at night by surveillance cameras installed along Ghana roads.

Technical and Preventive Measures

- Mandate cargo vehicles for goods exceeding specified limits.

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