



Determinants of traffic behavior awareness among Vietnamese road users

Pham Thi Hong Tham 

Ha Noi Open University, Vietnam.
Email: pththam3@hou.edu.vn



Abstract

Vietnam is currently improving urban traffic management through stricter and more effective regulations. In recent years, the government has introduced various traffic-related policies to reduce congestion and minimize traffic accidents. This study analyzes the factors influencing traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese people in the context of rapid urbanization, the increasing number of private vehicles, and traffic management reforms. By reviewing previous studies and government policy documents related to traffic in Vietnam, the research identifies several major factors affecting public traffic awareness, including socio-cultural factors, policy and legal systems, infrastructure and technology, education, and media communication. The findings show that although the government has made considerable efforts to improve traffic conditions through safety campaigns, educational programs, and infrastructure development, the results have not fully met expectations. Traffic violations such as running red lights, carrying oversized goods, and driving on sidewalks still occur frequently. This study highlights the ongoing challenges of traffic awareness in Vietnam and provides a theoretical basis for improving traffic policies and public awareness. Based on the identified factors, several recommendations are proposed to enhance traffic awareness and ensure greater traffic safety for citizens.

Keywords: Traffic awareness, Traffic behavior, Traffic safety, Urbanization, Vietnam.

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Contribution of this paper to the literature

This study examines traffic participation awareness in Vietnam amid ongoing government efforts to improve traffic management through new regulations. The findings reveal that cultural habits strongly influence public behavior. The study also proposes several measures to enhance traffic awareness and support more effective traffic management practices in Vietnam.

1. Introduction

With the rapid pace of urbanization, Vietnam is currently facing numerous challenges in traffic management, particularly in major cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang. Public awareness in traffic participation is considered one of the key factors determining the effectiveness of traffic management and the level of road safety. However, violations of traffic laws remain quite common. In order to improve the quality of traffic management, it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive perspective on the factors influencing traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens today.

1.1. Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the current state of traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens and to identify the factors influencing such awareness. In addition, the study proposes several measures to enhance traffic participation awareness in Vietnam.

1.2. Research Methodology

The paper adopts a theoretical research approach. Secondary data from traffic safety management authorities, as well as studies conducted by domestic and international scholars, are utilized in this research.

1.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although the study attempts to provide a relatively comprehensive overview of traffic participation awareness and its influencing factors among Vietnamese citizens, it still has certain limitations. First, the paper mainly focuses on identifying influencing factors and has not extensively addressed practical solutions to the existing problems. Nevertheless, the study opens up several directions for future research, such as the application of technology in traffic safety management, the improvement of infrastructure quality, and the strengthening of traffic awareness education at the school level.

1.4. Overview

In recent years, traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens has attracted considerable attention from both domestic and international researchers, particularly in the context of rapid urbanization and the significant increase in private vehicles (Vu, 2022). Existing studies mainly focus on analyzing traffic behavior, the factors influencing traffic participation awareness, and the effectiveness of government policies in this field.

First, many studies indicate that traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese people still has notable limitations (World Bank, 2020). Violations such as running red lights, not wearing helmets, driving under the influence of alcohol, and failing to comply with lane regulations remain quite common (Vo, Pham, & Nguyen, 2016). According to several studies, these issues stem not only from a lack of knowledge of traffic laws but also from subjective attitudes, habitual behaviors, and an underdeveloped traffic culture (Doan, 2022; Vu & Le, 2015).

In addition, socio-cultural factors are considered to have a profound influence on traffic behavior (Tran, 2019). Vietnam is characterized by a collectivist culture; however, in urban traffic environments, individualistic tendencies become more evident, especially in situations involving competition for road space. Some studies also emphasize the impact of the “crowd effect,” whereby violations committed by a small group can quickly spread and become widespread behaviors (Dinh, Vũ, McIlroy, Plant, & Stanton, 2020).

Beyond cultural factors, the legal and policy framework has also been widely analyzed as an important tool for regulating traffic behavior. Vietnam has introduced numerous regulations and increased penalties to enhance deterrence (Luu, 2021). However, the effectiveness of these measures still depends on the level of enforcement and transparency in governance. Some studies suggest that the application of technologies such as surveillance cameras, automated ticketing systems, and driver license point systems can significantly improve public awareness (Nguyen & Cao, 2025). Infrastructure and technological factors are also regarded as critical conditions influencing traffic behavior. The development of road networks, public transportation systems, and smart technologies not only helps reduce traffic pressure but also creates favorable conditions for compliance with regulations (Tran, 2020). However, disparities in infrastructure investment between urban and rural areas remain an issue that requires attention (Authority of Broadcasting and Electronic Information, 2024).

Moreover, education and media play a foundational role in shaping and enhancing traffic awareness (Bao & Ha, 2025). Research shows that early traffic safety education has a positive long-term impact on individuals’ awareness and behavior. At the same time, mass media campaigns contribute to raising public awareness and generating social pressure against traffic violations (Viet Hung & Huyen, 2011).

In conclusion, existing studies indicate that traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens is influenced by a combination of multiple factors. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that integrates policy improvement, enhanced enforcement, infrastructure development, strengthened education, and innovative communication strategies to build a safe and sustainable traffic culture.

2. Research Findings

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Traffic participation awareness: Traffic participation awareness refers to the level of individuals’ cognition and behavior in complying with traffic rules and norms in order to ensure safety for themselves and the community (To, 2012).

Factors influencing traffic participation awareness: This study examines the factors affecting traffic participation awareness from several perspectives, including socio-cultural factors, legal and policy factors, infrastructure and technological factors, educational factors, and media-related factors (Bao & Ha, 2025).

2.2. Current Situation of Traffic Participation Awareness among Vietnamese People

The current state of traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens reflects a complex picture influenced by multiple factors, including rapid urbanization, the increasing number of private vehicles, and challenges in traffic management (Doan, 2022). Although the Vietnamese government has implemented numerous strict and comprehensive legal policies, traffic safety issues remain a major challenge.

According to data from the *Vietnam Road Traffic Safety Annual Report 2025* published by the Vietnam National Traffic Safety Committee, the traffic accident situation in Vietnam has shown clear improvement but still poses significant concerns. Specifically, in 2025, there were 18,601 traffic accidents, resulting in 10,491 deaths and 12,312 injuries. Compared to 2024, these indicators have decreased considerably, particularly the number of injuries, which dropped by nearly 30%, indicating the initial effectiveness of traffic control policies and efforts to raise public awareness (Government Office of Vietnam, 2025). However, in absolute terms, the number of fatalities remains high, averaging nearly 29 deaths per day (Vo, Ngo, Hoang, & Nguyen, 2024). This figure highlights that traffic accidents continue to be one of the leading causes of death, directly affecting human resources and social welfare. Notably, the reduction in fatalities is significantly lower than the decline in the number of accidents and injuries, suggesting that the severity of accidents has not improved proportionately. This may be associated with factors such as vehicle speed, violations related to alcohol consumption, and the quality of traffic infrastructure in certain areas (Nguyen et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the discrepancy in the rate of decline among these indicators suggests that current measures have been more effective in reducing the frequency of accidents rather than their severity (Ministry of Transport of Vietnam, 2021). This implies a need to shift policy focus from “reducing the number of accidents” to “reducing accident severity,” through solutions such as improving vehicle safety standards, enhancing post-accident emergency response systems, and strengthening the monitoring of risky behaviors (Luu, 2021).

In addition, in the context of rapid urbanization and the growing number of private vehicles, increasing pressure is being placed on the traffic system. Without comprehensive and coordinated solutions - from infrastructure planning and traffic education to the application of management technologies - the risk of rising traffic accidents in the long term remains significant. These findings indicate that although the 2025 data show a positive trend, traffic accidents in Vietnam continue to be a serious issue that requires a more comprehensive and sustainable approach in the future (Authority of Broadcasting and Electronic Information, 2024).

Despite Vietnam's progress in developing its legal framework and traffic infrastructure, traffic violations remain widespread. Common violations include running red lights, speeding, driving in the wrong direction, driving under the influence of alcohol, not wearing helmets when riding motorcycles or electric bicycles, using mobile phones while driving, and failing to yield to pedestrians at crosswalks (Dinh et al., 2020).

Several studies indicate that many road users in Vietnam have not fully recognized the importance of complying with traffic regulations (To, 2012). Subjective attitudes, disregard for rules, and a lack of community awareness contribute significantly to this situation. Moreover, insufficient traffic safety education at the general education level and the lack of effective communication campaigns are also key factors leading to inadequate traffic safety awareness among Vietnamese citizens (Bui, Saadi, & Cools, 2020).

Although in recent years the Vietnamese government has made efforts to issue a series of circulars, decrees, and regulations on traffic safety - such as increasing penalties for violations - the rate of traffic violations, while reduced, has not yet led to a substantial improvement in public awareness of traffic participation (Vo et al., 2024).

How these factors influence traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens will be examined in detail in the following analysis.

2.3. Factors Influencing Traffic Participation Awareness among Vietnamese People Today

Traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens is influenced by multiple factors. Despite considerable efforts from the government and relevant organizations, improving this awareness requires a comprehensive strategy. In recent years, the Vietnamese government has implemented stricter policies to improve traffic conditions. Although certain results have been achieved, issues related to public awareness in traffic participation remain unresolved. To improve traffic conditions in Vietnam, it is necessary to clearly identify the factors influencing public awareness, thereby enabling the development of more effective solutions. Based on a review of several studies, the following key issues have been identified:

2.3.1. First, Socio-Cultural Factors

Vietnam is a country with a collectivist culture, where community values are generally emphasized over individual interests. This implies that when facing any issue, individuals are expected to prioritize collective benefits. However, some studies indicate that in the context of traffic participation, individualistic tendencies are relatively prominent (Pham, 2013). For example, individuals often attempt to overtake other vehicles, ride on sidewalks, or cars may encroach on lanes designated for motorcycles in order to move faster. Researchers explain that rapid changes in lifestyle and accelerated urbanization have contributed to the erosion of traditional norms governing traffic behavior (Bui et al., 2020).

In major cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, where traffic systems are monitored using advanced technologies such as AI cameras and automated penalty systems, public awareness has improved to some extent. However, violations such as running red lights, not wearing helmets, carrying more passengers than permitted, and speeding still occur frequently. In rural areas or smaller cities, where monitoring is less strict, traffic violations are even more prevalent (Tran, 2020).

Another undeniable factor in Vietnamese culture is the influence of crowd behavior. Vietnamese people are often influenced by the actions of others in a group (Tran, 2019). This is evident when a small number of road users ride

on sidewalks or run red lights, prompting others to follow suit (Nguyen, 2025). Such behaviors negatively affect overall traffic awareness. Therefore, policymakers need to adopt more specific measures to mitigate this phenomenon.

2.3.2. Second, Legal and Policy Factors

Legal and policy factors play a central role in shaping and regulating traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens. Over the years, the Vietnamese government has issued a series of traffic laws and administrative regulations to improve road safety. However, their effectiveness largely depends on enforcement and public awareness.

Vietnam has developed a relatively comprehensive legal framework for traffic management, including the following key documents:

- **Law on Road Traffic 2008:** Adopted by the 12th National Assembly on November 13, 2008, this law comprehensively regulates road traffic activities within the territory of Vietnam. It came into effect on July 1, 2009, replacing the 2001 Law on Road Traffic (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2008).
- **Law on Road Traffic Order and Safety 2024:** Adopted by the 15th National Assembly on June 27, 2024, and effective from January 1, 2025. This law partially replaces the 2008 Law on Road Traffic and establishes a new legal framework to ensure traffic order, safety, and human rights in the road sector (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2024).
- **Decree No. 100/2019/ND-CP:** Issued on December 30, 2019, this decree regulates administrative sanctions for violations in the fields of road and railway traffic. It is considered a significant step in strengthening traffic safety and deterring violations, particularly through increased penalties for offenders (Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2021).
- **Decree No. 123/2021/ND-CP (amending Decree 100):** Issued on December 28, 2021, this decree amends and supplements several provisions related to administrative sanctions in maritime, road, railway, and civil aviation sectors. It came into effect on January 1, 2022, aiming to update, harmonize, and strengthen the legal effectiveness of traffic regulations.

Despite the promulgation and implementation of this legal framework, loopholes and shortcomings in traffic management have not been fully addressed. Road users continue to violate safety regulations, such as driving under the influence of alcohol, overloading vehicles, and failing to maintain safe distances, leading to increasingly severe traffic accidents (Nguyen et al., 2010).

Several studies also indicate that public understanding of road traffic laws remains uneven across regions, educational levels, and gender. Findings show that people in rural areas generally have lower awareness and compliance compared to those in major urban centers. Higher levels of education are associated with better traffic awareness, and vice versa (Nguyen et al., 2010). These results highlight the important role of education in shaping traffic awareness.

The Vietnamese government has also implemented strong deterrent measures, such as imposing heavy fines for drunk driving. Since 2019, driving under the influence of alcohol can result in fines of up to 40 million VND (approximately USD 1,670), which is relatively high compared to the average income in Vietnam. In addition, traffic violators are subject to a deduction of 2 points from a total of 12 driving license points per year; once all points are depleted, the license is revoked. AI-powered surveillance cameras have also been installed at many intersections, highways, and urban areas. These policies have proven effective in major cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang. However, in rural areas, where enforcement is less strict, traffic violations remain widespread (Bui et al., 2020).

2.3.3. Third, Infrastructure and Technological Factors

Infrastructure and technological factors have a significant influence on traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens, especially in the context of rapid urbanization and the transition toward a “smart transportation” model (Nguyen, 2025). These factors not only provide favorable physical conditions for compliance with traffic regulations but also contribute to raising awareness, shaping behavior, and reducing violations. In recent years, Vietnam has gradually improved its road transport system through the following measures:

- **Rapid expansion of the transportation network:** Numerous highways connecting provinces and cities have been constructed and expanded, while many urban roads have been widened to alleviate congestion and reduce traffic accidents (Ministry of Transport of Vietnam, 2021).
- **Construction of new bridges:** Many bridges have been built across rivers to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion and accidents at key crossing points (Ministry of Transport of Vietnam, 2021).
- **Development of elevated railway systems:** Urban rail systems have been introduced to reduce congestion on road networks.
- **Pilot implementation of shared electric bicycle systems:** These initiatives aim to diversify transportation options and reduce pressure on road traffic.
- **Improvement of sidewalks:** Encroachments on sidewalks have been addressed, making them more accessible and safer for pedestrians.
- **Deployment of AI-powered surveillance cameras:** These systems have been installed across road networks to identify traffic violations through facial recognition and license plate detection (Ministry of Transport of Vietnam, 2021).

These efforts have contributed to a notable reduction in traffic violations and an improvement in public awareness. However, the rate of violations remains relatively high (Vietnam National Traffic Safety Committee, 2022).

2.3.4. Fourth, Educational Factors

Educational factors, particularly school-based education, play a fundamental and foundational role in shaping and developing traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens. In the context of a large population and

a complex traffic system, Vietnam has identified traffic education from an early age as a long-term and sustainable solution for building a traffic safety culture (Luu, Doan, & Nguyen, 2015).

Traffic education at primary and secondary levels: Since 2000, the Ministry of Education and Training has required schools to integrate traffic safety knowledge into the curriculum. Subjects such as “Moral Education,” “Civics,” and “Legal Education,” as well as extracurricular activities, incorporate content on basic traffic rules, safe walking and cycling practices, appropriate behavior in traffic, and recognition and compliance with traffic signs and signals. As a result, students develop proper awareness and habits of compliance from an early age. Moreover, they often act as “young supervisors” when accompanying adults, helping to promote safe traffic behaviors within families (Bao & Ha, 2025).

Experiential and simulation-based education: Many schools in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have developed simulated traffic environments, including traffic lights, lanes, and road signs, to allow students to practice real-life scenarios. Extracurricular activities such as traffic law competitions, simulated traffic situation exercises, and visits to urban traffic control centers are also organized. These approaches enhance practical skills and improve long-term retention compared to purely theoretical instruction, while fostering students’ active interest in social issues (Bui et al., 2020). In this model, teachers act as facilitators and sources of inspiration, guiding students’ thinking and helping them internalize the belief that compliance with traffic regulations reflects responsible citizenship (Bao & Ha, 2025).

In addition, families and society play an important role in fostering students’ traffic awareness. Vietnam has implemented various collaborative programs between traffic police and schools, such as “Traffic Safety Day” and “Traffic Culture Ambassador.” Schools also encourage parents to commit to practicing safe traffic behavior together with their children. Technology is utilized through platforms such as Zalo and educational applications that integrate traffic knowledge assessments for both students and parents. This coordinated approach creates a continuous chain of influence - from school to family to community - helping to reinforce awareness and behavior both inside and outside the classroom (Viet Hung & Huyen, 2011).

However, despite the existence of traffic safety education programs in schools, these activities are often still formalistic, lack practical engagement, and are not sufficiently connected to real-life situations (Viet Hung & Huyen, 2011).

2.3.5. Fifth, Media-Related Factors

Media-related factors have a significant and multidimensional impact on traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens. Over the years, the Vietnamese government has utilized media as a strategic tool to shape behavior, raise awareness, and influence public attitudes toward traffic laws. Communication efforts on traffic awareness aim to orient social perception, helping people understand that traffic violations are serious issues that affect not only individuals but also the broader community; and to disseminate messages related to traffic safety and information (Tran, 2020).

In addition, large-scale public communication campaigns - such as posters and billboards at bus stations, railway stations, schools, and residential areas; slogans like “Comply with traffic laws - the responsibility of every citizen,” “One second of violation - a lifetime of regret,” and “A minute faster - a lifetime slower”; and LED information boards installed at major intersections - help cultivate habits and subconscious compliance among the public (Authority of Broadcasting and Electronic Information, 2024).

Moreover, communication on enforcement and penalties has been widely applied to enhance social deterrence. Measures such as publicly broadcasting images of violations on television or digital platforms, and naming individuals or organizations that repeatedly violate regulations, expose them to public criticism. This approach strengthens deterrence effects, discouraging repeated violations, especially in the online environment where reputation is highly valued. As a result, such strategies contribute to improving overall traffic awareness among citizens (Doan, 2022).

In recent years, social media in Vietnam has also played an important role in shaping public opinion regarding traffic violations. Serious traffic accidents or cases involving well-known individuals being penalized for violations, when widely shared on social media platforms, have contributed to adjusting public awareness - particularly among younger generations.

2.4. Discussion of Measures to Enhance Traffic Participation Awareness among Vietnamese Citizens

Vietnam - with a relatively moderate population size and a rapid pace of urbanization - has implemented a number of valuable traffic safety management policies. However, the effectiveness of these policies remains open to discussion, as public awareness of traffic participation has not yet met the expectations of authorities, thereby posing challenges to traffic management and road safety.

The application of technology in traffic management - such as AI-based camera systems, big data, and increased investment in smart transportation infrastructure, particularly in major urban areas - represents a modern, effective, and transparent approach to managing urban traffic (Ministry of Transport of Vietnam, 2021).

Integrating AI into traffic flow management and automated enforcement plays an important role in promoting intrinsic awareness among road users. Individuals are more likely to recognize the consequences of violations and refrain from engaging in unsafe behaviours. In practice, deterrence has proven to be highly effective among Vietnamese citizens (Tran, 2020).

Strict and transparent law enforcement is also a key measure to enhance public trust in regulatory authorities. Evidence suggests that the more rigorous and transparent the legal system, the more effective traffic management becomes. The implementation of automated fines through surveillance cameras, along with a violation point system to deter drivers, has achieved certain results. In cases of serious or repeated violations, offenders may face restrictions in accessing certain public services. Nevertheless, deterrent measures still need to be strengthened further (Bui et al., 2020).

Improving the effectiveness of traffic awareness education in schools is another fundamental solution. Schools should organize both theoretical lessons and practical training using simulated traffic environments, such as miniature traffic towns, to help students develop safe habits from an early age (Luu et al., 2015). Traffic education should be a compulsory component, delivered not only through theory but also through games and situational

practice. However, it is equally important to raise awareness among adults, as their behavior significantly influences children's perceptions. Therefore, traffic education should target both students and adults to ensure safety for individuals and the broader community (Viet Hung & Huyen, 2011).

Developing public transportation systems - such as metro lines and bus networks - is essential to reducing the number of private vehicles and easing pressure on infrastructure (Nguyen & Cao, 2025). Vietnam should continue expanding metro systems, prioritizing affordable, punctual, and convenient public transport, while gradually restricting motorcycles in central urban areas. On July 1, 2026, Vietnam will begin implementing a policy to reduce gasoline-powered vehicles entering central Hanoi, marking an important step in the reform of the country's urban transportation system.

In addition, Vietnam should promote large-scale and innovative communication campaigns, such as animated videos warning about traffic accidents, interactive television programs, and 3D public advertisements. Traffic safety campaigns should be redesigned to be more accessible and engaging, utilizing social media platforms, influencers, and modern formats such as short videos and interactive games (Government Office of Vietnam, 2025). Currently, traffic safety communication in Vietnam remains largely confined to traditional media and school-based education. Although some content exists on platforms such as YouTube, it has not been sufficiently engaging, and awareness campaigns on other social media platforms remain underdeveloped and relatively ineffective (Tran, 2020). Therefore, strengthening communication strategies is essential in the current context.

3. Conclusion

Traffic awareness among Vietnamese citizens is the result of the interaction of multiple factors, including culture, education, policy, and infrastructure. Improving this awareness requires coordinated efforts among the government, society, and individuals. In the context of urban transformation and technological development, Vietnam needs to continue innovating its policy approaches in order to build a safer and more civilised traffic environment.

In addition, enhancing traffic participation awareness among Vietnamese citizens requires stronger and more practical measures, such as education both within and beyond schools, targeting not only children but also adults. Identifying the influencing factors has significant implications for policymakers and authorities. Based on these findings, effective measures can be developed to further improve public awareness of traffic participation in Vietnam.

This study also opens up directions for future research, including the current state of traffic safety in Vietnam, measures to reduce traffic risks, and the exploration of potential risks associated with inadequate traffic awareness.

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