



## HISTORICIZING THE IMPACT OF ACCIDENTS ON THE MORBIDITY PATTERN OF KERALA: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT

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**Abstract:** Kerala state which was formed on the year 1956 climbed the ladder of success, leaving behind its economic hardships and claimed a high position in the Human Development index of the state. Her health statistics were high in almost all aspects making it a safe haven for its population. But now this trend is slowly reversing. Diseases have wrecked havoc in the land mounting the morbidity in the state. Morbidity in simple words can be defined as ‘the state of being diseased’ or ‘incidence of ill health in a population’. Even though people live a longer life, they are subjected to various physical conditions that force them to visit hospitals every now and then. Accidents play a vital role in increasing the morbidity pattern of a state. Deaths and injuries due to road accidents in Kerala are rising every year.

The increased traffic congestion and the indifferent attitude of the civilians towards traffic rules create havoc among the roads in Kerala. The stringent work policies of various institution forces the people to reach their destinations in a hurry, which can cause accidents on their commutation. According to police reports more than 14000 people were injured in road accidents in the year 2017 (that is up to April). This paper intends to unravel the horrifying role played by accidents in escalating the morbidity pattern of the state.

**Keywords-** Health- Accidents-Kerala- Morbidity

### Introduction

Health is a result of an individual’s genetic makeup, income and educational status, health behaviors, communities in which the individuals lives, and environments to which he or she is exposed. Although medicine can identify the biological pathways to a disease, we will need a historical perspective to address the social determinants of health.<sup>1</sup> The state of Kerala which has been the centre of attraction for the health experts is now falling behind in the sector of well being.

According to Panicker and Soman Kerala is suffering a weird condition of low mortality and high morbidity syndrome.<sup>2</sup> United States public health department defined morbidity as a departure from a state of physical or mental well being resulting from disease or injury of which the individual is aware.<sup>3</sup> The national sample survey conferred morbidity rates of 71 per 1000 for acute ailments and 84 per 1000 for chronic diseases for rural Kerala as against 22 and 21 for rural India. This rate was published in the 28<sup>th</sup> round of the sample survey. The morbidity in Kerala was thus more than three times the all-India figure.<sup>4</sup>

### Impact of Accidents in Morbidity rate of the state

Accidents are responsible for increased prevalence rate in Kerala.<sup>5</sup> Road accidents due to negligent driving and drinking are always high in the state. The

liquor shops located in national highways are a factor that increases the number of road accidents in the state. According to a 2015 report by World Health Organizations, every year 1.3 million lives are lost and 50 million suffer from serious injuries on the roads across the world. As per the new reports Kerala contributes 7.8 % of the total accidents in India. This rate is due for increase in the coming years.

The increase in the number of accidents is visible from the data given below. The number of deaths in the state also shows the same trend. While the number of deaths due to various accidents increased from 2654 in 2005 to 3203 in 2005. The total number of injuries also went up in these years. It crossed fifty thousand in the year 2005. This increased the morbidity status of the state.

Year	No. of accidents	Death	Total Injuries
2001	38361	2674	49675
2002	38762	2792	49460
2003	39496	2905	48640
2004	41219	3059	51228
2005	42363	3203	51124
2006	41647	3589	49881
2007	39917	3778	48246
2008	37263	3901	43857
2009	35433	3831	41401

Table 1.1- Accidents in Kerala from 2001-2009.<sup>6</sup>

This trend reversed from the year 2006 as a result of the awareness program initiated by the government. As a result the number of accidents in the state went down to 37263 in 2008 compared to 42363 in 2005. This didn't mean that the deaths that were happening in the state came down. Deaths due to accidents mounted to 3901 in 2008 from 2671 in 2001. This shows the severity of the crisis faced by the state of Kerala. The slight decrease in the number of accidents and the injuries sustained by the people fell flat due to the increased number of deaths.

Year	No of accidents	Death	Injuries
2010	35082	3950	41473
2011	35216	4145	41379
2012	36174	4286	41915
2013	35215	4258	40346
2014	36282	4049	41096
2015	39014	4196	43735
2016	39420	4287	44108
2017	38470	4131	42671

Table 1.2 Accidents in Kerala from 2010- 2017.<sup>7</sup>

The same pattern continued from 2010 to 2017. Deaths due to accidents increased year after year while the number of reported accidents came down. The government plan to implement strict motor vehicle rules and checking in the national highways played a key role in bringing down the accident cases. Hefty fines were imposed in the state for negligent driving. Helmet was made compulsory for two wheel vehicles. Awareness programs like wear your helmet and no liquor while driving fetched good results. The initiative by the government for wearing seat belt mandatory for four wheelers played a pivotal role in ensuring the safety of passengers. But it didn't have any impact on the number of deaths in the Kerala. Deaths due to accidents crossed the four thousand mark in 2011. It didn't come down from that level till 2017.

While analyzing the accident cases in the capital city of Kerala, it can be concluded that two wheelers in the state were the main victims of accidents. Forty percent of the total cases reported in the capital were related to two wheeler accidents. If we consider the death rate of the capital city it is increasing year after year. The accident statistics of the capital remained around the range of 2000 from the period of 2007 to 2017.

Year	No. of accidents	Death	Total Injuries
2007	2009	156	2415
2008	1866	160	2156
2009	1739	141	2042
2010	1646	140	1885
2011	1792	141	2083
2012	1933	167	2244
2013	2000	195	2341
2014	2007	175	2360
2015	2199	164	2650
2016	2453	180	2994
2017	2113	170	2500

Table -1.3 Accidents in Trivandrum city from 2007-2017.<sup>8</sup>

The accident stats of Trivandrum city show a diminishing case of accidents reported from the region. In 2007 the total number of cases reported in the year was 2009. This came down to 1646 in 2010. Deaths rates also declined during the period. But this trend reversed as accidents that occurred in the state went up to 2453 in 2016. The number of deaths and injuries as a result of accidents also went up from 2011 to 2016. The highest numbers of fatalities were reported in the year 2013. One hundred and ninety five people lost their lives due to accident in this year.

The number of accident cases reported in the rural limit is high compared to city. Deaths and injuries were also high from 2007 to 2017 period. In 2007 the reported case of accidents in rural area was 2842 out of which 3024 were injured and two hundred and seventy five were killed. The highest number of death was reported in the year 2012 as 283 people succumbed to accidents. In 2017 the accident cases in the rural limit crossed the three thousand mark in the history of the capital. Lack of proper medical facilities and poor road condition in rural area was responsible for increased number of deaths in rural areas.

Year	No. of accidents	Death	Total Injuries
2007	2842	275	3024
2008	2763	290	3156
2009	2698	334	2982
2010	2622	352	2782
2011	2656	346	2653
2012	2685	383	2823
2013	2647	361	2903
2014	2699	347	2935
2015	2866	321	3151
2016	2962	351	3204
2017	3146	325	3327

Table -1.4 Accidents in Trivandrum Rural from 2007-2017.<sup>9</sup>

### Conclusion

Poor road conditions, negligence of traffic laws and complete disregard for personal safety are the main factors that contribute to this precarious situation in the state. The term Morbidity is a mystifying perception to characterize. It is complex, multi- dimensional and difficult to define and measure because it has strong cultural character, which permits its meaning to change over time and space.<sup>10</sup> Social conditions prevailing in the state can be crucial in defining morbidity of the state. People who get caught in accidents are sometimes denied treatment due to their economic backwardness. The hefty treatment charges imposed by private institutions prevent the entry of downtrodden section to these hospitals. Hence it becomes a hindrance for getting timely treatment for the patients. This leads to imminent deaths as a result of medical negligence. The activities of the government should be optimized to deal with accidents in the state which increases the morbidity status of the state.

## References

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- <sup>6</sup> <https://keralapolice.gov.in/public-information/crime-statistics/road-accident>
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> <https://tvmcity.keralapolice.gov.in/public-information/crime-statistics/road-accident>
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