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REFEREED PAPER

## Solving Bangkok's Traffic Problems

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### Abstract

Bangkok is reported to have the worst traffic in the world, a situation that has a detrimental effect on the economic, social and financial development of the city. This mixed-methods study of the enforcement of [Thailand's Road Traffic Act, B.E. 2522 \(1979\)](#) surveyed drivers in Bangkok and interviewed police traffic officers. The results reveal negative perceptions of drivers towards traffic police officers, poor law enforcement and disparity in policing practice. They also show that drivers lack road discipline and do not fear the consequence of any wrongdoing because they perceive that the Act merely prescribes petty offences and traffic police officers only impose light punishments. To support the cultural changes necessary to alter these perceptions, and enhance the economic and social development of the city, a range of strategies will be necessary, including training and development among drivers and law enforcement officers and strengthened legal provisions.

### Keywords

**Bangkok; Road Traffic Law; Police Traffic Officers; Drivers; Consequences of Traffic Congestion**

## Introduction

The road fatalities rate of Thailand is ranked as the second highest in the world, next only to locations of conflict and lawlessness (like Libya). When solely considering the motorcycle death rate, Thailand is ranked first in the world (Beech, 2019). According to the Thailand Road Safety Policy Foundation, Thailand witnessed the most road deaths in Southeast Asia between 2000 and 2009 (Marukatat 2018; Taekratok 2015). The number of road accident deaths comprises 36.2 people per 100,000 people, as represents an average of 24,326 people per year (Marukatat 2018; World Health Organization 2018) or 60 people per day. This makes Thailand the country with the highest number of such deaths in Asia (World Health Organization 2018).

Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand, has often been denoted as having the worst traffic congestion in the world alongside a high number of traffic accidents and related fatalities (Mark 2019; Phulsarikij 2018; Fernquest 2017; Kasikorn Research Center 2016). Traffic problems have been a complicated and growing problem for Bangkokians for many years, with the Thai Road Safety Collaboration having found that the highest number of traffic accidents in Thailand occur in Bangkok (Thai Road Safety Collaboration 2020).

Table 1. Number of Road Accidents, Deaths and Injuries in Bangkok Between 2016 and 2019

Outcome	2019	2018	2017	2016
Accident	52,582 (cases)	47,215 (cases)	41,524 (cases)	34,131 (cases)
Death	586 (persons)	615 (persons)	646 (persons)	604 (persons)
Injury	61,867 (persons)	55,669 (persons)	48,622 (persons)	39,909 (persons)

(Source: <http://www.thairsc.com/p77/index/10>)

The number of cars on the road in Thailand has continuously increased and the public transport of the country has remained inadequate. Alongside this, drivers have been seen to frequently drive without self-discipline and often in violation of the law (Chitsawang & Chitsawang 2014). These aspects, in combination, cause traffic congestion and traffic accidents. Such outcomes are considered a serious problem in Thailand as they cause direct and indirect loss which could evolve to obstruct the economic and financial development of the country. As a consequence, many government agencies give priority to urgently resolving this context.

The problem is complex, because there are four laws governing vehicles and road operations in Thailand: [the Road Traffic Act, B.E. 2522 \(1979\)](#), Land Transport Act, B.E. 2522 (1979), Vehicle Act, B.E. 2522 (1979) and Highway Act B.E. 2535 (1992). [The Road Traffic Act, B.E. 2522 \(1979\)](#) (hereinafter “the Road Traffic Act”) is a major law which has been instituted to govern traffic in Thailand, including in Bangkok, and aims to ensure the safety of both drivers and pedestrians (Chitsawang & Chitsawang 2014) and is the focus of this study. Although the Road Traffic Act has been in place in Thailand since 1980, frequent violations occur that often lead to serious accidents, injuries, disabilities and death. While a few studies on this traffic law have been produced, none has specifically considered the Road Traffic Act in relation to Bangkok – which is therefore the aim of this present exploratory research. Here, the study denotes the problems of, and level of understanding held towards, the enforcement of Thailand’s Road Traffic Act which is done by traffic police, as these are perceived indirectly to have a significant impact on the city and its development. This study seeks data which may be used to reduce traffic congestion, lower the rate of road accidents and road deaths and enhance the efficient development of traffic law enforcement in Thailand, so that this barrier to economic and social development is removed.

## Literature Review

### THEORETICAL APPROACHES RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY

Several theoretical approaches are relevant to this study. From criminology, we draw on deterrence theory, from policing practice on law enforcement theory and from sociology, on social learning theory. Deterrence Theory illuminates the thinking processes of humans towards the committing of a crime – where they weigh the potential benefit gained from the wrongdoing, the potential to receive punishment for that offence and the law enforcement efficiency perceived for that area (such as the severity, swiftness and certainty of the potential punishment). Deterrence theory holds that crime is prevented when the law is strictly enforced with suitable and proportional punishment ([Maneeapakorn 2010](#)). This theory also holds that misconduct will be take place when individuals do not fear the consequences and when law enforcement is poor.

From a policing perspective, law enforcement theory can be divided between the notions of crime control and due process. The crime control notion emphasises the importance of an efficient justice system and focuses on the control, deterrence and suppression of crime as a priority – with the efficiency, swiftness and certainty of law enforcement agencies being essential here. The due process notion conveys how law enforcement provisions must be maintained in the judicial proceedings instituted within every step of the justice system. It can be said that this aspect emphasises law enforcement in relation to the occurrence of justice and the protection of personal rights. To explain how these two processes can be balanced in practice, it could be said that in the case of a serious crime having occurred, law enforcement officers tend to predominantly apply crime control theory with due process theory as supplementary. However, in communities with a lower crime rate, law enforcement officers tend to primarily apply due process theory with crime control theory as supplementary.

Social learning theory argues that social behaviours are cognitively based, the result of learning through observation in a given context. Through watching others, both actually and through vicarious experiences, people come to learn that some actions are rewarded and others are punished, and, further, that some actions that one might expect to be found unacceptable and perhaps a focus for punishment are not subject to that punishment. Deviant behaviour can be learned through social relationships and through imitation of the behaviour of others (Agnew 1991).

### PRIOR RESEARCH INTO THE TRAFFIC LAW AND ITS ENFORCEMENT

[Chanthrasukho \(2013\)](#) in studying the relationship between the factors which relate to the violation of traffic law among motorcyclists in the Phutthamonthon Province of Thailand, has found that such misconduct derives from both a lack of traffic knowledge and a disrespect for the Road Traffic Act among drivers. [Phophan \(2014\)](#), in studying traffic law enforcement in the Nakhon Sawan Province of Thailand, similarly found that people (including drivers) lack an understanding of traffic law, leading them to break the law and this was paralleled with a failure to enforce the traffic law in this area.

[Yodsurang \(2017\)](#) has found that that law enforcement practices towards drink driving under the provisions of the Road Traffic Act are inadequate, for two reasons: the Act is not strictly enforced and the punishment of offenders is not stringent enough. Consequently, drivers continue to be on the road when they are drunk – and this leads to road accidents. Yodsurang has therefore suggested that the penalties held towards drink driving under the Road Traffic Act must be revised and increased in severity.

[Loha \(2012\)](#) focussed on the requirement to produce a driving licence under the Road Traffic Act, and found that the penalty in the case of a failure to produce a valid licence was inappropriate, since it only comprised a relatively small monetary fine (not exceeding 1,000 Thai Baht – approximately £25). This inability to impose severe punishment meant that people neither respected nor feared the law, with

the consequence of traffic law violations and ineffective law enforcement. The study also found that the misconduct of police traffic officers when requiring the presentation of a driving licence raised negative attitudes among drivers, further reinforcing the ineffective enforcement of the law in this context. Loha therefore suggested that the Road Traffic Act must be revised to increase the severity and proportionality of the liable punishment if a failure to present a driving licence is encountered.

[Khamkeaw \(2013\)](#) also found ineffective enforcement and lack of proportionality in the potential punishments set out in the Road Traffic Act and suggested that, instead of police traffic officers assuming responsibility for enforcing this traffic law, all traffic offences should proceed to the court whereupon a decision would be made and a traffic violator would be penalised in a suitable and fair way.

[Sumonthip Chitsawang and Nathee Chitsawang \(2014\)](#) have studied the effectiveness of the law enforcement used when punishing traffic offenders under the [Road Traffic Act, B.E. 2522 \(1979\)](#), Land Transport Act B.E. 2522 (1979), Vehicle Act, B.E. 2522 (1979) and Highway Act B.E. 2535 (1992). Here, they found that people viewed a traffic violation as a petty offence, that traffic law enforcement was lax and that traffic law violations were not to be feared.

The [SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research \(2013\)](#) reported on the punishment of traffic offenders and found that an increase in the penalty rate imposed would benefit the respecting of traffic rules (such as the wearing of seat belts, obeying the speed limit and adhering to traffic lights). The severe punishment imposed by the courts would also lead to a change in driver behaviour and would reduce drink driving. Finally, increased penalty rates and the strict enforcement of traffic law could reduce incidents of re-offending.

Despite the research set out above, the conclusions held are limited as to traffic law enforcement and no study directly relates to Thailand's Road Traffic Act for Bangkok drivers. It is thus this direction that the present exploratory research takes.

## Methodology

This study comprises a mixed-methods approach. A questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of individuals who hold a legal driving licence from the Department of Land Transport of Thailand and who live in Bangkok. Quota sampling was employed to gain a sample of 500 individuals aged between 25 and 60-years-old. The sample constituted 217 males, 262 females, 7 transgender woman and 10 lesbians. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part pertained to the personal information of the respondent – such as their age, gender, occupation, education level and marital status. The second part pertained to the respondent's understanding level of the Road Traffic Act, the problems of enforcing it and the potential to develop it. The questionnaire asked closed-ended question, where a scale rating was used to measure the opinion given. The respondents could choose only one answer for each question. Subsequently, the researcher evaluated the data, used descriptive statistics (such as mean and standard deviations) to analyse the data and then presented the results gained.

Qualitative data was gained through the conducting of in-depth interviews among traffic police officers and traffic officers with over five years of work experience in the field of traffic and the enforcement of Thailand's Road Traffic Act. This sample comprised 28 males and 2 females between 35 and 52 years old. The questions asked within each in-depth interview related to 2 distinct areas. The first area focussed on personal information, such as the respondent's age, gender, marital status, educational background and occupation. The second area related to the respondent's understanding level, the problems of law enforcement and the potential to develop the Road Traffic Act. Each interview had an approximate duration of 60–90 minutes. The researcher would conduct an interview again if the data was inconsistent. The data from the in-depth interviews was analysed and the results presented.

## Results

The findings from the survey indicated that the understanding of Thailand's Road Traffic Act among the sample was relatively low, as is shown in [Table 2](#). Although the level of knowledge of traffic signs or signals was quite high the respondents, that is drivers in Bangkok had a very low level of understanding of the spirit and objectives of the Road Traffic Act, and only a slightly higher level of understanding of what constituted an offence under the act and what penalties could be imposed. Their understanding of the duties and responsibilities of traffic police was also limited.

Table 2. Level of Understanding Held by Respondents Towards the Road Traffic Act

Area of Understanding	$\bar{X}$ .	S.D.	Understanding Level Held
1. Offences and Penalties Held Under the Road Traffic Act	2.46	0.82	Less Understanding
2. Traffic Regulations Held Under the Road Traffic Act	2.92	1.13	Moderate Level of Understanding
3. Spirit and Objectives of the Road Traffic Act	2.20	0.54	Less Understanding
4. Powers and Duties of Officials Provided Under the Road Traffic Act	2.61	1.06	Less Understanding
5. Traffic Signs or Signals	3.98	1.52	High Level of Understanding

[Table 2](#) sets out the enforcement problems encountered in relation to the Road Traffic Act in Bangkok. When considering each problem, the most problematic condition identified was that drivers tend to have a bias against traffic police officers. A second problematic condition was the view that traffic police officers misunderstand Traffic Law. A less problematic condition was that traffic police officers cannot enforce Traffic Law effectively.

Table 3. Enforcement Problems as to the Road Traffic Act in Bangkok

Enforcement Problems	$\bar{X}$ .	S.D.	Opinion Level
1. Many public agencies in the area of Traffic Law enforcement do not share the same policies, performance and direction.	3.16	0.94	Moderate Problem
2. People (including drivers) think that traffic offences are petty and not as serious as those offences set out in the Thai Criminal Code.	3.44	0.97	Problematic Condition
3. People (including drivers) think that Thailand's Traffic Law is outdated and unsuitable in responding to contemporary traffic problems.	3.32	0.86	Moderate Problem
4. Traffic officers do not understand Traffic Law correctly.	3.55	0.90	Very Problematic Condition
5. People (including drivers) are biased towards traffic police officers.	4.07	0.70	Very Problematic Condition

The findings demonstrate that for the efficient development of the Road Traffic Act's enforcement in Bangkok, what is most needed is the creation of public awareness as to traffic discipline, with this being followed by the reforming of traffic law and its related violation penalties as shown in [Table 4](#).

Table 4. Efficient Development of the Road Traffic Act Enforcement in Bangkok

Efficient Development Means	$\bar{X}$ .	S.D.	Development Level
1. Cultivating Public Consciousness as to Traffic Discipline	3.93	0.84	Most Development
2. Reforming Traffic Law and its Penalties	3.91	0.77	Most Development
3. Improving the Provisions of Traffic Police Officer and/or Related Authorities	3.79	0.80	Most Development
4. Conducting a Public Relations Campaign as to Traffic Law	3.58	1.02	Most Development

The findings from the survey, presented in the tables above, can lead to the conclusion that people (including drivers) do not understand the spirit and objective of the Road Traffic Act and that a lack of understanding is held towards the offences and penalties held under the Road Traffic Act. The prejudice and negative perceptions of drivers hold towards traffic police officers causes problems for the enforcement of the Road Traffic Act. Importantly, drivers view traffic offences as being liable to attract only trivial penalties. Drivers also perceive that to effectively implement the Road Traffic Act, focus should be given to cultivating public consciousness as to traffic discipline, to reforming traffic law and to improving the performance of traffic police officers and other relevant authorities.

In the interviews, traffic police officers reported that the problems encountered in the enforcement of the Road Traffic Act derived from drivers possessing stereotypes and prejudice which shape their negative perceptions towards them. Participants expressed the opinion that these negative perceptions arose from drivers having witnessed or being aware of police misconduct. An important factor was seen to emerge from the disparity in policing practice which led to some people encountering stricter enforcement of Thailand's Road Traffic Act than others, a consequence of police officers being empowered to perform their duties with discretion – such that some drivers were able to avoid arrest. Moreover, it was also reported that some police officers have no self-discipline and did not abide by the traffic law, behaviours that could undermine the enforcement of the law by others and even lead to some drivers not to comply with the law.

Another significant problem in regards to the enforcement of Thailand's Road Traffic Act is that the law is poorly drafted and has multiple loopholes. An obvious example is found in Section 140 of the Road Traffic Act, wherein it is stated that “when the traffic officer or competent official finds by his or her own means or by using any device that the driver violates or fails to comply with the provisions of this Act or any other law concerning such a vehicle, he or she may give a warning or issue a traffic ticket requiring the driver to pay [a] determined penalty fine”. This means that the Act permits traffic officers to give warnings to traffic offenders. Consequently, most offences committed in relation to the Road Traffic Act result in a warning being given by traffic officers and/or a fixed traffic fine being paid by the offender. Thus, drivers tend not to fear the penalties and are unaware of the consequences of their behaviours, which they are then likely to repeat.

Since the the offences relating to the Road Traffic Act are deemed to be be characterised as *Mala Prohibita*, whereby such acts are prohibited by Statutory Law rather than being wrong by their very nature,

light or no punishments are imposed when compared with the provisions held for offences listed under the Thai Criminal Code. In addition, there is no genuine enforcement of this Act. This adds to the problems with the law and its enforcement, already detailed above, that most drivers not only lack knowledge and an understanding of the Road Traffic Act, that the behaviours of traffic police officers appear to excuse violations of the Act, but also because of the positioning of offences under this act as *Mala Prohibita*, drivers do not fear the consequence of any wrongdoing, given their perception that the Road Traffic Act is not concerned with serious offences and any violation will only be met with light punishments. Appendix 1 sets out the penalties under the Act.

There are five offences under Section 157/1, Section 159, Section 160, Section 160 bis and Section 160 ter where traffic police officers or traffic officers cannot give a warning and a fixed fine must be imposed upon traffic offenders in accordance with Section 140. These offences must be progressed to the court for a decision to be made and a penalty imposed (such as imprisonment, fine, both imprisonment and a fine and/or the suspension or revocation of the offender's driving licence). These stand out as being different from the majority of violations listed.

### CHANGES TO ENFORCING THAILAND'S ROAD TRAFFIC ACT IN THE BANGKOK METROPOLITAN REGION

The findings presented above from drivers and traffic police officers indicate that that solving Bangkok's traffic problems, and thus removing the barriers these cause to economic and social development is not a simple matter. For any improvement, changes to the enforcement of Thailand's Road Traffic Act must focus on three significant factors: the drivers, their knowledge and attitudes, the provisions of the law itself and the policing practices through which the traffic law is enforced.

A big challenge will be in building an understanding the Road Traffic Act of Thailand and in developing the self-discipline of drivers in Bangkok. It will be very important to build a moral sense among drivers and the wider population as early as possible. This is a project which could engage most people in the community. Raising awareness and educating people may be possible through the provisions of educational institutions. Furthermore, use of the media, such as radio, television and social media, will be important in cultivating a culture of compliance towards the Road Traffic Act. Such a project could also give drivers and pedestrians an opportunity to engage with traffic officers and gain a better understanding of what their duties and responsibilities are. It might even be possible to recruit volunteers who help traffic officers. These are several measures through which, directly and indirectly it could be possible to build an understanding of the Road Traffic Act and to highlight the importance of Traffic Law compliance, both in the context of respect for the law of the country, but also for the economic and social development of the city. The burden from potentially avoidable traffic accidents is very high.

Changing the perceptions and knowledge levels of drivers and pedestrians will not be enough to solve the problems arising from enforcement of the law. The findings of this research also indicate that there is a need to reform Thailand's Road Traffic Act and to implement new legal provisions that institute consistent rules and regulations which meet international standards. Since the severity of penalties plays a major role in the efficiency of law enforcement, the legal measures and severity of punishment held under the Road Traffic Act should be revised to allow genuine and strict enforcement. For instance, increased punishment may be imposed upon repeat offenders and administrative measures (such as point deduction penalties and licence revocations) could be employed against drivers who commit Traffic Law infringement. Overall, the punishments available under the Road Traffic Act should be strengthened so that drivers fear this punishment or at least wish to avoid its consequences; such a situation will produce a basis for law enforcement that is more effective.

To reinforce the knowledge to be developed in drivers and pedestrians, advanced technologies, common in cities in other parts of the world, such as speed cameras, lane change cameras and red-light cameras, can provide concrete evidence of infringements of the Road Traffic Act being committed. Not only would this demonstrate that violations are not identified at the discretion of traffic police officers, but it could result in equal punishment being imposed on all offenders and could decrease the disputes that arise between traffic officers and drivers.

Finally, the findings demonstrate that traffic officers are crucial to the solution of traffic congestion, lowering the toll of injuries and death, and thus helping to minimise the social and economic problems which ensue. Some traffic officers lack knowledge of the Road Traffic Act and some are known to have committed violations of the law, setting a bad example for other drivers. Thus, there is a need for training by the Royal Thai Police, which would provide greater consistency in knowledge of traffic operations and the implementation of the law to traffic officers; this in turn would improve the performance of such officers, as well as enhancing their credibility and their capacity to enforce the law efficiently. In addition, there is evidence that the integration of cooperation and collaboration among government agencies and private sectors is important for improving law enforcement efficiency, but that is beyond the scope of this study.

## Discussion

The findings of this study, from both the survey and the interviews, support the findings of previous studies. People possess a low knowledge level and understanding of the Road Traffic Act of Thailand, poor driving behaviour is caused by a lack of Traffic Law knowledge ([Phophan 2014](#)) and that such ignorance is related to Traffic Law violations ([Chanthrasukho 2013](#)). Thus, at one level it would seem appropriate to assert that if the public is educated as to the offences and penalties held under the Road Traffic Act and are subsequently aware of the necessity of obeying this law, greater public compliance will be achieved. As a result, effective law enforcement will be witnessed as the public's knowledge and understanding of the law will be applied in practice. Thus, as the public begins to see the benefits of this, through a lessening of traffic congestion, fewer injuries and deaths, and an easing of some associated economic and social problems, they will maintain that behaviour over time.

However, driver respondents in this study, (as based in Bangkok also possessed stereotyped attitudes and prejudices which shape their negative perceptions of traffic police officers. This could be related to the occurrence of police misconduct, disparity in policing practice and the prevalence of police officers accepting bribes (of money or other benefits) in exchange for not furthering legal proceedings identified in the interviews. Consequently, drivers do not comply with the commands or orders of traffic police officers, with this leading to ineffective law enforcement. This is in line with the findings of [Loha \(2012\)](#), who explained that the poor duty performance of police officers caused prejudice and bias (including discrimination in law enforcement) and this, ultimately, resulted in inefficient Traffic Law enforcement.

The study also shows that the Road Traffic Act itself is a major cause of ineffective enforcement. This is due to the Act having loopholes that empower police traffic officers or traffic officers to give warnings to drivers when a Traffic Law violation occurs, instead of a stronger penalty. This is a major problem as offenders who are merely warned do not develop a fear of subsequent law violations and law enforcers can use this channel to accept bribes for not furthering legal proceedings. This leads to the ineffective enforcement of Traffic Law in Bangkok. Moreover, since the offences held under the Road Traffic Act are deemed to be characterised as *Mala Prohibita*, such acts are prohibited by Statutory Law and are not wrong by their nature. This invokes the provision of light sentences and punishment provisions when compared with those associated with the offences detailed under the Thai Criminal Code and means that people do not fear the consequence of breaking this law. These findings mirror previous research that has explained that without suitable punishment provisions the Road Traffic Act is unable to frighten drivers ([Yodsurang](#)



[2017](#); [Chitsawang & Chitsawang 2014](#); [Khamkeaw 2013](#); [Loha 2012](#)). It can be said that the loopholes, offence characteristics and light penalties found within the Road Traffic Act, B.E cause ineffective Traffic Law enforcement in Bangkok. This results in continued traffic congestion and high road accident/fatality rates in Bangkok.

The findings are presented from a Deterrence Theory perspective, which, as stated above, notes that crime prevention can be achieved if an effective law is enforced with rapid and suitable penalties. This approach is also consistent with the research of the [SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research \(2013\)](#) which has indicated that the increasing of penalties (such as in imposing higher fines) will enhance the compliance with the Road Traffic Act and more severe punishments being imposed by the courts will change driver behaviour for the better as well as reducing repeat traffic offences. An implication of the findings of this study is that the provisions of the Road Traffic Act must be revised to allow genuine and strict enforcement that corresponds with the current situation faced., The revision of this law can eliminate confusion and contradictions in this area. This aim is in accordance with the previous research which indicates that the law should be revised by increasing the severity and proportionality of the liable punishment and thereby ensuring it meets the international standard ([Yodsurang 2017](#); [Loha 2012](#)).

From this deterrence theory perspective, stricter penalties, including higher fine amounts and longer imprisonment terms, would leave drivers afraid and unlikely to violate Thailand's Traffic Law. As a result, the behaviour and discipline of drivers would be improved, the enforcement of the Road Traffic Act would be enhanced, traffic congestion would be reduced and road accidents and road deaths in Bangkok would be minimised.

However, a deterrence approach alone is not enough to bring about these desirable changes. Social learning theory holds that people's behaviours are not merely reactive to punishment and reward but are based on what individuals know and what is widely believed in a community. This study has shown that governmental agents (such as police traffic officers) also cause problems for the effective enforcement of the Road Traffic Act; they too possess inadequate knowledge of this Law and cannot explain correctly its legal content, offences and penalties to drivers. Furthermore, police misconduct, disparity in policing practice and the occurrence of bribery among police traffic officers and relevant government agencies has resulted in a lack of trust among drivers leading to a failure to comply with this law and the orders of traffic police officers. This is another important factor that causing ineffective Traffic Law enforcement, a conclusion consistent with the research of [Loha \(2012\)](#).

To find an appropriate theoretical approach to guide other solutions which will lead traffic officers and drivers to change their behaviours, we can turn to social learning theory (REF). This emphasises the importance of formal learning as well as learning from observation of how others behave in similar circumstances; it also notes that deviational behaviour also results from learning processes enacted through imitating the behaviour of role models such as family members, friends and teachers. This is in line with the research of [Chanthrasukho \(2013\)](#) and the description of how ignorance relates to Traffic Law violations. Social learning theory cannot propose quick solutions to social problems. Drivers must develop a moral sense towards driving and are required to hold an understanding towards Thailand's Traffic Law. Ideally, such self-discipline would be instilled in people since childhood as this will heighten their compliance with the law. Furthermore, there is a need to cultivate a culture of Traffic Law compliance via the media and to allow civilians to participate in such law enforcement. This is a longer terms solution, requiring collaboration among relevant agencies to provide activities which enhance the moral sense of the public towards driving and the civilian knowledge of Road Traffic Act and change the perception that the consequences of infringing this law are of little or no importance.

This study has shown that the factors behind Bangkok's traffic congestion and the high rate of accident and injury are complex, involving a weak law, inadequate use of technology, the lack of knowledge of drivers,

the inappropriate behaviours of traffic police and the weak moral position within society regarding Statute Law. This reflects the conclusion of [Sombat Treewatsuwan \(2015\)](#) who noted that promoting road safety and decreasing of road traffic fatalities requires cooperation among the relevant agencies and the people. This study has shown that taking only a deterrence theory approach will not result in the changes in beliefs and behaviours essential for minimising traffic congestion and reducing injury and death. The study has also shown how the knowledge and behaviours of drivers and pedestrians need to change, but so too do the knowledge and behaviours of traffic officers. While social learning theory may be relevant to understanding the strategies to be undertaken for both groups, it is also important to recognise that the programs targeting traffic officers should be in line with the concept of crime prevention and suppression, whereby the prevention of crime is understood to require the use of certain measures and methods (such as in eradicating the root causes of wrongdoing, eliminating the desire for crime commission and reducing the opportunities available to commit crime). Notably, this reflects the research of [Chitsawang & Chitsawang \(2014\)](#) and its finding that law enforcement and the policing of offenders is obstructed due to the ignorance of the law and lack of skills held by traffic officers.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown that people (including drivers) possess a low level of understanding and lack knowledge towards the Road Traffic Act and, furthermore, hold biases and negative attitudes towards police traffic officers. Moreover, the problems associated with the enforcement of the Road Traffic Act are seen to derive from drivers, the law itself and governmental agents including traffic police officers or traffic officers. Significantly, the Road Traffic Act has a number of legal loopholes and imposes light penalties, as results in the ineffective enforcement of Traffic Law in Bangkok.

Thus, action needs to be taken on these three fronts. The effective enforcement of the Road Traffic Act requires the possession of accurate knowledge and understanding among drivers in Thailand as well as the cultivation of traffic discipline among this population when they are young. At present, most people in Bangkok disrespect traffic rules, lack knowledge and consciousness as to this area and do not fear the light penalties. Thailand's traffic police must provide knowledge as to such traffic rules to students in schools, while such knowledge should also be conveyed via the curriculum and/or through radio, television or social media. This shall allow Thailand's youth to understand and be aware of the importance of complying with the Road Traffic Act. This need for compliance should also be promoted and publicised among the general population as it would heighten the cooperation of the population with the law.

For officials or practitioners, regular training as to the Road Traffic Act and modern law enforcement technology is necessary as this will allow those entities to better enforce the law, will make people recognise and trust the performance of traffic police officers and will ultimately lead to greater compliance with Thailand's Traffic Law. Moreover, it has been noted that an increased number of traffic police officers and the improving of their allowances and benefits are important factors in manifesting effective law enforcement in this area.

As further important aspect in gaining effective law enforcement relates to the reform of Thailand's Road Traffic Act to make it consistent with international standards. The revision of the penalties must respond to the current situation and lead to stricter penalties or administrative measures being imposed upon certain offenders, such as those that re-offend.

This three-pronged approach is essential in solving a problem which has given Bangkok an unwanted and undesirable position as having among the worst traffic congestion in the world and being number one for motor-cycle accidents. Unless action is taken, traffic congestion and high road accident/death rates will continue to be witnessed in this city, and economic and social development will continue to be hampered. This study is concerned with more than the enforcement of the Road Traffic Act. The problem

of traffic congestion leads to problems of ill health, noise and pollution, but it also leads to higher costs for travel, results in lost income from time spent waiting, but also significantly affects the fragmentation of communities as people do their shopping in locations that are convenient rather than local and take their meals at conveniently located fast food outlets, instead of local restaurants.

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## Appendix 1

### EXAMPLES OF OFFENCES AND PENALTIES UNDER THE ROAD TRAFFIC ACT

Offence	Penalty Under the Road Traffic Act	Actual Penalty
- Using a conveyance which is not in a firm and secure condition on the road (Section 6, Paragraph 1) - Incompletion of engine, accessories and/or components in accordance with the law on vehicles (Section 6, Paragraph 2)	A fine not exceeding 500 Baht	Warning or a fine of 400 Baht
Not following traffic signals and/or traffic signs (Section 22)	A fine not exceeding 1,000 Baht	Warning or a fine of 500 Baht
Driving on the wrong side of the road (Section 41)	A fine not exceeding 500 Baht	Warning or a fine of 200 Baht
Using a mobile phone or mobile phone device while driving (Section 43, Clause 9)	A fine of 400-1,000 Baht	Warning or a fine of 500 Baht
Taking over and passing by such as when driving up a steep slope, bridge or on a curve (Section 46)	A fine of 400-1,000 Baht	Warning or a fine of 500 Baht
Turning or reversing a vehicle on a road with signs prohibiting this (Section 53)	A fine of 400-1,000 Baht	Warning or a fine of 500 Baht
Driving over the speed limit (Section 67)	A fine not exceeding 1,000 Baht	Warning or a fine of 500 Baht
Not wearing a helmet while driving (Section 122) - Drivers or passengers not wearing a helmet - Passengers not wearing a helmet	A fine not exceeding 500 Baht A fine not exceeding 1,000 Baht	Warning or a fine of 400 Baht
Not wearing a seat belt (Section 123, Paragraph 2)	A fine not exceeding 500 Baht	Warning or a fine of 400 Baht

Offence	Penalty Under the Road Traffic Act	Actual Penalty
<p>Failure to comply with the order of officers (Section 157/1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fails to comply with the order of an inspector demanding the driver to be examined for narcotics or psychotropic substances (under Section 43 bis),</li> <li>- Fails to comply with the order of an inspector demanding the driver to be tested for alcohol or other intoxicants (under Section 43 ter)</li> </ul> <p><b>Moreover</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consuming narcotics under the law on narcotics, or psychotropic substances under the law on psychotropic substances, while driving (Section 43)</li> <li>- Consuming narcotics under the law on narcotics, or psychotropic substances under the law on psychotropic substances, while driving and then causing physical or mental injury to another person (Section 43bis, Paragraph 1)</li> <li>- Consuming narcotics under the law on narcotics, or psychotropic substances under the law on psychotropic substances, while driving and then causing serious injury to another person (Section 43 bis, Paragraph 1)</li> <li>- Consuming narcotics under the law on narcotics, or psychotropic substances under the law on psychotropic substances, while driving and then causing death to another person</li> </ul>	<p>A fine not exceeding 1,000 Baht</p> <p>A fine not exceeding 1,000 Baht</p> <p>An additional one-third more of the penalty prescribed under the law on narcotics or the law on psychotropic substances</p> <p>Imprisonment for a term between one year and five years, and a fine of between twenty-thousand Baht and one-hundred-thousand Baht. The Court shall also order the suspension of the offender's driving licence for a period of no less than one year or can revoke that licence.</p> <p>Imprisonment for a term between two years and six years, and a fine of between forty-thousand Baht and one-hundred-and-twenty-thousand Baht. The Court shall also order the suspension of the offender's driving licence for a period of no less than two years or can revoke that licence.</p> <p>Imprisonment for a term between three years and ten years, and a fine of between sixty-thousand Baht and two-hundred-thousand Baht. The Court shall also order the revocation of the offender's licence</p>	<p>Warning and a fine by a traffic police officer or traffic officer is not allowed</p>

Offence	Penalty Under the Road Traffic Act	Actual Penalty
<p>Fails to comply with an official's order to move away from a vehicle which is stopping or parking in violation of this Act (Section 159)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fails to comply with an official's order or obstructs them in the moving or using of a device for locking</li> <li>- damages, destroys or deteriorates or makes useless the locking device used by an officer to prevent a vehicle from moving without this having been permitted by the officer</li> </ul>	<p>Imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or a fine not exceeding five-thousand Baht, or both</p>	<p>Warning and a fine by a traffic police officer or traffic officer is not allowed</p>
<p>Section 160</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fails to drive a vehicle or to control an animal and thereby causes damage to another person or the property of another person and not provide assistance (Section 78)</li> <li>- Fails to drive a vehicle or to control an animal and thereby causes damage to another person or the property of another person and not provide assistance which consequently causes serious injury or death to another (Section 78)</li> </ul>	<p>Imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or a fine of between two-thousand Baht and ten-thousand Baht, or both.</p>	<p>Warning and a fine by a traffic police officer or traffic officer is not allowed</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Driving while being incapable of driving (Section 43(1))</li> <li>-Driving in an abnormal driving manner or with poor visibility (in the front or rear) (Section 43(5))</li> <li>-Driving without being aware of the safety or trouble of others (Section 43(8))</li> </ul>	<p>Imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, and a fine of between five-thousand Baht and twenty-thousand Baht, or both.</p> <p>Imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or a fine of between two-thousand Baht and ten-thousand Baht, or both.</p> <p>Imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or a fine of between two-thousand Baht and ten-thousand Baht, or both.</p> <p>Imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or a fine of between two-thousand Baht and ten-thousand Baht, or both.</p>	

Offence	Penalty Under the Road Traffic Act	Actual Penalty
<p>Section 160 <i>bis</i> Car racing on the road or promoting car racing on the road except when permitted in writing by a traffic officer (Section 134)</p>	<p>Imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or a fine of between two-thousand Baht and ten-thousand Baht, or both. The Court shall also order the suspension of the offender's driving licence for a period of no less than two years or can revoke that licence</p>	<p>Warning and a fine by a traffic police officer or traffic officer is not allowed</p>
<p>Section 160 <i>ter</i> -Driving while intoxicated by alcohol or another intoxicant (Section 43 (2))</p> <p>- Driving while intoxicated by alcohol or another intoxicant and then causing physical or mental injury to another person</p> <p>- Driving while intoxicated by alcohol or another intoxicant and then causing serious injury to another person</p>	<p>Imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or a fine of between five-thousand Baht and twenty-thousand Baht, or both. The Court shall also order the suspension of the offender's driving licence for a period of no less than six years or can revoke that licence.</p> <p>Imprisonment for a term of between one year and five years, and a fine of between twenty-thousand Baht and one-hundred-thousand Baht. The Court shall also order the suspension of the offender's driving licence for a period of no less than one year or can revoke that licence.</p> <p>Imprisonment for a term of between two years and six years, and a fine of between forty-thousand Baht and one-hundred-and-twenty-thousand Baht. The Court shall also order the suspension of the offender's driving licence for a period of no less than two years or can revoke that licence</p>	<p>Warning and a fine by a traffic police officer or traffic officer is not allowed</p>