

## Lived Experiences of Traffic Enforcers in Ozamiz City: A Phenomenological Study

John Spencer D. Paje, Aubrey I. Surita, Renzo Virtudez, Jasmin D. Calib-Og,  
Junvil A. Insong & Jose F. Cuevas Jr.

College of Criminology, Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines.

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### ABSTRACT

Traffic enforcers play a vital role to maintain public order and safety in our roads. The aim of enforcement was to prevent the occurrence of road traffic violations by means of control and punitive sanctions. This study was conducted to know the lived experiences of traffic enforcers in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. It is a phenomenological study where the researchers made an interview guide questions to gather data on the traffic enforcers experiences. The study was conducted for the randomly selected traffic enforcers in Ozamiz City. Moreover, there were seven (7) traffic enforcers purposely selected to be part of the respondents of the research study. The respondent was selected with the criteria where he/she is a traffic enforcer and must have an experience at least 2 years. There were five (5) themes identified in the study namely Adversity in the fulfilment of duties, Encountering Harassment, Resistance, and Threats from the Motorists, Seeking Police Assistance in responding Aggressive Motorists, Responding with Calmness, Patience, and Respect to the Motorist, and Obedience to Traffic Rules. Based on the findings of the study, it shows that majority of the traffic enforcer's encountered harassment, resistance and threats from the motorists. Some motorists are unapproachable, aggressive and too arrogant violators that still insist that they did not commit any traffic violations. It was recommended that the traffic enforcers of Ozamiz City may continue to show calm, patience and respect towards handling the rude behaviour of a certain motorist who violates the traffic law. Moreover, traffic enforcers encouraged motorists to always follow the traffic laws to avoid and lessen the accidents on the road and have a smooth flow of the traffic because if every motorist is disciplined, it can reduced the workload of the traffic enforcers and everyone can benefit to it.

**Keywords:** Duties, Experiences, Motorists, Traffic enforcer, Traffic law.

### 1. Introduction

Motorization has enhanced the lives of many people and cultures across the globe, but the benefits have come at a cost (Mattioli et al., 2020). Road safety has become a major concern for many people due to the increasing number of daily accidents and fatalities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), traffic accidents kill over 1.35 million people and injure over 50 million people worldwide. In Saudi Arabia, at least one accident occurs every minute. As a result, the Saudi Ministry of Interior established new laws, restrictions, and substantial fines to reduce road traffic accidents, fatalities, and injuries (Khan et al., 2020). However, the concern is still serious due to the huge number of road crash accidents and deaths worldwide. In contrast, traffic violations are a major contributing factor to a sizeable percentage of road crashes (Hammad et al., 2019).

With the speed at which cities are modernizing, there are more and more automobiles in the city, and the problem of urban traffic congestion is getting increasingly significant (Liu & Wu, 2017). The dynamic development of urban areas poses more challenges for providing transport services for the population (Barreto et al., 2018) increasingly. Because of the concentration of economic potential and population in metropolitan regions, huge transportation needs arise, and congestion occurs when these needs are met simultaneously (Kozlak & Wach, 2018). The increase in transport demands and the limited capacity of the road network has increased traffic congestion in urban and highway scenarios (Hidalgo et al., 2021).

Congestion is an on-going issue that threatens the long-term viability of transportation development (Noor et al., 2021). Many aspects of modern life are affected by this issue, including economic growth, traffic accidents,

greenhouse gas emissions, time wasted, and health repercussions (De Souza et al., 2017). In many large cities, traffic congestion is one of the most pressing challenges concerning sustainability and liveability. The situation in developing countries' burgeoning megacities, in particular, has deteriorated and is now drawing considerable attention from experts and politicians (Zhao & Hu 2019). This recommends that this issue develop exponentially, and it should be persistently addressed to turn away its negative results. In this situation, modern nations can rely on traffic management technologies to alleviate traffic congestion and its harmful consequences (Hopkins & McKay 2019).

Traffic violations can be avoided if law enforcement is visible on the road (Rolison et al., 2018). One of the most important functions of traffic enforcement is to discourage road users from committing offenses resulting in accidents and injury. When it comes to traffic behaviour, it is widely acknowledged that most road users break traffic laws to some extent, such as speeding, driving in the wrong lane, having failed to slow down at an intersection, failing to stop before a pedestrian crossing, drinking while driving—the most common violation in motorists failing to wear a helmet (Uzondu et al., 2020). In addition, people go to work, school, shop, and so on daily, causing a scramble for the right-of-way among all road users. Frequently causes what is known as traffic conflict. As a result, traffic officers are responsible for resolving traffic conflicts to ensure the free flow of traffic and safe driving (Dorohin et al., 2018).

In the present Traffic policing techniques and practices, officers are uncertain about traffic enforcement goals, which appear to be hurting road safety. Mohlala (2017) said that traffic enforcers need to be visible to deal with the lawlessness of the violation on all significant offenses. To solve the issues, Ramavhunga (2018) proposed the following: training to increase the competence of traffic cops; on-going training to improve efficiency; greater state engagement to increase to make training more effective, increase its efficiency and diversify it.

Like those in other countries, traffic enforcers in the Philippines are responsible for ensuring the safety of those who use the roads. It is well acknowledged that while it is impossible to prevent car collisions, trained traffic enforcers can help to prevent or mitigate some of the injuries and severity. They must ensure that everyone follows the traffic laws, identify those who break the rules and then punish those who do. Enforcement activities, like any other, become more effective when they are problem-oriented, targeted, have specific objectives and success criteria, and are monitored in terms of process and product. The most common cause of road traffic collisions is drivers' lack of awareness of traffic laws and regulations and their refusal to follow them.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution Article II Section 5, clearly stipulates the protection of life and the general welfare of its people. However, insurance of this protection and welfare depends on the capacity of the enforcers tasked with this matter. On the other hand, this capacity depends on how trained and knowledgeable these people are. Therefore, under the mandates of the Philippine Constitution, R.A 4136 creates the basic Law regulating rules and the creation of a land transportation commission in the Philippines.

This study extends a careful investigation of the lived experiences of Traffic enforcers in Ozamiz City. It employs this information to develop various procedures and techniques that improve existing circumstances. It gives a

classification, review, problems, and prospects for officers in enforcing traffic laws, all with this subject in mind. With the help of randomly selected traffic management enforcers in Ozamiz City, this study can achieve its purpose and function of addressing the problem of Traffic in Ozamiz City.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The qualitative research method was applied in this study. The project was carried out using a phenomenological methodology. Following Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology, it is the process of interpreting data from research participants to obtain meaningful themes (Moustakas, 1994). A philosophy of experience is phenomenology. The ultimate source of all meaning and value for phenomenology is human beings' lived experience. This research design is suited to explore the lived experiences of traffic enforcers in Ozamiz City. The researchers interviewed the randomly selected traffic enforcers in Ozamiz City to know what their experiences in fulfilling their duties. This study was conducted in Ozamiz City. The researchers' subject for interview is located in the Public mall, Zamora Street, Ozamiz city. The study was conducted for the randomly selected traffic enforcers in Ozamiz City. Moreover, there were seven (7) traffic enforcers purposely selected to be part of the respondents of the research study. The respondent was selected through the following criteria: Within who is a traffic enforcer; must have an experience at least 2 years. The study was conducted at Public Mall, Zamora Street, Ozamiz City for the randomly selected traffic enforcers in Ozamiz City. The researchers identify the traffic enforcers through their uniforms and assigned positions. The chief of City Traffic Management Services (CTMS) approved the researchers to interview his colleagues on the said office in Public Mall area. This study used the researcher-made interview guide. The tool contains questions that obtain the experience of traffic enforcers in the city area. The instrument is composed of opening questions to obtain the needed profile of the respondents, the core questions, and the closing questions. Further, during the conduct of the interview, the researcher recorded the conversation for future reference during the data interpretation. Moreover, aside from recording the interview and survey process, the researcher prepared a recording sheet to answer and record the important points given by the participants. The data collection was done seriously in order to obtain the reliable information from the selected traffic enforcers. The interview was not conducted without their personal consent through allowing them to sign the informed consent form prepared by the researcher. Their refusal to participate does not involve any penalty or loss of benefits and their signed consent does not mean of waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies from this study. In regards to the participants' identity, the researcher applied the measure to promote anonymity and secrecy through not mentioning the names of our participants during the conduct of interview, instead the researcher addressed them with sir and ma'am. No names of the participants in any manner that were reflected in the results and manuscript of the study. Their attendance and signature in the informed consent were kept with utmost confidentiality and lock in the secured cabinet or locker until it needs to be deposed.

In the entire process of the study, the welfare of the participants was the priority of the researcher. Privacy and confidentiality were observed at all times, particularly name of the participants and other information unnecessary to the study. The researcher adhere the guidelines set by the Republic Act No. 10173 known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012". The researcher informed them to read thoroughly the statement and agreement in the informed

consent. And for clarity, the researchers loudly read the information from the informed consent and explain the content in the local dialect or in language they can understand directly. After the participants sign the form, the respondents distribute the copy of the informed consent.

Responses of the participants of the study were analyzed through the NVivo software that produces the final themes of the study.

### 3. Results and Discussions

This part presented the different themes that were derived from the different responses of the participants of the study during the conduct of the interview.

The study explored the lived experiences of traffic enforcers in Ozamiz city using the qualitative research method through Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology and participated by seven selected traffic enforcers. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The selections were based on the following inclusion criteria: Within who is a traffic enforcer; must have an experience at least 2 years.

#### 3.1. Profile of the participants

The respondents that the researchers randomly selected are having at least two (2) years' work experience and those experiences in two years may be in the field, not in the office as shown in table 1. These traffic enforcers that the researchers randomly select are living within the city of Ozamiz, and they all finished a high school degree and some of them are college undergraduate. They are also motorists and they know how to properly follow the traffic rules and at the same time, a traffic enforcer.

Furthermore, the study participants' ages varied from 35 to 55 years old, according to their responses. The two of the respondents are single, while the other five are already married. The study included 1 female participant and 6 male participants.

**Table 3.1.** Profile of the Participants

Code Name	Age	Length of Service	Educational Attainment	Civil Status	Gender
R1	44	10	High School Graduate	Married	Male
R2	35	4	College Level	Married	Male
R3	50	15	College Level	Married	Male
R4	46	11	College Level	Single	Male
R5	55	21	College Level	Single	Female
R6	48	13	High School Graduate	Married	Male
R7	40	8	College Level	Married	Male

### 3.2. *The Lived Experience of the Traffic Enforcers*

There were two (2) themes identified such as: (1) Adversity in the fulfilment of duties, (2) Encountering Harassment, Resistance, and Threats from the Motorists.

#### 3.2.1. *Adversity in the Fulfilment of Duties*

As a traffic enforcer performing your duties, an enforcer should be flexible in his/her work. Traffic enforcers everyday faced different adversities in the performance of their duties, but they find ways and manage to solve the situation. Some of these adversities are approaching undisciplined drivers, passengers and pedestrians, not following the traffic laws and handling the traffic and violators while raining. Unfortunately, road users have a little road sense and perhaps, no respect for the traffic rules which often leads to road misunderstanding or worse, could lead to an accident. (Shinar, 2017). These are evident in the results of the interview conducted. These were the shared experiences of the participants:

**Table 3.2.1.** Adversity in the Fulfilment of Duties

Participants	Result
R3	<i>The hardest part of performing our duties is to control violators, but we can all somehow manage the challenge.</i>
R5	<i>The hardest part of being traffic enforcer is when there is a collision and then it rained.</i>
R6	<i>Then the heavy rain is also difficult in this job but you still need to do your duties as a traffic enforcer.</i>

The phenomenon like rain, collision is unpredictable because it can happen either day and night. When there is a rain and the traffic is busy, the traffic enforcers continue to fulfil their duties. With the rain and a collision of vehicles, they continue to manage the traffic to have a smooth continuous flow. It is a challenge for the traffic enforcers to experience these adversities at the same time and a motorist that violates the traffic rules is also stubborn. Road transport safety, particularly enforcement of traffic laws is challenging globally, especially in developing countries, where it affects both road users and governments. Due to a number of reasons the subculture of traffic and other law enforcement agents is not always viewed in a favorable light (Jiang, et al., 2017). It is generally accepted that it is not possible to completely prevent vehicle crashes, but that some of the injuries and severity can be prevented or minimized by skilled traffic enforcer. The most cause of road traffic collisions is drivers 'lack of awareness about traffic regulations and laws, and drivers 'failure to comply with traffic rules and regulations. Thus, Borlongan (2007) emphasized that traffic laws should be strictly enforced in the highly urbanized Philippine cities; hence, traffic enforcers (Cruz, et al., 2021).

Media reports and newspaper articles give evidence of a total disregard for law enforcement and lack of respect for law enforcement officials. The study found that of lack of good managerial skills, lack of motivation to work,

shortage of staff, lack of modern equipment and lack of training as challenges (Deuchar et al., (2019). According to Al Mazruii (2015), Traffic enforcing goals are unclear to officers in current traffic policing strategies and practices, and this appeared to have a negative impact on road safety achievement. Al Khaldi (2006) concluded that negative attitudes and practice of a driver can only be addressed by the traffic enforcer with aggressive enforcement of the regulation. Mohlala (2017) further concluded that traffic enforcers' presence must have high visibility, as defined, to deal with the lawlessness of the breach on all serious offences (Cruz et al., 2021).

The first identified theme implies that the traffic enforcers faced adversities in performing their duties. As a traffic enforcer, they can be flexible in their duties despite the situations they faced in order to solve the problem in a respectful manner. It is part of a traffic enforcer's duty to control traffic violators and be able to manage the situation.

### 3.2.2. Encountering Harassment, Resistance, and Threats from the Motorists

Encountering harassment, resistance, and threats is usually felt by anybody who implement the law and order for some violators insist that they did nothing wrong (Nadal,2020). The majority of traffic cops have been harassed and have had unpleasant interactions with violators, who are highly arrogant in their approach to the problem (Pryce et al., 2021). These are the sentiment of the participants:

**Table 3.2.2.** Encountering Harassment, Resistance, and Threats form the Motorists

Participants	Result
R1	<i>Those drivers that is unapproachable and aggressive; Sometimes, when I faced drivers that I cannot handle anymore because they are very arrogant.</i>
R2	<i>Most of the time there are drivers with high temper, no patience, and arrogant; The challenges I encountered the most is the sidecar drivers because they are the number one violators, sometimes arrogant and sometimes, doing illegal parking.</i>
R4	<i>There are also violators who will not obey our orders, stating that we do our job as traffic enforcers; I encountered in performing my duties is mostly when I apprehend the violator with the right approach, states to the violator about his/her violation and make him understand that it is a violation, then they will get angry at me because they will insist that it is not a violation.</i>
R5	<i>There are a lot of challenges that I encountered in performing my duty. Example of that is one of the drivers are threatening our traffic enforcers saying that, "I will comeback for you, just wait for it.</i>

R6	<i>There are times when the violators are told of their mistakes and they showed us an angry and arrogant attitude instead of accepting their mistakes. They are acting rude and did not admit of their actions.</i>
R7	<i>That is why most of them are really angry and if we do not talk to them in a proper and calm way.</i>

When traffic enforcers apprehend a violator who is arrogant and believes they are above the law, they frequently face these circumstances. Resistance is a regular issue because the violator will insist that they did nothing wrong and that they are correct while you are not. And threat is what they are scared of since it causes danger and, as a result, it lowers their self-esteem because they no longer feel safe. These are evident in the results of the interview conducted. Traffic enforcers are also human being they have feelings too, when motorist harassed, resist, and threats traffic enforcers they felt unsafe in everyday they are conducting traffic and even in their house to their families. All of the traffic enforcer have already experienced this kind of situation and some of them are used to it but, sometimes when facing harassment, resistance and threats it is also safe to call back-up or police officers.

The diversified attitudes of motorists present a new dimension of risk. There have been numerous incidents in which traffic officers have been subjected to harassment, resistance, and threats from irritated motorists (Guangzhou, 2020). Worse, some had become death treats victims, putting their own lives in danger. It is evident that some motorists may become cocky and arrogant when dealing with traffic violations (Hock, 2021).

### ***3.3. The Coping Mechanism used by the Traffic Enforcers***

Coping from the responses of participants, three (3) emergent themes were developed, these are the following: (1) Seeking Police Assistance in responding Aggressive Motorists, (2) Responding with Calmness, Patience, and Respect to the Motorist, and (3) Obedience to Traffic Rules.

#### ***3.3.1. Seeking Police Assistance in Responding Aggressive Motorists***

Anyone in the country seeks assistance to the Law Enforcement Officer especially when an argument does not go well (Gibbs & Haas, 2020). Most of the aggressive motorists are subject to Police assistance, particularly those narcissists they think they are special people who deserve special treatment. When they do not get the special treatment, they think they deserve, narcissists often lash out at others in an aggressive manner. Narcissists might think they “own the road” and can drive anyway they want, and that other driver should get out of their way (Bushman, et al., 2018). These are evident in the results of the interview conducted. These were statements of the participants:

**Table 3.3.1.** Seeking Police Assistance in Responding Aggressive Motorists

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Result</b>
R1	<i>Sometimes when I faced drivers that I cannot handle anymore because</i>

	<i>they are very arrogant, I will automatically call the police or back-up so that driver will be faced with disciplinary measures or his driver's license will be confiscated or forfeited.</i>
R5	<i>We can arrest them and turned over to the police. The police will take care of them so I suggest follow the orders and the rules.</i>
R7	<i>When there is a collision, we immediately call the police investigators because we are just assisting in the incident.</i>

Traffic enforcers have been given the authority to apprehend violators and contact the police for assistance for the motorists to be given any disciplinary measures. They usually requested police assistance when a motorist displayed extremely disrespectful and violent behavior that our traffic enforcers could no longer handle. Some of the motorists often do not respect our traffic enforcers and act arrogant until a police officer assists them in apprehending the motorists. They also ask for help when they arrest a driver for a traffic offense or when an accident occurs and they will be the one to manage the traffic while the police officers do their traffic investigation.

### **3.3.2. Responding with Calmness, Patience, and Respect to the Motorist**

Calmness is the state of being even-tempered despite with the stressful situation (Aulia, 2019). The patience is the ability to stay calm in enduring difficult circumstances (Pawl, et al., 2021). And respect is having a positive response or treating them with politeness (Christie, 2018). Responding them with calmness, patience and respect is a common courtesy of being a traffic enforcer which they should embark to avoid any conflict. These traits allow the traffic enforcers to have a smooth conversation towards the violator which they tend to address the issue quickly without causing any trouble. Responded by the participants:

**Table 3.3.2.** Responding with Calmness, Patience, and Respect to the Motorist

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Result</b>
R3	<i>Give them respect and right approach so that there will be no misunderstanding.</i>
R4	<i>As an enforcer, I should be calm as always despite situation like this. Through being calm and make the violators understand about his violation.</i>
R5	<i>In order to stick with that situation, you really need to be patient and stay calm.</i>
R6	<i>If there are drivers with bad habits, I will remain myself calm even if they say hurtful words towards me. I just need to extend my patience to them instead of fighting.</i>

R7	<i>That is why most of them are really angry and if we do not talk to them in a proper and calm way. We need to talk to them calmly so that the conversation ended up okay.</i>
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As a traffic enforcer, maximum tolerance may be applied at all situations especially in approaching motorists. It is important that enforcers approach them calmly, be patient, and respect them in order to solve whatever situation they are in. No matter how rude and disrespectful the motorists are, traffic enforcers must maintain their calm, longer patience, and respect to avoid arising conflicts. Traffic enforcers, motorists, all of us can benefit to this if everyone is disciplined enough to follow our traffic rules.

Responding with calmness, patience and respect to the motorist are highly necessary in a practical manner to make a certain interactional harmony between motorists and to allow effectiveness in dealing with the violators. Depending on the kind of claims which are settled, the traffic enforcer is should be implemented with high virtues in taking certain actions, or by implementing traffic laws and order for enforcement action. In certain situation like aggressive motorists the traffic enforcer should responds with calm, patience and respects which is necessary to prevent going deep in the situation. To minimize the misunderstandings between motorists that have traffic violations, it is essential that the traffic enforcers treat them with high regards despite with their looks.

### 3.3.3. *Obedience to Traffic Rules*

The primary point of traffic laws is safety, but also keeping order. Following traffic laws is one of the most essential aspects of driving and can increase your safety as well as of the people around you. Knowing the traffic rules in our region and applying them can prevent us from getting involved in a car accident and save us the pain and costs of a traffic ticket due to a violation. If we do not have any traffic laws there would be chaos on the roads and many disasters could happen (Loder, et al., 2019). Shared by the participants:

**Table 3.3.3.** Obedience to Traffic Rules

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Result</b>
R1	<i>You have to encourage everyone to obey the traffic law and most importantly, you have to be patient because it is not an easy job.</i>
R3	<i>To obey the law and most importantly, you have to be patient because it is not an easy job.</i>
R4	<i>Always follow the traffic rules because if not, violators will be issued with a ticket.</i>
R5	<i>What would I suggest to the drivers who do not want to obey the traffic law is that they should obey on it because it is a city ordinance that has been implemented. Wherever they are, there is always a city ordinance that they need to comply.</i>

It is important to follow all traffic laws to keep everyone safe on road. The amount of traffic accidents and losses drops significantly when people are obeying the rules on the road. Sometimes we forget what a big responsibility it is to drive carefully. Traffic laws are designed to protect you and other drivers on the streets. If we do not follow them we are not only putting ourselves in risk but also other innocent people (Khan, et al., 2020).

By knowing the rules of the road, practicing good driving skills, you help play a vital role in preventing a crash. You will also be making the safety policies more effective. Many components play a major role in road safety including speed limits that are posted and making sure safety equipment is properly installed and used. Rules are the foundation of society. If there are no rules everyone would do whatever they want and have serious consequences (Hong et al., 2019).

The last identified theme is showing the importance to follow traffic rules. Obeying traffic rules is one of the safest methods to avoid accidents in the road. It can help our traffic enforcers in their duties and the motorists on the road. It can lead to a proper flow of the traffic and can be easily managed by our traffic enforcers. Everyone should follow the traffic rules to have a harmonious flow of the traffic. If everyone is disciplined, fewer accidents occur. Obeying traffic laws is a simple yet often overlooked action to prevent accidents. Even the slightest error can lead to accidents. When it comes to driving, obeying traffic rules and using common sense are essential. Traffic rules are in place to help protect you and others while operating a vehicle on the road. Make sure you know the rules and that you apply them to your own driving every day. When everyone is following the rules, the road is more organized, more efficient, and most importantly safer. There are a few traffic violations that are popularly disregarded, but if ignored even at the slightest can cause a major accident (Ren, et al., 2021).

In summary, the result are all about how obedient the motorists are in following the traffic rules and regulations, and whatever might happen in the road the traffic enforcers must be versatile in fulfilment of their duties, whatever scenarios, crisis might happen to the road is it collision, harassment, resistance, threats and aggressiveness from the motorist be always versatile. Also, don't forget to respond with calmness, patience and respect to the motorists as well, and if things go beyond the traffic enforcers control then it needs the traffic enforcers to seek assistance to the police for the motorist to be controlled.

#### **4. Conclusions**

After data collection with participants in the study, the research revealed the following findings, which were grouped together by themes such as Adversity in the fulfilment of duties; Encountering Harassment, Resistance, and Threats from the Motorists; Seeking Police Assistance in responding Aggressive Motorists; Responding with Calmness, Patience, and Respect to the Motorist and Obedience to Traffic Rules. These are the common lived experiences of the traffic enforcers in Ozamiz City based on the results of the interview being conducted by the researcher. Based on the findings of the study, it shows that majority of the traffic enforcers encountered harassment, resistance and threats from the motorists. Some motorists are unapproachable, aggressive and too arrogant violators that still insist that they did not commit any traffic violations. Through this, the enforcers will have no choice but to issue a ticket or call the police for assistance. Even though the violator shows rude behavior, the traffic enforcer still manages to maintain calm, patient and respect to the motorists in handling the situation.

## 5. Recommendations

It was recommended that the traffic enforcers of Ozamiz City may continue to show calm, patience and respect towards handling the rude behaviour of a certain motorist who violates the traffic law. However, if the arguments are going too far and the motorist is showing aggressiveness towards the traffic enforcer then it is safe to call for back up or police assistance. The Chief of the CTMS may continue to conduct more trainings and workshops pertaining to traffic management among traffic enforcers. To those who want to be a traffic enforcer in the city of Ozamiz, he/she must know some knowledge about the traffic law and have an appealing attitude in apprehending violators.

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*The authors declare no competing financial, professional and personal interests.*

#### *Consent for publication*

*Authors declare that they consented for the publication of this research work.*

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