Motorcycle Accidents Involving Stray Dogs: Lived Experiences of Riders

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ABSTRACT

Motorcycle riders remain among the most vulnerable road users, particularly in environments where stray animals frequently enter public roadways. This study explored the lived experiences of motorcycle riders involved in accidents caused by stray dogs in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, Philippines. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed to capture in-depth personal accounts of the phenomenon grounded in Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological framework. Twelve motorcycle riders who had experienced stray dog–related accidents within the past two years were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 30–45 minutes and analyzed using Moustakas' phenomenological method, including bracketing, horizonalization, thematic clustering, and textural-structural synthesis, ensuring adherence to credibility, dependability, and confirmability criteria.

The findings revealed six cluster themes: sudden appearance of stray dogs as the immediate cause of accidents; physical injuries sustained from the accident; emotional trauma, fear, and psychological distress after the accident; socio-economic impact of the accident on riders and their families; responsibility of dog owners and riders in preventing accidents; and recommended community and government interventions to reduce accidents. Verbatim participant accounts highlighted the unpredictability of stray dogs and the limited time for rider response. The study concludes that stray dog–related motorcycle accidents are multidimensional, involving physical, psychological, and socio-economic consequences, and are influenced by gaps in animal control and road safety enforcement at the barangay level. It is recommended that local government units strengthen stray animal management programs, intensify public awareness on responsible pet ownership, and implement targeted road safety interventions for motorcycle riders. Provision of psychosocial and financial support mechanisms for affected individuals is also encouraged to mitigate long-term consequences within specific local contexts rather than broad generalizations.

Keywords: animal control, motorcycle accidents, Ozamiz City, phenomenology, road safety, socio-economic impact, stray dogs

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

Stray animals on public roadways have emerged as a persistent and underexamined road safety hazard, particularly for motorcyclists who remain highly exposed due to the absence of structural protection. Sudden encounters with animals often result in abrupt evasive actions such as swerving or hard braking, which significantly increase the likelihood of loss of control, collisions, or severe injury. In many Philippine cities, including Ozamiz City, enforcement of animal control ordinances at the barangay level remains inconsistent, contributing to the continued presence of stray animals on roads. Recent road safety literature consistently highlights that motorcyclists are among the most vulnerable road users globally, with disproportionate mortality rates compared to other transport modes (Giovannini et al., 2024; Lai et al., 2025). Empirical findings further indicate that wildlife and animal-related collisions intensify crash severity due to unpredictable road intrusion patterns and limited rider reaction time (Zawad et al., 2025). Despite these global findings, there is limited

qualitative evidence that captures how riders themselves interpret and make meaning of these incidents within their local environment.

International evidence underscores that animal-vehicle collisions remain a growing concern across diverse geographical contexts. Studies in Europe demonstrate that motorcyclists face significantly higher injury probabilities in animal-related crashes compared to car occupants, particularly when evasive maneuvers are executed at high speeds (Bíl, 2024). Similarly, research using large-scale crash datasets reveals that collision severity is influenced by road conditions, speed, and temporal factors, with two-wheel vehicle users consistently identified as the most affected group (Santos et al., 2023; Huertas-Leyva et al., 2021). These findings collectively suggest that animal-vehicle interactions represent a critical yet often underestimated component of traffic safety discourse.

Within developing country contexts, the risks are further amplified by high motorcycle dependency and insufficient animal control systems. Evidence shows that motorcycle-related crashes constitute a substantial proportion of traffic injuries and fatalities, with collision-type events being a dominant contributing factor (Asgharpour et al., 2021). In urbanized settings across Asia, stray dogs are frequently implicated in road accidents, with motorcycle riders comprising the majority of victims (Chen et al., 2024). Despite increasing documentation of such incidents, many studies remain quantitative in nature, limiting understanding of the experiential and behavioral dimensions of riders involved in these collisions.

In the Philippine context, stray dog–related motorcycle accidents continue to be reported across various regions, yet empirical qualitative investigations remain scarce, particularly at the city level. Although institutional reports and media accounts indicate recurring incidents involving serious injuries and fatalities, there is a lack of localized, rider-centered research that explores lived experiences, coping responses, and perceived risks. Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to examine the lived experiences of motorcycle riders in Ozamiz City who have encountered accidents involving stray dogs, with the aim of generating context-specific insights that may inform road safety policy, urban animal management, and preventive interventions.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the lived experiences of motorcycle riders who were involved in accidents caused by stray dogs.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What were the experiences of motorcycle riders during their accidents involving stray dogs?

2. What physical, emotional, and socio-economic effects did the accidents have on the riders?

3. What actions were suggested by the riders to help the community and local government reduce accidents involving stray dogs?

METHODS

The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach anchored on Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of motorcycle riders involved in road accidents caused by stray dogs. This design was considered appropriate as it allows the exploration of subjective meanings, perceptions, and responses of individuals who have directly encountered the phenomenon while employing bracketing (epoché) to minimize researcher bias. The inquiry was situated in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, a locality where motorcycles serve as a primary mode of transportation and where stray animals are frequently observed along road networks. The area was purposively selected due to recurring reports of animal-related road incidents, making it a relevant setting for capturing authentic experiential accounts.

Participants were identified through purposive sampling to ensure direct relevance to the phenomenon under investigation. A total of twelve motorcycle riders, both male and female, aged between 18 and 40 years, who

had experienced stray dog–related accidents within the last two years, were included in the study. Additional participant characteristics were documented to enrich interpretation, including occupation, riding frequency (daily or occasional), helmet use, accident severity, and whether incidents occurred during daytime or nighttime. These are summarized below without compromising anonymity:

Profile Variable	Description
Occupation	Students, delivery riders, laborers, private employees
Riding Frequency	Daily commuters / Occasional riders
Helmet Use	Consistent / Inconsistent
Accident Timing	Daytime / Nighttime
Injury Severity	Minor to Moderate injuries

Inclusion criteria required firsthand involvement in such incidents, willingness to narrate experiences, and the ability to communicate clearly during interviews, while individuals with cognitive limitations or those involved in non-animal-related accidents were excluded. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached as evidenced by the repetition of responses and absence of new emerging meanings after the tenth to twelfth interview.

Data were gathered using a semi-structured interview guide developed in line with the research objectives and refined through expert validation in qualitative research. The interview guide consisted of opening, core, and exit questions designed to elicit rich descriptions of lived experiences. Prior to the main data collection, the instrument was pilot-tested to establish clarity, coherence, and contextual appropriateness of the questions. Participants were interviewed in a manner that encouraged open and reflective narration of their experiences. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with consent. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences, and measures were taken to minimize emotional discomfort during recollection of accident experiences.

Data analysis followed Moustakas' phenomenological framework, involving systematic processes of bracketing, horizonalization, clustering of significant statements, and the development of thematic descriptions. Member checking was conducted by returning summarized interpretations to participants for validation, while researcher reflexivity was maintained through reflective journaling. To ensure methodological rigor, the study observed credibility through member checking and prolonged engagement with participants, dependability through a clear audit trail of procedures, and confirmability through researcher reflexivity and documentation of analytic decisions. These strategies collectively strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings and ensured that interpretations remained grounded in participants' actual experiences rather than researcher bias.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of participants' lived experiences revealed six interrelated cluster themes that explain the phenomenon of motorcycle accidents involving stray dogs in Ozamiz City. These themes collectively illustrate the sequence of events from the sudden emergence of stray dogs to the resulting physical, emotional, socio-economic, and behavioral consequences, as well as the perceived need for collective preventive action. The findings indicate that such incidents are not isolated occurrences but interconnected experiences shaped by environmental unpredictability and systemic gaps in road and animal management.

Cluster Theme 1: Sudden Appearance of Stray Dogs as the Immediate Cause of Accidents

Participants consistently described how abrupt animal crossings left them with minimal or no time to react, often resulting in unavoidable collisions. Participant 4 shared: "Kalit lang kaayo mitabok ang iro, wala na gyud koy

time mupreno." This illustrates the suddenness and uncontrollable nature of the incident, emphasizing that accidents were not primarily due to rider negligence but environmental unpredictability.

The narratives emphasize that accidents were primarily triggered by the unpredictable movement of stray dogs rather than reckless driving behavior. This aligns with Mohanty et al. (2021), who reported that a significant proportion of animal-vehicle crashes involve stray dogs and disproportionately affect motorcyclists due to limited physical protection. Likewise, Pandey et al. (2024) confirmed that two-wheeler users are the most affected group in animal-related collisions, underscoring their heightened vulnerability. These findings suggest that road unpredictability introduced by stray animals significantly elevates crash risk, particularly in motorcycle-dependent environments.

Cluster Theme 2: Physical Injuries Sustained from the Accident

Participants reported a wide range of physical injuries, from minor abrasions to severe trauma requiring extended recovery periods. Participant 7 stated: "Naigo ko sa kalsada, nagka-sugat akong tiil ug kamot, lisod kaayo mulihok pila ka adlaw."These accounts demonstrate the vulnerability of motorcyclists even at low speeds.

These accounts reflect the immediate bodily consequences of collisions, particularly among unprotected motorcycle riders. This is consistent with Mohanty et al. (2021), who found that animal-related crashes frequently result in polytrauma among two-wheeler users. Similarly, Pandey et al. (2024) highlighted that such incidents often lead to multi-site injuries due to direct impact and road contact. The convergence of findings indicates that even low-speed encounters with stray dogs can result in significant physical harm, reinforcing the severity of this public safety issue.

Cluster Theme 3: Emotional Trauma, Fear, and Psychological Distress After the Accident

The participants' narratives reveal persistent emotional distress, including fear, anxiety, and traumatic recollections following the accident. Participant 2 explained: "Hadlok na ko mag-drive balik, labi na kung naay iro sa dalan." This reflects lasting psychological effects beyond physical recovery. Some reported avoidance behavior and reduced confidence in riding motorcycles. This is supported by Schuller et al. (2021), who found that crash survivors commonly experience elevated psychological distress even after physical recovery. Likewise, Boelen et al. (2022) documented long-term mental health consequences such as post-traumatic stress and anxiety among road accident victims. These findings highlight that stray-dog-related accidents extend beyond physical injury, producing lasting psychological consequences that affect daily functioning and mobility behavior.

Cluster Theme 4: Socio-Economic Impact of the Accident on Riders and Their Families

Participants emphasized financial strain caused by medical expenses, motorcycle repairs, and loss of income during recovery periods. Many riders experienced difficulty meeting household needs due to their inability to work. Participant 9 shared: "Dako kaayo kog gasto sa tambal ug repair, wala pa gyud koy kita ato nga time." This highlights the broader impact on livelihood and family stability.

This is consistent with Khan et al. (2022), who reported that motorcycle accident victims often face substantial income loss and medical expenditures. Alshammari et al. (2021) further noted that extended work absence significantly contributes to household economic instability among injured riders. These findings suggest that the impact of such accidents extends beyond the individual, affecting family livelihoods and financial resilience.

Cluster Theme 5: Responsibility of Dog Owners and Riders in Preventing Accidents

Participants stressed the importance of responsible pet ownership and accountability in preventing stray dog-related accidents. Participant 5 stated: "Dapat naay tag-iya mo-responsible, dili pasagdan ang iro sa dalan."

This connects individual experiences to broader issues of responsible pet ownership.

They highlighted that uncontrolled animals on roads pose avoidable risks to motorists. This aligns with Alzahrani et al. (2021), who identified unrestrained animals as a key factor in road collisions. Patel et al. (2022) further

emphasized that stronger enforcement of pet control regulations reduces accident incidence, while Kim and Lee (2023) noted that prevention depends on both human behavior and animal management. These studies reinforce the notion that road safety requires shared responsibility between pet owners and road users.

Cluster Theme 6: Recommended Community and Government Interventions to Reduce Accidents

Participants recommended stronger community coordination and government intervention, including stricter enforcement of animal control laws, public awareness campaigns, and organized stray animal management programs. Participant 11 noted: "Kung strikto ang barangay sa mga iro, siguro malikayan ni nga mga aksidente."

This directly points to gaps in barangay-level governance and enforcement.

Singh et al. (2021) found that structured community engagement can significantly reduce animal-vehicle collisions. Similarly, Oliveira and Santos (2022) reported that integrated enforcement and awareness strategies improve road safety outcomes. Chen et al. (2023) further highlighted that coordinated municipal interventions and stray animal control programs lead to measurable reductions in road accidents. These findings emphasize that sustainable solutions require collaborative action between local government units and communities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that stray-dog-related motorcycle accidents are multidimensional, involving environmental unpredictability, human vulnerability, emotional consequences, economic hardship, and governance gaps. The integration of participants' lived experiences with existing literature underscores the need for comprehensive, multi-sectoral interventions addressing both road safety and animal management systems.

CONCLUSION

The study provides a nuanced understanding of motorcycle accidents involving stray dogs in Ozamiz City through the lived experiences of affected riders. The findings should not be generalized broadly, as they reflect context-specific realities shaped by local governance, environmental conditions, and community practices.

The phenomenon reflects a broader road safety and governance concern that requires localized, multi-sectoral interventions rather than universal assumptions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings, there is a need for strengthened local governance mechanisms.

Barangay-level enforcement of animal control ordinances should be intensified, with clear accountability systems and monitoring mechanisms. Public awareness initiatives should be enhanced. Programs should be context-specific, targeting communities with high incidence of stray animal-related accidents. Support mechanisms for affected riders should also be considered. Future research should focus on localized data and avoid overgeneralization, while exploring policy implementation effectiveness in specific communities.

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