TRAFFIC SAFETY RESEARCH
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

TSR editorial triage: quality criteria

During the triage, the editor is expected to make a holistic assessment of the manuscript. The provided criteria should not be seen as a mere checklist to be filled mechanically. However, to pass the triage a submission is expected to lean toward 'Excellent' and have no hits under 'Poor'.

Research question (RQ)

Poor	Medium	Excellent
• RQ is not concisely formulated and cannot be easily found in abstract and introduction; neither is it revisited in discussion and conclusions.	• RQ becomes clear after reading the paper, but it is not concisely formulated and is hard to find in abstract and introduction.	• RQ is clearly formulated and can be easily found in abstract and introduction; it is revisited in discussion and conclusions.
• RQ lacks clear link to traffic safety making its relevance to the field uncertain.	• RQ touches on issues related to traffic safety but could benefit from a more explicit framing to enhance its relevance and clarity within the field.	• RQ is clearly related to traffic safety domain.
• RQ is too broad, unspecific, unfocused, split in too many 'side questions'.	• RQ is focused and clear, but deduction on reader's side is required to figure that out.	• RQ is precise, focused, clear, exactly outlining what it aims to investigate.
• RQ cannot be answered, or the answer is imposed already in the problem formulation.	• RQ is answerable, allowing for measurable outcomes or data that can be analysed and interpreted.	• RQ is answerable, allowing for measurable outcomes or data that can be analysed and interpreted.
• RQ is not researchable within the constraints of time, resources, and available data or methods.	• RQ is researchable within the constraints of time, resources, and available data or methods.	• RQ is researchable within the constraints of time, resources, and available data or methods.
• RQ is of low interest for the scientific community and practitioners.	• RQ is moderately interesting for the scientific community and practitioners.	• RQ piques the curiosity and interest of the scientific community and practitioners.
• RQ has been studied extensively; no new aspects or perspectives can be found.	• RQ has generally been studied, but it contains minor novel perspectives on the topic.	• RQ addresses an aspect that has not been extensively studied or offer a novel perspective on an existing topic.
• RQ relevance and urgency is questionable for the given context.	• RQ deals with a potentially relevant but not urgent traffic safety issue for the given context.	• RQ deals with a significant and urgent-to-address traffic safety issue for the given context.
• Answering RQ has none or very little potential to be converted into practical safety improvements.	• Answering RQ contributes some insights, but how and to which degree they can be converted into practical safety improvements is not obvious.	• Answering RQ contributes valuable insights that can be converted into tangible traffic safety improvements (injuries prevented, or policies and practices corrected).

Poor	Medium	Excellent
• RQ is 'why bother?'-type; answering it will have no implications for today's policy decisions and practices in the given context.	• RQ is 'nice-to-know'-type; answering it will have little implications for today's policy decisions and practices in the given context.	• RQ is 'must-know'-type; answering it is crucial for today's policy decisions and practices in the given context.
• RQ is disconnected from the context and current state-of-affairs, and is clearly driven by other motives rather than the actual knowledge needs (e.g. access to data or advanced statistical skills).	• RQ has weak connection to the context and current state-of-affairs, and is potentially driven other motives (e.g. access to data or advanced statistical skills) rather than the actual knowledge needs.	• RQ has direct connection to the context and current state-of-affairs, and is driven by clear knowledge needs.
• RQ does not comply with the ethical guidelines; ethical aspects have not been given thorough consideration.	• RQ complies with the ethical guidelines; ethical aspects have not been given thorough consideration.	• RQ complies with the ethical guidelines; ethical aspects have been given thorough consideration.
• RQ is hard to related to FINER and PICO (or its variation for the given study type) frameworks.	• RQ can be related to FINER and PICO (or its variation for the given study type) frameworks, but not in all dimensions.	• RQ can easily be related to FINER and PICO (or its variation for the given study type) frameworks.

Motivation (M) and existing knowledge review (KR)

Poor	Medium	Excellent
• M fails to use earlier research or existing data to support the relevance of RQ and study in general.	• M only weekly supports the relevance of RQ and study in general by referring to earlier research or existing data.	• M persuasively supports the relevance of RQ and study in general by referring to earlier research or existing data.
• M is too general and not study specific ('1.19 million killed in traffic').	• M provides relevant arguments but fails to make a persuasive holistic case of it.	• M provides clear arguments specific for the study contents and scope, in a holistic way.
• KR is shallow and consist of mixed ('random') sources without consideration to context, study quality, or relevance of findings.	• KR uses relevant sources but misses key references or have contextual gaps.	• KR is sufficiently thorough to outline state-of-affairs; sources are carefully selected to be relevant for the RQ, with regards to the context, study design and quality.
• KR presents literature in laundry list form with no clear story line or conclusions.	• KR tells a story but does not result in clear conclusions.	• KR tells a clear story that leads to specific conclusions, supporting RQ and method choice.

Method

Poor	Medium	Excellent
• Method is weak, unsound, or not adequately described; method does not (cannot) answer the stated RQ.	• Method fits well to RQ, but its description (level of details and language use) can be improved.	• Method fits well to RQ and is described in sufficient detail and using comprehensive language.
• Obvious errors are found in the method application.	• Method is applied correctly in general, only minor imperfections can be pointed out.	• Method is applied according to the current best practice.
• Method choice is primarily driven by other motives than providing the best answer to RQ within given constraints (e.g. motivated by access to a high-tech data collection tool or advanced statistical skills).	• Method is primarily chosen based on consideration of what is best to answer RQ within given constraints.	• Method is primarily chosen based on consideration of what is best to answer RQ within given constraints.
• Method is too novel or complex for no obvious reason (same answer could be received using a simpler approach).	• Method complexity is mostly adequate to properly address RQ.	• Method complexity is adequate to properly address RQ.

Results (R)

Poor	Medium	Excellent
• R are vague or incomplete.	• R are presented but lack clarity or depth.	• R are clearly and thoroughly presented.
• R are disorganized or hard to follow.	• R have some structure but lacks flow.	• R have logical structure with smooth flow and clear headings.
• R fails to utilize figures or tables effectively.	• R use figures/tables for presentation, but they are not always well-integrated.	• Figures/tables in R are well-designed and enhance understanding.
• Presented data and analyses are not linked to RQ.	• Data and analyses are mostly relevant for RQ.	• Data and analyses directly support and answer RQ.
• R are characterised by overinterpretations and speculations.	• R are partly mixed with their interpretations and related discussions.	• R are presented objectively, leaving interpretation for the discussion.

Discussion (D)

Poor	Medium	Excellent
• D lacks clear structure, jumps between the ideas, is hard to follow.	• D's organization is mostly clear but may jump occasionally or lack smooth transitions.	• Discussion follows a clear and coherent structure, presents ideas in a logical progression supporting the overall argument.
• D mostly restates the results without adding interpretative value; it fails to meaningfully link them to the RQ.	• D has limited interpretative depth, offering only a partial connection to the RQ.	• D clearly explains what the findings mean in the context of the RQ and hypothesis.
• D fails to relate the results to previous research and broader scientific context.	• D relates results to previous research but misses some key references while highlighting less relevant studies.	• D successfully compares/contrasts study results with previous research to highlight novelty or consistency.
• D fails to acknowledge limitations of the study, creates an image of certainty and perfection.	• D mentions limitations briefly but without detail or reflection.	• D transparently discusses the study's limitations and constraints, such as sample size, methods, or potential biases.
• D's interpretations are narrow and lacking consideration for alternative explanations.	• D mentions a few other explanations but without deep analysis.	• D reflects on other plausible interpretations of the results, clearly showing critical thinking.
• D overlooks broader implications of the study, its practical applications, directions for future research.	• D touches on implications but with limited insight or vague suggestions.	• D reflects on study's implications and significance, such as how the findings contribute to the field, their practical applications, or future research directions.
• D makes claims that are unreasonable or unsupported by the results.	• D is generally balanced but may lean slightly toward overstatement or undue caution.	• D avoids making overstatements or being overly cautious; it has right scientific balance.

Conclusions (C)

Poor	Medium	Excellent
• C section is missing, or it lacks clearly formulated conclusions.	• C are present but lack clear structure and conciseness.	• C are formulated in a concise manner (e.g. bullet point list), succinctly summarizing all main takeaways from the study.
• C are trivial and superficial; they mostly repeat study findings with no attempt to generalize.	• C provide a concise summary of the findings but offer limited generalized takeaways.	• C clearly highlight the new knowledge delivered by the study and how it is useful for broader context then the study itself.
• Conclusions are not based on the actual study results.	• Conclusions are mostly supported by the study contents.	• Conclusions are firmly based on the study contents.

Language, style, visualizations, formatting

Poor	Medium	Excellent
• Formal submission requirements are not fulfilled.	• Formal submission requirements are fulfilled.	• Formal submission requirements are fulfilled.
• Language is poor and requires proof-reading.	• Eventual language imperfections do not disturb the reading flow.	• Eventual language imperfections do not disturb the reading flow.
• Writing style is inappropriate for academic writing (e.g. jargon, spoken expressions, contractions).	• Writing style is appropriate for academic writing.	• Writing style is appropriate for academic writing.
• Narrative structure is poor; manuscript is hard to follow and understand.	• Manuscript has a clear structure but occasionally is hard to follow or understand.	• Manuscript has a clear structure, is easy to follow and understand.
• Manuscript is sloppily formatted and is not ready for submission.	• Manuscript is generally well formatted though some unfinished traces can be found.	• Manuscript is thoroughly formatted and give impression of a finalised product.
• Visual materials are not readable, of poor resolution/colour choice/text size, cluttered with unnecessary elements, duplicate information already present in the text/tables, fail to convey the point, redundant.	• Visual materials are generally comprehensive and complement the text/tables; their readability, colour choice or resolution could be improved; some elements could be considered clutter.	• Visual materials are comprehensive, complementary to the text/tables, aesthetically balanced, readable, clutter-free; they perform well on colour and b/w print.
• Tables lack clear structure, excessively complex, duplicate information present in the text/visuals, overloaded with information, poorly formatted.	• Tables have clear structure and formatting and generally complement well information present in the text/visuals; occasional information/elements could be considered redundant or overcomplex.	• Tables have clear structure, complement well information present in the text/visuals, present minimally necessary information, well formatted.

Practical usefulness

Poor	Medium	Excellent
• Manuscript provides abstract or purely theoretical results with no mention of real-life relevance.	• Manuscript suggests potential applications but lacks concrete details or actionable pathways.	• Manuscript clearly demonstrates how findings address specific real-world problems or needs.
• Manuscript is overloaded with technical language that limits accessibility and uptake.	• Manuscript is understandable to specialists but not easily accessible to broader audiences.	• Manuscript communicates implications clearly for diverse stakeholders, including practitioners and policymakers.
• The study is very context specific and provides limited interest for international community.	• The study presents findings with local relevance; their broader applicability is limited.	• The study offers valuable insights within a specific context, with potential relevance for similar settings globally or as a foundation for comparative research.
• Manuscript offers no suggestions for implementation or further applied work	• Manuscript mentions practical steps vaguely, without considering their practical feasibility.	• Manuscript proposes specific and context-relevant follow-up actions and strategies for implementation.
• Manuscript does not consider contextual relevance and potential impact of the work.	• Manuscript touches on broader impact but does not explore it in depth.	• Manuscript explicitly discusses contextual significance of the work from practical, economic, societal, etc. perspectives.