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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF “DRIFTING” IN THE KSA.

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Abstract

Car drifting is a serious problem as it may lead to damage of the body, loss of some organs, loss of public and private materials as well suffering borne by the parents of drifters, as they suffer because of the bad reputation of their son actions. Causes of popularity of this phenomenon are the desire to be famous, weak control of parents, media, websites and weakness of religious faith

The purpose of this study was to analyze road traffic accident data from drifters, investigate the lifestyle of drifters, and suggest lowering the risk of accidents caused by drifting. We will also recommend lifestyle modifications in drifting to improve quality of life and may suggest safe practices.

Our main finding in this study was that the majority of drifters are teenager students and they learned it and started it at an early age, with their friends being the most encouraging factor and their family the most discouraging factor. Most of them damaged cars and many knew a friend who was injured or killed by drifting. Camry & Hilux users seemed to have more dangerous behaviours compared to other car users.

Drifting has a negative effect on the socioeconomic and health state of the country. We think it is difficult to stop, but recommend it should be regulated so it is a legal activity in special areas, so to keep drifters busy but in a safe environment. This will save lives and reduce the socioeconomic and health cost burden.

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Introduction:-

Drifting requires skill, and is growing in popularity. There is potential for harm if the driver loses control of the car. While it wasn't up until recently that drifting became as popular as it is today, the history of drifting dates back to many years ago. Drivers have been using this technique as early as the 1930's in Grand Prix races. People didn't call it drifting back then, but throughout the 20th century it started as a racing technique used in motorsports.

Drifting which better known locally as “hajwalah” or “tafheet”, where the car is intentionally spun several times at speed of 180 kph or more, this form of reckless stunt-driving is strongly condemned in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with strict sentences for drivers involved in fatal accidents.

Car drifting is a serious problem which may lead to damage of the body, loss of some organs, and loss of public and private property. It also affects the parents of the persons who drift; they suffer if their child is injured or killed and

also due to the bad reputation of their child's actions. Causes of popularity of this phenomenon are the desire to be famous, weak control of parents, media and websites popularizing this and weakness of religious faith.

A published definition is "Drifting refers to a specific driving technique, as well as a type of motor sport based on that technique. It occurs when the wheels are pointing in a different direction to the direction the car is sliding overall. Drifting requires skill, and is growing in popularity. There is potential for harm if the driver loses control of the car." [1]

In the process, racers often drive dangerously close to traffic, barriers and spectators, who are watching from the sides without any protection. Drifters usually drive and damage local rental vehicles. "Tafheet" practice and events occur with little to no concern for any vehicle occupants, other drivers or any spectator safety.

In videos posted to YouTube, large crowds are seen gathering by the side of the road to watch drivers skid their cars – often typical family sedans like Honda Accords and Hyundai Sonatas – through traffic at high speeds, sometimes heading in the wrong direction. These uploaded video give drivers' kudos within the culture even after vehicle damage, major injury or fatality and naturally after successful high speed skill displays. Tragically it terrorizes other highway users who are unaware of the event until they are in the middle of it and at risk of death or major injury. Several of the clips show out of control cars crashing into spectators causing serious injury, or even death. One particularly graphic video that surfaced in the internet in May 2013 showed a car that rolled through a crowd as several passengers were thrown from vehicle. A middle-aged man in Saudi Arabia was been sentenced to execution by public beheading after killing two people while 'drifting' his car.

Causes of Drifting:-

Drifting is gaining popularity as it spreads all over the internet via social networking sites like MySpace and YouTube. There is a cult following for many drifters, who have earned such titles as 'The Drift King' or 'Drift Master' from their outrageous drifting antics. However, despite all the glory from enthusiasts, drifting is quickly becoming a public safety hazard and a nuisance for Saudi authorities.

"The driving problems are with young people," Ali Abdul-Rahman Al-Mazyad, a Saudi columnist in Riyadh told The Media Line. "There are very little outlets for young people to enjoy themselves and kids basically do what they want."

"There is also not such great education in schools about driving and respecting the road," he said. "Drug use is also a contributing factor. These are the central problems." [2]

During a New York Times investigation, their reported found that between drag races and the "drifting" shown in the videos, the Saudi streets came to resemble a cross between the movies *Death Race* and *The Fast and The Furious*. It seems that a great national boredom, or "tufush," has seized the young men of Saudi, and with no public entertainment and few jobs, an underground car culture has flourished. Wealthier and middle-class men drag race Corvettes and Imprezas all night, but for the poorer, more desperately in need of excitement, only drifting cars through and around traffic will do. And the scene has created one crazy melting pot of young, angry desperation. "The idea behind drifting is, the economy and society don't need you," says Pascal Ménoret, an anthropologist with four years of field work in Riyadh. "They are mostly young Bedouins who recently moved to the city, and whose lives are marked by suffering and self-destructive behavior." [3]

Literature Review

Drifting is gaining popularity as it spreads all over the internet via social networking sites like MySpace and YouTube. There is a cult following for many drifters, who have earned such titles as 'The Drift King' or 'Drift Master' from their outrageous drifting antics. However, despite all the glory from enthusiasts, drifting is quickly becoming a public safety hazard and a nuisance for Saudi authorities.

There have been several drifting accidents which have resulted in fatalities over the years. The most infamous 'Abu Kab' drifting accident occurred in Riyadh in 2005 when a Navy officer decided to try his hand at performing the Arab Drift. He rented a Honda Accord and allowed 4 young boys to ride with him at a speed of 120 kph. The officer crashed and 3 of his passengers were killed. He was found guilty of negligence and sentenced to death by a Jeddah court. [4]

The Saudi government adopted the tougher law this past spring to deter Arab drifting and joyriding. Previously, fatalities would have been classified as “accidental” but now they are classified as “criminal negligence” which carries a much heavier punishment than the prior. Government officials hope that such a serious punishment will deter future Arab drifters from setting foot, or tire for that matter, on Saudi roads with the intention of performing daredevil stunts.

Jeddah's traffic department has recorded a whopping 2,000 cases of motorists running red lights over a two-week period. Lt. Col. Zaid Al-Hamzi, spokesman of the city's traffic department, said 60 percent of the violators were detected by the Saher system and the rest by security patrols. He said teenagers were responsible for most of the violations. A total of 200 violators were arrested, detained for 48 hours and fined SR500 each. Al-Hamzi said that during the same period, about 1,500 offenses were detected for drifting, passenger overloading, hiding of license plates, driving without seat belts, speeding, and talking on mobile phones while driving. Al-Hamzi urged motorists to abide by the country's traffic laws for the safety of all road users. [5].

The World Health Organization found Saudi Arabia to have the world's highest number of deaths from road accidents, which now make up the country's principal cause of death in adult males aged 16 to 36. First reported by the Saudi daily Arab News, the study found that 6,485 people had died and more than 36,000 were injured in over 485,000 traffic accidents during 2008 and 2009. [2].

An average of 19 Saudi Arabian residents die on the country's roads each day, a report by the Kingdom's General Directorate of Traffic has revealed. [7] In an interview with *Arab News* in September, the associate vice president and transportation systems director of Middle East Operations at traffic management consultancy Iteris Inc., Glenn N. Havinovski, said infrastructure wasn't an issue, but "when you see people turning left out of the far right lane and traffic cutting through parking lots and frontage roads, there are clearly some issues with discipline." [6]

Study Aim and Objectives:-

There are very few publications on the drifting and none were found in the on the Middle Eastern population. The aim of the study is to document and analyze road traffic accident data from drifters.

Objectives:-

- Analyze road traffic accident data from drifters.
- Investigate the lifestyle of drifters.
- Suggest lowering the risk of accidents caused by drifting.
- Recommend designated areas for drifting and attracting drifters to these areas.
- Suggest safe practices for drifting.
- Investigate risk factors for drifting.
- Suggest lifestyle modifications in drifting to improve quality of life and better future.
- The benefit of this work is that this research will help in raising the level of awareness the society by explaining the side effects and harms of drifting.

Methods:-

1. Study design: Random, cross-sectional study
 2. Study population and sample size: This will be a random cross-sectional study of 100 male subjects, aged 16 to 40 years, who will be recruited by personal contacts and online forums of the drifting community. Exclusion criteria will be subjects who do not drift. All subjects will complete a questionnaire.
 3. Data collection: A questionnaire has been prepared and will be validated to make sure it is reliable. It will pilot tested in AGU before being made available to drifters via an online questionnaire.
- Variables: The research is based on questionnaire (see Appendix) results recording age, marital status, occupation, educational level. Other questions are age of drifting initiation, what factors encourage you to drift, what factors discourage you to drift, car model, presence or absence of a driving license, drift frequency, seat belt use, frequency of car damage, frequency of being caught or arrested by police, whether any friends died or were injured by drifting and which areas do you prefer to drift.

Data Analysis:-

Method of analysis: All data will be presented as mean \pm standard deviation unless otherwise stated. Package used: IBM SPSS Statistics 19. Statistical tests used: Paired t-test, linear and multiple regression analyses.

The data will be analysed by SPSS version 19. The results will be expressed as means (\pm SD). Odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CI) will be calculated.

The Pearson's Chi squared (χ^2) and Fisher's exact tests were used to determine statistically significant associations of categorical variables. For quantitative variables, an unpaired t-test was used.

Results:-**A. Descriptive results**

All 105 subjects in this study were male and all were from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The mean age (\pm SD) of all our subjects was 18.44 ± 3.33 years. Their age range was 14 – 36 years. Their age of initiation i.e. the age they started drifting, was 15.10 ± 1.86 years. Their age of initiation range was 12 – 26 years. The mean number of times they drifted in one week was 2.63 ± 1.77 times.

B. Frequency

94 % of the drifters in this study were single (Figure 1). The remaining 6 % of drifters were equally either married or divorced. In terms of age, most subjects in our study were young. 54 % of drifters were aged 14 to 17 years, 29 % were aged 18 to 21 years and only 17 % were aged 22 years and above (Figure 2).

In terms of occupation, 71.4 % of the drifters in this study were students, while 21.9 % were unemployed and only 7 % were other i.e. employed (Figure 3). 91.4 % of our drifters started at a young age (12 – 17 years), 8.5 started from 18 to 21 and only 1 % of people started to drift after 22 years of age (Figure 4).

In our population, friends and free time were considered as the major encouraging factors for drifting with percentages of 35.2 % and 23.8 %, respectively (Figure 5). The remaining 41 % of encouraging factors included after exams, after football matches, stress and other factors. The greatest factors which helped discourage drifters in our study to drift were family (34.3 %). Other discouraging factors included police, religion, teachers, fear and other factors (Figure 6).

69.5 % of drifters in our study revealed that there was damage to their own vehicle or to others vehicles during the time they were drifting (Figure 7). A minority of only 30.5 % reported that there no car damage during the time they were drifting. 38.1 % of our drifters admitted they had been arrested for drifting on at least on one occasion (Figure 8). The majority were not arrested.

72.4 % of our drifters would participate in drifting 1-3 time/week, while only 27.6 % would get involved 4-7 times per week.

Figure 1:- Bar chart showing the frequency of marital status of drifters in our study (n=105).

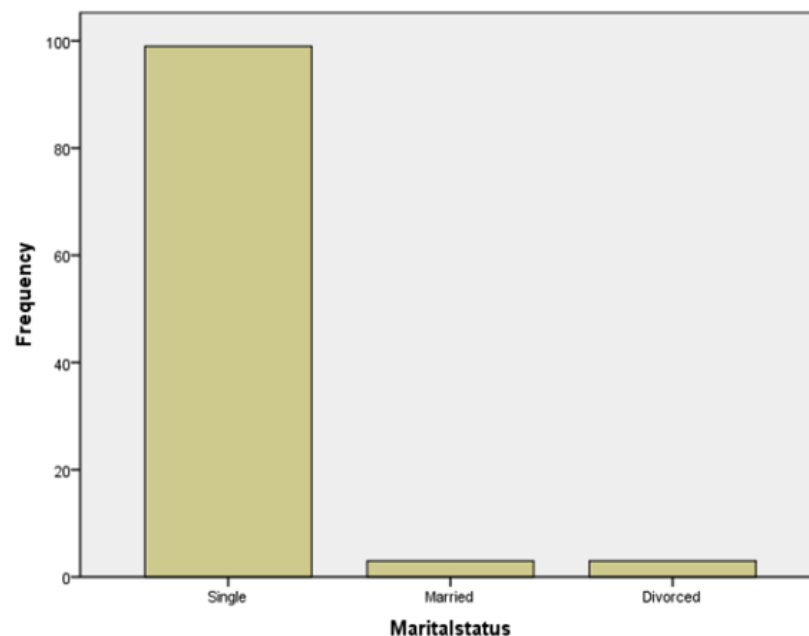


Figure 2:- Bar chart showing the frequency of various ages of drifters in our study (n=105).

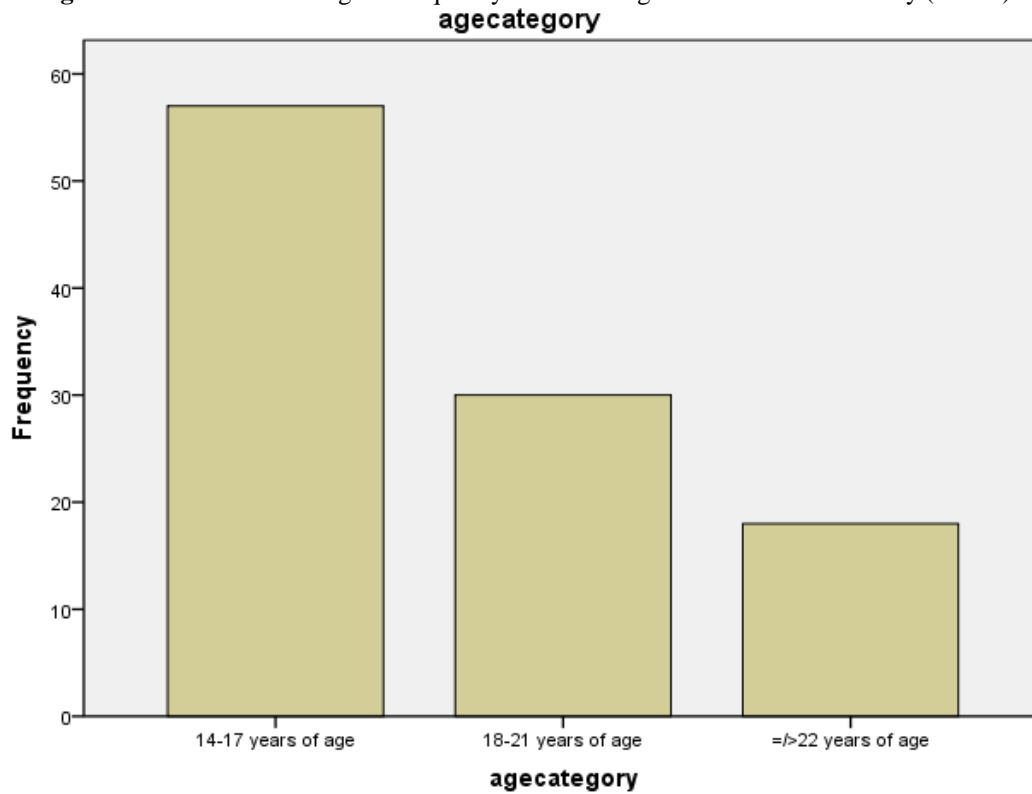


Figure 3:- Bar chart showing the frequency of various occupations of drifters in our study (n=105).

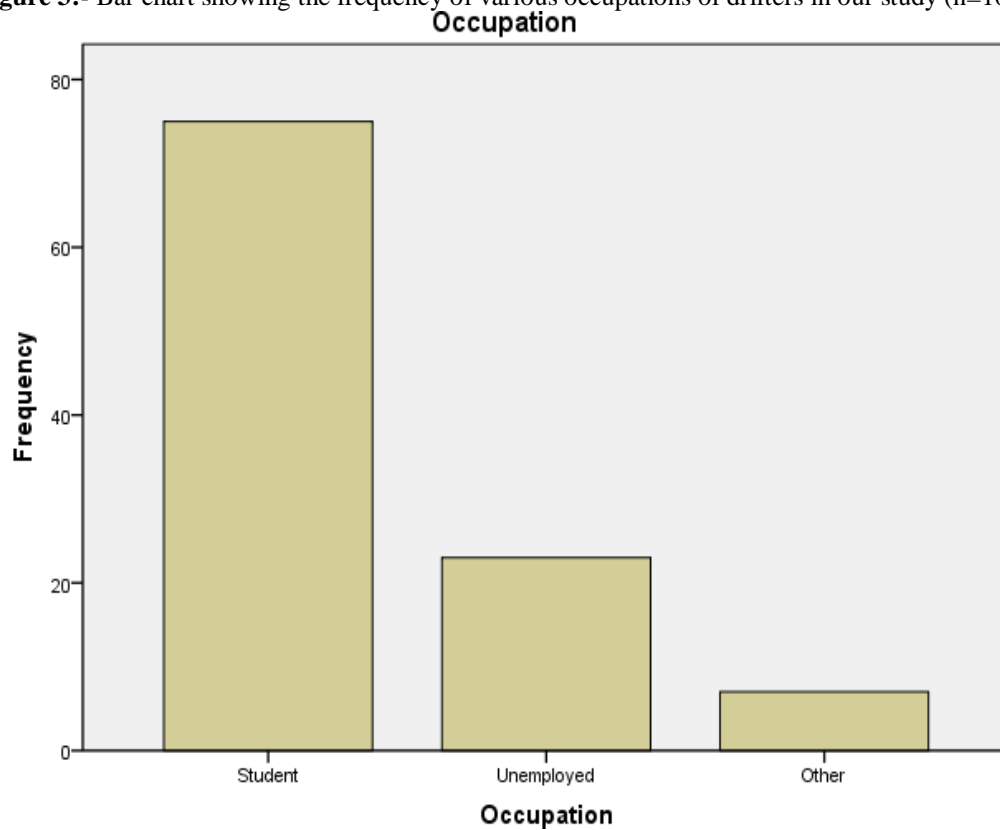


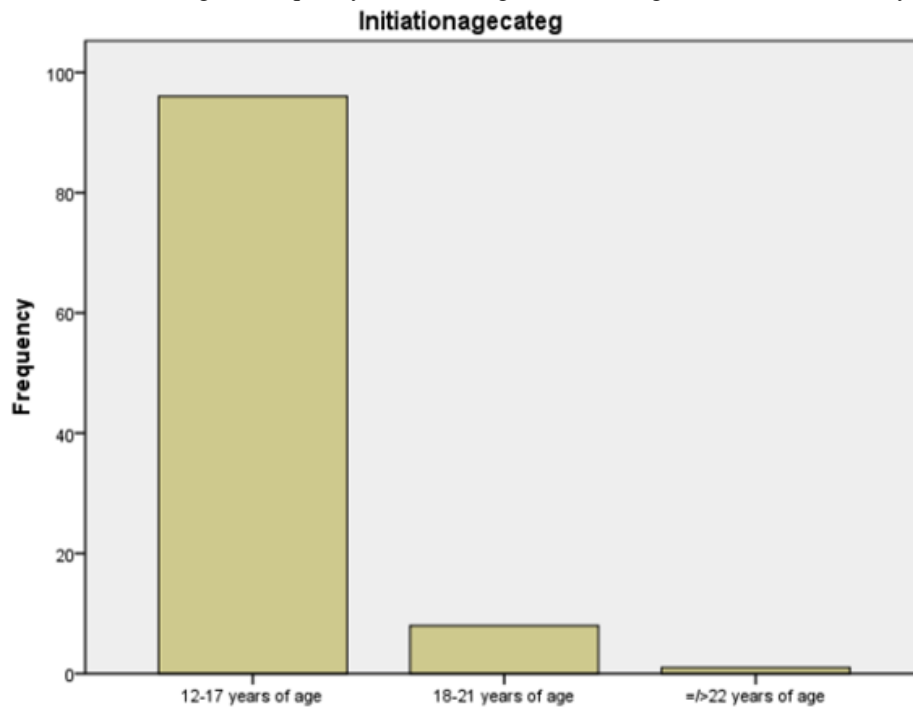
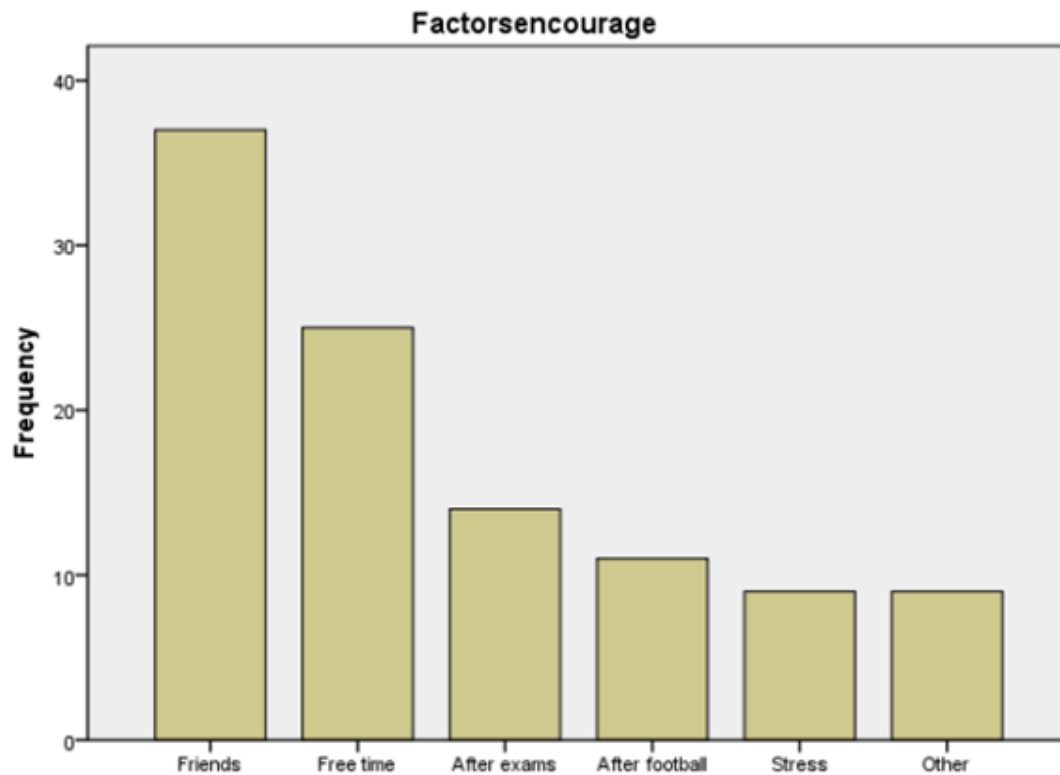
Figure 4:- Bar chart showing the frequency of various ages of initiating in drifters in our study (n=105).**Figure 5:-** Bar chart showing the frequency of various factors which encouraged our subjects to drift (n=105).

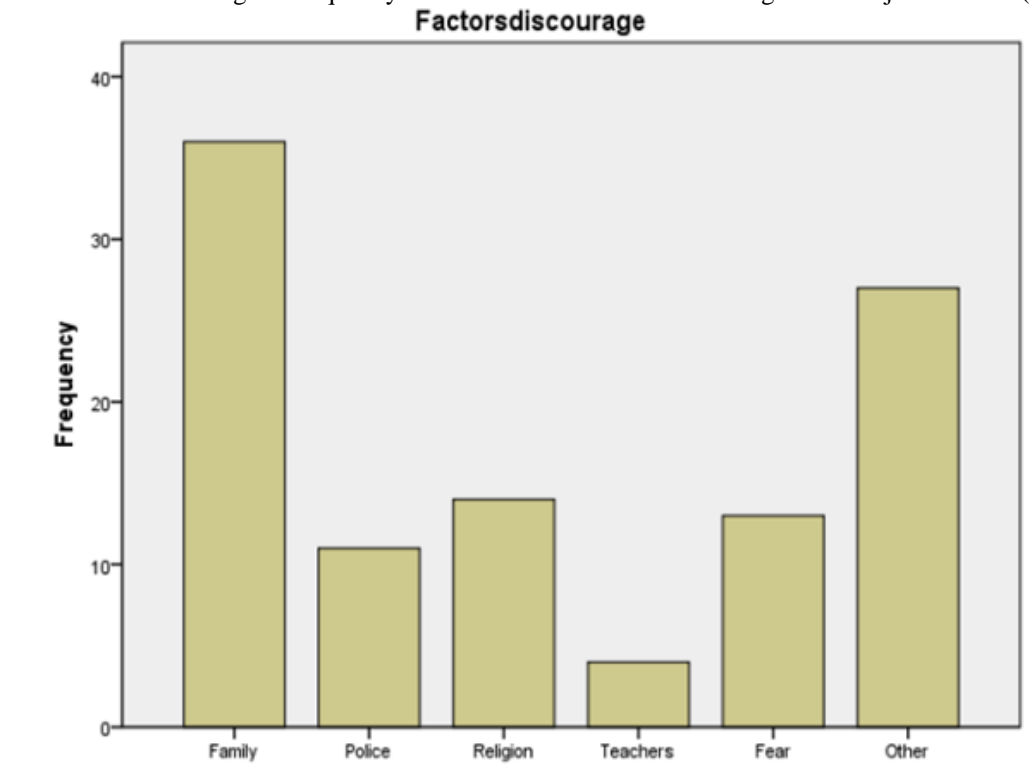
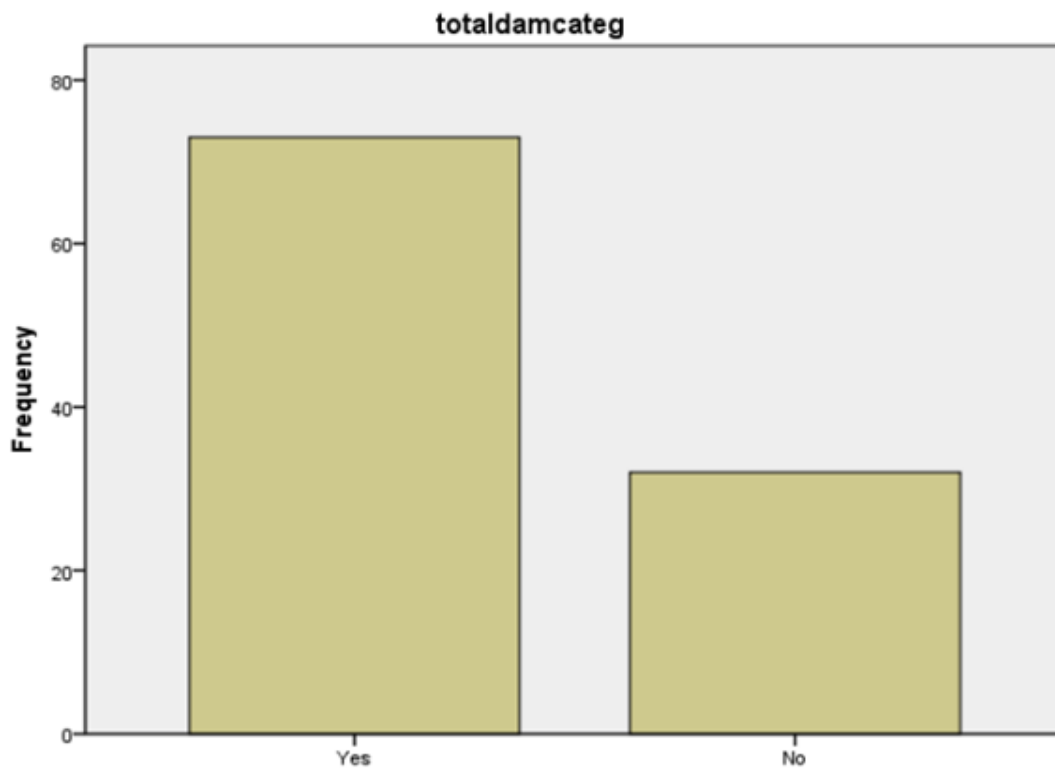
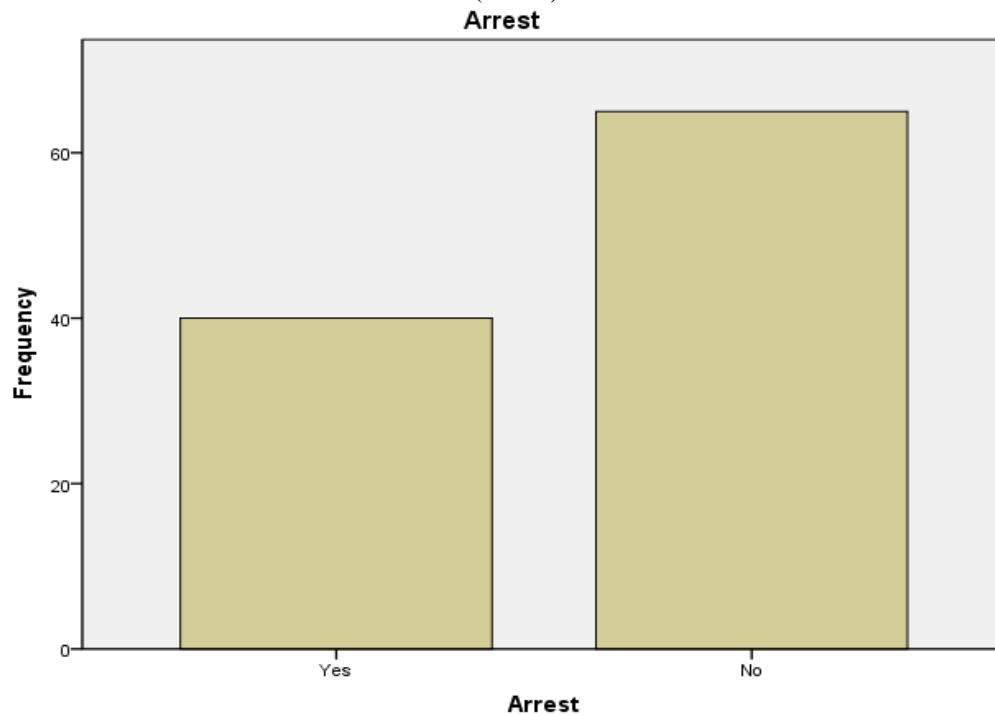
Figure 6:- Bar chart showing the frequency of various factors which discouraged our subjects to drift (n=105).**Figure 7:-** Bar chart showing the frequency of total vehicle damage (own and others vehicles) during drifting (n=105).

Figure 8:- Bar chart showing the frequency of whether our study participants were ever arrested during drifting or not (n=105).



Chi-square analysis

I. Effect of age on results state ...

- ❖ Age did not have a significant effect on whether drifters were arrested or not ($\chi^2 = 0.288$, $p = 0.591$). See Table 1.
- ❖ There were also no significant effect of the age on whether police caught drifters or not ($\chi^2 = 0.338$, $p = 0.561$).
- ❖ All the following relationships were not significant when relating age to the following:
 1. death of friend during drifting ($\chi^2 = 2.627$, $p = 0.105$)
 2. frequency of drifting ($\chi^2 = 0.450$, $p = 0.502$)
 3. injury of friend during drifting ($\chi^2 = 2.702$, $p = 0.100$)
 4. seatbelt use during drifting ($\chi^2 = 0.586$, $p = 0.444$)
 5. total damage to the car ($\chi^2 = 2.794$, $p = 0.095$)
- ❖ There was also no significant effect of the age category on the frequency of drifting (Table 2; $\chi^2 = 0.338$, $p = 0.561$).

Table 1:- χ^2 analysis showing relationship between arrest and age of drifters (n=105).

		Arrest		Total
		Yes	No	
agecategory	14-17 years of age	20	36	56
	=/>18 years of age	20	29	49
Total		40	65	105

Table 2:- χ^2 analysis showing relationship between frequency of drifting and their age category (n=105).**agecategory * Driftfreqcateg Crosstabulation**

Count		Driftfreqcateg		Total
		1-3 times/week	4-7 times/week	
agecategory	14-17 years of age	39	17	56
	=/ > 18 years of age	37	12	49
Total		76	29	105

II. Age of initiation of drifting:

There were no significant effects of age of drifting initiation on the following:

- ❖ Death ($\chi^2 = 0.861$, $p = 0.353$).
- ❖ Injury ($\chi^2 = 0.047$, $p = 0.674$).
- ❖ Seat belt use ($\chi^2 = 0.008$, $p = 0.927$).
- ❖ Total vehicle damage ($\chi^2 = 0.585$, $p = 0.444$).

III. Occupation:

Unemployed drifters had significantly higher prevalence of injuries of a friend during drifting than students drifters ($\chi^2 = 8.111$, $p = 0.004$). See Table 3.

Table 3:- χ^2 analysis showing relationship between injury and occupation of drifters (n=105).

		Injury		Total
		Yes	No	
Occupation	Student	30	45	75
	Unemployed	17	6	23
Total		47	51	98

There were no significant effects of occupation of drifters on:

- ❖ Death ($\chi^2 = 3.099$, $p = 0.078$).
- ❖ Seatbelt use ($\chi^2 = 1.527$, $p = 0.217$).
- ❖ Total vehicle damage ($\chi^2 = 2.473$, $p = 0.116$).
- ❖ Arrest during drifting ($\chi^2 = 0.074$, $p = 0.785$).
- ❖ Police catching drifters ($\chi^2 = 0.008$, $p = 0.767$).

Car model vs. seatbelt

Users of Camry and Hilux drifting vehicles had significantly lower prevalence of seat belt use during drifting (Table 4). As the χ^2 analysis had an expected count lower than 5, Fisher's Exact Test was used. This showed that when Camry cars were compared with Other cars, Camry users had significantly lower prevalence of seat belt use during drifting ($p=0.05$). Similarly, when Hilux and Other cars were compared, Hilux users had significantly lower prevalence of seat belt use during drifting ($p=0.04$).

Lastly, using a χ^2 analysis Camry and Hilux was combined and compared to Others cars. Results showed Camry + Hilux users had significantly lower prevalence of seat belt use during drifting ($\chi^2 = 5.13$, $p=0.023$). The odds ratio of wearing a seatbelt during drifting (to not of wearing a seatbelt during drifting) in Camry + Hilux users, compared to Other car users was 0.286 (95 % CI, 0.091 - 0.864).

Table 4:- χ^2 analysis and results showing the relationship between seat belt use and car model used by drifters (n=105).

		Seatbeltuse		Total
		Yes	No	
Car model	Camry	4	24	28
	Hilux	2	18	20
	Other	19	38	57
Total		25	80	105

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.353 ^a	2	.042
Likelihood Ratio	6.731	2	.035
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.647	1	.031
N of Valid Cases	105		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.76.

Discussion:-

Our main finding in this study was that the majority of drifters are teenager students and they learned it and started it at an early age, with their friends being the most encouraging factor and their family the most discouraging factor. Most of them damaged cars and many knew a friend who was injured or killed by drifting. Camry & Hilux users seemed to have more dangerous behaviours (not using their seatbelts) compared to other car users.

There are no deeper reasons apart from excitement and fun making that makes people in Saudi Arabia take part in drifting. In truth, drifting is mostly a reflection of other social issues including drug abuse, selfishness and deviance. Many people who attempt or actually drift their cars might be under the influence of drugs. What moves one to drifting is purely a selfish desire to satisfy one's curiosity without put into considerations other road users and relatives. The fact that drifting is illegal in Saudi Arabia, participating in it is an outward show of the levels of deviance among Saudi drivers. It is expected that once the government declares an act illegal people should desist from it.

Major concerns noted in our study were that the average age of 105 drifters was 18 years of age and some were as young as 14 years. Also, we found that the most of them initiated drifting at a very young average age of only 15 years, and some had started by even 12 years of age. It is difficult to imagine how the parents of these children allow this, but it is happening. At the time of injuries or death, parents have called for the death penalty of the responsible drifting drivers, but parents shoulder the full responsibility of their children's actions and should know where they are and what they are doing. In assessing factors encouraging our drifters, we noticed that friends and free time were considered the most important numerically, while their family was one of several factors discouraging them from drifting the most. In order to limit the level of drifting we have to deal with the most discouraging factor starting with their family. The family and parents should make their relationship stronger with their children, talk to them, let them know that they are an important member in their family, that they love them and that they are afraid from losing them. This can be exploited where by the Ministry of the Interior and Transport Departments can advertise on television and through brochures/pamphlets and target drifters and their families. Information can be given to them about the dangers of drifting with statistics to prove their point.

The majority of drifters in our study had either damaged their car or other cars while drifting. This is a large amount. If these figures were only halved, lots of resources including court, police, hospital, car insurance and other costs will be saved. No one has estimated the financial burden of drifting in Saudi Arabia, but an intelligent guess would put it in the billions of Riyals annually.

Approximately one third of our drifters' claim they had been arrested by the police. Video footage of drifters often shows they are ready and planning to escape. They choose a specific area e.g. empty space out of the city; this gives them the opportunity to escape easily. It was interesting to note that drivers who used a Camry or Hilux to drift had significantly less seatbelt usage than other car drifters. Therefore, it seems these two brands were popular and maybe drivers of these cars had more dangerous behaviours compared to other car users. The number of drifters who knew someone who had died or was injured during drifting was almost equal. It is unclear whether the factors

discouraging them from drifting would be different between these two groups, but we did not analyse this data as our sample size was only 105 and we had several discouraging factors.

With regard to the age and gender of the drifters, all are male and most are young. They are at a sensitive age with their hormones changes, in which their testosterone levels are increasing. They have a greater desire to try new things and get involved in different activities. If they are not given opportunities for outings, sports, etc then they might be attracted to drifting and other dangerous behaviours such as substance abuse. We noticed that their friends are the most common factor for them encouraging them to drift.

We had no way to compare our data with other GCC countries, such as Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain or the UAE, as we could not find any published data on this topic. However, anecdotal evidence suggests this problem is not very common in these other neighbouring countries. One possible reason for this could be that in these other GCC countries, their governments have provided avenues for young men to release their energy, be it by providing special spaces for these activities, other sports activities, competitions, greater opportunities for higher education, allowing them drift or drag race during competitions, so to allow it in a legal way. One such example is the Bahrain International Circuit (Formula1 Track), where people can drift or drag legally and safely using their own cars and also they have opportunities to use go-karts.

In coming to the outcome, every year the government loses billion of riyals to treat the drifters and the people who get injured from drifting. A large proportion of hospital beds have patients paralyzed by road traffic accidents including drifters or their spectators. In addition to all of that they waste the time of policemen who try to stop and catch them. It's a very serious issue which has also reached the social media. A famous Saudi television programme called 'Al Tamanna with Dawood Shriya', contacted some drifters for one of their episodes. They revealed two shocking facts: firstly, some of drifters steal others cars in order to use it in drifting and then they burn it after they have finished drifting. Secondly: they hide their faces and refuse giving their real name, but use nicknames in their activity. This is obviously so they cannot be identified by the authorities.

A limitation of our study was that data was only collected from one GCC country.

Drifting has a negative effect on the socioeconomic and health state of the country. We think it is difficult to stop, but recommend it should be regulated so it is a legal activity in special areas, so to keep drifters busy but in a safe environment. This will save lives and reduce the socioeconomic and health cost burden. They harm themselves and they should be aware of what Allah says in the Quran (وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ) 'do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction' البقرة آية 195

Conclusion and Recommendation:-

There is no doubt that drifting is a now major problem in Saudi Arabia. The fact that road accidents have been rated the number one killer shows how a menace drifting is. What makes it more problematic is that fact that many commercial organizations have funded advertisements for drifting or dangerous driving in order to make their products acceptable and popular among the youths. In addition, the increase in internet access as seen by the availability of free drifting videos in YouTube has continued to encourage many youths to take part in the act. The best way to decrease its frequency should be stripping away the participants driving licenses' besides charging them in a court of law. In this case they will be unwilling to participate since their freedom to drive will be taken away from them once their driving licenses are impounded.

It is really unfortunate that commercial enterprises have found a platform to advertise their commodities in such a social menace as drifting. Youth subcultures especially dangerous sports like drifting should be discouraged by all stakeholders. The idea of commercial enterprises to fund dangerous behaviours is very frustrating and in bad faith. Such firms include manufacturers of cars, tires and soft drinks. They are contributing to a course that will see many youths engage in dangerous driving hence high speed road accident cases and ultimately raising death tolls. This is the case where commercial enterprises run product adverts that show product acceptance among street youth gangs that are suspected of perpetuating crime and other social evils.

We don't want to have our youth living fast and dying young but rather living the normal pace and fully completing the metamorphosis of phases that life has laid before them. Until next time, please slow the pace down. From this it is obvious that to discourage drifting, ministries of health, interior, sports, culture and education need to work together to rid ourselves of this evil.

Acknowledgments:-

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Appendix

‘Survey on road traffic accidents as a consequence of “drifting” in Saudi Arabia’

1. Age: _____ years
2. Nationality: _____
3. Marital Status: ☐ single ☐ married ☐ divorced
4. Occupation: _____
5. Education level: ☐ High school ☐ University
6. What was your age when you started drifting? _____ years
7. What encourages you to drift? (can be more than one box)
 - ☐ Friends
 - ☐ Too much free time
 - ☐ After exams
 - ☐ After football game
 - ☐ Stress
 - ☐ Other (_____)
8. What model is your car? _____
9. Do you have a driving license? ☐ Yes ☐ No
10. How often do you drift? _____ week
11. Do you use a seat belt while you drift? ☐ Yes ☐ No
12. How many times did you damage your own car during drifting? _____
13. How many times did you damage others cars during drifting? _____
14. How many times did the police catch you drifting? _____
15. Did you ever get arrested by the police for drifting? ☐ Yes ☐ No
16. What discourages you to drift?
 - ☐ Family
 - ☐ Police
 - ☐ Religion
 - ☐ Teachers
 - ☐ Fear of injury/death
 - ☐ Other (_____)

17. Did any of your friends die by drifting? ☐ Yes
☐ No
18. Did any of your friends/spectators get seriously injured by drifting?
☐ Yes
☐ No
19. Where do you prefer to drift?
☐ Main roads
☐ Open areas
☐ Other (_____)