Saving Lives; Setting Precedents: The Impact of the Good Samaritan Law in India

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Introduction

- India's motor vehicle collision (MVC) fatalities constitute 13% of the global MVC mortality burden
- As India currently lacks a systematized prehospital trauma system, bystander engagement is crucial to the trauma chain of survival, particularly limited due to fear of criminal and financial liability
- The 2016 Good Samaritan Law (GSL), championed by the SaveLIFE Foundation, provided legal protection to Good Samaritans (GS) who assist MVC victims

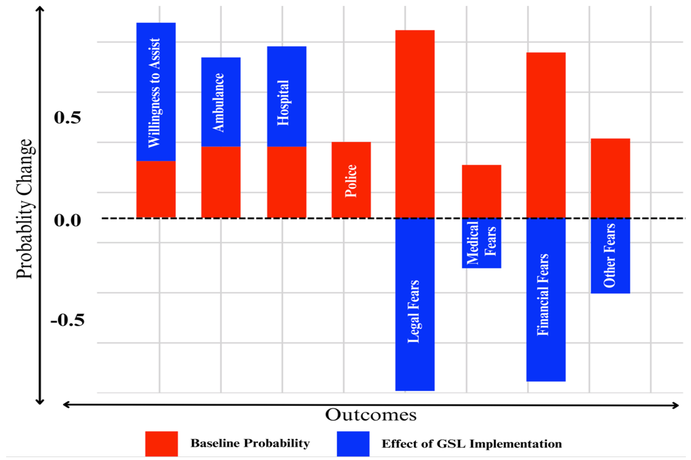
Objective

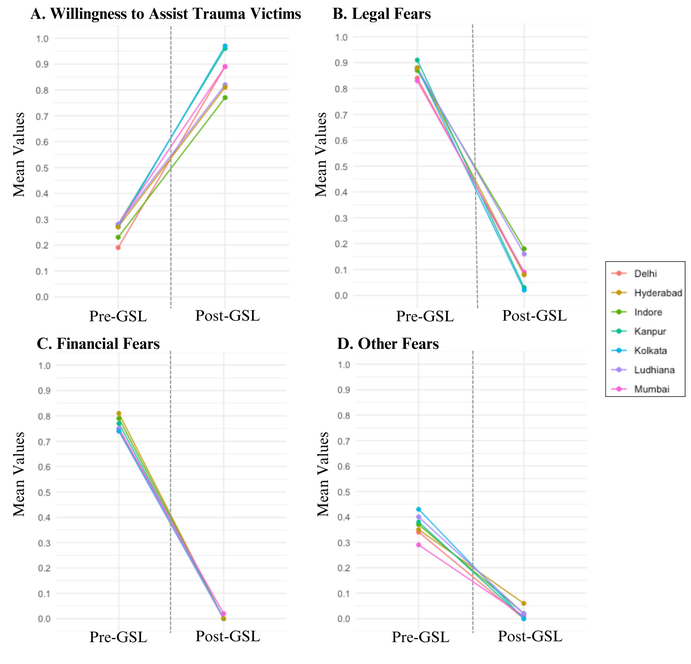
This study aims to evaluate the impact of GSL on Bystander Engagement pre- and post-GSL implementation.

Methods

- This retrospective, cross-sectional, observational study analyzed data from three national Knowledge-Based Assessment of Performance (KBAP) surveys conducted in 2013 (pre-GSL, n=1027), 2018 (post-GSL, n=3053) and 2024 (post-GSL, n=2832)
- We measured awareness, attitudes, and behavior as proxies of barriers to bystander engagement, i.e. willingness to aid MVC victims
- A difference-in-difference analysis was performed to determine the impact of GSL
- Primary Outcomes: Willingness to Assist
- Secondary Outcomes: Legal Fear, Financial Fear, Other Fears, Perceptions of Police, Perception of Ambulances, Perception of Hospitals
- Logistic regression was performed to adjust for confounding factors (age, gender, education)
- Additionally, we performed a sub-analysis of individuals surveyed in 2018 and 2024 who acted as a GS in recent roadside incidents
- An inter-city analysis was performed to identify trends

Results





Results

- Road-users surveyed across all cohorts were mostly male (84%), young (47% aged under 18-30 years) and had a graduate education or higher (71%)
- Willingness to assist increased post-GSL (26% vs. 88% vs 84%)
- Fear of criminal liability decreased post-GSL (88% vs. 8% vs 6%)
- Financial fears decreased post-GSL (77% vs 1% vs 3%)
- Awareness of GSL increased between 2018 and 2024 (16% vs. 40%
- In surveys conducted among Good Samaritans in 2018 and 2024, there was limited change in reports of police harassment (3.4% to 4.4%), police recording personal information (26% to 22%), individuals being held liable (1.3% to 2%), and hospitals requesting payment for victims' hospital bills (14% to 16%)

Conclusions

- GSL has demonstrated promising effects in promoting bystander intervention and minimizing perceived obstacles to helping
- There are still considerable opportunities to enhance awareness, implementation, and efficiency in the overall emergency response system
- GSL has great promise to be a model for prehospital trauma care in low- and middle-income countries as well as an intervention that decreases the mortality of trauma globally

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