



The beliefs which motivate young male and female drivers to speed: A comparison of low and high intenders

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ABSTRACT

In Australia, young drivers aged 17–24 years, and particularly males, have the highest risk of being involved in a fatal crash. Investigation of young drivers' beliefs allows for a greater understanding of their involvement in risky behaviours, such as speeding, as beliefs are associated with intentions, the antecedent to behaviour. The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) was used to conceptualise beliefs using a scenario based questionnaire distributed to licenced drivers ($N = 398$). The questionnaire measured individual's beliefs and intentions to speed in a particular situation. Consistent with a TPB-based approach, the beliefs of those with low intentions to speed ('low intenders') were compared with the beliefs of those with high intentions ('high intenders') with such comparisons conducted separately for males and females. Overall, significant differences in the beliefs held by low and high intenders and for both females and males were found. Specifically, for females, it was found that high intenders were significantly more likely to perceive advantages of speeding, less likely to perceive disadvantages, and more likely to be encouraged to speed on familiar and inappropriately signed roads than female low intenders. Females, however, did not differ in their perceptions of support from friends, with all females reporting some level of disapproval from most friends and all females (i.e., low and high intenders) reporting approval to speed from their male friends. The results for males revealed that high intenders were significantly more likely to speed on familiar and inappropriately signed roads as well as having greater perceptions of support from all friends, except from those friends with whom they worked. Low and high intending males did not differ in their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of speeding, with the exception of feelings of excitement whereby high intenders reported speeding to be more exciting than low intenders. The findings are discussed in terms of how they may directly inform the content of mass media and public education campaigns aimed at encouraging young drivers to slow down.

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1. Introduction

Young drivers are the most at risk group when it comes to being killed or injured in a road crash (Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government [DITRD], 2009). In the 12 months leading up to February 2011, those aged between 17 and 25 represented 24% of fatalities (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2011), yet made up only approximately 13% of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2011a,b). Young males, in particular, represented 76.5% of these fatalities, that is 18.33% of all fatalities (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2011), while only representing 6.7% of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a,b). While there are many behaviours that may influence the increased fatalities for this age group, one of the major contributors is speeding

which is especially prevalent among the younger driver cohort. Speeding not only increases the likelihood of having a crash, but also the severity of injuries sustained when a crash occurs (Fleiter et al., 2006; Peden et al., 2004). These findings suggest a need to investigate more effective preventive measures for young drivers, particularly young males, to decrease their speeding behaviour and ultimately their risk of crash or injury. Development of such measures requires an understanding of young driver crash risk and the factors which motivate young drivers' engagement in speeding behaviour in the first place. Such understanding begins with investigation into the various and differing beliefs of both younger males and females.

Previous research in the area has shown the importance of beliefs and their influence on intentions and behaviour. For example, Forward (2009) found that the beliefs elicited within a pilot study were significantly correlated with intentions to speed and dangerously overtake. There were also significant differences in these beliefs in terms of those who intended to engage in risky driving and those who did not, as well as differences between males and

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