Personalising risk to reduce young drivers’ speeding behaviour

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Research Summary

Background: Young drivers (15-29 years) throughout the world continue to be over-represented in motor vehicle accidents (WHO, 2009). A contributing factor to a large number of these motor vehicle accidents is speeding. Reducing drivers’ tendency to speed remains a challenge. In aviation, one method that has yielded positive results in terms of improving pilots’ risk management behaviour involves personalising the risk involved in the task (Molesworth, Wiggins, & O’Hare, 2006). Therefore, the main aim of the present research was to examine the utility of a training program where drivers are engaged in the task and given personalised feedback in order to reduce their tendency to speed.

Method: 58 young (16-24 years) motorists where divided into four groups. All participants completed both a ‘training’ session followed by a test session one week apart. Training consisted of either a card sorting task (control), reading three accident cases involving speeding, cases with rules associated with the offence, or a simulated drive with personalised post-drive feedback regarding speeding and its legal ramifications. The main dependent variable was percentage of distance speeding during simulated drive in the test session.

Results: A series of planned contrast analyses with family-wise error corrected at 0.05 revealed that receiving personalised feedback regarding speeding behaviour following a simulated drive significantly reduced speeding tendency in the test session, when compared to no training. Receiving case exemplars alone, or coupled with rules, appeared to have no impact on speeding behaviour, when compared to no training.

Conclusion: The results suggest that training programs that actively engage individuals in the task and provide personalised feedback may be effective in curbing young drivers’ speeding behaviour. Future research should be directed towards examining the longevity and generalisability of the results.

Acknowledgements
A revised version of this abstract has been submitted to the 9th International Symposium of the Australian Aviation Psychology Association. The study was funded by NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust.