

An Educated Prevention: the effectiveness of police-led, school-based driver education programs.

Levi Anderson¹, Lyndel Bates¹, Natasha S. Madon¹

¹School of Criminology and Criminal Justice and Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University, Brisbane

Abstract

Background

This study examines the effectiveness of police-led school-based education programs in reducing the high-risk driving intentions of young people. Road traffic crashes are the second leading cause of death for young people aged between 15 and 24 years of age (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015). In 2016, 46 young people were killed on Queensland roads (Bureau of Infrastructure Transport and Regional Economics, 2016), this accounts for 18.47% of the road fatalities which is an over representation on the 13.5% that this age group accounts for within the Queensland population. One key countermeasure used to address this over representation is driver education. There are many different types of driver education (Beanland et al., 2013) (Anderson et al., 2018). A qualitative evaluation of a compulsory pre-learner driver education course in the Australia Capital Territory identified that interactive components and a high level of engagement are important factors in a successful course (Lennon and Bates, 2015). Previous research into driver education and training suggests that apart from providing basic vehicle control skills and road law knowledge, previous driver education programs are ineffective at impacting the crash risk and infringement rate of young drivers (RACV, 2001). The Life Awareness Workshop is a program designed by the Road Policing Command of the Queensland Police Service which is both interactive and engaging for grade 12 students it is delivered to. The Life Awareness Workshop is the police-led education program utilized by this study.

Method

This study draws on a sample of 294 students from fourteen different private high schools who completed the Life Awareness Workshop delivered by the Queensland Police Service in 2017. Participants completed a pre-intervention and post-intervention survey that measured self reported behaviours and intentions. All grade 12 students at schools receiving the LAW program were invited to participate provided parental consent was obtained. Those without parental consent were unable to participate in the study but still received the LAW program. The survey consists of a number of socio-demographic and risk assessment questions, a thrill-seeking index and a modified version of the Behaviour of Young Novice Drivers Scale (BYNDS) (Scott-Parker et al., 2010). A series of T-tests, regressions and ANOVAs were used to examine changes across the sample of students prior to receiving the intervention program with their survey responses after completing the Life Awareness Workshop.

Results

Of the sample, one-hundred and eight participants were male (36.7%). The average age was 17.13, with a range of 16 to 18 years. Most had entered the graduated driver licensing system with 105 (36.8%) holding a learner license, 163 (57.2%) holding a provisional one license and 14 (4.9%) holding a provisional two license. Only a small proportion ($n = 3$ (1.1%)) of participants were pre-license. Males had a significantly higher score in almost all aspects of the thrill-seeking index. T-tests comparing the responses before and after the deliverance of the Life Awareness Workshop show statistically significant changes in the young driver intentions. These differences were found for all

four sub-scales tested within the modified BYNDS; Transient, Fixed, Misjudged, and Driver Emotions. Changes in behaviour for each of these factors would include the reduction of speeding (transient), drink driving (fixed), greater attention to detail (misjudgments) and not allowing emotion to effect driving styles/behaviour (driver emotions).

Paired T-Test comparing BYNDS sub-scales means before and after intervention

	Valid Responses	M (SD) (Before)*	M (SD) (After)*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Transient (TR)	259	1.8246 (0.66112)	1.2469 (0.38390)	<0.001
Fixed (FI)	267	1.1607 (0.27637)	1.0719 (0.19999)	<0.001
Misjudged (MS)	259	1.6654 (0.44557)	1.2377 (0.36229)	<0.001
Driver Emotions (DM)	272	1.9436 (0.85290)	1.3358 (0.56260)	<0.001

*The BYNDS is a five-point scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (All the time).

Limitations and Biases

While this pilot research shows a promising impact for the involvement of police in young driver education programs, there are some limitations with this research. Firstly, this study looks at only private school students due to ethical clearance difficulties within government schools in regards to illegal behavior. Due to the wide administration of the LAW program on the Sunshine Coast, a suitable control groups was unable to be identified and included.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that police-led school-based education programs can be an effective means of altering the driving intentions of young people. Given the positive results of this study, there is the potential to expand this study to a wider audience including schools statewide which would include the adaptation of the LAW program for that location including localized examples. Further research should be undertaken to measure how long the altered intentions remain and is the inclusion of police-officers is a key element in the success of school-based road safety programs.

References

- Anderson L, Bates L and Madon NS. (2018) An Educated Prevention: the effectiveness of police-led, school-based driver education programs. (Under Review).
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2015) *Leading causes of death*. Available at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/deaths/leading-causes-of-death/>.
- Beanland V, Goode N, Salmon P, et al. (2013) Is there a case for driver training? A review of the efficacy of pre- and post-licence driver training. *Safety Science* 51: 127-137.
- Bureau of Infrastructure Transport and Regional Economics. (2016) Australian Road Deaths Database: Fatalities. Canberra, Australia: Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development. Commonwealth of Australia.
- Lennon A and Bates L. (2015) Examining novice education: What can we learn from a qualitative evaluation of a compulsory program delivered to both mature-age and young pre-learner licence drivers? *2015 Australasian Road Safety Conference*. Gold Coast, QLD.
- Scott-Parker B, Watson BC and King MJ (2010) The risky behaviour of young drivers : developing a measurement tool. *Proceedings of the 24th Canadian Multidisciplinary Road Safety Conference*. Niagara Falls, Canada.