

## **Transitioning from driver to non-driver: Be safe and not a risk**

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### **Abstract**

Driving is fundamental for convenience, freedom, and independence, but there is increasing recognition of the need for many older adults to cease driving, due to age-related functional limitations. While much is known about this transition in developed countries, much less is known about driving cessation in developing countries. This study aims to understand the mechanism of driving cessation involving older Malaysian former drivers. Five themes and 16 sub-themes were identified relevant to driving importance, deciding factors, challenges faced, and strategies adopted. Findings suggest that driving cessation is an outcome of a transition process to discover safer mobility opportunities beyond driving.

### **Background**

Each year millions of car occupants are killed or seriously injured in collisions, and a substantial proportion involves older adults (ITF, 2017; Ang, Chen, & Lee, 2017). It is widely held that older drivers self-regulate their driving and this can minimise their risk of collision, provided that adjustments made adequately match their shortcomings (Charlton et al., 2006). While extensive research has been undertaken to understand self-regulatory behaviour and its impact on safe mobility in developed countries, much less is known about the driving patterns of older adults in an Asian context. With the emerging ageing population in Malaysia, it is timely and essential to conduct research to better understand and support retiring drivers to maintain safe mobility, while mitigating some of the negative consequences (Chihuri et al., 2016), making the transition experience more acceptable (Oxley & Charlton, 2009).

The objectives of the study are to:

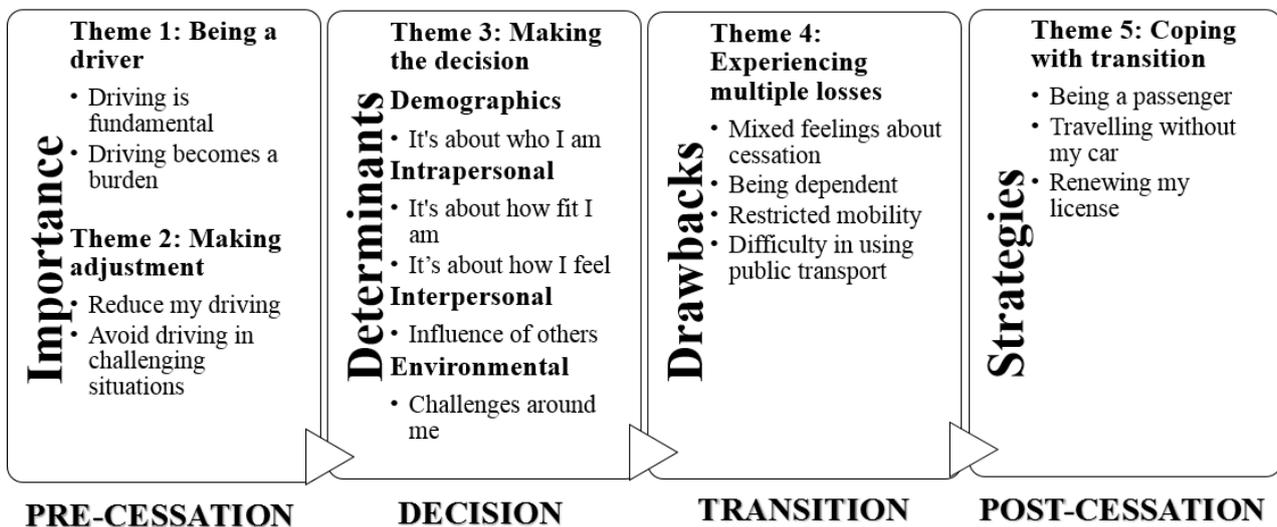
- Gain insight into their feelings, experiences, and perceptions on driving cessation
- Identify potential factors influencing driving cessation
- Understand the effects of this decision and coping strategies adopted

### **Method**

This study had been approved by Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. Recruitment was done via advertisements posted on notice boards of senior citizen organizations and snowball sampling. Malaysian former car drivers aged 60 years and above were interviewed using guided questions and thematic analyses of transcribed interviews were performed using NVIVO version 11.

**Results**

A total of 18 former drivers were interviewed, with a majority were very elderly (75 years and above) and women. Five major themes with 16 sub-themes identified were linked together in a series of four cessation phases providing a clear picture of mechanism involved, including pre-cessation, decision, transition, and post-cessation (Figure 1). According to Park, Yoon, Hamilton, & Cook, (2015), Korean older adults do not view driving as part of their independence. This was not true in our sample. The pre-cessation phase emphasized themes surrounding the importance of driving range from the basic needs for mobility to psychological needs for identity and how driving becomes a burden with increasing age, requiring them to make adjustments in driving patterns to reduce risks and extend safe driving. Reduction of trips and avoiding challenging situations were associated with being aware of their driving limitations and transitioning to being a non-driver. Older adults may choose to or are forced to stop driving for various reasons. Apart from physical limitations, psychological and social factors were important contributors to driving cessation. During the transition, older adults reported facing various challenges underscoring the need for support to attain and maintain the transition successfully. Two of the most common coping strategies adopted were depending on other principal drivers and travelling by public transports.



*Figure 1. Self-regulation of driving among older Malaysian former drivers*

**Conclusions**

Changes in one's ability to be mobile is not viewed only as a physical event, but a complex process that involves psychological and social well-being. Therefore, a good understanding of psychological and social implications in self-regulation are important aspects in the development of policy and intervention to support retiring drivers discover safer mobility opportunities.

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