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Sensation seeking and risky driving: a review and synthesis of the literature.

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Abstract

The relationship between sensation seeking and risky behaviour has been observed since the 1970s. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, road safety researchers have examined the relationship between sensation seeking and risky driving (e.g. driving while impaired, speeding, following too closely), as well as its consequences (e.g. collisions, violations). There is also growing evidence that sensation seeking may also moderate the manner in which drivers respond to other factors such as alcohol impairment and perceived risk. This paper reviews and synthesizes the literature on sensation seeking as a direct influencer of risky driving and its consequences and as a moderator of the influence of other factors. The vast majority of the 40 studies reviewed showed positive relationships between sensation seeking (SS) and risky driving, with correlations in the 0.30-0.40 range, depending on gender and the measure of risky driving and SS employed. Of those studies that have looked at the subscales of Zuckerman's Sensation Seeking Scale, Thrill and Adventure Seeking appears to have the strongest relationship to risky driving. The biological bases of SS is discussed as are the implications for collision prevention measures.

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