

[Keynote Talk]: The Intoxicated Eyewitness: Effect of Alcohol Consumption on Identification Accuracy in Lineup

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Abstract : The eyewitness is a crucial source of evidence in the criminal judicial system. However, rely on the reminiscence of an eyewitness especially intoxicated eyewitness is not always judicious. It might lead to some serious consequences. Day by day, alcohol-related crimes or the criminal incidences in bars, nightclubs, and restaurants are increasing rapidly. Tackling such cases is very complicated to any investigation officers. The people in that incidents are violated due to the alcohol consumption hence, their ability to identify the suspects or recall these phenomena is affected. The studies on the effects of alcohol consumption on motor activities such as driving and surgeries have received much attention. However, the effect of alcohol intoxication on memory has received little attention from the psychology, law, forensic and criminology scholars across the world. In the Indian context, the published articles on this issue are equal to none up to present day. This field experiment investigation aimed at to finding out the effect of alcohol consumption on identification accuracy in lineups. Forty adult, social drinkers, and twenty sober adults were randomly recruited for the study. The sober adults were assigned into 'placebo' beverage group while social drinkers were divided into two group e. g. 'low dose' of alcohol (0.2 g/kg) and 'high dose' of alcohol (0.8 g/kg). The social drinkers were divided in such a way that their level of blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) will become different. After administering the beverages for the placebo group and liquor to the social drinkers for 40 to 50 minutes of the period, the five-minute video clip of mock crime is shown to all in a group of four to five members. After the exposure of video, clip subjects were given 10 portraits and asked them to recognize whether they are involved in mock crime or not. Moreover, they were also asked to describe the incident. The subjects were given two opportunities to recognize the portraits and to describe the events; the first opportunity is given immediately after the video clip and the second was 24 hours later. The obtained data were analyzed by one-way ANOVA and Scheffe's posthoc multiple comparison tests. The results indicated that the 'high dose' group is remarkably different from the 'placebo' and 'low dose' groups. But, the 'placebo' and 'low dose' groups are equally performed. The subjects in a 'high dose' group recognized only 20% faces correctly while the subjects in a 'placebo' and 'low dose' groups are recognized 90 %. This study implied that the intoxicated witnesses are less accurate to recognize the suspects and also less capable of describing the incidents where crime has taken place. Moreover, this study does not assert that intoxicated eyewitness is generally less trustworthy than their sober counterparts.

Keywords : intoxicated eyewitness, memory, social drinkers, lineups

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