

Effects of Low Doses of Caffeinated Coffee on Mood and Performance

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The aim of the present research was to review the effects of caffeine on behaviour of adult humans. Many of the generalisations about the behavioural effects of caffeine are based on studies which have used very large doses of caffeine, used students as subjects and tested them in the early morning only. A. Smith conducted research to demonstrate that multiple smaller doses of caffeine throughout the day resulted in the same beneficial effect as one large dose. The participants were given 60 mg caffeine and asked to carry out a number of different tests. The results showed that even this dose of caffeine led to improved mood and enhanced encoding of new information.

The published literature on the effects of caffeine on behaviour show that it increases alertness, reduces fatigue and leads to improved performance of vigilance tasks and simple tasks requiring sustained response. The researchers demonstrated that these effects were most apparent when alertness is reduced by other factors (e.g. sleep deprivation, working at night, prolonged work, consumption of lunch and minor illness). The positive effects of caffeine can be observed in very low/non-consumers which suggests that withdrawal doesn't underlie the effects.

Negative effects of caffeine have been found with extremely high levels of consumption and in certain individuals. These effects must, however, be distinguished from the behavioural changes observed when caffeine is consumed in moderation by the majority of the population. Generally, consumption of caffeine is well controlled and the pattern of consumption suggests that individuals ingest caffeine to help restore levels of reduced alertness to a more optimum level. Similarly, consumption is reduced when high alertness is undesirable, such as when the person is trying to sleep.