

**DRUNKEN DRIVING AND ACCIDENT CASES: A STUDY OF  
MEGHALAYA DURING LAST DECADE**

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**ABSTRACT**

It has been observed that alcohol consumption is associated with increased alcohol-related problems everywhere in the world, including alcohol intoxication, crime, interpersonal violence, reduced job performance, absenteeism, health problems, personal injury, suicide, homicide, property damage, impaired driving, fatalities or death caused due to drunken driving, single-vehicle nighttime fatalities, etc. According to Skog (2001), the association between aggregate alcohol consumption and rates of fatal accidents is mainly due to traffic accidents. As there is a relationship between alcohol consumption, drunken driving and vehicle crash risk, therefore, various research literature clearly implicates the importance of minimizing the use of alcohol consumption in conjunction with the operation of motor vehicles (Gruenewald & Ponicki, 1995).

This paper is concerned with examining the drunken driving and accident cases in Meghalaya during the last decade.

**Keywords:** Alcohol consumption, Drunken driving accident cases, Accident in Meghalaya.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

We know that the excess consumption of alcohol has a large negative impact on the physical, social and psychological health of individuals and welfare of the society. Moreover, the relationship between drunken driving and accident cases is well established everywhere in the world. The level of alcohol consumption and drunken driving are good predictors of levels of alcohol problems in a community including an increased rate of accidents (Douglass, 1998).

According to Garnett & Sandra (2006), it is true that alcohol sales may increase the tax revenue of a country or a state, but at the same time, it exacts a significant price that is paid by crash victims and their loved ones, health care providers, insurers, law enforcement and judicial systems. Hence, reduction of excessive alcohol consumption and drunken driving are thus matters of major economic interest as well as public health of that country or state (Hahn et al., 2009).

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been observed that there is a similar trend of increasing numbers of drunk driving accident cases in various countries in the world in the last few years. According to CDC Report (2001), excessive alcohol consumption, including both binge drinking and heavy average daily alcohol consumption, is responsible for approximately 79,000 deaths per year in the U.S. and many deaths take place due to drunken driving accident cases, making it the third-leading cause of preventable death in the nation. Moreover, from the literature, it has been observed that not only in the U.S but everywhere in the world - driving after consuming alcohol is responsible for many deaths per year (WHO Report, 2000).

According to Carpenter & Dobkin (2009), high rates of alcohol consumption are correlated with adverse outcomes at both individual and societal levels include increased rates of mortality, injuries, motor vehicle accidents, and criminal activity. It has been observed that many alcohol policy measures can reduce alcohol-related road traffic fatalities, including increased prices of alcohol, minimum purchase age laws, reducing outlet density, non-visibility of the wine shops etc. These factors can reduce the consumption of alcohol and due to which alcohol-related road traffic fatalities can also be reduced (Anderson, 2009).

Mello et. al. (2013) in their research study found that driving after consuming alcohol causes deaths and injuries in car accidents and batteries, and when they tried to quantify the causal effect of problematic alcohol consumption on different crime categories including road accidents, it was observed that one standard deviation (s.d.) increase in problematic alcohol consumption increases deaths in car accidents by 0.51 s.d., injuries in car accidents by 0.82 s.d., and batteries by 1.27 s.d.

According to Goklany (2017), the World Health Organisation mentioned that the immediate effects of alcohol on the brain are either depressing or stimulating in nature, depending on the quantity of alcohol consumed. It further said that driving after alcohol consumption "results in an impairment which increases the likelihood of a crash since it produces poor judgement, increased reaction time, lower vigilance and decreased visual acuity". Moreover, driving after consuming alcohol can impair judgement and increase crash risk even at relatively low Blood Alcohol Concentration levels. However, the effects become progressively worse as the level increases. Luca, Owens & Sharma (2019) have carried out one research study to find out the relationship between driving after consuming alcohol with rates of motor vehicle accidents as well as domestic violence. They have observed from the study that stricter alcohol control is associated with lower rates of motor vehicle accidents and crimes against women.

It has been observed that road accidents in India kill more people than terrorism or natural disasters (Goklany, 2017). According to the government reports on Road & safety (1999, 2009, 2019) - the total number of road accidents was 3,86,456, persons killed due to road accident was 81,966, and the person got injured due to road accident was 3,75,051 in India in the year 1999, which has been increased to 4,86,384, 1,25,660 and 5,15,458 respectively in the year 2009, and 4,49,002; 1,51,113 and 4,51,362 respectively in the year 2019 (Government report on Road & Safety, 2019).

However, if we analyze the accident cases due to drunken driving, we can see from the government reports that- in India, the total number of road accidents due to drunken driving was 27,151, persons killed in a road accident due to drunken driving was 9,307, and the person got injured in a road accident due to drunken driving was 30,264, in the year 2019, which has been decreased to 18,916, 6,968 and 19,432 respectively in the year 2014, and further decreased to 12,256, 5,325 and 10,564 respectively in the year 2019 due to implementation of new Government policy regarding various restrictions related to drunken driving (Government report on Road & Safety, 2019).

But, it has been observed that in spite of practising prohibition from time to time, all the Northeastern states including Meghalaya, have reported many cases of drunken driving, often leading to serious accidents resulting in major and minor injury, property damage and death (The Shillong Times, 2019). According to Das (2014), the increasing number of wine shops in the Gauhati- Shillong national highway evoked concern among legislators in the assembly. He also stated that some kind of government restrictions are really necessary - as these stalls exist in Meghalaya side of Gauhati- Shillong national highway has less price of liquor in comparison to neighbouring state Assam. Moreover, despite several advisories by Meghalaya traffic police against drunken driving and its consequences, the state witnessed many cases of drunken driving causing injuries to several people across the state especially at the time of festivals like Christmas, new year eve etc. (TNT Desk, 2018).

### 3.0 NEED OF THE STUDY

According to the WHO Report of Department of Mental Health & Substance dependence (2000), even though there are many cases of alcohol-related problems like crime, interpersonal violence, health problems, personal injury, impaired driving, alcohol-related crashes, death due to drunken driving etc. in the many states of India, but it is noted that the State-wise data on these problems are still scarce, with very few scientific comparable studies conducted so far. Moreover, many states of India are likely to face a heavy burden of medical and social problems due to the increased rate of drunken driving cases.

Therefore, it is very important to understand the impact of drunken driving on road accidents in every State of the country because Goklany (2017) stated that drunken driving does not only put at risk the life of the driver, but also that of co-passengers, other motorists and pedestrians.

### 4.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the research study are-

1. To study the incidences of road accidents, injury and death due to drunken driving during the last decade in Meghalaya.
2. To study various measures taken by the government of Meghalaya to reduce accident cases due to drunken driving in Meghalaya.

### 5.0 METHODOLOGY

This study is based on secondary data collected from various reports of Road Accidents in India, the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Government of India, and from other sources like newspapers, research articles published in various journals, thesis, government websites etc. In order to study the specified objectives, statistical tools like year-wise total number of accident cases, number of persons got injured and killed due to overall accident cases as well as those accident cases which have taken place due to consumption of alcohol or drunken driving were calculated and analyzed.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION**

This study has been drafted to portray the scenario of road accidents and the number of people injured & killed due to drunken driving in Meghalaya during the last decade. Here, the researcher has also discussed- an overall number of accidents take place every year due to various reasons along with the total number of injury and death in the last ten years in Meghalaya.

### **6:1 Incidences of overall road accidents, injury and death due to drunken driving during last decade in Meghalaya**

Every state of India - including Meghalaya, which is situated in the North-Eastern region of India, is also realizing now the increasing trend of problems associated with impaired driving and the number of traffic accidents and death. However, these impaired driving and all traffic accidents take place not always due to drunken driving, but also for various reasons like over-speeding of the vehicle, driving on the wrong side, jumping on a red light, use of mobile phone etc.

Below given the Incidences of an overall road accident, injury and death (due to over-speeding, driving on the wrong side, jumping on a red light, use of mobile phone, drunken driving etc.) along with accident cases, injury and death especially due to drunken driving during the last decade in Meghalaya.

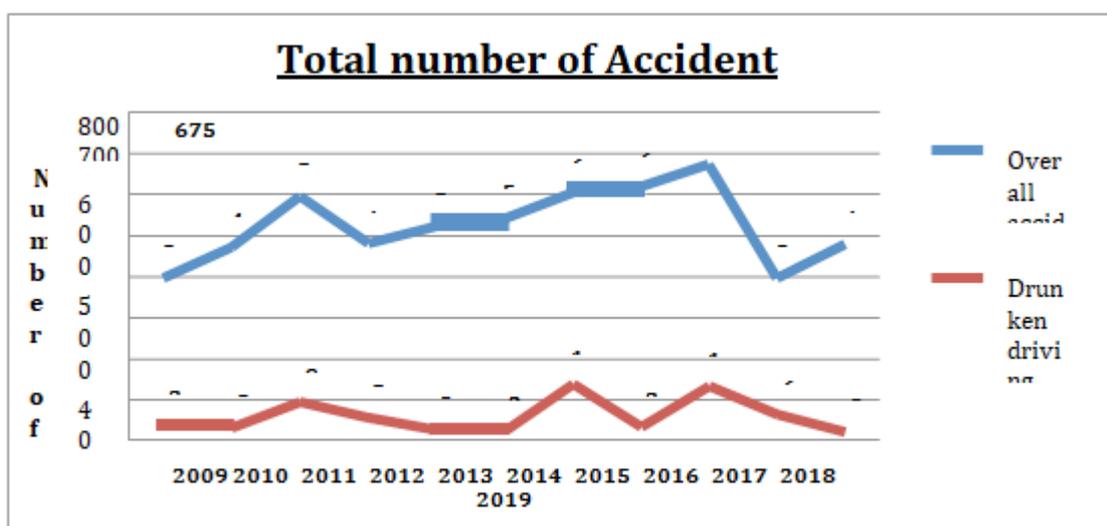
#### **6:1:1 Incidences of overall road accident as well as drunk driving accident cases during the last decade in Meghalaya**

According to Das (2014), many people have been killed and injured due to drunken driving in Meghalaya every year. Moreover, Meghalaya has recorded 132 cases of accidents due to drunken driving in 2017, up from a mere 35 in 2016, according to official data (Special correspondence, 2019; Govt. report 2016 & 2017).

Below given the total number of accident cases in Meghalaya (overall and drunk driving accident cases)

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total number of overall accident cases	398	474	599	483	525	542	606	620	675	399	482
Total number of drunk driving accident cases	39	33	93	56	29	25	137	35	132	64	23

Table 1: Total number of accident cases in Meghalaya (overall and drunk driving accident cases)



Graph 1: Total number of accident cases in Meghalaya (overall and drunk driving accident cases)

From the above graph 1, it can be observed that the total number of overall accident cases for various reasons (over-speeding of the vehicle, driving on the wrong side, jumping on red light, use of mobile phone, drunken driving etc.) and accident cases due to drunken driving have increased every year at the beginning of the decade. It has been observed that maximum incidences of overall accident cases and drunk driving accident cases took place in the year 2017 & 2015 respectively. However, these accident cases have reduced slightly in the year 2018 and 2019.

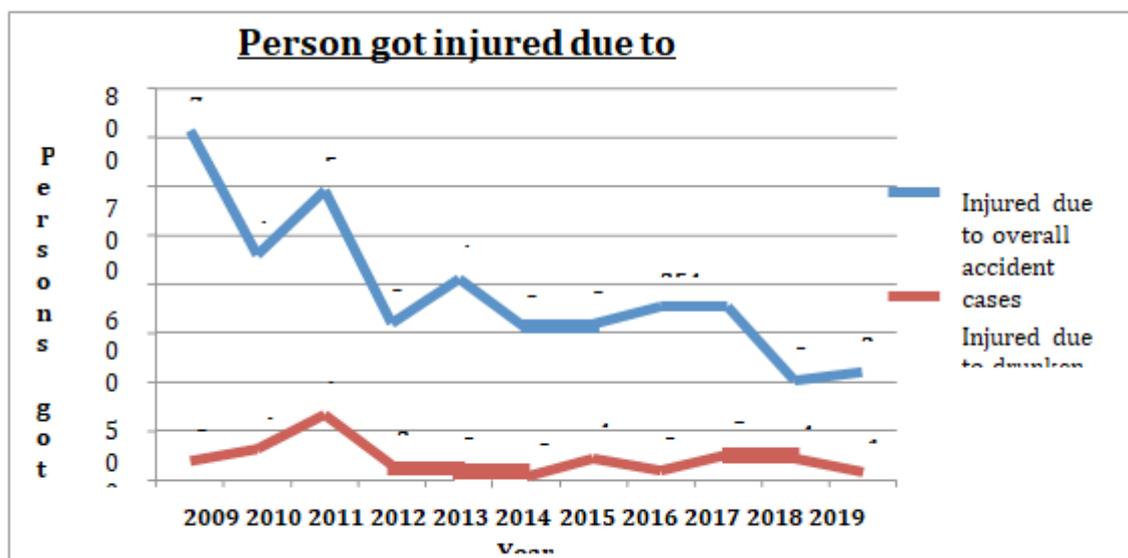
### 6:1:2 Number of people got injured due to overall road accident cases as well as drunk driving accident cases during the last decade in Meghalaya

There is a huge number of people that have got injured every year due to overall road accidents for various reasons (over-speeding of the vehicle, driving on the wrong side, jumping on red light, use of mobile phone, drunken driving etc.) as well as road accidents for drunken driving in Meghalaya.

Below given the total number of person got injured in an accident in Meghalaya (overall & drunken driving accident cases)

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total number of person got injured in overall accident cases	713	461	591	322	412	311	319	354	354	205	222
Total number of person got injured in drunken driving accident cases	37	62	134	30	21	8	46	21	53	43	15

Table 2: Total number of people injured in accidents (overall and drunk driving).



Graph 2: Total number of people injured in accidents (overall and drunk driving).

From the above graph 2, it can be observed that the total number of people who got injured in overall accident cases for various reasons mentioned above and drunk driving accident cases have decreased almost every year in the last decade, especially after 2011. Even though overall accident cases had slightly increased in the year 2013 and drunk driving accident cases had slightly increased in the year 2015 & 2017, but after that, it has started decreasing gradually.

### 6:1:3 Number of people killed due to overall road accident cases as well as drunk driving accident cases during the last decade in Meghalaya.

There is a huge number of people that have got killed every year due to overall road accidents for various reasons (over-speeding of the vehicle, driving on the wrong side, jumping on red light, use of mobile phone, drunken driving etc.) as well as road accidents for drunken driving in Meghalaya.

Below given the total number of person got killed in an accident in Meghalaya (overall & drunken driving accident cases)

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total number of person got killed in overall accident cases	145	163	212	219	130	141	183	150	182	182	179
Total number of person got killed in drunken driving accident cases	11	6	27	21	8	12	21	10	89	33	4

Table 3: Total number of people killed in accidents (overall and drunk driving).



Graph 3: Total number of person got killed in accident (overall and drunken driving)

From the above graph 3, it can be observed that the number of people killed due to overall accident cases for various reasons mentioned above was increasing every year till 2012, then decreased and again increased in 2015. However, the number has reduced slightly after that.

Similarly, the number of people killed in accident cases due to drunken driving was maximum in the year 2017 and started reducing after that in the year 2018 and 2019.

### 6:2 Measures taken by State Government to reduce accident cases due to drunken driving in Meghalaya

As most of the road accidents are happening in India due to drunk driving (Sinha, 2016), hence Central as well as State Government of our country formulate various policies regarding alcohol sale and consumption from time to time for the well being of the citizen (Road accident report, GOI, 2016). Moreover, the Government of India felt that it would be good if there would not be any vendors, advertisements, or signage about the availability of liquor shops on national highways as well as on state highways, which otherwise may distract the drivers and ultimately meet accidents (Sinha, 2016). As a result, the Supreme Court stated that (April 2016) the liquor/wine shops should be located 500 metres away from highways so that they were neither visible nor accessible to travellers.

However, Sikkim and Meghalaya, where almost 90 percent of liquor shops were to be closed because their relocation was not possible due to topographical constraints, have been completely exempted from this directive by the Supreme Court (Anand, 2017). Related to this, the State Cabinet of Meghalaya amended its earlier order of not allowing liquor shops within 500 meters to reduce the minimum distance of zero on National highways (Shillong Times, November 2017). However, according to Das (2014), the increasing number of liquor shops along Guwahati- Shillong road has evoked concern among legislators in the assembly. Therefore, Minister in charge of Excise Zenith Sangma said (Shillong Times, November 2017) the liquor shops should not be visible from National or State highways in Meghalaya

Das (2014) stated that several measures have been taken along with non-visibility of liquor shops located in National highways of Meghalaya to contain incidents of drunk driving in the State and these include frequent vehicle checking using Alcometer, enforcement of the Motor Vehicle Act provisions, mobile vehicle checking and mobile courts, awareness programmes on traffic rules and raids on liquor outlets along the national highway.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

If state-wise alcohol consumption per capita per week (in ml) is analysed, then it can be observed that the alcohol consumption in Meghalaya much higher than its surrounding states of North-East India. However, after the implementation of the new State government policy of Meghalaya about non-visibility of liquor shops from National or State highways (Shillong Times, November 2017), the number of accident cases, person injured and killed due to drunken driving has reduced slightly (Reports of Road Accidents in India, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Government of India, 2009 to 2019). Therefore, the above mentioned State government policy has a positive impact on reducing drunk driving accident cases in Meghalaya and thereby reducing the number of persons injured and killed.

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