

# Psychological Influence in the Courtroom: How Attorneys Shape Jury Decision-Making

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## Abstract

Litigators and attorneys often use psychological methods, consciously or unconsciously, to influence juries and judges, which can affect court rulings. Psychology plays a major role in the courtroom, and its impact varies based on how it is applied. Factors such as speech, tone, confidence, and emotional appeal can influence whether the court sides with an attorney. Jury demographics and individual perceptions are also important considerations. Beyond speech, attorneys and defendants influence the courtroom through appearance, professionalism, and etiquette, all of which can shape how they are perceived. The primary focus of this paper is to identify the psychological techniques used in the courtroom and examine how significantly they affect juror decision-making. By understanding these methods, both professionals and everyday individuals may apply similar strategies in other settings to subtly influence outcomes. This literature review will look at research from psychology and law to understand how psychology works in the courtroom. Studies show that jurors do not rely solely on facts but are also influenced by a multitude of other psychological factors. By reviewing and combining these studies, this paper aims to evaluate how much courtroom decisions are shaped by psychological factors rather than just evidence and legality.

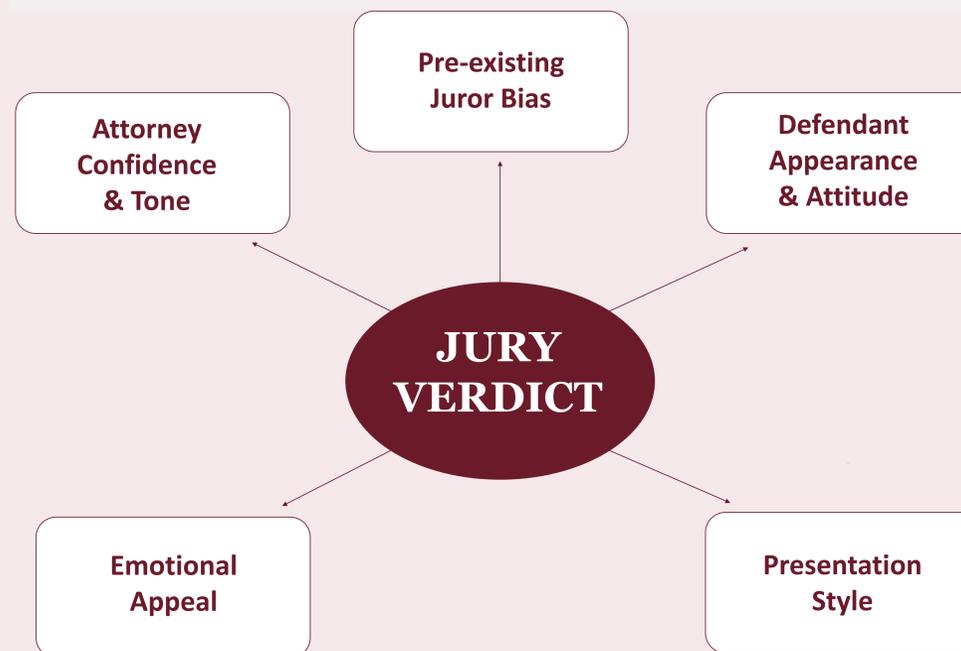
## Background

Jurors are crucial in the courtroom. Society has relied upon them for consideration on numerous cases. They are expected to be neutral fact-finders, but research consistently points out that decision-making involves both cognitive and emotion processes. Different individuals perceive and interpret information through different means ranging from personal belief, prior experience, empathy, and moral reasoning. Jurors are not perfect, rather than acting as purely logical evaluators, jurors construct narratives that make sense to them individually. Because of this, courtroom outcomes are not purely shaped by the fact of the case but also by how that evidence is presented, perceived, and interpreted.

## Introduction

Psychology and law are closely connected, and come together, especially in the courtroom. While court rulings and decision-making are typically expected to be centered around facts and legal standards, human psychological processes are influenced by a variety of dynamics. Litigators and attorneys often use these psychological aspects, intentionally or not, to strengthen their argument and sway the jurors. This poster will go in-depth on how factors like communication style, confidence, emotional appeal, and presentation style can shape jury decision-making. Understanding these psychological dynamics is essential to determining how fair and objective courtrooms are and how regular people can be well-served as well.

## Perception of the Defendant & Attorney



## Juror Psychology & Decision-Making

Jurors often rely on cognitive and social processes, like memory and persuasion, rather than acting as neutral observers (Bornstein & Greene (2011)). Marcus-Newhal et al. (2023) discovered that a defendant's perceived character, life, style and even moral standing significantly shapes how guilty they determine the defendant to be. Moreover, Goldman & Thomas (1979) further showed that moral judgement levels swayed the emotional tone and quality of jury deliberations.

## Attorney Influence & Communication

A lawyer's effectiveness heavily depends on their emotional intelligence, communication skills, and awareness of these cognitive biases; however, many practitioners of law often overlook these "soft skills" (Sternlight 2024). Soft skills are traits that can be learnt and applied through different applications of your life. Greeley (2010) showed how pre-trial research helps attorneys predict juror reactions and how they can also craft narrative that may resonate on a psychological level.

## Evolving Courtroom Dynamics

Webster and Huebner (2023) discovered that the shift to virtual court meetings disrupted traditional ways of court communications, with some people favoring efficiency of the virtual hearings while others noted loss of personal connections. Wiener & Georges (2013) analyzed problem-solving courts that emphasize on rehabilitation over punishment. Additionally, Allison (2024) showed alibi evidence can reduce bias, however a strong prosecution narrative may still sway verdicts.

## Conclusion

Even today and so forth, psychology and law are deeply intertwined, and they will forever play hand in hand. Juror decisions are shaped by a variety of factors that are but not limited to, presentation, perception, and emotional cues as much as by facts. By recognizing these dynamics, it is essential for future attorneys to learn and educate themselves with these mandatory skills to sway the courtroom.