

An Investigation into the Relationship between Social Media
and Alcohol Consumption

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BA (Honours) Psychology

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Abstract

Objective: According to the social learning theory social media has the potential to influence one's behavior. The main objective of the current study was to address the gap in literature and investigate to determine if a relationship exists between social media using the SNAIS and alcohol consumption using the AUDIT-C. **Sample:** A convenience sample of 82 young adults participated in the current study. **Results:** Young adults who spent more time on social media indulged in higher levels of alcohol. Significant gender differences for social media usage were found where females reported higher levels of social media usage in contrast to males. College students were also found to use social media when compared with non-college goers. However, there was no significant difference found regarding alcohol consumption between college students and non-college goers. **Conclusion:** The results established a significant relationship exists between social media usage and alcohol consumption. Further research is required to confirm this relationship.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Social Media

Social Media is the utilization of highly interactive web-based technology allowing individuals to communicate via sharing, creating, discussing and modifying user generated content (Kitzmann,2011). Social media has grown dramatically due to individuals using it as a platform for communication and a dominant information source (Lim et al 2017). Social media is now part of individual's daily life where 94% of young adolescents engage in one or more social media platforms (Weinstein,2018). One of the most prominent advantages surrounding social media is the opportunity to promote one's self by sharing private information (Sahin&Kumcagiz,2017). Social media engages to near one third of the world's population, this exponential growth is due to the numerous amounts of availability to various social media websites (Hawi & Samaha,2017). Social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram are some of the most popular social media websites (Hawi& Samaha,2017). As of 2016, on average Facebook had 1.09 billion daily active users, Instagram had 400 million monthly users including 80 million pictures shared daily and a total of 3.5 million likes received daily. In addition, Twitter had an accumulation of 310 million monthly users and 433 million users were active on LinkedIn (Hawi&Samaha,2017).

According to Pew Research Center (2018) there is a considerable age differences regarding social media usage. As of 2018 young adults stand out for their social media consumption (Pew,2018). 90% of young adults aged 18-24 who had access to the internet in 2015 used social media platforms (Villanti et al.,2017). 88% of adults aged 18 to 29 were found to use any form of social media in comparison to adults aged 30-49 which decreased to 78% and further decreased to 64% in those aged 50-64 and finally only 37% of individuals over the age of 65 used social media (Pew,2015). There is also differences in social media

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platforms within the young adult's population, 78% of those aged 18-24 used snapchat in contrast to only 54% of adults aged 25-29(Pew,2018).

Social media website studies have not uncovered gender differences in social media usage however, Pew research and American life project suggest a definite relationship exists for example adolescent males are less likely to have social media when compared to females (Zazik et al., 2010).In a recent study when investigating gender differences in social network communication on Facebook in undergraduate students. Thomson and Lougheed (2000) found that females far exceed males regarding time on social media. Females spent 62% of their time on Facebook whereas males spent 44% of their time on Facebook. In addition, Thomson and Lougheed (2000) also found that 9 out of 10 females strongly agreed/agreed that Facebook was part of their daily routine in contrast to males answering at 71%. However, Thomson and Lougheed's study's primary focus was university students which may have influenced their results. Despite this, Sorokowski and colleagues (2010) study included non-college students and found that females spent more time on social media posting higher number of selfies.

However, both males and females in the young generation have adapted to the 24-hour availability and access of social media (Khan, Shabbir&Rajput,2017). Anything in excess is bad and this enormous internet use can lead to social media addiction (Mashti&Phaneendra,2018). Youth and particularly young adults who attend college are at risk for problematic internet use due to the availability of free internet use in college alongside the absence of parental supervision (Khan, Shabbir&Rajput,2017). Younger people are more susceptible to media influence and are therefore more at risk for developing addictive behavior (Khan, Shabbier&Rajput,2017). Social media addiction has been an emerging health problem among young people (Masthi&Phaneendra,2015). In a recent study Masthi and Phaneendra (2017) when investigating social media usage of young people in

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India found that 1/3 of participants were addicted to social media and majority of participants had mild addiction.

As stated above 90% young adults between the ages 18-24 use social media platforms (Villanti et al.,2017). The period of development during young adulthood can be recognized through various different transitions such as changing living conditions, attending college and entering into employment (Vateriaus et al., 2015). During this stage young adults develop a degree of independence; the increased independence and various transitions that occur is an important time for developing lasting health behaviors (Vateriaus et al.,2015). Vateriaus and colleagues (2015) found that social media does have an influence on health behaviors. In their study they found social media content to be a motivator and barrier for exercise and food choices. In addition, Branley and Covey (2016) when researching exposure to online content regarding risky behavior increased the viewers offline risky behavior such as excessive alcohol use, drug use, eating disorders, self-harm, violence to other and dangerous pranks.

1.2 The social learning theory

The existing social learning theory by Bandura may be able to explain this relationship between using social media and risky health behavior (Branley&Covey,2016). The social learning theory proposed by Albert Bandura has successfully explained the processes of learning and the impact this learning has on one's behavior (Miller&Morris,2018). The social learning theory used refers to any behaviorist approach (Akes&Lee,1996). New patterns of behavior can be gained through direct experience or through observing others behavior (Bandora,1971). The social learning theory states as we more through adolescents we become less reliant on parental figures and become more dependent and reliant on peers (Santor et al.,2000). Belonging to a peer group involves

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conforming to group interests such as alcohol consumption (Santor et al.,2000). Durkin and colleagues (2005) conducted research testing the social learning theory in college students with regards to binge drinking. Their results found that the social learning theory explained 45% of binge drinking supporting that binge drinking is a learned behavior through peers. Research regarding social learning theory focuses on traditional peers (face to face) rather than virtual peers (Miller&Morris,2014). Miller and Morris (2014) conducted research investigating virtual and tradition peers' effects in digital and traditional offending. Miller and Morris (2014) findings suggest that virtual peers influence the social learning process and that virtual peer association is just as important as traditional peer associations during the social learning process. In addition, Yoo and colleagues (2016) conducted research on social medias influence on smoking in college students and found online peers (online messages and perceptions) to influence college students' attitudes and behavior on smoking.

1.3 Alcohol consumption

As stated, above Branley and Convey (2016) findings suggesting risky online content increased offline risky behavior such as excessive alcohol use however there is very little research investigating social medias influence on alcohol consumption. One of the major prominent public health concerns is the continued misuse of alcohol consumption (Cheng&Furnham.2000). Alcohol is one of the main causes of premature deaths causing a serious public health concern (Domardzka,2015). Excessive amounts of alcohol consumption are associated with numerous negative health risks (Vinke&Vyncke,2017). Binge drinking contributes to alcohol related deaths alongside consequences such as alcohol poisoning, unintentional injuries, suicide etc. (Courtney&Povich,2009). Drinking large volumes begins with pleasant outcomes such as increased confidence and increased relaxation to harmful effects such as risk of sickness, risk of coma, fatal injuries etc. (Vincke&Yvnke,2017). The

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repeated use of alcohol can be linked to over 200 diseases and health conditions including cancer, liver disease etc. (Vinke&Yvnke,2017).

Despite these diseases associated with alcohol consumption, alcohol is highly prevalent in young adults (Vinke&Yvnke,2017). Binge drinking is consuming large quantities of alcohol over a small time period (Vinke&Yvnke,2017). Age has an impact on drinking behavior where binge drinking peaks during young adulthood (Brook et al.,2010). Previous studies have showed the prevalence of binge drinking at the age of 18 was at 20% which increased to 43% at age of 22 (Brooke et al.,2010). Prior research conducted by Ramizer and colleagues (2014) found hazardous alcohol use to be associated with the ages of 18-24. This increase of alcohol consumption occurs during college years where alcohol is a prominent part of college culture (Bosari&Corey,2001). This excessive alcohol consumption is constantly recurring among university students (Domarazka et al.,2015). Individuals entering college consume more alcohol compared to those live at home or get jobs following high school (Bosari&Carey,2001). Slutske (2005) found college students to have higher related alcohol problems and more likely to receive an alcohol abuse disorder than their non-attending college peers.

Peer influence have been found to be associated with such alcohol use (Borsari&Casey,2001). Previous research has found peers to be a strong consistent factor for initiating and maintaining alcohol consumption (Meeus et al.,2011). Tildesy and coworkers (1993) found peer perceptions and attitudes to be a significant factor of alcohol use. In addition, Meeus and colleagues (2011) found the more college students perceived other students consuming alcohol and approving of alcohol consumption the higher they reported drinking themselves. Meeus and colleagues (2011) also found that close peers such as best friends do not have a greater influence than a broader group of peers.

1.4 Alcohol consumption on social media

According to Beullens & Schepers (2013) alcohol is more present on Facebook than previously expected. When investigating the display of alcohol related content on Facebook Beullens and Schepers (2013) Found that 95% of participants displayed alcohol consumption with the use of pictures. In addition, Beullens and Schepers (2013) results portrayed that positive alcohol related posts and pictures gained a more positive reaction by peers and gained more “likes”. In correlation Glassman (2000) found 29% of college students to post pictures of themselves consuming alcohol and 56% posted pictures of their friends consuming alcohol on their Facebook page. Kerr and colleagues (2000) found that ¼ of alcohol related status’s on Facebook references intoxication. Kerr and Colleagues (2000) also found various gender differences regarding the online display of alcohol on Facebook Women were more likely to mention levels and terms of intoxication than males.

This exposure to the alcohol content online may influence people’s offline behavior. As previous research suggests virtual peers influence behavior through the social learning process just as much as traditional peers (Miller&Morris,2014). Despite peer influence being a major risk factor for alcohol consumption there is little research regarding online peer influence and alcohol consumption. As social media 90% of young adults have an active social media account (Villanti et al.,2011) and alcohol consumption has many negative effects it would be important to find out if a relationship exists. If a relationship is found various intervention strategies could be implemented raise awareness of this relationship.

1.5 Current study

1.5.1 Rationale

According to the social learning theory, patterns of behavior are the direct result of learning through direct experience or the observation of peer's behavior. Findings suggest that virtual peers influence this social learning process just as much as traditional peers. As social media has become a widely used daily concept and displays of alcohol related content are generated online. This online exposure may have an influence on people's offline behavior. There is a current gap in literature as there is very little empirical research surrounding the relationship between social media and alcohol consumption. Thus, the research question was formed, is there a relationship between time spent on social media and alcohol consumption in young adults? The investigation of this relationship is important as social media is a big part of today's society and alcohol consumption is responsible for various negative health effects including over 200 injury's, diseases and mental health conditions. If a relationship is found procedures and methods of awareness should be implemented.

The current study also investigates gender differences in social media. Gender differences in social media usage has not been clearly established despite organizations like Pew stating the relationship exists. Prior study's findings suggest females use social media more than males. Therefore, gender differences were investigated to contribute to current research. The current study also investigated college student's social media use and alcohol consumption. Current literature displays that college students are at risk for problematic internet use and as alcohol is a dominant part of college culture this is an important area of investigation. The main objective of the current study is to investigate time spent on social media using the SNAIS scale and the relationship between alcohol consumption using the

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AUDIT-C measure of alcohol in a sample of 82 young adults across a period of six months in Dublin Ireland.

1.5.2 Aims

The aims of the current research is to fill a gap in the literature and contribute to existing research by determining the following; (1) is there a relationship between social media and alcohol consumption, (2) is there gender differences for social media use, (3) is there a difference between college goers and non-college goes social media use and finally (4) is there a difference between college goers and non-college goers alcohol consumption.

1.5.3 Hypotheses

Based on the current literature and aims discussed four hypotheses were established.

Hypothesis 1: Young adults who spend more time on social media will indulge in higher levels of alcohol.

Hypothesis 2: Females will spend more time on social media than males.

Hypothesis 3: College goers will spend more time on social media than non-college goers.

Hypothesis 4: College goers will report consuming higher levels of alcohol than non-college goers.

Chapter 2: Methods

2.1 Participants

For the present study, a sample of 82 participants between the ages of 18-24 (29 males and 53 females) were recruited across Ireland. Out of 82 Participants 47 were full time college students and 35 did not attend college.

The sample was gathered between December 2018 and March 2019 through various social networking sites such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram. As recruitment for the sample was gathered through online social networking platforms and participation was strictly voluntary an opportunity sampling technique called convenience sampling was used. As participants had the opportunity to share the questionnaire to their own social networking sites there is a small element of snowball sampling present in the study. As the primary focus of this study is young adults an inclusion criterion was set in place stating participants must be between the ages of 18-24.

2.2 Design

The present study consisted of a quantitative cross-sectional design. The variables of interest were social media usage and alcohol consumption, college status and gender. The dependent variables were social media usage and alcohol consumption. The independent variables consisted of college status and gender. All data was analysed using IBM SPSS statistics 25.0.

2.3 Measures

For the present study all data was gathered anonymously through an online survey created using google docs on docs.google.com. All questions were mandatory and required a response; participants could not submit the survey without completing every aspect. An information sheet followed by a question regarding informed consent was measured through a ‘tick the box’ method. Participants were required to answer a numeric value to measure age. All other demographic questions such as gender and education status were obtained using the ‘tick the box’ method.

The Social media networking intensity scale (SNAIS) (Li et al.,2016) as seen in appendix A was used to measure social networking use intensity. The SNAIS consists of a 14-item questionnaire with two subscales Q1-10 measures Social function use intensity (SFUI) and Q 11-14 measures entertainment function use intensity (EFUI). The SNAIS and its subscales SFUI and EFUI contains good reliability Cronbach’s Alpha (= 0.89,0.90 and 0.60). The 14 items are written like questions “How often have you performed the following on online social networking activities” such as sent messages to friends on a message board. The scale is measured using a 5-point Likert scale from 0 (Never), 1(Few), 2(Sometimes), 3 (Often), 4(Always). Total scores are calculated by adding all numeric values together. Despite this, there is no specific cut off for low, moderate or high social network activity usage; higher scores indicate higher usage levels. See appendix for the full SNAIS scale.

The alcohol use disorders identification test- consumption (AUDIT-C) (Barbor et al.,1992) as seen in appendix B is a validated measure to screen for risky drinking and alcohol misuse. The AUDIT-C has good psychometric properties with a high reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.98). It is a 3-item questionnaire measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Questions such as “How often do you have a drink containing alcohol” are used with answers

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such as Never (0 points), monthly or less (1 point), Two or four times a month (2 points), Two to three times a week (3 points) and four or more times a week (4 points). The scoring involves the sum of the three questions. Available scores are from 0-12. In men, four or more indicated positive in hazardous drinking and a score of three or more indicated positive in hazardous drinking for woman. The higher the score the higher the levels of alcohol consumption; signifying hazardous drinking. See appendix for the full AUDIT-C scale.

2.4 Pilot study

A pilot study consisting of two participants one male and one female aged 18-24. A pilot study was conducted to examine the feasibility of the current study. Participants were presented with a printed copy of the questionnaire to complete. Both participants completed the study within five-ten minutes. Following feedback from the pilot study the 5-point Likert scale for the SNAIS scale measured (0-4) was slightly modified to 1-5 in order to allow a better understanding and avoid confusion when answering the online questionnaire. Despite this, all other components of the questionnaire were easily understood and remained the same.

2.5 Procedure

A questionnaire using google docs was shared publicly on three social media platforms; Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook. Individuals had the option to click on the questionnaire. Those who clicked on the questionnaire were firstly presented with an information sheet regarding the nature of the study, how long participation would take and the inclusion criteria (to participate you must be 18-24) was also presented here. Participants were informed here that participation was anonymous and strictly voluntary and informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any given time without penalty. Contact details in the form of emails of the researcher and research supervisor were given here to allow

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participants to ask any questions regarding the study. Participants were then asked to complete the consent form to ensure that they understood the information sheet provided and take part in the study. Each question required a response meaning participants could not move forward without consenting/ answering all questions. Demographic questions such as age, gender, education and employment status were then presented to participants.

The first scale presented to participants was the SNAIS scale which was used to measure participants social media usage. Information regarding the scale was provided to inform participants what the scale was measuring and what the values of the scales mean to ensure correct completion. The final set of questions presented to participants was the AUDIT-C. Participants were informed that AUDIT-C was used to measure their alcohol consumption. Finally, participants were presented with a debriefing sheet which thanked participants for taking part, reminding participants of their anonymity and a helpline for alcohol consumption. Participants then had to press 'submit' to submit their response which was then stored in google docs until completion of gathering participants was over. Participants had the option to share the questionnaire via their own social media platforms. Once recruitment was complete, the questionnaire was closed and no longer available to the public. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing all participants responses was downloaded from the google docs website. To prepare for later statistical analyses, the data was then moved from Microsoft Excel and entered IBM SPSS statistics 25.0.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

As the target population was individuals between the ages of 18-24 which excludes vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly no significant ethical issues were expected to arise. However, As the study involves alcohol which may be a sensitive/ distressing topic for some individuals' steps were put into place to avoid any ethical issues.

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The information sheet provided the nature of the study outlining clearly that alcohol would be involved. It was also outlined clearly that participation was not mandatory and individuals who did not want to participate could click out of the questionnaire. In addition, if any feelings of distress arose in participants a confidential service helping regarding alcohol consumption was placed in the debrief sheet. Furthermore, both details in email format of the researcher and research supervisor was provided in the information sheet to allow participants to make any enquires regarding the study.

Chapter 3 Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

This study comprised of 82 participants (Males n=29, Female n=53). In total n= 47 participants attended college and n= 35 were not currently enrolled in college. All demographic variables can be viewed in Table 1. Descriptive statistics for all measured variables can be viewed in Table 2. Preliminary analysis indicated that social media approximated normality with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov score of .200. However, preliminary analysis conveyed the alcohol consumption scale to be not evenly distributed with a Kolmogorov - Smirnov score of .001 (see tests for normality table and histograms in appendix E).

Table 1

Frequencies for the current sample on each demographic variable (N = 82)

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender		
Male	29	35.4
Female	53	64.6
College Status		
Full Time Student	47	57.3
Not a Student	35	42.7

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of all continuous variables

	Mean (95% Confidence Intervals)	Std. Error Mean	Median	SD	Range
Social media activity	46.74(44.71-48.78)	1.03	47	9.23	26-64
Alcohol usage	6.80 (6.41-7.20)	.20	7	1.79	4-11

3.2 Inferential Statistics

3.2.1 Testing hypotheses 1

The relationship between social media use and alcohol consumption was investigated using correlation analysis. To ensure no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity preliminary analysis were conducted. As some assumption of violation was present a Spearman's rho order correlation was conducted to investigate the relationship. The Spearman's rho revealed a moderate positive relationship between the two variables ($r_s = .34$, $n=82$, $p < .002$) indicating that the two variables share approximately 12% of variance. The results a positive relationship between social media and alcohol consumption. Indicating higher levels of social media activity are associated with higher levels of alcohol consumption.

3.2.2 Testing Hypotheses 2

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare levels of social media activity between males and females. There was a significant difference in scores ($t(80) = 3.02$, $p = .003$) with females ($M = 48.92$, $SD = 8.77$) scoring higher than males ($M = 42.80$, $SD = 8.98$). The magnitude of difference in the means (mean difference = 6.17, 95% CL: 10.23-2.10) was moderate (Cohens $d = .69$).

Table 3

Gender differences between males and female's social media usage.

Variable	Group	N	M	SD	t	d
Social Media Usage	Males	29	42.76	8.98	3.02*	.69
	Females	53	48.92	8.77		

Note. d = Cohen's d; Statistical significance: * $p < 0.02$

3.2.3 Testing Hypotheses 3

A Further independent sample t-test was conducted to compare levels of social media usage between college students and non-college goers. There was a significant difference found in scores ($t(80) = 2.59, p=.011$) with college goers ($M = 48.96, SD= 8.93$) scoring higher than non-college goers ($M=43.77, SD=9.02$) as seen in figure 3 and table 4. The magnitude of the difference in the means (mean difference =5.19, 95% CI:1.20 – 9.17) was moderate (Cohens d = .58)

Table 4 Group differences between individuals who attend college and participants who don't attend college for levels of social media use.

Variable	Group	N	M	SD	t	d
Social Media Usage	FT College Students	47	48.96	8.93	2.59*	.58
	Non College-Goers	35	43.77	9.02		

Note. FT = Full Time; d = Cohen's d; Statistical significance: * $p < 0.02$

3.2.4 Testing hypothesis 4

As some of the assumptions of normality were broken A Mann-Whitney test was conducted to compare levels of alcohol consumption between college students and non-college goers. There was no significant difference found ($p=.374$) with college students scoring slightly ($M=43.5$) higher than non-college goers ($M=38.8$). The mean difference is 4.66 with an extremely small effect size (0.1).

Chapter 4 Discussion

4.1 Summary of main results

The primary objective of the current study was addressing the current gap in literature to determine if a relationship exists between social media and alcohol consumption. The second objective involved investigating gender differences regarding social media usage. The third objective was to determine a difference between college goers vs non-college goer's social media use. Finally, the fourth objective included investigating differences in levels of alcohol consumption between college goers and non-college goers.

Per the results hypothesis 1 was supported. Correlation analyses confirmed a positive relationship between social media use and alcohol consumption in young adults. In addition, a fair amount of variance was found. Thus hypotheses 1, young adults who spend more time on social media will consume higher levels of alcohol was accepted. The findings are very beneficial as it portrays the influence and effects using social media can have. Social media plays a major role in young adults as does alcohol which is surrounded with numerous negative health effects thus, the findings of this relationship could influence and benefit society greatly. Techniques such as awareness campaigns and talks could be used to spread awareness in order to minimise social media use. In addition, social media websites such as Facebook and Instagram could implement the option to block content regarding alcohol including peers displaying alcohol and

Furthermore, the second hypothesis was also supported by the results of this study. The results convey a clear gender difference in levels of social media use. The results show females reported higher scores on their social media use in comparison to males. There was a clear moderate difference between scores found. Therefore, the second hypothesis females will spend more time on social media than males, was accepted. The findings correlate with

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previous literature. This study findings are similar to Thomson and Lougheed's (2012) with females exceeding with their social media use in contrast to males. As it is mentioned in the literature there is very little research and findings regarding gender differences regarding social media. Therefore, the findings of this study are important as it allows some insight on the topic further contributing current research.

In addition, the third hypothesis was supported by results. The results found a significant difference in scores of social media use in college goers and non-college goers. Results display that college goers scored significantly higher than non college goers. Therefore, it is evident that college students use social media more in contrast to those not in college. Therefore, the third hypothesis was accepted. The results correlate with current literature. Current literature suggests the reason for this is because college students have complete access to free internet use in college, they have full availability to social media websites. Colleges should implement a technique in order to block social media websites and raise awareness in the form of programmes or talks.

In contrast to the three hypotheses mentioned above per the results the fourth hypothesis was not supported. There was no significant difference found between college students' levels of alcohol consumption when compared to non college students. These findings are not consistent with current literature for example, the results contradict Slutske and colleagues (2005) study where college students drank more than non-college students. The reason a significant difference may not have been found could be due to the sample size. The sample consisted of very few participants and when dissected into two subscales (College students vs non college students) there was only a small number of participants in each group. Therefore, a replication of this study consisting with a larger sample size to ensure a true representation should be conducted.

4.2 Implications

The current study is one of the very few conducted to investigate and determine if a relationship between social media and alcohol consumption exists. The findings suggest a negative outcome for social media usage. Higher levels of social media usage were significantly associated with higher levels of alcohol consumption. Thus, from the findings it is evident using social media increases risky negative health behaviours. A further implication that can be drawn from the findings of this study is females and college students are the dominant users of social media when compared to their peers. Females exceeded males with their social media usage and therefore may be more at risk for consuming higher levels of alcohol.

Further research is recommended to investigate this relationship with a larger sample to increase statistical power and allow generalisability of results. As a relationship was found between full time college student and non-college goers social media usage, further research investigating further sub groups including part time college goers as this study primary focus was full time students which may lead to different results. Further research could also include different employment levels such as full-time worker, part time worker and unemployed as these variables may influence results and would be an important area of investigation.

4.3 Strengths and limitations

The first major strength of this study is that all measures administered were highly reliable and validated measures. Both the SNAIS and AUDIT-C scales have been commonly used in prior research. This is extremely beneficial as it ensures that a reliable representation of social media use and alcohol consumption was measured thus, reducing measurement error.

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A second strength of this study is the benefit of addressing the current gap in literature regarding the relationship of social media and alcohol consumption. Social media has emerged into a part of daily life and alcohol can lead to serious negative health effects therefore, the finding of a relationship is extremely important. In addition, by investigating gender differences in social media use this benefits a topic that needed more attention.

Another important strength of the following study is the administering of the questionnaire online. As the questionnaire was uploaded onto various social media websites it reduced the risk of a research bias. This is extremely beneficial as it minimised the influence on the results thus, ensuring a greater reliability and validity of results.

Despite the various strengths of this study there are some limitations that should be taking into consideration when interpreting the results. Convenience sampling was the sampling technique used which is not the most effective and may lead to sampling bias. Thus, it is difficult to infer if the current findings are a true representation of the population. Replication of this study would be necessary to rectify this.

The sample consisted of a relatively small number of just 82 participants. Participants in this study were dominantly female which may cause a gender bias in the results. In order to increase statistical power and eliminate gender bias replication with a larger sample and a more equal number of males and females would be necessary.

4.4 Conclusion

To conclude social media has emerged into the daily lives of young adults which may have the potential to strongly influence decisions. According to the social learning theory social media has the ability to influence one's behaviour. It is evident per the results in this study that a relationship between social media and alcohol consumption exists. Further research is required to gain a deeper understanding of this relationship. The current study has

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proven to be beneficial as higher levels of social media usage was found to be associated with higher levels of alcohol consumption. In addition, as social media can influence risky behaviours research regarding interventions of social media should be put into place.

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Appendices**Appendix A****SNAIS SCALE**

terms

How often have you performed the following online social networking activities in the last month?

Social Function

1. Sent messages to friends on message board.
 2. Chatted with friends via instant messaging function.
 3. Replied to comments made by social networking friends.
 4. Commented on friends' status, logs, and photos.
 5. Shared/Forwarded content.
 6. Browsed others' logs/photos/statuses/albums.
 7. Updated self-status.
 8. Posted photos/videos on personal web profile.
 9. Wrote logs/weibo.
 10. Decorated personal web profile.(changed image/contact information/privacy setting)
- Entertainment Function Use Intensity**
11. Surfed entertainment/current news.
 12. Watched video/listened to music.
 13. Played games/applications.
 14. Bought/gave virtual goods. (e.g. birthday gifts)

Note. Items are on a 5-point scale: 0 (never), 1 (few), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often) and 4 (always).

Appendix B

AUDIT-C SCALE

AUDIT-C

The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test is a publication of the World Health Organization, @ 1990

Q1: How often did you have a drink containing alcohol in the past year?

Answer

Never

Monthly or less

Two to four times a month

Two to three times a week

Four or more times a week

Q2: How many standard drinks contain alcohol do you have on a typical drinking day?

Answer

None, I do not drink

1 or 2

3 or 4

5 or 6

7 to 9

10 or more

Q3: How often did you have six or more drinks on one occasion in the past year?

Answer	Points
--------	--------

Never	0
-------	---

Less than monthly	
-------------------	--

Monthly	
---------	--

Weekly	
--------	--

Daily or almost daily	
-----------------------	--

The AUDIT-C is scored on a scale of 0-12 (scores of 0 reflect no alcohol use). In men, a score of 4 or more is considered positive; in women, a score of 3 or more is considered positive. Generally, the higher the AUDIT-C score, the more likely it is that the patient's drinking is affecting his/her health and safety.

Appendix C

Information sheet and informed consent

The current study is being conducted for a psychology undergraduate thesis in the National College of Ireland. This study aims to investigate the relationship between social media and alcohol consumption in young adults. Therefore, you must be between the ages of 18 and 24 years old in order to participate in this study.

All participation in this study will remain anonymous and all information provided by you will not be directly linked to you. However, the overall results from this study will be presented and seen by the supervisor of this study, second marker, external examiner and the students in my course.

Participation of this study is strictly voluntarily and completion of this study is not mandatory. If at any given point you wish to stop participation you have the right to withdraw from this study and may do so without penalty. If this is the case all information you provided will be disregarded immediately.

Participation in this study will take no longer than five-ten minutes and entails a series of questionnaires. You will be first presented with demographic questions regarding your age, gender, education and work status. You will be then asked to complete the social media networking activity intensity (SNAIS) scale in order to measure your social media usage. Finally, you will be asked to complete the AUDIT-C scale in order to measure your alcohol consumption

If you wish to participate in this study, please fill out the consent form below. Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you have any further queries concerning this study, please feel free to contact me via email: x16423324@student.ncirl.ie or the assisting supervisor of this study: michele.kehoe@ncirl.ie

Consent form

- (1) I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. (2) I have read and understood the information sheet provided above. (3) I understand that all information provided will remain confidential. (4) I understand that I can withdraw from this study or withdraw permission to use my data within this study and (5) I am over the age of 18.

If you agree and consent with participating in this study and the above statements tick the following box

I consent

Appendix D

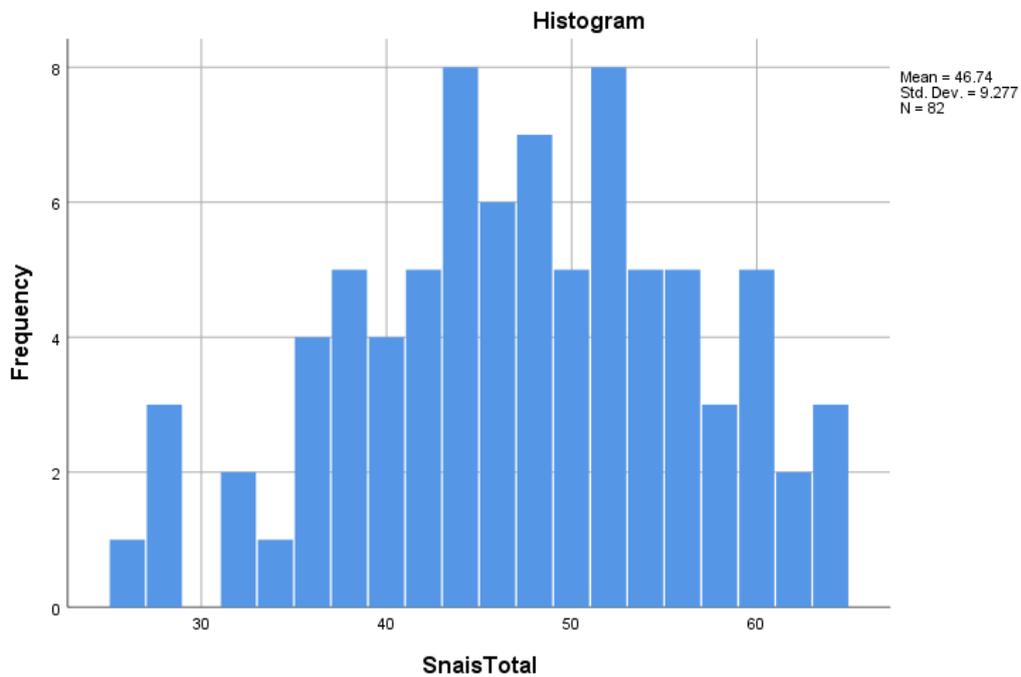
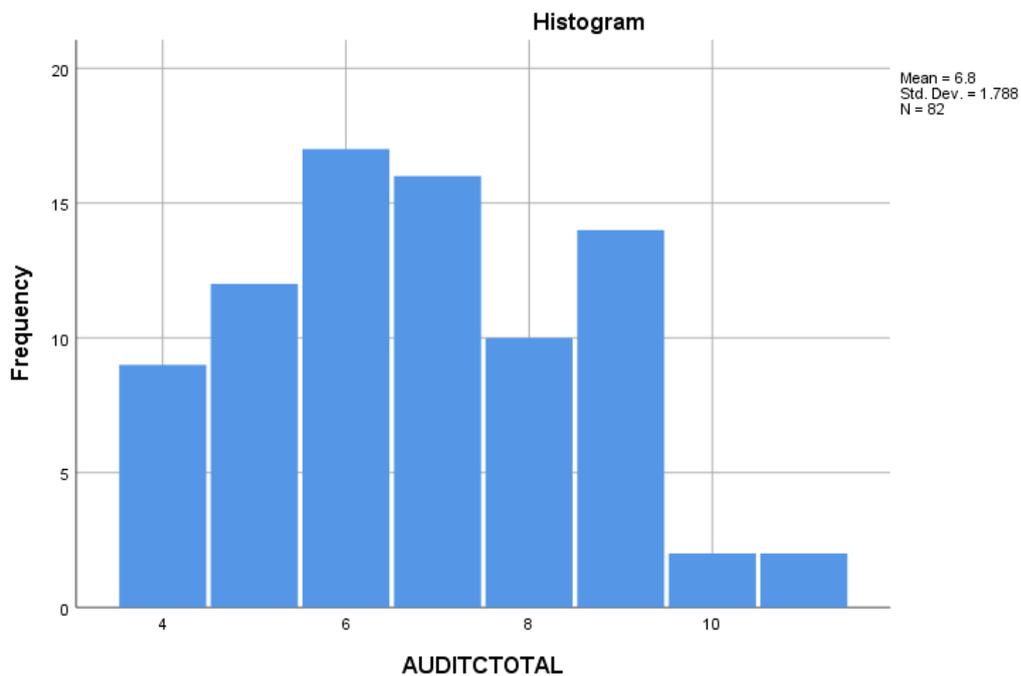
Debrief Sheet

Thank you for participating it is greatly appreciated. This study is concerned with investigating the connection between social media and alcohol consumption in young adults.

This study is important as social media is a big part of today's society and alcohol consumption is responsible for various negative effects such as over 200 injury's, diseases and mental health conditions. I would also just like to remind participants that you will have full anonymity. Furthermore, as alcohol may be a sensitive topic if you have felt any distress from participating in this study here is a provided confidential service helpline regarding alcohol 1800 459 459

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Appendix E



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Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
SnaisTotal	.055	82	.200*	.982	82	.313
AUDITCTOTAL	.137	82	.001	.947	82	.002

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction