



## Full length article

# The role of online social network chatting for alcohol use in adolescence: Testing three peer-related pathways in a Swedish population-based sample



Peter Larm<sup>a, b, \*</sup>, Cecilia Åslund<sup>a</sup>, Kent W. Nilsson<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Centre for Clinical Research, Uppsala University, Västmanland County Hospital Västerås, S-72189 Västerås, Sweden

<sup>b</sup> School of Health, Care and Social Welfare, Mälardalen University, Box 883, S-72123 Västerås, Sweden

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 12 October 2016

Received in revised form

11 January 2017

Accepted 3 February 2017

Available online 7 February 2017

## Keywords:

Internet

Adolescence

Alcohol drinking

Cross-sectional studies

## ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to examine whether online social network chatting (OSNC) is related to any of three peer-related pathways to alcohol use among adolescents including a stress-exposure pathway, a peer status pathway and a social context pathway. A survey was distributed to a Swedish population-based sample of 2439 boys and girls 15–16 years old enrolled in the 9th grade of primary school. Indirect effects, moderating effects, and gender differences were analysed. The results exposed a robust positive association between OSNC and alcohol use, but also that OSNC accounted for one-fifth of the association between the peer status pathway and alcohol use. A positive association between the stress-exposure pathway and alcohol use was found that was weaker among adolescents who scored high on OSNC whereas a positive association between the social context pathway and alcohol use also was found that was stronger among adolescents who scored high on OSNC. Consequently, OSNC may contribute differently to alcohol use depending on which peer-related pathway that the adolescent follows. The robust positive association between OSNC and alcohol use that remained when the three peer-related pathways were accounted for also indicates that this association is accounted for by other factors.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

The introduction and integration of social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook into adolescents' lives has raised concerns whereas this integration is associated with psychosocial risks. In a recent review, seven fears were discussed including sexual solicitation by strangers, cyberbullying, impaired social relationships with parents and peers, disturbed identity development, cognitive performance, and sleeping problems (George & Odgers, 2015). Other concerns include academic performance, psychological well-being and self-esteem (Ahn, 2011). Although, alcohol use in youths 10–24 years old is ranked as a leading risk factor for health problems and accounts for 7% of the total burden of disease worldwide (Gore et al., 2011), little attention has been given to whereas SNSs among adolescents influence their alcohol consumption. Peer influence serves as a major determinant of alcohol use during

adolescence (Windle et al., 2008). Consequently, the introduction of new arenas for peer communication such as SNSs may influence adolescents' alcohol use. An increased use of social media and computer games that take place in domestic environments (Svensson & Andersson, 2016) has been suggested to contribute to the trend towards non-drinking that recently occurred among adolescents in many European countries (Hibell et al., 2012; Looze et al., 2015), USA (Looze et al., 2015), and Australia (Livingstone, 2014). On the other hand, an increased use of social media has also been hypothesized to reinforce peer communication at the expense of their communication with parents (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008), which potentially may weaken the protective effect that parental monitoring has for adolescents alcohol use (Ryan, Jorm, & Lubman, 2010). Consequently, the association between online communication and alcohol use in adolescence is of interest.

### 1.1. The association between online social network sites and alcohol use

Although, the association between online social networking and

\* Corresponding author. Centre for Clinical Research, Västmanland County Hospital Västerås, S-72189 Västerås, Sweden.

E-mail address: [peter.larm@tv.se](mailto:peter.larm@tv.se) (P. Larm).

alcohol addiction has been discussed (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011), the role of online social networking for alcohol use in adolescence has focused on alcohol advertising and peer alcohol behavior (Moreno & Whitehill, 2014). Alcohol behavior on SNSs, in particular displaying alcohol references has been associated with an increased alcohol use among adolescents (Huang, Soto, Fujimoto, & Valente, 2014; Moreno, Christakis, Egan, Brockman, & Becker, 2012; Ridout, Campbell, & Ellis, 2012). In addition to alcohol advertising and peer alcohol behavior, SNSs may be related to alcohol use among adolescents in a third way. During the past decade, an increased trend towards separation from adults to spend more time with peers, has been noticed among adolescents (Steinberg, 2005). An increased use of SNSs may have contributed to this trend since SNSs has been hypothesized to reinforce peer communication at the expense of their communication with parents (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Although, some studies suggest that SNSs is associated with less time spend with parents (Rosen, 2007) and less family interaction (Mesch, 2006), it is not clear whereas these findings lead to less qualitative relationship with parents nor if they are associated with increased involvement in risky behaviors (George & Odgers, 2015). A previous study on 1563 10th graders from five Southern Californian high schools failed to find a direct association between use of online social network sites and alcohol use (Huang et al., 2014). However, other features of online social network sites that may be important for how peers influence each other's alcohol use such as the messenger/chatting function where individuals can send messages or chat with others are unexplored.

### 1.2. The importance of peer influence for adolescent alcohol use

Adolescents usually drink alcohol with peers (SAMHSA, 2013), and the peer processes linked to adolescent's alcohol use are usually divided into peer influence and peer selection (Leung, Toumbourou, & Hemphill, 2014). Peer influence refers to the process that leads to changes in adolescent attitudes and behaviors (Arnett, 2007), whereas peer selection refers to the process where individuals select peers that are similar in attitudes and behaviors (Leung et al., 2014). The importance of peers has also been identified as a major motive of why adolescents use alcohol, i.e. to obtain social rewards (e.g., to be polite and social camaraderie) and to avoid social rejection (e.g., peer pressure and peer acceptance). Other motives include coping motives and to enhance positive mood or well-being (e.g., for kicks and to get high) (Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2005). In addition, peers constitute the primary target for communication on online social network sites (Heimisdottir, Vilhjalmsdottir, Kristjansdottir, & Meyrowitsch, 2010), and three hypotheses have been provided of how online networking is associated with interpersonal relations in adolescence (Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). First, the stimulation hypothesis, specifies that online communication stimulates adolescent's self-disclosure and is less threatening than face-to-face communication leading to more qualitative friendships (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). Second, the rich-get-richer hypothesis, suggests that online communication benefits the highly sociable adolescents whereas it is not improving friendship quality for adolescents with poor social skills and limited offline network (Kraut et al., 2002; Lee, 2009). Third, the social compensation hypothesis, suggests in contrast that adolescents who are uncomfortable with face-to-face communications benefit their relationship with peers using online communication sites since voice tone, eye contact, and facial expressions are not expressed in these forums (McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002).

However, given the novelty of the field where previous research predominantly focused on identifying main effects of internet communication for psychosocial development rather than

addressing underlying processes (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011), we used a pathway framework in order to elaborate this association during adolescence. In developmental psychopathology, the pathway framework views pathology as a succession of branches that take the individual further from functioning and that there exist multiple pathways to a similar manifest outcome (Sroufe, 1997). In other words, adolescents may follow multiple peer-related pathways that lead to alcohol use. In order to understand what role online social network chatting (OSNC) has for peer influences on alcohol use in adolescence, three peer-related pathways were hypothesized that bridge together knowledge of how peers influence the use of online social network sites respectively alcohol use. Two of the peer-related pathways build upon classical behavior theories of why adolescents use alcohol whereas the third peer-related pathway is constructed upon evidence that the social dimension is important for both alcohol use and OSNC.

### 1.3. The stress-exposure pathway

The first potential pathway builds on the general strain theory that victimization by others evokes negative emotions such as depression, with consequently deviant coping responses involving criminality or substance use (Agnew, 2001; Wright, Fagan, & Pinchevsky, 2013). In particular, individuals faced with stressors who lack adaptive coping strategies are at higher risk for heavy alcohol consumption during adolescence (Laurent, Catanzaro, & Callan, 1997). Further, coping motives is a common reason as to why adolescents use alcohol (Kuntsche et al., 2005). Accordingly, a stress-exposure pathway is hypothesized in which adolescents who lack adaptive coping strategies use alcohol when exposed to stressors. These adolescents might use online social network sites to interact with others who use a similar maladaptive alcohol-related coping strategy. OSNC may for these adolescents' act as a collective social compensator (McKenna et al., 2002) that benefits their relationship with like-minded peers. On the other hand, a recent review suggests that online social network sites are used by some people as a coping mechanism as a response to negative life events (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011) primarily by providing social support (Nabi, Prestin, & So, 2013). Thus, adolescents exposed to stressors may use online social networking as an adaptive coping strategy that protects against alcohol use by stimulating adolescent's self-disclosure in less threatening communication forms that leads to qualitative friendships as the stimulation hypothesis impose (McKenna & Bargh, 2000).

### 1.4. The peer status pathway

The second pathway builds on the social learning theory where individuals adapt to behaviors that they believe would improve their status among peers (Bandura, 1973). Thus, adolescents largely engage in "adult" behaviours such as sexual activity and alcohol use to achieve peer status (Mayeux, Sandstrom, & Cillessen, 2008). Popularity during adolescence has also been associated with more extensive alcohol use (Tucker et al., 2013). To avoid social rejection in terms of peer pressure and peer acceptance is also a common motive for adolescents to use alcohol (Kuntsche et al., 2005). Postulated from social learning theory, a peer status pathway to alcohol use is hypothesized in which adolescents drink more alcohol to gain and maintain social status. In addition, group identification referred to as endorsement of group norms, personal interconnectivity and social enhancement constitutes an important motivator for visiting online social network sites (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2010). Consequently, group identification on online social networking sites may increase alcohol use among popular adolescents, by receiving more friend nominations and getting friends

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4937363>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4937363>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)