

# Webinar: Social media, alcohol use and parent monitoring across adolescence

## Speaker Key:

LG Lucy Grummitt

AS Anna Smout

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00:00:00	LG	Okay, hi, everybody. Good afternoon and welcome to the Positive Choices webinar series. My name is Lucy and I'm a research assistant on the Positive Choices project and I'll be chairing the webinar session today. So today's webinar will focus on the relationship between social media, alcohol use and parental monitoring across adolescents.
00:00:25		At Positive Choices our aim is to assist parents, teachers and students across Australia to access up to date and accurate information about alcohol and other drugs. This webinar series is one way we try to achieve this aim. We will be hosting another webinar later in the year, so please subscribe to the Positive Choices newsletter by going to our website and you'll be notified when we have more details about this webinar. Over the series so far we've covered a number of topics, such as how parents can keep their teenagers safe at parties, and if you miss this or any other sessions you can watch on demand at our website.
00:01:06		So just some housekeeping before we start. You're currently in listen-only mode, which means we can't hear you. The webinar is being recorded and will be made available on the Positive Choices portal, along with the hand-out of the slides and we will have a question and answer session towards the end of the webinar, so please just type your questions using the Q&A box available.
00:01:32		If you haven't already visited the Positive Choices website, I would encourage you to take a look at the range of evidence-based drug resources that are available. Positive Choices was developed in consultation with young people, teachers and parents and we'd appreciate your feedback on anything additional you'd like to see on the site. Or if you'd like to suggest a future webinar topic, please email us on <a href="mailto:info@positivechoices.org.au">info@positivechoices.org.au</a> .
00:01:59		So now I'd like to introduce our speaker for today, Miss Anna Smout. Anna is a doctoral candidate and research assistant at The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance use at the

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		University of Sydney. She currently works Climate and Preventure study, a longitudinal randomised control trial that has followed approximately 2,000 students from age 13 to age 20. The findings she is reporting and using the Climate and Preventure data set. Anna's PhD research is looking at the development of mental health and substance use with a focus on risky behaviours. So, thank you, Anna. I'll just pass that [sound slip] now.
00:02:37	AS	Cool. Thanks, Lucy. I'll just share my screen. All righty. Cool. So thanks, everyone, for coming along today, tuning in. As Lucy said, my name's Anna Smout and I'm a PhD candidate with the Matilda Centre.
00:02:58		What I'll be presenting on today forms part of my doctoral thesis. Just to note that it's unpublished at the moment, so if you could refrain from posting any results anywhere, that would be great. At this point, and firstly, like to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed to this research, in particular the students and schools who generously participated in the study. It's a really big team, as you can see, and the project has actually been running since 2012.
00:03:29		We'll start off with a bit of context around social networking. It'll be no surprise, I'm sure, that about eight in ten Australians are currently using social media. This number is even higher among teens, so up to 99% in those aged 14 to 17. And, on average, teens are spending three or more hours per day on social networking sites, visiting their favourite sites 50 or more times per day, and their favourite sites being Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter.
00:04:05		So research has found that more time spent on social networking sites has been associated with an increased frequency of drinking among adolescents. And authors have identified alcohol-related content, generated by peers as one particularly critical factor in this relationship. This is due to the fact that they bias and inflate perceived peer drinking norms.
00:04:29		And in studies that analyse the content of social media profiles, they find that actually most profiles contain some reference use. Usually it's pictures or text portraying consumption or being drunk or hung-over and usually in a positive or humorous light. At this point, we'll touch on the poll. Lucy, did you launch the poll at the start of the...?
00:04:54	LG	Yes. I'm just about to launch it now.
		Okay, cool. We'll just do a quick poll. So what percentage of Australian parents never monitor their child's social media use? So if you just vote on what number you think is your closest and best guess

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		and we'll reveal the answer in a minute.
	LG	Great. Thanks, Anna. So we've had most people answered now. Do you want me to reveal the results now?
	AS	Yes, you can reveal that now, if you like.
00:05:30	LG	So we actually had an equal split, so 54% of our attendees said 60% never monitor and another 44% said 75% never monitor.
	AS	Great! Nice job, everyone. That's actually correct. So I think it's really surprising that, considering this huge amount of time that younger teens are spending on social media, it's a bit surprising that according to both parent and teen reports, 60% of Australian parents reportedly never monitor their child's social networking's use.
00:06:07		So we'll just touch now on what we actually mean by monitoring. So despite what it might sound like, we're not actually talking about looking over anyone's shoulder or overstepping any boundaries. In the literature, it's usually referred to as parent mediation and distinctions are made between a couple of types.
00:06:27		So one type is active mediation, which is more about engaging adolescents or children in critical discussion about what they're seeing on social media; restrictive, which is more about placing limits on the amount of time or a specific content they're allowed to engage with and co-use, which is more about using at the same time. And despite the protective influence that we know parents can and do have on the adolescent's engagement and risk behaviours, including alcohol use, the effective parent monitoring of social media use on drinking actually remains largely overlooked.
00:07:04		So that brings us to our present study. So the current study aimed to address some of these gaps in the literature to date. Firstly, because we already know from past research that more spent on social media is linked to an increased frequency of drinking, we also wanted to look here at the effect of exposure to images of peers engaging in risky substance use, on drinking frequency, so not just time spent on social media.
00:07:33		And after doing this, we then wanted to look at the effect of parent monitoring on these two relationships, so does parent monitoring affect their relationships between time spent and drinking frequency and then exposure to content and drinking frequency. And, thirdly, research examining the link between social media use and drinking is commonly at the moment conducted among older adolescents or

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		university samples.
00:07:58		And so for the present study, we wanted to look at this in a younger age group or from an earlier age to establish whether there's an opportunity here for prevention. So I'll just quickly run you through the participants and method. So analyses for this study made use of data collected from students who participated in a study designed to assess the effectiveness of a drug and alcohol prevention programme. This was called Climate and Preventure or CAP for short, and this study began in 2012 and we're actually still collecting data today, seven years on.
00:08:36		So for this presentation we're only using age 13 data from participants who were allocated to the control group of the study. This means that during the study, they actually didn't receive the prevention programme and we used control group participants so that we know that any effects we're finding are not affected by whether or not they received the prevention programme.
00:08:58		So data was collected from students and surveys online in class from the age of 13 up to 16, but again we're just using age 13 data. Final number of participants was 527, 65% female, on average 13 years old. Quickly running through how we measured our variables of interest. When we said drinking frequency, we're talking about the number of days per month that a standard drink was consumed over the past six months.
00:09:30		Social media was measured two ways. Firstly, through hours spent per day, using social media and, secondly, yes or no, whether or not kids reported seeing pictures of their peers drunk, passed out or using drugs on social networking sites. Parent monitoring was assessed through the item: does your parent monitor your social networking site use? Yes or no. And, finally, because we know that they are associated with increased drinking in adolescents, in our analyses we also took into account participant sex and four personality risk factors that are associated with increased drinking.
00:10:07		These are impulsivity, sensation seeking, hopelessness and anxiety sensitivity. And we want to take these into account so that we know that any effects we find linking social networking site use and drinking frequency are not just a product of differences in participant sex or personality.
00:10:28		So to look at these relationships we use a statistical technique called regression. There are heaps of different types of regression analyses, but at their core, they're all examining the relationship between two or

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		more variables of interest. So a number of independent variables and the effect of them on a dependent variable. So for our study, our independent variable today is social media use, with our dependent variable being drinking frequency.
00:11:00		And there's one other aspect that we need to understand in interpreting our analyses and that's moderation. So moderation is a way to check whether a different variable, for example, parent monitoring, influences the strength or the direction of the relationship between our LU and our DV. Finally, we include our covariates that I had just mentioned, participant sex and participant personality.
00:11:26		We call them covariates and we include these when there's a chance they are going to affect the relationship between social networking and drinking frequency. And including these can increase the accuracy of our results. So, onto results. So the first question we wanted to ask was whether more time spent on social media is associated with an increased frequency of drinking among our sample of 13-year-olds and our covariates are in there too.
00:12:00		So the answer to this is Yes and I'll quickly explain the interpretation of this slide. So this table is the output of a regression. The furthest right column shows us the significance value or the P value, and if the P value of the variable we're interested in is below 0.05 we call this statistically significant. So the graphs on the slides show us what the numbers in the regression output translate to in a visual way.
00:12:34		So the way we would interpret this output is that the graph is showing us that at age 13 more time spent on social media is associated with an increased frequency of drinking. And we know that this result is statistically significant because our P value is below 0.05. So this is in line with the previous research that we discussed earlier linking drinking frequency with social networking site use and shows us that this is occurring as young as the age of 13.
00:13:04		So our next question we wanted to answer was: does seeing images of others moderate the relationship between time spent on social media and drinking frequency, and again we've got our covariates in there. So the answer here again was Yes. This was statistically significant.
00:13:26		So, looking at our graph is depicting the people who did see images of risky substance use, and for this group, more time spent on social media is still associated with an increased frequency of drinking. However, when we look at the red line, or people who didn't see images, amongst those people, this relationship is very reduced. So

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		from this, we can see that while more social media hours per day is predicting an increased frequency of drinking, this is occurring actually only among the adolescents who report seeing images of their peers drunk, passed out or using drugs.
00:14:05		So we've established here that both the amount of time spent on social media and the content kids are exposed to are having some influence on drinking frequency. So next we want to see what happens when we include parent monitoring in our models. So our first question looking at parent monitoring: does parent monitoring of social media use moderate the relationship between time spent on social media and drinking frequency.
00:14:37		So the answer to this one was a bit more complex. It's a Yes, sort of. So this result was initially significant. Looking first at the red line on our graph, we can see that without any parent monitoring, more time spent on social media is associated with an increased frequency of drinking. However, when we look at the blue line, we can see that the presence of any parent monitoring appears to reduce the strength of this relationship.
00:15:02		However, once we added our covariates into the model, this was no longer statistically significant. So it's hard to say exactly what this means, but what it's telling us is, it seems participant sex and personality are also important factors in this relationship.
00:15:23		So our second and final parent monitoring question: does parent monitoring of social media use moderate the relationship between seeing images of peers drunk, passed out or using drugs and drinking frequency? And again, finally, we have our covariates. So the answer to this one again was Yes. This result was significant. So this graph is a little bit more complex to interpret. It helps if you look at the two red bars together and then the two blue bars together and then imagine a line connecting them both.
00:16:02		Basically, looking at the red bars, they show us that, in the absence of parent monitoring, seeing images of other kids drunk or passed out is associated with a higher frequency of drinking, but in the presence of parent monitoring disappears; this is counteracted. So a quick summary of our findings.
00:16:26		Firstly, we're replicated findings linking social media, or time spent on social media, and drinking frequency, and we found that this is occurring in as young as the age of 13. However, it's interesting to note that actually seeing images of peers drunk, passed out or using drugs actually moderated this relationship, such that more time spent

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		on social media predicted increased drinking frequency, but only among those who were exposed to images. Parent monitoring also reduced the strength of the relationship between seeing images of friends drunk, passed out or using drugs and increased drinking frequency.
00:17:05		So what does this all mean for us? Firstly, I suppose it goes without saying that, yes, we should continue aiming to reduce social media use among our young adolescents due to its association with increased drinking, but until now we maybe weren't aware that it was occurring as young as age 13, so start early!
00:17:28		These findings also suggest that a perception of parent monitoring might be of benefit at this early age. So as we just saw, we saw that seeing images was an important predictor of drinking frequency, even in the statistical models that included time spent on social media and further, that parent monitoring reduced the positive association between seeing images and drinking frequency.
00:17:52		So because of all this, we might then hypothesise that active monitoring methods or methods that involve encouraging adolescents to thinking critically about what they're seeing on social media might have more beneficial outcomes for drinking frequency than simply just restricting the amount of time they're allowed to spend on social networking sites. Given the exploratory nature of the items in our study, we didn't actually gather any reference to the specific type or amount of parent monitoring.
00:18:29		The next step would be to explore outcomes differentially according to monitoring amount and type. And so what about later in adolescents? Unfortunately, we didn't have time today to cover this in our presentation, but we've also run this cross-sectional analysis in this sample across the ages of 14, 15 and 16 and we've also run some longitudinal analyses as well.
00:19:00		So what we actually found was that the results we saw today, age 13, are actually not as strong across later ages of 14, 15 and 16. And, further, we found that seeing images at age 13 was actually associated with an increased frequency of drinking across the ages of 14, 15 and 16. However, parent monitoring at age 13 did not significantly affect drinking frequency across the longer term.
00:19:31		So, in other words, what we can bring all this together and say is that, it's pointing to an early window of influence for parents and early adolescents where the influence of social networking site content on behavioural outcomes might be a little bit stronger than in later years.

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00:19:52		And, in parallel, across adolescent development, we might need to think of some alternative ways to intervene when it comes to disrupting the connection between early exposure to content depicting risky behaviours on the related behaviour outcomes. So as the behaviour becomes more normative in real life situations, perhaps real life exposure takes precedence. However, at younger ages when receiving less real life exposure, it might be that what they're seeing on social media is more influential at that early age.
00:20:33		Just a couple of limitations of the present study to mention. So all these analyses today were cross-sectional analyses, so we cannot infer causality from these. Just because their variables are significantly associated with one another does not necessarily mean they cause each other.
00:20:54		We also had a reliance on student self-report, so it's possible that, for example, some parents might have used some monitoring techniques that their kids weren't aware of, for example, making a Facebook profile and befriending them or something like that. So future research would benefit from having both child and parent reports of monitoring. And, finally, next time, as I mentioned earlier, we'd like to probably gather more data about monitoring amount and type. We're in the final stages of writing up these findings for publications and upon acceptance, we can circulate them through the Positive Choices communication channels.
00:21:33		This paper will contain some additional analyses that I just mentioned to what I've prevented here. So thanks very much for listening today. And now we will do... We've got time, I think, for a quick Q&A. Yes, great! Thank you.
00:21:52	LG	We'll move on to the Q&A now. So if everyone would like to type a question they have into the Q&A box in your control panel, I can pass that on to Anna. Okay, so a couple of early questions. Anna, could you give an example of the different types of monitoring that you spoke about? So active, restrictive and co-use.
00:22:23	AS	Sure. So active monitoring, as we mentioned is encouraging kids to think critically about what their friends or acquaintances are posting on social media. So how much do they think this is a true representation of their lives. Having open communication about their experience with social media. So things like how does this benefit you? Why do you enjoy using social media? Is there anything you don't like about social media? And then another really important part of active monitoring is talking about cyber safety in general.



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00:23:03		So the classic examples of only visiting trusted sites, being careful about the type of content you're sharing and who you're sharing it with, telling it out if something seems wrong; basically just opening a back and forth dialogue where it feels like they're heard and not just perhaps being told what to do.
00:23:27		Restrictive monitoring is more about restricting the amount of time they're allowed to spend on social networking sites. It might be that they're not allowed to use it in the evening or they're only allowed to use it in shared areas. No computers in bedrooms, no social media after bed time and things like that. And then co-use. It's mentioned a lot in the general media literature. It's perhaps less applicable to social media, but it's like watching TV together or watching movies together or playing video games together, so you're using it at the same time.
0:24:03		You probably could do this to some extent with social media, like sitting down together and talking through a few social media profiles. But, yes, generally it's more about engaging together through shared interest in some type of media.
	LG	Okay, great. Thanks, Anna. And we've had another question come in about how would I start a conversation with my child about alcohol and what's [inaudible].
00:24:31	AS	Yes. It can always be a bit difficult, I imagine. A good technique that I've seen talked about in a few of these papers is using current events or happenings to start a conversation. So when things come up on the news, you could say something like, has something like this ever happened to you or happened to your friends or someone you know?
00:25:02		It's always good to let it come about organically. Positive Choices also actually has a couple of communication guides and video demonstrations up on the website, I think as well.
	LG	Yes, that's right. In our parent portal, our parent section of the portal, there are video demonstrations and communication guides for starting those tricky conversations with your children.
00:25:34		And another question for you, Anna. Until what age do you think parents should be monitoring their social media – sorry, their children's social media use.
	AS	Well, look, I think when we're talking about things like engaging in critical discussion, I can't really think of any time that this would be inappropriate, so I guess checking in as often as you see necessary.

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00:26:09		The conversation can also be reversed and applied both ways, so how does your social media use compare to theirs? Could you cut back too? As a family, what do you guys want to be achieving with social media or using it for? So, yes, I really think there's no age that it's too old.
00:26:34	LG	Okay. Another question has come through regarding the age of the students in your sample. They have asked how many 13-year-olds in Australia are actually drinking alcohol? Is this something that you know from your samples?
00:26:54	AS	Yes. Well, so in our sample, at age 13 about 11% of our sample is drinking, so the prevalence is low, and this is in accord with Australian statistics. If you'd like to see some more, there's the Australian Secondary School Survey – is it Alcohol and Tobacco Use?
	LG	Yes. Alcohol and Other Drug Use.
	AS	Alcohol and Other Drug Use, ASSAD, A S S A D 2017, I think, which would have some more detailed information.
00:27:29		Among our sample it was about 11% and again, yes, that's a low prevalence, but in the interests of prevention, we're wanting to be getting in there early, looking at these patterns as they're emerging, rather than when they're established. But, yes, any drinking at the age of 13 could be considered pretty risky.
00:27:55	LG	Yes, definitely. Thanks, Anna. Another question has come through as to whether you think these sorts of findings would be applicable in other areas of [sound slip]. Or maybe tobacco use or even desired health behaviours such as healthy eating and [sound slip].
	AS	Healthy eating?
	LG	Yes.
	AS	Yes. These specific findings are pointing to very specific exposure on social media use. I can't think why it wouldn't apply to anything that kids are exposed to on social media.
00:28:31		So, yes, pictures of healthy lifestyle, which definitely comes out, yes, I would say... Basically, yes, and I guess in these findings we're seeing that again this might be particularly... The scope of influence of social media might be stronger before they're getting real-life exposure to these behaviours. So I think as long as it's unique behaviours, they're not getting exposure to otherwise, I think there's every chance that

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		that could influence their behaviour.
00:29:02	LG	Great! Thanks, Anna. I think that's all we have time for in our shorter half-hour time slot today. But if anyone still has some questions that they'd like Anna's answer to, please just send us an email at <a href="mailto:info@positivechoices.org.au">info@positivechoices.org.au</a> and type in the question there.
00:29:23	AS	Thanks so much, everyone. Thanks, Lucy.