



**An exploration of the impact of social media on the
drinking behaviour of students aged over 18 at
University College Jersey.**

Zuzanna Swiatek

BSc (Hons) Social Sciences

2025

Research Supervisor:

Dr Moyra Journeaux

Acknowledgements

Writing a dissertation was one of the hardest but most enjoyable things I have done during my university journey.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Moyra Journeaux, for her continuous guidance throughout my dissertation process. Her motivation and advice have aided me through all the stages of writing this research project.

It is important for me to thank my mum, Patrycja Swiatek, and my partner, Brandon Baird, for their prolonged support and their belief in me during my undergraduate studies. I could not have done this without them.

Acknowledgements are also given to University College Jersey for allowing me to embark on this journey.

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Abstract.....	5
Chapter 1 – Introduction.....	7
1.1 Background of Study	7
1.2 Research Problem	8
1.2.1 Research Question.....	9
1.2.3 Research Aim	9
1.2.4 Research Objectives	9
1.3 Significance of Research	9
1.4 Structure of the Dissertation.....	10
1.5 Conclusion	10
Chapter 2 – Literature Review.....	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Search Strategy	11
Table 2.1 Search Terms.....	12
Table 2.2 Prisma	12
Table 2.3 Included Studies	14
2.3 Review of Literature.....	17
2.4 Conclusion	23
Chapter 3 – Research Design	24
3.1 Introduction	24
3.2 Research Philosophy.....	24
3.3 Research Methodology	25
3.3.1 Quantitative Research	25
3.3.2 Survey Research.....	25
3.4 Data Collection Methods.....	26
3.5 Data Analysis Methods	27
3.6 Recruitment Strategy.....	28
Table 3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	28
3.7 Ethical Issues	29
3.8 Conclusion	31
Chapter 4 – Data Analysis/Findings.....	32
4.1 Introduction	32
4.2 Data Analysis Method	32
4.3 Demographics of Participants.....	32
Table 4.1 Age and Gender of Eligible Participants.....	33
Table 4.2 Year of Study and Hours Spent on Social Media Per Day	34
4.4 Social Media Use	34
Table 4.3 Most Used Social Media.....	35

Table 4.4 Most Engaged with Type of Content	36
Table 4.5 Most Commonly Ranked Content	36
Table 4.6 Least Commonly Ranked Content	37
4.5 Alcohol Consumption	37
Table 4.7 Frequency of Alcohol Consumption	38
Table 4.8 Preferred Type of Alcohol	39
Table 4.9 The Situations where Participants Drink	40
Table 4.10 Social Media and Alcohol	41
Table 4.11 Social media alcohol consumption and glamour	42
Table 4.12 Increase in Alcohol Consumption after Alcohol-Related Content	43
Table 4.13: Opinion on Social Media as an Influence on Perceptions of Alcohol	44
4.6 Conclusion	45
Chapter 5 – Discussion of Findings	46
5.1 Introduction	46
5.2 Interpretations	46
5.3 Implications	49
5.4 Limitations	50
5.5 Was the research question answered?	51
5.6 Conclusion	52
Chapter 6 – Conclusion	53
6.1 Introduction	53
6.2 Summary of Key Findings	53
6.3 Recommendations	54
6.4 Conclusion	55
References	56
Appendices	61
1. Survey Questions	61
2. Participant Information Sheet	64
3. Email approval from Jo to access UCJ students	65
4. Approval letter from Highlands College Research Ethics Committee	66

Abstract

Social media usage is a large aspect of the 21st-century lifestyle for university students, and alcohol consumption is a concerning part of university students' culture. Many previous studies have explored the influence of social media on alcohol consumption in university students, though no causal relationship has been identified.

This research aimed to investigate the influence of social media content on alcohol consumption by examining whether students encounter alcohol-related content, how they engage with social media, whether social media influences their drinking and the situations in which they drink.

Participants were invited to complete an online survey. Data was analysed using simple descriptive statistics. Findings indicate that students accessing social media viewed minimal alcohol-related content. This suggests that social media may not have as big an impact on the drinking behaviour as thought. Findings also illustrated that of the students who drank alcohol, the majority reported only occasional drinking (less than once a week), highlighting the low engagement in alcohol consumption amongst these students. The low response rate may account for this, as it is a possibility that, by chance, those who have a higher engagement with alcohol were not responders to the survey. Despite the limited alcohol consumption among the participants, there was a 50-50 split in participants who felt that alcohol related content impacts alcohol consumption and those who did not.

The small response rate was a limitation of the study, and a larger study with a higher response rate would have allowed inferential statistical analysis and may have revealed more generalisable findings. Although this study's analysis did not seek to infer a causal relationship, the findings align with previous studies, such as Atusingwize et al.'s (2022) study, which found that social media use is positively associated with alcohol consumption.

This research contributes to existing literature by providing new insights into the drinking habits of students at the University College Jersey. The implications are that it is important to ensure support systems are in place for students to ensure they do not form negative relationships with alcohol. Additionally, a larger research project that is longer in time can connect with more participants and provide more meaningful results.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The dissertation aims to explore the impact of social media on alcohol consumption in University College Jersey (UCJ) students who are over the age of 18. In this chapter, the background and rationale for the research will be provided, and the research problem will be introduced. Previous work done by researchers who highlight concerning figures surrounding alcohol consumption rates in university students will also be discussed. The aims and objectives will be outlined, identifying the significance of this research. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 Background of Study

Social media is a prevalent aspect of life in the 21st Century, with 4.8 billion social media users worldwide, which is 59.9% of the global population (University of Maine, 2023). The University of Maine (2023) report has also highlighted that there were '150 million new social media users between April 2022 and April 2023.' Kuntsche et al. (2023) found that 28-99% of participants in the studies they reviewed (to determine how much people post about alcohol and also view alcohol on social media) posted alcohol-related content, which was mostly displayed in a positive context that promoted drinking. Additionally, 32-65% of participants were exposed to alcohol posts from other social media users. Lukács et al. (2013) found that more than 90% of university students consume alcohol, with higher alcohol abuse in male students than female students. Lukács et al. (2013) study also found that most students do not drink alone. A concerning finding from Balsa, Giuliano and French

(2011) found that having average or above-average academic performance decreases significantly as the frequency of alcohol consumption increases. While these studies are some years old, they have relevance today as social media tools such as artificial intelligence (Gocen and Aydemir, 2021), and Microsoft programmes such as Teams (Juanis, 2020) are being used in educational settings.

Ng Fat, Cable and Kelly (2021) found that social media use was predictive of increased drinking and binge eating among youths and young adults. Nagata et al. (2023) found that problematic social media use was associated with positive and negative alcohol consumption. These concerning findings call for research to be conducted in university settings to understand issues students may face in particular settings.

1.2 Research Problem

It is clear from previous research that alcohol consumption can be influenced by what they see on social media. It is also identified that alcohol consumption among students can affect their overall academic performance. This research study, therefore, will focus on how social media influences drinking behaviour within this population. From this identified research problem, a research question has been posed using the PICO framework to help structure it. The PICO framework refers to population (sample of subjects that you wish to recruit), intervention (the treatment that will be provided), comparison (what you plan on using as a reference group to compare with your intervention), outcome (what result you plan on measuring) and time (duration for data collection) (Riva et al., 2012).

1.2.1 Research Question

The research question is therefore posed as: What is the impact of social media on the drinking behaviour of students aged 18 to 30 at University College Jersey (UCJ)?

1.2.3 Research Aim

This research aims to investigate the influence of social media content on alcohol consumption among university students.

1.2.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives for this study are to:

1. To explore what type of alcohol-related content students encounter and view on social media platforms;
2. To explore how viewing peer posts related to alcohol consumption influences and impacts student's own drinking behaviour and intentions;
3. To examine the influence of part and fully alcohol-related content on students' perceptions of normal or acceptable drinking levels;
4. To explore social media influenced drinking behaviour among different demographic groups, including gender, age and course.

1.3 Significance of Research

This research will focus on students aged over 18 as it will allow for determining and understanding how they are affected by what they view on social media and how it influences their opinions of and participation in drinking behaviour. This study

supports the need for exploration of how Jersey students are being affected by social media and alcohol-related content and the extent to which this influences their alcohol consumption. This research will provide University College Jersey with statistics on alcohol consumption by their students and allow for knowledge to offer more help and support if necessary.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

This chapter has introduced the research, and the focus of the dissertation has been outlined. In chapter two, previous work done by researchers will be discussed and it will be showcased how that work was found. Chapter three will provide information about the research conducted, including the sample and collection methods. Chapter four is the data analysis section. Chapter five will be a discussion of findings, with mention of limitations. Chapter six will be a conclusion of the findings and will provide recommendations for future research. References and Appendices can be found at the end of the document.

1.5 Conclusion

Within this chapter, the beginning of this research has been outlined, with a focus on reasons as to why this research must be conducted, as well as the objectives and aims. In the following chapter, the search strategy will be outlined, which was used to gather literature that is relevant to this research. There will also be a review of each piece of literature that was identified as relevant.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the literature focusing on current research related to social media use and alcohol consumption. The chapter will begin by illustrating the literature retrieval process and outlining the search strategy. A review of the retrieved literature will be presented, and a conclusion summarising the key literature findings will be outlined at the end.

2.2 Search Strategy

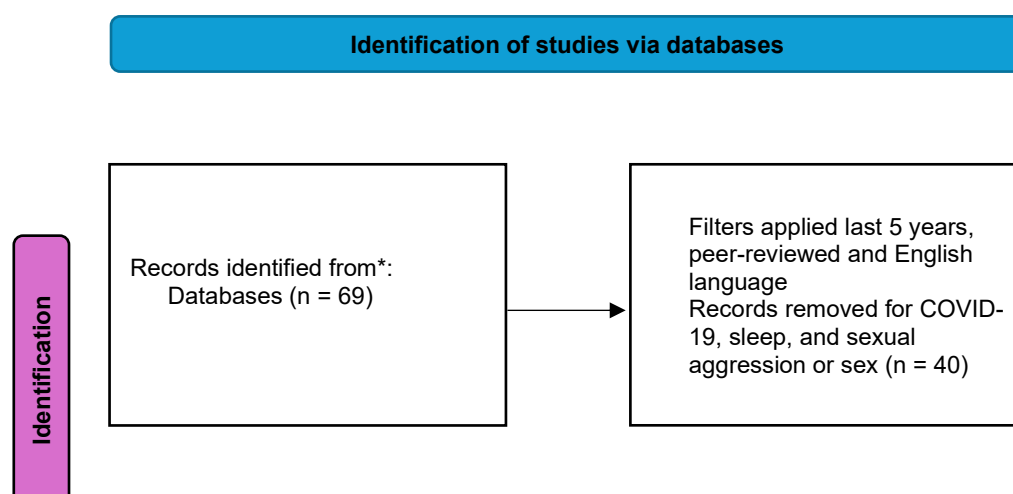
A search strategy is an 'organised structure of key terms' used to search within a database (University of Leeds, 2022) to retrieve relevant literature. Search terms for this research were identified using the PICO framework (Riva et al., 2012) and through identifying their synonyms which can be seen in Table 2.1. The literature for this study was identified using the EBSCO Research Databases, then narrowed down using SocINDEX with Full Text, Academic Search Complete, English Language, peer reviewed and published within 5 years. The 5-year date is to ensure the most up to date research is included. The search was completed on the 10th of February 2025. Boolean operators were used to narrow and focus the search (MIT Libraries, 2018). A screening process was followed to ensure the literature selected fit with the focus of this research (Table 2.2). Through backwards searching by looking at reference lists, the study by Boyle et al. (2016) was found to be relevant to the search. Although it falls outside of the timeline of the search criteria, it was

identified in the reference lists of other included papers and therefore was selected for inclusion. A summary of the retrieved papers is included in Table 2.3.

Table 2.1 Search Terms

Key Search Term	Synonyms	Hits
Social media	OR "social networking" OR "online social networks"	198,745
Drinking behaviour	OR "alcohol consumption" OR "alcohol use" OR "binge drinking"	142,389
Students	OR "university students" OR "college students" OR "adult students"	1,386,101
Impact	OR effect OR influence	9,718,192
	Combined with Boolean Operator AND	165
	Applying filters English Language, Peer Reviewed and 2020-2025	69

Table 2.2 Prisma



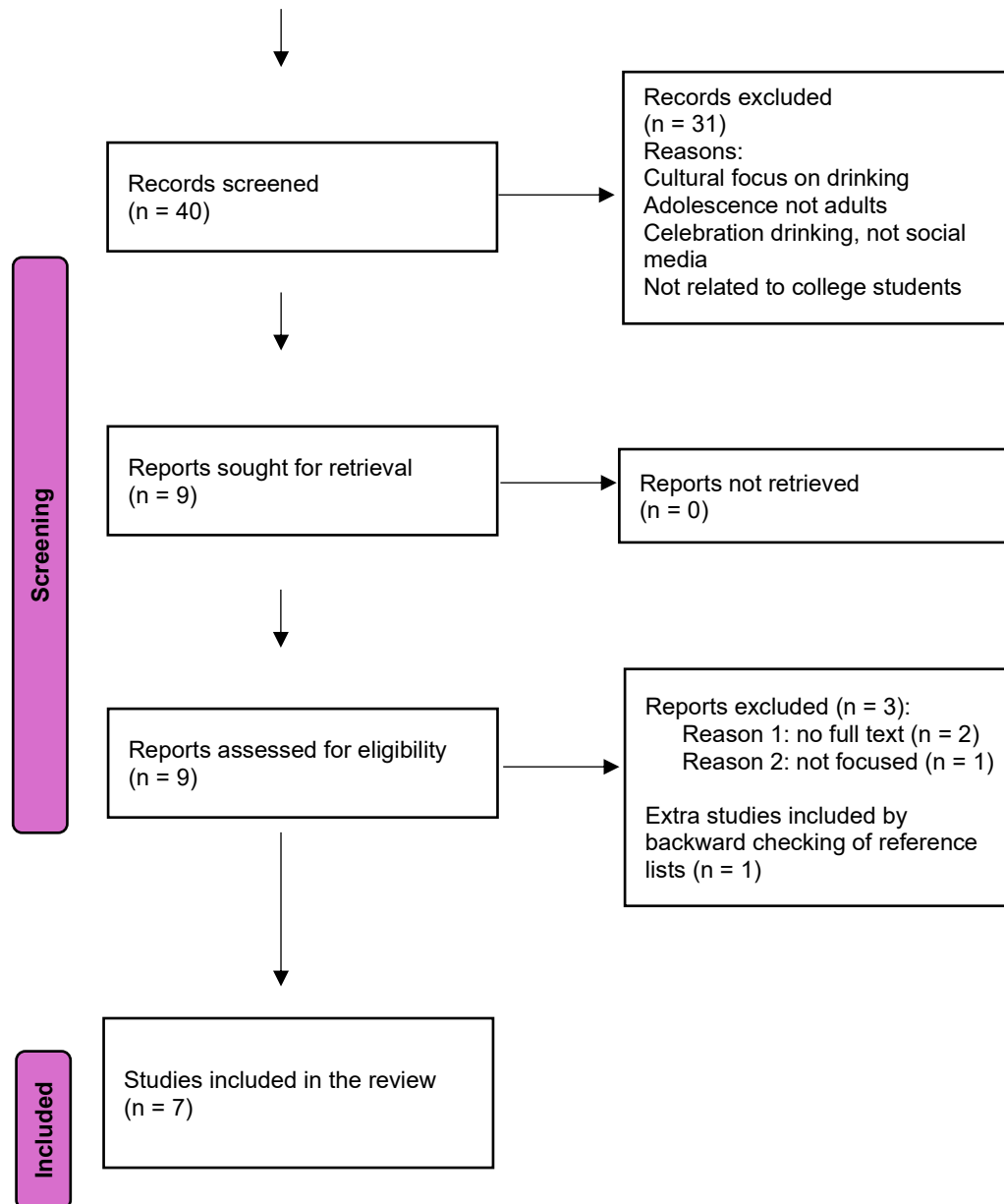


Table 2.3 Included Studies

Author	Title	Summary	Findings
Atusingwize et al. (2022)	Social Media Use and Alcohol Consumption Among Students in Uganda: A Cross-Sectional Study	A study of 996 undergraduate students at Makerere University to assess prevalence of and associations between social media use and alcohol consumption.	Regular alcohol use was associated with moderate and high level general social media use and alcohol-related lurking.
Strowger, Braitman and Barnett (2022)	The Association Between Social Network Members Sharing Alcohol-Related Social Media Content on Alcohol Outcomes Among College Student Drinkers	A study of 130 college students with an average age of 23.39 who has consumed at least one alcoholic drink in the past week.	Viewing alcohol related content on social media was associated with a greater frequency of alcohol use.
O'Shields and Baldwin-White (2022)	Exploring the Role of Social Networking Sites in Alcohol Consumption among College Students: Which Platforms Have the Greatest Influence?	A study of 330 college students to investigate the effects of different social media apps on drinking behaviour.	Snapchat was the only app found to have association with college student drinking behaviour.

Graupensperger et al. (2023)	Exposure to Media with Alcohol-Related Content Across Young Adulthood: Associations with Risky Drinking and Consequences Among High-Risk 2- and 4-Year College Students	A study of 201 participants enrolled in 2- and 4-year colleges to determine associated with heavy episodic drinking (HED) and negative consequences.	Exposure to positive and negative alcohol-related media content was associated with HED.
Davis, Desmarais and Giguère (2024)	Under the Influence: How Viewing Extreme Partying and Drinking on Social Media Shapes Group Perceptions	A study of 208 participants to explore how exposure to alcohol use on social media shapes the perceptions of the prototypical student and drinking norms.	Viewing alcohol-related media influences the perception of drinking norms toward pro-drinking perceptions.
Strowger et al. (2025)	Influencer Drinking Norms: Cross-Sectional Mediators of Alcohol-Related social media and College Drinking	A study of 528 college students who drink alcohol to investigate whether exposure is associated with drinking and perception of alcohol.	Influencer norms are linked to students' drinking habits.
Boyle et al., (2016)	Different Digital Paths to the Keg? How Exposure to Peers' Alcohol-Related Social Media Content Influences Drinking Among Male	A study of 408 first year college students to assess the relationship between exposure to peer's alcohol-related social media content and drinking.	Exposure to alcohol-related social media content during the initial 6 weeks of college predicted alcohol-consumption 6 months later.

	and Female First-Year College Students		
--	---	--	--

2.3 Review of Literature

Atusingwize et al.'s (2022) study of 996 undergraduate students in a Ugandan university focused on the influence of social media on alcohol consumption. A power calculation reported as determining the sample size needed for 95% power was 844, and this was achieved. They found that social media use, focusing on alcohol-related use, was positively associated with alcohol consumption. Atusingwize et al. (2022) suggested that students who drink alcohol may search for alcohol-related content on social media or use platforms to identify and connect with friends who also consume alcohol. Research assistants who were recent graduates of the university were used to gather data. The use of peers was to encourage participants to interact and, therefore, reduce the risk of response bias. However, this could be argued to produce response bias, as students may be aware of who the assistant researchers are and try to answer the way they think these researchers would want them to. Atusingwize et al. (2022) point out that social-desirability bias, where participants might respond in a way to present themselves in a socially acceptable way (King and Bruner, 2000), was likely, as students may have underestimated their reported alcohol use to what they believe would be socially acceptable. Findings indicated that those who reported high alcohol related social media use were 6.46 times more likely to be a regular drinker than an abstainer than those reporting no alcohol related social media use. However, the Confidence Interval is wide (CI: 4.04–10.30), and this could suggest that further information is required to be certain about the effect. While Atusingwize et al. (2022) reported a relationship between social media use and alcohol consumption as likely, they acknowledge that while a cross-sectional study can establish a correlation, it cannot establish a causal relationship.

Therefore, further research using a methodology to test a causal relationship would be useful.

Strowger, Braitman, and Barnett's (2022) study of 130 university students found that higher engagement with network members who post alcohol-related content was statistically significantly associated with having more drinks per week ($p = 0.031$). Strowger et al. (2022) also found that having a higher proportion of friends who posted alcohol-related content and who are drinking buddies was associated with drinking on more days of the week but not associated with alcohol-related content from general network members. This suggests that the relationship with the individual posting content is important in influencing students' drinking patterns. The study brings awareness to this with their suggestion that the network members who others go to for advice may allow for modelling of behaviour that they display, such as consuming alcohol or positively showcasing alcohol. This was also a cross-sectional study, meaning that no causal relationship could have been established. The sample data for this study was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Strowger et al. (2022) consider that during this time, people were unable to meet and drink socially, which could have influenced the results by there being less alcohol-related content shared online.

O'Shields and Baldwin-White's (2022) study of 330 students in an American public university explored which platforms have the highest impact on alcohol consumption among students. Participants in this study were paid with a \$5 gift card upon completing the survey. While the use of incentives should be considered in relation to bias, this incentive would be considered reasonable. Snapchat was found to be

the most statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) when associated with the amount of alcohol consumed in an episode of drinking, and use of this platform was a significant positive predictor of alcohol consumption. As Snapchat is an image and video-sharing platform, the theme of modelling and learning through observation is also identified in this study. O'Shields and Baldwin-White (2022) mention that Snapchat may influence alcohol consumption as images are coming from one's social network, therefore influencing their perceptions of alcohol-related norms. This study was also cross-sectional, which means it failed to provide a causal relationship. However, it does point to a correlational relationship between the use of alcohol related video images on Snapchat and alcohol consumption.

Graupensperger et al.'s (2023) study of 201 high-risk college students explored how exposure to alcohol-related media content is associated with heavy episodic drinking. The study aims focused on examining age-related changes in exposure to alcohol related media. It focused on the associations between exposure to media and drinking and used self-reported data. Participants were identified through an online eligibility survey, which was completed by 5152 students, of which 581 were eligible for inclusion. The baseline survey was completed by 500 students who were reimbursed with either \$10, \$20 or \$25. These would be considered reasonable incentives. Participants were randomised to an assessment control condition, then completed a 21-day burst of two surveys per day, followed by surveys at 1, 6, and 12 months. The study found that younger participants reported greater exposure than their older peers. Additionally, it was reported that positive portrayals of alcohol usage increased alcohol consumption and negative consequences. Graupensperger et al. (2023) included descriptive statistics in table form, reporting that participants

stated that, on average, exposure to alcohol-related content portrayed the effects of alcohol positively (SD = 0.99). For statistical analysis, Graupensperger et al. (2023) set a 95% confidence interval. However, findings report a wide confidence interval (CI -0.31 – 0.14), which suggests not statistically significant results. This can suggest that the sample was not large enough and, therefore, provides less generalisable findings. Graupensperger et al. (2023) mention that younger adults may not experience greater targeting or alcohol-related content but may be more susceptible and tend to notice this content more (p. 106). The findings of this study, Graupensperger et al. (2023), indicate that negative portrayals of alcohol related content could be a risk for increased negative consequences as they may normalise or glorify alcohol behaviour. While the study is robust, Graupensperger et al. (2023) acknowledge limitations, such as the participants in the sample being high-risk drinkers and not light or non-drinkers and that other research should include a more diverse sample to allow for generalisability.

Davis, Desmarais and Giguère's (2024) longitudinal study of 208 students investigated how exposure to risky forms of alcohol use on social media influences the perceptions and drinking norms of students. A priori power analysis was conducted, with results suggesting that 168 participants were required to achieve a power level of 0.95. 233 participants were recruited, of which 208 partook, allowing the study to achieve a power level of 95%. Participants were randomised into two control and two experimental groups over three-time points, one week apart. The first hypothesis explored whether pro-partying and drinking content would influence participants' prototypes of an undergraduate student. This hypothesis was supported by statistically significant findings of a difference and moderate effect size between

Time 1 (T1) and Time 2 (T2) ($p < 0001$) and that after exposure to T2, participants used more pro-drinking words on average than at T1. After another week at Time 3 (T3), participants still used more pro-drinking words ($p = 0.018$). The second hypothesis explored whether exposure to pro-partying and drinking media content would alter participants' drinking norms. The hypothesis was first found to not be significant, but once Davis, Desmarais and Giguère (2024) conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with a Bonferroni correction, they revealed a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.016$). It was found that after exposure to risk-taking alcohol-related videos, participants perceived drinking norms differently. Davis, Desmarais and Giguère (2024) focus on the limitations of ecological validity within this study as participants were shown videos found by the researchers, which they may not have viewed naturally in a non-laboratory setting. Participants were unable to comment on posts they viewed, which could also limit the ecological validity of this study, as the authors mentioned.

Strowger et al. (2025) studied 528 college students to examine whether students follow influencers who post alcohol-related content, how often the influencers share such content, their norms, and personal alcohol consumption and consequences. This study aimed to investigate if viewing alcohol-related content is associated with drinking indirectly through participants' perceptions of how often influencers drink and examine whether the frequency with which media was viewed is associated with alcohol use indirectly through influencer descriptive norms. This study was a second study done by Strowger et al. as a secondary analysis of a cross-sectional study (Strowger et al., 2024), which found that viewing influencer alcohol-related content was more influential in alcohol outcomes than viewing peer alcohol-related content.

Participants were narrowed down through eligibility criteria such as being between 18 and 25 years old. Strowger et al. (2025) analysed the data using descriptive statistics. The study found that influencer quantity and the quantity of drinking were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Additional findings suggest that influencer frequency norms affect personal drinking frequency with statistical significance ($p < 0.028$). However, there were no significant findings of influencer consequences. Strowger et al. (2025) state that their findings suggest a causal relationship between influencer norms and students' drinking behaviour.

Boyle et al.'s. (2016) prospective study of 408 first-year college students aimed to explore alcohol-related social media influence on college students. Boyle et al. (2016) examined how viewing alcohol-related content during the first six weeks of college influenced viewers' alcohol consumption during the second trimester. The study did not include a confidence interval to ensure the sample size was big enough. Boyle et al. (2016) used a univariate analysis test to examine gender differences, finding that there were similar patterns in the frequencies of which males and females both checked and encountered alcohol-related content. A multivariate analysis was used to determine whether alcohol-related media exposure at T1 (1 month) or social media alcohol exposure and gender interaction predicted drinks per week at T2 (6 months). Snapchat and Facebook alcohol-related media exposure in T1 was found to be statistically significant in predicting drinks per week in T2 ($p < 0.001$). Boyle et al. (2016) bring awareness to the relationship between T1 exposure and alcohol consumption in T2, being stronger in male students than female students, stating that it was unexpected, as females tend to check their social media more often and therefore had significantly higher exposure to alcohol-related

content. Boyle et al. (2016) propose that alcohol-related content may be important for heavier-drinking males or those who think alcohol is necessary to enhance their college experiences (p. 26). The study mentions that lower female alcohol consumption was due to alcohol beliefs and drinking motives. Boyle et al. (2016) concluded that Snapchat was found to have the most influence on drinking among college students due to the disappearing post feature, which assures students that there is no lasting proof of their alcohol behaviour. The limitations of this study are acknowledged, with suggestions of employing more diverse cohorts of college students and creating a stronger design to include an additional data point for the assessment of theorised mediators between alcohol exposure at T1 and consumption at T2. Boyle et al. (2016) acknowledge that students self-reported their media exposure and alcohol consumption, paying attention to the limitations of such reporting, for example, low introspective ability.

2.4 Conclusion

Having reviewed the literature, there is still a need for further studies to be conducted to determine any relationship between viewing alcohol-related content and engaging in alcohol consumption privately. The studies have identified a correlation but not a causal relationship between viewing alcohol-related content and engaging in alcohol consumption privately. These will be revisited in the discussion chapter in relation to the findings of the research.

Chapter 3 – Research Design

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research design of the dissertation will be outlined, including the philosophy, methodology, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and recruitment strategy. The ethical issues within the research design will also be considered.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The research focuses on drinking habits that are influenced by social media, which are quantifiable behaviours. The research explores patterns in the data that can be analysed objectively. Park, Konge and Artino (2020) state that positivism relies on the 'hypothetical deductive method to verify a priori hypotheses that are often stated quantitatively' (p.690). Positivism aligns with the objectives of this research as it helps predict relationships between social media and drinking behaviour and between gender, age, course, and drinking. Positivism is characterised by a systematic and structured approach to research and emphasises generalisability (Bryman, 2016), which aids in this research as it follows a structured approach of a survey to gather as many responses as possible to produce generalisable research findings. Park, Konge and Artino (2020) further explain positivism as focusing on larger samples rather than smaller samples, which was the goal of this research.

3.3 Research Methodology

3.3.1 Quantitative Research

The methodology that best fits with the philosophy of positivism is quantitative.

Quantitative research relies on structure and objectivity (Lim, 2024). It fits with this research because it can allow for objective measuring of the relationship between social media and drinking behaviour. The research follows a deductive approach, which begins from a theoretical starting point and hypothesis (Woiceshyn and Daellenbach, 2018) and then allows room for testing the hypothesis as well as concluding. Closed questions were used in the survey to allow for the comparison of data collected. Hyman and Sierra (2016) pose that closed questions are simpler to answer and understand by participants, therefore allowing data to be analysed quickly by researchers. Quantitative research relies on objective measurements and numerical data (Dehalwar and Sharma, 2024), creating a structured approach for research inquiries. Quantitative research can provide generalised findings, though Polit and Beck (2010) state that the goal of this type of research is to provide a better understanding of a certain aspect of human experience through the study of particular cases.

3.3.2 Survey Research

Survey research relies on having a set of questions that are placed sequentially to get acceptable responses (Check and Schutt, 2011), adding that it is 'the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions' (p.160). Survey research is an efficient method of data collection as it is flexible and cost-effective (Rashid, 2020). Online surveys particularly allow for reaching a wide

audience and generating a high number of responses quickly (Stenton and Dolley, 2004) as they are easily accessible. Cobern and Adams (2020) state that survey research has high potential of being standardised by providing participants with the same questions in similar situations, which is important to ensure the validity of studies. Overall, survey research was the most beneficial type for this dissertation.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The survey method for data collection fits well with quantitative research as it is a structured tool that can enable the collection of measurable numerical data. For the research, an online survey was created using Microsoft Forms (Appendix 1) as it has been used already as a platform within the college, and therefore, reduces risks related to the security and confidentiality of data. Surveys are a good way to test hypotheses as they provide 'a high level of general capability in representing a large population' (Meerkerk, Edelenbos and Klijn, 2019, p.67). Therefore, surveys have the benefit of being able to be distributed to a large number of participants from different demographic groups. The use of structured closed questions and measurable scales can ensure consistency in responses, which minimises subjective interpretation. This is important in quantitative research to minimise bias (Ong and Weiss, 2000).

UCJ currently has 176 students, therefore, the expected response rate is 53, following the suggested 30% response rate recommended by Malnik (2023). Total population sampling, which involves examining the entire population (Lund Research, 2012), has been used in this research, as all students in UCJ have

received an email from the admin team with the participant information sheet (Appendix 2) and survey link. Data were collected from February 11th, 2025, to April 21st, 2025.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

Survey results can be analysed statistically. To be able to test whether there is a relationship between social media use and alcohol consumption, the plan would be to use inferential statistical analysis. However, for this to be a valid method of analysis, a large response rate would be required from the survey. If a 30% response rate is not achieved, it would not be possible to make inferences on a causal relationship, and, therefore, the data will be analysed using simple descriptive statistics, which are used to describe and analyse large amounts of data efficiently (Sarmiento and Costa, 2017). Descriptive statistics are suitable because they can be used to 'summarise data in an organised manner by describing the relationship between variables in a sample' (Yellapu, 2018), also stating that this type of data can be condensed into a simpler summary, which allows for assessing populations in a more manageable form through percentages. Therefore, this method will allow for results to be presented in charts and graphs that make it easier to communicate findings in a way that others can understand. Data will be organised using percentages and frequencies, which will help interpret participant responses (Barr, 2022). Tables, graphs and charts will be used to present data in a meaningful way.

3.6 Recruitment Strategy

It is important to have a recruitment strategy as it outlines who should or should not be part of the research project. The sample for this research needed to be large due to the research being quantitative. Large sample sizes can increase the validity and reliability of the research findings as they can ensure statistical power. This allows for more precise estimates (Asiamah, Mensah and Oteng-Abayie, 2017). A large sample allows for the results to be generalisable and representative of the population. The population for this research was students aged over 18. There are currently 176 university students, as per the guidance of the school. This research uses a total population sampling technique. Total population sampling ensures that a target group is included, and including inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 3.1) reduces the risk of selection bias. After gaining permission from the Principal of Highlands College to distribute the survey (Appendix 3), participants have two weeks to respond, with a reminder email being sent out to encourage further responses. The aim is to achieve a 30% response rate target. This is recommended by Malnik (2023).

Table 3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Rationale
Aged 18+.	Under 18.	Students under 18 would not be legally consuming alcohol, therefore would be unethical to research.
Students at University College Jersey.	Students from other institutions.	Having students from this institution only, allowed for

		research to be focused on a specific population.
--	--	--

3.7 Ethical Issues

Remaining within ethical boundaries is important when conducting any type of research to ensure participants remain safe and that the research does not pose any risk or harm. The Nuremberg Code (1947) brings awareness to the fact that the voluntary consent of a human subject is essential; the experiment should yield fruitful results for the good of society; the experiment should be conducted to avoid unnecessary physical and mental suffering (British Medical Journal, 1996). This research will remain within the principles outlined in the Nuremberg Code. The Declaration of Helsinki (1964) states that research involving human participants must ensure respect for all and protect their health and rights, and that the purpose of the research is to generate knowledge (World Medical Association, 2024). The ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, privacy and confidentiality are also important in research projects. This will be outlined with reference to Varkey (2020).

Beneficence (the obligation to act for the benefit of the participant), as well as non-maleficence (the obligation to not harm the participant), were both met, as before any research took place, an application for ethical review was submitted to the Highlands College Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 4). This was important as it would provide this research with an unbiased view and ensure that things missed by researchers would be noticed by the ethical committee. Additionally, this research

had the possibility of being sensitive and potentially upsetting to students who may be suffering from alcohol misuse, and therefore, relevant support contacts needed to be included in the participant information sheet, such as Student Support Centre at Highlands and encouragement to reach out to their general practitioners for further professional support.

Autonomy, which states that everyone should have the power to make their own rational decisions and moral choices, was met as participants were able to willingly engage with the link provided, and there was a disclaimer page that outlined participation information and then informed consent and the right to withdraw, with a rule set that 'Yes' must be selected to proceed with the survey. This also complied with the ethical principle of informed consent. Additionally, the Nuremberg Code states that voluntary consent from participants is essential, further emphasising the importance of autonomy. Participation in this survey was voluntary, as participants had the right to withdraw before submitting their survey data for analysis. However, once the data was anonymously submitted and analysis began, it was not possible to extract their data to withdraw it. This was outlined on the participant information sheet of the survey.

Confidentiality and privacy were both followed by referring to the Data Protection (Jersey) Law 2018 (Government of Jersey, 2024), which states that personal data is something which identifies a living person by, for example, their name, identification number or location. This law was adhered to as no names were gathered from participants, giving them the right to remain anonymous. Only my supervisor and I had access to data from participants, which was stored securely on a password-

protected computer. Also, the use of Microsoft Forms for a survey allows the setting of rules. A rule was set that participants would have to acknowledge the implications of confidentiality, privacy and their rights to move on to the next section, which was the consent form (Appendix 5).

3.8 Conclusion

Within this chapter, the research design was outlined with a rationale for the decisions made when planning the research. The ethical issues within the research have been considered and addressed. In the next chapter, data analysis and findings will be presented.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis/Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the data analysis method and key themes from the data analysis. This will include the demographics of participants, the type of content that is most encountered by students at UCJ and how participants recorded the influence of alcohol on their own drinking.

4.2 Data Analysis Method

The study concluded with 46 participants, earning a response rate of 26.1%, which did not meet Malnik (2023) recommendations of having a 30% response rate; the total population of students in UCJ is 176, meaning that this survey should have had 57 respondents to achieve a 30% response rate. As this was not achieved, data were analysed using simple descriptive statistics, which is an approach best suited for survey research where there is no requirement for hypothesis testing or causal inference. Had the response rate been larger, inferential statistical analysis could have been used to determine a causal relationship between social media use and alcohol consumption.

4.3 Demographics of Participants

Of those who completed the survey, 76% (n=35) were drinkers and therefore were eligible for analysis. 24% (n=11) were non-drinkers. Table 4.1 illustrates the gender and age of participants. As can be seen from the table below, 57.1% (n=20) of participants were aged 18-21, 14.2% (n=5) of participants were aged 22-25, and

28.6% (n=10) were over 25. The gender of qualifying participants was biased towards females at 74.2% (n=26) in comparison to males at 25.7% (n=9).

Table 4.1 Age and Gender of Eligible Participants

Age	Female	Male
18-21	15	5
22-25	3	2
Over 25	8	2
Total	26	9

Table 4.2 illustrates participants' years of study and hours spent on social media per day. The most common amount of time spent on social media per day was 1-3 and 4-6 hours, with 37.1% (n=13) falling into each category. Viewing social media for more than 6 hours was most common for 17.1% (n=6) of participants. Viewing social media for less than 1 hour was reported by 11.4% (n=4).

Most participants were within their third year of study at UCJ, 42.9% (n=15), and there was an equal number of participants in their first and second years, 28.6% (n=10). Interestingly, viewing social media 4-6 hours a day was most common in third-year students, 46.7% (n=7), compared to first- and second-year students who

had only 30% (n=3) of students each. Of the first-year students, viewing social media, 40% more than 6 hours was most common at 40% (n=4). For second-year students, the most common timeframe was 1-3 hours at 60% (n=6).

Table 4.2 Year of Study and Hours Spent on Social Media Per Day

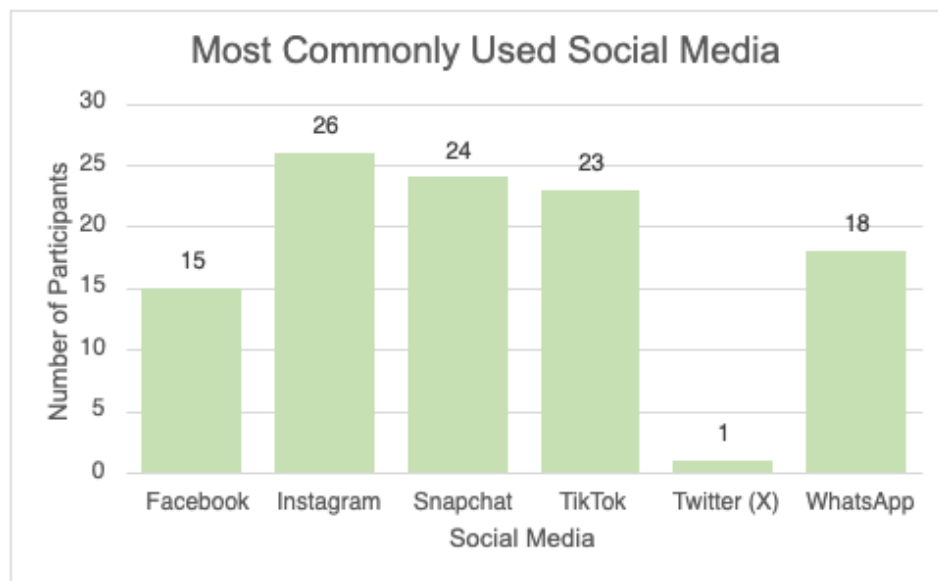
Hours per day	First year	Second year	Third year	Total
1-3 hours	3	6	4	13
4-6 hours	3	3	7	13
Less than 1 hour	0	1	3	4
More than 6 hours	4	0	1	6
Total	10	10	15	35

4.4 Social Media Use

The social media platform that was found to be most used among participants was Instagram, with 74.3% (n=26) participants reporting a preference for use. Snapchat was reported by 68.6% (n=24) of participants using this platform. TikTok was closely

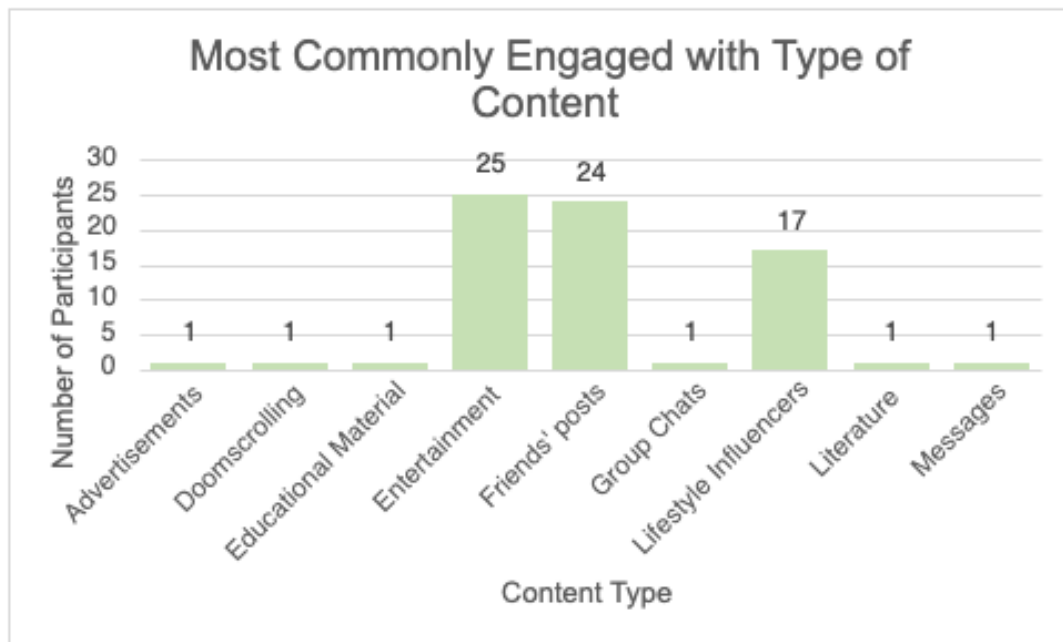
reported to Snapchat, with 65.7% (n=23) of participants selecting this form of social media. WhatsApp was reported to be used by 51.4% (n=18), and Facebook by 42.8% (n=15). Twitter (X) was only reported to be used by 2.9% (n=1) of participants (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Most Used Social Media



The type of content that participants engaged with the most when using social media was reported as entertainment at 71% (n=25), followed by friends' posts at 68.6% (n=24). Viewing lifestyle influencers was in third place with 48.6% (n=17). The least commonly engaged with content types were literature, messages, advertisements, doomscrolling, educational material and group chats, which all received 2.9% (n=1). Table 4.4 displays these findings.

Table 4.4 Most Engaged with Type of Content



Participants were asked to rank from most viewed to least viewed. Most participants ranked viewing family and friends' content at 48.6% (n=17), followed by vlogs and influencer posts at 28.6% (n=10), then game-related content with 22.9% (n=8). Interestingly, the lowest-ranked type of content participants viewed was alcohol-related content, with 34.3% (n=12) of participants selecting this option. Game-related and makeup-related content were ranked as being least viewed by 31.4% (n=11) of participants. Vlogs and influencer posts were ranked least viewed by 2.9% (n=1). Tables 4.5 and 4.6 display the most commonly and least commonly viewed social media content.

Table 4.5 Most Commonly Ranked Content

Type of Content	Count
-----------------	-------

Family and friends' posts	17
Game-related content	8
Vlogs/influencer content	10

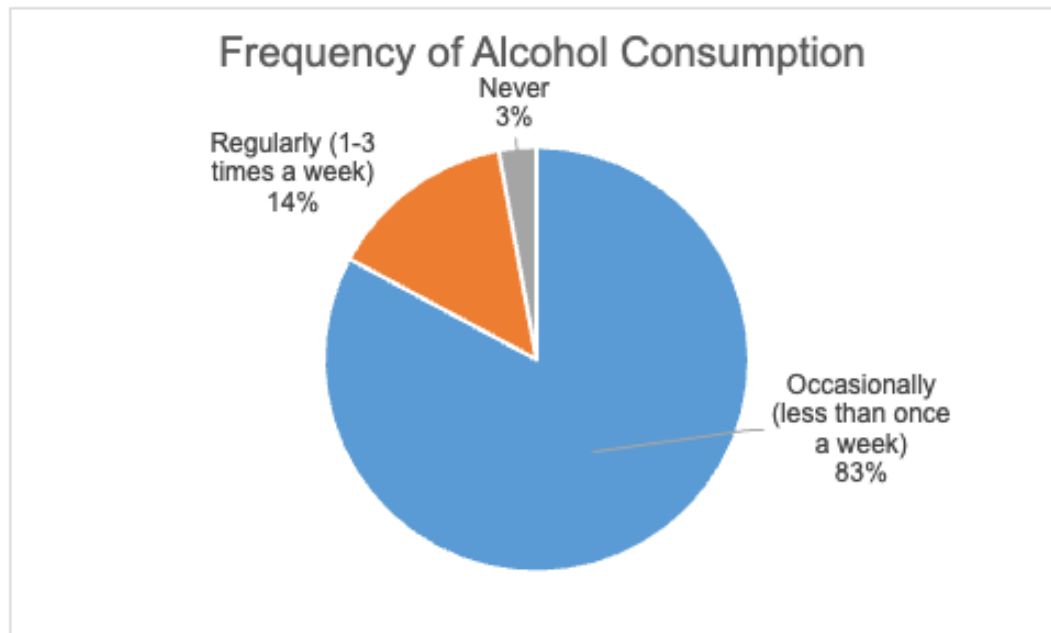
Table 4.6 Least Commonly Ranked Content

Type of Content	Count
Alcohol-related content	12
Game-related content	11
Make-up related content	11
Vlogs/influencer content	1

4.5 Alcohol Consumption

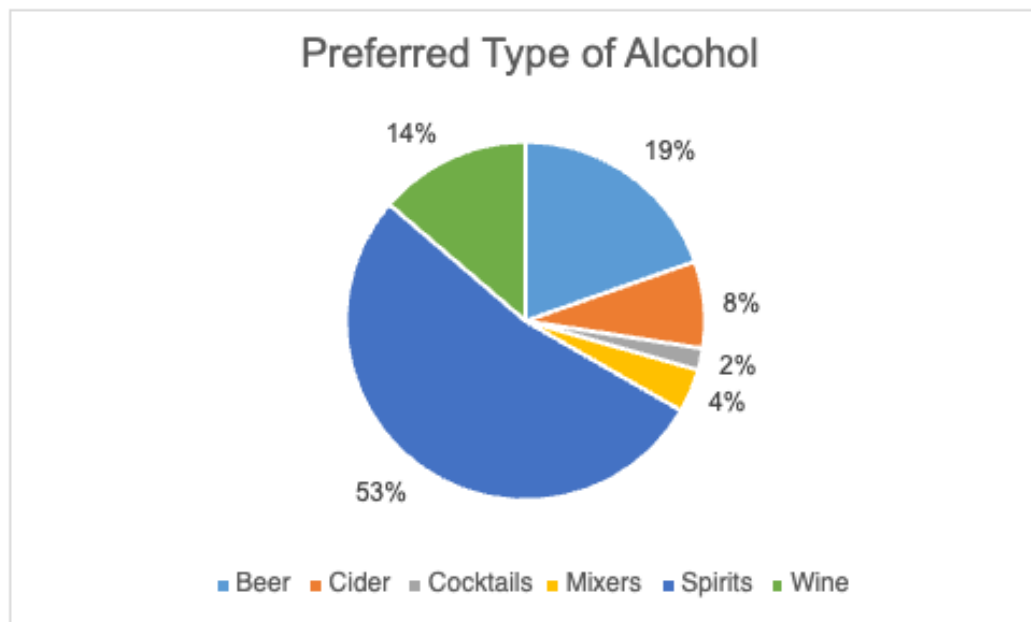
Participants were asked about the frequency of their drinking habits (Table 4.7). 83% (n=29) reported drinking occasionally (less than once a week). Regular (1-3 times a week) was reported by 14% (n=5).

Table 4.7 Frequency of Alcohol Consumption



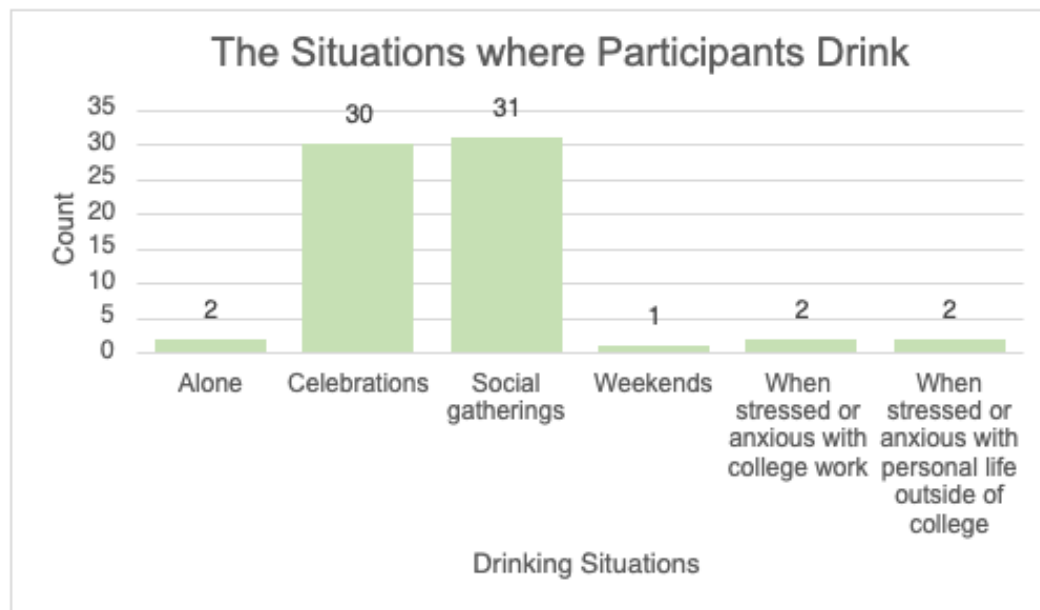
Participants were asked to select the type of alcohol they consume, with the option to select more than one. Table 4.8 highlights the preferred type of alcohol participants selected. Spirits were the preferred alcohol type amongst participants, 53% (n=26). Beer was next selected with 19% (n=10). 14% (n=7) of participants reported preferring wine. 8% (n=4) reported preferring cider, 4% (n=2) prefer mixers and 2% (n=1) prefer cocktails.

Table 4.8 Preferred Type of Alcohol



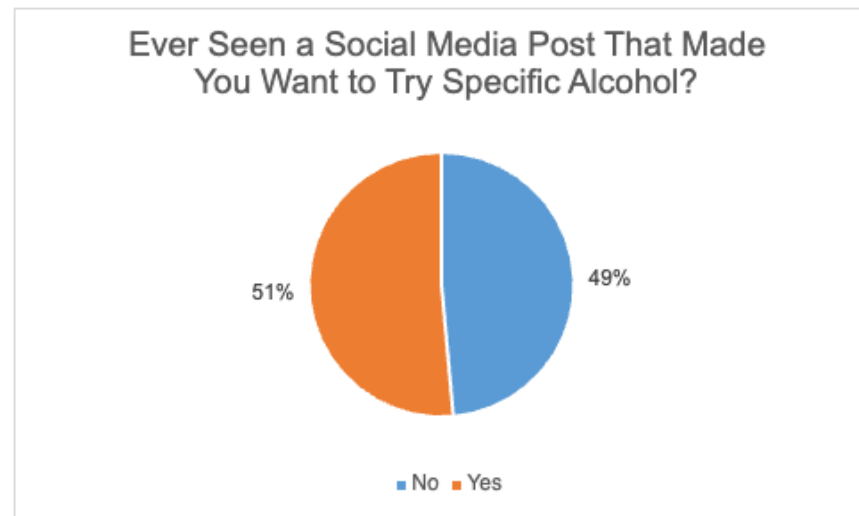
The situations in which participants drank were explored. Participants reported drinking mostly in social gatherings at 88.6% (n=31). Closely reported was drinking during celebrations, with 85.7% (n=30) of participants selecting this option. Drinking when stressed or anxious with college work, drinking when stressed about personal life outside of college, and drinking alone was reported by an equal number of participants at 5.7% (n=2). Only 3% (n=1) of participants reported drinking specifically on weekends. Table 4.9 displays the situations in which participants drink most frequently.

Table 4.9 The Situations where Participants Drink



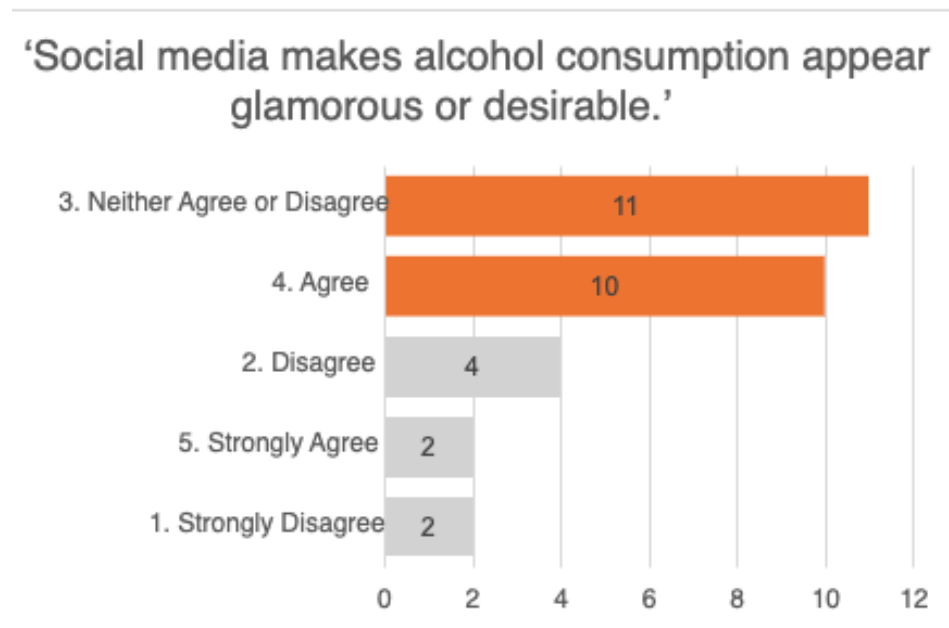
When asked how often participants viewed alcohol-related content, 60% (n=21) of participants reported viewing it rarely or never. 33% (n=12) of participants reported seeing alcohol-related content on social media occasionally, and 8% (n=3) reported viewing the content frequently. No participants reported viewing alcohol-related content very frequently. Participants were also asked if they had ever seen any social media posts that made them want to try a specific drink or brand of alcohol. As seen in Table 4.10, the responses were split, with 49% (n=17) of participants stating no, and 51% (n=18) reporting yes.

Table 4.10 Social Media and Alcohol



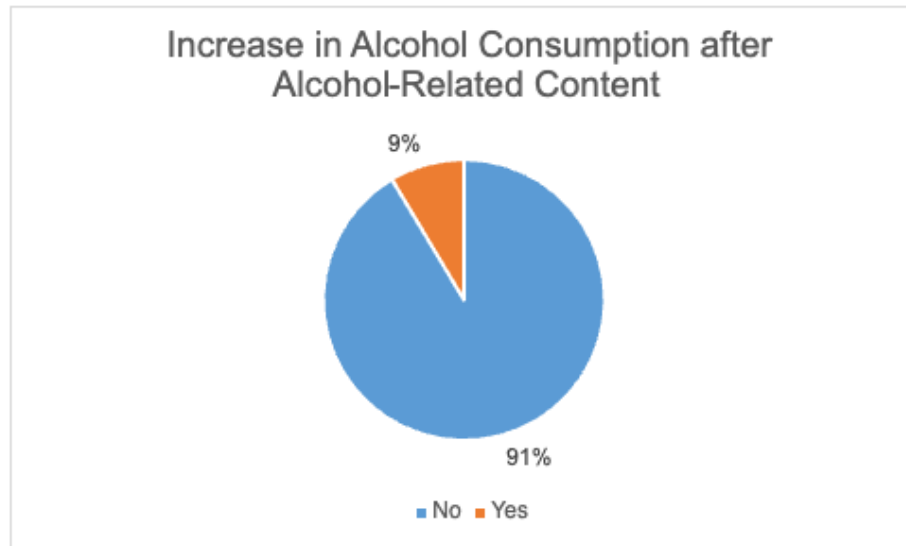
The scale question asking participants to rate how much they agree with the statement 'social media makes alcohol consumption appear glamorous or desirable.' Table 4.11 shows the responses to this statement. Most respondents (31.4%, n=11) stated that they neither agree nor disagree. 28.6% (n=10) stated that they agree with the statement. 11.4% (n=4) of respondents disagree, and 5.7% (n=2) strongly agree but also strongly disagree.

Table 4.11 Social media alcohol consumption and glamour



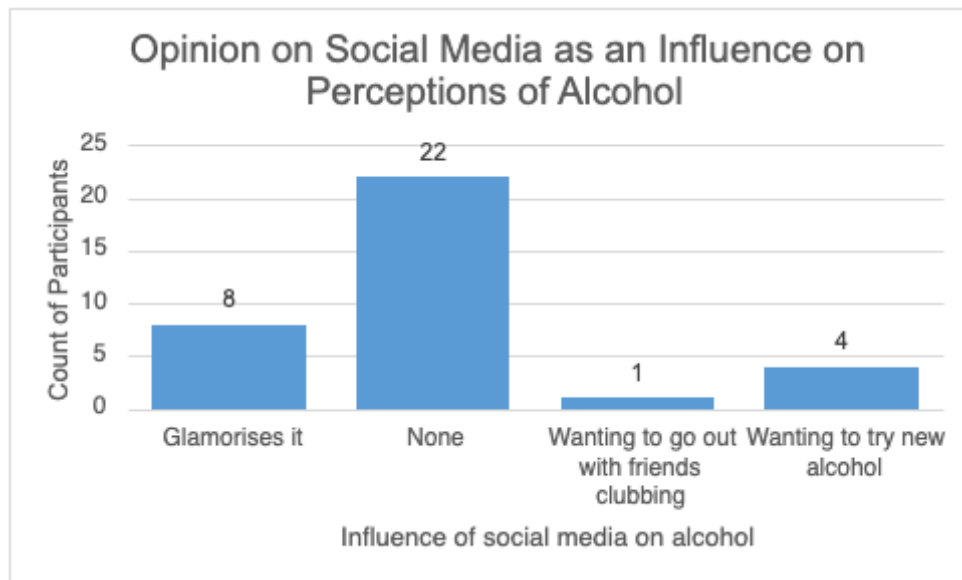
Participants were asked if they had ever increased their alcohol consumption after viewing alcohol-related content on social media. Interestingly, as can be seen in Table 4.12, only 9% (n=3) of participants responded that they did increase their alcohol consumption after viewing alcohol-related content on social media. 91% (n=32) of participants claimed not to. However, when asked if they ever participated in any drinking challenges or trends viewed on social media, the response was 60% (n=21) respondents saying no, and 40% (n=14) stating yes. One participant elaborated, stating that posts of friends drinking made them want to go out with friends and drink.

Table 4.12 Increase in Alcohol Consumption after Alcohol-Related Content



Participants had mixed opinions on how they felt social media influences their perceptions of alcohol. Table 4.13 displays the themes of responses provided by participants. 62.9% (n=22) of respondents believe that viewing social media has no influence over their perceptions of alcohol, with one participant stating all forms of media (such as television or posters) influence alcohol perceptions, not just social media. 22.9% (n=8) of respondents state that social media glamourises alcohol consumption, adding that social media makes it seem like drinking is fun every time, or that it is cool and normal. 11.4% (n=4) of respondents reported that social media makes them want to try new alcohol, specifically when they receive suggestions of cocktails to make at home, or new drinks at venues. 2.9% (n=1) of participants stated that social media makes them want to go out with friends to go clubbing or to events.

Table 4.13: Opinion on Social Media as an Influence on Perceptions of Alcohol



Participants were asked if they had any suggestions to reduce the negative influence of social media on alcohol consumption among students. 65.7% (n=23) of participants stated that they had no suggestions. 5.7% (n=2) recommended that students think about the consequences of drinking. Another 5.7% (n=2) suggest not relying on alcohol to enjoy a night out. Participants mentioned adding further age restrictions on alcohol, or finding activities to fill time, suggesting to 'limit social media exposure,' and being aware of how to develop healthy relationships with substances. A few participants state that limiting alcohol-related social media content can help, as viewing it can cause one to experience 'fomo' (fear of missing out).

4.6 Conclusion

Having outlined the findings in this chapter, the next chapter will discuss in relation to wider literature and the research question focus.

Chapter 5 – Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

Having outlined the findings in the previous chapter, this chapter will discuss the results to the extent that they have been able to answer the research question. The implications of the research and limitations of the research design will be outlined.

5.2 Interpretations

The aim of this research was to explore the impact of social media on alcohol consumption in UCJ students. In posing the research question, the findings of the research had some commonalities with previous research but also differences that need to be considered in the context of this research. Using simple descriptive statistics to analyse the data, it was possible to explore initial insights and trends to look for general patterns in the data in relation to social media use and alcohol consumption.

An outcome of this research illustrated that the participants of this study did not view alcohol-related content as frequently as was reported in previous research, with 60% (n=21) of participants stating that they very rarely or never view any alcohol-related content. Another key finding was that 83% (n=29) of participants in the study reported only drinking occasionally (less than once a week). Most participants were found to drink in social gatherings (88.6% (n=31) or during celebrations (85.7% (n=30). Overall, 34.3% (n=12) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that

social media makes alcohol consumption appear glamorous or desirable. Only 17.1% (n=6) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that social media made alcohol consumption appear glamorous or desirable.

There was a lower than anticipated response rate to the survey and though the findings were not conclusive of social media having an influence on alcohol consumption in UCJ students, it may be that, by chance, those who participated in the survey were not frequent drinkers and therefore did not see social media as having an impact on an already low alcohol consumption. Additionally, the fact that the majority of the participants ranked the alcohol content lowest is a likely factor in the suggestion that social media does not have an impact on their alcohol consumption. This is contrary to findings by Strowger, Braitman and Barnett (2022), Graupensperger et al. (2023) and Boyle et al. (2016), who concluded that portrayals of alcohol on social media increase positive and negative alcohol consumption, including high episodic drinking. However, this finding could be because UCJ students live in a smaller geographical area than typical university students, who may reside in cities where nightlife is more prominent. It is a consideration that the different set up for university provision in Jersey where students do not live together on campus or have access to a student union bar, may account for a lower alcohol intake. It is also a consideration that due to the small response rate, the participants' sample was not representative of the total UCJ population, and the findings cannot be generalised.

However, within my research, although alcohol consumption was considered lower, and participants did not believe social media influenced their consumption, there was

a 50-50 split between participants reporting seeing social media posts that made them want to try a specific type of alcohol and those who were not influenced by social media. Therefore, half of those who did view alcohol related social media may actually have had an influence over their alcohol consumption to a certain degree, even if the participants may not have been aware of it. Bermejo-Berros (2022) states that even if individuals know of the harmful effects of alcohol, they may develop reactance attitudes, self-affirmation and defensive responses. Bermejo-Berros (2022) adds that individuals can change their attitudes and behaviour towards alcohol. Students could have developed defensive responses towards the questions of the survey and shifted their attitudes towards drinking to conform to what they believe to be normal.

Despite participants not believing that they have been influenced by social media in regard to their perceptions of alcohol, the majority agreed that social media makes alcohol consumption appear glamorous or desirable. This supports the findings of Tucker, Miles and D'Amico (2013), who state that drinking may be glamorised on social media, specifically to portray excessive fun. Vicente and Augusta (2024) found that individuals who viewed alcohol-related content developed a desire to drink, and this may have been due to it being glamorised.

Participants were found to typically drink in social situations rather than alone. Only two participants in this study were found to drink alone when influenced by either school or personal stress. Kuendig and Kuntsche's (2011) findings show that individuals will drink more during social occasions than when alone. Lindman (1982) found that almost twice as much alcohol was consumed during social drinking and

drinking when alone failed to leave individuals feeling the same way as social drinking did. Both of these findings, including those of this research, suggest that social situations influence alcohol consumption. There are concerns surrounding lone drinking; Skrzynski and Creswell's (2023) findings support those of this study, stating that lone drinking can increase total time spent drinking as a coping mechanism, showcasing the dangers of drinking alone due to stress. This is important to the findings of the research as it supports what has been discovered, such as drinking alone not being common when compared to social drinking but used when experiencing difficult situations. It also posits that lone drinking can be used as a coping mechanism.

In returning to the research question, it can be concluded that the students who participated in this study were not heavy drinkers and typically only drank during social settings. The reported influence of social media that participants believed they had on their alcohol consumption was low, implying that for this cohort of participants, social media does not play a role in how they view alcohol. However, findings also portray mixed emotions in participants, as they report viewing alcohol and wanting to try it. Overall, the reported influence of social media on alcohol consumption in these UCJ students was less than expected.

5.3 Implications

As the response rate was low, and it would not have been valid to analyse the data using inferential statistics, it was not possible to conclude a relationship between social media use and alcohol consumption. However, my research did offer some useful baseline data that can be used to justify a larger study over a longer period of

time. While previous literature does report on some link between social media use and alcohol consumption, albeit not a causal relationship, my findings are suggestive of some trends towards increased drinking where social media has glamorised this. However, whether influenced by social media or not, alcohol consumption remains an issue in young people, and support should still be put in place, particularly in university settings, where stress levels may be high and they may be more susceptible to developing detrimental habits (Emran et al., 2024). The findings of my study add to the literature surrounding the influence of social media on alcohol consumption in university students. The unexpected non-influence of social media on alcohol consumption provides a different view of the population in comparison to previous studies. This suggests the need for further research within the population to ensure results are representative and generalisable, as well as to ensure that a better understanding of university students is possible.

Educating students on the consequences of alcohol consumption, as well as aiding students in developing healthy relationships with alcohol or addictive substances, is important.

5.4 Limitations

This research has limitations. Due to the short amount of time and the nature of an undergraduate research project, a smaller number of participants made up the total population to draw the sample. There is a difficulty with surveys in relying on participant engagement; Guin et al. (2012) found that surveys can be viewed as unpleasant events by participants. While there was a 6-week window for survey

responses, and one reminder was sent out after midway point, there was still a difficulty in recruiting participants rate for a good response.

As this research did not receive a 30% response rate, the findings are not generalisable to a wider population of university students who consume alcohol. It is uncertain whether a larger sample may have included individuals who were more frequent drinkers, and therefore, findings could have been different. However, Andrade (2020) states that a large sample size is imperative to improve the generalisability of the results of the study, therefore, this limitation could have been a significant drawback of this study. Moreover, it is likely that the UCJ population may not be generalisable to the wider population of UK university students, and any future research in this population will only be possible to be representative of students studying in Jersey.

5.5 Was the research question answered?

The aim of the research was to investigate the influence of social media content on alcohol consumption among university students. Social media content was not found to have an impact on the alcohol consumption within the sample included in this research. However, most participants believed that social media content did glamourise alcohol consumption. Just over half of the participants also reported being influenced by social media in regard to trying a new type of alcohol. This research was exploratory in nature and provides baseline data, highlighting areas of interest that can be further explored. While there is no conclusive answer to the research question, there are clear implications in relation to alcohol consumption.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed an interpretation of the key findings of my research.

Within the next chapter, an overall conclusion to the dissertation and recommendations will be offered.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Having discussed the research findings and how these answered the research question, within this chapter, recommendations from the research will be made.

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

This study was unique as it researched a typically underrepresented population in adult research. Focusing on students specifically in UCJ allowed for research to be conducted on a population that may not typically be offered a position to explore their opinions in an academic way.

As this research aimed to explore the influence of social media on alcohol consumption in UCJ students, the findings can only be representative of students at UCJ. A small response rate meant these were not possible to be generalisable even within this population. However, as exploratory research, it was possible to highlight areas of interest. These findings indicate that despite the highly reported influence of social media on alcohol consumption in previous literature, UCJ students may not be as influenced by what they view online as those in previous studies. This could be due to the unique geographical and set-up of UCJ when compared to other UK universities, which may be in cities with a bigger nightlife and therefore higher rates of alcohol consumption.

The findings of this research support the idea that alcohol consumption may be lower in participants as they live in a smaller geographical. Perhaps if there were more social cues for alcohol consumption in Jersey, participants would have differing views from those reported in this study. Despite all, several participants believed that social media made alcohol consumption glamorous, suggesting for the need to explore this relationship further as social media is a developing and growing aspect of modern-day life.

6.3 Recommendations

This research has provided a different view from students regarding the influence of social media on alcohol consumption and recommendations can be made:

1. The research provides an avenue for further research to ensure that the target population is accurately represented, and the results are generalisable. A larger-scale survey over a longer period of time could potentially have a greater response rate.
2. A more robust research design and methodology that will better measure the relationship between social media use and alcohol consumption in students could provide a valuable causal relationship.
3. Efforts must be made to learn about the current thinking of university students surrounding social media and alcohol consumption.
4. Even if no relationship was able to be determined between social media and alcohol consumption within this study, alcohol use is still a relevant problem. Supporting mechanisms should be put into UCJ to support students if needed.

These support mechanisms should be promoted and easily accessible for students. Additionally, safe social media usage should be better promoted and taught in UCJ, primary and secondary schools.

6.4 Conclusion

To conclude, this research outlines valuable insights into the influence of social media on alcohol consumption in university students and contributes to the effects that viewing alcohol-related content may have. Though there are limitations to this study design, the findings aid in understanding a small population of UCJ students, as well as provide a guide for future research that should be conducted.

References

- Andrade, C. (2020). Sample Size and Its Importance in Research. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, [online] 42(1), pp.102–103.
doi:https://doi.org/10.4103/IJPSYM.IJPSYM_504_19.
- Asiamah, N., Mensah, H.K. and Oteng-Abayie, E.F. (2017). Do Larger Samples Really Lead to More Precise Estimates? a Simulation Study. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 5(5 1), pp.9–17.
- Atusingwize, E., Nilsson, M., Sjölander, A.E., Ssempebwa, J.C., Tumwesigye, N.M., Musoke, D. and Landstedt, E. (2022). Social Media Use and Alcohol Consumption among Students in Uganda: a Cross Sectional Study. *Global Health Action*, [online] 15(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2022.2131213>.
- Balsa, A.I., Giuliano, L.M. and French, M.T. (2011). The Effects of Alcohol Use on Academic Achievement in High School. *Economics of Education Review*, [online] 30(1), pp.1–15. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2010.06.015>.
- Barr, S. (2022). *Are Percentages Always Better than Counts to Measure Performance?* [online] Stacey Barr | Performance Measure and KPI Specialist. Available at: <https://www.staceybarr.com/measure-up/are-percentages-always-better-than-counts-to-measure-performance/> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2025].
- Bermejo-Berros, J. (2022). Educational Influence of Knowledge of the Masked Presence of Alcohol on Instagram on Behavior Change. *El Profesional De La Información*, 31(4). doi:<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2022.jul.04>.
- Boyle, S.C., LaBrie, J.W., Froidevaux, N.M. and Witkovic, Y.D. (2016). Different Digital Paths to the keg? How Exposure to peers' alcohol-related Social Media Content Influences Drinking among Male and Female first-year College Students. *Addictive Behaviors*, [online] 57, pp.21–29.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2016.01.011>.
- British Medical Journal (1996). The Nuremberg Code (1947). *BMJ*, [online] 313(7070), p.1448. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.313.7070.1448>.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Check, J. and Schutt, R.K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education*. California: SAGE Publications.
- Cobern, W. and Adams, B. (2020). When interviewing: How Many Is enough? *International Journal of Assessment Tools in Education*, 7(1), pp.73–79.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.21449/ijate.693217>.

Davis, J.K., Desmarais, S. and Giguère, B. (2024). Under the Influence: How Viewing Extreme Partying and Drinking on Social Media Shapes Group Perceptions. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 164(6), pp.964–977.

Dehalwar, K. and Sharma, S.N. (2024). Exploring the Distinctions between Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods. *Think India*, [online] 27(1), pp.7–15. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10553000>.

Emran , G.I., Mahmud, S., Khan, A.H., Bristy, N.N., Das, A.K., Barma, R., Barma, A., Mita, M.H.M., Bosunia, L., Rahman, M. and Roy, M. (2024). Factors Influencing Stress Levels among Students: a Virtual Exploration. *European Journal of Medical and Health Sciences*, 6(6).

Findley, M., Kikuta, K. and Denly, M. (2021). External Validity. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 24(1), pp.365–393.

Gocen, A. and Aydemir, F. (2021). Artificial Intelligence in Education and Schools. *Research on Education and Media*, 12(1), pp.13–21. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2478/rem-2020-0003>.

Government of Jersey (2024). *Data Protection (Jersey) Law 2018*. [online] Jerseylaw.je. Available at: https://www.jerseylaw.je/laws/current/l_3_2018 [Accessed 15 May 2025].

Graeff, T.R. (2005). Response Bias. *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement*, 3, pp.411–418.

Graupensperger, S., Calhoun, B.H., Fairlie, A.M. and Lee, C.M. (2023). Exposure to Media with alcohol-related Content across Young adulthood: Associations with Risky Drinking and Consequences among high-risk 2- and 4-year College Students. *Drug and Alcohol Review* , 43(1).

Guin, T.D.-L., Baker, R., Mechling, J. and Ruyle, E. (2012). Myths and Realities of Respondent Engagement in Online Surveys. *International Journal of Market Research*, 54(5), pp.613–633. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2501/ijmr-54-5-613-633>.

Hyman, M.R. and Sierra, J.J. (2016). Open- versus close-ended survey questions. *Business Outlook*, [online] 14(2), pp.1–5. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282249876_Open-_versus_close-ended_survey_questions [Accessed 26 Mar. 2025].

Juanis, A.A. (2020). Microsoft Teams as an Online Learning Tool: Exploring the Students Perspective. International Conference on Multidisciplinary Approaches in Social Sciences, Islamic & Technology.

King, M.F. and Bruner, G.C. (2000). Social Desirability bias: a Neglected Aspect of Validity Testing. *Psychology and Marketing*, [online] 17(2), pp.79–103.
doi:[https://doi.org/10.1002/\(sici\)1520-6793\(200002\)17:2%3C79::aid-mar2%3E3.0.co;2-0](https://doi.org/10.1002/(sici)1520-6793(200002)17:2%3C79::aid-mar2%3E3.0.co;2-0).

Kuendig, H. and Kuntsche, E. (2011). Solitary versus Social Drinking: an Experimental Study on Effects of Social Exposures on in Situ Alcohol Consumption. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 36(4), pp.732–738.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-0277.2011.01663.x>.

Kuntsche, E., Anderson-Luxford, D., Riordan, B. and Alen, G.D. (2023). Alcohol on Social Media – Why Does It Matter, What Do We Know, and How Do We Collect Better Evidence? *Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, 79, pp.41–108.

Lim, W.M. (2024). What Is Quantitative research? an Overview and Guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, [online] 1(1).
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264622>.

Lindman, R. (1982). Social and Solitary drinking: Effects on Consumption and Mood in Male Social Drinkers. *Physiology & Behavior*, 28(6), pp.1093–1095.
doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/0031-9384\(82\)90181-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0031-9384(82)90181-0).

Lukács, A., Nóra, S., János, D. and Emőke, K.T. (2013). Alcohol Consumption among University Students. *Egészségtudományi Közlemények*, 3(2), pp.57–61.

Lund Research Ltd (2012). *Convenience Sampling*. [online] dissertation.laerd.com. Available at: <https://dissertation.laerd.com/convenience-sampling.php> [Accessed 15 May 2025].

Malnik, J. (2023). *Survey Benchmarks: What's a Good Survey Response rate?* [online] Xola. Available at: <https://www.xola.com/articles/survey-benchmarks-whats-a-good-survey-response-rate/> [Accessed 29 Jan. 2025].

Meerkerk, I.V., Edelenbos, J. and Klijn, E.H. (2019). Survey Approach. In: J. Voets, C.J. Koliba and R. Keast, eds., *Networks and Collaboration in the Public Sector*. Erasmus University : Rotterdam, pp.64–81.

MIT Libraries (2018). *Database Search Tips: Boolean Operators*. [online] MIT Libraries. Available at: <https://libguides.mit.edu/c.php?g=175963&p=1158594> [Accessed 13 Feb. 2025].

Nagata, J.M., Smith, N., Zamora, G., Sajjad, O.M., Ganson, K.T., Testa, A. and Jackson, D.B. (2023). Problematic Social Media Use and Alcohol Expectancies in Early Adolescents. *BMC Public Health*, [online] 23(430).
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15298-3>.

Ng Fat, L., Cable, N. and Kelly, Y. (2021). Associations between Social Media Usage and Alcohol Use among Youths and Young adults: Findings from Understanding Society. *Addiction*, 116(11). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/add.15482>.

O'Shields, J. and Baldwin-White, A. (2022). Exploring the Role of Social Networking Sites in Alcohol Consumption among College Students: Which Platforms Have the Greatest Influence? *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 41(1), pp.91–102. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/07347324.2022.2137447>.

Ong, A.D. and Weiss, D.J. (2000). The Impact of Anonymity on Responses to Sensitive Questions. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30(8), pp.1691–1708. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2000.tb02462.x>.

Park, Y.S., Konge, L. and Artino, A.R. (2020). The Positivism Paradigm of Research. *Academic Medicine*, [online] 95(5), pp.690–694. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000003093>.

Polit, D.F. and Beck, C.T. (2010). Generalization in Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Myths and Strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, [online] 47(11), pp.1451–1458. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2010.06.004>.

Rashid, M.H.A. (2020). *Main Aspects of Questionnaire*. [online] Library & Information Management. Available at: <https://limbd.org/questionnaire-main-aspects-merits-demerits-of-questionnaire/> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2025].

Riva, J.J., Malik, K.M.P., Burnie, S.J., Endicott, A.R. and Busse, J.W. (2012). What is your research question? An introduction to the PICOT format for clinicians. *PubMed*, 56(3).

Sarmiento, R. and Costa, V. (2017). Descriptive Analysis. In: *Comparative Approaches to Using R and Python for Statistical Data Analysis Authors*: Pennsylvania: MKP Technologies.

Skrzynski, C.J. and Creswell, K.G. (2023). Solitary-specific Drinking to Cope Motives Explain Unique Variance in Solitary Drinking Behavior but Not Alcohol Problems Compared to General Drinking to Cope Motives. *PLOS ONE*, 18(4), p.e0282506. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0282506>.

Stenton, J. and Dolley, J. (2004). The Use of Online Surveys in Capturing large-scale Data.

Strowger, M., Braitman, A.L. and Barnett, N.P. (2022). The Association between Social Network Members Sharing Alcohol-related Social Media Content and Alcohol Outcomes among College Student Drinkers. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 46(8). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.14899>.

Strowger, M., Geyer, R.B., Braitman, A.L., Ayala Guzman, R. and Ward, R.M. (2024). Following Social Media Influencers Who Share Alcohol-related Content Is Associated with College Drinking. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 43(1), pp.86–97. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13694>.

Strowger, M., Steers, M.-L.N., Geyer, R.B., Ayala Guzman, R., Ward, R.M. and Braitman, A.L. (2025). Influencer Drinking Norms: Cross-Sectional Mediators of Alcohol-Related Social Media and College Drinking. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 60(4), pp.596–603.

Tucker, J.S., Miles, J.N.V. and D’Amico, E.J. (2013). Cross-Lagged Associations between Substance Use-Related Media Exposure and Alcohol Use during Middle School. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53(4), pp.460–464. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.05.005>.

University of Leeds (2022). *Literature Searching Explained*. [online] Leeds.ac.uk. Available at: https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1404/literature_searching/14/literature_searching_explained/4 [Accessed 17 Feb. 2025].

University of Maine (2023). *Social Media Statistics Details*. [online] Undiscovered Maine. Available at: <https://umaine.edu/undiscoveredmaine/small-business/resources/marketing-for-small-business/social-media-tools/social-media-statistics-details/> [Accessed 11 Dec. 2024].

Varkey, B. (2020). Principles of Clinical Ethics and Their Application to Practice. *Medical Principles and Practice*, [online] 30(1), pp.17–28. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1159/000509119>.

Vicente, F. and Augusta, A. (2024). Social Media and Teenagers’ Desire to Consume Alcoholic Beverages. *ReMark - Revista Brasileira De Marketing*, 23(3), pp.975–1022. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5585/remark.v23i3.23606>.

Woiceshyn, J. and Daellenbach, U. (2018). Evaluating Inductive Vs Deductive Research in Management Studies. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: an International Journal*, 13(2), pp.183–195. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-06-2017-1538>.

World Medical Association (2024). *WMA Declaration of Helsinki – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants*. [online] Wma.net. Available at: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki/> [Accessed 15 May 2025].

Yellapu, V. (2018). Descriptive Statistics. *International Journal of Academic Medicine*, 4(1).

Appendices

1. Survey Questions

An exploration of the impact of social media on the drinking behaviour of students at UCJ 

Section 1

...

Participant Information

1. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of alcohol-related social media content on drinking behaviour in UCJ students. You have been chosen as you are a UCJ student. All responses are anonymous, and it is up to you to decide whether you want to complete this survey or not. It is possible to withdraw before submission, but it will not be possible once your response is sent. If you feel distressed by this survey please reach out to your GP or the emails provided at the end. Results will be written up in a dissertation. *

- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I disagree

Section 2

...

Participant Consent

2. I have read the participant information form, been given the chance to ask questions and have my questions answered. If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By completing and returning the survey, I understand I am agreeing to be in this study. I can keep a copy of this consent information for future reference. I have read and understood the above consent. I certify that I am 18 years old or older and agree to be a participant in the survey. *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Section 3

...

Alcohol Consumption

3. Do you drink alcohol? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Section 4

Demographics

4. What is your age? *

- ☐ 18-21
- ☐ 22-25
- ☐ Over 25

5. What is your gender? *

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to say

6. What year are you currently in college? *

- ☐ First year
- ☐ Second year
- ☐ Third year

Section 5

...

Social Media Usage

7. How many hours per day do you spend on social media? *

- ☐ Less than 1 hour
- ☐ 1-3 hours
- ☐ 4-6 hours
- ☐ More than 6 hours

8. Which social media platforms do you use most frequently? (Select all that apply) *

- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ X (Twitter)
- ☐ WhatsApp
- ☐ TikTok

9. What types of content do you engage with most on social media? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Lifestyle Influencers
- ☐ Advertisements
- ☐ Friends' posts
- ☐ Entertainment

10. Rank 1-5 the type of content you view the most on social media, with one being the most frequent and 5 being the least frequent. *

Game related content

Make up related content

Vlogs/influencer content

Alcohol-related content

Family and friends' posts

Section 6

.

Alcohol Consumption

11. How often do you consume alcohol? *

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Occasionally (less than once a week)
- ☐ Regularly (1-3 times a week)
- ☐ Frequently (more than 3 times a week)

12. What is your preferred type of alcohol? (Select all that apply) *

- ☐ Beer
- ☐ Wine
- ☐ Spirits (e.g., vodka, whiskey)
- ☐ I do not drink
- ☐ Other

13. In what situations do you usually drink alcohol? (Select all that apply) *

- ☐ Social gatherings
- ☐ Celebrations
- ☐ When stressed or anxious with college work
- ☐ When stressed or anxious with personal life outside of college
- ☐ Alone
- ☐ Other

Section 7

Social Media Influence

14. How often do you see alcohol-related content on social media? *

- ☐ Rarely or never
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Very frequently

15. Have you ever seen social media posts that made you want to try a specific drink or brand of alcohol? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree with the following statement: *

	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither Agree or Disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
'Social media makes alcohol consumption appear glamorous or desirable.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Behavioural Link

17. Have you ever increased your alcohol consumption after being exposed to alcohol-related content on social media? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

18. Have you participated in any drinking challenges or trends you saw on social media? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

19. Can you recall a specific instance where social media influences your decision regarding alcohol?

☐ Yes

☐ No

20. Please elaborate.

Enter your answer

Section 9

Optional Open-Ended Questions

21. How do you feel social media has influenced your perceptions of alcohol consumption?

Enter your answer

22. What suggestions would you offer to reduce the negative influence of social media on alcohol consumption among students?

Enter your answer

2. Participant Information Sheet

Participation Information Sheet

I am a student in the BSc (Hons) Social Sciences course, and as my final year dissertation project, I am undertaking a research project titled: *'An Exploration of the Impact of Social Media on the Drinking Behaviour of Students Aged Over 18 at University College Jersey.'* You are being invited to take part in this research study, which is an anonymous online survey. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of alcohol-related social media on the drinking behaviour of students at University College Jersey. You have been chosen because you are a student at this institution.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide to take part. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw until the data is anonymised and analysis begins. As your survey responses are submitted anonymously, your name is not connected to these, and that means that it would not be possible to extract your individual responses once these are collected. This means it would not be possible to withdraw after this point.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no disadvantages or risks foreseen in taking part in the study. However, if completing a survey about alcohol use triggers any distress, you do not need to continue, and I want to point to some support services available to you: your General Practitioner (who will be able to refer you to alcohol pathways), Highlands Student Support (a place for students such as yourself to go for support) and Mind Jersey (a charity counselling organisation).

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is possible that you may welcome the opportunity to share your views. By taking part, you will be contributing to research on this important topic by sharing your views, hopefully benefiting others in the future.

What if something goes wrong?

If you wish to complain or have any concerns, please contact Mr Ben Bennet, Head of Higher Education, by email - ben.bennett@highlands.ac.uk.

Will my participation in the study be kept confidential?

All information collected will remain confidential so that only my supervisor and I will have access.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Results will be written up in a dissertation for academic assessment, which focuses on an analysis of drinking behaviour. Results may also be used in a future academic conference presentation or publication. Individuals who participate will not be identified.

If you would like more information, please contact Zuzanna at 1142435@hc.ac.je or Moyra at moyra.journeaux@highlands.ac.uk.

3. Email approval from Jo to access UCJ students.

Hi,

Happy New Year.

Yes, it does Moira – thank you.

Approved thank you.

Jo

4. Approval letter from Highlands College Research Ethics Committee

Approved with amendments

Ethics form - complete

Participant information sheet - supervisor contact details should be included. Alcohol pathway needs a GP referral so please change this contact to visit your GP

Unsure how they will be able to ask questions before an online survey

Questions ? Alcohol consumption questions (8,9,10) - please speak with your supervisor about changing these to measures of alcohol. Please make changes with supervisor and go through module lead who will obtain chairs action so no need to re-submit