

Examining adolescent exposure to alcohol and marijuana content across popular social media platforms

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Background

- While adolescent substance use (SU) is normative, initiation and experimentation can lead to long-term negative consequences.
- One risk factor for SU may be exposure to, and use of, social media, as social media provides opportunities to view use in contexts where negative consequences are seemingly absent.
- Examining social media use is especially important given that rates of social media use are highest during adolescence, the developmental period in which SU initiation typically occurs.
- This study examines 1) exposure to alcohol and marijuana content posted by peers and influential figures across four social media sites and 2) whether injunctive norms mediated the association between exposure to alcohol and marijuana content and offline use.**

Methods

- Sample:** 264 adolescents ($M_{age} = 14.9$, 50.8% Female, 86.4% White, 84.5% Latinx/Hispanic) who completed Waves 1 and 2 (W1 + W2) of a longitudinal study examining factors impacting SU initiation.
- Measures:**
Social Media Measure (W1): Adolescents endorsed the frequency of observing alcohol/marijuana content posted by peers & influential media figures on Instagram (4 items total; 0 = *Never* to 4 = *Always*).
- Injunctive Norms (W1):** Adolescents endorsed their perceptions of close friend approval of alcohol and marijuana use (1 = *Strongly disapprove* to 7 = *Strongly approve*).
- Alcohol/Marijuana Use (W2):** Adolescents reported alcohol and marijuana use since the last assessment (~1.5 years; days used).

Data Analytic Plan

- Descriptives were examined in SAS. Path models in SEM were estimated using *MPlus*. Covariates included sex, age, race, and prior alcohol/marijuana use.

Figure 1. Mean exposure to alcohol related content

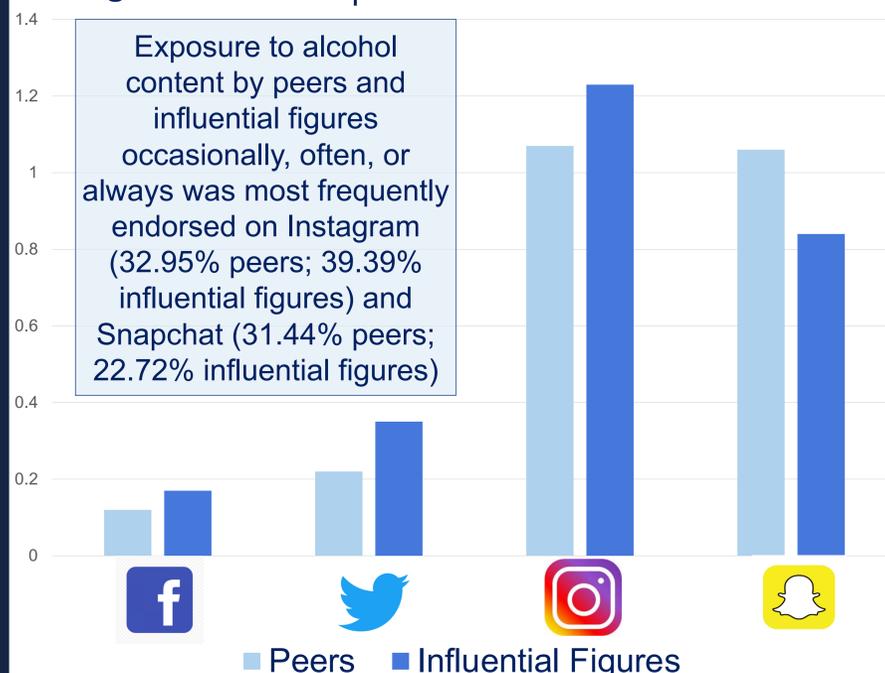
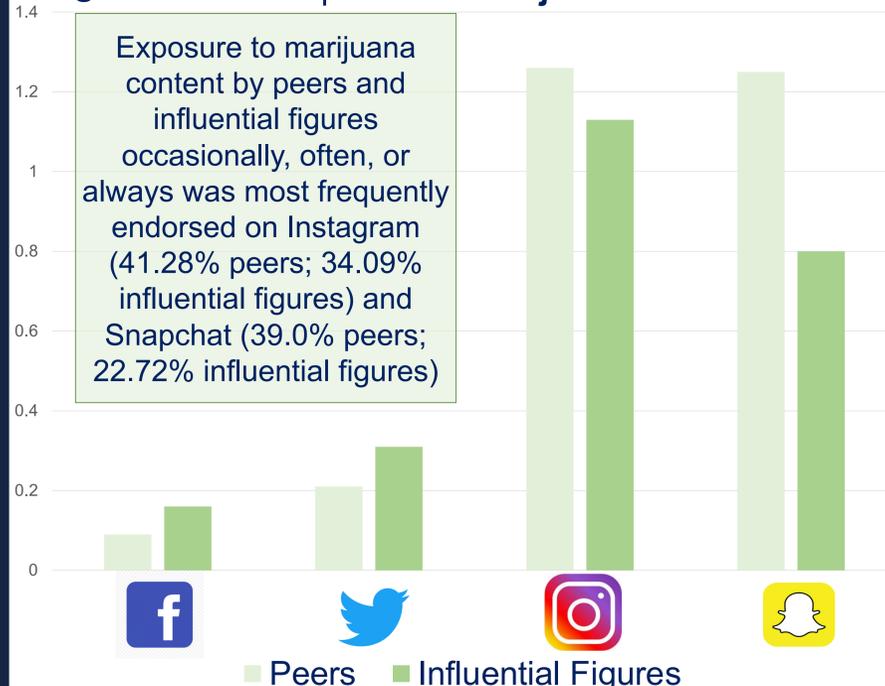


Figure 2. Mean exposure to marijuana related content



Results

- Descriptives are displayed in Figures 1 and 2. Of note, adolescents endorsed more frequent exposure to alcohol and marijuana content on Instagram and Snapchat.
- Injunctive norms significantly mediated associations between exposure to **alcohol content** by peers on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, and by influential figures on Instagram and Snapchat and offline alcohol use.
- Injunctive norms significantly mediated associations between exposure to **marijuana content** posted by peers and influential figures and offline marijuana use on Instagram only.

Discussion and Conclusion

- Adolescents reported exposure to marijuana content most frequently. In fact, more adolescents endorsed exposure to marijuana use on social media than nation-wide prevalence rates, which may contribute to misperceptions of use.
- Exposure to alcohol and marijuana content increased the perception of close friend approval and ultimately contributed to offline use. This occurred most often on Instagram and Snapchat.
- Future research should examine *which* social media features are contributing to increased perceptions of close friend approval.
- Social media may serve as a naturalistic avenue on which to deliver preventive interventions, as well as education on current prevalence rates.

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