

Friends

Can they influence our drinking behaviour?

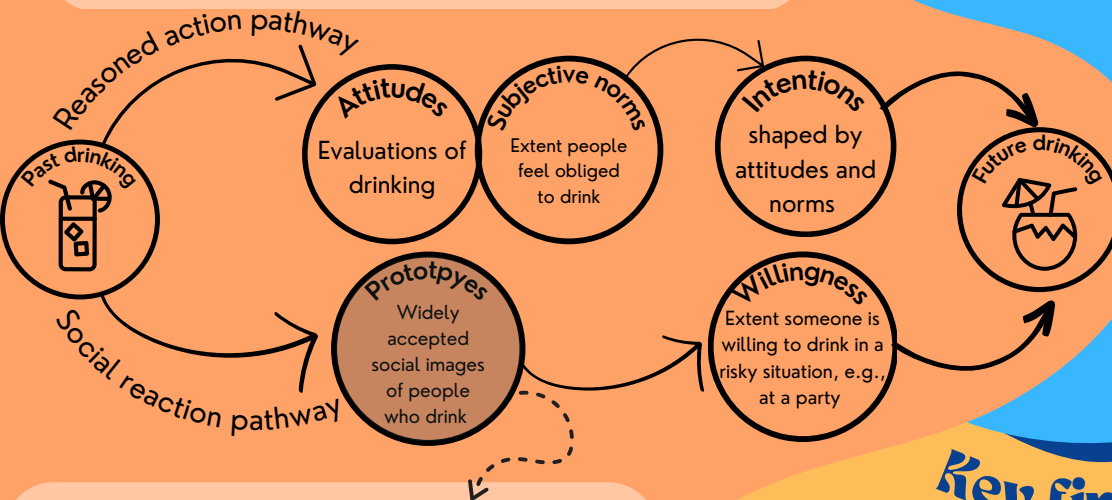
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Background

Drinking is a widely accepted part of British culture and **friendship** groups, rendering it normal, enjoyable, and embedded within many social rituals [1]

The **social context** around drinking remains a key part of predicting alcohol consumption. Evidence suggests that **peers** influence our attitudes and behaviours in several ways [2]

The **Prototype willingness model (PWM)** attempts to explain what underlies decision-making for why people decide to drink:



RQ: Do evaluations of peer prototypes contribute to the prediction of alcohol consumption within the PWM?

Using close friends as peer prototypes presents an opportunity to investigate this

Methods



153 participants aged 18+ took part in an **online questionnaire** measuring:



Original PWM constructs:

- Willingness
- Intentions
- Attitudes
- Subjective norms



Participants were asked to rate themselves (**self-perception**) and their closest friend (**peer prototype**) using predetermined adjectives

Participants also provided measures on their own and their friend's **alcohol consumption**

Key findings



The study answered the RQ and found that...



Higher intentions to drink predicted **greater alcohol consumption** in participants

Participants tended to estimate their **peer's alcohol consumption** as **higher** than their own consumption. Participants whose **peers** had **higher** alcohol consumption were significantly more likely to **drink more**



Participants' perceptions of **peer prototypes** were a **stronger predictor** of alcohol consumption than self-perception. Higher **peer favourability** scores also predicted higher **alcohol consumption**

Conclusions



Updates existing literature investigating peer influence and health behaviours [3]

Peer prototypes appear to predict health behaviours **more accurately** than general prototypes. People **compare** themselves to others to decide whether their behaviour is appropriate [4]

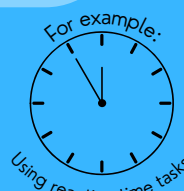
Individuals tend to **overestimate** the prevalence of their own behaviours in **peers** [5]

Intentions were most likely strong predictors because participants had **awareness** of the **risks** associated with drinking, which develops with **age** and **experience**



What next?

Implement more **implicit measures** which may account for more variance in behaviour despite the importance of the current explicit measures



References

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- [3] Berndt, T. J. (1999). Friends' influence on students' adjustment to school. *Educational psychologist*, 34(1), 15-28.
- [4] Morris, H., Larsen, J., Catterall, E., Moss, A. C., & Dombrowski, S. U. (2020). Peer pressure and alcohol consumption in adults living in the UK: a systematic qualitative review. *BMC public health*, 20(1), 1-13.
- [5] Maxwell, K. A. (2002). Friends: The role of peer influence across adolescent risk behaviors. *Journal of Youth and adolescence*, 31(4), 267-277.