

Introduction

Social media use is ubiquitous among college students, with 91% of students using social media at least weekly. More frequent social media checking has been linked to greater alcohol-related content (ARC) exposure. Furthermore, greater exposure to ARC on social media has been linked to greater alcohol consumption, particularly among college students. It is important to consider the motives behind frequent social media checking, which may increase ARC exposure. One motive, fear of missing out (FoMO; i.e., anxiety related to absence from experiences enjoyed by peers), has been associated with problematic social media use, particularly high usage frequency. Studies have identified FoMO as a risk-factor for select negative outcomes, yet no studies have investigated the link between FoMO and alcohol outcomes via social media use. This study examined how FoMO is indirectly related to alcohol outcomes via social media checking frequency (mediator 1) and frequency of exposure to peer-shared ARC among college students (mediator 2) using sequential mediation.

Methods

Participants

- $n = 619$ college student drinkers
- $M_{age} = 20.23$, $SD = 1.86$
- 76.1% female; 23.6% Black; 71.9% White

Materials

Fear of Missing Out ($\alpha = .88$)

- 10 items assessing fear of missing out (e.g., "I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to"; Przybylski et al., 2013)
- 1 (*Not at all true of me*) to 5 (*Extremely true of me*)

Social media checking frequency

- One item assessing how often participants check their social media accounts across platforms
- 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*7 or more times a day*)

Peer-Shared Alcohol-Related Content

- One item assessing frequency of exposure to ARC posted by friends on social media
- 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*Daily or almost daily*)

Alcohol Consumption

- Daily Drinking Questionnaire (DDQ; Collins et al., 1985)
- Assesses drinks per day in a typical week: Calculated drinking quantity, frequency, and peak drinks

Alcohol Problems

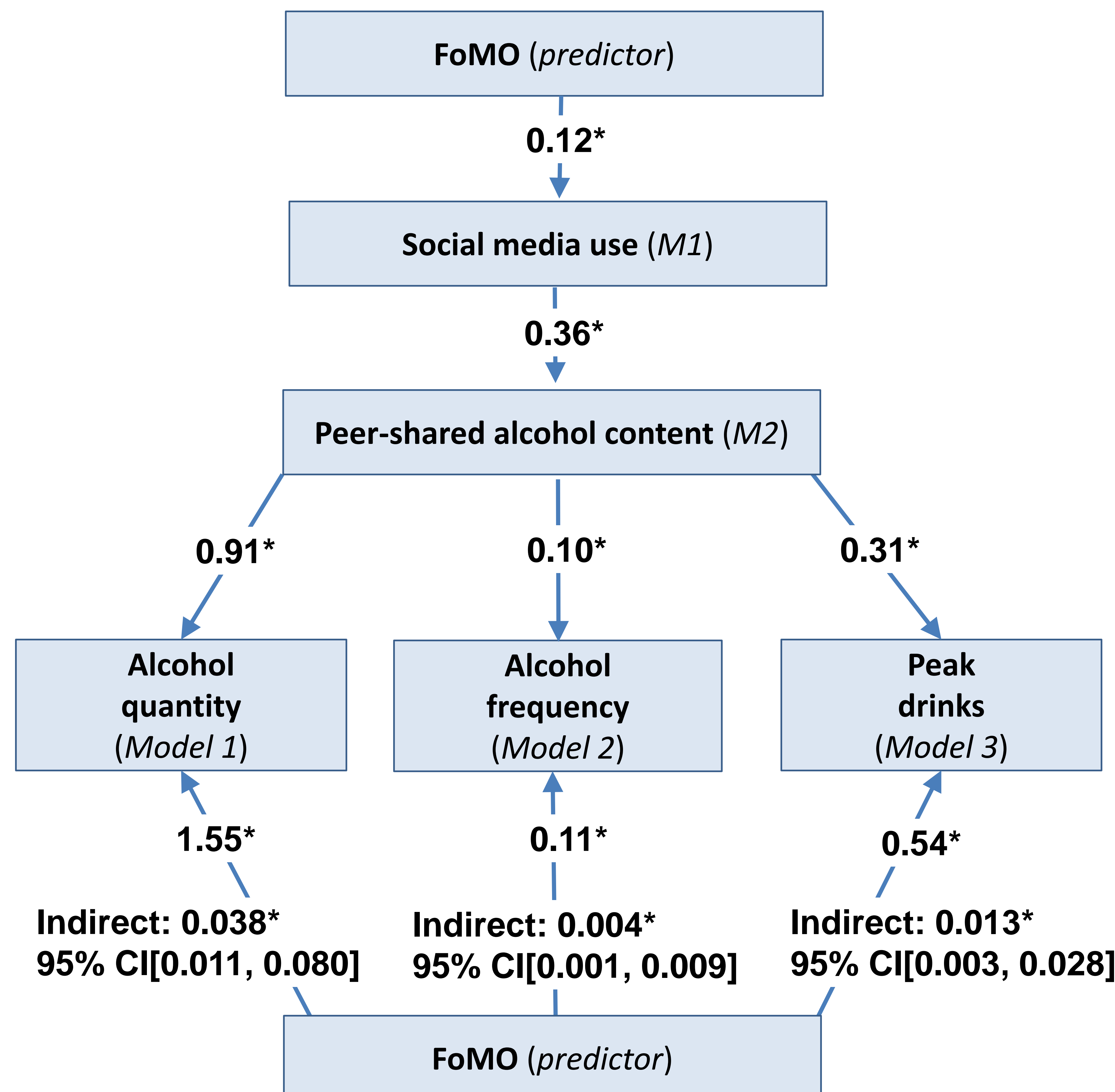
- Brief Young Adult Alcohol Consequences Questionnaire (BYAACQ; Kahler et al., 2005)
- 24 yes/no items measuring drinking problems (e.g., "I have often found it difficult to limit how much I drink")

Results

| Variables of Interest | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----|
| 1. FoMO | 2.50 | 0.84 | -- | | | | | | |
| 2. Social media checking frequency | 6.49 | 0.73 | .14* | -- | | | | | |
| 3. Peer-shared ARC | 4.31 | 1.43 | .13* | .19* | -- | | | | |
| 4. Quantity | 8.94 | 8.65 | .17* | .06 | .16* | -- | | | |
| 5. Frequency | 2.38 | 1.16 | .06 | .05 | .13* | .66* | -- | | |
| 6. Peak drinks | 4.63 | 3.32 | .16* | .06 | .13* | .89* | .41* | -- | |
| 7. Alcohol problems | 3.76 | 3.83 | .34* | .15* | .19* | .54* | .32* | .52* | -- |

Note: * $p < .01$. Significant values in bold.

FoMO sequentially mediated by social media use and peer-shared ARC on alcohol quantity, frequency, and peak drinks



Procedure

- Online survey completed by students across two universities in the U.S.
- Participants received either course credit or raffle entry

Analyses

- A series of sequential mediation models were conducted in PROCESS macro (3.5) to examine:
 - If FoMO is indirectly related to alcohol outcomes through social media checking frequency (M1) and ARC exposure (M2)
 - **Four alcohol outcome models:** Drinking quantity, frequency, peak drinks, and problems
 - **Covariates:** age, gender, site, and quantity (for problems outcome)

Results

- Greater FoMO predicts greater social media checking frequency
- Greater social media checking frequency predicts greater exposure to peer-shared ARC
- Significant indirect effects were found for quantity, frequency, and peak models, but not for alcohol problems after controlling for alcohol use

Experiencing greater FoMO is related to greater alcohol consumption, but not problems, through greater frequency of social media checking and exposure to peer-shared ARC

Discussion

The association between FoMO and alcohol outcomes is largely underexamined in the alcohol literature. Findings indicate students experiencing greater FoMO are significantly more likely to report greater alcohol consumption, and that this link may be explained by how frequently they are checking social media and being exposed to ARC posted by their friends. Implications suggest FoMO may serve as a risk factor for increased alcohol use through ARC exposure on social media, emphasizing the impact social media may have as an agent on risky health behaviors. Findings suggest FoMO may be a potential avenue to for development of alcohol interventions for college students.



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