




Socializing agents and prevention of alcohol consumption in young people in instagram times: A shared responsibility

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ENG Abstract: The aim of this study is to analyse the role of the family and institutional social agents in relation to alcohol consumption and use of social networks among young people. The research methodology consisted of in-depth interviews and discussion groups conducted with people under 24 years of age who maintain profiles on the Instagram social network. The results of this study show that alcohol use among young people is normalised in the family environment and the dominant discourse focuses on responsible use. Social media contributes to this normalisation, with frequent publications of friends or family members engaging in risky behavior, with alcohol consumption to the forefront. In view of these findings, it is considered essential to carry out interventions in family and institutional contexts (education, health and others), including interaction social spaces such as Instagram and other online communities. We believe that social work plays an important role in the improvement of health and that it is key to prevent the abuse of psychoactive substances through the development of preventive intervention programmes and policies aimed at young people.

Key Words: Social work; alcohol; young people; prevention; social media

ES Agentes socializadores y prevención del consumo de alcohol en jóvenes en tiempos de instagram: una responsabilidad compartida

Resumen: El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo analizar el papel de la familia y agentes sociales institucionales en relación con el consumo de alcohol y el uso de redes sociales en jóvenes. La metodología de la investigación consistió en la realización de entrevistas en profundidad y la organización grupos de discusión con personas menores de 24 años con consumos de alcohol y perfil en la red social Instagram. Los resultados de nuestro estudio muestran que en el ámbito familiar se normaliza el uso del alcohol que realizan las personas jóvenes y predomina un discurso relacionado con el consumo responsable. Las redes sociales contribuyen a esa normalización al ser frecuentes las publicaciones de amistades o familiares realizando conductas de riesgo, entre las que destaca el consumo de esta sustancia. A la vista de estos hallazgos, se considera fundamental implementar intervenciones en contextos familiares e institucionales (educación, salud, y otros) incluyendo espacios de interacción social como Instagram y otras comunidades virtuales. Creemos que el papel del Trabajo Social es importante en la mejora de la salud y la prevención del abuso de sustancias psicoactivas resulta relevante, a través del desarrollo de programas y políticas de intervención preventiva dirigidas a la población joven.

Palabras Clave: Trabajo Social; Alcohol; Jóvenes; Prevención; Redes Sociales

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beyond the family environment: necessary but insufficient. Transforming the role of social networks regarding consumption: strategic alliances for prevention. Discussion. Conclusions. Bibliography.

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Introduction

Social media and alcohol consumption

If we look at the *Encuesta sobre alcohol, drogas y otras adicciones en España (2022)* ("Survey on alcohol, drugs and other addictions in Spain"), in terms of heavy drinking, 35.4% of young adult males, aged from 15 to 34, and 24.1% of young adult females state that they have been drunk at some point in the last 12 months (EDADES, 2022). Another survey, the *Encuesta sobre uso de drogas en enseñanzas secundarias en España (2023)* ("Survey on drug use in secondary schools in Spain"), shows that 75.9% of students aged between 14 and 18 years old have drunk alcohol at some point in their life (compared to 73.9% in 2021), and 56.6% in the last 30 days (53.6% in 2021) (ESTUDES, 2023).

It is worth mentioning that alcohol consumption by young people is associated with many behaviours of risk to health (such as smoking tobacco, using illicit drugs, carrying out high-risk sexual behaviours, driving under the influence, among others) (Miller et al., 2007). In the last few decades, the problem has been exacerbated through the phenomenon known as "intoxication culture" (Atkinson & Sumnall, 2016; Hutton & Wright, 2015; Laws et al., 2018; Lyons et al., 2016), which includes the spaces of the night-time economy where the excessive consumption of alcohol is associated with pleasure, fun and socialization for young people (McCreanor et al., 2008). According to Mecca (2018), social relationships become a fundamental aspect of the first outings and development of nightlife leisure in youth, in which complex processes take place involving identity exploration and emancipation from the family.

Furthermore, it should be noted that traditional spaces for leisure and alcohol consumption have expanded as a result of the progressive incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into our lives. Nowadays, the digital environment has become a daily use space for social interaction and entertainment. (Gómez y Calderón, 2022).

Young people are spending more and more time communicating with friends and acquaintances in online settings (Moreno & Whitehill, 2014). According to the latest survey on equipment and uses of information and communication technology in homes, carried out by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) [National Institute of Statistics] in Spain, 95.4% of the population from 16 to 74 years old have used the internet in the last three months, 0.9 points up from 2022. Among adolescents and young people from 16 to 24 years of age, internet use is almost total, at 99.8% for both men and women (INE, 2023).

Among the activities that the young population carries out on the Internet, the use of social networks stands out. Social media plays a very important role in daily life and takes up much of their time, which is why it is also often used to talk about alcohol (Carrotte et al., 2017; Hendriks et al., 2017; Tong et al., 2008).

The displaying of alcohol consumption by adolescents and young people on social media sites such as Instagram has become a habitual practice (Romo et al., 2023a). Various investigations have demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between alcohol consumption and social media use by young people (Geusens & Beullens, 2021; Hendriks et al., 2018; Russell et al., 2022; Scott & Barber, 2020). This consumption increases on weekends and public holidays, when social media posts focused on drinking also increase (Bellis et al., 2015; Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2020).

Other studies have indicated that social media can come to promote alcohol consumption due to the influence of publications from friends and family (Navarro et al., 2018) and positive comments about alcohol drinking (Boyle et al., 2016; Moreno et al., 2015).

Similarly, the literature shows that social media distorts the reality of alcohol consumption, particularly when concerning young people, since they share online audiovisual content on drinking, idealizing it and hiding its risks (Romo et al., 2023b). In a study conducted in four countries –South Korea, Finland, Spain, and the US – it was observed that in the first three there was a clear association between the daily use of Facebook and Instagram and the dangerous consumption of alcohol (Savolainen et al., 2020).

The role of the family, institutions and social work against this problem

Confronting the problem of alcohol misuse by young people is no easy task. On the one hand, this is because drinking is associated with the trends in socialization and general leisure that take place with this population. On the other hand, it is important to stress how alcohol consumption should be understood as a social practice embodied and integrated in gender relations (Lyons et al., 2017). In this sense, as the review by Patrón-Hernández et al. (2020) on the study of the relationship between gender norms and alcohol consumption confirms, traditional stereotypes are still present. The masculine role is associated with heavier drinking, aggressiveness and high-risk behaviours, whereas the female role is identified with a lower consumption of

alcohol, caregiving and the home. This occurs even though it has been demonstrated that there has been a change in patterns with the youngest women, who have a higher prevalence of alcohol consumption than their male counterparts, and also drink more heavily (Romo et al., 2023a).

Family relationships play an important role in the development of young people. Depending on parental actions, they can represent a factor of risk or prevention (Barragán et al., 2016; De la Torre et al., 2013). This role that families play, therefore, serves as a model and source of values and attitudes in young people's education (Secades, Fernández-Hermida & Vallejo, 2005). The improvement and strengthening of affective family ties not only protects against drinking and reduces its probability, but also serves as protection against other problematic behaviours in adolescence (Errasti et al., 2009). In their study, Barragán et al. (2016) show that the subjects that drank more had greater perceived social support from their peer group rather than their family. Achieving interventions in the family and social contexts of young people is key, because they perceive the fact of drinking alcohol as a factor that facilitates their social interactions, reinforcing the drinking behaviour (Lema et al., 2011).

Some prevention programmes in schools have been designed through certain associations and institutions dedicated to addiction prevention and treatment. Their aim is for young people to acquire healthy attitudes and lifestyles (Fernández-Rodríguez et al., 2021). Programmes for the prevention of alcohol consumption during adolescence often include components that correct the mistaken perceptions of adolescents on the rates of alcohol consumption among their peers, or factors of empowerment (for example, positive parenting) that can lessen the influence of perceived alcohol consumption among peers (Bo et al., 2023). Likewise, the social media sites themselves can help to prevent alcohol consumption since they provide essential information on the role it plays with young people, with the means to identify individuals who require an intervention due to heavy consumption or risk behaviours associated with the heightened level of drinking (Litt et al., 2018).

As we know, Social Work carries out an important role in the improvement of the general health of the whole community through programmes and intervention policies, including the prevention of psychoactive substance misuse (Delany, Sanville and Shields, 2013). As we mentioned earlier, there is a normalization of excessive alcohol consumption among young people. Prevention and early detection of problematic consumption of legal and illegal drugs is key to immediate intervention from the different resources that work to eradicate this problem (López-Morales et al., 2021). Alcohol misuse remains a global problem, the consequences of which need to be reduced and prevented, as it represents a huge challenge for Social Work (Begun et al., 2016). Social Work, in addition, should not only focus on substances and prevention but also on creating support strategies (Montivero & Santillán, 2021).

In view of the contextual and theoretical data presented, it seems appropriate to continue expanding scientific knowledge on the subject given its social relevance and epistemic pertinence. Consequently, the objective of this research is to analyze the role of the family and other social agents in relation to alcohol consumption and use of social networks in young people.

Methodology

We started from a study based on a digital ethnography through the application of different qualitative research techniques carried out in fieldwork between January and December 2021, both in person and virtually. The latter as a consequence of the health restrictions imposed during the confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was initially considered a handicap but which, at the same time, facilitated the research team's telematic contact with young people from 12 different Autonomous Communities in Spain. In total, 13 focus groups and 38 in-depth interviews were conducted with 118 young people from two age groups (15-18 years and 19-24 years) and diverse profiles in relation to social class, rurality, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religiosity. In addition, a period of intensive observation on Instagram was carried out during which the open accounts of 50 young people were studied.

The criteria for participation in the study were twofold: being consumers of alcohol and having Instagram accounts. We chose Instagram instead of other popular social networks among young people, such as TikTok, for two main reasons: First, because it is the most used social network in Spain among the young population, both for consuming and creating content, with 84.9% of young people using this network compared to 67% using TikTok and 61% using YouTube (Gómez and Calderón, 2022); and second, we were particularly interested in researching the youngest age group as possible, for being the least researched, and this was easier to achieve through Instagram, since young people can create an account from the age of 13, while on TikTok the minimum age is 16. In this way, we were able to include 15-year-olds in the study, who otherwise would not have been part of the participant group. Contact was made mainly through the snowball technique, using primarily the educational system: institutes and universities, as well as youth groups and associations that work with this population.

First, we introduced ourselves and briefly explained what the research project consisted of. We sent them the link to the project website where they could read the objectives of the project, the universities that were involved in it, and put a face to the group of researchers that were part of it. On the website they could also access the contact details of each researcher in the group.

The fieldwork began in January 2021, when we carried out the first focus group session online, which was recorded and transcribed. We started the process by drawing up a draft script for the focus group between the study participants and an intentional separation of the groups, based on the previous study of the subject matter. After its analysis, we proceeded to correct and reorganize the themes to be included in the discussion

to be held by the rest of the groups (N=13). We first contacted the young people through informal networks with acquaintances and colleagues. The young people were students from different university degree courses that we teach, youth groups, and so on. We introduced ourselves and briefly explained the essentials of the research project. We sent them the link to the project website, where they could read the aims of the project, the universities involved in it, and identify the research team members. They could also access the contact details of each researcher in the group.

On the day the group was due to take place, just before beginning, we provided the participants with a link to a form on Google so that we could collect basic information like their name, autonomous community and city/locality, age, contact details, education level, type of alcohol use and type of social media use. Due to the need to hold the groups in virtual form, they lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. In this time we requested that they fill out an information form that took 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

We composed a draft interview script that was approved by all the researchers in an in-person group meeting, in which we also made an intentional separation from the group of participants with the goal of attaining the greatest possible heterogeneity of discourse.

The first pilot interview was conducted online in October 2021, and was recorded and transcribed. After its analysis, we corrected and reorganized the themes to be included in the interview script. For the focus groups we managed to contact a more adult profile of participants (between 18 to 24 years old), and therefore for the interviews we prioritized younger people (between 16 and 18 years of age) in our search. Intersectionality underlay of participants, we selected diverse profiles in terms of age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, rural or urban background, and self-perceived social class.

Following the grounded theory model (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we carried out a process of continuous analysis throughout the fieldwork. All the results from the different research techniques applied in the process of digital ethnography have been incorporated into a single NVivo 12 database.

Ethical considerations

This study has received approval from the Ethics Committee of the University of Granada with reference (1944/CEIH/2021). Furthermore, it complies with the international ethical criteria of the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 1964) and its subsequent amendments, as well as with the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) of Horizon 2020 (European Commission, 2013) and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament on the processing of personal data (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016). All the participants in the project agreed voluntarily to be interviewed having received information about the study and a letter of commitment to confidentiality signed by the research team. Informed consent was requested directly from the informants when they were of legal age, and from their guardians when they were minors through the management of the educational centres or from the persons responsible for the associations and youth groups. Informed consent was mostly signed by hand or digitally.

Results

The ambivalent role of the family in the prevention of alcohol consumption: between prevention and promotion

The results presented below should be taken as a sample of the narratives gathered in this study, which illustrate the varied forms and meanings that alcohol consumption takes in the lives of these young people and their families.

Our data show how the families of the young people that took part in the study were concerned that they drank responsibly. Many of the interviewees mention advice such as “drink sensibly”, “don’t overdo it with the drink”, or “don’t drink much”, as we can observe in the following accounts:

My father, uncles and grandparents have told me to drink responsibly, that I can drink, that I can get tipsy, but not to overdo it, and so that’s what I’ve been doing. I’ve been drinking and have not had problems of getting crazy drunk almost never. So that’s the deal, they tell me to be responsible, that I know what I’m doing and that they, that as I’m like that, that I’m not going to overdo it, they trust me. (M13, young man, 16 years old).

Some of these young men state that their family members have never told them not to drink, but that if they drink alcohol, it should be consumed responsibly. This is shown clearly in the account of this eighteen-year-old young man:

My mother, well, she tells me, “don’t drink a lot, don’t overdo it,” and so on... she never said like no, don’t drink, because she doesn’t, because she probably did it too, she was young once, it’s normal, but that I should always be careful and not to get hooked, obviously. But she never said to me not to do it, you know? I mean, it would be good if I didn’t, but not that I mustn’t (M16, young man, 18 years old).

The data we obtained show that, as well as family members asking the young people to drink responsibly, there are also those that normalize alcohol consumption and are not concerned that their sons or daughters drink, feeling safe in the trust they have in them. The following account, from a sixteen-year old woman, is a clear example of this:

For my parents... you see, it's not that they don't care, but at the same time they are not worried because I'm a girl, I'm responsible [...]. So I drink and I know that I have to drink in moderation and being careful with people and all that. My parents know that I'm responsible and that they don't have to worry in that way. Now I'm 16, before no, but now I'm older, then yes it's like it's normal that a girl drinks or whatever because she's sixteen years old, when they were our age they went out partying as well and it's normal. But being responsible, so, it's like well they worry less, and it's normal (M36, young woman, 16 years old).

The normalization of drinking and the lack of concern of families, based on the responsible consumption, means that, occasionally, this consumption is undertaken jointly:

I've been at parties with my mother and with my father like, for example, last weekend was my friend's birthday party, she had turned 18. Everyone got stuck in like crazy. We were all there, her friends, my parents and everyone. And I went and they said to me, "I like it that you drink like that" because I'm not the type to go, "boom, boom" (M10, young woman, 18 years old).

In such cases, what is made problematic by many families is the mixing of different alcoholic drinks, and they showed some concern in this regard:

My parents told me not to mix my drinks and that if I was going, for example, to order a spirit then I shouldn't change the drink, but from then on I should keep on drinking the same thing (M29, young man, 18 years old).

This widespread generalization of socially accepted drinking clashes with the worry families have about the consumption of other substances. This is made clear in the following account:

I've got home drunk more than once and whether you like it or not well sure, they've worried about me, but my parents have been concerned about other substances that I might take more than alcohol (M14, young man, 19 years old)

Faced with the stories of normalization and consumption of alcohol in the family, some minors report their parents' lack of knowledge regarding their consumption, since they choose to hide it from them using different strategies:

They've never known. I've always tried to hide it. (M33, young man, 16 years old).

Not my parents, because they simply didn't know, because I didn't tell them, but they have over my state of mind. My friends did, but not anymore, because I set limits. Because I'm not going to tell them that I drown my problems in alcohol because they're going to say to me: "Don't you know your own age? You don't know what a real problem is." So they worry about my state of mind because I would spend the whole day crying, a lot, but they knew more about my state of mind than about what I was doing. (M31, young woman, 16 years old).

I hid it. Maybe I would arrange to sleep elsewhere, I disguised it well, or the effects had worn off by the time I got home (M31, young woman, 16 years old).

The importance of family intervention to prevent alcohol misuse or risk behaviours is recognized by the study participants themselves. Thus, if they do not receive information from their families about these issues, it creates a "void" and ignorance:

Well I don't know, I, it's that I think that with everything they have to educate us about from... above all in the family, I think that that's very important, but also in schools with everything. Not only with alcohol, but with alcohol, drugs, social media, etc. ... and it's that ... if in your family they don't talk about these things, in the end it's like in that sense you're like empty. You can get speeches in schools and stuff, but it's like there isn't any either... (M19, young woman, 20 years old).

Responsible consumption, the normalization of this consumption and the importance of family intervention are some of the issues most highlighted by the young people interviewed.

Other social agents involved beyond the family environment: necessary but insufficient

Social, political and educational institutions, along with families, as already stated, should play a key role in the prevention of alcohol consumption by minors. Several of the participants in our study stated that they had received informational talks in their schools on different psychoactive substances, but not on alcohol, even though this is the substance that is most consumed by young people. They also state that it is important for these talks to be correctly focused not on forbidding alcohol consumption nor only on the health problems that can develop as a result of drinking, but on teaching them how to "control" the amount and form of consumption and to start actions that enable them to reduce harms:

No, I've never been given any. I've had talks around the subject of drugs. About how harmful they are, the causes they can have... but they've never given me a talk on alcohol consumption. I don't know, I maybe I see it as necessary, but not so that they just tell teenagers, "don't drink", but so that they might say, "control the amount of alcohol you can handle", because I think that's what's most important. You're not going to tell a teenager who if they go out partying, don't drink alcohol, tell them how, so they know how to control it, and that's it. (M13, 16 years old).

It's the typical one that goes, "don't drink alcohol", but you, how are you going to say to a person don't drink alcohol because you say so, because it's bad and that's that? Each person is going to say, "I want to experiment, I want to live my own experiences and I want to speak and base myself on them". So, ultimately, the talks they give are the typical type: the effects of alcohol, the diseases you can get, the excessive consumption of alcohol and that alcohol is bad, that's it. (M31, young woman, 16 years old).

When they described what types of professionals had given them the informational talks, they said that they were mainly from state security forces (Police or Civil Guard) or from the healthcare sector (from the fields of medicine or nursing). They did not state that they had received information from professionals from the sphere of social work.

The talks given by the security forces tended to focus on the different effects of the different substances: they instructed them to take care with such consumption, that these substances were expensive and caused addiction.

Yes, the typical policemen would always come and give us talks, and people didn't... (M16, Chico de 16 years old).

A Civil Guard [*one of the Spanish security forces*] and he explained to us the effect of drugs, the effect of alcohol, and all that (M28, young man, 17 years old).

I do remember, for example, when I was in secondary school, that national police would come to give us talks about drugs [...], that we should be very careful because they could put it in drinks, and that we should not accept any drugs because you would get hooked, it's expensive, and then as well they explained how many neurons they destroyed in your head, I remember (M23, young man, 19 years old).

However, they did state that they had received information from associations and healthcare personnel, who centred on the consequences and effects that alcohol and other drugs had on their organisms.

Yes, people came from some association or the same doctors who work in the health service, who gave us some talk about that. (M11, young man, 16 years old)

We went to the one by Alcoholics Anonymous, they gave us a talk and so on, in fact it was really cool and then, I don't know, here, well, we also did another like a conference, we had to go as drug addictions or something like that, and they came to give us a talk from the perspective of nursing. (M05, young woman, 22 years old).

It seems clear that families, along with political, educational and social institutions, including Social Work, play an important role in preventing youth consumption. Despite this, and as we have seen in the previous testimonies, this role is blurred or made invisible in the youth discourses analyzed.

Transforming the role of social networks regarding consumption: strategic alliances for prevention

Instagram, alcohol and partying is an often interconnected triad for young people. Sharing images on social media sites such as Instagram when they are partying and drinking alcohol is a common occurrence. This is shown by the following accounts:

Obviously when you go out partying and are drinking, it's like it's increased more by the fact that you meet people you probably know, you haven't seen them for a long time and you say, "come on, let's take a photo for memory's sake" and things like that. (Mixed focus group, 19-24 years old).

In the following account, we can see how the word "party" is directly linked to consuming alcohol, something very common among the people who participated in this research:

I think that the concept of partying, for me, is tied to alcohol. If I go out partying, I'm going to drink. It's that, I don't know, I've always done it like that... The first thing that you think is to connect the idea of "party" with "we're going to drink alcohol". (Mixed focus group, 19-24 years old).

They justify drinking in relation to this by stating that alcohol "gives them greater self-confidence" and raises their spirits:

Alcohol, one of the things it has is that it gives you like greater self-confidence. Something absurd, but it was one of the things that happens... Because of the fact that you feel in a better mood [...] I think that yes, that the idea of the party yes is tied to the idea of drinking alcohol or even the consumption of other drugs. (Mixed focus group, 19-24 years old).

Another young woman stated that she has a good time when she drinks, that she laughs with everyone together and that it helps her to be more sociable with other people:

Yes, because me with alcohol I'm not at all violent or anything at all. I get into my groove, I laugh my head off with everyone and people laugh their head off with me. I just get into my world and I, I find anything funny, I mean anything, and as well as that like I open up more, look, I'm open with people, I'm super sociable, but with a couple of mixed drinks added in, now we're talking (M10, young woman, 18 years old).

Some of the narratives collected in this study show that the young men and women like to upload content to social media showing themselves drinking alcohol:

My content... many friends who take photos of partying and then they uploaded them. The truth is that later I had to untag myself because I was embarrassed by my face. I mean, photos when people already really don't look good. [...] I think that they're the ones that always picture themselves a bit, a bit crazy, you know? So I think that if there was less drinking, maybe you wouldn't want, we wouldn't want to reveal ourselves so carefree. (Focus group 1, mixed, 19-24 years old).

The content that they upload to social media when they are partying is also affected by alcohol consumption. Alcohol is a disinhibitor, and makes them care less about what type of images they post on social media sites such as Instagram:

The person who drinks alcohol when posting they are much more reckless about it. Now there's the Close Friends thing [*option on Instagram to share content only with people the user has selected beforehand*], but before, when they didn't have Close Friends, then they would end up posting stupid things and you would get drawn into it a lot as well, because so-and-so has come to see you, and I've experienced this with my friends "that way", you have two drinks and already, "so come on, let's talk to such and such" or "I'm going to post this". (Young women's focus group, 19-24 years old).

The next account shows how they use Instagram as a medium for meeting and going out with other people. One could say that the young use social media sites as tools for socializing with their peer group, creating plans to go out partying or to go to parties that they see posted on Instagram. Likewise, this participant states that they use Instagram Live (a function for broadcasting live images on that platform) for consuming alcohol and other substances, such as cannabis:

We were going to a house or whatever and once in the house then maybe we got to doing an Instagram Live and while we were live, well, we were smoking our joints, having some drinks [...]. And, well, through the live broadcast, well, people came on and we were saying, "Hey, what are you going to do tonight?" and so on, "you coming to wherever?". And well in the end we made our plans that way, through Instagram, or we would see stories of people partying and we would speak to them and would say, "hey, what are you doing tonight? I'm out with so-and-so, we've got the car and are thinking of going I dunno where", and in the end well we get a party going, but it's like that, thanks to Instagram. As there's so much communication with Stories, that you know where everybody is or whatever, like, it's like that, through Instagram I sort it out to go out partying. (M14, young man, 19 years old).

A function of social media sites is to enable communication and the exchange of information. Posting photographs to social media is a normalized action for young people. The study participants state that they do this to "show off" in front of their followers about what they are drinking, whom they are drinking with, and how they are having a good time:

If, for example, I go out partying I take a photo of my drink and then I take a photo with my friend with the drink in my hand, and then I took a photo of the bottle... But sure, my friends it's like they do it to show off. Perhaps if I'm going to have some beers with my friend, then I post it like this kind of side on, or the beer and the tapas, or some other thing like that as well, sure, as though to say: "Look how good, look how delicious", you know? (M01, non-binary, 24 years old).

Some of the accounts show that popularity increases when they post images and videos that show them undertaking risk behaviours, among which is consuming alcohol, an issue that is made evident in one of the focus groups:

I think that popularity level does rise, since another person, when they see it, they think that like that person is daring or is crazy or I don't know what, and some people could come to identify with that type of personality, and I think that, well, let's follow her and see what's up, what she carries on doing and how she goes and that kind of thing. (Focus group 1, mixed, 19-24 years old).

In contrast, in a focus group, it was stated that it is not necessary to post content and show pictures when going out, and that over time they have become more and more careful with what they upload to social media:

As time has gone by, I've also become more careful. So not anymore, it's not because of embarrassment of someone seeing me having a drink, but rather of why do I need to show that, like I'm having a good time... So that's it, like... There's no need to like show it compulsorily (Female focus group, 19-24 years old).

Similarly, we can state that social media can be a tool for preventing alcohol and drug consumption, as well as violence in general and gender-based violence in particular. Young people are clear about this when asked about the matter:

Social media does help to prevent [alcohol consumption]. If people, most if not all, have social media accounts and people see them and if they see them then, I don't know, something is going to get into their consciousness. Maybe some no and others yes, but yeah, at least it gets seen. (M23, young man, 19 years old).

Based on these testimonies, we can affirm that social networks have a very important role in the prevention of alcohol consumption. That is why Social Work must use social networks as a tool to work on prevention.

Discussion

The results shown in the previous section are in line with the specialized literature on the subject. In this sense, Romo et al., (2023a) show that cultural, social and family factors, through group imitation, belonging and sociability shared on social media, contribute to the normalization of alcohol consumption among young people. This issue has been made evident in our study.

Social networking sites have brought about a genuine revolution in our society. In addition to the traditional spaces of alcohol consumption (bars, nightclubs, homes, streets, squares...), there is now the virtual space provided by social media. However, we can affirm, in agreement with Westgate and Holliday (2016), that social media has a huge potential for enabling intervention and working in prevention for public health. Litt et al. (2018) argued that social media is essential for working in the prevention of alcohol consumption because it offers means for identifying problematic drinking.

In line with the study by Lema et al. (2011), we believe that it is vital to carry out interventions in family and social contexts, since many of the young people stated that drinking alcohol made socialization with other people easier for them, and this reinforced their desire to consume it. Along with families, institutions play a fundamental role in the prevention of youth drinking. Similarly, policies of prevention and intervention should be carried out through social networking sites such as Instagram, as it is a space where the majority of young people spend a great deal of time. Social Work should also focus on new technologies and social media in the prevention of the use and misuse of alcohol and other drugs, and in the improvement of intervention programmes and policies, as Delany, Sanville and Shields (2013) have indicated. The issue is a relevant area for Social Work, since they have the objective of putting forward preventative strategies to enable working with teenagers and young people in the prevention of the misuse of alcohol and the use of ICT (González-Arias et al., 2023).

Conclusions

This study analyses the role of the family and other social agents in relation to alcohol consumption and the use of social networks in young people. As we have observed in the previous section, there is a clear normalization of alcohol consumption by young people in the family environment. In many cases, this initiation of alcohol consumption begins with the parents and the family discourse is related to responsible consumption, without questioning other problematic dimensions associated with it.

On the other hand, the family plays a fundamental role in preventing alcohol and other drug use, as well as problematic use of social networks. As we have indicated in this paper, not receiving information on such issues from family members creates a lack of knowledge and information among young people. Furthermore, as we have been able to observe, social agents are present, but insufficiently, with a particularly significant absence of Social Work. In this sense, it is necessary for social workers to have training and skills to expand the important preventive role, to be part of multidisciplinary teams (in training processes, support, mediation, etc.) in line with recognized professional skills, all from the field of social services as well as from the health and educational fields.

This research is not without limitations. The participants were selected through snowball sampling in some autonomous communities, which excluded young people from other regions who might have had different experiences. Likewise, participation based on gender was not balanced, as there was a greater representation of women. On the other hand, the analysis focuses on a single social network, Instagram, leaving out others such as WhatsApp or Tiktok, with different functionalities that enable other types of interactions between younger people.

The identified limitations provide opportunities to develop future lines of research. Firstly, broadening the population profile under study in terms of geographical distribution, gender, and age would allow for the identification of potential differences based on these variables. Specifically, it would be valuable to include minors aged 12 to 14, as this age range is when alcohol consumption and the use of personal smartphones typically begin. Additionally, it would be important to consider analyzing other social networks widely used by young people, such as WhatsApp and TikTok. And finally, the testimonies gathered in this study highlight the significant role families play in relation to both risk behaviors, suggesting the need to expand research to include digital socialization within the family context.

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