

## Abstract

This study assessed the relationship between alcohol use and alcohol related problems as mediated by social support. Social support as well as experiencing negative alcohol related consequences have shown to predict positive drinking outcomes for people with alcohol use disorders. We hypothesized that average number of drinks per week would predict alcohol related problems as measured by the Short Inventory of Problems (SIP+6). Additionally, we predicted that the relationship between average number of drinks per week and alcohol related problems would be mediated by perceived social support. Injured patients ( $M_{age} = 34.81, SD = 12.39$ ) from 3 Level I Trauma Centers were screened for heavy drinking. Results revealed that average number of drinks per week predicted SIP+6 scores such that more drinks per week consumed yielded an increase in alcohol related problems. Additionally, social support was directly related to alcohol related problems. Social support was not a mediator in the relationship between alcohol use and alcohol related problems. In conclusion, patients with higher levels of perceived social support may experience more alcohol related problems due to possible feedback from their social support system urging them to reduce their alcohol use. Thus, future studies may want to further investigate different types of social support and how this can be applied to interventions.

## Introduction

### How much is too much?

Research has found alcohol abuse to be among the top 20 leading causes of premature death and disability in the United States and is considered a public burden. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has defined heavy drinking as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion on each of five or more days in the past 30 days (2015).



### What's the harm?

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2014), excessive consumption of alcohol led to approximately 88,000 deaths and significant economic costs, which were estimated at \$249 billion in 2010. Furthermore, excessive consumption of alcohol has been associated with negative social consequences in a person's life that may impact an individual's

1. Employment
2. Finances
3. Relationships (Mulia, Ye, Thomas, Greenfield, & Zemore, 2009).

Given this information, alcohol use has been noted as the third preventable cause of death in the United States (Mokdad, Marks, Stroup, & Gerberding, 2004).

### How can you reduce the risk?

Research has shown that social support plays a role in helping people reduce their alcohol consumption. Social support has been noted to predict positive drinking outcomes for people with alcohol use disorders (Hunter-Reel et al., 2009; Groh, Jason, Davis, Olson, & Ferrari, 2007).

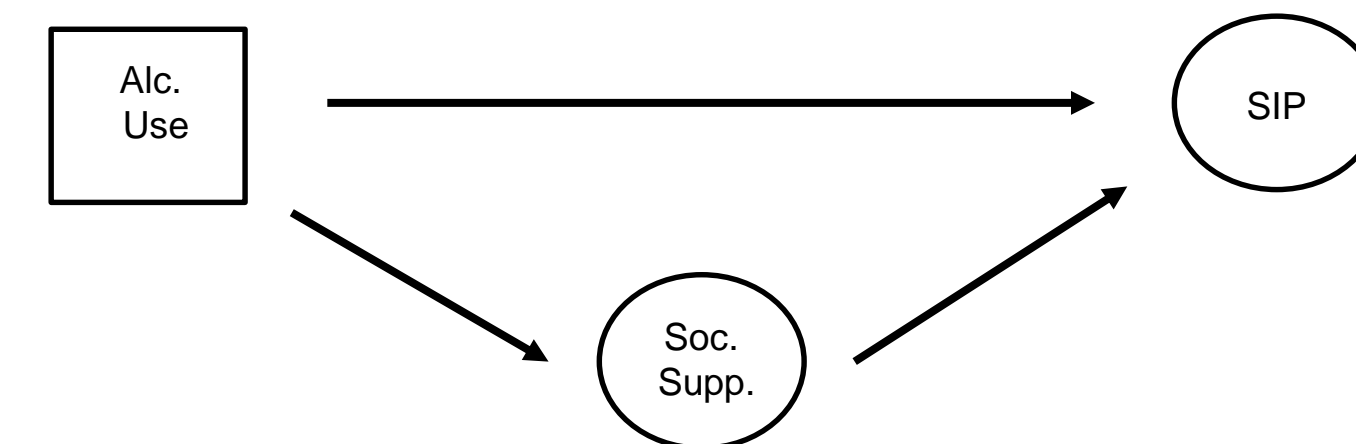
Particularly, lower drinking levels are associated with the amount of social support received from the most important people, the number of supportive relationships, and having more non-drinking friends (Hunter-Reel et al., 2009). Another predictor of positive drinking outcomes has been prior negative alcohol-related experiences. It has been shown that more negative alcohol related experiences may increase an individual's motivation to decrease hazardous drinking.



## Hypotheses

The primary aim of the present study was to investigate if social support is one mechanism that affects alcohol use and alcohol related problems. We conducted a path analysis with the following predictions in mind:

1. Average number of drinks per week will predict alcohol related problems as measured by the Short Inventory of Problems.
2. Relationship between average number of drinks per week and alcohol related problems will be mediated by perceived social support.



## Method

### Procedure

The analyses for the present study consists of 595 participants that were recruited from three urban Level I trauma centers:

1. Baylor University Medical Center (BUMC; Dallas, TX)
2. Methodist (Dallas, TX)
3. University Medical Center Brackenridge (UMCB; Austin, TX).

All participants who were over the age of 18 ( $M = 34.79 \pm 12.39$ ) and were treated for unintentional injuries such as motor vehicle collisions and falls or intentional or violence-related injuries such as gunshot wounds, stab wounds, and other injuries related to assaults were eligible for inclusion in the study and were included in the analysis (Field et al., 2009).

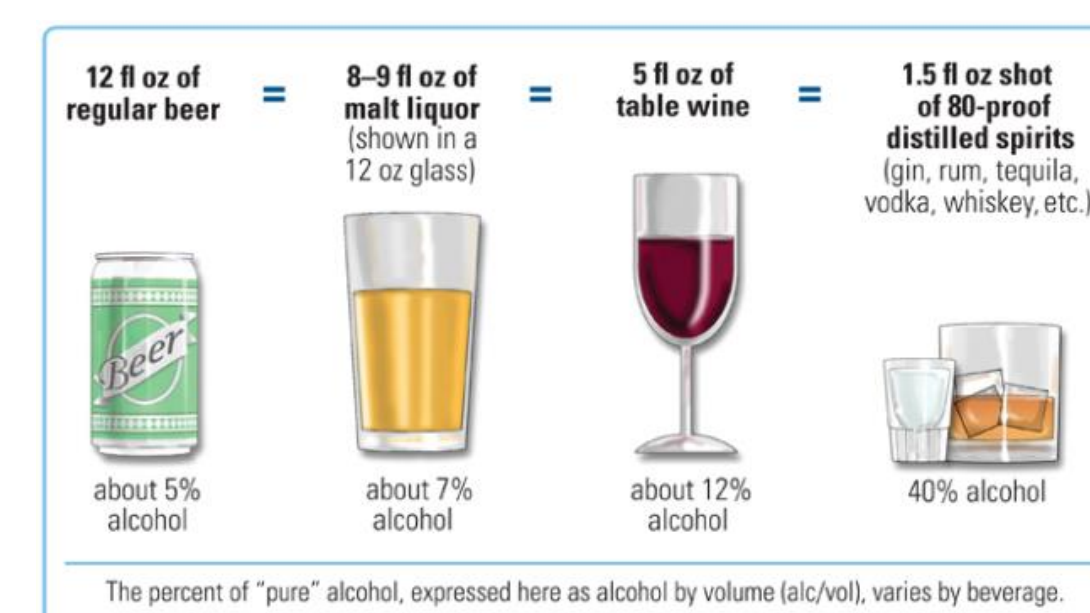
### Measures

The measures are as follow:

**Social Support**- An adapted version of the Important People and Activities Instrument that assesses the person's involvement in their social network and activities, and the support of the social network and activities of the person's drinking and abstinence (Clifford & Longabaugh, 1991).

- "To what extent is \_\_\_ generally supportive of you, by being sensitive to your personal needs, helping you to think about things, solve problems, and by giving you the moral support you need?"

**Alcohol Use** - The variable of alcohol use was assessed by the Timeline Follow-back Measure (Dawson, Grant, & Li, 2005). Alcohol use was measured by the average number of drinks per week.



**Short Inventory of Problems**- Measures negative consequences of alcohol use and is composed of six subscales that assess different domains. The constructs that the SIP +6 measures are: physical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, social responsibility, impulse and injury (Field, Caetano, Harris, Frankowski, Roudsari, 2009; Soderstrom, DiClemente, Dischinger, Hebel, McDuff, Auman, & Kufera, 2007).

## Results

One hundred and forty participants were female ( $N=144$ ) and the remaining were male ( $N=455$ ). The majority of the participants self-identified as White (44%). The remaining participants self-identified as Latino (26.2%), Black (27.3%), (2.6%), and other (2.5%).

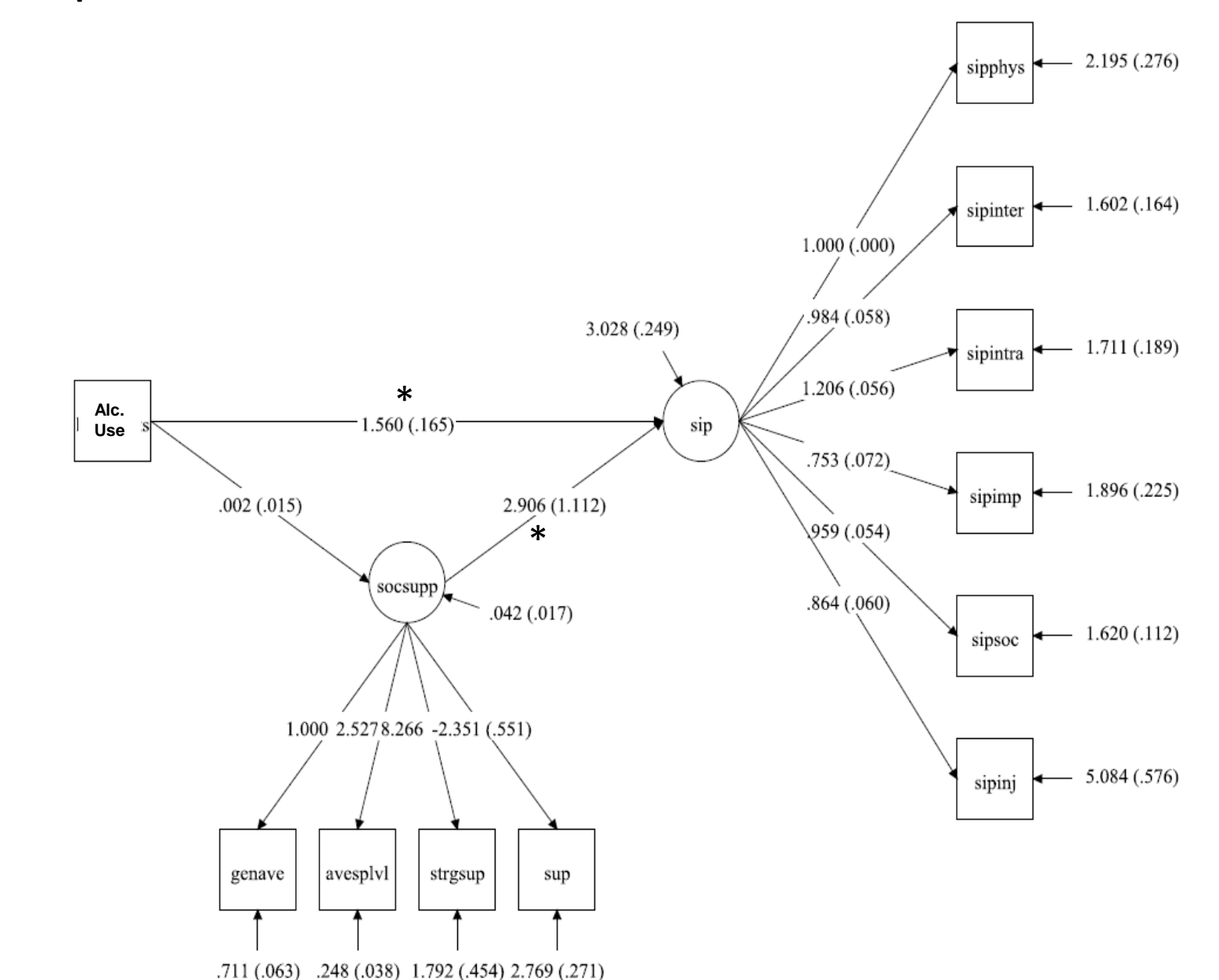
We conducted a series of path analyses to assess if perceived social support mediated the relationship between average number of drinks per week and alcohol related problems. Additionally, below we provided model fit statistics.

MODEL	$\chi^2$	DF	TLI	RMSEA	CFI	SRMR
	196.93*	42	0.929	0.079 SRMR CI (0.066, 0.098)	0.946	0.055
Hu & Bentler (1999)			TLI: 95	RMSEA: 06	CFI: 90	SRMR: 08

**Path 1:** Average number of drinks per week as a predictor of alcohol related problems,  $t(594)=9.432, SE=0.165, p=0.00$

**Path 2:** Social support as a mediator of the relationship between average number of drinks per week and alcohol related problems.

Indirect 95% CI:  
 (-0.029, 0.067), NS



\* denotes significant ( $p=0.00$ ) path

## Discussion

Results revealed that average number of drinks per week predicted SIP+6 scores such that more drinks per week consumed led to patients experiencing more alcohol related problems. Additionally, social support was directly related to alcohol related problems. However, social support did not mediate the relationship between alcohol use and alcohol related problems.

In conclusion, patients with higher levels of perceived social support may experience more alcohol related problems due to possible feedback from members of their social support system advising them to decrease their alcohol use. Moreover, alcohol use predicted alcohol related problems; thus, future studies may want to further investigate different types of social support and how this can be applied to interventions aimed at helping individuals reduce their alcohol consumption.

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