

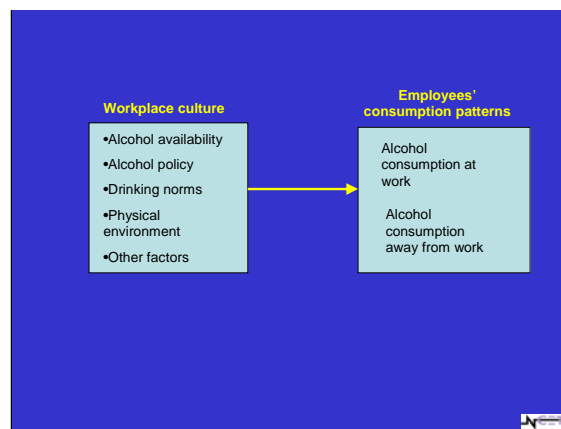
Workplace alcohol policy, workplace social influence, and building trades apprentices' alcohol consumption

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This presentation outlines two studies that examined the relationship between the workplace and the alcohol consumption patterns of adolescent new entrants to traditional blue collar occupations. As will be outlined during this presentation, these two studies provide evidence that the workplace has potential as a setting for achieving cultural change concerning alcohol use.



While research concerning alcohol use and the workplace is limited, alcohol consumption patterns do vary substantially between industry and occupational groups, suggesting that factors within the workplace are associated with employees' alcohol use.

One explanation of this relationship is that workplace factors such as alcohol availability, alcohol policies, drinking norms, physical conditions in the workplace, and other factors can contribute to a workplace culture that influences employees' consumption patterns. This influence is not restricted to alcohol consumption that occurs in the context of the workplace, but also extends to consumption away from work.

Workplace cultures concerning alcohol use may play a particularly important role in shaping the long-term consumption patterns of adolescent new entrants to the workforce. There is evidence indicating that adolescent employment is associated with a range of negative outcomes including increased alcohol consumption. This increased consumption is not just due to increases in disposable income, but also due to exposure to new peer groups and to more opportunities to consume alcohol.

Adolescent new entrants to the workforce may be particularly susceptible to social and cultural processes evident in the workplace. The transition from school to work signifies a transition to adulthood and involves access to new freedoms and the adoption of new responsibilities. Combined with this, adolescent new entrants are in the early stages of a career development period which will form a significant part of their personal identity (i.e., they will become an electrician, mechanic, plumber, etc, and this occupation will become an important part of their identity, or self-concept of who they are).

Understanding the relationship between the workplace and employees' alcohol consumption patterns is important for informing the harm reduction strategies targeting both adolescent new entrants and the existing workforce. However, Australian evidence concerning this issue is extremely limited. Little is known about how workplace factors contribute to a culture of alcohol use, and how this culture impacts on workers' consumption patterns.

Participants

- 300 1st year building trades apprentices
 - Majority male (97%), single (95%), ESB (96%)
 - All aged 15-22 yrs ($M_{age} = 18\text{yrs}$)
 - 241 enrolled at metropolitan TAFEs
 - 59 enrolled at regional TAFEs
 - All had been employed as an apprentice for less than 5 months



To address this, the research began with a prevalence study to identify alcohol consumption patterns of adolescent new entrants and to determine if there was any relationship between these consumption patterns and alcohol-related factors evident in the workplace.

Participants in the study were first year apprentices enrolled in building and construction trades courses at metropolitan and regional South Australian Technical and Further Education Colleges. These trades included plumbers, electricians, carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, and painters.

Apprentices receive a wage and are employed on a full-time basis. They attend lectures at TAFE on a part-time basis for a period of three years, however, the majority of their training involves work experience and “on the job training” at their employer’s workplace.

Measures

- Participant background (age, location, gender, trade, etc)
- Overall frequency and quantity consumption measures and problems associated with alcohol use (AUDIT)
- Alcohol use during work-related hours
- Workplace factors (alcohol policy, alcohol availability, number of employees at workplace)



The survey included a range of alcohol consumption measures, including alcohol use during work-related hours which included drinking at lunchtime or with co-workers immediately after work. In addition, the 10 item Alcohol Use Disorders Identification test was used to assess potential problem drinking.

Also recorded were relevant workplace factors such as the existence of an alcohol policy, the number of other employees at each participant's workplace, and the degree to which alcohol was available in the workplace (eg through staff canteen, at regular work functions, employer supply of alcohol after work, etc)

Overall alcohol consumption

Frequency of use	N	%
Never	16	5.3%
Monthly or less	48	16%
Weekly or less	94	31.4%
More frequently	142	47.3%
Frequency of consuming 6 or more drinks		
Never	34	11.3%
Less than monthly	54	18%
Monthly	58	19.3%
Weekly	151	50.4%
Daily or almost daily	3	1%
AUDIT score of more than 10	135	45.0%

As can be seen a substantial proportion of apprentices engaged in levels of alcohol consumption that potentially placed them at risk of harm. Nearly 50% drank alcohol more frequently than weekly, while just over 50% drank 6 or more drinks at least weekly. In addition, nearly half reported AUDIT scores indicative of alcohol problems.

Workplace factors and alcohol use

- Alcohol availability in the workplace was positively correlated with:
 - Overall frequency of alcohol use
 - Alcohol use during work-related hours
- The existence of a workplace alcohol policy was negatively correlated with:
 - Overall frequency of alcohol use
 - Alcohol use during work-related hours



Further analyses indicated that workplace alcohol availability and workplace alcohol policy were associated with patterns of alcohol consumption.

*In general, apprentices who reported alcohol was available in their workplace reported significantly more frequent alcohol use, and significantly more alcohol use during work-related hours compared to apprentices who reported alcohol was not available in their workplace.

*Apprentices who reported the existence of an alcohol policy in their workplace reported significantly less frequent alcohol use, and significantly less alcohol use during work-related hours compared to apprentices who reported no alcohol policy.

Relationship between workplace factors

- Apprentices employed at workplaces with more than 10 employees reported significantly higher levels of alcohol availability
- Apprentices employed at workplaces with no alcohol policy also reported significantly higher levels of alcohol availability



An examination of these factors indicated no relationship between number of employees at the workplace and the existence of a policy, however:

*Apprentices employed at workplaces with more than 10 employees reported significantly higher levels of alcohol availability compared to other apprentices,

*as did apprentices employed at workplaces with no alcohol policy.

Taken together, these results indicate that the number of employees in the workplace contributes to the extent of alcohol availability, and that the existence of an alcohol policy can restrict alcohol availability in the workplace

Workplace factors and alcohol use during work-related hours

- No policy and more than 10 employees were significant predictors of alcohol availability
- Alcohol availability, no policy, and more than 10 employees were significant predictors of alcohol use during work-related hours
- Number of employees did not contribute to the prediction of alcohol use during work-related hours over and above the influence of availability and policy



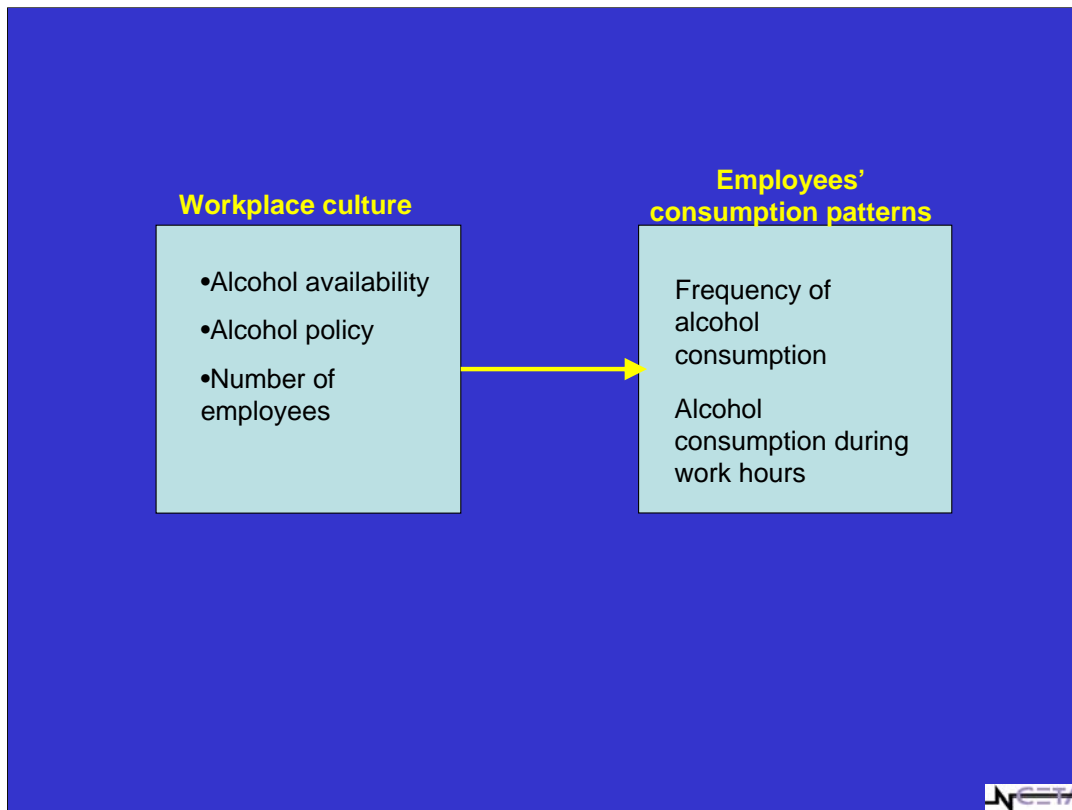
To more closely examine the relationship between these factors, a series of logistic regression were conducted.

Results indicated:

*Having no alcohol policy and more than 10 employees at the workplace were significant predictors of alcohol availability in the workplace. Combined these two variables accounted for 66% of total alcohol availability.

*Alcohol availability, no alcohol policy, and more than 10 employees were significant predictors of alcohol use during work-related hours. Combined these 3 variables accounted for 80% of the total alcohol use during work-related hours

*The number of employees at the workplace did not contribute to the prediction of alcohol use during work-related hours over and above the influence of availability and alcohol policy. Rather, the number of employees contributed indirectly through its influence on availability.



Overall, this first study identified that a substantial number of adolescents undergoing occupational transition engaged in patterns of alcohol use that potentially placed them at risk of harm.

The results also indicated that workplace factors such as availability, alcohol policy, and the number of employees at the workplace were associated with the frequency of alcohol consumption and consumption during work-related hours.

This tends to support the cultural approach to understanding the relationship between the workplace and alcohol use in that social controls such as alcohol policy and availability, and social influence processes involving other employees, contribute to a workplace culture that impacts on employees' alcohol consumption patterns.

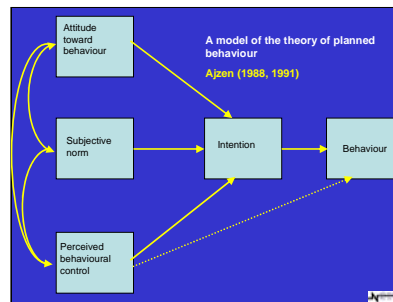
However, these results say little about how these factors operate to influence individual attitudes and behaviours concerning alcohol use.

2nd Study Aim

- To apply contemporary psychological theory to an examination of the relationship between workplace social factors and alcohol use



To more closely examine this issue, a second study was conducted. The aim of this study was apply contemporary psychological theory to an examination of the relationship between workplace social factors and individual attitudes and behaviours concerning alcohol use.



One theory that is useful for understanding how social factors interact with individual attitudes and behaviours is the theory of planned behaviour.

Basically the theory proposes that behaviour is primarily determined by an individual's intention to perform the behaviour.

Intention in turn is determined by the individual's attitude toward the behaviour, which can be positive or negative, subjective norms regarding the behaviour which are basically social influence processes involving the behaviour and expectations of others, and perceived controls over the behaviour which can be internal factors (such as the skills, knowledge and abilities required to perform the behaviour) or external factors such as availability, legal, social, moral (or in this case workplace) sanctions regarding the behaviour, or they can be resources (such as time or money) that are required to perform the behaviour.

The broken line between perceived control and behaviour represents the degree to which perceived controls accurately reflect actual controls over the behaviour.

The theory is one that has been applied to a wide range of health-related behaviours (including alcohol use) and has been influential in the development of many health-related interventions. In general, these interventions tend to focus on changing attitudes and perceptions of control, which in turn are expected to influence subjective norms. The idea behind this is that if you change the attitudes and perceptions of control for everyone, changes in subjective norms will follow.

An example of this type of intervention is evident in school drug education strategy. Attitudes are targeted by providing information regarding the potential harms associated with alcohol and other drug use, while perceived control is targeted by strategies such as increasing resistance skills.

In general, there is strong support for the theory. However, there has been limited support for the role of subjective norms which, in part, may explain why most interventions based on the theory focus on attitudes and perceived control. However, lack of research support for the role of subjective norms may indicate a weakness in the theory. Indeed, the theory has come under substantial criticism by some researchers for having a narrow view of social influence

Social identity theory & subjective norms

- Subjective norms (i.e., expectations and behaviours of 'others') can have strong impact on individual behaviour
- But only to the extent we identify with these 'others'

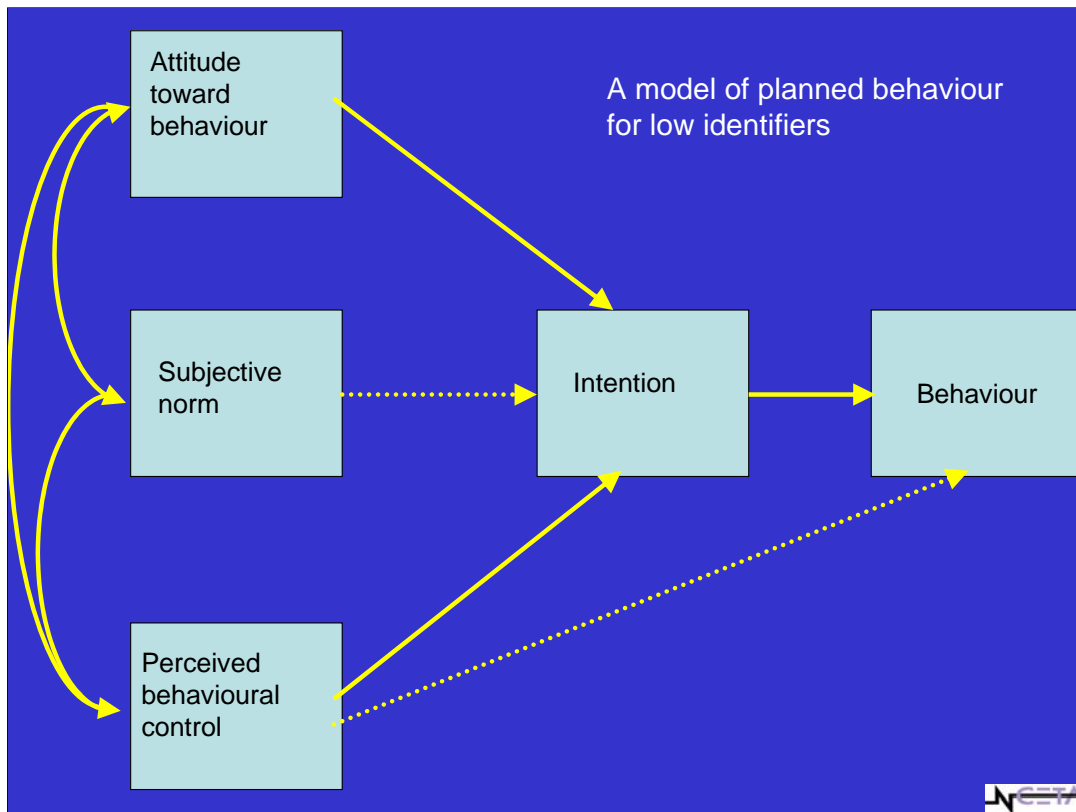
Much of this criticism has come from proponents of another psychological theory - social identity theory.

According to this theory, the importance of subjective norms (or social influence) varies according to the social situation in which the behaviour occurs.

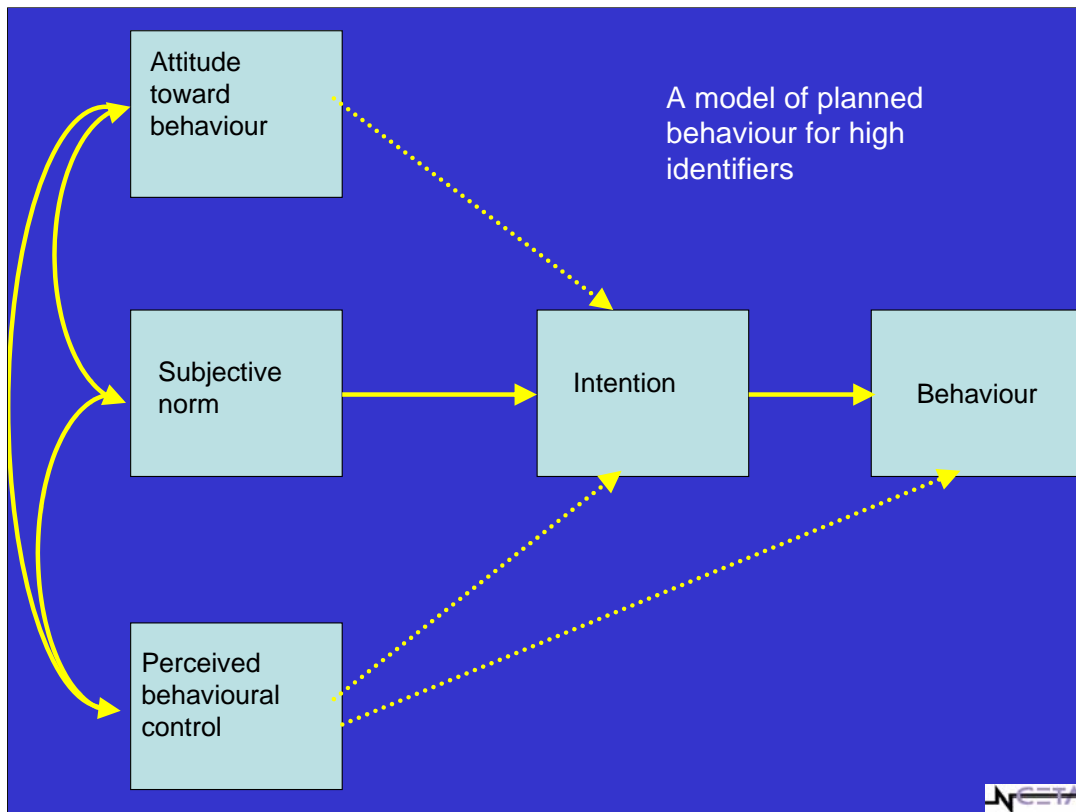
Without going into too much detail, the social identity perspective on subjective norms is that the expectations and behaviours of others can have strong influence on individual behaviour in situations where group membership, or social category, is an important part of environment or the behaviour in question, but only for those that identify with these 'others' as being members of the same group or social category.

It is important to recognise that social identity is not a personality trait. We all belong to different groups that we identify with. While there are exceptions, the importance an individual places on identifying with a particular group or social category varies according to the social situation, the relevance of a particular group to that situation, and the degree to which membership of relevant groups or social categories are an important part of our self-identity, or self concept of who we are.

From a social identity perspective, the degree to which the behaviours and expectations (or norms) of others in the workplace influence the individual behaviours depends on the degree the individual identifies with, or sees themselves as the 'same' as these other workers.



From a social identity perspective, if the individual does not identify with other workers, it is likely that individual attitudes toward the behaviour and perceptions of control over the behaviour will be the most important influence on intentions to perform the behaviour.



In contrast, if the individual strongly identifies with other workers, it is likely that the expectations and behaviours of other workers (subjective norms) will be the most important influence on intentions to perform the behaviour.

Participants

- **319** (317 Male, 2 Female) **building trades apprentices aged 16-24 years** (Mage = 19yrs)
 - 122 (38%) 1st year
 - 118 (37%) 2nd year
 - 79 (25%) 3rd year
- **All located at metropolitan TAFEs**



The second study applied these two theories to an examination of adolescent apprentices' alcohol use during work-related hours.

*Participants were 319 mainly male building trades apprentices aged from 16 to 24 years old.

38% were in the 1st year of their apprenticeship, 37% were in their 2nd year, and 25% were in the 3rd year of their apprenticeship.

*All participants were enrolled at metropolitan TAFEs

Measures

- **1st wave:**
 - Background demographics
 - Attitudes toward alcohol use during work-related hours
 - Alcohol use during work hours
 - Alcohol use after work, but before going home
 - Subjective norms
 - supervisors and co-workers expectations and behaviours regarding work-related alcohol use
 - Perceived controls over alcohol use during work-related hours
 - Intention to engage in alcohol use during work-related hours
- **2nd wave (3 months later):**
 - Alcohol use during work-related hours in past 3 months
 - Identification with others in the workplace

The study collected data at two time points, 3 months apart .

*The first wave of data collection involved collecting information on background demographics, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived controls.

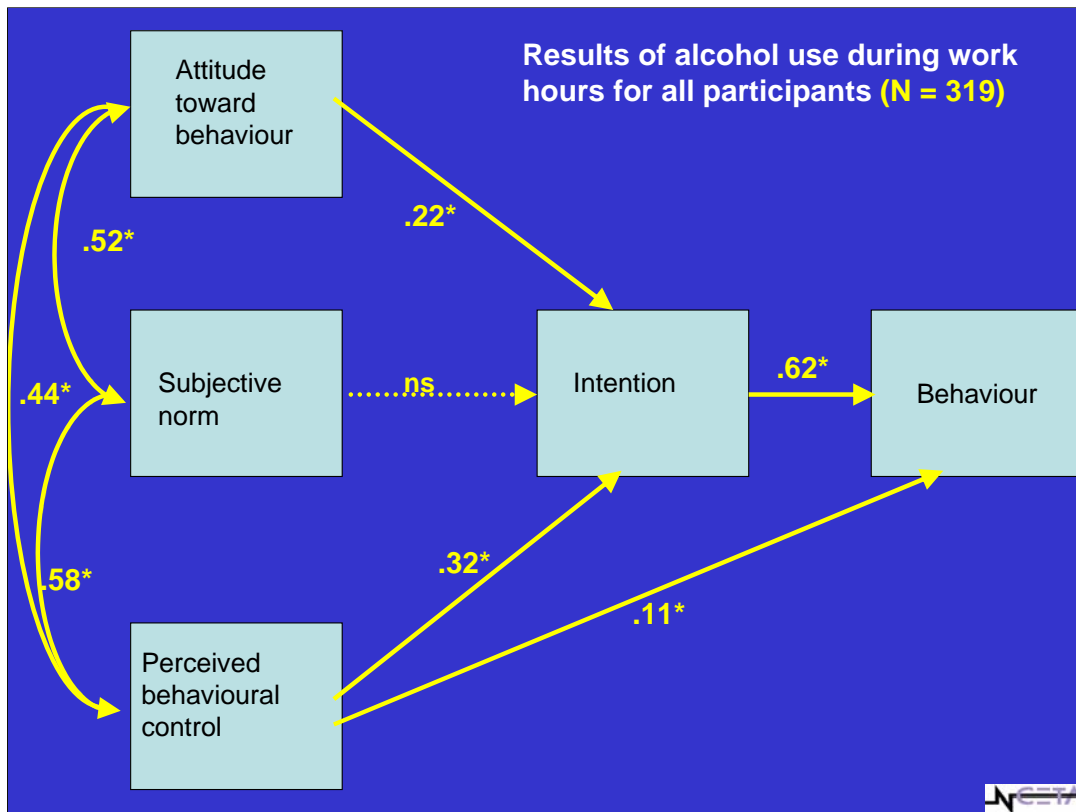
Attitudes were measured using positive to negative semantic differential scales concerning alcohol use in work-related hours.

Subjective norms were measured as supervisors and co-workers behaviour and expectations concerning alcohol use in work-related hours.

Perceived controls were measured using internal measures such as the degree of difficulty in engaging in alcohol use during work-related hours and external measures such as the extent of alcohol policy enforcement at the workplace and the degree of availability of alcohol in the workplace

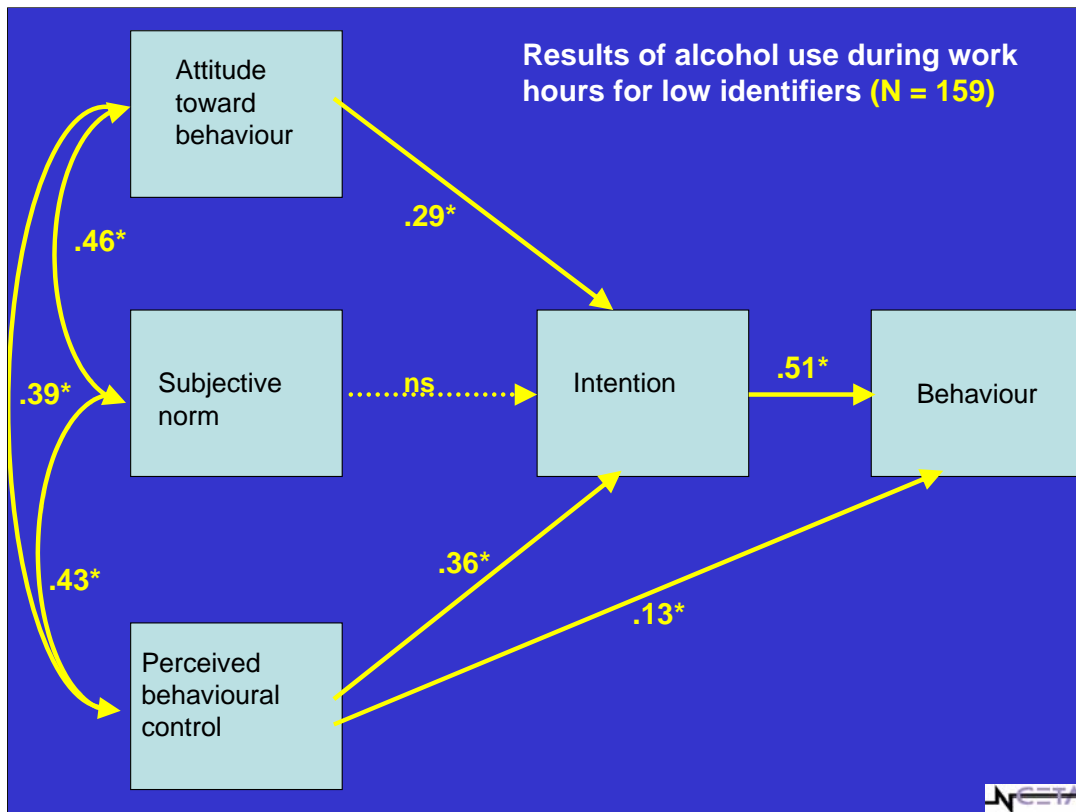
Intentions were measured as the likelihood of engaging in alcohol use during work-related hours in the next 3 months

*The second wave involved collecting data concerning alcohol use during work-related hours in the past 3 months and levels of identification with others in the workplace.

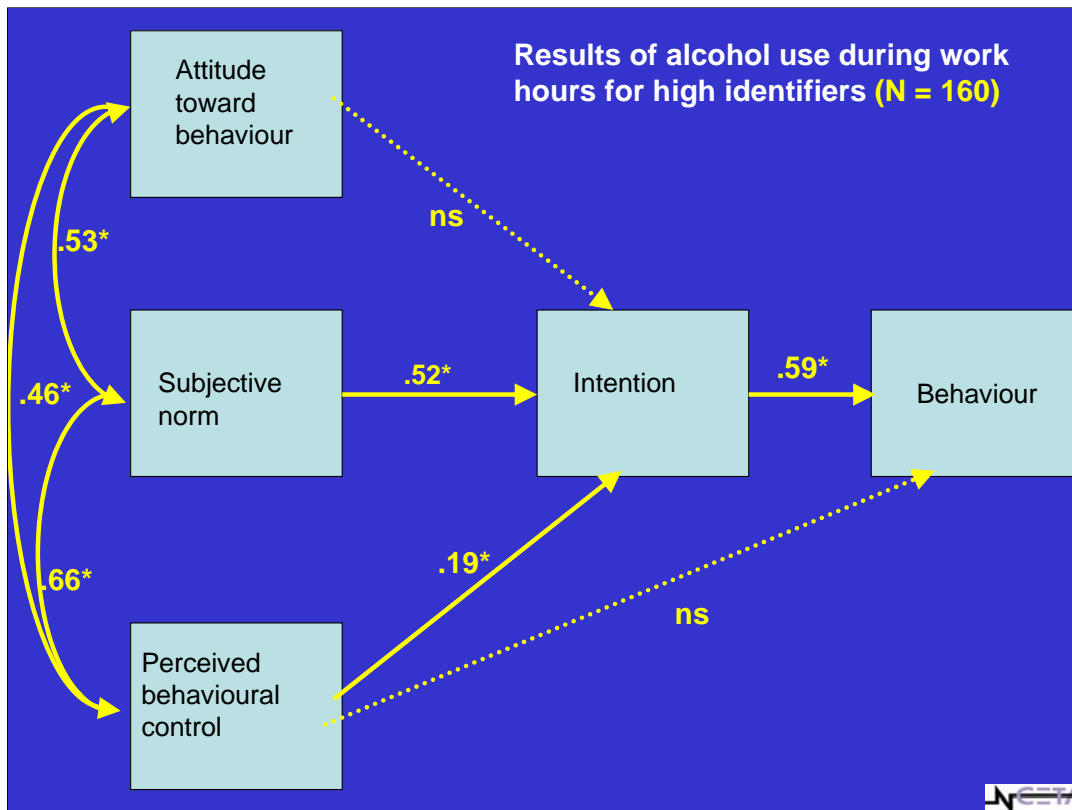


This slide outlines the results obtained when the planned behaviour model was applied to the alcohol use during work hours of all 319 participants.

Overall, the results were consistent with previous research that has utilised the theory to examine other health-related behaviours, in that subject norms appeared to play a very limited role .



Similar results were obtained when the model was applied to the low identifiers only

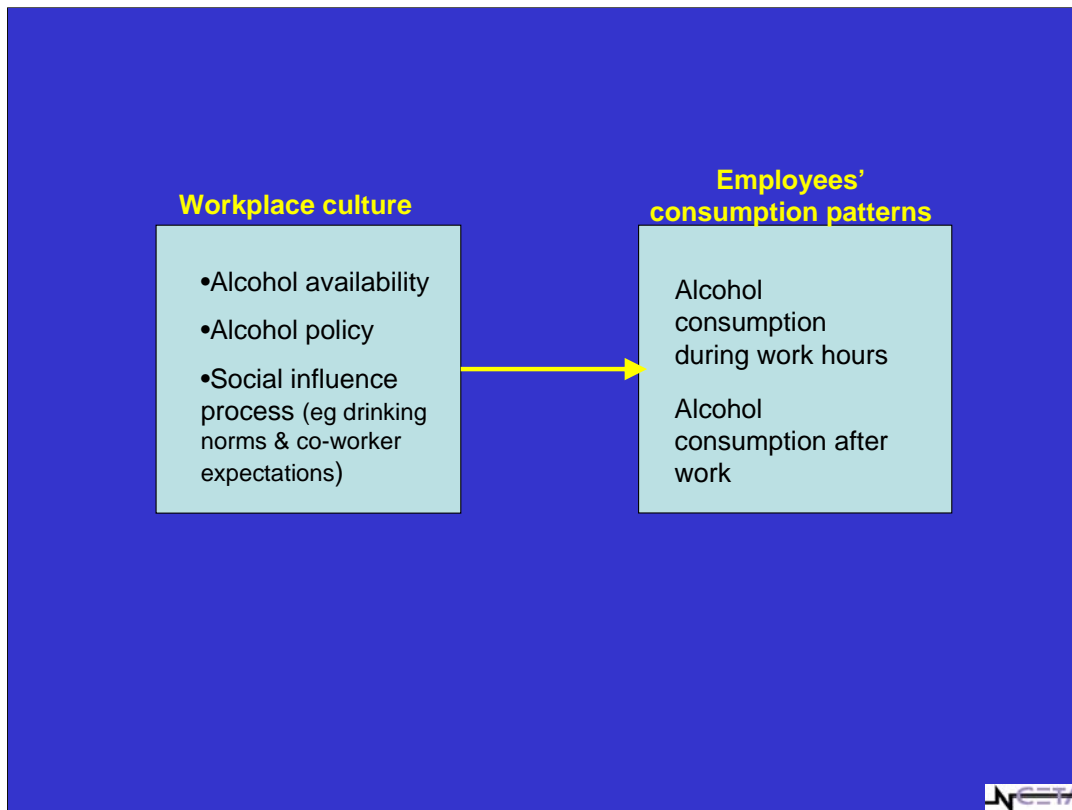


However, for the high identifiers, subjective norms played a much more important role.

For high identifiers the most important influence on alcohol use during work hours was not their individual attitudes toward the behaviour, nor was the extent they believed they could or could not perform the behaviour, nor was the extent workplace controls or alcohol availability prevented them from performing the behaviour.

Rather for high identifiers, the behaviour and expectations of supervisors and co-workers was the primary influence on whether they intended to engage, or did not intend to engage, in alcohol use during work hours.

Similar results were obtained for alcohol use after work, but before going home.



The results of the second study also support the cultural approach. While individual attitudes played a role, social controls in the form of alcohol policy and availability, and social influence processes involving the behaviour and expectations of co-workers were important influences on apprentices' alcohol consumption patterns both at work and away from the workplace.

Formal and informal social controls, such as those examined here, are factors that contribute substantially to the normative regulation of drinking in the workplace. Normative regulation of drinking is perhaps the most important aspect of any culture regarding alcohol use.

Thus, the workplace is a potential setting for strategies that aim to produce cultural change regarding alcohol use. That is, safe drinking practices both at work and away from the workplace, can be encouraged by utilising the influence of workplace informal and formal social controls.

This can be achieved by encouraging workplaces to develop and implement alcohol policies that restrict alcohol availability, and by providing workplace education and training strategies that target individual behaviours and attitudes concerning alcohol use.