

Alcohol and the youth: a bottom-up approach to develop educational measures

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ABSTRACT

A major challenge for governments as well as schools and health professionals is developing educational measures to decrease the amount of alcohol consumptions among youth. This article reports the findings of a qualitative study examining young people's beliefs and behaviours according to the use of alcohol the participants' social context and their opinion on alcohol prevention. Fourteen people between 15 and 17 years old were interviewed using a semi-structured interview list. The findings suggest that responsibility is the main topic in this study. Students feel responsible for their own behaviour and also parents give the message to drink responsible. Whatever this concept means depends highly on the social backgrounds and beliefs of the participants. When the participants talk about the educational measures and prevention programmes they have followed, they mention a gap between these programmes and their own experiences.

Introduction

In the Netherlands, young people's alcohol consumption has attracted many recent media attention. Parents, schools, cities and governments are increasingly worried about the number of alcohol consumptions of youths. For example this topic in a Dutch paper: 'Underage binge-drinking rose from 700 teenage drinking cases in hospitals in 2009, to 900 cases in 2010' (Stadsblad Schiedam, 2011). The prevalence of alcohol consumption is high, especially among 15-17 year olds (Trimbos instituut, 2010). Besides, recent research of the past ten years is showing a strong connection between drinking alcohol before becoming twenty years old and the emergence of brain damage (Jonathan and Phillippe, 2010). Therefore, reducing teenage drinking is one of the key government priorities. Due to the facts of the Trimbos Instuut and medical research as done by Jonathan and Phillippe (2010), the attitude of the Dutch ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports changed from alcohol use as a citizen's responsibility to a government's responsibility (van der Sar, Brouwers, van de Goor & Garretsen, 2011). The health policy of the government is intended to give local municipalities space to set up a local prevention policy. The main goal of the government is to reduce the alcohol consumption of youths under 16 to the level of 1992 (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports [VWS], 2003). One of the most common methods to fulfil this goal is to invest in educational measurement by reviewing the successful interventions (evidence-based and costs-effective) of the Western world and use these methods in the Netherlands (VWS, 2003). However, research of Sociaal-Cultureel Planbureau [SCP] (2007) demonstrated that almost all of the public health interventions have failed. According to Mills (2006), this is not because interventions in general are not successful, but because the message of the government is inappropriate with the thoughts and lives of citizens. The government gives primary information about risks and risk factors, but citizens are not only interested in risks and are incapable of making rational choices (Rooij, Kool & Prast, 2007). Besides, almost all young people already know the risks of drinking alcohol, but still the alcohol consumption of young people increases (Albuquerque, Ferreira, Pereira, & Oliveira, 2010).

The need for greater elaboration on how social contexts shape alcohol consumption among youth is an important issue for adolescent drinking research, because it has been demonstrated that school-based prevention on information-giving and developing student social competencies has limited long-term efficacy in reducing alcohol consumption (SCP, 2007). Prevention is now based on casting the youth as lacking in knowledge, skills or willpower or as victims of group pressure (Poland, 2000). Gill (2002) reviewed studies on British students' drinking behaviour over the past 25 years and reported that excessive drinking within this age group may be viewed as normal. Drinking at university in western cultures may be socially acceptable, attractive and expected (Wechsler et al, 1994; Capraro, 2000; Piacentini and Banister, 2008) and serves certain ritualistic functions. For example, it can serve as a bonding activity for both male and female students (Piacentini and Banister, 2008). For male students in particular, excessive alcohol consumption can also be used as a manifestation of their masculinity due to their gender-role stress (Capraro, 2000) or their desires to be included and accepted by a certain group (Piacentini and Banister, 2008). Although the research above gives a detailed description of the social context of people who are in college, it has not been studied from the light of people who are younger than 18. Neither has a Dutch context been addressed (SCP, 2007).

Although research has long recognised that alcohol consumption among teenage children is socially motivated, health education is still based on risk-behaviour (SCP, 2007). Horstman and Houtepen (2005) are providing an alternative approach to health education. Instead of the top-down approach that the government is now practicing, a bottom-up approach could be used for developing education that suits the participants more. According to Horstman and Houtepen (2005), participants need to be included in the process of developing health prevention. This way, the participants will be more committed to the program and the program meets the needs of the focus group. Qualitative research into the social context, beliefs and thoughts of participants could help to develop these new forms of health education (SCP 2007).

Besides, van der Sar and colleagues (2011) demonstrated that limited public opinion-related surveys on alcohol policy measures have been done and if, it is mainly on an adult population. The opinion of teenagers gives policy makers the chance to take their opinion into account when developing alcohol policy (van der Sar et al. 2011).

Contrary to the developmental and risk-behaviour orientations of educational on health education, this research focuses on the beliefs and behaviours of the youth, their social context and the opinion of the youth on educational measurements according to the prevention of alcohol use. Therefore, the main question of this research is: What are the perceptions of 15-17 year old teenagers on alcohol consumption and alcohol prevention? The sub questions are:

1. What are the beliefs and behaviors of teenagers among alcohol consumption?
2. What is the social context of teenagers in relation to alcohol consumption?
3. What is the perception of teenagers on educational measures and alcohol availability?

In the theoretical framework the social context as well as a further description of bottom-up research will be explored.

Theoretical framework

To describe the social context and the culture of youth, a framework for describing organisational culture could be used. Organisations are collections of interactions which are determined by five key concepts, namely meanings, power, importance, experience and contextual influences (Schein, 1996). The organisations in this research are mainly the school of the teenagers, their parents and their sports.. The five key concepts will be employed for framing the most important theories regarding the drinking culture of the youth.

Meanings

The behaviour of youth can be largely explained on the basis of everyday meanings or constructions. The same goes for people's perceptions about using alcohol (Boeije, 2005). To describe the meaning of youth on drinking alcohol, the perception of teenagers will be explained, especially the perception of 'responsible drinking'.

In several ways young people's perception of the use of alcohol is an indicator for the amount of alcohol young people use (Lundborg & Lindgren, 2002). One of those perceptions that are an indicator for the use of alcohol of young people, is the risk perception that people have about the use of alcohol. Lundborg and Lindgren (2002) proved that people overestimate the risk of alcohol use, and that the younger people are, the more they overestimate the risk of alcohol consumption. There is also a significant difference between the risk perception of people who drink alcohol and people who do not. The research also demonstrated that individuals with higher perceived risks were less likely to consume alcohol. Another indicator for the amount of alcohol young people use is the norm of alcohol intake that they think is normal in their environment. Young people who overestimate the consumption of alcohol use of their peers are very vulnerable to the use of alcohol, especially under group pressure (Crawford and Novak, 2007)

'Drink responsibly' is a message commercials try to send to consumers. This theme can also be found in drinking education programs (Barry & Goodson, 2011). However, the conceptualization and interpretation of people regarding 'responsible drinking', has not been largely investigated. Barry and Goodson (2011) revealed that the most important characteristics of responsible drinking regarding college students are don't drink alcohol if you have to drive, drink in moderation, monitor and limit alcohol consumption and know your personal limits. However, the decision-making is rarely based on available definitions and guidelines but only on their experiences and perceptions.

Power

The concept of power regarding to the drinking culture of the youth, could be captured in two important topics. The first topic is the influence of groups and social pressure, second the dominance of the drinking culture. According to Santor, Messervey and Kusumakar (2000), the relation between social pressure and the use of alcohol among youth is manifest. Coleman and Henry (1990) describe becoming a member of a peer group as one of the primary developmental tasks of adolescence. Belonging to a group requires conformity to group interests and desires. These interests and desires do not have to be the same as the individual. This is one of the reasons that the influence of the group can be substantial (Santor et al., 2000). Risk-taking behaviour, substance use, and sexual activity may represent efforts to conform to the norms of the group and to demonstrate commitment and loyalty to other group members. Although group pressure is an important topic, there has not

been qualitative research on how high school students themselves experience these influence regarding alcohol consumption. Counter to the findings of Santor et al. (2000) and Coleman and Henry (1990), Mounteney and Haugland (2010) demonstrated that group pressure is not a key factor for the consumption of alcohol among the youth. Mounteney and Haugland (2010) describes group pressure as something that is not explicit present in the lives of the teenagers, but they only think that they have to adapt to the group. So friends don't push each other explicit, for instance, persuade some other group member to drink, but individuals most of the time only think they do have to drink because other people want them to. According to Mounteney and Haugland (2010), the perception of group pressure is more important than the presence of peer pressure.

In the Netherlands, the prevalence of alcohol consumption is high. The Dutch youth are, compared to other European countries, the heaviest drinkers (Monshouwer, Verdurmen, Dorsselaer, Smit, Gorter & Vollebergh, 2008). 92% of Dutch 16 years old have tasted alcohol, 77% drink alcohol every month 53% of them had been drunk the last month and 76% drank five glasses or more at one night in the last month, also called binge drinking (Trimbos-instituut, 2010). Due to these percentages, the conclusion could be that the youth grows up in a dominant drinking culture (Piacentini & Banister, 2008). Piacentini and Banister (2008) demonstrated that managing anti-consumption or drinking less alcohol is more unlikely than drinking alcohol. People who refuse to drink alcohol, often developing coping strategies to manage the anti-consumption. In conclusion, Piacentini and Banister (2008) revealed that drinking is more social accepted than anti-consumption.

Importance

The importance of alcohol consumption is very large investigated. Many studies focused on the question which motivation students have for drinking alcohol (Piacentini and Banister, 2008). The reasons why children drink alcohol, and the solution to the problems related to the use of alcohol are different. Albuquerque, Ferreira, Pereira and Oliveira (2010) describe that the main reasons for students to drink alcohol are: it gives them pleasure (25.7%), to be happy (24.0%), for feeling uninhibited (18.7%) and to forget the problems of everyday life (13.3%).

Experiences

The experience with drinking alcohol is, according to Orford, Krishnan, Balaam, Everitt, & Graaf (2004), an important topic and could be an indicator of the amount of alcohol people drink. Orford et al. (2004) researched the social and motivational differences of heavy drinkers versus light drinkers. The research demonstrated that heavy drinkers are participating in a social network where people also drink more than average; they receive more encouragement to drink from the people in their social network and participating in more heavy drinking activities. Also the drawbacks for consuming alcohol are different. Light drinkers most of the time report physical wellbeing, whereas heavy drinkers mention the drawbacks to their finances.

Contextual influences

The environment has also a major impact on whether children are going to drink alcohol, at what age teenagers start drinking and how much they drink. One of these influences, according to Anderson et al. (2009), is the commercialization of alcohol on the television and radio. This research reveals that the more young people are

exposed to alcohol, the earlier they start drinking alcohol and the more they drink more alcohol. Drinking alcohol is associated with being cool, is the message of the commercials according to Anderson et al. (2009). Another issue that is mentioned is the policy with regard to alcohol in the Netherlands. Children are not allowed to consume alcohol until they are sixteen, but it is still very easy to get alcohol in a bar or in a shop before this age (Trimbos-instituut, 2010). Recent research also describes the role of parents and the influence parents have on whether their children are going to drink alcohol or not. Moore, Rothwell and Segrott (2010) revealed that parents have influence, especially on how much alcohol their children drink in one night. Besides, the parents are also important role models for children. If the parents drink more alcohol than average, their children are also likely to drink more (Moore and colleagues, 2010).

Materials and Method

Design and procedure

This study employed a qualitative design to explore the culture and opinion among the youth about alcohol consumption. The interview study was carried out between February and June 2011. After receiving approval from the school board, participants were recruited via a variety of ways, including e-mails and oral information in four different classes. All recruitment materials and talks provided basic information about the research aims and procedures, including the provision of one study hour, the students had to collect four hours every week. All students who were in class, filled in a form that consisted of basic information like name, gender, birthday, e-mail address, the average number of alcoholic drinks in one week and whether or not a student had been drunk or tipsy, whether or not the student wanted to participate in the interview and dates and times when the interviews took place. In-depth interviews were undertaken with 4 men and 10 women who were all “vwo” or “gymnasium” students at a secondary school in Schiedam. Two double interviews and 10 individual interviews took place. All interviews were held in a private classroom. Each interview lasted 30-52 minutes and all were audio recorded. Recruitment continued until saturation was reached and no new topics were emerging the interviews.

Participants

Participants were recruited from a secondary school in Schiedam, a medium-sized town next to Rotterdam. The research was part of the development for a drug prevention programme in Schiedam aimed at reducing consumption of alcohol, narcotics and tobacco among the youth population. All participants were selected purposively according to the following criteria: age between 15 and 17, diversity of boys and girls, diversity of consumers and non-consumers. The 14 participants all have the same socio-cultural background, all participants are Dutch. The alcohol consumption differs from an average of 0 to 15 alcohol consumptions average in seven days. All participants only drank alcohol in the weekends, especially during special events, like parties, birthdays and in clubs and bars. Table 1 shows the participants information. The names of the participants are different than in reality, due to the privacy of the participants. The decision to only take students who were following a high level of education is mainly based on the fact that this group is drinking more than average, for instance teenagers who are following “vmbo”. The number of alcohol consumptions in this level also increased more in the past ten years compared to other levels of education (Trimbos-instituut, 2010).

Data collection

A semi-structured interview schedule was used, covering the three key topics of the research, namely; the drinking culture among youth; the beliefs and behaviours among alcohol consumption and their opinion about prevention among alcohol consumption. Each interview started with asking how young people were first introduced to alcohol. Besides two types of alcohol policy measures are used in this study to ask the participants about as described by Anderson, Chisholm and Fuhr (2009). First education and information related measures such as school-based education and public information campaigns were questioned, second the availability of alcohol, like happy hours, selling alcohol in supermarkets and sport canteens and the prohibition of alcohol use. Open-ended probes were used to solicit descriptions of alcohol in relation to the social context, namely; family, friendships, relationships and informal social groups as school and sports. A series of prompts were used to ensure that the interview covered the three key topics, but issues raised by the interviewees were allowed to discuss during the interview.

Data analysis

All the audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were entered into MAXQDA, a qualitative data-management software package. Data was analysed in accordance with principles of grounded theory. Using the grounded theory approach to analyses, the process of developing broad categories began once the first two interviews had taken place. These were built up and refined as further interviews and analyses took place, using a constant comparative approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Three types of coding were distinguished within the analysis: open, axial and selective coding. For the analysis, the spiral of analysis as described by Boeije (2007) was used.

The result section will give a further description of the four main codes after the axial coding, namely responsibility, beliefs and behaviours, risks and prevention and social network.

Table 1: *Participant information*

Name student	Gender	Drinking profile
Gayle	Female	2-4 consumptions limit: 5, only in the weekends, only with friends.
Fifi	Female	4-6 normal, limit 10, only in the weekends. Drinking after work, on the street. only weekend
Lena and Alice	Females	4-7 normal, limit. 12, only weekend. Only with friends, high alcohol consumption on hockey and parties, only weekend or holiday
Pete	Male	6-8 normal, limit 15. Especially on hockey, only weekend
Jack	Male	8-10 normal limit: 15-20. Especially on hockey only weekend
Kelly	Female	No alcohol consumption, drinking alcohol is 'pointless'
Andy	Male	8-12 normal, limit 16, only on Saturday. Especially on hockey
Bob	Male	5-7, max 10. Depends on the amount of money. Only in the weekend.
Kate and Sue	females	4-10, especially on hockey, only in the weekend.

Karen	Female	2-4, limit inexperienced. With friends and parents. only weekend
Jane	Female	4-6, limit 12. Drinking alcohol with friends, only weekend
Emily	Female	4-6, limit 12. Drinking with friends and at hockey. only weekend

Results

This section outlines the main findings of this study. After the axial coding process, three main topics were found, namely, Risks and prevention, social network and beliefs and behaviours. In this section the topic social network is split up and specified in two main sections, namely group pressure and parents. The beliefs and behaviours section are spread out on all topics and the opinion in specific will be described. As selective code, the topic 'responsibility' is named. The expression: 'I'm a responsible drinker', could summarise the result section. The four main topics and the selective code will be described.

Risks

Generally the participants know what the risks of consuming alcohol are. All participants accept one mentioned brain damage as a main risk. In general, the participants talked more about health drawbacks than social drawbacks. Social drawbacks only appeared when participants are 'drunk'. Whenever the participants only drank a few drinks or were only tipsy, they did not mentioned any social drawbacks.

I have been drunk once, on a hockey party, but I've done something that I really regret. I was really drunk and got very sick. I kissed a friend of my ex-boyfriend. He was so mad at me! Now we can never be friends again. (Jane, 17)

They don't see these risks for themselves; the participants are mainly not based on facts but only on personal experiences. All participants answered 'no' to the question if it is possible to get in a coma themselves. Nine participants did called getting in a coma as a risk when consuming too much alcohol. There seemed to be no connection between their knowledge and their own drinking pattern.

Andy: I'll never get in a coma. My biology teacher told once that your brain cells could die. ...The water in your brain left, so you don't have enough liquid anymore, but you just have to drink water, then you can continue drinking again.

Interviewer: So you don't have permanent damage?

Andy: no, I don't have that.

Participants also hardly see the damage of alcohol in other people. Only two participants saw alcohol damage in friends or family, the other participants didn't see any damage or only in people they didn't know.

A friend of mine already been in hospital three times to empty her stomach due to alcohol. Her liver doesn't functions very well anymore and she has to take medicine now. (Karen, 16)

I never saw any damage in people that I know, also not in family or people with liver problems or anything, but I've been once to an exposition of 'body world' (an exhibition of real human bodies) and

they showed livers from people who drank a lot of alcohol and I was really shocked by that. It does happen in real life. But in the back of my head, I know that this person had drunk far more alcohol than I do, so it won't happen to me (Alice, 17).

Projecting risks on participant's own lives happens when the teenagers can link the risks to personal factors. Some of the participants are for instance worried to gain weight. Three participants (two girls and one boy) mentioned gaining weight as a reason in the beginning of the interview as a reason to 'live healthy' and at the end for not drinking too much alcohol. All three participants drink less alcohol than their friends. One other participant started drinking alcohol later, because he was worried about alcohol disturbing his growth.

I used to have problems with growing. They said that alcohol can slow down this process, so I really paid attention and didn't drink alcohol before I was nearly sixteen. (Bob, 16)

I really have the tendency to gain weight ... It might sound a bit superficial, but you do gain weight and your metabolism is working a lot slower, so for me this is a reason to drink less and to not drink a lot of mixed drinks. (Emily, 17)

Group pressure

Asking directly about the term 'group pressure', nobody said to drink more because people were encouraging them. However, the role of the groups and the meaning friends give to the consumption of alcohol is very present.

My friends just accept me the way I am, whether I drink or not. I don't think group pressure is present in my group of friends. One girl almost never drinks alcohol, but we don't mind. (Fifi, 16)

Reasons to drink alcohol according to the respondents are never based on group pressure. Alcohol is "just part of a night out" or "it is just normal to drink something after playing a match". Alcohol and 'cosiness' [Dutch translation: gezelligheid] is also very important. Only the participant who doesn't drink alcohol thinks you can have more fun when people do not drink alcohol. This pattern is easy to see when talking about 'imbibe'. The term imbibe [Dutch translation: indrinken], suggests that people drink just to get drunk. Participants explicitly don't drink to get drunk and don't imbibe, but just drink for instance three or four alcohol consumptions because it is 'fun' or it is just part of the evening.

I'm glad that the school parties are alcohol-free, it is more fun than with alcohol (Kelly, 16).

Most of the time I drink before going out, but I won't call it imbibing because then I see bags full of Bacardi and people who drink because they want to get drunk. We just drink 2 to 4 glasses of wine before we leave. It is just fun but it is not that we're having a sort of booze party because it is cheap or something; we will never do that (Emily, 17).

Another important distinction can be made between the participants themselves and 'other people'. The participants referred to friends or peers when talking about 'others'. The participants never drink because it is cool, and never drink just to drink or to get drunk, but other people do. When the participants are going out or

being on a party, they see friends and peers drinking because “they want to belong to the group” or “because they want to impress their friends”. All participants do not drink “because it is cool”. Whenever friends or peers are drinking more than they do, they name to impress and want to be cool as most important reasons. Even the participant who does not drink alcohol at all thinks everybody how does drink alcohol, drinks because they want to be cool or want to impress friends. The connection between drinking and hockey is largely made during the interviews. More than half of the participants played hockey themselves, four participants visited hockey parties and three respondents have never been to a hockey party. The participants were divided over three hockey clubs in Schiedam and Vlaardingen. According the participants, the alcohol consumption on hockey clubs is very high. The respondents also showed how normal it is to drink alcohol there and alcohol and hockey can’t be seen apart.

It is just part of the game. That’s what everyone in my team thinks. Just relax together after playing and not with coke, but with beer. I can’t say more about it. (Andy, 16)

We sometimes watch the first men team on Sunday. It is just fun and normal to drink wine while watching. It is just nicer and it taste better than drinking something else. (Kate, 16)

Parents

All participants said that the alcohol consumption of their parents is low. Most of the parents only drank alcohol in the weekends or one consumption during dinner. Four participants reported that the parents were anti-consumers. None of the participants talked of their parents as a role model. Jane explains why her parents aren’t role models for her.

‘My mother never consumes alcohol and my father only on Friday or Saturday, or at a party. He drinks maybe one glass of wine, but it is so different if my father is drinking a glass of wine while having dinner or when I am taking a shot of alcohol when you’re going out. At least, that’s my opinion, well, it is both alcohol, I cannot explain the exact difference, but it feels so different that I never even realised that what my father drinks is actually consuming alcohol too.’ (Jane, 17)

However, most of the participants are also very loyal to their parents and find it very important what they think about their alcohol consumption. This can also be a reason for not telling parents how many consumptions they drink.

If I come home very drunk, I think my parents would be very disappointed in me. Especially because you show that you can’t be responsible for yourself and you’re not as good as they think you are (Bob, 16).

Opinion

There is a difference between asking the participants what they thought about the prevention and lessons on their school directly and the implicit opinion about prevention. Asking directly to their opinion, the participants did not come with many ideas for developing educational measures and prevention programmes. The tension was “I do not exactly know what is wrong about the prevention programmes at school, but I do know that I rather do not listen to it”. Their indirect opinion is mostly described as “They do not know how things go when we drink alcohol”. ‘they’ refers to teachers as well as parents. ‘We’ refers to friends and peers.

I think I did learn that alcohol is bad for you and what the risks of taking alcohol are... Whenever I go out I never think of these lessons. Lessons are mostly in some sort of story-mode. Like a movie about someone who wants to be cool and drinks so much that he gets in a coma. This is so unrealistic. It is only what is happening in stories, not in real life. (Andy, 16)

Drinking alcohol was so different than I expected it to be before I drank alcohol. My first alcoholic consumption was a 'Flugel'. I really thought I would be completely drunk if I drank after drinking one of those drinks... people try to frighten you, but when you start drinking you find out that it is not so scared at all. (Alice, 17)

Also within topic the theme responsibility is very important. The participants feel responsible for their own behaviour and do not think that they need education about alcohol. Ten participants thought that more prevention and education about alcohol when they were younger, between 13 and 15 years old, is important.

I do think more prevention is important, but not now anymore. I mean, I am sixteen now, I am allowed to drink alcohol and I know how to behave myself but I did not know this when I was 14. (Bob, 16)

Responsibility

The main topic of this study is responsibility. In all topics as described above, the topic responsibility is coming back. The theme responsibility is directly as well as indirectly an important topic in the daily life of the participants. However, the meaning of responsible drinking is highly subjective. Responsibility is usually based on own experiences and interpretations, not on facts. All participants saw themselves as someone who drinks responsible.

I do think that I'm a responsible drinker. I always know how to get home and how to control myself. And when something happens I'm immediately sober and ready to help someone or solve a problem (Karen, 15).

Participants were also asked to indicate the number of consumptions were drinking was still responsible. Numbers were between 4 and 14 consumptions on one night. When talking about responsible drinking, all answers were based on experiences with friends or peers, not with parents. The participants drink 'just as much as their friends do', or 'less than most of their friends'. Just one of the participants thought that he maybe drank more. When the participants were asked to give examples or to describe situations, they were all referring to examples with friends or peers.

'I do think I drink responsible... because when I see some friends of mine, they really don't know when to stop, they can misbehave so badly but that will never happen to me.'(Sue, 17)

If friends are drunk, the participants see this as 'their own responsibility'. Most of the participants don't feel responsible for the drinking patterns of their friends and don't talk with friends when they drink too much. Only two of them tried to influence the consumption of a friend.

It is just fun when somebody is drunk. When somebody is drunk I just laugh. One of my friends had to puke once and since then we call him puking Kevin, haha. (Fifi, 15)

‘If someone is really drunk and is drunk very often, then we might say: behave yourself, but if someone is sometimes drunk, it is just something that happens. It is just part of the game. But we have one friend who is drunk very often, so sometimes we say drink a bit slower.’ (Gayle, 16)

However, most of the participants do feel responsible for taking somebody home safe. It is also a characteristic of being responsible. If somebody is drunk, it’s their own fault, but getting friends safe home is an important condition for being responsible.

You do feel responsible if you are the only one who can think clear, of course. You can’t let them drive home alone. I do find it very stupid, being so drunk so I don’t carry them home. (Kelly, 16)

Parents also give the message to drink responsible. However, none of the parents has explicit rules or a maximum number of consumption. Only one parent once said ‘don’t drink more than five consumptions tonight’. According to the participants, the most important message of their parents is to be responsible.

My parents don’t talk about the amount of consumptions, but that’s of course because they don’t know what my limit is. They do know that I know what my limit is, so they tell me to be aware of that. (Lena, 17)

I mean, I’m seventeen now, so I think that they expect that I can look after myself, without parents who are having strict rules. You have to be responsible for yourself now. (Andy, 16)

In conclusion, responsibility could be viewed as most important and selective code. All participants together would be mentioning themselves as ‘responsible drinkers’, this topic is also related to the other topics. In the next section the results will be discussed and compared with the literature used in the introduction and the theoretical framework. The key findings of the research will be named, limits will be discussed and recommendations for developing educational measures and for further investigation will be presented.

Discussion

The study identifies the beliefs and behaviours of the youth and the culture and environment the participants grow up in. Below, the sub questions are answered through a comparison of the results and the literature. Thereafter, a general conclusion and practical implications are discussed in the form of recommendations to health education. Lastly, directions for further research are described.

1. What are the beliefs and behaviors of teenagers among alcohol consumption?

This study identifies some of the beliefs and behaviours of the youth. The participants in general know the risks of drinking alcohol. However, the participants seemed not to be aware that these risks could also count for them. This is in contrast with Lundborg and Lindgren (2002), who demonstrated that people overestimate the risk of alcohol use. The participants also did not see the risks doing harm to other friends, peers and family. All participants named brain damage as a risk, but nobody could give an example of this risk or could name someone who had brain damage. The SCP (2007) revealed that when people talk about risks of alcohol consumption will not stop people from drinking alcohol. Although the findings of this study demonstrates a

similar pattern, this study also shows that if participants can link the risks to personal factors such as 'gaining weight', it does make them drink less. The gender roles as described by Piacentini and Banister (2008) do not compare with the findings of this study. There are no explicit differences found between men and women. The conceptualisation of drinking responsibly is in line with the description of Barry and Goodson (2011). The decision-making is rarely based on available definitions and guidelines but only on their experiences and perceptions. However, there are more subjects related to responsible drinking than described by Barry and Goodson. Also the social context as parents and friends are involved within this subject.

2. What is the social context of teenagers in relation to alcohol consumption?

The social context of the teenagers is mostly shaped by the experiences with friends. Although Moore and colleagues (2010) demonstrated that if the parents drink more than average, their children are also likely to drink more, this study shows that the participants do not refer to their parents when talking about alcohol consumption. None of the parents drank more than five glasses of alcohol every week. The number of consumptions the participant drinks, depends highly on the consumption of their friends. Another important issue for the participants was the major role of hockey and alcohol consumption. According to the participants, the alcohol consumption on hockey clubs is very high. The respondents also reported how normal it is to drink alcohol there and alcohol and hockey can't be separated. Gill (2000) describes that drinking is viewed as normal. This study underlines these findings; however it depends on the place where the participants drink alcohol. Drinking alcohol is only normal in the weekends at night and when being with friends. Drinking among parents and drinking during schooldays is not viewed as normal. According to the group or peer pressure, the participants are not aware of this and do not feel any pressure from friends. However, the participants do notice pressure according to other peers. The findings of Santor et al. (2000), Coleman and Hanry and Mounteney, & Haugland (2010) might still be correct. However, the findings could be completed with the perceptions of the teenagers themselves. The main reasons to consume as described by Pereira and Oliveira (2010), this study only finds having fun as reason for drinking alcohol.

3. What is the perception of teenagers on educational measures and alcohol availability?

There seemed to be a difference between asking the participants what they thought about the prevention and lessons on their school directly and the implicit opinion about prevention. The tension when directly asking to the programmes they followed themselves was "I do not know exactly what is wrong about the prevention programmes at school, but I do know that I rather do not listen to it". Their indirect opinion is mostly described as "They do not know how things go when we drink alcohol". 'They' refers to teachers as well as parents. 'We' refers to friends and peers. The participants thought that more prevention and education about alcohol when they were younger, between thirteen and fifteen years old, is important.

In conclusion this study could be summarized with the word responsibility. Counter talking about risks and having stricter rules about consuming alcohol, this study suggests that prevention has to be considering the social context of people's lives and to use a bottom-up approach. Treating young people as socially competent individuals, responsive to their cultural field, may be counter intuitive for prevention that is now based on casting the youth as lacking in knowledge, skills or willpower or as victims of group pressure (Poland, 2000).

After this study, several recommendations could be given. Firstly, using a bottom up approach could be useful to implement in educational measures and prevention programmes to serve the needs of the participants better and to be able to connect to the social context. This also creates space for participation which could make participants more committed to a prevention programme. Using a bottom up approach could also provide misunderstandings, for instance, to talk about drinking before going out instead of imbibing or to discuss what is meant by responsible drinking.

Further research should address three main limitations of this research. Firstly, further quantitative analyses could shed light on if linking personal factors to risks it is a regular pattern or not and if this really makes people drink less. Another addition to the research of SCP (2007) that could be further investigated would be the fact that the participants not only did not drink less by talking about risks, the teenagers also do not link the risks to their own personal lives. Moreover, more research to the practical implications of using a bottom up approach should be conducted to give inside on for example long term effects. Secondly Further investigation of the role of sports and drinking alcohol is important to expand the knowledge of this topic. This study demonstrates a possible link between alcohol and hockey, but not in relation to other sports. Lastly, more research to the social context of high educated teenagers and research to compare this group with other groups is needed. For instance, is the role of parents more important for low educated people than for high educated people? What are differences between the social contexts of high educated teenagers against low educated students in relation to alcohol consumption? Are younger teenagers more likely to drink to impress their friends than older teenagers?

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