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Intervention strategies used by University of Gavle when dealing with alcohol problems

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# Content

Abstract  4  

1 Introduction  5  
1.1 Background  5  
1.2 Previous research  5  
1.3 Aim and questions  7  
1.4 Motivation  8  
1.5 Plan for this thesis  8  
1.6 Relations with social work  8  

2 Theory  10  
2.1 Ecological perspective  10  
2.1.1 Intrapersonal level  10  
2.1.2 Interpersonal process  10  
2.1.3 Community level  11  
2.2 Alcohol strategies as a part of health promotion  11  

3 Methodology  13  
3.1 Method of sampling  13  
3.2 Method of research  13  
3.3 Method of analysis  14  
3.4 Ethical consideration  15  
3.5 Reliability  15  
3.6 Validity  16  
3.7 Generalization  16  

2 / 31
4 Results and analysis

4.1 The work by the health center with individual students
   4.1.1 A collaborating partnership
   4.1.2 To respect the autonomy of the client
   4.1.3 Open-ended questions and reflective listening

4.2 Safer drinking environment and prevention strategies formed
   4.2.1 Drinking culture
   4.2.2 A safer drinking environment
   4.2.3 Prevention strategies

4.3 A comprehensive and overall drinking strategies at community level
   4.3.1 Comprehensive prevention strategies
   4.3.2 Communication and networking
   4.3.3 Common goals

5 Discussion

5.1 Brief conclusion of research results
5.2 Comparison with previous research
5.3 Alternative interpretations for the result
5.4 Critical discussion of methodology
5.5 Suggestion for further research

Reference list

Appendix
Abstract

This study aims at exploring the intervention strategies directed to reduce alcohol drinking in Hogskolan in Gavle. Although many students consume alcohol in different settings such as parties and gathering, few of them can understand the whole picture of the school’s intervention strategies. As shown by the research, the social workers in health center attempt to form a collective relationship with students and use the open-ended questions when conducting the counseling. Meanwhile, the employees who are responsible for school bar not only try to create a safer environment based on Responsible Alcohol Drinking but also apply prevention strategies including a high alcohol price and a long waiting line. According to the overall situation in the community, a meeting has been organized among different sectors regarding health center, student union, and municipalities. The topics of the meetings are not only about the current situation in this region but also about the cooperative strategies of each sector. To take a closer look at the school’s alcohol methods, we interviewed two social workers at the health center as well as two employees in the students’ union who are mainly responsible for school bar.

Key works:

Alcohol prevention strategies, college students, alcohol problems
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Alcohol, one of the most widely used drugs around the world, is accepted as a must in our social gathering because alcohol can probably bring relaxation on special events (Hallgren, 2006, p7). However, it has been argued that the alcohol can not only cause harm to human beings but also lead to intoxication and dependence. Also, it is reported that intoxicated drivers may be injured or killed in car accident (Hallgren, 2006, p7). Overall, alcohol consumption will affect the safety and life of students.

Alcohol use is common in university settings. According to College Alcohol Survey (CAS) conducted by Harvard University, it shows that one out of five college students will undertake binge drinking (Hallgren, 2006). Binge drinking refers to a pattern of heavy drinking. More recently, it has been applied to define young adults who consume a number of alcohols in a single occasion. (Babor, 2010, p. 336) As pointed out by Hallgren (2006), the misuse of alcohol by the college students as well as its negative consequence for students and even their families has aroused great concern.

The problems of college drinking cannot be taken for granted and many efforts need to be paid in this respect (Chase, 2010, p3). Therefore, confronting with multiple drinking problems, both university and the whole society should spare no efforts to put forward alcohol intervention strategies and policies.

1.2 Previous research

According to Chase (2010), college is a unique stage of life where students can experience different ways of life. The following parts may explain the reason why the university students participate in heavy drinking behavior.

As described by Chase (2010), one reason is to establish a close relationship in the
groups and share cognitions, feelings, expectations, values and behavior with the group (Chase, 2010, p3). Students who are willing to integrate into the group tend to follow the others’ drinking behavior and consume more when a group of people consume large amount of alcohol (Chase, 2010, p3).

As stated by Chase (2010), another social aspect is the environment. To be specific, the living surrounding may influence the drinking behavior. Students who have less supervision in their environment tend to consume more alcohol, compared with those who have more supervision (Chase, 2010, p3). One possible reason is that the students who have less supervision may find it easier to keep alcohol in their homes and apartments than those with more supervision (Chase, 2010, p3).

As pointed out by Chase (2010), it is sometimes difficult to cope with students’ drinking problems in college settings because it is related to the individual, the group and the institution. It might be difficult to change the drinking behavior of students. Meanwhile, the challenges faced by practitioners may be huge. For example, when students go to college, they believe that the alcohol is part of students’ life. Also, they expect to have positive experiences while consuming the alcohol (Chase, 2010).

Apart from individual expectations, social and environmental factors also play significant role in binge drinking and serious alcohol problems. Chase (2010) explained that parent supervision in college tend to be low than in high school. Students enjoy more freedom in deciding their life way. Additionally, other factors may make it more difficult to deal with the drinking problems.

According to the report of NIH (2013), there are usually two main strategies addressing college drinking, in which one is the strategy targeted at individual students, while the other is the strategy targeted at the campus and the surrounding community.

Strategies directed towards individual students might be effective. These programs often include alcohol screening and brief interventions to evaluate students’ alcohol
use and provide feedback. As shown by the data, the alcohol use among 19 percent of college students aged between 18 and 24 might be described as alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence. However, only 5 percent of them tend to look for treatment assistance. (NIH.Turning Discovery Into Health, 2013, p. 3)

Alcohol prevention programs might not be restricted to students but also target at broader college community. Such strategies might include: 1) alcohol education, 2) limitation of alcohol availability, e.g. to hinder underage-drinking 3) encourage alcohol-free campus activities, 4) information to parents, 5) adjust academic schedules to include more Friday classes and reduce the number of long weekends during the semester. (NIH.Turning Discovery Into Health, 2013, p. 4)

Campus-community partnerships can be effective as well, and they enforce the community policies consistently with several related groups, such as local law enforcement, merchants, residents, campus administrators, and local leaders. (NIH.Turning Discovery Into Health, 2013, p. 4)

1.3 Aim and questions

Our aim is to find the intervention strategies used by Hogskolan in Gavle when dealing with alcohol problems.

Main question: What are the intervention strategies used by Hogskolan in Gavle when dealing with alcohol problems?

Sub questions:

1. How does the student union staff try to solve students’ alcohol-related problems?
2. How does the university health center staff try to solve students’ alcohol-related problems?
1.4 Motivation

As the college students, we will usually experience parties and see people who enjoy their parties and consume alcohol. It seems that the students want to have fun and drink several glasses of alcohol in a party. In our view, we (the authors) can get information regarding the strategies of students’ union and the university health center for alcohol prevention in the student population.

We wonder how school deals with drinking problems and how these prevention strategies are applied in practice. The information is about how the strategies have been developed and what staff in the student union and health center regards strategies as effective ones.

Also, the data from Sweden might be translated into Chinese and give inspiration to China.

1.5 Plan for this thesis

The second chapter shows a theoretical framework from the ecological perspective. This perspective highlights a comprehensive perspective upon alcohol reduction, and it can be divided into three levels, including interpersonal, intrapersonal and community levels. Chapter three includes the selection of the methodology, ethical considerations, reliability, validity, and generalization of this study. Chapter four presents the results and analysis. Chapter five not only explains the conclusions of our research but also includes the comparison with the previous research. In the end, there is a reference list and appendix.

1.6 Relations with Social Work

Alcohol usually plays controversial role in the daily life of students. When alcohol is moderately used, it will bring pleasure to the students and encourage social interactions. However, when it is misused, problems, such as low individual
wellbeing, conflicts in family relationships, and problems in work and education, will appear. The aim of social work is to promote the wellbeing of individuals, groups, and communities when problems happen. Based on this aim, social workers should reflect and form comprehensive interaction strategies, so as to ensure the well-being of individuals, groups and communities.
2 Theory

2.1 Ecological perspective

As shown by the research, alcohol prevention strategies can be more effective if the context of drinking environment is better understood. Alcohol prevention requires not only educational activities but also organizational changes and community development.

2.1.1 Intrapersonal level

Individual health behaviors are related to individual cognitions, expectations, values and past experiences. According to the theory of “stage changes”, a change of behavior is not an “event” but a “process” (Robert, 2005, p. 10).

At the individual level, the skill we have applied is the Motivational Interview (MI) perspective, and the main goal of MI is to increase client’s motivation to change based on personal goals and values. (Soderlund, 2010, p.18) Clients should be given the responsibility to decide when and how to undertake behavioral change (Soderlund, 2010, p.19). In MI, the counselor helps the clients to increase the motivation to change (Soderlund, 2010, p.19). The spirit of MI concerns the “ability and willingness” of counselors to join the clients’ inner world, (Soderlund, 2010, p.20) the aim of which is to form a collaborative partnership between the counselor and the client (Soderlund, 2010, p.19). In MI, it is of great significance to honor the autonomy of the client because it is the client who decides what to do and what to change (Soderlund, 2010, p.20).

2.1.2 Interpersonal process

According to interpersonal theories, the individuals exist in a context from which the clients may import beliefs, understandings, and ideas that affect their behaviors (Croyle, 2005, p.17). Social learning theory explains that people and their
environment interact continuously (Croyle, 2005, p. 17).

Social Learning Theory (SLT) means that people learn from their personal experiences as well as others’ behaviors. As pointed out by Croyle (2005), SLT puts emphasis on “modeling”, indicating that people obtain a behavioral pattern from individuals in the environment. After observing the behavior of others, people can understand the consequences of the behavior and then conclude whether the behavior is correct or not (Croyle, 2005, p. 17). SLT theory stresses that the drinking patterns can be influenced by the individual’s peers as well as others (Croyle, 2005, p. 17).

As pointed out by Croyle (2005), reciprocal determinism means that the environment and individual behavior can affect each other. Environment may shape and form the behavior of individual. In the meanwhile, people could also influence and create the environment.

2.1.3 Community level

In the previous years, alcohol strategies focused on the targeted groups. However, the evidence shows that alcohol prevention strategies can be more effective if it is organized on the community level (Hallgren, 2006, p.12). Community-level strategies can provide a comprehensive prevention method that aims at a better health promotion environment for the individual, group, and community. (Hallgren, 2006, p. 17)

2.2 Alcohol strategies as the part of health promotion

Alcohol intervention strategies can be more structured and organized if we apply ecological perspective into our research. This theory enables us to divide the material into three levels: the individual, the group, and the community level. Our research aims to comprehend the alcohol strategies in the university, as the part of the social health promotion in the university (Hallgren, 2006, p. 11). As pointed out by Hallgren (2006), ecological perspectives highlight the needs of addressing health promotion at
different levels and link them as a system.
3 Methodology

3.1 Method of sampling

Considering the situation and design of this research, the purposive sampling, which is sometimes referred to as ‘theoretical sampling’, is selected. (Robson, 2002, p. 193) With this method, the researchers can choose the samples based on their own judgment, and the interviewees can be selected by the information needs of the researcher (Robson, 2002, p. 193,265). The purpose of our study is to find the intervention strategies used in the university - how they deal with alcohol problems. To focus on the aim of research, the researchers selected interviewees among individuals with professional knowledge and experiences, and asked them how they cope with the drinking problems.

Interviewee 1 from student union mainly deals with alcohol problems in school’s bar. Interviewee 2 from the student union is mainly responsible for selling alcohol behind the counter. Both Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2 come from student union and work in the students’ bar, meaning that they have to handle conflicts in the bar. We conduct separate interview with each of them. Interviewee 3 from the students’ health center mainly talks with students and copes with alcohol problems of students. Interviewee 4 is mainly responsible for handling and discussing alcohol-related problems with students. Because of her background, she can talk not only about students and problems but also about the intervention methods she used. Both Interviewee 3 and interviewee 4 have participated in the third interview. Additionally, Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 4 who worked in the health center are both older than Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2.

3.2 Method of research

Semi-structured interview is widely applied in the qualitative research. We used such interview questions in our study, and it is a flexible method. Interviews follow an
interview guide but are complemented by the follow-up questions (Robson, 2002, p. 271). The researchers can ask extra questions to avoid possible misunderstandings, and try to make the interviewees feel comfortable during the interview. Also, it can make the conversation go broader and deeper but not deviate from what it should be. For example, in this research, when we asked about the rules and strategies the interviewees had taken, apart from the questions how they deal with the problems, the question of how other communities cope with the students’ alcohol problems were included. As a result, it brings more information about the research topic. In consideration of the design and usage of research, semi-structured interview has been chosen in this research. (Kvale, 2009, p. 130)

3.3 Method of analysis

Hermeneutics is the study of the interpretation of texts (Kvale, 2009, p. 50), and the main theme of hermeneutics is the interpretation of meanings as well as how people express their thoughts. Different meanings would be sought by the new interpretations. (Kvale, 2009, p. 50) Parts and whole, understanding and pre-understanding refer to two pairs of circle from hermeneutics. The meaning of text is valid and common to understand by hermeneutical interpretation. In hermeneutics, researchers try to analyze the parts and the entire text. Besides, the researchers attempt to understand the meaning of the parts and the entire text based on their pre-understanding of the words and the concepts, so as to gain a new understanding. (Kvale, 2009, p. 51, 210) By combining these pairs together, they can obtain better knowledge regarding the themes in the text. The researchers have a pre-understanding about the research theme from their normal life knowledge, personal experiences, and other types of information before the research. Moreover, the researchers should search for the background information and previous research reports before starting the research.

During the interview, the researchers should pay attention to each question that participants answered. Based on their interpretations, researchers should try to get an
overview of the text by combining the answers. Through such interpretation process, the researchers might gain a new understanding of the text.

We used hermeneutic method as analyzing the responses from the interviewees. Our pre-understanding comes from three sources: our experiences from China, our experiences in Gavle, and the knowledge from publications. In China, most colleges do not allow students to take alcohol in school facilities. Also, the Chinese colleges do not establish an effective organization concerning college drinking management. By contrast, in Sweden, there are some parties organized by student unions during the weekends, which makes a significant difference between the two settings.

3.4 Ethical consideration

Ethical issues should be considered in order to have an ethical protocol (Kvale, 2009, p. 63). Thus, it is important to let interviewees clearly understand what will happen during the interview as well as the later use of their interview data. An agreement has to be reached between the researchers and the participants before the interview. This is the so-called informed consent. (Kvale, 2009, p. 272) Such agreement had been reached in this study. We used a written informed consent formulary directed to each of the participants, and they read the formulary and accepted to participate in our study. Meanwhile, for protecting the interviewees’ privacy, their names are anonymous in this report (Kvale, 2009, p. 272)

3.5 Reliability

It is of great significance to keep consistency and trustworthiness during the research process (Kvale, 2009, p. 245). Reliability means whether the research finding can be tested and verified by the other researchers and obtains similar results. (Kvale, 2009, p. 245) In each interview part, the answers have been repeated to avoid any misunderstanding between the interviewer and the interviewee. Also, we asked the same questions in different words so as to get reliable answers.
However, there are some problems during the transcribing process, such as transcribing from the oral language to the written language. In fact, there are probably some deviations between what the interviewees really want to express and the words in the written report. For avoiding the language translation problems, both interviewers and interviewees used English during the interview. However, some misunderstandings might have occurred because this is not the mother language of either interviewers or interviewees. Also, there are some differences when different researchers make the transcription. (Kvale, 2009, p. 245) Nonetheless, we have tried to avoid the misunderstandings by working carefully.

3.6 Validity

There are three main points of validity: “the truth, the correctness, and the strength of a statement.” (Kvale, 2009, p. 246) Validity in a research means that the researchers investigate what should be investigated (Kvale, 2009, p. 246). The researchers need to explain their aims for the participants. During the interview, the questions should focus on the main aim. However, if it is necessary, extra questions related to the aim can be asked, so as to get a more broad and deep perspective and gain better understanding of the interviewees’ answer. (Kvale, 2009, p. 246)

In our study, we discussed and checked the question list several times, so as to make sure that the interview questions focus on the research aim. Furthermore, we have used numerous questions to each interviewee, in order to clearly understand the answer of interviewees. When we tried to obtain further information and asked extra questions, all the questions focused on our aims. (Kvale, 2009, p. 246) To assure the validity, we also followed the recommendations of Kvale.

3.7 Generalization

The main point in generalization is to determine whether the research result can be transferred to the other situations (Kvale, 2009, p. 262). There are three forms of generalization, including naturalistic, statistical, and analytic form.
Naturalistic generalization depends on the personal experiences (Kvale, 2009, p.262). However, it might be difficult to generalize because of the difference in the context and the cultures. For example, the rules and controls of college drinking are different in China and in Sweden. We tried to understand the differences so as to avoid direct comparisons. Also, we attempted to see how the differences in culture and context might influence the college drinking habits.

Statistical generalization, as a formal method, is based on the random selected subjects from a population. (Kvale, 2009, p.262) Due to the restriction in time and resources, we do not use this method.

In the analytical generalization, “the findings of one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation.” (Kvale, 2009, p.262) It is based on an analysis of the differences and similarities of the situations. When comparing the differences in college drinking between Sweden and China, we have tried to use analytical generalization.
4 Results and analysis

Interviewee 1 (I1): Interviewee comes from the student union and works as a coordinator in school’s bar;

Interviewee 2 (I2): Interviewee also comes from student union and mainly sells the alcohol behind the counter.

Interviewee 3 (I3): The interviewee comes from the students’ health center and mainly talks with students and deals with students’ alcohol problems.

Interviewee 4 (I4): The interviewee is mainly responsible for collecting information regarding the expectations from the student bar and the organized parties of Gavel college.

Alcohol consumption and alcohol drinking are common in Hogskolan in Gavle. Basically every week, the school club bar will be opened for students who intend to drink and have fun. Besides, some big parties are organized several times a year. In such great parties, some students might consume huge amounts of alcohol.

According to NIH (2013), the abusive college drinking are public health problems which can affect not only individuals but also their families and university as a whole. Among the negative consequences, there are injuries, sexual abuse, academic problems, and even deaths (NIH.Turning Discovery Into Health, 2013, p.1).

This research aims to understand how the university and the community cope with serious alcohol drinking and explore which intervention strategies are applied in this setting. With the use of ecological perspective (Hallgren, 2006), the intervention strategies of Hogskolan in Gavle can be divided into three levels, including individual level, interpersonal level, and community level. The ecological perspective (Hallgren, 2006) makes it easier for us to view intervention strategies in Hogskolan in Gavle.
through a comprehensive and systematic approach.

4.1 The work by the health center with individual students

4.1.1 A collaborating partnership

The work with an individual will start when a student decides to visit the health center. The counselor attempts to talk and discuss with the students about their drinking and personal life. The counselor attempts to establish a collaborative relationship with the students who visit the health center. Also, Interviewee 3 explained that they discuss and try to understand the entire life of the students (the client) who visit the health center. The interaction is in the form of open-ended question, which not only allows the client to express his/her feeling and personal situation but also encourages the client to reflect on his/her situation and drinking behavior.

As stated by the social worker I3, she acts as a “traveler” with the student. In this process, the social worker firstly discusses with the student about his/her life and drinking situation. The social worker asks the student about his/her daily life, friends, family situation, and social interactions. After knowing more situation of the student, the counselor may offer new perspectives regarding the drinking of clients. This makes it possible for a common decision-making process in the end. I4 mentioned that the relations play an important role in the social life. Moreover, the relations include the relation with person’s self, friends, and relatives. Thus, the social worker is required to form a relationship which involves discussions and partnership. As mentioned by I3, she may arrange numerous counseling meetings to some students. Because it will takes time for the students to develop a reliable relationship with social workers. After a certain period, the student may become more talkative and open in his/her communication.

4.1.2 To respect the autonomy of the client

I3 said that if students are firstly told by the social worker that he/she drinks too much,
it may cause resistant attitude by the student. Therefore, it is of great significance for the social workers to ask questions and then let the clients think for themselves.

When we asked whether the students tend to enter the counseling a second time or more often, the social worker who is responsible for counseling (I3) said that she does not force the client to make further meeting. Furthermore, the social worker explained: “We just provide other perspectives. However, it is our students who make decisions about changing their drinking behaviors”.

When we asked about the efficiency of this approach, I3 pointed out that the purpose of these questions was not just to get answers but to offer student a chance to reflect about his/her situation. Also, it may open the door for the client to repeatedly think upon his/her situation.

4.1.3 Open-ended questions and reflective listening

Both social workers explained that they, as the counselors, do not just give them information about alcohol and how alcohol affects the body when students firstly enter health center. After all, this information has already been known by the client. The aim of the social workers is to make students understand and realize his situation. This can be achieved by asking students numerous questions. As explained by I3, after listening carefully to the words of student, she will guide the client to think about his/her situation. For example, if a student says “I think I need to drink less”, the following-up question will not be the comments about the sentence. Instead, the social worker will ask the student why he/she thinks in this way and encourage the students to comment this topic by his/her own words. Furthermore, I3 said: “We just provide other perspectives, but it is our students who make decisions about changing their drinking behavior”.

4.2 Safer drinking environment and prevention strategies formed

4.2.1 Drinking culture
The staff in the student union makes efforts to change school’s drinking culture by organizing alcohol-free activities. A safer environment will be conductive to creating less drinking.

All the interviewees agree that drinking is a part of university life. According to some students, one experience of college life is to get drunk. For changing this culture, all the interviewees pointed out that ‘one way to change this culture’ is ‘to organize the alcohol-free activities’. This may show the students that having fun is to stay with their friends rather than to drink a lot. However, most of gatherings still include the alcohol consumption.

4.2.2 A safer drinking environment

Over the past few years, a safer environment in the bar has been promoted, in which one way to reach this goal is to change the students’ behavior in the bar (Babor, 2010, p152). For example, the staff in the bar might restrict the sales of alcohol to students who may have already drunk too much. Besides, such regulation will probably give rise to the reduction of drinking and decrease the aggressive behavior such as fighting.

Nowadays, the employees in the bar are required to pass an education called the Responsible Beverage Service Program before they are allowed to serve in the school bar. These training programs are organized by municipality. One part of the education is about alcohol related laws in Sweden, and the other part is mainly about what may happen if someone drinks a lot as well as how alcohol may affect the person. As explained by one staff member (I4), the staff will be blamed and punished if there are aggressive behaviors and conflicts among students in the bar. Therefore, the staff member should undertake the due obligation. I4 said that her job was to divide and organize the staff to work well. When the conflicts occur, the drunken people will be taken to the police station by the guards.
4.2.3 Prevention strategies

When we asked how the interviewees prevent serious alcohol drinking, the interviewees presented several ways. To be specific, the first one was to observe people who are almost drunk. One of the staff who serves as a coordinator (I1) mentioned: “If students get too drunk, they just provide them water. Another way was to encourage alcohol-free drinks.” As pointed out by the coordinator, the alcohol is relatively expensive at the bar and a soft drink is about the half price of an alcohol drink. This can decrease the alcohol intake because an alcohol drink means the double price of soft drink, and students may not want to purchase it.

4.3 A comprehensive and overall drinking strategy at community level

4.3.1 Comprehensive prevention strategies

At the community level, the first approach is to send e-mails to every student. Such mail will encourage students to visit health center when necessary. Also, meetings are arranged including the student union, the health center and the community. In the meetings, alcohol problems and regulations in the region as well as possible solutions and exchange of resources will be discussed.

In the previous years, the main alcohol strategy usually focuses on some “target group”. However, the evidence displays that the alcohol prevention strategies can be more effective if they are organized at the community level (Hallgren, 2006, P.12-17).

As explained by I3 and I4, they tend to work on alcohol issues by intervention at the early stage. One example was to send emails to students from school mail system. These emails can include questions for the students to test his/her drinking behavior. Students may be encouraged to fill in the form and contact the health center if they find that they drink too much.

When we asked about the efficiency of these intervention strategies, I1 answered that
some students fail to make the tests. Even if they do the test and find the problems, few of them choose to enter the health center and discuss their problems. In our research, we found that the school does not pay enough attention to this testing and alcohol problems of students. Though the emails are sent and social workers show up in the school and prepare to answer questions by students, the school still makes minor effort to arouse the attention of students about drinking and interventions for those who have serious alcohol problems.

4.3.2 Communication and networking

Generally speaking, a two-way communication flow is more effective for behavioral changes compared with one-side persuasion. Therefore, the decision makers ought to value the significance of communication and networking. The interviewees explained that they have a special meeting and a cooperation including the students’ union, the health center, and the municipality. They will discuss the current situation and possible prevention strategies. Besides, one cooperation program has been proposed to set up an organization of trained mentors. For each semester at the welcome meeting of new students, the mentors will be appointed. These mentors act as guiding persons for the new students at the university. The mentors will be trained about alcohol among other matters which may attract new students. However, as described by I1, most of the mentors are volunteers and the time they can spend with students cannot be controlled. She said: “it is difficult for us to supervise the mentor’s work and how they work with the students. However, this is a first step, and the following step with the mentors is to focus more on the provision of information of our health center to the students.”

In Gavle University, there are meetings where the staff from the student union, professionals from the health center, staff from other university and officials from the local government can discuss the health-related problems of students.
4.3.3 Common goals

The interviewees from the health center explained that they participate in the meetings with the community. In such meetings, drinking problems in this region will be proposed and discussed. According to the information provided, the municipality will cope with the problems. The municipality works a lot with the student union bar. One of the social workers stated: (I1) “In accordance with our responsibility, we discuss problems at different levels and do different kinds of alcohol prevention.” As mentioned by the interviewees, the municipality will supervise the school bar by inspection. If they find negligence in the bar, they may suspend the bar license.
5. Discussion

5.1 Brief conclusion of research results

This research aims to understand the alcohol intervention strategies applied in the university at different sectors. As mentioned by the social workers in health center, they are required to form a collaborating partnership with student, which includes discussing and understanding the whole situation of students’ life. The second approach of practitioners is that they respect students’ rights to make decision. Open-ended question, which allows students to fully express their feelings and situations, will be applied after reflective thinking. Besides, the staff in the student union makes efforts to change the drinking culture of school by organizing alcohol-free activities. At the community level, the first approach is to send e-mail to every student who is expected to visit health center when necessary. The second approach is to hold big meeting that involves student union, health center and community, so as to discuss alcohol problems in this region, analyze the main problems, find solutions, and exchange resources.

5.2 Comparison with the previous research

Both Chase (2010) and NIH (2013) have mentioned alcohol prevention by focusing on the individual, the group, and the environment.

According to Chase (2010), the college students try to obtain a different life experience by having alcohol drinks. Also, our interviewees mentioned that drinking environment is a significant factor. The staff in student union tries to provide a safer drinking environment, so as to prevent and reduce the over-drinking behavior. Besides, the interviewees from student union and health center have adopted other strategies, such as communicating with students, sending the alcohol-relative emails, and holding some meetings with other municipalities. Also, NIH (2013) had mentioned
these strategies. However, the community strategy of NIH (2013) is to formulate some policies to prevent students’ alcohol drinking by gathering surroundings, such as the local law enforcement, and the merchants.

5.3 Alternative interpretations for the results

Based on the ecological system theory, our research shows the intervention strategies at different levels (individual, interpersonal, and community) which can deal with alcohol consumption in Gavle University. According to the alcohol consumption of students, an alternative research strategy could divide students into two groups, including those with high-risk consumption and those with low-risk consumption. However, we did not collect the individual alcohol use of students. Thus, such research strategy can not be applied.

When comparing with hypothesis and results, we find some similarities and differences. One similarity is about the task of health center. We have predicted that the main task of health center is to discuss and reflect upon students’ drinking behaviors and personal lives. In our result, the social workers in health center communicate with students about their drinking behaviors. However, there are differences as well. In our hypothesis, we think that health center only deals with individuals. However, according to our result, we found that the health center also conducts alcohol prevention strategies. For example, they will send emails about alcohol drinking information to every student. The other difference is related to the school bar. In our hypothesis, we consider that the task of school bar staff is to deal with the conflicts. However, our results show that they should follow the Responsible Beverage Service, and this regulation requires the responsibility and supervision of staff before and after students drink alcohol.

5.4 Critical discussion of methodology

During the interview, both researchers and participants have used English, which is not their mother language. This might have affected the validity of this study.
We have interviewed the counselors from the university’s health center as well as the staff from the students’ club. There are four participants in our interview study. As a result, this low number might have influenced the validity. However, it is impossible to find more participants in the selected organization. This is the reason why we restricted our sample to a low number.

Besides, we fail to interview students who have come to the health center or those who have joined the students’ parties. If we knew more about the students’ attitudes, feelings, and personal experiences, we probably could have understood the advantages and disadvantages of the intervention strategies more clearly. This is the suggestion for further research.

5.5 Suggestion for further research

Due to the time limitation, qualitative research has been selected as the research strategy. To better understand the drinking behavior of college students, the quantitative research can also be used. However, such strategy requires longer time and larger resources. As a result, it is not utilized.

This research can lead to international comparisons. For example, we can compare the situation of student drinking in China and Sweden. As a matter of fact, most colleges in China do not allow students to drink alcohol in the campus. Students usually organize their own parties outside of the university or have alcohol with family members. Honestly speaking, this will bring both positive and negative effects. If students cannot drink at campus, it may contribute to a “good study” atmosphere. Also, the students in China may lack self-control when they have a chance to drink alcohol. By contrast, in Sweden, students can use alcohol at campus and they can enjoy their parties when there is a gathering. However, when there are few restrictions on alcohol drinking, the students might be easily drunk. Also, some after-drinking problems will probably be caused.

This research shows a brief picture of intervention strategies in Gavle University.
Based on these results, further research can consider about students’ attitude and advices towards the school’s alcohol intervention strategies. Since students are the main role in all the intervention programs, their feelings, attitudes and personal experiences will significantly affect the efficiency of intervention projects. Therefore, the further research can focus more on students’ cognitive and emotional world in designing the intervention programs and adjust the programs to the needs of the students.
References

Appendix

Consent

Hi,

We are a group of students who study the fourth year of the international social work program at University of Gavle. During this autumn, we will write an essay and study the strategies used by Hogskolan in Gavle when dealing with alcohol problem. We will distribute interviews among the staff in the organization. First and foremost, we will present an essay on the methodical part of how we have conducted a research in this area.

The interviews are completely anonymous and we will use a voice recorder to document the answers. Once we have presented the results and completed the course, the voice-recording file will be discarded. Moreover, the interviews will not be connected to a single individual.

Before you answer the interview questions, we will inform you about the subject and you can ask the questions. Also, you can always cancel the interview if you do not want to proceed. The essay will only be presented to the teacher and the current class. If you wish to see the results, please contact Chen Qiaoran.

You can get in touch with the course coordinator for the “Degree Paper” John Lilja, john.lilja@hig.se for general questions about the course and what it involves.

If you have any comments or questions about the interview, please contact: Chen Qiaoran, qiaoranchen@163.com

Thank you for your cooperation!
Question List

To social workers in health center:

1. What will you do when students first enter health center?
2. How do you talk with students who ask for help about their drinking problems?
3. Is there any intervention strategy at a community level? Will you have any meetings with community and what is it about?
4. According to your own experience, what do you think of Sweden’s drinking culture?
5. Is there any alcohol prevention strategy towards students in general? What are they?
6. Based on your own working experience, what do you think about students’ drinking problems? And what are the main reasons for this?

To staffs in school’s bar:

1. What’s your responsibility in school’s bar? How do you divide your work?
2. What is your main role in school’s bar?
3. According to your own working experience, how do students usually drink in the bar?
4. How do you deal with conflicts? Is there any training before you work in school’s bar?
5. What do students think about your work?
6. How does community supervise your work? Is there any communication between the bar and the community?