

Controlling teenagers' drinking: Effects of a community-based prevention project

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Abstract

Aims: The study presents the evaluation results of the age-limit component of a community-based prevention project called PAKKA. The project aimed to reduce alcohol availability among those under 18, which is the legal age for purchasing alcohol. The interventions consisted of law enforcement, community coalitions and community mobilization. **Data and methods:** The effects of the interventions were measured in a quasi-experimental research-setting with a matched control area before (2004) and after (2006/7) the interventions. The data included under-age purchase trials, a population survey and a school-based survey. **Results:** According to the purchase trials, the age limit control in the shops improved between the measuring points, and the young people reported in surveys that it had become more difficult to obtain alcohol. However, changes in the intervention and the control areas were similar. This can partly be explained by increased surveillance in addition to spill-over effects of PAKKA-interventions into the control areas. **Conclusions:** Local coalitions can be important tools in reducing alcohol availability among minors. The quasi-experimental research-setting has its methodological limitations in assessing the intervention's impact given the overlap in local and national processes seen in the case of the PAKKA project.

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