Abstract

Title: The living conditions of young people in Sweden. On the crisis of the 1990s, social conditions and health.

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Key words: Young, youth, adolescents, school, empowerment, living conditions, crisis, unemployment, economic stress, health education, health promotion, alcohol, moking, health.

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ISBN: 91-86796-21-6

The purpose of paper I is to describe the link between economic stress and perceived health among Swedish adolescents. The study is based mainly on data collected during 1995 from over 2400 adolescents in 9th grade. The results show that worry about family finances in particular are strongly linked to the adolescents' perceived health, although their own relative economic deprivation also plays a significant part. The relationship between economic stress and perceived health is also stronger than the relationships between other types of stress and perceived health.

The purpose of paper II is to elucidate one aspect of the transfer effects of unemployment to the family, namely the relationship between parents' employment situation and children's health among pupils in 4th and 9th grades. The samples consisted of 679 pupils in 4th grade and 714 pupils in 9th grade. Among the fourth grade pupils, the results do not indicate any clear patterns. However, among the ninth grade pupils, psychosomatic troubles are much more common among boys and girls who have an unemployed parent than among those whose parents are not unemployed. In addition, both among fourth grade and ninth grade pupils, psychosomatic troubles are more usual among children and young people who worry that the parents will become unemployed than among those who do not.

The purpose of paper III is to elucidate more closely the relationship between unemployment among the young and mental ill health, especially with respect to differences between men and women and the significance of private financial situations. The study also aims at elucidating the significance of youth training programs, especially with respect to mental well-being. The sample consisted of 81 openly unemployed young people under 25 years of age and 143 youth trainees. The results show an explicit relationship between unemployment and mental ill health among young people. The study also indicates that women, on the whole, suffer from mental ill health due to unemployment more than men do. In addition, the results also indicate that young people with poor finances on the whole show more mental problem and anxiety about the future than young people with good finances do.

The purpose of paper IV is to employ an explorative approach at aggregated level to analyze the relationship between adolescents' alcohol and smoking behaviours on the one hand and factors within and outside their schools on the other hand. Individual level data, which have been aggregated, as well as area data on population composition have been used for the ecological analyses. The results indicate as a whole that consumption of alcohol and smoking are affected by partly different factors. Consumption of alcohol is related to the predominant
social structure of the school, i.e. to whether it is a 'blue collar' or 'white collar' school, but there does not appear to be any similar pattern as far as smoking is concerned. However, both the consumption of alcohol and smoking are linked to factors that reflect the school climate.

The purpose of paper V is to examine various health education programs and to describe similarities and dissimilarities between them in order to discover prominent characteristics and patterns. The empirical material consists of a number of different texts on health education in schools. As a result two main categories emerged. The first is the strategy for change (top-down or bottom-up) that characterizes health education. The second is the contextual framework (narrow or wide) within which health education is practised. By combining these two dimensions the number of models of health education in schools can be reduced to four main types: traditional educational models, modern educational models, planner models and empowerment models.