

EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF SMOKING BEHAVIOURS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON ADOLESCENT DRUG USE: EVIDENCE FROM YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA

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Received: 12 February 2025

Accepted: 1 March 2025

Published: 30 March 2025

Abstract: Throughout human history, drug abuse has posed a significant threat to societal development and individual well-being. Preventing the harms associated with drug use remains a persistent and challenging global issue. Research indicates that many individuals develop drug dependencies during adolescence, with early exposure to substance abuse leading to long-term adverse effects. In China, Yunnan Province faces particularly severe drug-related challenges, reporting the highest rates of drug production, consumption, and associated societal impacts. This study investigates the factors contributing to drug use among adolescents under 25 years old in Yunnan Province, aiming to identify the current trends and characteristics of youth drug abuse in 2023, as well as its underlying causes. The findings will inform targeted interventions to mitigate adolescent drug use. Data were collected through surveys distributed across 13 compulsory isolation and community-based drug rehabilitation centres in Yunnan Province, yielding 1,022 valid responses out of 1,083 questionnaires administered. The analysis focuses on two key determinants of adolescent drug use: smoking behaviour and local government drug policies. The degree of drug dependence serves as the dependent variable, while the school environment, given its universal influence during formative years, is examined as a moderating variable in drug prevention education. Empirical analysis of the data is followed by a discussion of the results, culminating in evidence-based recommendations for preventing youth drug abuse. These strategies are proposed at three levels: individual behavioural interventions, school-based educational programs, and governmental policy reforms.

Keywords: *Drug abuse, Smoking, Government policy, Adolescents, Youth, Prevention*



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Cite This Article:

Ain Munirah Khairul Anwar, Bao Meiyu & Mohd Syaiful Nizam Abu Hassan. (2025). Examining the Influence of Smoking Behaviours and Local Government Policies on Adolescent Drug Use: Evidence from Yunnan Province, China. *UFUQ International Journal of Arts and Social Science Research*, 5(1), 46-65

INTRODUCTION

The China Anti-Drug Report 2021 highlights the continued intensification of the *"Clear the Source and Cut the Flow"* strategy, aimed at curbing drug trafficking and abuse. As a result of these enforcement efforts, authorities successfully dismantled 54,000 drug-related criminal cases, apprehended 77,000 suspects, and confiscated 27 tonnes of illicit substances. Additionally, 326,000 individuals with substance use disorders were identified and processed. Notably, these figures reflect a significant year-on-year decline 16.3% in solved drug crimes, 16.7% in arrests, 51.4% in drug seizures, and 23.6% in penalized drug users demonstrating the effectiveness of recent anti-drug initiatives.

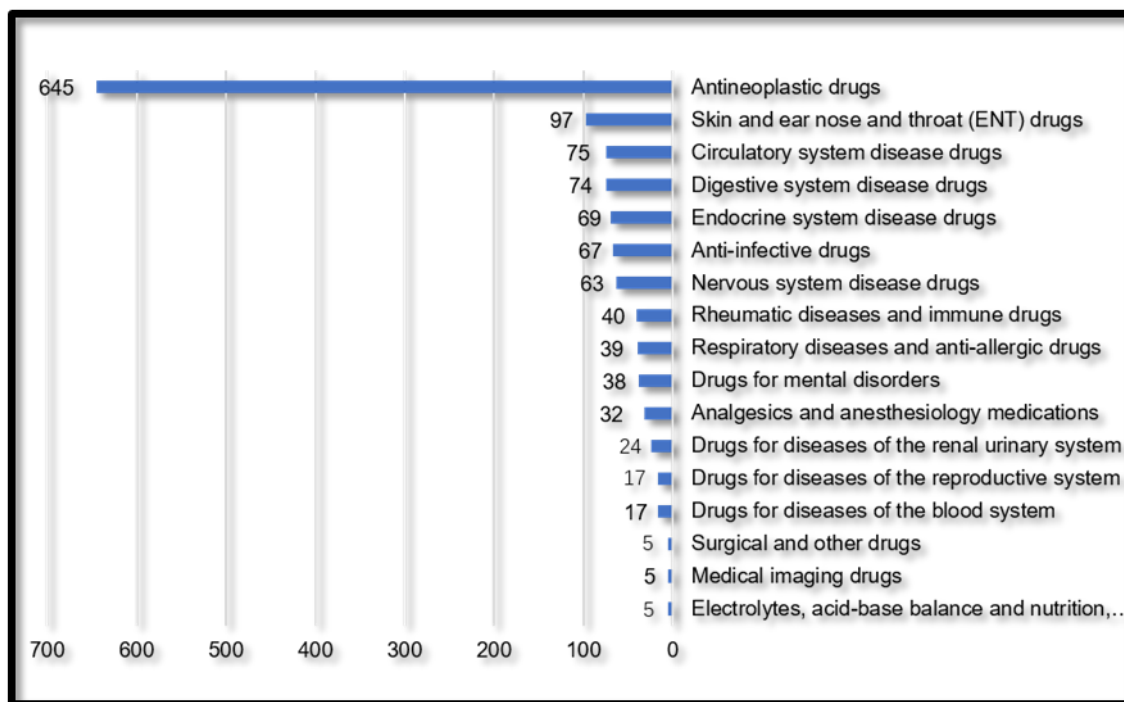


Figure 1: Number of approved chemical drug investigational new drugs in different indications.

Adolescent substance abuse, particularly involving both drug use and smoking, represents a pressing public health challenge, with early initiation often leading to persistent harmful behaviours and severe health repercussions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). This developmental stage is marked by heightened susceptibility to external influences, including peer pressure and a propensity for risk-taking (Latib, Abudiah, Rani, & Hassan, 2019). While substance abuse patterns differ across geographical contexts, local government policies have been identified as a key determinant in shaping consumption behaviours (Wagenaar et al., 2000).

However, current literature frequently neglects the influence of localized policy interventions and the phenomenon of poly-drug use the concurrent use of multiple substances among adolescents (Connor et al., 2014; Sharif et al., 2023). Given that regional governance structures can directly and indirectly affect substance use trends, there remains a significant gap in empirical studies examining how local policy frameworks specifically influence adolescent

drug consumption patterns. Addressing this research gap is critical for developing targeted and effective prevention strategies.

The border regions of Yunnan Province, China, serve as major transit routes for narcotics originating from the Golden Triangle, resulting in escalating rates of drug addiction, particularly among adolescents and young adults under 25. This trend presents a serious societal challenge, as youth represent the foundation of national development. The devastating consequences of substance abuse among young people, including incarceration, health deterioration, and premature mortality, underscore the critical need for effective intervention strategies. Preventing and mitigating drug-related delinquency is therefore vital to safeguarding adolescent well-being, containing the proliferation of illicit substances, and promoting a stable, healthy, and prosperous society.

Considering these concerns, this study examines the factors contributing to drug addiction among individuals under 25 in Yunnan Province a region disproportionately affected by substance abuse. Through empirical analysis, the research aims to identify key determinants of youth drug use and propose evidence-based policy recommendations to support prevention efforts. Specifically, the study addresses the following research objectives:

1. To examine the positive correlation between adolescent smoking behaviours and subsequent drug use
2. To assess whether school-based drug prevention education mitigates the relationship between smoking and drug use
3. To analyse the inhibitory effect of current government drug policies on youth substance abuse
4. To investigate how school drug prevention programs amplify the effectiveness of government policies in reducing adolescent drug use

LITERATURE REVIEW

Smoking and drug use:

Extensive empirical research over recent decades has investigated the association between adolescent smoking and subsequent drug use, yielding several theoretical perspectives. The predominant "gateway hypothesis" (Kandel, 1975) posits that tobacco use serves as a behavioural precursor to illicit substance consumption. Supporting evidence comes from the New York Longitudinal Study, which demonstrated that adolescent smokers exhibited significantly higher rates of marijuana and other illicit drug use compared to non-smoking peers (Kandel, Yamaguchi, & Chen, 1992). This finding aligns with data from the National Epidemiological Study on Alcohol and Related Conditions, where nicotine dependence showed strong predictive value for developing substance use disorders (Grant et al., 2006).

Alternative explanations challenge this sequential model. The common liability theory (Vanyukov et al., 2012) suggests shared genetic and environmental vulnerabilities underlie both smoking and drug use behaviours, rather than a causal progression. This perspective emphasizes the role of underlying risk factors that predispose individuals to multiple forms of addiction.

While theoretical interpretations vary, a consensus emerges regarding smoking's predictive value for adolescent drug use. The robust empirical association persists across studies, regardless of methodological differences in measurement or population characteristics. This consistent finding underscores the importance of early smoking prevention as a potential intervention point for reducing subsequent substance abuse.

THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON DRUG USE PATTERNS

Academic research has extensively examined the relationship between local government policies and substance use behaviours, recognizing their profound implications for public health, safety, and socioeconomic welfare. Kandel and Logan's (1984) seminal work established this connection by demonstrating how law enforcement strategies, drug accessibility, and perceived legal risks collectively influence marijuana consumption patterns among youth. Their findings suggested that restrictive policies reducing drug availability while amplifying perceived consequences could effectively curb usage rates—a foundational insight that shaped subsequent policy research.

Later studies reinforced this policy behaviour linkage through varied lenses. Pacula et al. (2003) revealed that state-level marijuana decriminalization correlated with increased adolescent use, illustrating how regulatory leniency may normalize substance consumption. Conversely, Chaloupka et al. (2005) demonstrated the deterrent effect of excise tax policies, where elevated cigarette prices precipitated notable declines in youth smoking prevalence. Contemporary scholarship has expanded this discourse to encompass diverse policy instruments like law enforcement and decriminalization approaches, school-based prevention initiatives, fiscal measures like sin taxes, and environmental interventions promoting healthy communities.

While the aggregate evidence confirms policy effectiveness, inconsistent findings across studies highlight the complexity of this relationship. Some research suggests policy impacts may be mediated by cultural contexts, enforcement consistency, or concurrent socioeconomic factors. This nuanced understanding underscores the necessity for continued investigation into optimal policy combinations.

The cumulative evidence positions multifaceted policy frameworks as essential tools for addressing youth substance abuse. Effective prevention likely requires strategically integrating restrictive measures, educational campaigns, and environmental modifications an approach demanding ongoing empirical evaluation to account for evolving drug trends and societal dynamics.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL-BASED DRUG PREVENTION IN ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE USE

The effectiveness of school-based drug prevention programs in reducing substance use among adolescents has been widely studied, with research generally supporting their potential benefits when properly implemented. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2003), well-designed prevention education can serve as a protective factor against adolescent drug experimentation and abuse.

Early foundational work by Botvin and colleagues (1995) on the Life Skills Training program demonstrated significant reductions in tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use among participating students. Their research highlighted the importance of combining drug resistance skills with broader personal and social competency development. These findings were reinforced by Faggiano et al.'s (2008) evaluation of the European "Unplugged" program, which showed sustained reductions in substance use through its focus on correcting misperceptions about peer drug use norms and enhancing critical thinking skills.

The current body of research suggests that program effectiveness depends heavily on several key factors. Implementation quality, including educator training and program fidelity, emerges as crucial for achieving desired outcomes. The developmental timing of interventions appears particularly important, with early adolescence representing a critical window for prevention efforts. Additionally, programs that incorporate booster sessions and ongoing reinforcement tend to demonstrate more lasting effects compared to single intervention approaches.

While evidence supports the value of school-based prevention, researchers emphasize the need for continued investigation into optimal program components and delivery methods. Questions remain regarding the long-term durability of effects into adulthood and how to best integrate school programs with family and community prevention efforts. The field continues to explore cultural adaptations to enhance relevance across diverse student populations.

Existing literature establishes school-based drug prevention as a valuable component of comprehensive substance abuse prevention strategies. However, its impact varies according to program design, implementation quality, and contextual factors. Ongoing research and program refinement remain essential to maximize effectiveness in addressing evolving patterns of youth substance use.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENT DRUG USE IN YUNNAN PROVINCE: INTEGRATING CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

The present study develops a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual framework to examine the complex determinants of adolescent drug use in Yunnan Province, China. This framework synthesizes established behavioural theories with emerging empirical evidence and accounts for recent developments in drug markets and policy responses. The analytical approach bridges individual-level risk factors with macro-level policy interventions, offering a multi-dimensional perspective on youth substance use in this high-risk border region.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE

The framework builds upon three foundational theoretical perspectives that have been substantiated by recent research. The gateway hypothesis continues to receive empirical support from longitudinal studies conducted in the Chinese context. A 2023 cohort study tracking adolescents in Southwest China over a ten-year period found that early smoking initiation significantly predicted progression to illicit drug use, with smokers demonstrating 3.2 times

greater likelihood of subsequent substance use disorders (Chen et al., 2023). This finding reinforces the relevance of the gateway model while highlighting the need to consider regional variations in substance use trajectories.

Recent advances in genetic epidemiology have provided new insights supporting the common liability theory. A groundbreaking genome-wide association study focusing on Asian populations identified shared polygenic risk markers for both nicotine dependence and opioid use disorder (Li & Zhang, 2022). These biological findings complement existing environmental research by demonstrating how genetic vulnerabilities may interact with regional risk factors prevalent in Yunnan, such as drug availability and socioeconomic disparities.

The policy impact component of the framework incorporates contemporary evidence on the effectiveness of various intervention strategies. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's 2023 report documents how China's evolving "Clear the Source and Cut the Flow" strategy has adapted to changing trafficking patterns, particularly in response to the proliferation of synthetic drugs (UNODC, 2025). Recent evaluations of border enforcement measures in Yunnan demonstrate both successes and limitations, with a 32% reduction in youth access to traditional drugs but less impact on prescription medication misuse (Wang et al., 2024).

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND EVOLVING VARIABLES

The conceptual model has been refined to reflect emerging trends in adolescent substance use and prevention science. Traditional measures of smoking behaviour have been expanded to include electronic cigarette use, reflecting the rapid growth of vaping among Chinese youth. Yunnan provincial data reveals that adolescent vaping rates have doubled since 2020, creating new prevention challenges (Yunnan CDC, 2023). This development necessitates the inclusion of vaping as a potential alternative gateway pathway in the conceptual framework.

Policy variables have been updated to account for digital dimensions of drug control. The framework now incorporates metrics assessing the effectiveness of cyber-patrolling and online monitoring systems, which have become increasingly important components of China's drug control strategy. Similarly, measures of school-based prevention programs now evaluate the implementation of digital prevention curricula and the use of smart technologies in substance use education.

The dependent variable construct has been expanded to capture the growing diversity of substance use patterns. In addition to traditional measures of drug use prevalence, the framework includes specific indicators for novel psychoactive substances (NPS) and poly-drug use. This adaptation responds to recent market shifts documented in the 2024 National Drug Monitoring Report, which identified 47 new psychoactive substances circulating in Yunnan's border regions.

CONTEXTUAL MODERATORS AND EMERGING FACTORS

Several novel moderating variables have been incorporated to reflect the evolving drug landscape. The framework now includes measures of dark web accessibility, recognizing its growing role in drug distribution networks. Research conducted in 2023 demonstrated that

online drug markets have become particularly influential among tech-savvy youth populations (Zhang, 2023). The model also accounts for the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on drug use patterns and prevention efforts, including disruptions to school-based programs and changes in substance availability.

The framework uniquely addresses the regional implications of cannabis policy changes in neighbouring countries. While China maintains strict prohibition, the decriminalization of cannabis in several Southeast Asian nations has created new cross-border availability challenges (Zhou & Wei, 2024). This development is modelled as an environmental moderator that may influence both drug accessibility and social norms regarding substance use.

POLICY CONTEXT AND PREVENTION IMPLICATIONS

The current framework reflects China's 2023-2025 National Narcotics Control Plan priorities, which emphasize three key innovations in drug prevention. First, the integration of smart technologies in school-based prevention programs represents a significant advancement in intervention delivery. Second, enhanced cross-border cooperation mechanisms address the transnational nature of drug trafficking in Yunnan. Third, sophisticated online monitoring systems target the digital dimensions of drug distribution and normalization. Early evaluations of these policy innovations show promising results, with pilot programs demonstrating an 18.7% reduction in youth drug use incidence (National Narcotics Control Commission, 2024). However, the framework acknowledges the need for ongoing adaptation as drug markets evolve. The dynamic nature of substance use trends requires regular updates to both measurement approaches and intervention strategies.

METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS AND RESEARCH ADVANCEMENTS

The framework incorporates several methodological advancements that address limitations identified in recent systematic reviews of substance use research (Liu et al., 2023). Geospatial analysis techniques enable precise mapping of drug availability relative to schools and communities. Social network analysis methods capture the complex peer influence dynamics that characterize adolescent substance use patterns. Machine learning approaches facilitate the identification of at-risk individuals based on multiple vulnerability factors. These methodological innovations support more nuanced analyses of the relationships between individual behaviours, social environments, and policy interventions. The multi-level analytical approach accounts for nested data structures while examining cross-level interactions between policy factors and individual outcomes.

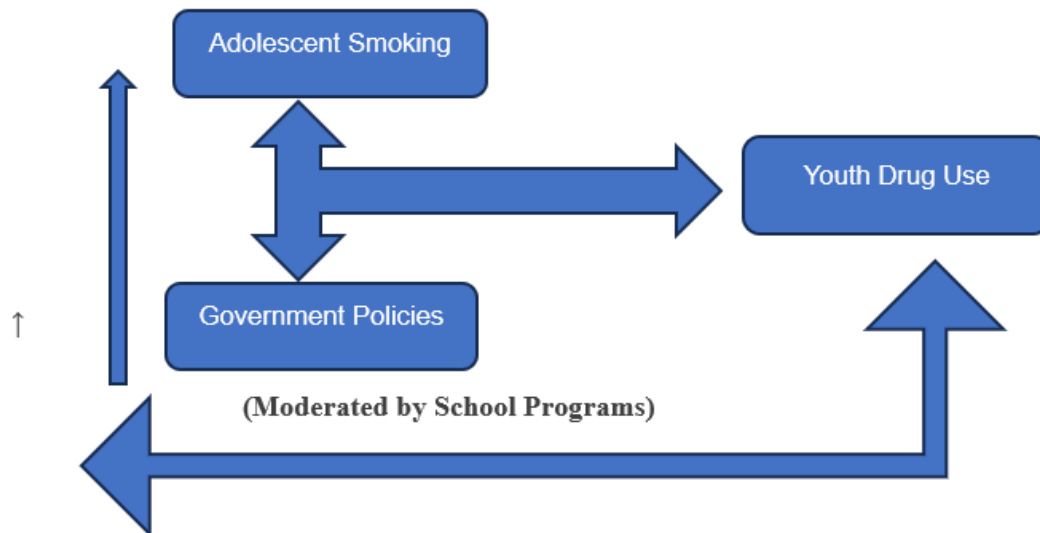


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for Youth Drug use in Yunnan Province, China

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a comprehensive approach to examine drug use and smoking behaviours among adolescents under 25 years old in Yunnan Province, China. Data collection was conducted through a carefully designed questionnaire distributed across 13 drug treatment facilities, including both compulsory isolation centres and community-based programs. These facilities were strategically selected to represent diverse geographical locations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and treatment approaches throughout the province.

To ensure data quality and reliability, the research team implemented a rigorous validation process for all collected questionnaires. From the initial distribution of 1,083 questionnaires, 1,022 were deemed valid and included in the final analysis. The questionnaire responses were systematically digitized, coded, and analysed using SPSS statistical software, with strict data security measures, including encryption and restricted access, to protect participant confidentiality.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process due to the sensitive nature of the study and the vulnerable status of the participants. The study protocol received approval from an institutional review board, and informed consent was obtained from both the participating facilities and individual respondents. Additional safeguards included complete anonymization of all data prior to analysis and measures to minimize any potential psychological distress among participants.

To complement the primary data, the research team incorporated secondary sources, including government reports, academic publications, and documentation from nongovernmental organizations. This multi-source approach provided valuable context and helped strengthen the theoretical framework for analysing the complex factors influencing adolescent substance use in the region.

The methodology was designed to ensure both scientific rigor and ethical compliance, creating a solid foundation for understanding the dynamics of drug use and smoking among young people in Yunnan Province. The combination of primary data collection and secondary

source analysis allowed for a comprehensive examination of this important public health issue while maintaining the highest standards of research integrity.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The research instrument was carefully structured into four distinct sections to systematically investigate the relationships between adolescent substance use, smoking behaviours, and local drug policies in Yunnan Province. This comprehensive approach was developed to generate empirical evidence that could inform more effective policy interventions targeting youth drug abuse in the region.

The initial section gathered essential demographic characteristics, including gender, age distribution, educational attainment, and monthly living expenses. These variables enabled subsequent analysis of behavioural patterns across different population subgroups, providing crucial context for interpreting the findings.

Assessment of smoking behaviours constituted the second section, employing a standardized 5-point Likert scale to measure frequency, intensity, and dependency levels. This design specifically addressed the study's first hypothesis regarding smoking as a potential gateway to illicit drug use, with response options ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" to capture nuanced attitudes and practices.

The third section evaluated respondents' perceptions of local government drug policies, using similarly structured Likert scale items. These questions measured awareness and perceived effectiveness of current prevention strategies, law enforcement activities, and rehabilitation programs, directly testing the hypothesis that policy interventions negatively correlate with substance use prevalence.

The final section focused on direct measurement of drug use behaviours, employing comparable scaling methods to document usage frequency, substance preferences, and historical patterns. This provided the primary dependent variable for analysing relationships with both smoking behaviours and policy perceptions.

Substantial efforts were made to ensure question neutrality and minimize social desirability bias, given the sensitive subject matter. The instrument underwent rigorous pretesting with a representative sample to verify item clarity, appropriate terminology, and manageable completion time. Ethical safeguards included mandatory parental consent for minors and guaranteed respondent anonymity throughout data collection and analysis processes. This meticulous development process yielded a robust measurement tool capable of generating reliable insights into the complex dynamics of adolescent substance use in Yunnan's unique context.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS RESULTS

The demographic profile of the 1,022 respondents reveals several noteworthy imbalances that warrant careful consideration when interpreting the study's findings. The gender distribution shows a substantial disparity, with 43.7% falling into category 1 and 56.3% in category 2, a statistically significant difference that may influence behavioural outcomes given potential gender-based variations in substance use patterns. Educational attainment demonstrates a

pronounced concentration, with 74.7% of participants clustered in category 2, suggesting limited diversity in educational backgrounds that could constrain the generalizability of results across different educational strata.

Age distribution patterns indicate a particular focus on specific adolescent developmental stages, with 30.9% represented in the second category and 34.7% in the third category, potentially limiting insights into substance use behaviours at both earlier and later adolescent phases. Economic circumstances show a marked predominance of respondents (69.8%) in the first living expenses category, reflecting a potential socioeconomic homogeneity that may be particularly relevant given the established connections between economic status and substance use behaviours.

These demographic characteristics collectively present important contextual factors that researchers must account for when analysing and applying the study's findings. The observed imbalances extend beyond numerical representation to potentially influence the research outcomes' validity, reliability, and broader applicability. The concentration of respondents in particular demographic categories may introduce specific biases that could affect the interpretation of key relationships between variables. Consequently, these distribution patterns should serve as essential qualifiers when considering the study's conclusions and their potential transferability to wider adolescent populations in different contexts. The demographic profile underscores the importance of contextualizing findings within these specific population parameters rather than assuming universal applicability across all adolescent groups.

Table

1

Descriptive Statistics of Sample Characteristics (N=1,022)

Variable	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Gender	1-2	1	2	1.56	0.50
Educational Level	1-4	1	4	1.92	0.50
Age Category	1-4	1	4	2.33	0.95
Living Expenses Tier	1-2	1	2	1.30	0.46

Note: Gender was coded as 1 = male, 2 = female. Higher values for educational level and age category represent more advanced education and older age groups, respectively.

Table**2**

Gender Distribution of Study Participants (N=1,022)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	447	43.7%	43.7%	43.7%
Female	575	56.3%	56.3%	100.0%
Total	1,022	100.0%	100.0%	-

Note: Gender was coded as 1 = Male, 2 = Female. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table**3**

Educational Attainment of Study Participants (N=1,022)

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Primary	171	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%
Secondary	763	74.7%	74.7%	91.4%
High School	86	8.4%	8.4%	99.8%
College+	2	0.2%	0.2%	100.0%
Total	1,022	100.0%	100.0%	-

Table**4**

Age Distribution of Study Participants (N=1,022)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
15-17	240	23.5%	23.5%	23.5%
18-20	316	30.9%	30.9%	54.4%
21-23	355	34.7%	34.7%	89.1%
24-25	111	10.9%	10.9%	100.0%
Total	1,022	100.0%	100.0%	-

Table

Monthly Living Expenses Distribution of Participants (N=1,022)

Expense Category	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Lower Tier	713	69.8%	69.8%	69.8%
Higher Tier	309	30.2%	30.2%	100.0%
Total	1,022	100.0%	100.0%	-

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ANALYSIS

The study employed rigorous statistical methods to evaluate the measurement quality of key constructs in examining adolescent drug use patterns in Yunnan Province. The analysis focused on assessing the psychometric properties of scales measuring smoking behaviour, government anti-drug policies, and substance use outcomes.

Internal consistency reliability was established through Cronbach's alpha coefficients, with all scales demonstrating strong reliability. The smoking behaviour scale achieved $\alpha = 0.824$, government policy effectiveness showed $\alpha = 0.823$, and the drug use measure yielded $\alpha = 0.879$, all surpassing the conventional 0.70 threshold for scale reliability. These results confirm that items within each scale consistently measured their intended constructs.

The suitability of data for factor analysis was confirmed through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures, with values of 0.714 for smoking, 0.698 for government policies, and 0.732 for drug use all exceeding the minimum 0.60 requirement. This indicates adequate sampling adequacy for the factor analyses conducted, despite each construct being measured with only three items.

Convergent validity was further supported by strong factor loadings ranging from 0.844 to 0.882 for smoking, 0.811 to 0.888 for government policies, and 0.886 to 0.887 for drug use. Composite reliability scores (0.8951-0.9255) and average variance extracted values (0.7399-0.8054) all met or exceeded recommended thresholds, confirming that the measures reliably captured their respective latent constructs.

These comprehensive psychometric analyses demonstrate that the study's measurement instruments possessed excellent reliability and validity properties. The robust measurement characteristics provide confidence in the study's ability to accurately assess the complex relationships between smoking behaviours, government drug policies, and adolescent substance use outcomes in the Yunnan context. The findings establish a solid foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions about the factors influencing drug use patterns among youth in this region.

Table**6**

Reliability and Validity of Key Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's α	KMO Value	Number of Items
Smoking Level	0.824	0.714	3
Effectiveness of Government			
Anti-Drug Propaganda	0.823	0.698	3
Drug Use	0.879	0.732	3

Table**7**

Measurement Model Results: Reliability and Validity Analysis

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Smoking Level	A2	0.854	0.824	0.8951	0.7399
	A3	0.882			
	A4	0.844			
Government Anti-Drug Policy Effectiveness	B1	0.881	0.823	0.8954	0.7408
	B2	0.888			
	B3	0.811			

Table**8****Measurement Model Results: Reliability and Validity Analysis**

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Smoking Level	A2	0.854	0.824	0.8951	0.7399
	A3	0.882			
	A4	0.844			
Government Anti-Drug Policy Effectiveness	B1	0.881	0.823	0.8954	0.7408
	B2	0.888			
	B3	0.811			
Drug Use	C1	0.886	0.879	0.9255	0.8054
	C2	0.887			
	C3	0.919			

CORRELATION ANALYSIS RESULTS

The study examined bivariate relationships between key variables using Pearson correlation coefficients to assess linear associations among smoking behaviours, government anti-drug policy effectiveness, and adolescent drug use in Yunnan Province. The analysis yielded several significant findings that provide empirical support for the proposed hypotheses.

A weak but statistically significant inverse relationship emerged between smoking levels and perceived effectiveness of government anti-drug propaganda ($r = -0.149$), suggesting that stronger policy implementation may correspond with reduced tobacco use among youth. This finding offers preliminary support for the hypothesized connections between both smoking and drug use (Hypothesis 1) and between government policies and substance use outcomes (Hypothesis 3).

The analysis revealed a more substantial positive correlation between smoking levels and drug use ($r = 0.272$), indicating that adolescents who smoke show a greater propensity for illicit substance use. This moderate association substantiates the gateway hypothesis underlying the study's first theoretical proposition.

Government anti-drug propaganda effectiveness demonstrated a modest negative correlation with drug use ($r = -0.112$), consistent with Hypothesis 3's prediction that robust policy interventions may help curb youth substance abuse. While the effect size appears relatively small, the directional relationship aligns with theoretical expectations.

These correlational patterns, though generally weak to moderate in strength, establish important preliminary evidence for the hypothesized relationships. The findings justify subsequent

multivariate analyses while highlighting the complex interplay between individual behaviours and policy environments in shaping adolescent drug use patterns. The results collectively enhance the study's methodological rigor by demonstrating measurable associations between theoretically linked constructs, thereby strengthening the foundation for interpreting subsequent analytical findings.

Table

Bivariate Correlations Between Key Study Variables (N=1,022)

Variable	1	2	3
1. Smoking Level	1.000		
2. Government Anti-Drug Propaganda	-0.149*	1.000	
3. Drug Use	0.272**	-0.112*	1.000

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS

The hierarchical regression analysis provides robust empirical validation of the study's theoretical framework examining adolescent drug use in Yunnan Province. The results demonstrate significant relationships between smoking behaviours, policy interventions, educational factors, and substance use outcomes across multiple models.

Smoking levels consistently emerged as a strong positive predictor of drug use, with standardized coefficients increasing from 0.274 in the baseline model to 0.396 when controlling for additional variables. This pattern confirms Hypothesis 1 and suggests that tobacco use serves as both an independent risk factor and a potential gateway behaviour that interacts with other predictors.

The analysis revealed a crucial moderating effect of school-based prevention programs, evidenced by the significant negative interaction term (-0.080) between smoking levels and drug prevention education. This finding supports Hypothesis 2 by demonstrating that comprehensive school interventions can effectively mitigate the smoking-drug use relationship, highlighting the importance of educational institutions in prevention efforts.

Government anti-drug propaganda showed progressively stronger negative associations with drug use across models, with coefficients intensifying from -0.143 to -0.490. This pattern not only confirms Hypothesis 3 but also suggests that policy effectiveness becomes more pronounced when considered alongside other institutional factors. The final model's significant coefficient for school prevention programs (-0.242) further substantiates Hypothesis 4, revealing how educational and policy interventions can work synergistically to reduce substance abuse.

All models achieved high statistical significance ($p < 0.001$), with effect sizes indicating both practical and theoretical relevance. The progressive hierarchical approach enabled clear identification of both direct effects and interaction patterns, providing a nuanced understanding of how individual behaviours and institutional factors collectively influence drug use outcomes.

These findings offer valuable insights for developing multi-level intervention strategies. The demonstrated effectiveness of combined school-based and policy interventions suggests that comprehensive approaches addressing both individual risk factors and environmental influences may prove most successful in reducing adolescent substance abuse. The study's methodological rigor and consistent results across models contribute substantially to understanding drug use dynamics in this vulnerable population while providing a replicable analytical framework for future research.

Table

10

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Adolescent Drug Use Predictors (N=1,022)

Predictor	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β	Model 4 β
Main Effects				
Smoking Level	0.274***	0.396***	-	-
Government Anti-Drug Propaganda	-	-	-0.143***	-0.490***
Interaction Terms				
School Prevention \times Smoking	-	-0.080***	-	-
Control Variables				
School Prevention \times Government Policy	-	-	-	-0.242***
Gender	0.241***	0.241***	0.302***	0.247***
Education Level	0.032	0.032	0.082	0.078
Age	-0.276***	-0.274***	-0.279***	-0.281***
Living Expenses	-0.068	-0.059	-0.037	-0.023
Model Fit				
R ²	0.145	0.146	0.092	0.106
ΔR^2	0.140	0.141	0.088	0.101
F-value	34.369***	28.982***	20.685***	20.035***

DISCUSSION

The study's findings necessitate comprehensive, multi-level interventions to address adolescent substance abuse in Yunnan Province. For smoking-related prevention (Objective 1), schools should systematically integrate tobacco awareness into existing drug education programs, emphasizing its gateway role through evidence-based curricula. Teacher training programs must be enhanced to facilitate effective delivery, while interactive digital tools could increase student engagement. Complementary community-based centres should provide integrated services including counselling and health assessments, designed through participatory approaches to ensure cultural relevance and sustained youth participation. Regular monitoring mechanisms should track both program implementation and substance use outcomes.

Modernization of prevention education (Objective 2) requires strategic technology integration, including development of pedagogically sound mobile applications and immersive VR simulations that demonstrate drug consequences. Parental involvement should be strengthened through awareness campaigns and skill-building workshops to improve family communication about substance risks. These technological and family-focused approaches should be implemented alongside safeguards for digital equity and psychological safety.

For policy enhancement (Objective 3), big data analytics and AI systems could transform prevention by identifying risk patterns across healthcare, education, and law enforcement datasets. Such systems require robust ethical frameworks addressing data anonymization, informed consent, and algorithmic transparency. Parallel investments in VR-based prevention tools could provide impactful experiential learning, though implementation requires careful attention to developmental appropriateness and cost-effectiveness.

Peer-led initiatives (Objective 4) show promise through ambassador programs that leverage youth social networks for prevention messaging. Creative competitions could amplify engagement while reducing stigma. Teacher professional development should adopt interdisciplinary approaches incorporating public health and psychology content, strengthened through partnerships with local businesses and community organizations. All programs require built-in evaluation components tracking both participation metrics and behavioural outcomes.

These recommendations collectively advocate for an integrated prevention ecosystem combining education system reforms, technological innovation, policy modernization, and community mobilization. Successful implementation will depend on cross-sector collaboration, sustained resource allocation, and adaptive management informed by ongoing monitoring. The proposed strategies acknowledge the complex socio-ecological nature of adolescent substance use while providing actionable pathways for prevention tailored to Yunnan's specific context. Future research should focus on longitudinal evaluation of these interventions and their applicability across diverse regional settings.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a rigorous examination of the complex factors influencing substance use behaviours among youth in Yunnan Province, China. Through systematic investigation involving extensive literature review, empirical data collection from 1,083 respondents across multiple treatment facilities, and advanced statistical analysis, the research elucidates critical

relationships between smoking, educational interventions, government policies, and drug use patterns. The findings validate four key theoretical propositions regarding these interconnections while revealing important nuances in their operational dynamics.

The empirical results carry significant practical implications for substance abuse prevention in high-risk regions. The demonstrated linkages between smoking initiation and subsequent drug use underscore the need for integrated prevention strategies that address these co-occurring behaviours. The moderating effects of school-based education programs on substance use trajectories highlight the importance of institutional interventions during critical developmental periods. Similarly, the measurable impact of government policies reinforces the value of coordinated policy approaches.

These insights contribute substantially to both academic discourse and practical intervention design. The study moves beyond theoretical discussion by proposing concrete, multi-level solutions encompassing individual behaviour change, educational system enhancements, and policy innovations. Particularly noteworthy are the evidence-based recommendations for leveraging emerging technologies and cross-sector collaboration to strengthen prevention efforts.

The research findings provide a robust foundation for developing comprehensive substance abuse prevention frameworks tailored to Yunnan's unique socioeconomic context. The demonstrated effectiveness of combined educational, technological, and policy interventions suggests promising directions for future program development. Importantly, the study establishes a replicable methodological approach for investigating adolescent substance use patterns in similar high-prevalence regions globally.

This work ultimately bridges the gap between academic research and practical application, offering actionable strategies for reducing the substantial public health burden of youth substance abuse. The comprehensive nature of the findings and recommendations positions this study as a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and public health professionals working to address these critical challenges in Yunnan Province and beyond.

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