



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Integrating school environment strategies into adolescent substance use prevention: insights from Taiwan and implications for global research

To the Editor,

Taiwanese research on adolescent substance abuse has consistently highlighted the early initiation of substance use and its associated risks for mental health and substance use disorders (1). Similar to findings by Halladay et al., the transition from childhood to adolescence represents a critical period for the initiation of substance use, compounded by school transitions (2). This period is marked by rapid brain development and heightened sensitivity to substance use's rewarding effects, yet adolescents' decision-making and impulse control mechanisms remain immature (1).

The multilevel latent class analysis by Halladay et al. uniquely contributes to our understanding by identifying distinct classes of students and schools based on substance use patterns, mental health symptoms, and school environment factors. This aligns with findings from Taiwanese studies, which also emphasize the importance of addressing the school environment as a key factor in substance use prevention strategies (1).

In Taiwan, prevalence rates of adolescent substance use vary, with increased risks among street youth and variations across urban and rural settings (1). The variety of substances used by Taiwanese youth, including emerging drugs, ketamine, and amphetamines, reflects the need for tailored prevention and intervention strategies that consider local substance use trends and cultural factors.

Addressing adolescent substance use requires a multifaceted approach that includes early identification, comprehensive mental health support, and interventions targeting the school environment. Halladay et al.'s study underscores the potential of school-based interventions in creating positive school climates, enhancing students' sense of belonging and safety, and ultimately, reducing the likelihood of early substance use. This approach is highly relevant to Taiwan, where school-based prevention programs could significantly impact adolescent substance use trends.

In conclusion, the findings from Halladay et al.'s study provide valuable insights into the prevention and early intervention of substance use among adolescents. By considering the role of the school environment alongside individual and familial factors, we can develop more effective strategies to combat adolescent substance use. As Taiwan continues to face challenges related to adolescent substance abuse, integrating lessons from international research into local prevention and intervention efforts will be crucial.

Sincerely,

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Conflict of Interest

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