

## Exploring Smoking Influences on Asian Children and Adolescents: A Scoping Review

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Smoking is a leading cause of non-communicable diseases and remains a significant public health challenge, particularly among children and adolescents in Asia, where prevalence rates are high. This behavior is influenced by a complex interplay of individual traits, interpersonal relationships, and broader social-environmental factors. Understanding these influences is crucial for developing effective interventions to reduce smoking among youth. **Objectives:** This study aimed to identify and map the key factors influencing smoking behavior among Asian children and adolescents, providing insights into potential strategies for targeted interventions. **Methods:** A scoping review was conducted through systematic searches of the Scopus and ScienceDirect databases using keywords related to smoking among Asian youth. From an initial pool of 312 articles, four met the inclusion criteria for in-depth analysis. Thematic analysis categorized influencing factors into individual, interpersonal, and socio-environmental domains. **Results:** The review identified three main categories of factors. Individual factors included age, gender, and curiosity, which often trigger initial smoking. Interpersonal influences such as peer pressure and family members who smoke played a significant role. Social and environmental factors, including exposure to tobacco advertising, easy access to cigarettes, and weak regulatory frameworks, further increased smoking risks. These factors frequently interacted, compounding their impact on youth smoking behaviors. **Conclusion:** Addressing smoking among Asian youth requires comprehensive strategies that encompass education, regulation, and family involvement. School-based programs, social media campaigns, stricter laws, and family-focused interventions are essential to reduce smoking prevalence and foster healthier generations.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Asia, Children, Influencing Factors, Smoking Behavior

### INTRODUCTION

Smoking is the leading cause of non-communicable diseases globally and a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease (CVD) and lung disease (Münzel *et al.*, 2020). Despite widespread awareness of its negative health effects, smoking remains a common addictive habit in many communities worldwide (Jiang *et al.*, 2020). The WHO reports that cigarette consumption causes the death of up to half of its users. Each year, more than 8 million people die from tobacco-related causes, of which approximately 7 million deaths are due to direct use, and another 1.2 million result from exposure to secondhand smoke in non-smoking individuals (Münzel *et al.*, 2020).

Tobacco use among adolescents is a significant public health issue globally. An estimated 1.2 billion smokers worldwide include more than half of them being young people. Most begin smoking at an early age and continue into adulthood (Nainggolan, Dharmayanti and Kristanto, 2020). Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to social and environmental influences. During this stage, individuals often seek acceptance from their peer groups, which can serve as an initial trigger for smoking behavior (Imamuzzaman *et al.*, 2022). Data from the Global Youth Tobacco Survey indicate that smoking prevalence is not limited to boys but also affects girls (Ahmed, Ahmed and Uddin, 2021).

Asia is the largest and most populous continent in the world, covering

approximately 44.58 million square kilometers, or nearly 30% of the Earth's total land area. Geographically, Asia is situated in the northern and eastern hemispheres, bordered by the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the east, the Indian Ocean to the south, and the Red Sea and Europe to the west. Geologically and geographically, Asia is connected to the European continent, forming the landmass known as Eurasia (Serruys, 2024).

Smoking behavior among children and adolescents has become a major public health concern, especially in Asia, which exhibits a high prevalence of tobacco use. Data indicate that the majority of smokers begin this habit during adolescence, influenced by complex and interacting risk factors, including individual, interpersonal, and social elements (Sharma *et al.*, 2021). Factors such as peer pressure, curiosity, and exposure to tobacco advertising play significant roles in shaping smoking habits. Additionally, an unsupportive family environment—such as the presence of family members who smoke—further increases the risk (Fan *et al.*, 2023). Psychological pressures, including academic stress and negative emotions, also influence smoking behavior; adolescents often see smoking as a way to cope with stress or seek escape from daily problems (Zhao *et al.*, 2023).

In Asia, the social and cultural environment, easy access to tobacco products, and weak regulatory frameworks contribute to the high prevalence of smoking among children and adolescents (Fan *et al.*, 2023). Exposure to tobacco advertising via social media and public spaces also impacts adolescents' perceptions of smoking, making it appear attractive or normal (Fan *et al.*, 2023).

Recent studies have shown that various factors influence smoking behavior among Asian adolescents. One of the most prominent is peer influence, where adolescents often start smoking due to encouragement or pressure from their social circles. Additionally, the role of parents is significant, especially for adolescents with parents who smoke or hold permissive attitudes toward tobacco use. Other contributing factors include a low understanding of the health risks associated with smoking, exposure to cigarette advertising, and the desire to try new experiences.

However, there are still gaps in research regarding the effectiveness of interventions involving families and communities in preventing adolescent smoking. Therefore, further studies are necessary to identify optimal prevention strategies that actively involve families and communities in reducing smoking prevalence among adolescents (Oktania, Widjarnako and Shaluhayah, 2023)(Yohnes *et al.*, 2023).

A better understanding of the factors that influence smoking behavior among children and adolescents in Asia is essential for designing effective interventions. This study aims to explore and map the various factors affecting smoking behavior in this age group and identify opportunities for targeted, effective prevention strategies. The insights gained can inform the development of prevention efforts—such as education, awareness campaigns, and strengthened tobacco regulations—that are better tailored to this population. Ultimately, this approach will contribute to fostering a healthier next generation.

## METHODS

This study employed a scoping review approach to map the factors influencing smoking behavior among children and adolescents under 18 years of age living in the Asian region. This approach was chosen because it is well-suited for exploring broad areas of research, identifying gaps in the literature, and providing in-depth insights into the dynamics of smoking behavior among adolescents. The research process involved several main steps: literature search, article screening, and data analysis, following the principles outlined by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Glasgow Caledonian University, 2024).

The literature search was conducted in two major scientific databases: Scopus and ScienceDirect. Keywords were combined using Boolean operators, specifically: “child\* OR youth\* OR teenage\* OR adolescen\*” AND “influencing factor” AND (“smoking behavior” OR “smoking habit” OR “smoking\*”). Additional filters limited the search to articles that were relevant to the following criteria: English language, published between 2019 and 2024, and available in full text with free

access. Inclusion criteria were: (1) the respondents were children or adolescents under 18 years of age, (2) the studies were conducted in Asian countries, (3) the articles focused on factors influencing smoking behavior, and (4) the articles presented empirical data. Exclusion criteria included: (1) review articles, (2) articles lacking a clear source of publication, and (3) research findings that were not relevant or did not impact child and adolescent health.

Data were systematically extracted to identify relevant information, including research characteristics, study design, methods, population, factors influencing smoking behavior, and main outcomes. The analysis was conducted descriptively using thematic methods, with groupings based on individual, interpersonal, and socio-environmental factors. Mendeley was used for reference management, while thematic analysis was performed manually.

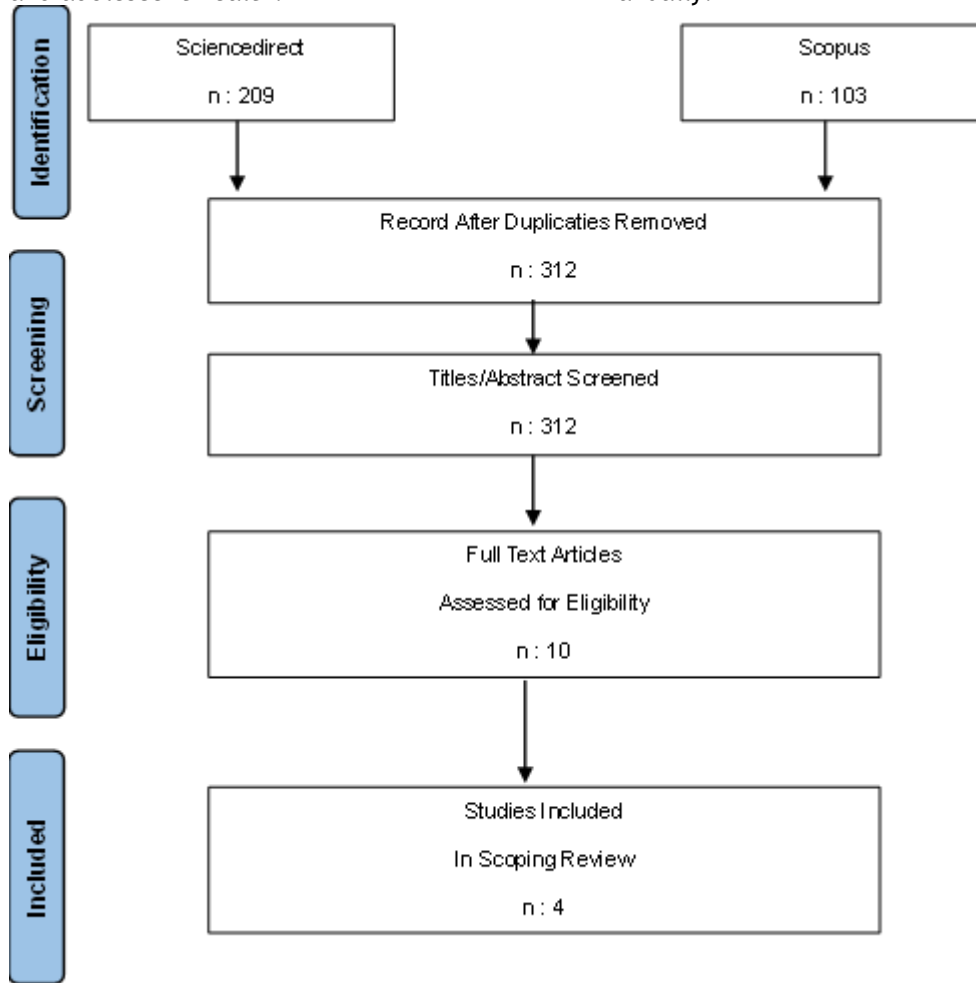


Figure 1. Framework diagram based on PRISMA guidelines

Table 1. Summary of selected data

Author Name and Year of Publication	Research Title	Research Type	Method or Research Design	Results
(Sharma <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Tobacco Consumption and its Associated Factors Among Nepalese Students	Cross-sectional	Analytic study with cluster sampling technique and self-administered questionnaire	The prevalence of tobacco use was 22.8% with peer pressure (62.3%) as the main factor. Use was higher among male (37.2%) than female (8%) students. School-based interventions are recommended to reduce tobacco use.

Author Name and Year of Publication	Research Title	Research Type	Method or Research Design	Results
(Imamuzzaman <i>et al.</i> , 2022)	Prevalence of Smoking and its Associated Factors among Adolescent Males in Bangladesh	Cross-sectional	Community-based survey with Probability Proportionate Sampling (PPS) technique	Smoking prevalence was 25%. Major risk factors included peer influence (OR=41.9) and family members who smoke (OR=19.89). Knowledge of the negative impact of smoking did not reduce the prevalence of the behavior.
(Fan <i>et al.</i> , 2023)	Comparative Analysis of E-cigarette Prevalence and Influencing Factors Among Adolescents in Jiangsu Province, China	Cross-sectional	School-based survey using the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) technique and logistic regression analysis	The prevalence of e-cigarette use increased from 2.23% in 2019 to 3.74% in 2021. Risk factors include cigarette experimentation (OR=2.7), peer influence (OR=2.5), and exposure to e-cigarette advertising (OR=1.8). Tobacco control strategies are needed to mitigate this trend.
(Zhao <i>et al.</i> , 2023)	The Characteristics and Risk Factors of E-cigarette Use Among Adolescents in Shanghai: A Case-Control Study	Case-Control	Survey with quantitative and qualitative approaches; Analysis using the seven-step Colaizzi method	E-cigarette use was driven by curiosity, peer influence (93.2%), exposure to sales (90.9%), and diverse nicotine flavors. Users had higher positive expectations of e-cigarettes than the control group ( $p < 0.001$ ).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial search yielded 312 articles, comprising 103 from Scopus and 209 from ScienceDirect. After completing the literature search, the articles were subjected to two stages of screening to ensure relevance and data quality. In the first stage, the title and abstract of each article were manually examined to assess whether they met the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This initial screening narrowed the relevant articles down to 10 for further review.

In the second stage, the full texts of these 10 articles were analyzed to verify methodological validity, the quality of results, and relevance to the objectives of this study. Articles with methodological flaws, unclear publication sources, or irrelevant findings—such as review articles and studies not aligned with the research focus—were excluded, resulting in four final articles selected for in-depth review.

The results of this scoping review are based on the analysis of these four

articles, which are relevant to the factors influencing smoking behavior among Asian children and adolescents under 18 years of age. These articles provide a diverse overview of individual, interpersonal, and social/environmental factors contributing to smoking behavior.

Individual factors include demographic and psychological characteristics that influence smoking behavior among children and adolescents. Based on the findings from the four articles, these factors include age, gender, and psychological motivation.

Age is a key factor in the initiation of smoking. A study in Nepal reported that the majority of adolescents began smoking between the ages of 15 and 17, a period often associated with increased curiosity toward risky behaviors, including smoking (Sharma *et al.*, 2021). In China, the average age of first use of e-cigarettes or traditional cigarettes was 16 years, with a significant increase observed in the 16-18 age group (Zhao *et al.*, 2023). Boys are more likely to smoke than girls. In

Bangladesh, the prevalence of smoking among adolescent boys is 25%, which is much higher than among adolescent girls, largely due to social norms that support smoking as a symbol of masculinity (Imamuzzaman *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, in Nepal, adolescent boys were reported to have a higher prevalence of smoking than girls, primarily driven by social influence and accessibility (Sharma *et al.*, 2021).

Psychological motivation or curiosity also emerged as a main reason adolescents start smoking. Most adolescents reported trying cigarettes initially to “get a taste” or as part of social exploration (Sharma *et al.*, 2021)(Zhao *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, stress and emotional distress—whether due to academic pressures or interpersonal conflicts—often drive adolescents to smoke as a coping mechanism. Studies in Bangladesh indicate that smoking is frequently used as a way to cope with stress, especially among adolescent boys (Imamuzzaman *et al.*, 2022).

Interpersonal factors refer to influences arising from social relationships, such as with peers and family. This factor is consistently identified as one of the main drivers of smoking behavior. Peers play a particularly significant role in shaping adolescent smoking. Studies in China show that 93% of adolescents who smoke have friends who also smoke, and most reported that they started smoking after being invited by their friends (Zhao *et al.*, 2023). This influence extends beyond initiation to the continuation of smoking. Social pressure to fit in with the group often discourages adolescents from quitting.

The presence of family members who smoke—especially parents or siblings—increases the likelihood of children adopting the habit. In Nepal, more than 50% of adolescents who smoked reported having a family member who smoked, which was considered a factor normalizing smoking behavior within the home environment (Sharma *et al.*, 2021). Bangladesh, easy access to cigarettes at home is also a primary reason adolescents start smoking (Imamuzzaman *et al.*, 2022). School and work environments also influence smoking behavior. Studies in China have reported that some adolescents begin smoking due to social interactions with part-time coworkers or older schoolmates who smoke actively (Zhao *et al.*, 2023).

Social and environmental factors include external elements that influence the perception of and access to tobacco products, such as advertising, product availability, and government regulation. Exposure to tobacco advertising is a significant factor in increasing adolescent smoking. In China, 90.9% of adolescents who smoke reported having seen tobacco product advertisements, whether through social media, billboards, or other public venues (Fan *et al.*, 2023). These promotions often depict cigarettes as symbols of a modern lifestyle, fostering a positive perception of smoking.

Easy access to tobacco products remains a major challenge in many Asian countries. In Bangladesh, adolescents reported being able to purchase cigarettes easily at local stalls without needing to show identification. The low price of cigarettes further exacerbates this issue, enabling adolescents to buy these products without significant financial barriers (Imamuzzaman *et al.*, 2022). Ineffective tobacco control policies in some Asian countries, such as Nepal and Bangladesh, facilitate adolescents' access to tobacco products (Sharma *et al.*, 2021)(Imamuzzaman *et al.*, 2022). Although some countries have enacted bans on cigarette sales to minors, enforcement of these policies is often inconsistent, resulting in limited impact.

Based on the analysis of four articles, there is a potential interplay between individual, interpersonal, and social/environmental factors in shaping adolescent smoking behavior in Asia. Peer pressure was identified as the dominant factor driving smoking initiation, often reinforced by exposure to advertising and easy access to tobacco products. Additionally, family factors—particularly the presence of family members who smoke—play a crucial role in normalizing this behavior.

This analysis reveals that smoking behavior among children and adolescents in Asia is not simply an individual act but is influenced by a complex web of interconnected factors. Understanding how social, environmental, and individual dynamics contribute to the decision to start smoking is essential for developing targeted and effective interventions.

The results showed significant differences in smoking behavior by gender. Boys consistently reported smoking more

than girls across all study sites, including Bangladesh, Nepal, and China. This disparity is influenced not only by biological factors but also by social and cultural norms that associate smoking with masculinity and courage (Imamuzzaman *et al.*, 2022)(Zhao *et al.*, 2023). In Asian societies, particularly in rural areas, smoking is often considered part of male social culture, affecting both adolescents and adults. Conversely, smoking among adolescent girls is usually more concealed, as it is perceived to violate traditional gender norms. This highlights the need for interventions that consider local cultural norms to develop strategies that are relevant and sensitive to gender dynamics. Public awareness campaigns targeting these perceptions are essential to reduce social acceptance of smoking among adolescent boys, while addressing the stigma that may prevent adolescent girls from seeking support to quit.

Another key finding of this study is the strong influence of media in promoting adolescent smoking behavior. Exposure to tobacco advertising on social media, billboards, and other public spaces significantly increases interest in smoking, especially among children who may not fully understand the health consequences of such actions (Fan *et al.*, 2023).

Compared to studies conducted in Western countries, the gender gap in smoking behavior tends to be narrower. For example, research in Europe and North America indicates that smoking prevalence among female adolescents is relatively higher than in Asia. This difference may be attributed to varying social norms regarding gender roles and tobacco use. In many Western societies, smoking is less stigmatized for females, and factors such as media portrayal and targeted marketing by tobacco companies play a significant role.

This study contributes new knowledge by highlighting that, in the Asian context, cultural and familial factors strongly influence gender differences in smoking behavior. The emphasis on traditional gender roles, stricter parental control over girls, and the perception of smoking as a masculine behavior may explain why male adolescents are more likely to smoke. Understanding these unique sociocultural dynamics is crucial for designing gender-sensitive smoking

prevention programs tailored for Asia (Talip *et al.*, 2016).

Tobacco marketing strategies often utilize attractive product designs, such as fruit flavors or brightly colored packaging, specifically crafted to appeal to adolescents. Conversely, the lack of effective regulation of tobacco advertising in some Asian countries exacerbates this issue. For example, in China, despite restrictions on tobacco advertising in traditional media, digital advertising and sponsorship of youth events remain loopholes exploited by the tobacco industry (Zhao *et al.*, 2023). Stricter regulation of tobacco marketing on digital platforms, including a ban on ads targeting minors, is urgently needed to reduce media influence on smoking behavior.

Although many Asian countries have implemented tobacco control policies, enforcement remains often ineffective. In Nepal and Bangladesh, adolescents can reportedly purchase cigarettes easily without needing to show identification, despite regulations prohibiting sales to minors (Sharma *et al.*, 2021)(Imamuzzaman *et al.*, 2022). This gap indicates a disconnect between existing policies and their actual enforcement on the ground.

Additionally, the low price of cigarettes is a major factor enabling adolescents to purchase tobacco products without financial barriers. Stricter tobacco taxation policies could serve as an effective measure to reduce accessibility, especially among youth. However, such policies should be complemented by strict monitoring of illegal sales, which often serve as alternatives when cigarette prices increase.

Peer influence is one of the most dominant factors in adolescent smoking initiation. Social relationships with friends who smoke create pressure to adopt similar habits as a means of building social bonds and gaining acceptance within peer groups (Zhao *et al.*, 2023). This pressure can be difficult to resist, particularly in school or community settings with high smoking prevalence.

However, family influence cannot be overlooked. The presence of family members who smoke often fosters an environment that normalizes smoking behavior. As Sharma *et al.* (2021), reported, adolescents living with family members who smoke tend to perceive this

behavior as normal and harmless. Conversely, families that maintain a smoke-free environment can serve as a strong protective factor.

These findings underscore the importance of community-wide approaches that engage peers and families in smoking prevention efforts. Family-based interventions, such as parental training to establish smoke-free home environments, may prove particularly effective.

Individual, interpersonal, and social factors reinforce each other. For example, adolescents with high curiosity (an individual factor) are more susceptible to the influence of peers who smoke (interpersonal factors), especially if they are also exposed to tobacco advertising that fosters a positive perception of smoking (social factors). The interactions among these factors suggest that effective prevention strategies should adopt a multidimensional approach that addresses these elements simultaneously.

Furthermore, the different social contexts in each country should also be considered. For instance, in China, the primary challenge is the heavy influence of digital tobacco advertising (Fan *et al.*, 2023), while in Bangladesh, the main issues are low cigarette prices and ease of access (Imamuzzaman *et al.*, 2022). Tailoring strategies to these local contexts can significantly enhance the effectiveness of tobacco control programs.

This study has several strengths. First, it provides a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing smoking behavior among children and adolescents in Asia by synthesizing evidence from multiple studies conducted in diverse cultural and social contexts. The scoping review approach allowed for the identification of key patterns and themes across different studies, offering valuable insights into the complex interplay of individual, interpersonal, and environmental factors that shape smoking behavior. Additionally, the systematic search strategy and the use of predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria enhanced the reliability of the findings.

However, this study also has some limitations. The inclusion of only English-language articles may have introduced language bias, potentially excluding relevant studies published in local Asian languages. Furthermore, the limited

number of studies included in the final analysis (only four articles) may not fully capture the diversity of factors influencing smoking behavior across all Asian countries. The reliance on cross-sectional studies also restricts the ability to draw causal inferences regarding the relationship between the identified factors and smoking behavior. For future research, longitudinal studies are recommended to better understand the causal pathways of smoking initiation and continuation among adolescents. Additionally, expanding the scope to include qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into the contextual and cultural factors influencing smoking behavior. Finally, future reviews should consider incorporating studies published in local languages to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the issue across different regions in Asia.

This study has several important implications for the development of tobacco control policies and smoking prevention interventions among children and adolescents in Asia. The findings highlight the significant roles of age, gender, peer influence, family environment, and social factors in shaping smoking behavior. Therefore, prevention strategies should holistically address these factors:

#### 1. Stricter Tobacco Control Policies

Asian countries need to strengthen regulations related to tobacco advertising, sales to minors, and the pricing of tobacco products. Policies should specifically target vulnerable age groups, particularly adolescents aged 15-18, who are at the highest risk of initiating smoking, as identified in this study. Stricter law enforcement and penalties for violators are essential to ensure effective policy implementation.

#### 2. Age and Gender-Sensitive School-Based Education Programs

Education on the dangers of smoking should be integrated into the school curriculum, with approaches tailored to different age groups. Programs for younger children (under 15 years) should focus on basic knowledge about the health risks of smoking, while programs for older adolescents (15-18 years) should emphasize refusal skills and critical thinking to resist peer pressure. Additionally, gender-specific interventions are

necessary. Programs targeting boys should challenge social norms that associate smoking with masculinity, while programs for girls should focus on building resilience against peer pressure and addressing the stigma surrounding hidden smoking behaviors. Involving peers as agents of change can also help create a social environment that supports healthy behaviors.

### 3. Segmented Social Media Campaigns

Given the strong influence of media in shaping adolescents' perceptions of smoking, awareness campaigns through social media can be an effective strategy. These campaigns should be tailored to specific age and gender groups. For example, campaigns targeting adolescent boys can focus on debunking the myth that smoking is a sign of courage, while campaigns for girls can highlight the negative health and aesthetic impacts of smoking.

### 4. Community and Family Based Interventions

Engaging families and communities in smoking prevention programs can enhance the effectiveness of interventions, especially in areas with high smoking prevalence. These programs should include parental training to create smoke-free home environments and improve supervision of children's behavior, particularly during the transition from childhood to adolescence when the risk of smoking initiation increases.

Considering the findings of this study, effective interventions must be tailored to age- and gender-specific factors, as both significantly influence smoking behavior among Asian adolescents. A multidimensional approach that is sensitive to cultural contexts is expected to effectively reduce smoking prevalence among the younger population.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the coping review of the four articles above, it shows that smoking behavior in children and adolescents in Asia is influenced by a complex interaction of individual, interpersonal, and social/environmental factors, such as age, gender, peer pressure, family influence, exposure to

tobacco advertising, and easy access to tobacco products. These factors reinforce each other, creating a significant challenge in reducing smoking prevalence among adolescents. Therefore, a multidimensional prevention strategy is necessary, including strengthening regulations on tobacco advertising and sales, implementing school-based education programs to increase adolescents' awareness of the dangers of smoking, conducting anti-tobacco campaigns on social media to counter positive narratives about smoking, and developing community-based interventions that involve families and peers in creating an environment that supports healthy behaviors. Consistent implementation of these measures can significantly impact the reduction of smoking among Asian children and adolescents.

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