



Urban School Environments, Coded English and Psychoactive Substance Communication among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Psychoactive substance use among secondary school students is a growing educational, public-health and communication concern. This paper examines coded English expressions used to conceal substance-related discussions among students in Oyo State, drawing on a TETFund-funded mixed-methods study conducted in Oyo South and Osun West Senatorial Districts. Of 600 questionnaires administered, 582 were valid (97.0%), including 291 respondents from Oyo State. Findings revealed peer influence ($M = 3.42$), secrecy ($M = 3.35$), teachers' difficulty understanding coded language ($M = 3.34$) and shared peer meanings ($M = 3.31$). Teacher training on emerging slang received the highest intervention rating ($M = 3.47$). Although urban Oyo evidence highlights contextual vulnerabilities, the parent survey did not directly measure residential differences. The paper recommends teacher training, stronger counselling, peer education, parental engagement and continuous monitoring of emerging coded expressions to improve early identification and prevention.

KEYWORDS: psychoactive substances, coded English expressions urban vulnerability, secondary school students, peer influence, intervention strategies.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND STUDY CONTEXT

Among adolescents, psychoactive-substance use is embedded in a wider social and communicative environment. For secondary schools in Oyo State, an important but less examined dimension is the language students use when discussing substances, access, consumption, intoxication and peer identities. Familiar English words may be reassigned specialised meanings, while slang, abbreviations and metaphors can make peer conversations difficult for adults to interpret. This study therefore approaches substance-related behaviour not only as a health and educational concern, but also as a problem of communication within school communities. Oyo South provides a particularly useful setting because it combines metropolitan Ibadan with adjoining peri-urban communities across Akinyele, Egbeda, Ibadan North, Ibadan North-East, Ibadan North-West, Ibadan South-East, Ibadan South-West, Ido and Oluyole. Rather than treating urban residence as a direct cause of substance use, the paper examines urbanity as a communication environment: dense peer contact, mobility, commercial activity and digital connectivity may increase opportunities for exposure and speed the diffusion of coded expressions. The emphasis is consequently on pathways of vulnerability and concealment, not on a deterministic urban-versus-rural label.

1.1 Context and Statement of the Problem

Psychoactive substance use among secondary school students presents a complex educational and public-health challenge because the behaviour may be concealed through language that is readily understood by peer-group members but unfamiliar to teachers, parents and counsellors. The problem is particularly relevant to urban and peri-urban communities in Oyo South, where dense peer networks, mobility, commercial activity and digital communication can increase opportunities for the rapid circulation of both substance-related practices and coded expressions. Yet conventional school drug-prevention approaches often concentrate on substances and behaviour without adequately considering the linguistic mechanisms through which students conceal, normalise or negotiate such practices. There is therefore a need to identify and interpret the coded English patterns associated with psychoactive-substance communication and to examine how knowledge of these patterns can strengthen early identification, counselling and prevention in Oyo State schools.

Urban School Environments, Coded English and Psychoactive Substance Communication among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

1.2 Purpose, Objectives and Research Focus

The aim of this paper is to examine coded English expressions associated with psychoactive-substance use among secondary school students in Oyo State and to assess their implications for urban vulnerability, early identification and language-based intervention. The specific objectives are to:

1. identify the major forms and patterns of coded English expressions associated with psychoactive-substance communication among secondary school students;
2. examine the social and communicative factors that encourage the use of coded expressions, particularly peer influence, secrecy and social-media exposure;
3. analyse how coded language affects teachers', parents' and counsellors' ability to identify and respond to substance-related behaviour;
4. examine the relevance of urban and peri-urban social environments to the diffusion of coded substance-related language in Oyo State; and
5. propose language-sensitive, school-based intervention strategies for prevention, counselling and early support.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study is justified by the communication gap created when students attach specialised meanings to otherwise ordinary English words, slang, abbreviations and metaphors. Understanding these patterns can improve the capacity of teachers and counsellors to recognise warning signs without treating every instance of youth slang as evidence of substance use. Focusing on Oyo State further permits closer consideration of metropolitan and peri-urban conditions, particularly within Oyo South, and provides evidence that can inform locally appropriate school counselling, parent engagement, peer education and drug-prevention programmes.

1.4 Delimitation and Analytical Boundaries

The paper focuses on secondary school students in Oyo State, drawing specifically on the Oyo component of the parent IBR study conducted in selected public secondary schools in Oyo South Senatorial District. The substantive scope covers coded English expressions, their meanings and communicative functions, peer influence, secrecy, social-media diffusion, barriers to early identification and language-based intervention strategies. Urban vulnerability is examined as a contextual dimension, with emphasis on metropolitan and peri-urban school environments. The parent questionnaire did not directly classify respondents by urban or rural residence; consequently, the paper does not manufacture an urban–rural prevalence estimate from the IBR dataset. Instead, measured IBR mechanisms are interpreted alongside relevant published evidence on urban substance-use vulnerability in Oyo State.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review examines the conceptual, sociolinguistic and empirical foundations for understanding psychoactive-substance communication among adolescents. It focuses on substance use in adolescence, peer influence, coded English and concealment, urban and digital communication environments, school-based intervention, and the research gap at the intersection of language and adolescent substance use. Particular attention is given to Nigerian evidence from Oyo and Osun States and to the discourse-oriented work of Haidar et al. (2020).

2.1 Oyo State Evidence and the Local Research Setting

The Oyo State literature is particularly relevant because the study area includes metropolitan and peri-urban Ibadan environments and because published work has examined substance abuse in another urban Oyo community. Idowu et al. (2018) investigated selected public secondary schools in Ogbomosho using a cross-sectional design and multistage sampling. Their work positions adolescent substance abuse as a public-health and school-policy concern and emphasises the value of formal awareness. Earlier Southwestern Nigerian research cited within that literature also demonstrates that estimates differ substantially across locations and definitions, reinforcing the need for locally grounded studies rather than statewide generalisation from a single community (Idowu et al., 2018).

For the present paper, the key unresolved issue is linguistic. Existing Oyo research has largely asked what substances students use, how common use is, and what factors are associated with use. It has paid much less attention to how students talk about substances, how specialised meanings circulate among peers, and how linguistic concealment may affect teachers' or counsellors' understanding. Linking the urban substance-use literature with the discourse perspective of Haidar et al. (2020) therefore creates a distinctive contribution: it shifts part of the prevention question from "What are students using?" to "How do students communicate about use, and what does that communication mean for timely, non-stigmatising intervention?"

2.2 Urbanity, Exposure and Adolescent Vulnerability

Urban environments can create distinctive social conditions for adolescent substance exposure, including denser peer networks, greater mobility, commercial and entertainment activity, transport corridors and rapid digital connectivity. These conditions may expand opportunities for contact with diverse youth subcultures and may accelerate the diffusion of both behaviours and language.

Urban School Environments, Coded English and Psychoactive Substance Communication among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

Urban vulnerability should therefore be understood as a contextual configuration of exposure and social interaction rather than as a claim that residence in an urban area automatically produces substance use.

State-specific Nigerian evidence supports the need for this nuanced approach. Idowu et al. (2018) studied secondary school students in urban Ogbomosho, Oyo State and concluded that substance abuse among young people warranted intensified school awareness and policy action. In Osun State, Ogunisola and Fatusi (2016) directly compared rural and urban adolescents and found that overall lifetime substance-use prevalence was similar across the two settings, while the pattern of associated risk and protective factors differed. These studies suggest that the urban question should extend beyond simple prevalence comparison to the social mechanisms operating within each setting, particularly peer exposure, parental norms and access to prevention messages.

2.3 Adolescent Psychoactive-Substance Use

Psychoactive substances are chemical agents that act on the central nervous system and can alter mood, cognition, perception, consciousness and behaviour. Their use ranges from legitimate therapeutic administration to non-medical use, misuse and dependence. Adolescence is an especially important period for substance-use prevention because developmental changes in reward sensitivity, novelty seeking, identity formation and peer orientation can increase engagement in risk-taking behaviour (Steinberg, 2008). From a clinical perspective, problematic substance use exists on a continuum and is better understood through patterns of impaired control, social impairment, risky use and pharmacological consequences than through a simple user/non-user distinction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Within Nigerian secondary schools, substance use is not only a health issue but also an educational and social issue. It can intersect with attendance, school discipline, interpersonal relationships, emotional well-being and academic engagement. Nigerian research has repeatedly identified alcohol and a range of other psychoactive substances within adolescent populations, although prevalence varies considerably with location, substance definition, sampling and measurement procedures. Idowu et al. (2018), for example, examined substance abuse among students in selected public secondary schools in urban Ogbomosho, Oyo State, while Ogunisola and Fatusi (2016) compared risk and protective factors among urban and rural in-school adolescents in Osun State. Together, these studies demonstrate the importance of examining adolescent substance use within its immediate social and school context rather than assuming that patterns are uniform across Southwestern Nigeria.

2.4 Peer Networks and Social Learning

Peer relationships become particularly salient during adolescence and can shape attitudes, language, perceived norms and behaviour. Social learning theory proposes that behaviour is acquired and maintained partly through observation, modelling, reinforcement and interaction with significant others (Bandura, 1977). This perspective is highly relevant to substance-related behaviour because adolescents may learn not only whether and how substances are used, but also the language through which such behaviour is discussed, evaluated and concealed. A peer group can therefore operate simultaneously as a behavioural network and a speech community.

Empirical work in Nigeria supports the importance of peers. Ogunisola and Fatusi (2016) treated peer characteristics alongside individual and parental factors when examining adolescent substance use in Osun State. Their comparative design is particularly useful because it shows that risk and protective processes may differ according to social setting. More recent Nigerian work has similarly emphasised peer influence, modelling and social acceptance as mechanisms associated with substance-related behaviour among secondary school students (Obozokhae, 2026). The implication for the present study is that coded language should not be analysed as isolated vocabulary. Its circulation is embedded in relationships through which adolescents seek belonging, signal familiarity with group norms and manage access to sensitive information.

2.5 Youth Language, Identity and Peer Culture

Language is a social resource through which speakers construct identities, negotiate relationships and distinguish insiders from outsiders. In adolescent peer groups, slang, abbreviations, metaphor, semantic shifts and euphemisms can mark group membership and create communicative distance from adults. The same expression may have an ordinary dictionary meaning in one context and a specialised peer-group meaning in another. Consequently, the interpretation of youth language requires attention to speaker, audience, setting and purpose rather than reliance on lexical form alone.

This sociolinguistic perspective is particularly relevant where communication concerns prohibited, stigmatised or punishable behaviour. Haidar et al. (2020) argue that discourse is an underexplored dimension of addiction research and show that drug-related communities can develop specialised terms for substances, users, sellers, places and practices. Their analysis presents language as a form of social organisation and, in some contexts, as a “shield” that limits outsiders’ comprehension. Although their study was conducted in Pakistan and its specific lexical items cannot simply be transferred to Nigerian secondary schools, the underlying analytical categories are useful for investigating how locally generated expressions may perform secrecy, identity and solidarity.

2.6 Coded English as a Communicative Practice

Coded English in the present study refers to ordinary or modified English words, slang, abbreviations, metaphors, euphemisms and phrases that acquire specialised substance-related meanings within particular student networks. Such expressions may conceal the referent from teachers, parents and other non-initiates, but concealment is only one possible function. Codes may also create humour, reduce the perceived seriousness of a behaviour, indicate status, identify trusted participants or make substance-related talk appear routine.

Haidar et al. (2020) provide a useful discourse-based framework for understanding these functions. They found that drug-related discourse could rename substances and participants and could frame drug use through positive, negative, heroic or religious meanings. Their proposal of “Discourse Therapy” further highlights the possibility that language is not merely descriptive but may be relevant to intervention. For the Nigerian school context, however, the methodological lesson is more important than the literal vocabulary: locally occurring codes must be elicited from local speakers and interpreted within local contexts. A fixed imported lexicon risks misclassification because slang is culturally specific, fluid and capable of rapid semantic change.

2.7 Digital Communication and Linguistic Diffusion

Digital communication has altered the ecology of adolescent peer interaction. Expressions can now circulate beyond a single classroom, neighbourhood or school through messaging platforms and social networks. Online communication also encourages abbreviations, altered spellings, memes, visual symbols and rapidly changing references, making coded language more dynamic. The relationship between online interaction and substance-related discourse therefore deserves attention even when the principal research site is the physical school.

From a social-learning perspective, digital networks extend the environments in which modelling and reinforcement occur (Bandura, 1977). They may also strengthen the insider–outsider distinction described in discourse-based addiction research because meanings can be shared repeatedly within closed or semi-closed peer networks (Haidar et al., 2020). For schools, the practical implication is that a static glossary will have limited value. Language-sensitive prevention requires continuing engagement with students and an emphasis on communication competence, critical digital literacy and trusted counselling relationships.

2.8 Concealment, Detection and Adult Interpretation

When a peer group shares specialised meanings that adults do not recognise, language can create an information asymmetry between students and school authorities. This asymmetry may hinder early recognition of substance-related conversations and can weaken opportunities for supportive intervention. Haidar et al. (2020) conceptualise this protective communicative function as “language as a shield.” In a school setting, the shield may operate through apparently harmless words, shortened forms, metaphors or expressions whose meanings depend on shared peer knowledge.

The concept should nevertheless be applied cautiously. Youth slang is a normal feature of adolescent identity and linguistic creativity, and the occurrence of an unfamiliar expression is not evidence that a student uses psychoactive substances. Effective intervention therefore requires contextual interpretation rather than surveillance based on word lists. Teachers and counsellors need sufficient linguistic awareness to recognise when a pattern warrants a supportive conversation, but such awareness should be combined with confidentiality, professional judgement and non-stigmatising counselling. This distinction is essential if language-based intervention is to strengthen trust rather than drive communication further underground.

2.9 Language-Sensitive School Prevention and Counselling

School-based intervention is most likely to be useful when it combines accurate information with supportive relationships and skills for resisting harmful peer pressure. A purely punitive response can discourage disclosure, especially when students expect unfamiliar language to be interpreted as evidence of misconduct. Counselling approaches should instead create opportunities for adolescents to discuss peer pressure, motives for experimentation, perceived benefits, risks and alternative coping strategies. Motivational interviewing, for example, emphasises collaborative communication and the elicitation of personal reasons for change rather than confrontation (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

A language-sensitive approach complements rather than replaces conventional drug education. Teachers and counsellors can use knowledge of emerging expressions to improve comprehension, ask better questions and recognise possible changes in peer culture, while avoiding deterministic conclusions from vocabulary alone. Haidar et al. (2020) extend this logic by proposing discourse-focused intervention, whereas Nigerian school studies underscore the importance of formal education and context-specific prevention (Idowu et al., 2018; Ogunsola & Fatusi, 2016). The present study brings these strands together by treating student language as one component of a broader prevention and counselling system.

2.10 Comparative Empirical Evidence from Southwestern Nigeria

Research from Oyo and Osun States provides the closest empirical context for the present papers. Idowu et al. (2018) used a cross-sectional design among students in selected public secondary schools in Ogbomoso, Oyo State. Their study focused on the burden and correlates of substance abuse and called for intensified awareness within secondary schools. Its value to the present Oyo paper

Urban School Environments, Coded English and Psychoactive Substance Communication among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

lies in its urban school setting and its demonstration that prevention exposure is a relevant dimension of adolescent substance-use research. Its limitation for the present linguistic inquiry is that it did not centre on coded English expressions or discourse practices. Ogunsola and Fatusi (2016) conducted a comparative cross-sectional study among 600 adolescents in rural and urban areas of Osun State. They examined individual, peer and parental factors and demonstrated that risk and protective patterns can vary between settings. This work is especially important for the Osun paper because it cautions against assuming that urban–rural vulnerability can be represented by prevalence alone. Ajibade et al. (2015) also examined substance abuse among selected secondary school students in Osun State and provides additional state-level evidence on adolescent involvement. Collectively, these studies establish a substantive literature on adolescent substance use in Southwestern Nigeria, but they leave the linguistic organisation of substance-related communication largely unexplored.

2.11 Synthesis and Research Gap

Three strands emerge from the reviewed literature. First, adolescent substance use is shaped by interacting individual, peer, parental and school factors, with peer processes repeatedly identified as important (Bandura, 1977; Ogunsola & Fatusi, 2016). Second, language is central to peer identity and can acquire specialised meanings that organise insider communication. Discourse research on addiction demonstrates that specialised terms can label substances, participants and places and can function as a shield against outsiders (Haidar et al., 2020). Third, Nigerian studies in Oyo and Osun States have provided valuable evidence on substance-use patterns, associated factors and urban–rural contexts (Ajibade et al., 2015; Idowu et al., 2018; Ogunsola & Fatusi, 2016), but their primary focus has not been the English-language codes through which secondary school students may communicate about substances.

The principal gap is therefore at the intersection of sociolinguistics, adolescent substance-use research and school intervention. There is limited Nigerian empirical work that systematically identifies coded English expressions used by secondary school students, examines the meanings attached to those expressions, considers how they circulate through peer and digital networks, and translates linguistic knowledge into counselling and prevention strategies. The present study addresses this gap by combining quantitative and qualitative evidence and by adapting discourse categories from Haidar et al. (2020) as a sensitising framework rather than importing their Pakistani vocabulary. This approach preserves local meaning while connecting the analysis to a broader literature on language, peer culture and addiction.

3.0 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The paper has five objectives: (i) to examine the forms and functions of coded English associated with psychoactive substance-related communication among senior secondary school students in Oyo South Senatorial District; (ii) to interpret such language using discourse categories derived from the parent IBR study and Haidar et al. (2020); (iii) to explain why urban and peri-urban communication environments may increase exposure to rapidly circulating codes; (iv) to assess the implications of coded language for early identification, counselling and school management; and (v) to propose language-sensitive intervention strategies for Oyo State schools.

The corresponding questions address the types of coded expressions encountered, the meanings assigned within peer groups, the role of secrecy and identity, the contextual pathways through which urban settings may intensify exposure, and the ways teachers and counsellors can use linguistic awareness without criminalising ordinary youth slang.

3.1 Theoretical Framework: Social Learning and Discourse

3.2 Urban Communication Ecology as an Interpretive Lens

Urban communities are treated in this paper as the higher-vulnerability setting because they combine dense peer networks, commercial and transport activity, greater population mobility, entertainment spaces and rapid social-media diffusion of new expressions. The present IBR questionnaire did not directly code urban/rural residence, so the parent dataset cannot itself generate an urban–rural prevalence ratio. The urban emphasis is therefore strengthened with independent quantitative evidence rather than by inventing location-specific values from the IBR data.

These contextual considerations support the need to treat urban Oyo school communities as priority environments for prevention, surveillance of emerging coded language, counselling and drug education.

3.3 Research Design

The parent study adopted a descriptive survey design with mixed methods. Oyo South Senatorial District was one of two purposively selected senatorial districts. Ten public secondary schools were selected from each district. The quantitative component involved 600 students overall, with 300 allocated to Oyo South Senatorial District and 300 to the comparison district. Students were drawn from SSS I–SSS III. Qualitative participants included students in focus groups and purposively selected teachers, guidance counsellors and school administrators.

3.4 Participants, Instruments and Data Collection

Data collection combined a structured student questionnaire, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, observation and documentary review. The questionnaire asked whether students had heard coded expressions, whether teachers and parents found them difficult to understand, whether secrecy and peer pressure influenced their use, and what schools should do in response. Open-ended items invited students to supply coded words and interpretations. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively, while qualitative material was analysed thematically. For this paper, discourse coding is organised at word/phrase, sentence and thematic levels.

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) provides the principal theoretical explanation for the interpersonal processes examined in this paper. Adolescents learn behaviours, norms and communicative routines through observation, modelling, reinforcement and interaction with significant peers. Applied to coded substance-related communication, the theory suggests that students may learn both practices and the vocabulary that signals membership, secrecy and acceptance within a peer network.

The analysis also draws on a sociolinguistic discourse perspective. Haidar et al. (2020) demonstrate that addiction-related communities may develop specialised labels for substances, people, places and practices. In the present study, this perspective is used as an interpretive lens rather than as a source of Nigerian vocabulary: meanings are treated as locally situated and dependent on speaker, audience and context.

3.5 Data Analysis and Mixed-Method Integration

Quantitative questionnaire responses were analysed with descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used for the four-point response scale; item means above this value were interpreted as agreement with the statement measured. The use of both the mean and standard deviation is important. The mean indicates the overall direction and strength of respondents' perceptions, while the standard deviation provides information about the dispersion of responses around that mean. Qualitative data from focus-group discussions and key-informant interviews were analysed thematically, with attention to recurrent descriptions of peer influence, secrecy, fear of punishment, curiosity, social-media exposure and the practical difficulties teachers and counsellors encounter when students use unfamiliar expressions. Integration occurred at interpretation: quantitative patterns were compared with qualitative explanations to determine where the two strands converged, complemented one another or required caution. The language-and-addiction paper was used as an analytical guide for classifying the functions of expressions at word/phrase, sentence and thematic levels. Its literal Pakistani vocabulary was not treated as Nigerian student data. Instead, categories such as substance labels, status labels, place labels, paraphernalia, concealment, positive framing and negative framing were used to organise locally supplied expressions. This distinction is methodologically important because coded vocabulary is culturally and temporally specific. The analysis therefore focuses on what a code does in communication rather than assuming that a term carries the same meaning across countries, schools or peer groups.

3.6 Ethical Considerations, Trustworthiness and Limitations

Ethical safeguards are especially important because the research concerns adolescents, psychoactive substances and potentially incriminating or stigmatising language. Participation was voluntary, confidentiality and anonymity were emphasised, and qualitative engagement was intended to generate understanding rather than identify individual students for punishment. Interpretation of coded expressions must follow the same principle. A word or phrase should not be treated as proof of substance use merely because it appears in a coded-language lexicon. Meaning depends on context and should be corroborated through repeated usage, participant interpretation and professional judgement. A major limitation for the present state papers is that the questionnaire recorded state and other demographic variables but did not directly classify each respondent by urban, peri-urban or rural residence. Consequently, the parent dataset cannot legitimately produce a new urban-versus-rural prevalence percentage. The urban-vulnerability analysis therefore combines the measured parent-study mechanisms—especially peer influence, secrecy and social-media diffusion—with published state-specific evidence. This preserves the distinction between what the IBR dataset directly demonstrates and what external comparative studies contribute. Future research should add explicit school-location and residence variables and should test urban–rural differences using inferential statistics while controlling for age, sex, class level, peer substance use, parental monitoring and exposure to drug education.

4.0 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETIVE DISCUSSION

4.1 Profile of the Study Sample

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents in the parent study (N = 582)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	286	49.1
Sex	Female	296	50.9
Age	13–14	142	24.4
Age	15–16	287	49.3

Urban School Environments, Coded English and Psychoactive Substance Communication among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

Age	17–18	153	26.3
Class	SSS I	189	32.5
Class	SSS II	197	33.8
Class	SSS III	196	33.7
State	Oyo	291	50.0
State	Osun	291	50.0

Table 2. Forms of coded English expressions

Item	Mean	SD	Rank
Slang expressions conceal substance discussions	3.28	0.69	1st
Alternative names for psychoactive substances	3.21	0.74	2nd
Metaphors/coded phrases in peer discussions	3.12	0.77	3rd
Abbreviations for psychoactive substances	2.91	0.81	4th
Modification of existing English words	2.84	0.86	5th

Table 3. Communication and factors associated with coded language

Item	Mean	SD
Shared peer-group understanding	3.31	0.68
Context-dependent multiple meanings	3.17	0.75
Teachers find coded conversations difficult	3.34	0.66
Coded language limits early identification	3.25	0.72
Peer influence	3.42	0.64
Desire for secrecy	3.35	0.70
Social-media exposure	3.12	0.76
Curiosity/experimentation	3.04	0.81
Fear of punishment	2.97	0.84

Table 4. Effects and intervention strategies

Item	Mean	SD
Coded language delays identification	3.30	0.69
Teachers may misinterpret unfamiliar expressions	3.18	0.75
Coded language reduces monitoring effectiveness	3.09	0.78
Understanding codes can improve case management	3.01	0.80
Teacher training on emerging language	3.47	0.61
Strengthen drug education	3.39	0.66
Counsellor open discussions	3.28	0.72
Parent education	3.19	0.77
Peer education	3.11	0.80

Of 600 questionnaires administered, 582 were usable, giving a 97.0% response rate. The final sample comprised 291 respondents from Oyo State and 291 from Osun State (50.0% each); 286 were male (49.1%) and 296 female (50.9%). By age, 142 (24.4%) were

Urban School Environments, Coded English and Psychoactive Substance Communication among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

13–14 years, 287 (49.3%) were 15–16 years and 153 (26.3%) were 17–18 years. Class distribution was similarly balanced: SSS I 189 (32.5%), SSS II 197 (33.8%) and SSS III 196 (33.7%).

On a four-point scale with a criterion mean of 2.50, slang used to conceal substance-related discussion recorded $M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.69$; alternative substance names $M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.74$; metaphors/coded phrases $M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.77$; abbreviations $M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.81$; and modification of existing English words $M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.86$. Shared peer-group understanding of coded expressions recorded $M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.68$. Teachers' difficulty understanding coded conversations was $M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.66$, while limitation of early identification was $M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.72$. Peer influence was the highest-rated driver of coded language ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.64$), followed by secrecy ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.70$), social-media exposure ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.76$), curiosity/experimentation ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.81$) and fear of punishment ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.84$). Coded language delaying identification recorded $M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.69$. Teacher training on emerging language patterns received the strongest intervention endorsement ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.61$), followed by stronger drug education ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.66$). These parent-study values quantify the communication mechanisms through which densely connected urban school communities may become especially vulnerable.

4.2 Patterns and Functions of Coded Expressions

A practical state-level coding matrix can classify locally supplied expressions under the following functions: substance label; seller/source label; experienced-user or status label; consumption-place label; paraphernalia label; action or transaction code; effect/intoxication code; concealment or warning code; positive/euphemistic framing; negative/aversive framing; bravery or masculinity framing; religious or sacred framing; and digital/social-media-derived slang. Each expression should be recorded with the speaker's interpretation, context of use and confidence that the meaning is substance-related.

This matrix is deliberately broader than a dictionary. The same word may have different meanings in different schools, and an apparently suspicious word may be ordinary slang in another context. Triangulation is therefore essential. A code should not be treated as evidence of substance use merely because it appears in a lexicon. Interpretation requires context, repetition, corroboration and professional judgement. The purpose of the lexicon is to improve communication and early support, not to create a punitive surveillance list.

Analytical category	What to look for
Substance labels	Alternative names, euphemisms, metaphors
People/status	Dealer/source, experienced user, group-status terms
Places/paraphernalia	Meeting places, smoking/consumption implements
Actions/transactions	Buying, using, sharing, warning and concealment codes
Evaluative framing	Positive/healthy, bravery/status, sacred/religious, negative/aversive
Social function	Secrecy, identity, solidarity, exclusion, normalisation

4.3 Peer Communication and the Urban School Environment

The combined findings support the view that coded language is socially learned and sustained by peer interaction. In urban and peri-urban environments, the number and diversity of peer contacts may increase the speed with which such expressions circulate. Digital communication further weakens school boundaries: expressions learned outside school can enter classrooms quickly, while school-generated slang can spread beyond the immediate peer group.

For Oyo South Senatorial District, this has two implications. First, teachers require linguistic awareness that is current rather than based on outdated drug slang. Second, schools need to distinguish awareness from accusation. A language-sensitive system should encourage counsellors to ask open, non-judgmental questions, verify meanings and look for clusters of behavioural or welfare indicators. Urban vulnerability is therefore best addressed through communication competence and supportive referral, not through indiscriminate policing of students' vocabulary.

4.4 Urban Vulnerability: Interpretation of the Quantitative Pattern

The parent-study statistics identify a cluster of mechanisms that can be amplified in urban communities. Peer influence, the highest-rated factor, recorded $M = 3.42$ ($SD = 0.64$), while secrecy recorded $M = 3.35$ ($SD = 0.70$) and social-media exposure $M = 3.12$ ($SD = 0.76$). In metropolitan and peri-urban Oyo South, dense peer networks, transport activity, commercial spaces, entertainment environments and continuous digital interaction can enlarge the number of contacts through which both substances and coded expressions circulate. Urban vulnerability in this paper therefore refers to the concentration and interaction of these exposure pathways rather than to urban residence as an automatic cause of substance use.

4.5 Oyo-Specific Urban Evidence and Prevention Exposure

Independent evidence from an urban secondary-school population in Ogbomoso provides additional quantitative context. The study reported 26.3% meeting its criterion for substance abuse, 21.7% reporting alcohol consumption and 40.0% showing a positive

Urban School Environments, Coded English and Psychoactive Substance Communication among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

attitude towards substance abuse. Particularly relevant to intervention, reported substance abuse was 47.5% among students without formal lectures on substance abuse compared with 29.7% among those who had received such lectures ($p = 0.023$). This pattern supports the parent study's strong endorsement of teacher training ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.61$) and strengthened drug education ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.66$).

4.6 Detection, Counselling and Adult Comprehension

The linguistic dimension is important because exposure is not always visible to adults. Teachers' difficulty understanding coded conversations recorded $M = 3.34$ ($SD = 0.66$); limitation of early identification recorded $M = 3.25$ ($SD = 0.72$); and delayed identification of students involved in substance use recorded $M = 3.30$ ($SD = 0.69$). These values indicate that language can create a practical detection gap. Urban schools require a dynamic rather than static response: periodic updating of locally encountered expressions, confidential counselling, student peer educators, parent engagement and careful contextual interpretation so that ordinary youth slang is not automatically treated as evidence of drug involvement.

4.7 Integrated Interpretation of Findings

The quantitative results converge with the qualitative themes of peer pressure, belonging, secrecy, fear of punishment, curiosity and social-media influence. The convergence is important because the means and standard deviations show the strength and consistency of students' perceptions, while interviews and group discussions explain why the language persists. Coded expressions serve social functions: they can mark membership, exclude non-initiates, reduce the perceived seriousness of risky behaviour and protect conversations from adult scrutiny. In a large urban communication network, these functions can reinforce one another and accelerate linguistic change.

Table 5. Quantitative evidence relevant to urban vulnerability

Indicator	Statistic	Interpretation
Peer influence	$M=3.42$, $SD=0.64$	Strongest coded-language driver
Secrecy	$M=3.35$, $SD=0.70$	Concealment mechanism
Social media	$M=3.12$, $SD=0.76$	Rapid diffusion pathway
Urban Ogbomoso burden	26.3%	Reported urban substance-abuse criterion
Formal drug education	47.5% vs 29.7%; $p=0.023$	Lower reported abuse with formal lectures

5.0 CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Concluding Synthesis

The discourse-therapy idea is valuable when adapted cautiously to adolescents. The central principle is that language can reinforce the meanings attached to substance use. Euphemistic or heroic expressions may reduce perceived risk, while alternative ways of talking can help students examine consequences, ambivalence and personal goals. This aligns with motivational interviewing, which emphasises collaborative, non-confrontational communication and eliciting the young person's own reasons for change.

A school-based language intervention can therefore include guided discussion of euphemisms, exploration of what a code means to the peer group, reframing of apparently positive drug narratives, and development of safer language for help-seeking. Counsellors should not simply replace one label with another; they should use the student's language as an entry point to discuss experience, risk, pressure and support. Confidentiality and safeguarding procedures remain essential.

5.2 Practical Recommendations

Schools in Oyo State should institute periodic training for guidance counsellors and selected teachers on emerging youth language, psychoactive substances and referral procedures. A confidential, continuously updated school lexicon can be developed from verified local expressions, with clear warnings that codes are context-dependent and must never be used as stand-alone proof of misconduct. Peer educators can help interpret rapidly changing language while also modelling help-seeking and refusal skills.

Parents should receive communication-oriented sensitisation rather than alarmist lists of slang. Schools should strengthen counselling services, establish confidential referral pathways, collaborate with relevant health and drug-control professionals, and integrate digital literacy into prevention programmes. Future research should explicitly code school location as urban, peri-urban or rural and compare prevalence, exposure pathways, code density, social-media influence and intervention access across these settings.

5.3 Implications for Policy and Further Research

The major policy implication is that adolescent substance-use prevention should include a sociolinguistic component. Drug education that discusses only substances and health effects may overlook the communicative systems through which peer norms are

Urban School Environments, Coded English and Psychoactive Substance Communication among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

transmitted. Teacher education, counselling guidelines and school safeguarding protocols can incorporate recognition of coded communication while maintaining students' dignity and avoiding stereotyping.

For research in Oyo State, the next phase should produce a validated local lexicon and an urbanicity index. The latter could combine school location, population density, proximity to transport/commercial nodes, internet/social-media exposure and students' mobility patterns. Multilevel analysis could then test whether urbanicity predicts awareness or use of coded expressions after controlling for age, sex, class, school type and peer exposure. Such a design would directly test the urban-vulnerability proposition.

5.4 Final Observation

The Oyo South evidence positions coded English as part of the social organisation of adolescent substance-related communication. Its importance lies less in compiling a fixed list of slang than in understanding how meanings move through peer groups, digital spaces and metropolitan school environments.

Because the parent questionnaire did not classify respondents by urban or rural residence, the study does not claim a new location-based prevalence difference. Urban vulnerability is interpreted instead through measured communication mechanisms and independently published Oyo evidence. Future work should measure urbanicity directly and test its relationship with coded-language exposure, peer influence and prevention access.

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