

Research Article

DRUG ABUSE IN RURAL AREAS: USER PROFILES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT IN BÉTÉ COUNTRY (GAGNOA SUB-PREFECTURE, CÔTE D'IVOIRE)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to analyse the impact of drug use in rural areas on the community. The study took place in four Bété villages in the sub-prefecture of Gagnoa (Côte d'Ivoire) and involved one hundred (100) respondents. Data were obtained from semi-structured interviews, individual or group, and participant observation on the realities of consumption, the profiles of users and the disadvantages for the village community. The survey revealed that drug use is a reality in rural areas, with its own specific characteristics compared with urban areas. In terms of profiles, the users are young, out of school, deprived of their plot of land and involved in petty crime (theft and fights). Most of them have no social role, which hinders their social integration in the village. As for drug use, it is marked by multiple consumption of cannabis and psychotropic drugs, accompanied by alcoholic and adulterated energy drinks. Drug clubs and a particular vocabulary enable addicts to conceal their use, which nevertheless peaks at funeral wakes. This consumption causes numerous problems for the community as a whole, including a proliferation of cannabis plantations, theft of property, physical attacks, illegal land sales and the emergence of a deviant counter-culture that undermines customary authority and social cohesion.

Keywords: Rural environment, drug addiction, profiles, impact, social role.

INTRODUCTION

There is little research on drug-related practices in rural areas (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012; Cadet-Taïrou and Grandilhon, 2015). However, some authors believe that the place where people live, whether urban, peri-urban or rural, is one of the factors that lead them to use or not use drugs (Aubertinand Morel, 2009). Others also observe that regional disparities influence the earliness, intensity and modes of exposure to psychoactive substances (Amsellem-Mainguy and Timoteo, 2012). On the reasons for the low level of motivation among researchers on the subject of drug use and sales in rural areas, DelaquisandMoissac (2007) note that this is a consequence of the link established between delinquency, psychoactive substance use and urbanisation. DuprezandKokoreff (2000) believe that this is due to the promotion of a reductionist discourse on drugs which criminalises certain categories of the population and ignores others. Despite the invisibility of drug use in rural areas, the availability of drugs there is real and has become a real local concern. Suderie (2016), notes that in France, rural areas are also affected by drug trafficking, sometimes organised in a more structured way around user-dealers. The latter have no difficulty in selling their products because of the very dense networks of acquaintances in these areas. In the United States, some studies (Coomberet *et al.*, 2011; National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2000) show that young Americans living in rural areas consume more alcohol, cannabis, methamphetamines, cocaine and inhalants than those living in urban areas. McInnis *et al.*, (2015) made the same observation in Canada, where their study found that rural students consumed more alcohol and methamphetamines, as well as opioid analgesics and stimulants for non-medical purposes, than urban students. This change in drug use in rural areas can be explained by several factors, including socio-cultural factors such as immigration, acculturation,

marginalisation and a precarious social situation (Booth, Sullivan *et al.*, 2002). For Cadet-Taïrou and Grandilhon (2015), it is the development of migration of disadvantaged populations towards peri-urban and rural areas that is the cause. The majority of users in rural areas are in a precarious situation, most often reduced to living on minimum social benefits or seasonal work, mainly because of the deteriorating economic conditions (Pavic, 2013; Schmitt, 2016).

In this context, drug use is as much a matter of personal consumption as it is a survival strategy to cope with everyday necessities or to overcome intimate pain. Many young people in rural areas, faced with the same difficulties as those in urban areas, will resort to drug use to let go, have a good time with friends and cope with the lack of distractions, compared with urban areas where the cultural environment is often more developed (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012). Consumption is associated with a climate of loneliness, pressure and violence, but also appears to be a way of escaping the difficulties of everyday life (Canat, 2012). For Ivaldi (2003), the main factors in the use of illicit psychotropic substances by young people in rural areas are to be found in their immediate environment. We need to look at their relational network and their lifestyle, i.e. the pattern of drug use within the group, the time they spend with their peers, and the collective encouragement and pressure to use psychoactive substances. However, researchers believe that curiosity remains the main reason for experimenting with illicit products in rural areas. In addition, people are more often aware of the dangers of cannabis, but less aware of the dangers of regular smoking and alcohol (EOS Gallup Europe, 2004). In terms of supply, the proximity of rural areas to the urban world facilitates supply, which takes place mainly in the same markets as those frequented by urban users (Grandilhon, 2022). However, the ways in which psychoactive substances are accessed in urban areas are quite different from those in rural areas. Urban drug use is influenced by the relationships, meanings and social contexts that shape the reality of drugs, their use and abuse (Molly and Britto, 2001). Some drugs are more accessible than others, depending on the location and nature of the product (Schmitt, 2016);

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Suderie, 2016). The products are just as varied as in the city (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012), due to the proximity of the urban environment, which facilitates supply, and the networks of user-dealers that make up for the absence of the large trafficking networks (Tovar *et al.*, 2012). However, trafficking and use are more difficult to dismantle because these practices take place in a much more intimate setting, and are hidden from family and social circles (Perrin and Reversé, 2022). According to Tom (2010), the rites of initiation and experimentation with drugs take place during festive ceremonies, which are tolerated areas of deviance that give young people the right to go wild. Outside these contexts, users are presented as deviants or criminals deserving of punishment, a threat to society, or sick people in need of treatment. Rural dwellers are therefore more in favour of implementing a repressive policy towards consumers than urban dwellers (EOS Gallup Europe, 2004).

A review of the literature on the problem of drug use in rural areas shows that drug use in these areas is very real. The literature has highlighted the types of drugs used, the strategies used by those involved in acquiring them, and the factors that explain why drug use begins in rural areas. Although this literature is relevant, it seems to ignore the profiles of users and the consequences of these uses on the village community as a whole. It seems that these aspects of drug use are important for a better policy of prevention and care for users, especially in our cultural context, which is different from that of the West. So what are the profiles of drug users in rural areas, and what are the consequences of such use for the community? This study seeks to determine the effects of drug use in rural areas on the community. Based on the point of view of the users and rural populations concerned, the aim will be to identify the specific characteristics of drug users and the impact this has on the community, taking into account the Bété (Gagnoa) culture. These findings reinforce the need for a better understanding of the differences between drug use in rural and urban areas, in order to encourage the introduction of effective prevention and treatment programmes tailored to the rural environment.

This study will draw on Shaw and McKay's theory of cultural deviance (Trizulla *et al.*, 2016). This theory views crime as a normal response to the social, structural and cultural characteristics of a community. Individuals living in these communities are not intrinsically deviant, but are influenced by the circumstances of the environment. How should drug use among young people in rural areas be interpreted? It seems that the profiles of users, the types of products used, consumption patterns and their impact on the population are all linked to the cultural context.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in four (4) villages in the Gagnoa sub-prefecture, located 271 km from Abidjan in the centre-west of Côte d'Ivoire. The villages were Dahopa-Ourépa, Logobia, Lélébrekoua and Godiabré. The indigenous populations of these areas are the Bété. They are divided into seven cantons: Nékédi, Niabré, Gbadi, Guébié, Pacolo, Zabia and Zédi. The population's economy is based on agriculture, mainly coffee, cocoa, rubber and food crops. Parental organisation is patrilineal. The pre-survey showed that the Gagnoa area is increasingly the scene of seizures of large quantities of drugs and cannabis. Cannabis plants were reportedly discovered in maize and cocoa fields in some of the villages selected for the study. Moreover, in some of these villages, complaints attributing delinquency to drug users were becoming increasingly recurrent. Data was collected from 100 respondents, including 12 traditional and religious authorities, (1) village health worker, 3 street vendors selling fake medicines, (2) law enforcement officers, (42) drug users and (10)

people per village. These people were interviewed using semi-directive, individual or group interviews on drug use in the Bétés villages, the profiles of users and the drawbacks for the village community. In addition, participant observation was carried out with users and local people, usually at funeral wakes, festivals and sporting events in the places where drugs were used, to get a closer look at the realities of drug use. In each village, a request for authorisation to carry out a survey, including the objectives of the study, was sent to the chiefdom for approval. Once the formalities had been completed, the respondents were selected by reasoned choice and by snowballing. To reach the drug users, who are fairly discreet and distrustful, we had to go to the pubs and drinking spots set up in the fields, and infiltrate the youth groups. Being so close to them made it easier to talk to them. To prove the veracity of the accusations made against the drug users, we had to interview gendarmerie officers, victims and witnesses. The data obtained was processed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

UNITS RESULTS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

The results focus on the manifestations of drug use on the one hand and its impact on the village community on the other.

Manifestations of drug addiction in rural areas

User profiles

The user profiles cover age, marital status, social roles and criminal history. Users range in age from 16 to 38, with an average age of 13. They are therefore relatively young. The majority (61.91%) are aged between 18 and 25, while those aged between 26 and 33 account for (21.43%) and (9.52%) are aged between 33 and 38. According to the respondents, users are influenced by the popular culture conveyed by social networks, particularly the offbeat coupé and American music videos that propagate drugs and the culture of excess. Many of them believe that consuming cannabis, for example, is part of fashion and should be experienced by all emancipated young people. In their environment, a non-smoker is called a "babi", which means a "gaou", an old-fashioned, outdated individual, a villager, subject to ancestral norms. Many young people feel frustrated by this stigma. Those who, on the other hand, allow themselves to be drawn into initiatory or experimental drug use are showered with all sorts of labels highlighting their ability to shake off prejudices about drugs and take risks. They are described as adults, intelligent and worthy of being part of the peer group and taking part in certain activities. They are "yèrè" young people, i.e. they are fashionable, they follow the trend, or young people who have "borileur mince", young people who have worked on their intelligence, gifted people. Sisco, a Jewish user, explains: *"Many of us consume out of curiosity or to escape being made fun of. To be part of the group of trendy young people, to walk with them, to dress up, to chat in a group on WhatsApp, so that we can teach you about the city, you have to smoke a joint with us"*.

Most of the substance users surveyed live with family members (73.9%) or friends (18.6%), while only 7.5% live alone. In local culture, isolation increases with financial independence and marriage. So friends and family are not an obstacle to drug use. The survey also shows that most young drug users in the villages are unemployed and lack skills training (61.91%), although (11.91%) of them have dropped out of school, (7.14%) are vendors and (4.76%) are singers, planters or students. In addition, (85.71%) are single without children, although they are of marriageable age according to the practices of the social group. These young people who use drugs therefore have no social roles, whereas marriage, work and fatherhood are criteria for social integration in Bété country. The fact

of being single after the age of 25, or living at that age in the parental compound, or not having any agricultural activity, subjects the individual to a certain number of prejudices. They are treated as lazy, irresponsible, children who do not yet have the right to adult advice. Such an individual is not invited to the elders' ceremonies and his or her opinion in family and community affairs is not taken into account. The lack of a social role therefore plunges these young people into boredom, exclusion and social disintegration. In the villages we visited, the majority of young drug users were people who had been disinherited from their plot of land. Some are under the guardianship of their uncle or stepfather (sometimes the uncle becomes the stepfather), who is entrusted with the management of the plantation after the father's death. Others, on the other hand, no longer had any land or had only a small plot to share between several brothers. The rest has been sold or put up as collateral by the father or a family member. In this region, land is often sold to foreigners at derisory prices for funeral expenses. Faced with limited prospects, young people with no activities experience a sense of despair that leads them to take psychoactive substances. However, some respondents pointed out that landlessness is just a pretext for these drug users. They tend to be easy-going and envious, preferring games of chance, maquis and bistros, and chatting with friends all day long. These young people are also very active during festive or unhappy events. They are mobilised to provide security or entertainment at football matches, funerals or cultural events organised in the village. O. M., village chief: *"The young people who take drugs here are easy to recognise. They don't go out to the fields, they're out on the tarmac every night, they like to go at weekends to villages where there are funerals. They're grown up but they don't think about marriage, they don't want to build their own little house, they don't want to see a child, when they send a girl, two days later she goes back to her village. Because of the drugs, they live like children"*. Another characteristic of drug users is that many of them were involved in petty crime, alcohol consumption and brawls before becoming involved in illicit drug use. In the village, minor thefts and physical assaults are dealt with by the family or the chieftom. Generally, the guilty party's family is ordered to pay a fine to the victim to compensate for the offence. Under these conditions, repeat offences are common. According to the families, most of the village children who end up on alcohol and drugs have had a troubled childhood. They are generally undisciplined and rebellious towards parental authority. While some change their behaviour during adolescence, others remain disobedient and engage in deviant behaviour. Mrs K., a mother, explains the case of her son who became a drug addict: *"Since he was a child, he was stubborn, he didn't like going to school, he didn't like going to the fields. But he loved walking around the village. When he came home, it was because he was hungry. We did everything we could, we coaxed him, we gave him advice, but as he was walking with young people who smoke drugs, he was led astray"*. Drug users in rural areas therefore have special characteristics specific to their environment.

Use of psychoactive substances

The use of psychoactive substances in rural areas was examined in terms of prevalence, frequency of use and routes of administration, and the effects of the substances used. In terms of prevalence, the products most commonly used in the 30 days preceding the survey were cannabis, psychotropic medicines known as tablets and alcohol, even though the use of these drugs is tolerated in the villages. Cocaine and heroin are gradually taking on a more prominent role. Alcohol and tablets are the most commonly consumed products on a daily basis. In every village, there are places selling alcoholic beverages and bistros where adulterated alcohol is sold at lower prices. People also drink the locally-produced palm wine or white

wine known as "Bangui". Falsified tablets of inferior quality are delivered every day by street vendors selling fake medicines throughout the villages. For cultural reasons, and because there are not enough health centres in the villages, people often resort to selling illegal pharmaceutical medicines to treat fatigue, pain, malaria, lack of appetite and other minor illnesses. On the Gagnoa-Oumé road, which comprises 9 villages with a population of 13,116, only 4 villages have a health centre, of which only 2 are operational. These shortcomings benefit drug traffickers, who sell psychotropic and other hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin under the guise of fake medicines. Cannabis, on the other hand, is used on a weekly basis, usually at weekends. It can also be occasional, depending on availability. According to the police, as a result of tighter control systems, drug dealers have considerably reduced the frequency with which they bring drugs into the villages. On the other hand, drug users believe that the frequency with which cannabis is consumed is due to the recognizable smell it leaves the smoker and the discretion required for its use in an environment such as the village. Heroin and cocaine, on the other hand, are used rarely or only occasionally by a minority of users. These two drugs are still rare in the area and are sold at a high price, usually during festive periods or when cocoa is being traded by young people from the city. The substances are most often consumed in bistros, most of which have been built on the edge of the village. Inspired by the urban music played in these places, drug users will dissolve the psychotropic tablets in adulterated alcoholic drinks to give the impression that they are only drinking alcohol. Generally, the number of cans or bottles of alcohol ingested corresponds to the number of psychotropic tablets consumed. Cannabis cigarettes are smoked well before or after a visit to the bistro. Users meet up at the edge of the village, away from prying eyes, on the field road or at one of their homes to smoke in peace and quiet. According to some witnesses, there are open smoking rooms hidden in certain cocoa or rubber plantations. Consumption is particularly high at funeral wakes or on festive nights, when large numbers of people arrive in the village. Solitary consumption is rare. Instead, they are done in groups of three or four people who share a joint or a can of alcohol mixed with a psychotropic tablet. Roland lebenguiste, a user from the village, explains: *"Here we smoke in groups, we get drunk in groups. It's a way of helping each other out, covering up, and often contributing to the purchase of the product. But we smoke in a group so that we don't feel the negative effects and get the maximum pleasure"*. With regard to the products consumed, all users (100%) consumed cannabis alone or cannabis combined with alcohol and tablets. The combination of cannabis and alcohol was preferred by 83.33% of users, while 71.43% combined cannabis with psychotropic tablets and 28.57% used tablets without any combination. Cocaine or heroin combined with alcohol and cannabis accounted for (4.76%). These results show that users do not have a particular preference when it comes to drugs. The choice depends on the availability of the products and the user's expectations.

It can be seen that cannabis remains the main drug of intoxication among these multiple users. According to users, cannabis smoked in cigarette form produces a rapid, almost immediate effect that can last from two to four hours. They say it gives them a feeling of euphoria, well-being, relaxation and increased appetite. It is also said to be effective in relieving nausea and vomiting. However, users describe cannabis as a product that gives them a compulsive desire to use again, makes them want to party or gives them the strength and courage to commit certain acts. Junior, a drug user, explains: *"The day I tried it, I smoked 4 or 5 joints in quick succession the next day. With cannabis, as soon as you finish a cigarette you want to have another one. Then it takes away your shame, embarrassment and respect for others. So you can act and do things you couldn't before."*

In fact, cannabis makes you a boy, you become a Woody". Apart from cannabis, psychotropic drugs remain the second most common source of intoxication among young people in Bétés villages. Among the most commonly used are tramadol, Rivotril, valium, ephedrine and diazepam. According to users, Tramadol helps prevent headaches, joint pain and fatigue. However, this painkiller is also used as a stimulant or as a disruptive agent, as James explains: "All those tablets you see there can do anything. It all depends on what you want. If you want to sting, i.e. to sleep, you can take them; if you also want to mix, i.e. to attack, you can also take them. It's up to you to decide which tablet to take". The survey revealed two types of Tramadol. One, green in colour, used as a painkiller, and the other, red in colour, called "Gaddafi", "Boko Haram" or "Assailant" in street parlance, and used as a disruptive and stimulant. It is said to have the effect of making users lose all feelings of affection, pity and remorse, while making it easier to commit crimes. Rivotril comes as a white tablet in transparent red packaging. It is sold under the name "Rivo" at a price of 500 FCFA for a pack of 10 tablets. Valium, on the other hand, is made up of small blue tablets, which is why users call it "blue blue". Olanzapine is sold in yellow tablets with the D5 imprint in the centre. Users therefore refer to it as "D5". Like 'Rivo' or 'bleu bleu', 'D5' is normally prescribed for the treatment of agitation. However, the young people who use them as drugs claim that these products, combined with alcohol and cannabis, make it possible to get high fairly quickly and reduce social anxiety. They boost excitement and impulsivity and make users easily irritable. To keep the effects of these products going, doses are regularly increased. The adulterated drinks that frequently accompany this consumption are "vodi", "koutoukou or gbèlè" and many other imported drinks such as "déchirercaleçon", "4 heures du matin" or "siaguéhi", which are adulterated for their aphrodisiac virtues. The high alcohol content of these drinks (between 18% and 40% alcohol per 33cl) is said by users to increase the effects of these drugs by a factor of 10. This consumption has consequences for the entire village community.

Consequences of drug use in rural areas

Proliferation of cannabis cultivation

According to sources close to the Gagnoa police and gendarmerie, cannabis cultivation is gaining ground in the region's villages and camps. Cannabis plants, some of them mature, are hidden in cocoa, rubber, cassava and maize plantations several kilometers from the village. These fields are thought to be the work of Burkinabé and Malian workers and young local villagers who grow cannabis for sale and personal consumption. Discussions with the villagers revealed that cannabis production has increased since many young local people started taking drugs. These young people, most of whom are idle, entrust their plot of land to a sharecropper, who grows cannabis there among the manioc or maize plants. The produce is then sold and the profits shared between all the accomplices. A leading figure in the village of Dahopa-Ourepa confides: "There are young people in

this village who join forces with young Burkinabé living in the camps to grow cannabis. You see them here in the village, they never go out to the fields, but they go out a lot at night, they go to a lot of funerals in neighboring villages, they like to go to parties at night to sell their produce. Once they've got the money, they come back to the village to party, dress well and have lots of girlfriends. It's all thanks to the money from cannabis". Sometimes it's the young people in the village who take care of the upkeep and retailing to consumers themselves. They generally go to the fields in the afternoon and return to the village at nightfall. This craze for cannabis is causing young people to lose interest in cash crops and, more generally, in work in the fields. These cannabis traffickers, who show every day the signs of their financial affluence in terms of material goods (mobile phones, new clothes, jewellery, food), become role models for many young people in the village whom they drag along in their wake. These young people wander around the village, frequent the drinking establishments and prefer the company of the traffickers to benefit from their services. According to the local authorities, in 2020 the dealers made several attempts to set up a smoking room in each village to expand their business. These attempts failed thanks to the mobilisation of the villagers and the intervention of the police.

Theft, assault, violence

Users of psychoactive substances have reported theft of property and physical attacks to finance their consumption. Despite the low cost of drugs and adulterated drinks, many users are exposed to a scarcity of financial resources to buy tablets. To limit the risk of reprisals, each user commits crimes in their home village. They steal goods that they can easily resell, such as gas bottles, mobile phones and household appliances. As with consumption, thefts are carried out in groups. While some keep watch, others assault passers-by, commit thefts, sometimes by breaking and entering, and still others take it upon themselves to find customers. They also go out into the fields at night to steal fermenting or dried cocoa beans. According to the users, they sometimes become road cutters during the cocoa trade because of the large amount of money in circulation at that time. These facts are confirmed by the inhabitants of the villages surveyed. In Lélébrekoua, individuals broke into the village and stole the amplifier that powered the village's loudspeakers. The equipment was found 3 days later at the home of a young villager, who explained that it was intended for sale to finance the purchase of drugs. In the village of Logobia, thefts of bags of cocoa and animals (pigs and sheep) were on the increase between 2020 and 2022. Several young people arrested for these offences were drug users. In Godiabrè, drug addicts specialised in stealing manioc. They go to the fields in the afternoons, when the farmers return to the village to harvest the tubers, which they hide in the bush to sell a few days later. The group of thieves, which was later dismantled on the basis of an anonymous tip, consisted of a bistro manager and 4 tramadol and cannabis users. The survey listed the offences committed by drug users and tried by the chiefdom of each village over the period 2021-2022, as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Offences committed by drug users by village

Deviances Villages	Theft		Assaults		Illegal sales		Violence		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lélébrekoua	07	7,22	03		02		03		15	15,46
Logobia	17	17,53	11		00		09	9,28	37	38,14
Dahopa-Ourépa	13	13,40	07	7,22	02		09	9,28	31	31,96
Godiabrè	05	5,15	05		01		03		14	14,43
Total	42	43,30	26	26,80	05	5,15	24	24,75	97	100

Sources: Archives, chiefdom of each village 2021-2022.

In all 4 villages, 97 offences were recorded over the period 2021-2022 (Table I), committed by drug users and tried by the customary court in each village. Theft was the most frequent offence (43.30%), followed by assault (26.80%), violence and fighting (24.75%) and illegal land sales (5.15%). The village of Logobia had the highest number of offences (38.14%), with 17 thefts, 11 assaults and 9 cases of violence. In Dahopa-Ourépa, thefts (13.40%), violence and theft (9.28%) and assaults (7.22%) were more frequent. All in all, this climate of drug use and associated delinquency reinforces the feeling of insecurity in rural areas.

Undermining social cohesion

The use of psychoactive substances in villages is a source of violence and division between community members. There are pitched battles between users who, under the influence of drugs, clash over the sharing of goods made from drug sales. They also attack fellow citizens to defend their interests or to get some of their members out of serious situations. The families of these users are stigmatised and are the object of suspicion in the event of theft in the village. In the past, there was a paternalistic influence on the part of the traditional chieftaincy, which interfered in certain matters falling within the remit of the judicial police. This interference guaranteed freedom for the perpetrators of certain crimes perceived as less serious by the social group. With the spread of drugs, more and more criminals are being brought before the formal courts without going through the customary justice system. The chieftain's withdrawal from the defence of violent drug addicts or delinquents is seen by some villagers, particularly the relatives of the accused, as contributing to their conviction. Moreover, under the influence of drugs, indiscipline and violations of village norms and values are on the increase. Some users attack symbols of the village, verbally abuse elders and violate prohibitions. In some villages, intoxicated young people defy the authority of chiefs by destroying property or taking punitive action against people accused of witchcraft. Consumption also encourages a deviant counter-culture in the villages. More and more small clubs of drug users are springing up, coordinating supplies and identifying places to meet and consume. The users develop a specific drug vocabulary that enables them to evade parental and community surveillance and to make the products and their effects, the places where they are taken and the deviant behaviour they project discreet. For example, they will say "Gogni-Kpé", literally manioc leaf, to refer to cannabis, or "allons-chier" or "allons à babi" to mean "let's go and have a smoke" or "let's go and take a dose". Thanks to these clubs and codes, a number of individuals, said to be well integrated into the social group, have become drug users while remaining discreet and controlling their consumption. These clubs get the youngest members to use drugs for free. Once they have become accustomed to the product and the benefactor, they follow the group everywhere, adopting its norms, doing it favours, sharing products and in turn recruiting on behalf of the group. The survey revealed a small category of user-resellers who are still very discreet.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Scientific research into drug addiction focuses on urban areas, leaving aside rural areas, which are nonetheless heavily involved in such deviance, each with its own specific socio-cultural characteristics. The aim of this study is to analyse the profiles of drug users in rural areas and the effects of their drug use on the community. The results are divided into three phases. In terms of profiles, the majority of drug users are young, unemployed people with no apparent social role, which seems to be a factor in their integration into the Bété culture. Many survive thanks to family

solidarity or paid day-to-day work in the fields. Many of them are fatherless or motherless, and therefore have no arable land, which is usually sold for family needs or taken away by a paternal uncle. These users also have a history of delinquency and difficult relationships with their parents. Since childhood, they have been runaways, undisciplined, rowdies and regularly involved in petty crime such as stealing money, telephones or bags of manioc or cocoa. In this context of idleness, drugs are first experimented with out of curiosity, then they become an escape, a means of feeling they exist, of relieving their suffering and overcoming their despair. At this level of analysis, the study is in line with the work of Ivaldi (2003), whose results show that the use of illicit psychotropic substances is linked to the young people's immediate environment, their relational network or lifestyle and the model of drug addiction existing within the group. Dany and Apostolidis (2002) come to the same conclusion, asserting that the relationship with psychoactive substances is part of a social and cultural context that carries meaning for the consumer, who does not exist in isolation but in relation to the socio-cultural system from which he or she comes. Drug addiction arises when the individual no longer feels part of society as a whole, and suffers from problems of exclusion and social disintegration. Behavioural patterns of consumption show that the drug is used in a number of ways, in groups, discreetly and in secret. Use is exposed at funeral wakes, which are usually very lively, or at night-time parties, which are occasions for experimentation for many young people. Small user clubs are set up, using a coded vocabulary to keep things as discreet as possible. Some have become drug addicts by joining these groups, which become a source of supply but also a refuge and a role model with whom they identify. Others, on the other hand, try to control their use so as not to come into conflict with the social group. The products most commonly used are cannabis, psychotropic tablets, tramadol, ephedrine, Valium, Rivotril etc., accompanied by alcoholic beverages. Drug cocktails are sometimes made by mixing alcoholic "vodi" or "Koutoukou" energy drinks with all kinds of psychotropic tablets. The drugs are supplied by traffickers from the city and street vendors of substandard and falsified medicines (MQIF). The relationship with effects is important for users, who are above all concerned with preserving their parents' good image by avoiding overdoses and drunkenness that lead to uncontrolled behaviour. Contrary to the work of Juvin and Kotarac (2022), who found that certain products were becoming commonplace and that drug use was festive in rural areas, the study highlighted consumption linked to the availability of products due to the lack of a reliable and regular supply network. Like Varescon (2010), it also shows that the degree of social isolation, the level of dysfunction caused by a lack of reference points and the lack of proximity to parents are risk factors for drug addiction in rural areas. This risk will be correlated with the degree of availability of psychoactive substances in the social environment. Despite informal control, drug use develops in indiscreet places, with consequences for the whole community. There has been a proliferation of cannabis cultivation in the various villages, held by locals and some foreign immigrants, and consequently a gradual abandonment of coffee and cocoa cash crops. Users of psychoactive substances and local residents have reported thefts of property and physical assaults to finance their consumption. Fights between young people from the same village or from neighbouring villages are becoming a regular occurrence, resulting in serious injuries and complaints to the gendarmerie. The survey shows the emergence of a counter-culture in which young people oppose the actions of their elders. In some villages, the authority of traditional chiefs is no longer respected. Families are clashing over the delinquency of their children, undermining social cohesion. This study is a contribution to research into drug addiction in rural areas, an issue that is less and less addressed by specialists. It highlights the specific features of drug use in these areas, whereas previous studies have long shown

that the situation prevailing in rural areas is not really any different from that in urban centres, apart from the difficulty of reaching these different audiences, particularly those involved in the most problematic drug use (Cadet *et al.*, 2014). These particularities are closely linked to the socio-cultural context, i.e. perceptions of drug use, the regulation of drug addiction and the economic context. Insofar as studies have suggested that increased substance use among young people in rural areas may be attributable to restricted access to awareness and treatment services, which are more readily available in cities (Devoe *et al.*, 2009; McInnis, 2015), this study is a step forward. It could help to improve the provision of awareness-raising, assistance and treatment in rural areas by providing real data that takes account of the social realities of the people concerned. Despite these innovations, the study does not take sufficient account of the social regulation of drug use in Bété country. This aspect would have enabled us to understand some of the particularities of drug use by rural subjects. In addition, the sample was not large enough, being limited to one social category. Future research should take into account the major ethnic groups in the Ivory Coast in order to analyse the relationship between drug use and the cultural context on a broader scale.

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