

DRUG ADDICTION AND SOCIAL DEVIANCE. STUDY ON TEENAGERS AND STUDENTS IN THE CLUJ COUNTY EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract: *The phenomenon of drug use in contemporary society is one of the biggest and most serious social problems among young people. The onset of drug use among the young population of Cluj is 13 years old, in the case of drug use. Drug use can trigger inappropriate, risky behaviors in young people that include violence, unprotected sex that can lead to sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancies, or breaking the law, or it can lead to learning difficulties and behavior problems at school. The present work aims to study the possible effects of drug consumption among young people in Cluj County, generating effects of social deviance. This research aims to develop specific benchmarks for users of psychoactive substances in Cluj from the urban and rural environment. To carry out this study, questionnaire-based investigation was used, and the applied research tool was the questionnaire. The main conclusion is the consequences of substance use are serious. The number of accidents in which young people are involved under the influence of drugs is constantly increasing, self-aggressions and other aggressions are more and more frequent.*

Keywords: drug use; social deviances; effects of drug use., teenagers, young people.

1. Introduction

The radical transformations of society throughout its history, the evolution of the means of production and the emergence of new technologies, the creation and continuous development of intercontinental communication route networks, requiring shorter and shorter periods of time to travel distances, determined the expansion of usage of drugs worldwide, and no nation can consider itself protected from the destructive effects of narcotics.

Romania being isolated in time for many years, due to political and economic constraints, remained in its communist area, one of the rare areas on the world map that does not present in its traditional culture of behavior models that might include drug use, economic crisis or wide opening of the state borders that facilitate the transit in continuous growth of people, goods and services. However, after the fall of communism and especially after Romania's entry into the EU and the increase in living standards, this country has become an important potential market for drug dealers and users. In the current situation of year-on-year increase in the number of users and the quantities of confiscated drugs, it tends to turn into a social phenomenon. The actions of specialized governmental and non-governmental organizations must have a prevention component, not just a sanctioning component, as well detailed analysis of the results of cooperation with the institutions and the bodies of the European Union and the United Nations. The preventive component must first of all take into account drug addiction in the case of young people and adolescents, but also especially their predisposition towards social deviance.

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

2.1. Substance dependence among adolescents and young people

The issue of drug addiction is becoming more prevalent in modern society, and its negative effects are felt by both the individual and society as a whole.

Addiction is a condition where a person feels an overwhelming urge to use drugs or engage in a certain behavior, despite the negative consequences. It's a chronic and potentially life-threatening disease that's characterized by a persistent preoccupation with drugs, loss of control, increased tolerance, harmful effects in one or more areas of life, denial, and distorted thinking. Koob and LeMoal defined drug addiction as a chronic relapsing disorder characterized by (a) a compulsion to seek out and take the drug, (b) loss of control in limiting consumption, and (c) emergence of a negative emotional state (eg, dysphoria, anxiety, irritability) when access to the drug is prevented (defined here as dependency) (Koob and LeMoal, 2006). The knowledge of the personality and behaviour of the young drug addicts from a multidisciplinary perspective displays a high interest for theoretical and applicative researches belonging to various scientific and practical fields (Andrioni, Popp, Petrică, 2016).

Substance abuse can quickly lead to addiction in young people, resulting in a loss of autonomy and the ability to express oneself freely. With time, drug use becomes compulsive, and the individual may feel powerless to control their impulses, resulting in significant changes to their personality and behavior.

Addiction is a condition where an individual becomes excessively preoccupied with drug use and feels a compulsive urge to use despite negative consequences. This chronic and progressive disease can significantly impact an individual's physical and mental health, as well as their social and professional life. According to Stroescu's (Stroescu, 1999: 14) framework, addiction is defined by four key features:

- **Psychological addiction** is characterized by an overpowering desire to use a drug in order to relieve psychological discomfort. The pleasurable effects of the drug lead to repeated administration and the strengthening of conditioned behavior, resulting in addiction. The reactivity of the individual also plays a role in intensifying the satisfaction derived from the drug. Psychological addiction is a common element in all cases of addiction, but each drug has its own unique characteristics;
- **Tolerance** is a phenomenon characterized by a decrease in the effectiveness of a drug upon repeated use, requiring an increase in dosage to achieve the desired effect. This can lead to a vicious cycle of drug use and tolerance, where the individual becomes increasingly dependent on higher doses of the drug to achieve the same effect;
- **Physical dependence** is a condition where the body has adapted to the drug's presence and requires it to function normally. The discontinuation of the drug leads to the onset of withdrawal symptoms that vary depending on the substance. The severity of withdrawal symptoms can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, life-threatening;
- Long-term use of addictive substances at high doses can lead to **phytotoxicity**, which is characterized by behavioral disturbances, including psychotic symptoms.

2.2. Drugs and the social consequences of drug use: deviance and stigma

One of the central themes of sociology is the concept of deviant behavior. According to Emile Durkheim, deviance is a natural occurrence in all societies. Durkheim examines this phenomenon in terms of its origins and consequences, as there is no authority that can compel members of society to conform entirely to its norms and values. Thus, deviance is an inherent aspect of society, since complete adherence to its norms is unattainable.

Anthony Giddens, a prominent sociologist, defined deviance as *"the failure to conform to the norms of a social group or society, which are accepted by a significant number of people"* (Giddens, 2001: 189). In other words, deviance is the violation of social norms that are

considered legitimate and accepted by the majority of people in a particular community or society (Vlăsceanu, 1998: 165-166).

According to the Romanian Dictionary a “drug” is a “medicinal or toxic substance that is used to treat medical conditions or diseases.” While the dictionary definition of “drug” refers to substances used in pharmaceutical preparations, in common language it can refer to a wider range of substances, including natural, synthetic, or semisynthetic substances used for recreational purposes or to self-medicate, which can result in addiction and other negative outcomes.

2.3. The impact of drug consumption on social deviance and the forms of social deviance

The issue of drug consumption has been an ongoing challenge for humanity, and its negative repercussions have led to the global cooperation to combat and diminish its prevalence. The problem continues to worsen, reaching alarming levels, with drug addiction transcending age, social class, and occupation.

Legal drugs refer to substances that are allowed by law, and their use and distribution are regulated by the state. This category includes alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and some prescription drugs. While legal, these substances can still be harmful to the body and lead to self-destruction. However, their consumption is permissible as long as it is in compliance with the laws and regulations of the country.

Drug consumption has a significant impact on social deviance. It is a problem that affects individuals, families, communities, and society as a whole. One of the most significant consequences of drug consumption is the emergence of deviant behavior, which is non-conformity to a given set of norms, which are accepted by a significant number of people within a community or society. Drug consumption can lead to behavioral disorders, sometimes with a psychotic aspect, which can appear in the case of long-term use of high doses of addictive substances. These behavioral disorders can lead to criminal behavior, such as theft, drug trafficking, and violent behavior, which are considered deviant behaviors in society. Drug consumption also has a significant impact on the health of individuals. Long-term drug use can lead to physical dependence, tolerance, and phytotoxicity. Physical dependence is the need to continue using the drug to avoid the disorders that occur when the administration is interrupted.

Tolerance is the progressive reduction of the effect upon repeated administration, respectively the need to increase the dose to obtain the expected effect. Phychotoxicity is manifested by behavioral disorders, sometimes with a psychotic aspect, which appears in the case of long-term use of high doses of addictive substances. Drug consumption also has a significant economic impact. The costs of drug consumption include the costs of healthcare, law enforcement, and lost productivity. Healthcare costs include the costs of treating drug-related illnesses and injuries. Law enforcement costs include the costs of enforcing drug laws, such as the costs of investigating and prosecuting drug-related crimes. Lost productivity costs include the costs of absenteeism, reduced productivity and reduced work quality. Drug consumption also has a significant social impact. Based on the analysis of the Andrioni and Popp research results, drug consumption can have long-term impact, even in relatively short-term drug consumption (Andrioni, Popp, 2018: 10). The use of drugs can lead to the breakdown of families, the loss of social ties, and the disintegration of communities. Drug use can also lead to a decline in social values, such as honesty, integrity, and respect for others. The use of drugs can also lead to social inequality, as drug users are often stigmatized and excluded from mainstream society.

It is important to understand the forms of social deviance. An example of categorization in the field of deviant behavior is presented by M. Cusson (1997: 439), who proposes a taxonomy (in Boudon, 1997) divided into seven categories:

1. Violent behavior and criminal activity such as murder, theft, and juvenile delinquency;
2. Suicide;
3. Substance abuse with its psycho-social implications;
4. Deviant sexual behavior including prostitution, homosexuality, lesbianism, and pornography;
5. Religious deviance that leads to fanatical attitudes in certain religious sects, heresies, and witchcraft;
6. Mental illnesses have also been analyzed from the perspective of deviating from social norms;
7. Physical disabilities.

2.4. Types of deviant behavior determined by drug use

In the following, some aspects related to types of deviant behavior determined by drug use:

- Social isolation. Many drug users become isolated from their families, friends, and communities. They may spend long periods of time alone, neglecting personal hygiene, nutrition, and other basic needs. This isolation can exacerbate their drug use and lead to a downward spiral in their lives.
- Health problems. Drug use can lead to a range of health issues, including organ damage, infections, and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. These concerns not only affect the individual but can also have a significant impact on their family, friends, and society as a whole.
- Disruptive behaviors. The use of drugs can lead to disruptive behaviors that negatively impact personal relationships, school or work performance, and social interactions. This can result in isolation and feelings of loneliness, which further exacerbate drug use. Financially problematic behaviors.
- Financial problems. Drug use can lead to financial difficulties, such as job loss, bankruptcy, and debt. Users may prioritize buying drugs over paying bills and meeting other financial obligations.
- Medical complications. Drug use can lead to a range of medical complications, including heart issues, respiratory issues, and infectious diseases. Injecting drugs can also lead to the spread of diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C.
- Risky behaviors. Drug use can lead to engaging in risky behaviors such as unprotected sex, sharing needles, and driving under the influence. These behaviors can have serious consequences for the user and those around them.
- Emotional instability. Drug use can lead to extreme mood swings, making the person feel euphoric one moment and depressed or anxious the next. This can lead to difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships, as well as other negative impacts on social behavior.
- Criminal activity. In addition to the potential for violence and aggression, drug use can also lead to involvement in criminal activity such as drug trafficking or distribution. This can have severe legal consequences and further perpetuate deviant behavior.
- Physical deterioration. Prolonged drug use can result in severe physical deterioration, such as malnutrition, respiratory problems, and other health issues. This can lead to a cycle of further drug use and self-destructive behavior.
- Impulsive behavior. Drugs can reduce inhibitions and increase impulsivity, leading individuals to engage in risky behaviors such as driving under the influence, and making impulsive purchases or financial decisions.

One of the most serious implications of behavioral disorders is theft, which is often rooted in feelings of frustration and anxiety. Studies in the field of psychology have shown that

many juvenile delinquents engage in theft as a means of coping with these emotions. When committed by gangs, theft can take on even more severe and terrifying forms, particularly among young people.

Robbery is a severe form of deviant behavior that involves the use of violence or the threat of violence to obtain money or goods. When committed by a gang, it highlights the disharmonious personality characteristics and intensifies the tragic nature of the situation.

Deviant sexual behaviors can arise during sexual maturation and can take on aberrant forms due to harmful influences, aggression, or opposition. Rape is one such deviant behavior that can have serious consequences.

Suicidal behavior can have contagious functions, especially in certain areas or during specific periods. While suicide attempts are more common than actual suicides, both are serious issues that require attention and support.

The phenomenon of suicide contagion varies across different periods and locations, with suicide attempts generally being more common than completed suicides. Another concerning trend is the use of drugs among teenagers, who may be drawn to the thrill of breaking rules and engaging in risky behavior such as smoking, drinking, and experimenting with illegal substances like marijuana and heroin. While adults may use legal substances like alcohol and tobacco to varying degrees, teenagers may consume alcohol in large amounts in order to boost their confidence, elevate their mood, or feel more social.

Heresy, when viewed through a historical lens, can be seen as a form of social and political dissent, challenging established authority and advocating for alternative ways of living and believing. However, in modern times, religious deviations can take on more extreme and harmful forms, such as terrorism or cult behavior.

Cultural beliefs and values are often passed down from generation to generation and deeply ingrained in individuals from a young age. This can lead to a narrow-minded perspective and resistance to alternative viewpoints.

Drug consumption has a significant impact on social deviance. It leads to the emergence of deviant behavior, has a significant impact on the health and economic well-being of individuals and society, and has a significant social impact. To address this problem, it is essential to develop comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of drug consumption, including poverty, social inequality, and lack of access to education and healthcare. These strategies should also focus on providing effective drug treatment and prevention programs, as well as developing more effective drug policies that balance the needs of individuals and society.

2.5. The effects of drug use that can lead to deviance in adolescents and young people.

From the perspective of the effects, it has on the central nervous system, we can distinguish between the following types of drugs:

- *Psycholeptic substances*: causing euphoric symptoms, sedatives, which induce euphoria and inner calm
- *Psychoanaleptic substances*: stimulants, which cause an excitation of brain activity
- *Psychodysleptic substances*: which produce hallucinations.

Because of drug use, there have been a lot of car accidents lately. Teenagers get behind the wheel after consuming drugs, which reduces their ability to distinguish in traffic. It seems that a drug use for a young person leads to a decrease in inhibitions, and teenagers seem to feel more mature, when in fact, the effect obtained is the opposite.

There is also the risk of transmission of sexual diseases, because in the state of unconsciousness some forget to use condoms or other forms of protection and do not think

about the fact that they could get HIV-AIDS, herpes, chlamydia or unwanted pregnancies can occur.

Young people are not aware of the fact that the drug called cocaine causes addiction, being very dangerous. Thus, cardiac arrhythmia, myocardial infarction, pseudoepileptic seizures or cerebral vascular accidents can occur. Among the most common drugs used by adolescents are ecstasy, gamma hydroxybutyrate. Toxic substances are distributed especially in night clubs, but a very dangerous aspect is that they have started appearing in schools. The use of ecstasy can cause sleep disorders, severe anxiety, liver damage or temporary memory loss. The danger is all the greater as in some cases the drugs are taken in combination with alcohol can generate: car accidents – drug use is one of the main causes of car accidents involving teenagers and young people; violence and delinquency – teenagers who use drugs are prone to acts of violence; risky sexual behaviors – the risk for unwanted pregnancies, infection with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS is very high; emotional costs – drug use lowers self-esteem, increases the risk of depression and aggression, creates problems with friends, school or parents; suicide - in many cases drug use leads to suicide.

3. Research methodology

The present article has two major components:

a) The theoretical part and the review of specialized literature - it aims to comprehensively explain the concepts of social deviance, drug use and user profile aspects. Last but not least, the effects of drug use in the case of teenagers and young people will be presented.

b) The practical, applied part, the one in which the studied concepts are operationalized – it aims to apply a questionnaire among young people from universities in Cluj County, as well as teenagers from high schools in the same county.

The objectives of the practical part are:

b1) General objectives

Objective no. 1: Studying the relationship between the presence of drug use among urban and rural youth and their deviant predispositions

Objective no. 2: Studying the existing relationship between the presence of alcohol consumption among urban and rural youth and the presence of deviant behaviors

b2) Specific objectives

Objective no. 1: Highlighting the differences between drug users from the urban environment and those from the rural environment

Objective no. 2: Revealing the differences that appear in terms of the presence of deviant behavior in consumers from urban and rural environments

b3) In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the following working hypotheses were advanced:

The first hypothesis: There are differences between urban and rural drug users and their deviant predispositions.

The second hypothesis: There are differences between urban and rural consumers and the presence of deviant behaviors.

b4) The investigated population. This paper aims to highlight the differences between young drug users in urban and rural areas and non-consumers in the motivational structure of the person. For this, 120 subjects aged 15 to 19 years, female and male, were tested from January to March 2023. They are part of high schools in urban and rural areas, but also from their first academic year in Cluj-Napoca. In order to assess their environment, they were divided into two groups based on not their school affiliation, but on their home of residence.

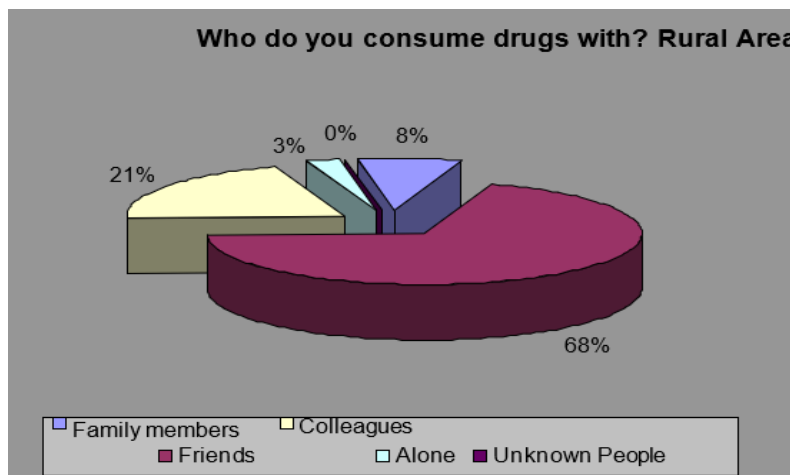
b5) Method. To carry out this study, questionnaire-based investigation were used, and the applied research tool was: questionnaire.

4. Drug addiction and social deviance – The results of the study on teenagers and students in the Cluj-Napoca education system

After applying the questionnaire to assess the size of health risk behaviors in high school and university students, they were divided into two batches according to drug use: an “experimental” one (that includes a variety of subjects, from subjects who responded to having taken at least one dose of the drug in the past 30 days or subjects who declared they only tried once) and one “in control” (subjects who responded that they did not ever used or tried drugs).

The very interesting fact is that subjects **were equally distributed** in the two batches in terms of their consumption (60 of 120), and almost the same in terms of their environment (of which 34 from urban and 26 from rural areas). Thus 50% of the today teenagers have at least once tried drugs.

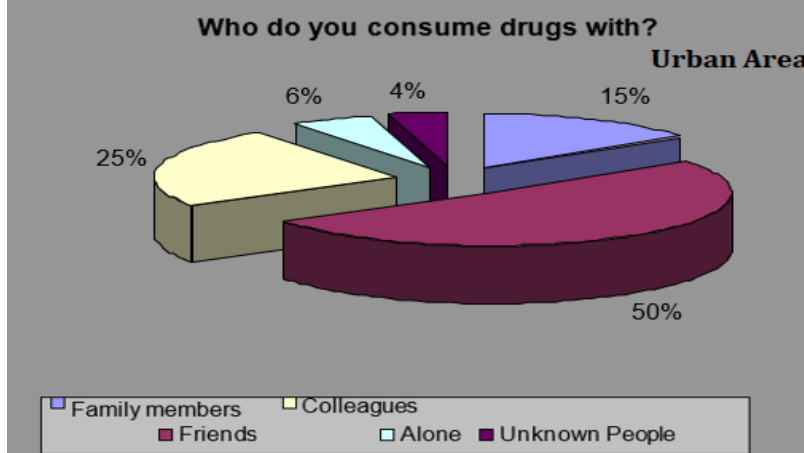
Figure 1. Drug consumption based on companionship – Rural Area



In this research, it was assumed that the psychological variables measured with the investigative tool used, will record significant differences between the two batches. However, all research is carried out under certain conditions, in a certain context. It must be admitted that, in one way or another, unexpected elements may occur in the conduct of the phenomenon under investigation, determined by the composition of the group, by the presentation of information and instructions by the examiner to different groups of subjects and by the context of the examination.

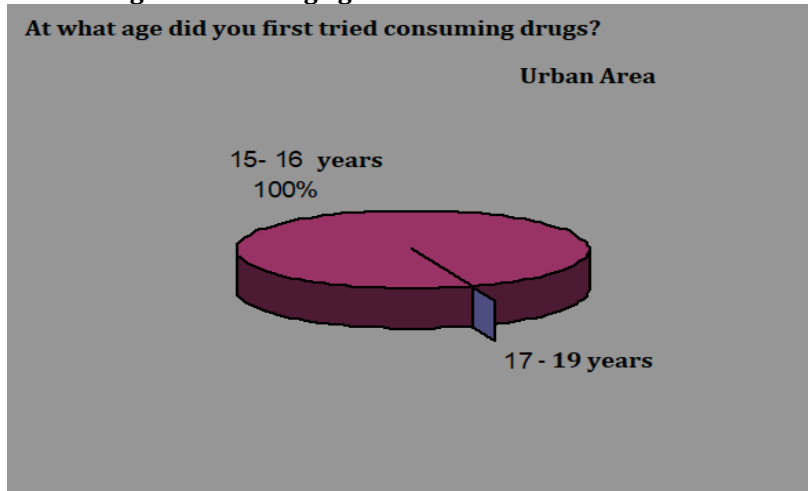
First hypothesis: There are differences between urban and rural drug users. Consumers in urban areas have many more favorable factors than those in rural areas, so the percentage of the two categories differs.

Figure 2. Drug consumption based on companionship - Urban Area



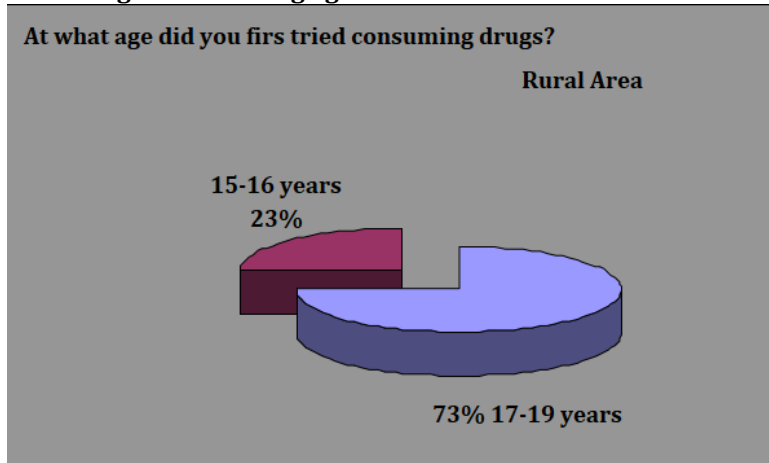
We observe that in rural areas drugs are used in a high percentage with friends, while in urban areas, a favorable factor for drug use is the school / university environment.

Figure 3. Starting age for consumers - Urban Area



All of the 34 consumers from the urban area of Cluj-Napoca have started using drugs, or tried drugs at a very young age, between 15-16.

Figure 4. Starting age for consumers - Rural Area

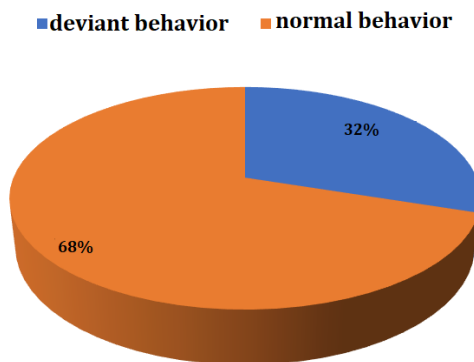


From the 26 consumers from the rural area of Cluj County, only 6 of them started using/ tried drugs in their first 2 years of high school. Most of the other 20 remaining, first consumed drugs at the age of 19, in their first academic year (16 out of 20).

Thus, the academic environment in Cluj-Napoca offers temptations many students who came from rural areas might not handle properly.

Second hypothesis: There are differences between urban and rural consumers and the presence of deviant behaviors.

Figure 5. Deviant behavior in Rural Areas as a consequence of drug use
Deviant behavior in Rural Areas



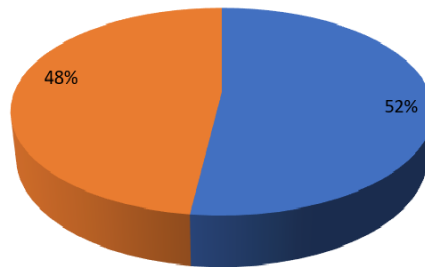
In rural areas, 9 subjects out of 26 have reported that they have had some sort of deviant behavior as a consequence of drug use.

In rural areas, considering that both favorable factors are reduced and situations of manifestation and development of deviant behaviors, their percentage is about 32%, while much bigger in the urban areas.

Figure no. 6. Deviant behavior in Urban Areas as a consequence of drug use

Deviant behavior in Urban Areas

■ deviant behavior ■ normal behavior



It can be seen that in the case of urban consumers, they have a high percentage of deviant behaviors, a percentage that is significantly superior to rural consumers. This difference is supported by the high number and diversity of schools, universities and leisure opportunities.

5. Conclusions

From what has been stated so far, an important conclusion emerges: young people turn to alcohol consumption out of the desire to assert their independence, to be part of a group. In adolescence, when the young person moves away from the family, the group of friends and its values become milestones in the formation of his personality. If the members of the group use drugs, the young man will do it too, because he will continue to remain among similar people. The schools will offer the opportunity to enrich his knowledge about the ways of communication and relating to others. Out of the desire to demonstrate that he is important, the teenager will resort to risky behaviors, including the consumption of substances. (Dixit, 2023, p.2). The diversity of the economic, educational, and family factors as well as the pressure of the entourage exert their influence on the behaviour of the minors and can determine their predisposition to drug use (Andrioni, Popp, Petrică, 2016,p.22).

The consequences of consumption behavior should also be analyzed: aggression in all its forms: from verbal to beatings, to suicides and homicides.

The first hypothesis (there are differences between urban and rural drug users) is supported by the higher percentage of urban drug users, both regarding the age at which drug use begins and the people with whom they use.

The second hypothesis (There are differences between urban and rural consumers and the presence of deviant behaviors) was strengthened by the presence of deviant behaviors as a result of addictive consumption among young people, behaviors which are also in a much higher percentage among those from the urban environment than rural.

The consequences of substance use are serious, sometimes even fatal. The number of accidents in which young people are involved under the influence of drugs is constantly increasing, self-aggressions and other aggressions are more and more frequent.

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