

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE IVORIAN ELECTRICITY COMPANY (CIE) AMONG DISSATISFIED POPULATIONS: A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS IN YOPOUGON (ABIDJAN)

KOUAME KOUAKOU FÉLICIEN

Teacher-Researcher,
Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny Abidjan-Cocody,
22 BP 441 Abidjan 22,
(+225) 0504177494

DIGBEU ALAIN FABRICE

Teacher-Researcher,
Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny Abidjan-Cocody
(+225) 0173985488

<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJSSMR.2024.7612>

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to determine the structuring elements of social representations of the Ivorian Electricity Company among populations in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly in Yopougon, in the economic capital Abidjan. For this purpose, a sample of 250 male and female participants from the said locality is constituted using the stratified random sampling technique. These participants are subjected to the evocation questionnaire and the characterization test of Abic (1994) using the structural approach to social representations. Analysis of the data using évoc2005 and simi2005 reveals a largely negative perception of the CIE, dominated by notions of high cost, injustice and abuse. Variations between groups show how social representations are structured differently depending on experiences and specific socio-economic contexts. These elements therefore belong to the central core of these representations both at the level of the overall sample and at the level of the different categories.

Keywords: Social representations, central core, periphery, CIE, Yopougon, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Côte d'Ivoire, like many other developing countries, faces major socio-economic challenges, among which rising electricity prices and the perception of injustice in its distribution are recurring problems. In this context, the Compagnie Ivoirienne d'Electricité (CIE) plays a central role as the main electricity supplier in the country. However, populations, particularly those living in the capital Abidjan, are increasingly expressing their dissatisfaction with the CIE, due to the increase in electricity bill amounts. This discontent is part of a broader context of high cost of living, rapid societal changes, social mutations and forced displacement of populations in risk areas following evictions.

In this context, the manifestations of discontent towards the electricity distribution company, the CIE, provide an interesting window of observation of the social representations which are

formed around this institution. A thorough analysis of the context reveals several problems. First, there is a tension between citizens' expectations in terms of public services, such as electricity, and the reality of economic and social constraints. Second, increases in electricity prices exacerbate already existing tensions linked to the cost of living. Third, social changes and population movements can influence the perception of the services provided by the CIE, particularly in terms of reliability and accessibility.

To understand this complex phenomenon, it is crucial to adopt a multidimensional approach, integrating both sociological and psychological perspectives. With this in mind, the theory of social representations designed by Serge Moscovici (Jodelet, 1984) and developed by Jean-Claude Abric (1994) can provide a relevant conceptual framework. Social representations are increasingly the subject of sociological investigations. They allow the approach to the symbolic domain and the analysis of the meanings that the actors give to their practice (Vergès, 2001). Jodelet (1984) emphasizes for this purpose that the concept of social representation designates a specific form of knowledge, common sense knowledge, whose contents manifest the operation of socially marked generative and functional processes. More broadly, it designates a form of social thought. Social representations are modalities of practical thought oriented towards communication, understanding and mastery of the social, material and ideal environment. As such, they present specific characteristics in terms of the organization of content, mental operations and logic. The social marking of contents or processes of representation refers to the conditions and contexts in which representations emerge, to the communications through which they circulate, to the functions they serve in interaction with the world and others.

According to Jean-Claude Abric (1994), social representation is structured into organizing, stable and non-negotiable elements to form the core of the representation around which unstable and negotiable peripheral elements act as a buffer to reality.

According to this theory, social representations are forms of socially developed and shared knowledge, which contribute to giving meaning to our social reality. Thus, the perceptions of the CIE and its practices by populations feeling disillusioned are likely to be influenced by these social representations, which can in turn shape individual and collective attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

The problem of this research therefore consists of exploring in depth the social representations of the CIE by dissatisfied populations, by analyzing how these representations are constructed, shared and internalized in a context of growing dissatisfaction with the practices of the electricity company. More precisely, this research aims to answer the following question: what are the social representations of the electricity distribution company (CIE) among populations of Yopougon dissatisfied with the increase in the amounts of electricity bills, and how these representations do they influence their attitudes and behavior towards the CIE?

The general objective of this research is therefore to better understand the psychosocial dynamics underlying the populations' dissatisfaction with the CIE through the study of their social representations. To achieve this general objective, several specific objectives can be identified:

- ✓ Analyze the discourses and perceptions of the populations of Yopougon with regard to the CIE, highlighting the key elements of their social representations.
- ✓ Examine the social, economic and cultural factors that contribute to the formation and dissemination of these social representations.
- ✓ Explore the links between social representations of the CIE and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of populations towards it.
- ✓ Propose avenues for reflection and action aimed at improving communication and relations between the CIE and dissatisfied populations, with the aim of promoting better mutual understanding and responding to the needs and concerns of stakeholders.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

By combining an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic and cultural context with an exploration of social representations through the prism of social psychology, this research aims to shed new light on the tensions and conflicts linked to the distribution of electricity in Côte d'Ivoire, and thus contribute to the development of more inclusive and sustainable solutions.

2.1 Participants

The study concerns populations of the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire, in particular those of the commune of Yopougon.

Justification for the choice of the Yopougon commune as the study area.

Subsidiary of the Eranove group linked to the State of Côte d'Ivoire by a leasing-type concession agreement for the operation of production, transport and distribution, marketing, import and export of energy works electricity, the Ivorian Electricity Company (CIE) is one of the leaders in its sector on the African continent. With a capital of 14 billion CFA francs (nearly 22 million euros), CIE took over from the former national company EECI. At the heart of development in Ivory Coast and in Africa while respecting the environment, CIE aims to be an innovative, attractive, efficient company, leader in customer service in electricity, a benchmark player in the production, transport, distribution and marketing of electrical energy.

For a while now, voices from the Ivorian population have been raised to cry that they are fed up with the bills issued that they find inappropriate. We are interested in those of the popular commune of Yopougon, to the west of the economic capital.

The largest popular commune in Abidjan, often characterized by a high population density and socio-economic diversity, represents an ideal microcosm for studying social representations. These areas often seem to be the most affected by increases in electricity prices and economic fluctuations, making them relevant places to observe and analyze people's perceptions and reactions to CIE policies.

Studying a large popular commune makes it possible to collect data representative of the perceptions of large segments of the urban population. The demographic diversity of these municipalities, including people of different ages, genders, education levels and socio-economic statuses, provides a rich sample to explore the different facets of social representations of the CIE.

The fact that the researchers reside in the chosen municipality offers several methodological advantages:

- ✓ Researchers can easily access participants and different sites of interest, facilitating regular and prolonged data collection.
- ✓ The researchers' familiarity with the local context, social dynamics and cultural specificities of the municipality allows a deeper and nuanced understanding of the data collected.
- ✓ Residing in the same municipality as participants can strengthen residents' trust and cooperation, making participants more willing to openly share their opinions and experiences.

By conducting research in their own municipality, researchers demonstrate a direct commitment to their community. This can not only improve the legitimacy and acceptability of the study among residents, but also enhance researchers' sense of social responsibility towards the research results and their practical implications for improving local conditions.

Researchers living in the commune can take advantage of opportunities for participant observations and daily interactions with residents. These informal interactions can provide valuable insights that would not be accessible through more formal and distant research methods.

The geographic proximity of researchers reduces costs and logistical constraints associated with frequent travel and the establishment of research infrastructures. This allows more resources to be allocated to critical phases of research, such as data analysis and dissemination of results.

By choosing the largest popular commune of Abidjan as a study site, researchers benefit from a unique combination of contextual relevance, accessibility, representativeness, and opportunities for deep and meaningful interactions with participants. This approach maximizes the richness and reliability of the data collected, while reinforcing the commitment and social responsibility of researchers towards their own community.

In the context of your study on the social representations of the CIE, it is crucial to capture the diversity of opinions and experiences among the different components of the population of the municipality. Social representations can vary significantly depending on sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, and professional situation. Stratified sampling ensures that these variations are adequately accounted for, allowing for a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of perceptions and attitudes toward the CIE.

Stratified sampling, combined with random selection within strata, is a solid methodological technique for interviewing 250 participants in this popular commune of Abidjan. This approach makes it possible to obtain rich and diversified data, essential for an in-depth study of the social representations of the CIE.

2.2 Data collection equipment

The material used is the evocation questionnaire by Abric and Vergès (1994). From the “CIE”, participants are asked to produce the five (5) words or expressions that come to mind. They are then invited to classify these words or expressions according to the importance they attach to them. Besides the fact that free associations reveal the latent dimensions which structure the semantic universe specific to the representations studied, they allow access to the figurative core of the representation.

Based on the expressions collected, we develop the second questionnaire for the centrality test. Using the results of the first phase of collection, we offer the subject the list of items by asking him for each of them, if he “moves away the most”, if he “does not move away nor gets closer,” if it “gets closer” to the object. Thus, the participant marks their degree of agreement or disagreement in the list of items to express the characteristic elements of the CIE. This profile is that of the central elements.

2.3 Data analysis method

For the definition of the elements of the central core of social representation, we used on the one hand, lexicographic analysis and, on the other hand, the definition of categories. This processing is carried out using a computer program (Evoc2000, version 2005) and gives the following results.

3.0 STUDY RESULTS

The presentation and analysis of the results of the study are done at four levels, namely categorization at the global level, categorization according to sex, categorization according to age and categorization according to socio-professional situation.

1) Categorization at the global level

Table 1: Overall characterization of the representation of the CIE covering all participants

Term	Frequency	Rank
augmentation-injustifiée-et-abusive	44	2,
surfacturation	21	1,952
électricité-chère	64	2,297
absence-de-concurrents	34	3,
abus-population	35	3,800
anarque	10	3,300
appauvrissement-population	23	3,
coupure-injustifiée	35	3,200
donne-lumière	13	2,846
escroquerie	25	3,360
facture-très-elevée	22	2,727
incomprehension-dans-facturation	10	4,
injustice	17	3,471
malhonneteté	11	2,818
facture-injustifiée	6	2,667
liberalisation-secteur-electricité	5	2,f
mauvaise-qualité	6	2,500
souffrance-population	7	2,:
abus-de-pouvoir	8	3,125
detresse-population	6	3,
manque-information-sur-redevances	8	3,f
relation-difficile-avec-CIE	8	3,j

The evoc2000 analysis reveals that the central core of the representations of the CIE by all the participants is made up of the elements: expensive-electricity, unjustified-and-abusive increase and overbilling. These items are therefore organizers of the other elements of the representational structure.

Similarity analysis draws on the notions of salience, centrality, periphery and relationships to describe a social representation. This organization is represented in the maximum co-occurrence tree as follows:

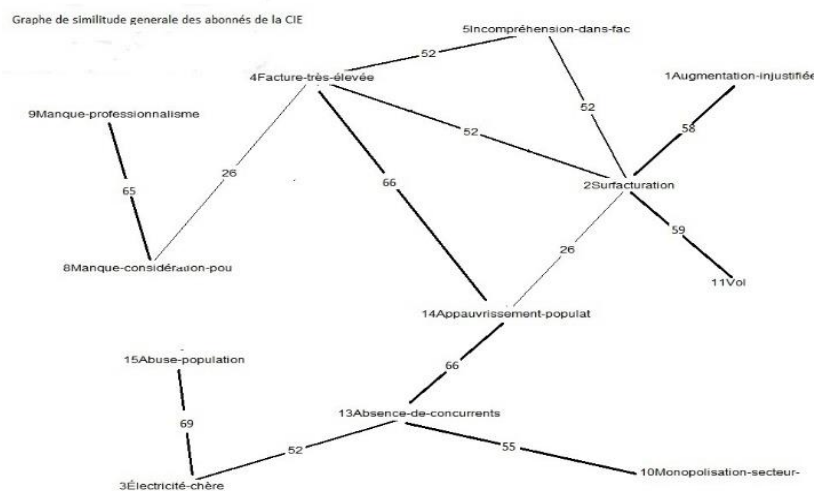


Figure 1: similarity graph (maximum tree) of the CIE covering the entire population

Examination of the overall similarity graph (figure 1), relating to the responses of all the participants who together responded to the characterization questionnaire, reveals the items they chose as being characteristic of the social representation they have of the Ivorian Electricity Company.

Careful examination of the graph reveals that ten (10) items stand out due to the strength of their relationships. They thus play a fundamental organizing role and give meaning to the overall representation. These are: expensive-electricity, population-abuse, unjustified-and-abusive-increase, overbilling, theft, absence-of-competitors, population-impooverishment, very-high-bill, lack-of-consideration, lack-of-professionalism. This graph shows strong connectivity between the elements expensive-electricity and abuse-population (69), impoverishment-population and absence-of-competitors (66), impoverishment-population and very-expensive-bill (66), lack-of-competitors (66), consideration and lack of professionalism (65), overcharging and theft (59), unjustified increase and overcharging (58) It should be noted that these elements belong to the central core and the first periphery, that is to say elements as important as those of the central core.

These functions of generating meaning and organizing representational elements are, which, from our point of view, allow the central core to determine the dominant orientation of the process of appropriation of a given technique and to reveal the meaning and the essence of its dynamics. If the central core thus appears to be the fundamental element of social representation, the peripheral elements (in particular, those of the first periphery) also hold an

essential place. Concentrating a maximum of relationships with the other elements, this configuration confirms the previous results and the analysis of the distribution of the items.

2) Categorization at the sex level

Table 2: Characterization of the representation of the CIE relating to men

The screenshot shows the 'Options pour le programme TABRGFR' window. It features a yellow background and several control elements: 'Fermer' and 'Editer' buttons, and three frequency/ranking filters: 'Fréquence Minimale' (5), 'Fréquence Intermediaire' (10), and 'Rang moyen' (2.5). Below these are four panes displaying items categorized by 'Rang < 2,5' and 'Rang >= 2,5'. The left panes also show frequency filters: 'Fréquence >= 10' and 'Fréquence <= 5', and 'Fréquence < 9'. The right panes show a list of items with their frequency and score.

Item	Freq	Score
surfacturation	14	2,214
électricité-chère	42	2,095
absence-de-concurrents	28	3,458
abus-population	24	3,458
appauvrissement-population	15	3,333
augmentation-injustifiée-et-abusive	33	2,333
coupure-injustifiée	27	3,333
escroquerie	20	3,450
facture-elevée	11	3,656
injustice	13	3,338
manque-consideration	16	2,338
monopolisation-secteur-electrique	14	2,667
vol	51	2,667
mauvaise-qualité	5	2,000
monopolisation-secteur-electrique	6	2,111
souffrance-population	8	1,444
abus-de-pouvoir	5	3,800
anarque	8	3,500
incomprehension-dans-facturation	8	3,333
malhonnêteté	9	2,556
manque-consideration-pour-abonnés	8	5,111
numero-vert-179-très-couteux	5	4,444
relation-difficile-avec-CIE	5	3,333

It appears from the evocation table that the characterization of the CIE men is structured around the items overbilling and expensive electricity. These are the two elements of the central core of the social representation of the CIE for the men who participated in the study.

With the analysis of the similarity graph, we will know more about these central elements and their connectivity.

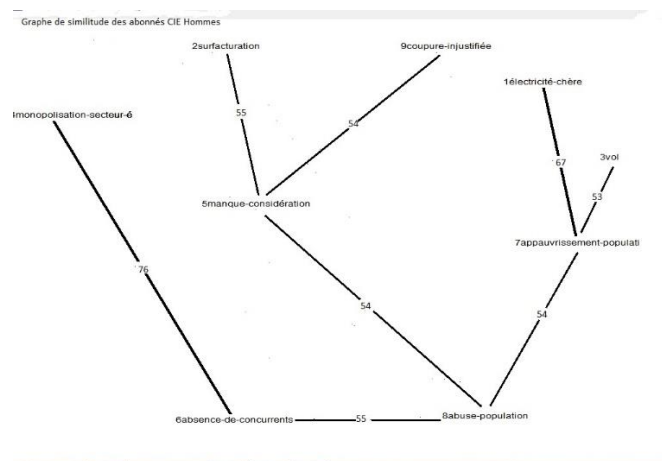


Figure 2: similarity graph (maximum tree) of the CIE for men

Examination of the similarity graph (figure 2), relating to the responses of male participants who responded to the characterization questionnaire, reveals a strong connection between elements such as monopolization-electrical-sector and absence-of-competitors (76) , expensive electricity and population impoverishment (67). These elements belong to the central core and the first periphery of men's representations of the CIE.

Table 3: Characterization of CIE representation of women

Options pour le programme TABRGFR

Fréquence Minimale: 5
Fréquence Intermediaire: 9
Rang moyen: 2,20

Rang < 2,20	Rang >= 2,20
facture-très-elevée: 9, 2,111	abuse-population: 9, 4,111
électricité-chère: 12, 1,667	augmentation-injustifiée-et-abusive: 9, 2,111
	vol: 18, 3,111
surfacturation: 7, 1,429	absence-de-concurrents: 6, 3,111
	coupure-injustifiée: 8, 2,750
	detresse-population: 6, 3,111
	escroquerie: 5, 3,000
	manque-de-consideration: 6, 3,111

Examination of the evocation table (table 3) reveals that the social representation of the CIE by women is structured around a central core composed of the elements expensive-electricity and very-high bill.

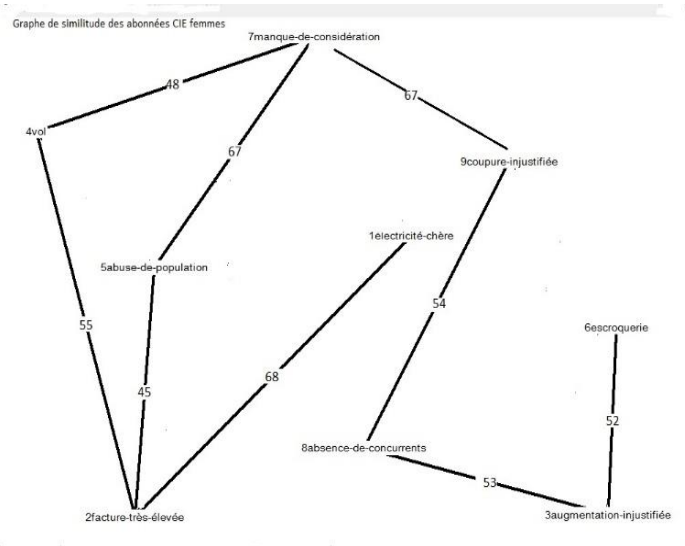
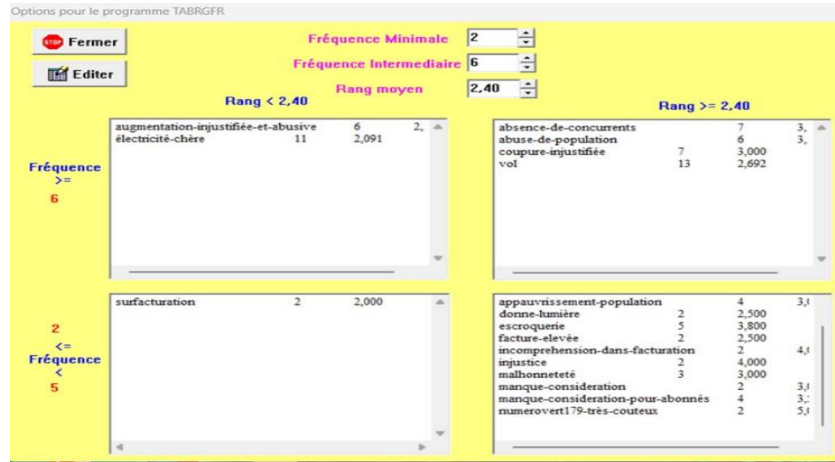


Figure 3: similarity graph (maximum tree) of the CIE relating to women

The similarity graph suggests strong connectivity between the elements expensive-electricity and very-high-bill (68), lack-of-consideration and abuse-of-population (67), as well as lack-of-consideration and unjustified-cutting (67). The elements of the structure belong to the central core and the peripheral elements (first and second periphery).

3) Categorization at the level of age groups

Table 4: Characterization of the representation of the CIE relating to participants aged 20 to 30



The central core of the representation of the CIE by participants aged 20 to 30 is made up of the elements increase-unjustified-and-abusive and electricity-expensive.

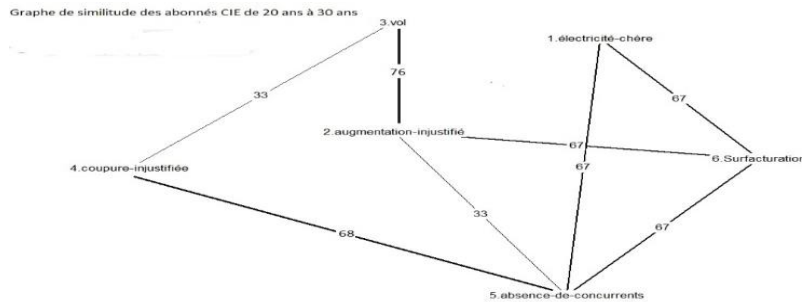


Figure 4: similarity graph (maximum tree) of the CIE for participants aged 20 to 30

The similarity graph of strong connectivity between CIE elements such as unjustified-increase and theft (76), unjustified-cut and absence-of-competitors (68), unjustified-increase and overcharging (67), expensive-electricity and absence-of-competitors (67), expensive-electricity and over-billing (67) and, over-billing and absence-of-competitors (67). These are elements of the central core and the first periphery.

Table 5: Characterization of the representation of the CIE relating to participants aged 30 to 40

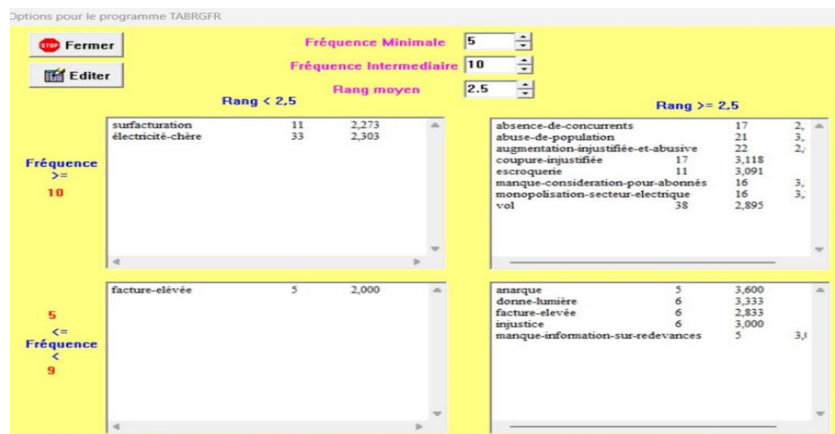


Table 5 reveals that the central core of the representation of the CIE by populations aged 30 to 40 is structured around the elements of extra billing and expensive electricity.

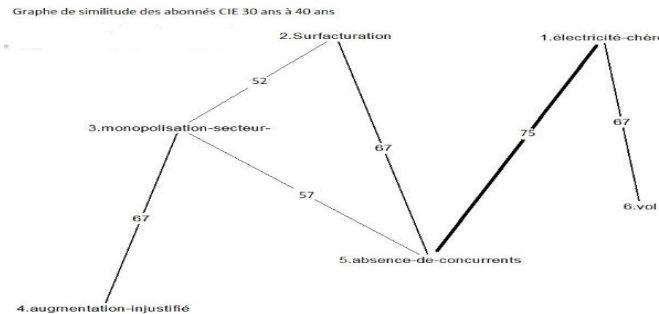
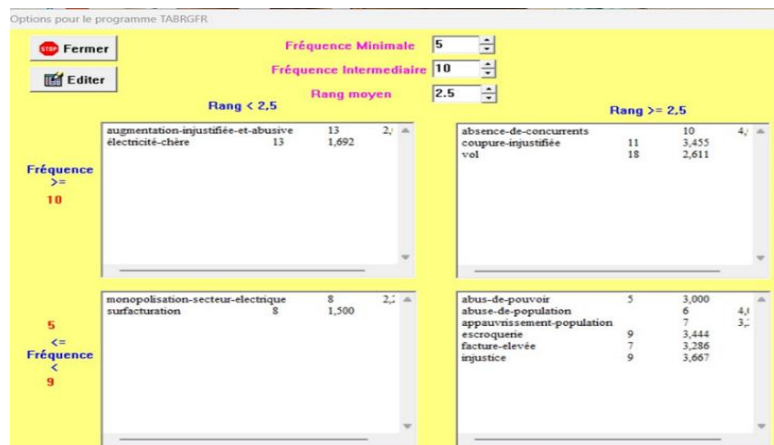


Figure 5: similarity graph (maximum tree) of the CIE for participants aged 30 to 40

Analysis of the similarity graph (figure 5) indicates strong connectivity between certain elements, notably between expensive electricity and absence-of-competitors (75), expensive electricity and theft (67), overbilling and absence-of-competitors (67), electricity-sector-monopolization and unjustified-increase (67). These are the elements of the central core and the first periphery.

Table 6: Characterization of the representation of the CIE relating to participants aged 40 and over



According to Table 6, the central core of the social representation of the CIE by participants aged 40 and over is formed with the elements unjustified increase and expensive electricity.

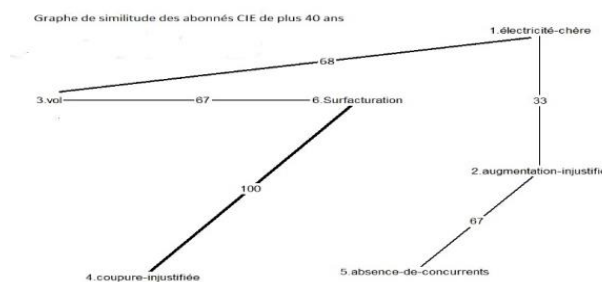


Figure 6: similarity graph (maximum tree) of the CIE relating to populations aged 40 and over

The similarity graph (figure 6) particularly reveals a very strong connectivity between overbilling and unjustified cut-off (100). It further suggests strong connectivity between elements such as expensive-electricity and theft (68), overcharging and theft (67) and absence-of-competitors and unjustified-increase (67). Apart from the overcharging item which is one of the contrasting elements of the representation of this category of participants, all the other elements in connectivity are either from the central core or from the periphery.

4) Categorization at the level of socio-professional situation

Table 7: Characterization of the representation of the CIE relating to public participants

	Rang < 2,50	Rang moyen	Rang >= 2,50
vol	6	2,333	
électricité-chère	6	1,500	
absence-de-concurrents	4	1,1	
augmentation-injustifiée-et-abusive	4	1,1	
abus-de-population			8
coupeure-injustifiée			7
manque-de-professionnalisme			4
monopolisation-secteur-electrique			4

The public sector workers who participated in the study have a social representation of the CIE whose central core is made up of the elements theft and expensive electricity.

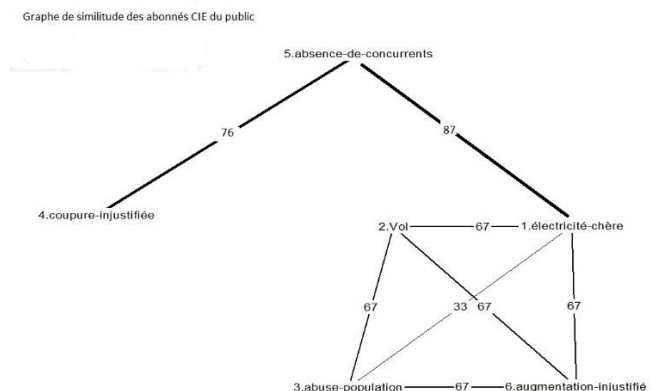


Figure 7: CIE similarity graph (maximum tree) for public sector participants

The similarities graph (figure 7) reveals very strong connectivity mainly between the elements absence-of-competitors and expensive-electricity (87) and unjustified-cut and absence-of-

competitors (76). It is an element of the central core (electricity-expensive), an element of the first periphery (cut-off-unjustified) and an element of contrast (absence-of-competitors).

Table 8: Characterization of the representation of the CIE relating to private sector participants

Options pour le programme TABRGFR		
Fermer		
Editer		
Fréquence Minimale: 5		
Fréquence Intermediaire: 10		
Rang moyen: 2.5		
Rang < 2,5		
Rang >= 2,5		
monopolisation-secteur-electrique	17	2
surfacturation	11	2,000
electricite-chere	42	2,024
Fréquence >= 10		
Rang < 2,5		
abus-de-pouvoir	5	2,400
injustifiee	6	2,000
Fréquence <= 5		
Rang >= 2,5		
absence-de-concurrents	20	3
abus-de-population	21	3
appauvrissement-population	13	3
augmentation-injustifiee-et-abusive	31	2
coupure-injustifiee	26	2,962
escroquerie	20	3,500
facture-elevee	10	3,500
injustice	10	3,500
manque-consideration-pour-abonnés	18	3
vol	50	2,760
Fréquence < 9		
Rang >= 2,5		
anarchie	9	3,444
donne-humière	9	2,889
incomprehension-dans-facturation	6	4,1
malhonnêteté	6	2,667
manque-information-sur-redevances	8	3,1
mauvaise-qualité	5	2,800

According to Table 8, the elements constituting the central core of the social representation of the CIE by private sector workers are: monopolization-electrical-sector, overbilling, expensive electricity.

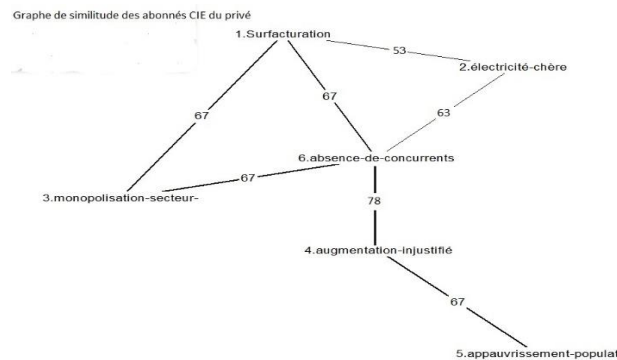
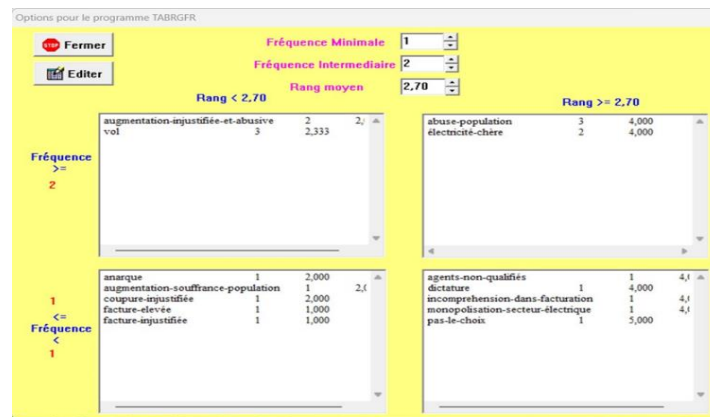


Figure 8: CIE similarity graph (maximum tree) for private sector participants

The similarity graph for this category of participants indicates strong connectivity between the absence-of-competitors and unjustified-increase elements (78). Other connectivities seem important, notably between unjustified-increase and impoverishment-population (67), monopolization-electric-sector and absence-of-competitors (67), over-invoicing and absence-of-competitors (67), over-invoicing and monopolization- of the electricity-sector (67). It should be noted that this strong connectivity is essentially established between the elements of the central core and those of the first periphery.

Table 9: Characterization of the representation of the CIE relating to unemployed participants



Concerning the category of unemployed, their social representation of the CIE is built around a central core composed of elements such as theft and unjustified-and-abusive increase.

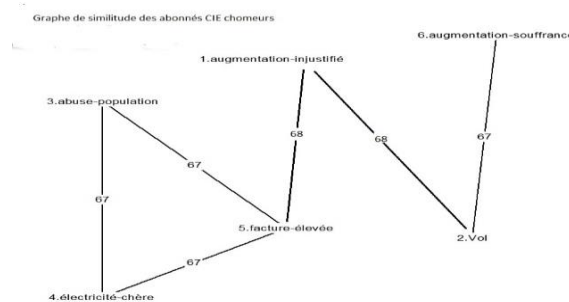


Figure 9: similarity graph (maximum tree) of the CIE relating to unemployed participants

When analyzing the similarity graph (figure 9), we note strong connectivity between all the elements of the social representation. These are the connectivity between unjustified-increase and theft (68), unjustified-increase and high-bill (68), suffering-increase and theft (67), high-bill and expensive-electricity (67), electricity-expensive and abuse-population (67), electricity-expensive and abuse-population (67).

Table 10: Characterization of the representation of the CIE relating to Unemployed participants

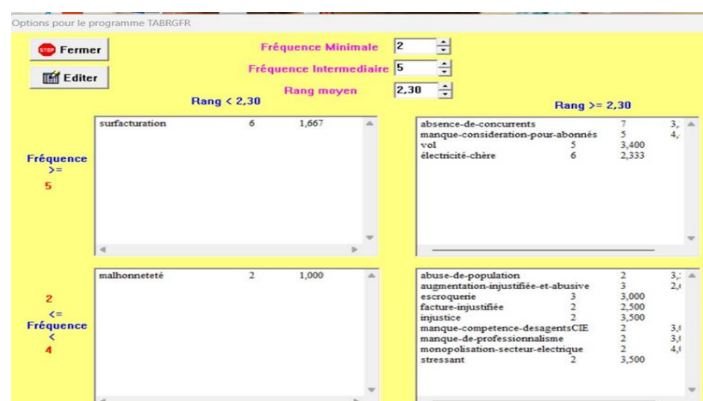


Table 10 reveals that the social representation of the CIE by unemployed participants is structured around a central core composed of a single element, overcharging.

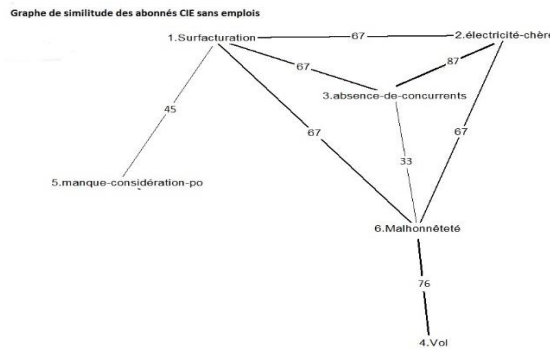
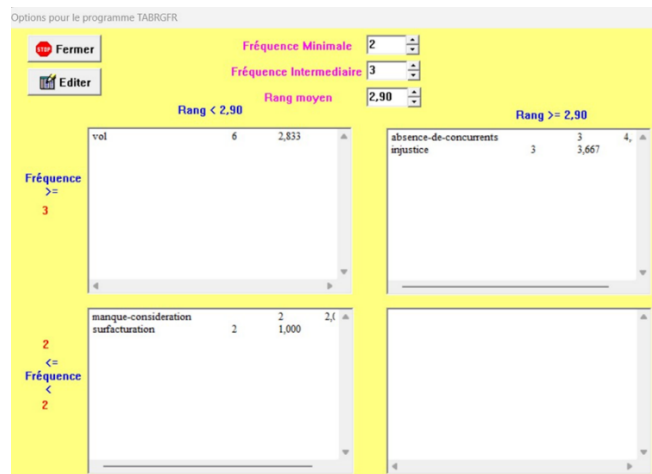


Figure 10: similarity graph (maximum tree) of the CIE relating to unemployed participants

Through their evocations, the speeches of the unemployed in the study reveal strong connectivity between the items expensive-electricity and absence-of-competitors (87), dishonesty and theft (76), dishonesty and expensive-electricity (67), dishonesty and overbilling (67), overbilling and absence-of-competitors (67), overbilling and expensive-electricity (67).

Table 11: Characterization of the representation of the CIE relating to retired participants



It appears from Table 11 that the social representation of the CIE by the retirees in the present study has a central core consisting of a single element, theft.

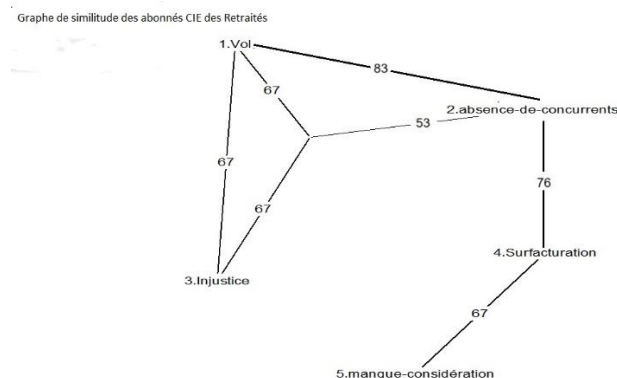


Figure 11: similarity graph (maximum tree) of the CIE relating to retired participants

The similarity graph (fig 11) reveals strong connectivity between theft and absence-of-competitors (83), absence-of-competitors and overcharging (76). Other no less important connections are established between the elements overcharging and lack of consideration (67), theft and injustice (67).

4.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

We will interpret and discuss these results based on the theory of social representations and the structure of the central core. The theory of social representations, as developed by Abric, postulates that social representations are structured around a stable central core and more flexible peripheral elements.

4.1 Analysis of the central core and peripheral elements

The central core of the social representations of the CIE is made up of fundamental and consensual elements which structure the overall perception of the electricity company by the participants. These elements are resistant to change and form the basis of social representation.

1) Elements of the overall central core:

Electricity-expensive: This element appears recurrently in all categories, highlighting a general consensus on the high cost of electricity provided by the CIE. This reflects a pervasive perception of electricity as too expensive a service.

Unjustified-and-abusive increase and Overbilling: These elements are also common and reflect a perception of injustice and abuse in electricity billing. Participants seem to perceive price increases as unjustified and billing practices as abusive.

2) Interpretations by sociodemographic categories

- ✓ Men

Overbilling and Expensive Electricity: The focus on overbilling suggests that men are particularly sensitive to CIE billing practices, which they perceive as excessive and unfair.

- ✓ Women

Expensive-electricity and very-high-bills: Women mainly focus on the high cost of bills, which may indicate a more acute concern for managing household expenses and the direct financial impact on the family budget. Jeunes Adultes (20-30 ans).

Unjustified-and-abusive-increases and expensive-electricity: Young adults perceive not only the high cost of electricity, but also rate increases as particularly unfair, which may reflect increased sensitivity to issues of justice and equity.

- ✓ Adults (30-40 years old)

Overcharging and expensive electricity: Similar to men, this age group emphasizes overcharging practices, indicating a perception of economic abuse.

- ✓ Elderly people (40 years and over)

Unjustified-and-abusive-increase and expensive-electricity: Elderly people share the concerns of young adults, highlighting a perception of injustice in the rate increases.

3) Interpretations by Socio-economic Categories

- ✓ Public sector workers

Theft and Expensive Electricity: The notion of theft suggests an extremely negative perception, implying practices perceived as fraudulent on the part of the CIE, in addition to the high cost of electricity.

- ✓ Private sector workers

Monopolization-electric-sector, Over-billing, Expensive-electricity: The mention of monopolization indicates a criticism of the lack of competition in the electricity sector, seen as a cause of abusive practices and high costs.

- ✓ Unemployed

Theft and Unjustified-and-abusive-Increase: For the unemployed, the feeling of theft and injustice in tariff increases is particularly pronounced, probably reflecting their economic vulnerability and their frustration with financial burdens perceived as illegitimate.

- ✓ Unemployed people

Overcharging: This category primarily focuses on overcharging, which may be linked to their precarious economic situation and increased sensitivity to fixed costs like electricity.

- ✓ Retirees

Theft: Retirees mainly associate the CIE with the notion of theft, which reflects an extremely negative perception and a feeling of injustice probably accentuated by fixed and limited income.

The heterogeneous conception of the Ivorian Electricity Company by the participants therefore emanates from a social construct whose foundations seem to be economic, cultural, even ideological: "It is a government strategy to make us pay for the fact that "We're not them," said one participant. Everything is constructed by stereotypes of those in power in a sensitive socio-political context. Beyond the increase observed in invoices, we will construct the CIE in

a discriminatory and unequal manner on the basis of prejudices and clichés. Thus, social representations will reflect the frustrations of a population which has a strong feeling of injustice.

It is also at this level that the two processes of objectification and anchoring distinguished by Moscovici (1961; 1976) in the formation and functioning of social representations take on their full meaning. Thus, through the objectification which constitutes the development of knowledge relating to the social object, here the CIE, the individual selects the information (selective deconstruction) taken out of its contexts. He then appropriates the information relating to the CIE according to his own environment (cultures, standards). This information is then “schematized” to form the core of the social representation. The identified elements then have a more important and more significant role in relation to the object of social representation. By generalizing collectively, this schematization of the object replaces the very reality of the object; this is made possible because the representation is coherent and concrete. Naturalization therefore accounts for the use of social representation in everyday life. In the commune of Yopougon, the categorization is very clear between certain neighborhoods, even certain ethnic groups.

Furthermore, the anchoring which is an incorporation of these naturalized elements, in the system of knowledge and values of the subject, intervenes, upstream, by inscribing the object of the representation in a network of meanings, so that the whole be consistent. Indeed, the object of representation here, the CIE, seems to be part of a coherent network. The CIE is a “dismemberment” of the State, if not of the rulers, it is a weapon of repression of rebellious populations. Downstream, the anchor has a functional value. The representation is therefore useful for interpreting and controlling one's environment. In addition, anchoring transcribes the social insertion of the representation and the individual by social groups. According to Moscovici (1976), the dynamics of a representation functions as a whole: the processes of objectification and anchoring combine in the movement of appropriation to reality, but they also participate in any evolution or transformation of representations.

1. Recommendations to the Government

Strengthen Regulation and Surveillance:

- o Establish stricter regulatory mechanisms to monitor CIE billing practices and ensure transparency in setting prices.
- o Create an independent agency responsible for monitoring the electricity sector and handling consumer complaints.

Promote competition:

- o Encourage the entry of new players in the electricity sector to break the CIE monopoly and promote competition, which could lead to improved services and lower prices.
- o Facilitate investments in renewable energies to diversify energy sources and reduce dependence on the CIE.

Subsidize costs for vulnerable populations:

o Establish subsidy programs to help low-income households pay their electricity bills, thereby reducing the financial burden on the most vulnerable populations.

Improve communication and education:

o Launch information campaigns to raise awareness among citizens about energy management and help them understand tariff structures.

o Educate consumers on their rights and on the steps to follow in the event of overbilling or disputes with the CIE.

2. Recommendations to the CIE

Improve transparency and communication:

o Communicate transparently about the composition of tariffs and the reasons for increases, in order to reduce perceptions of injustice and abuse.

o Establish effective customer service centers to respond quickly and effectively to consumer complaints and concerns.

Adopt fair billing practices:

o Review billing methods to ensure they are fair and transparent, and avoid any form of overbilling.

o Offer flexible payment options, such as installment payments, to help consumers manage their electricity costs.

Invest in Modern Technologies:

o Invest in smart metering technologies to provide more accurate consumption readings and reduce billing errors.

o Use technologies to optimize network management and reduce energy losses, which could help reduce operational costs and, therefore, tariffs for consumers.

Social Responsibility and Community Engagement:

o Engage in social responsibility initiatives, such as the electrification of rural areas and the implementation of energy efficiency programs, to improve the perception of the CIE among populations.

3. Recommendations to the Populations

Awareness and education on energy consumption:

o Actively participate in awareness and education programs on energy efficiency to reduce their consumption and, consequently, their bills.

o Adopt more responsible energy consumption practices, such as using energy-efficient appliances and optimizing electricity use during off-peak hours.

Civic engagement and participation:

- o Organize and participate in community forums to discuss electricity-related concerns and seek collective solutions.
- o Use available communication channels to report any irregularities in CIE billing or service, relying on the regulatory structures put in place by the government.

Claim of rights and responsibilities:

- o Learn about their rights as electricity consumers and use available recourse mechanisms to resolve disputes.
- o Collaborate with civil society organizations to pressure the CIE and the government to improve services and ensure fair and transparent practices.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Ultimately, we note that the results reveal a largely negative perception of the CIE, dominated by notions of high cost, injustice and abuse. Variations between groups show how social representations are structured differently depending on experiences and specific socio-economic contexts.

Overall consensus: The consensus around the “electricity-expensive” element shows a common perception of electricity as too expensive.

Specific sensitivities: Specific elements such as "theft" for public sector workers and retirees, or "electricity-sector-monopolization" for private sector workers, reveal particular sensitivities linked to the economic and social position of each group.

In conclusion, the CIE is predominantly perceived negatively, with variations in representations that reflect the specific concerns and priorities of each sociodemographic group. These insights can guide targeted actions to improve the perception of CIE, addressing the specific concerns of each segment of the population.

The recommendations made above aim to improve the relationship between the CIE, the government and the populations. A collaborative and transparent approach, combined with regulatory, social responsibility and awareness-raising initiatives, can help resolve current issues and establish an environment of trust and mutual satisfaction.

In order to improve relations between the CIE and disaffected populations, it is essential to adopt a holistic approach that includes transparent communication, ongoing education, community engagement, and effective conflict resolution mechanisms. By implementing these actions and encouraging continued reflection on best practices, the CIE can not only address current concerns, but also build a lasting relationship of trust with consumers.

REFERENCES

- Abric, J.C. (1994). L'organisation interne des représentations sociales : système central et système périphérique. In C. Guimelli (dir.), Structures et transformation des représentations sociales, 73-84. Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel.
- Jodelet, D. (1984). Représentation sociale : phénomènes, concept et théorie. In S. Moscovici (dir.), Psychologie sociale, 357-378. Presse Universitaire de France, Paris.

- Moliner, P. (1996). Images et représentations sociales: de la théorie des représentations à l'étude des images sociales. Presse Universitaire de Grenoble, Grenoble.
- Moscovici, S. (1961). La psychanalyse, son image et son public. Presse Universitaire de France, Paris.
- Moscovici, S. (1991). Des représentations collectives aux représentations sociales : éléments pour une histoire. In D. Jodelet (dir.), Les représentations sociales (pp. 62-86). Presse Universitaire de France, Paris.
- Tajfel, H. (1978b). The psychological structure of intergroup relations. In H. Tajfel (Eds.), Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations. Academic Press, London.
- Tajfel, H & Turner, J.C. (1985). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In G.W Austin et S. Worshel (éds), Psychology of intergroup relations, Nelson-Hall, Chicago.
- Vergès, P. (2001). L'analyse des représentations sociales par questionnaire. Presse Française de Sociologie, N°3, Vol. 42, pp. 537-561.
- Verges, P. & Tyszka, T. (1994). Noyau central, saillance et propriétés structurales. Papers on social representation, vol.3, n°1, 3-12.