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Article

Food and Tourism Development. European Mountain Series Analysis (3)

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Abstract: This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the development of mountain entrepreneurship within the food and tourism sectors, contributing to the body of research dedicated to the evolution of mountain businesses in Europe. The investigation focused on the available mountain entrepreneurship indicators from the Eurostat database, covering a sample of 15 European countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. Through statistical methods, the countries analyzed were integrated into common models, allowing for the derivation of conclusions that are representative of European mountain entrepreneurship. The results indicate a stable and sustainable mountain entrepreneurial environment, with positive implications for both the food and tourism sectors, reflecting a favorable trend within European business contexts. This analysis highlights the growth and strengthening potential of mountain entrepreneurship, providing an empirical foundation for future policies and strategies in the field.

Keywords: food and tourism entrepreneurship; mountain european entrepreneurship; european mountain series analysis

Introduction and Literature Review

In the third paper of the series dedicated to European mountain entrepreneurship (the authors' series can be found under *European Mountain Series Analysis 2025* and *European Mountain Series Forecasting 2025*), the authors highlight the significance of developing the food and tourism sectors to ensure the sustainability of high-altitude regions. The research is based on Eurostat indicators from the European business demographics index, specifically the mountain area section (I1-I28), with explanations of the indicators available at DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14713867>.

In a study on consumer behavior regarding local food products in the Italian Alps, an attempt was made to observe how the use of indigenous dishes stimulates spending in less favored mountain communities. The study, based on 507 responses to a questionnaire, reveals a paradox concerning the net turnover of local mountain entrepreneurs: while consumer spending increases, entrepreneurs' incomes remain limited to certain financial thresholds. Only intervention from European, central, and local governance has managed to break the cycle of entrepreneurs' incomes being capped at specific thresholds. Thus, local products can represent sustained added value, provided there are appropriate local policies supporting them. (Duglio et al., 2022)

Another study examining consumer perception of local mountain food products demonstrates the high value of mountain businesses among young people. The study, conducted through a questionnaire applied to 4,079 students, shows that mountain products represent a fundamental category of all food types (cheese, meat, honey, fruits, and vegetables). The research posits that all stages of the supply chain should be independently developed in mountain areas. It demonstrates that the mountain agro-food economy is a key pillar, not only for economic resilience but also for stimulating social and environmental spheres. Within this context, mountain products form the

foundational pillar of the mountain economy. Similar to other studies, this one emphasizes the importance of mountain policies in developing the mountain economy and business environment. (Bonadonna et al., 2022)

A study on the European mountain economy found that small farms and businesses primarily ensure local food security, especially under conditions of complexity, instability, and unpredictability. It also observed that strong collective action contributes to the adaptive capacity of small farms. Specific to the development of European mountain agriculture, studies show that the participatory method predominantly supports European agriculture. This research also reinforces the need for appropriate mountain policies, particularly in light of the insularity phenomenon commonly found in some European mountain areas. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of mountain products and businesses in ensuring food security and superior nutrition from a qualitative standpoint. (Ortiz-Miranda et al., 2022)

A study examining the relationship between systemic practices and production in small artisanal food businesses shows that in a rural region of Germany, local practices are maintained through teleoaffective structures and socio-material arrangements. The same study reveals that this specific niche mode supports cooperation within the niche while hindering cooperation outside it. The research concludes that local production and networking practices lead to a unique niche path for business development. (Tuitjer, 2022)

Italian researchers have emphasized the importance of developing mountain products as niche products. Mountain agriculture represents a defining source of ecosystem services such as biodiversity, culture, and traditions. Certain food subsectors, particularly dairy, show considerable economic decline, impacting both the business sector and quality of life. The research by Staffolani et al. (2022) shows that a holistic approach to mountain issues addresses numerous ecosystemic shortcomings. It was observed that the most important factor in developing mountain businesses is the uniqueness or rarity of mountain products. The study highlighted the additional financial interest in mountain products, particularly those that are labeled, with a substantial willingness to pay for local, specialized products from high-altitude regions. (Staffolani et al., 2022)

A group of mountain researchers from Spain observed the importance of sustainability in mountain areas, especially in addressing depopulation, which is more common than in low-altitude areas. In their research, Vidal-Matzanke and Vidal-González (2022) noted the reversal of the depopulation process through reversal strategies that led to a significant increase in sports tourism. Mountain entrepreneurs who combined mountain businesses with offers in sports tourism substantially increased the added value of their benefits. The study, which involved 16 semi-structured interviews, clearly indicated the increase in competitiveness through the provision of sports products and services. It was noted that the symbiosis of locally specific offers from both public and private governance ensures high sustainability through the presence of sports products and services. (Vidal-Matzanke & Vidal-González, 2022)

Skiing, the most practiced sport in mountain areas, is affected by climate change and the predicted reduction in snow, requiring urgent actions. The results of a study conducted by Colasante et al. (2024) highlight the importance of engaging stakeholders and the relevance of mountain strategies, such as zero-emission lodges, energy communities, and zero-emission ski lifts. The same research suggests the need for political interventions to protect mountain tourism, including financing the conversion of facilities, expanding mountain infrastructure, and rewarding tourists who choose certified zero-emission resorts. (Colasante et al., 2024)

Methodology

This study, conducted through a methodological approach based on the analysis of specialized literature, develops a statistical analysis that integrates the modeling and simulation of statistical data using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The analyzed data come from the Eurostat meta-index, with the results presented in Table 1 and the histograms of the study, covering the period 2021-2022.

The frequency analysis method allows for the identification of the methodological conditionalities associated with each indicator of mountain entrepreneurship. The study includes a set of 28 indicators (I1-I28, according to Table 1), and the analysis is performed at the group level of countries.

The countries included in the sample, evaluated based on the cumulative percentages for each indicator, return the following distributed results: Austria (6.7%), Bulgaria (13.3%), Croatia (20.0%), the Czech Republic (26.7%), France (33.3%), Germany (40.0%), Greece (46.7%), Italy (53.3%), Poland (60.0%), Portugal (66.7%), Romania (73.3%), Slovakia (80.0%), Slovenia (86.7%), Spain (93.3%), and Sweden (100.0%).

This methodological framework allows for the extraction of relevant conclusions regarding the dynamics of mountain entrepreneurship in the analyzed countries, highlighting the distribution and behavior of the selected indicators.

In the analysis of histograms, the focus is on identifying distributions and statistical trends. The data are processed through frequency analysis methods, and the generated histograms (see resulting histograms) enable the visualization of the distribution of each indicator. The analysis process includes the following steps:

- Data Processing: Raw data, imported into Excel and SPSS, are carefully organized for analysis. Calculations, based on the absolute and relative frequencies for each indicator, return distributions graphically represented in the form of histograms.
- Distribution Analysis: Histograms are used to identify the type of distribution (left-skewed, Gaussian, or right-skewed) and to determine the general trends of the indicators. This step also involves calculating descriptive statistics, such as the mean, median, standard deviation, etc.
- Comparison Between Countries: The data are aggregated at the national level, and the cumulative percentages for each country are used to compare the evolution of indicators across different EU member states.
- Validation of Results: The results are calibrated by comparing them with specialized literature and verifying the consistency of the data within the statistical tools used.

This methodology provides a clear understanding of the distribution and trends of the studied indicators, forming a solid foundation for interpreting the results and formulating economic recommendations.

Table 1. Frequency Statistics for Indicators I1-I28.

		I1.2021	I1.2022	I2.2021	I2.2022	I3.2021	I3.2022	I4.2021	I4.2022	I5.2021	I5.2022	I6.2021	I6.2022
Mean		45590.53	46544.60	3642.93	4366.54	1.6971	1.7900	1.00	1.00	3013.80	4091.00	61.5857	66.3525
Std. Error of Mean		15361.125	15647.446	1242.071	1539.132	0.19225	0.27891	0.000	0.000	1099.372	1565.708	19.38997	22.86714
Median		16421.00	16421.00	1540.00	1559.00	1.6650	1.7700	1.00	1.00	1555.00	1778.00	33.2750	28.0600
Mode		794 ^a	667 ^a	49 ^a	60 ^a	.94 ^a	.65 ^a	1	1	48 ^a	1505	3.08 ^a	2.83 ^a
Std. Deviation		59493.381	60602.296	4810.521	5549.418	0.71932	0.96616	0.000	0.000	4257.850	5645.240	72.55061	79.21410
Skewness		1.852	1.830	2.339	1.893	1.657	1.943			2.544	2.580	1.648	1.374
Std. Error of Skewness		0.580	0.580	0.580	0.616	0.597	0.637	0.580	0.616	0.580	0.616	0.597	0.637
Kurtosis		2.509	2.427	5.801	3.590	3.711	5.348			6.554	7.179	1.832	0.670
Std. Error of Kurtosis		1.121	1.121	1.121	1.191	1.154	1.232	1.121	1.191	1.121	1.191	1.154	1.232
Range		193651	197290	18150	19213	2.74	3.79	0	0	16041	20893	225.63	221.96
Minimum		794	667	49	60	0.94	0.65	1	1	48	37	3.08	2.83
Maximum		194445	197957	18199	19273	3.68	4.44	1	1	16089	20930	228.71	224.79
Sum		683858	698169	54644	56765	23.76	21.48	15	13	45207	53183	862.20	796.23
Percentiles	25	11250.00	12111.00	1014.00	1013.50	1.1575	1.1000	1.00	1.00	853.00	1177.50	11.9700	11.9475
	50	16421.00	16421.00	1540.00	1559.00	1.6650	1.7700	1.00	1.00	1555.00	1778.00	33.2750	28.0600
	75	71104.00	75354.00	4888.00	8074.00	1.9950	2.0925	1.00	1.00	2368.00	5019.00	89.2250	102.4775

		I7.2021	I7.2022	I8.2021	I8.2022	I10.2021	I10.2022	I12.2021	I12.2022	I13.2021	I13.2022	I14.2021	I14.2022	I15.2022	I16.2021	I16.2022
Mean		2681.13	2866.54	6.2487	6.3054	81.69	119.80	16.2367	19.8838	8.8807	9.8800	7.3547	10.0046	1.2592	195035.00	227685.31
Std. Error of Mean		888.389	1066.519	0.49449	0.47856	20.007	52.417	1.28940	2.02621	0.82793	0.91219	0.64898	1.39889	1.58134	67790.735	84579.140
Median		990.00	1150.00	6.0200	6.3400	78.00	52.00	16.1300	18.9500	8.7600	9.5400	6.9100	9.6000	1.8100	72128.00	63500.00
Mode		36 ^a	36 ^a	3.08 ^a	3.17 ^a	28	21 ^a	8.45 ^a	10.86 ^a	3.98 ^a	4.79 ^a	2.59 ^a	4.82 ^a	-15.99 ^a	3729 ^a	3206 ^a
Std. Deviation		3440.714	3845.388	1.91513	1.72546	72.138	165.756	4.99384	7.30561	3.20654	3.28896	2.51349	5.04377	5.70159	262552.387	304954.426
Skewness		2.028	2.061	0.821	0.507	1.918	2.568	0.075	0.818	0.891	1.350	0.579	1.166	-2.482	1.816	1.569
Std. Error of Skewness		0.580	0.616	0.580	0.616	0.616	0.687	0.580	0.616	0.580	0.616	0.580	0.616	0.616	0.580	0.616
Kurtosis		4.018	4.025	0.941	1.203	4.606	6.928	-0.819	-0.314	1.664	4.250	1.153	0.538	7.979	2.487	1.417
Std. Error of Kurtosis		1.121	1.191	1.121	1.191	1.191	1.334	1.121	1.191	1.121	1.191	1.121	1.191	1.191	1.121	1.191
Range		12416	13218	7.05	6.93	266	542	15.88	22.46	12.98	13.89	10.06	16.09	23.98	870077	936659
Minimum		36	36	3.08	3.17	16	21	8.45	10.86	3.98	4.79	2.59	4.82	-15.99	3729	3206
Maximum		12452	13254	10.13	10.10	282	563	24.33	33.32	16.96	18.68	12.65	20.91	7.99	873806	939865
Sum		40217	37265	93.73	81.97	1062	1198	243.55	258.49	133.21	128.44	110.32	130.06	16.37	2925525	2959909
Percentiles	25	835.00	740.50	4.6400	5.1500	28.00	34.00	12.2200	14.2100	6.1700	8.6900	6.0500	5.8100	0.5950	33534.00	35144.50
	50	990.00	1150.00	6.0200	6.3400	78.00	52.00	16.1300	18.9500	8.7600	9.5400	6.9100	9.6000	1.8100	72128.00	63500.00
	75	4724.00	4152.00	6.7700	7.1950	107.00	127.75	19.2200	24.8800	10.5100	11.1150	8.2700	12.6000	4.1400	243577.00	386082.00

		I17.2021	I17.2022	I18.2021	I18.2022	I19.2021	I19.2022	I20.2021	I20.2022	I21.2021	I21.2022	I22.2021	I22.2022
Mean		7398.21	9432.33	3.7593	3.6733	5136.07	7243.23	8962.64	9655.75	6307.38	6747.46	2.8200	3.7092
Std. Error of Mean		3121.949	4027.219	0.33484	0.45512	2281.184	3152.118	3170.816	3895.591	2499.732	2664.882	0.31053	0.54240
Median		2653.50	2935.00	3.7600	3.7400	2650.50	2253.00	3295.00	2677.00	2320.00	2567.00	3.0050	3.6300
Mode		1193	59 ^a	1.49 ^a	4.31	122 ^a	56 ^a	111 ^a	102 ^a	60 ^a	79 ^a	.85 ^a	1.62 ^a
Std. Deviation		11681.263	13950.695	1.25284	1.57657	8535.411	11365.125	11864.107	13494.723	9012.913	9608.368	1.16190	1.95566
Skewness		2.560	1.715	0.063	0.647	2.872	2.531	1.486	1.456	1.921	1.804	-0.197	0.939
Std. Error of Skewness		0.597	0.637	0.597	0.637	0.597	0.616	0.597	0.637	0.616	0.616	0.597	0.616
Kurtosis		7.024	1.637	-0.059	0.142	8.467	6.497	0.754	0.572	3.124	2.384	-0.753	0.328
Std. Error of Kurtosis		1.154	1.232	1.154	1.232	1.154	1.191	1.154	1.232	1.191	1.191	1.154	1.191
Range		43011	40464	4.71	5.16	31900	40414	35386	38701	29835	30823	3.84	6.34
Minimum		85	59	1.49	1.73	122	56	111	102	60	79	0.85	1.62
Maximum		43096	40523	6.20	6.89	32022	40470	35497	38803	29895	30902	4.69	7.96
Sum		103575	113188	52.63	44.08	71905	94162	125477	115869	81996	87717	39.48	48.22
Percentiles	25	1193.00	1445.50	2.9100	2.1050	1087.00	1511.50	1547.75	1626.75	1200.00	1281.00	2.0475	1.9400
	50	2653.50	2935.00	3.7600	3.7400	2650.50	2253.00	3295.00	2677.00	2320.00	2567.00	3.0050	3.6300
	75	9720.25	14545.50	4.8775	4.3100	3510.75	7089.00	15439.50	22016.50	10000.00	10601.00	3.7575	4.7550

		I23.2021	I23.2022	I24.2021	I24.2022	I25.2021	I25.2022	I26.2021	I26.2022	I27.2021	I27.2022	I28.2021	I28.2022
Mean		4.6693	4.5133	37.0315	37.5200	153193.73	183170.69	4480.15	6512.55	2709.58	3806.92	49.8177	54.2636
Std. Error of Mean		0.34375	0.34614	6.93524	5.70450	53674.486	68720.149	2245.990	3076.317	1491.393	1839.800	6.36311	5.63827
Median		4.8100	4.3750	30.0400	32.1000	53152.00	56354.00	1090.00	1954.00	1045.50	897.50	51.2000	55.0200
Mode		2.17 ^a	2.40 ^a	4.92 ^a	14.38 ^a	3318 ^a	2875 ^a	70 ^a	29 ^a	79 ^a	29 ^a	15.83 ^a	20.44 ^a
Std. Deviation		1.28621	1.19907	25.00538	19.76098	207880.389	247774.022	8098.031	10202.990	5166.335	6373.255	22.94253	18.70004
Skewness		-0.131	0.106	0.507	1.138	1.976	1.687	2.480	1.687	2.993	2.457	-0.210	-0.682
Std. Error of Skewness		0.597	0.637	0.616	0.637	0.580	0.616	0.616	0.661	0.637	0.637	0.616	0.661
Kurtosis		0.020	-0.260	-0.918	0.795	3.688	2.253	6.276	1.424	9.351	6.309	-1.496	-0.035
Std. Error of Kurtosis		1.154	1.232	1.191	1.232	1.121	1.191	1.191	1.279	1.232	1.232	1.191	1.279
Range		4.81	4.08	80.08	66.71	732914	802380	27996	27861	18296	21820	66.52	60.39
Minimum		2.17	2.40	4.92	14.38	3318	2875	70	29	79	29	15.83	20.44
Maximum		6.98	6.48	85.00	81.09	736232	805255	28066	27890	18375	21849	82.35	80.83
Sum		65.37	54.16	481.41	450.24	2297906	2381219	58242	71638	32515	45683	647.63	596.90
Percentiles	25	3.8600	3.7725	14.5400	22.9900	23390.00	24652.00	321.00	318.00	269.50	241.75	27.5100	49.1000
	50	4.8100	4.3750	30.0400	32.1000	53152.00	56354.00	1090.00	1954.00	1045.50	897.50	51.2000	55.0200
	75	5.6350	5.3825	59.5350	49.4500	202788.00	323533.00	5101.50	9677.00	1969.75	4737.25	68.8600	69.7700

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

Results

Following the analysis of the histograms generated based on Eurostat data, significant trends have been identified in the evolution of the economic and social indicators of mountain entrepreneurship in the food and tourism sectors (see histograms below).

The majority of indicators—namely I1, I2, I5, I6, I7, I10, I16, I17, I19, I20, I21, I25, I26, and I27—exhibit left-skewed distributions, suggesting a decreasing trend in their values over time. This pattern indicates a progressive decline in the number of mountain enterprises within the studied sectors, accompanied by a reduction in the rate of new business formation and a decrease in employability and workforce absorption in mountainous regions.

These trends reflect structural and economic pressures that impact the sustainability of entrepreneurship in these areas.

Conversely, a group of indicators—namely I3, I8, I12, I13, I14, I18, I22, I23, I24, and I28—display Gaussian distributions, characterized by the presence of an equilibrium point or a local maximum/minimum.

The Gaussian shape of these distributions suggests a relative stability around central values, indicating that while the number of mountain enterprises is declining, the overall state of entrepreneurship in these sectors remains positive.

This trend may result from the intrinsic development of existing businesses, as well as from increased turnover, which partially offsets the numerical decline of enterprises.

A distinct pattern is observed in indicator I15, which exhibits a right-skewed distribution. This configuration indicates a growing trend in the indicator's values as the independent variable increases, suggesting an exponential or rational growth pattern.

In the context of mountain entrepreneurship, this rightward orientation reflects a net increase in economic activity within the studied sectors, potentially driven by favorable external factors or business-stimulating policies implemented in mountain areas.

Regarding indicator I4, it stands out due to its specificity, measuring the employability rate within discontinued enterprises. The indicator highlights a constant level of unemployment in mountain areas, reflecting a persistent structural issue despite the changes observed in other indicators.

This stability suggests that while certain aspects of the mountain economy may experience improvements, workforce employment remains a significant challenge, necessitating targeted interventions to stimulate job creation and reduce unemployment.

The analysis of all histograms reveals a diversity of trends in the evolution of mountain entrepreneurship. While some indicators reflect a decline in the number of enterprises and employability, others indicate stability or even growth in economic activity.

These results underscore the necessity for differentiated policies that consider regional specificities and the diverse dynamics of economic and social indicators.

Concluzii

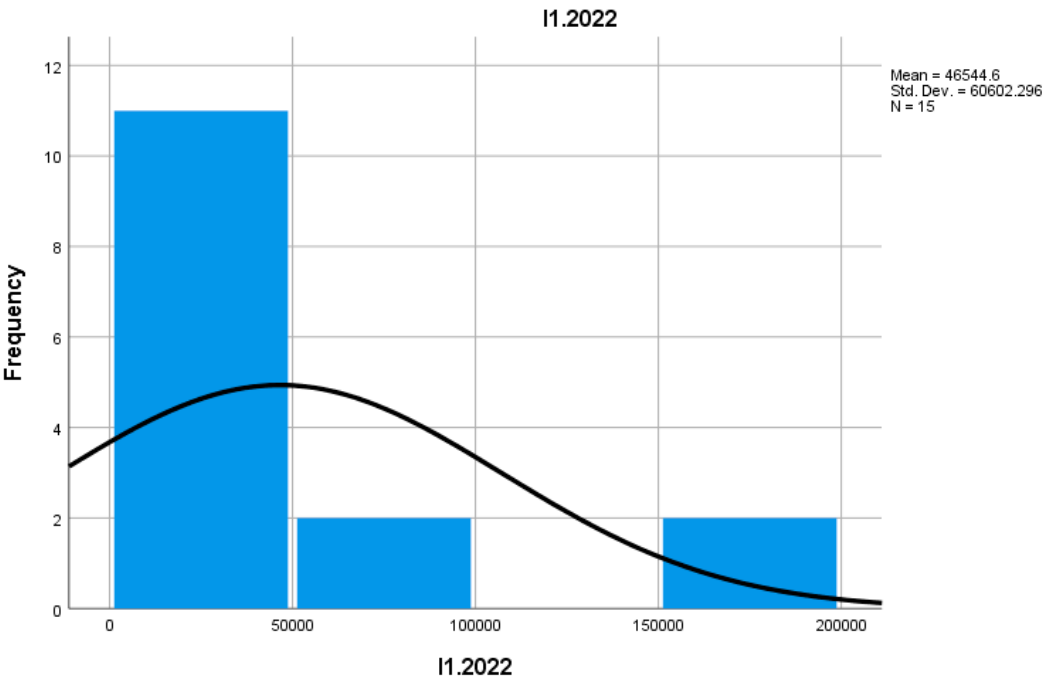
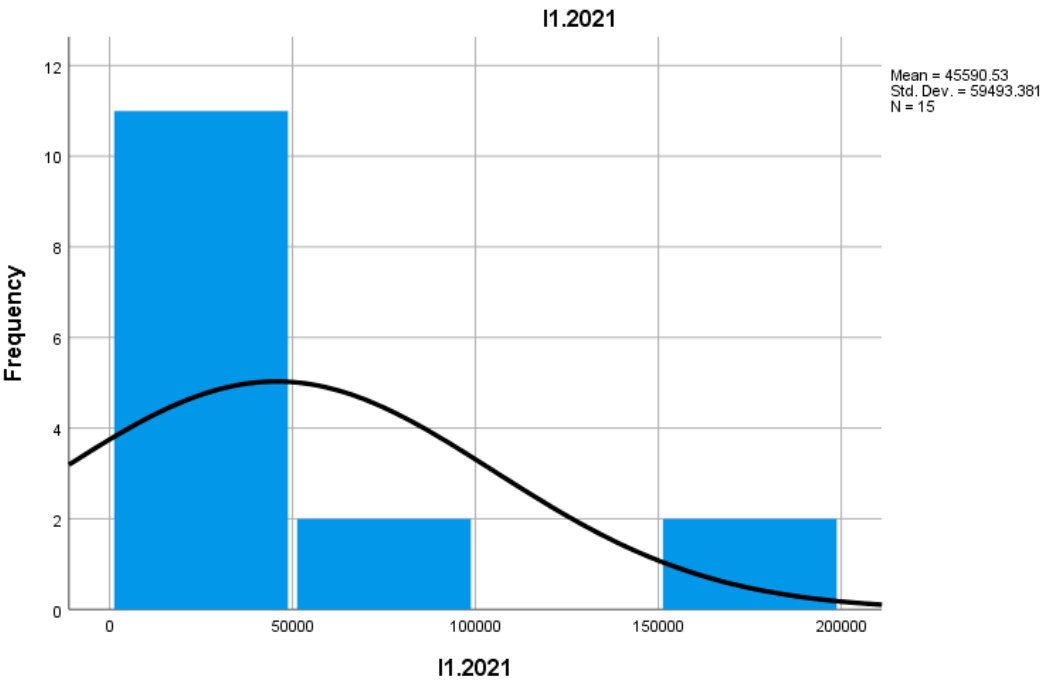
European mountain entrepreneurship in the food and tourism sectors is characterized by stability and sustainability, exerting a beneficial impact on both mountain and non-mountain businesses.

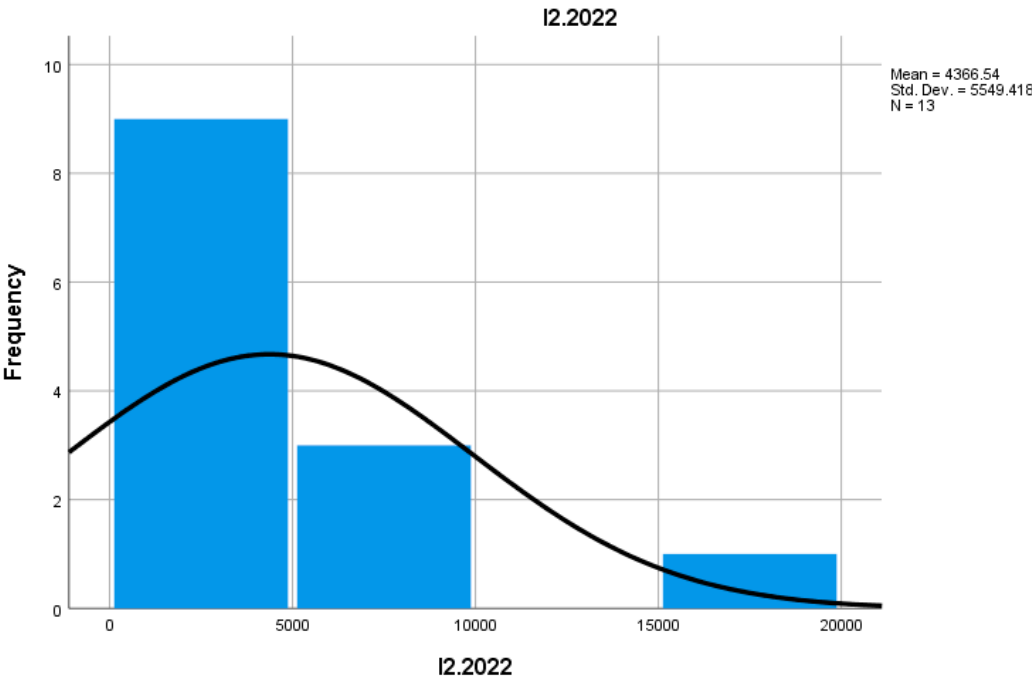
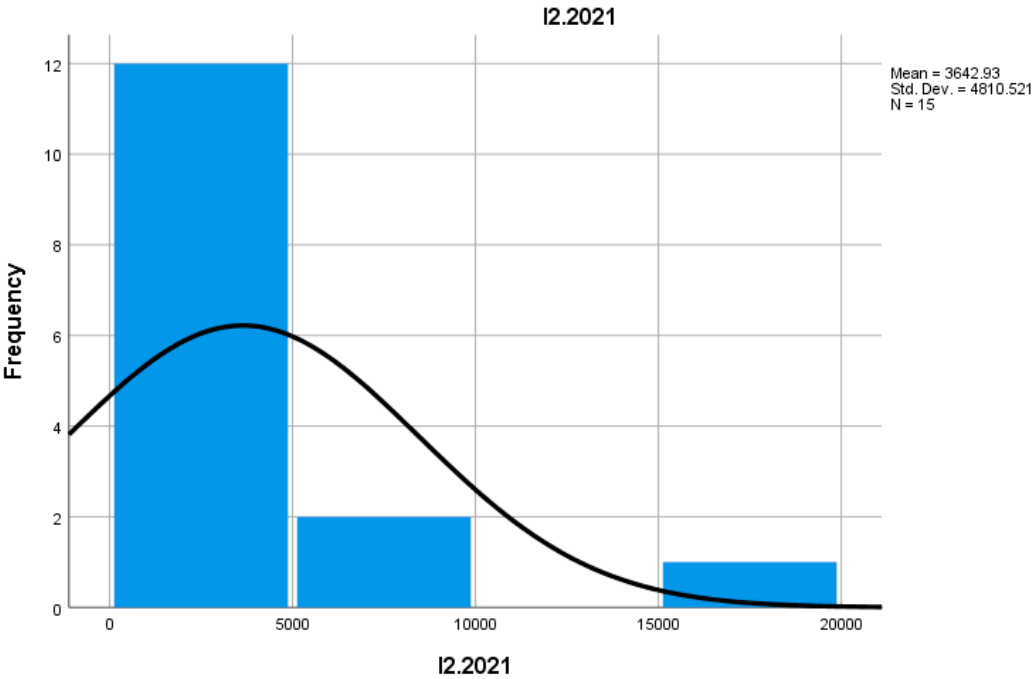
The results indicate positive developments in certain indicators, despite their negative influence on the business environment in the food and tourism sectors within mountainous regions.

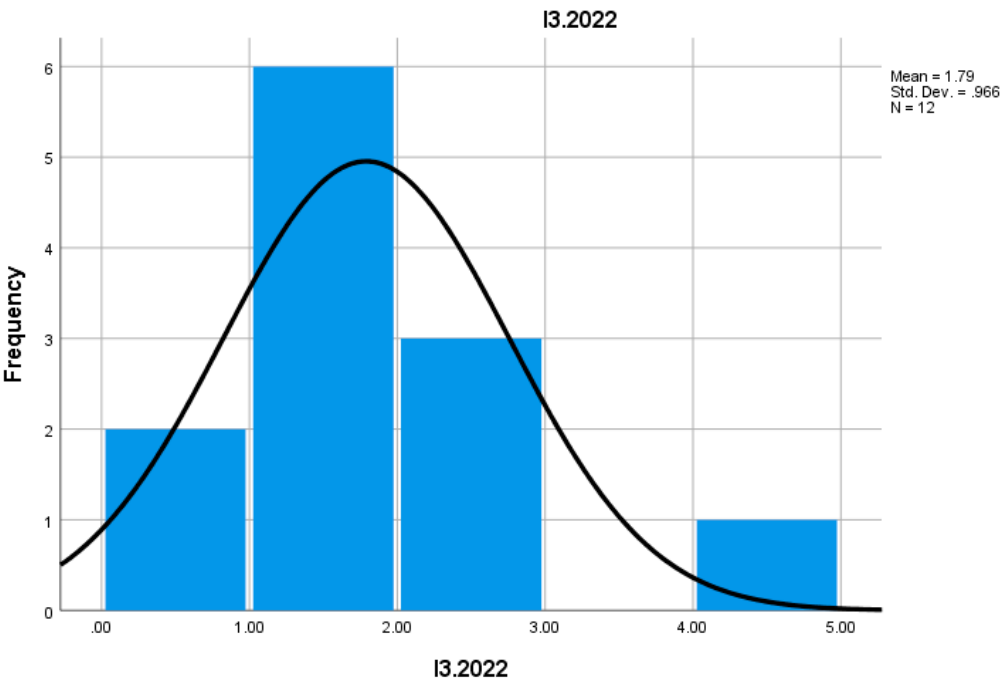
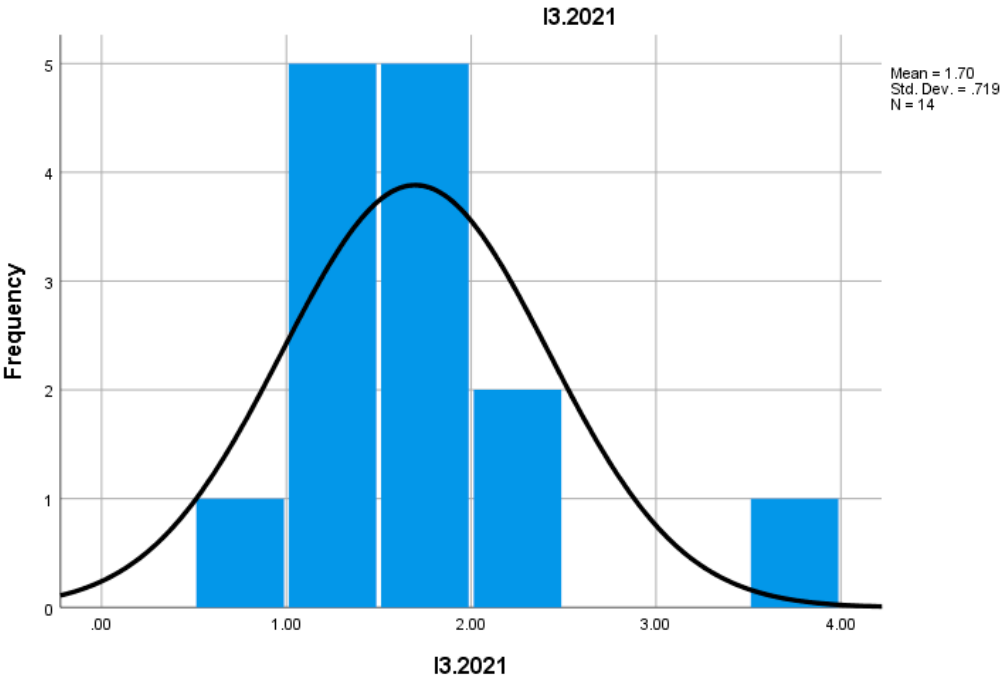
The number of active enterprises is declining, accompanied by a reduction in the rate of new business formation.

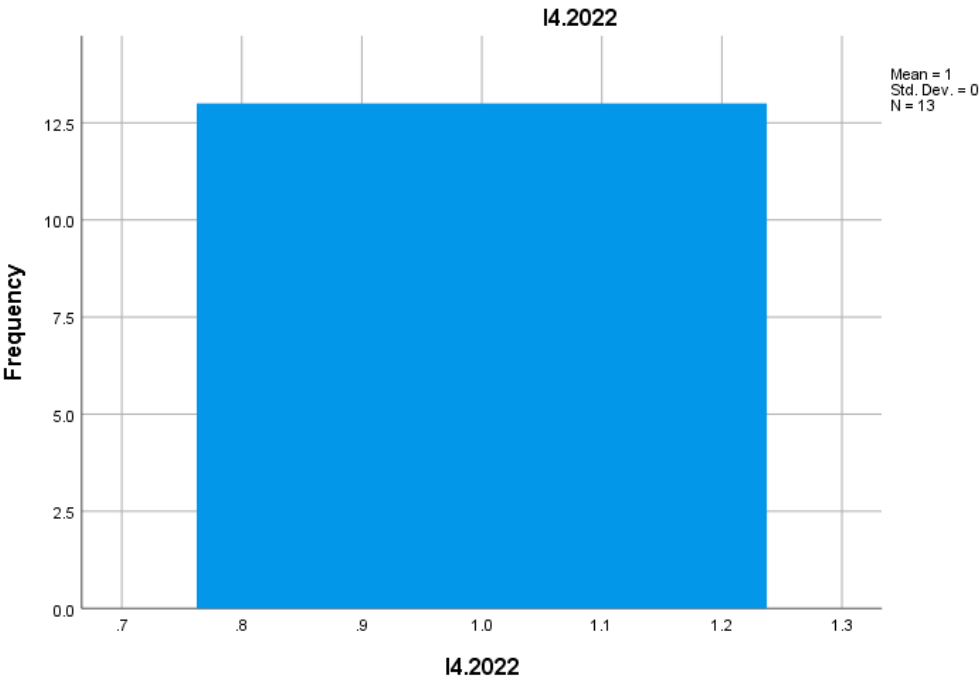
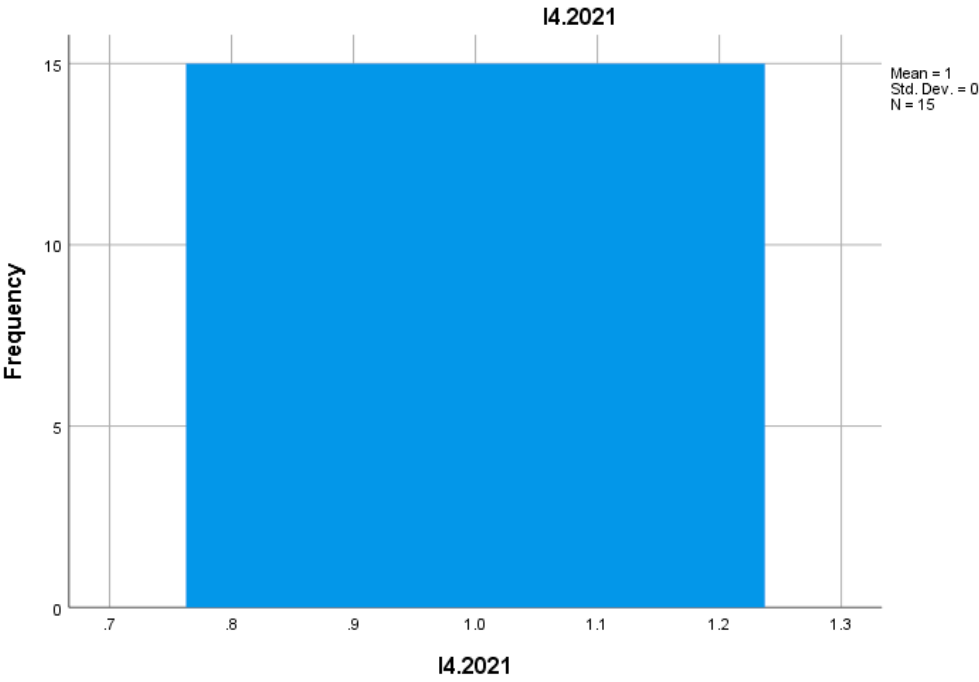
The intensity of economic activity in the mountain sector is increasing, along with employment levels and workforce absorption.

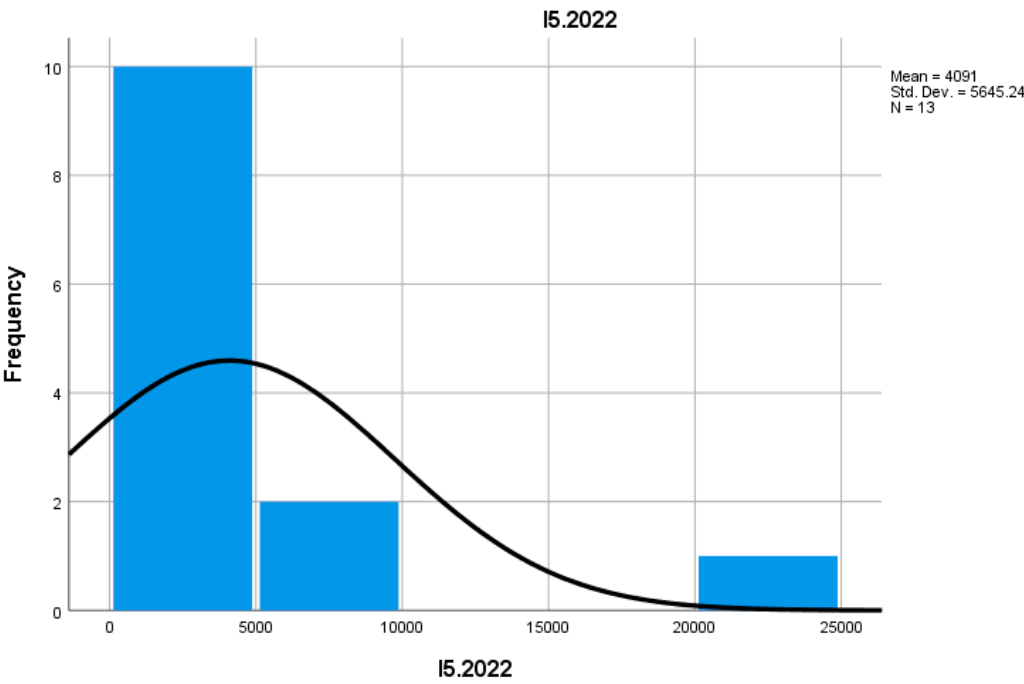
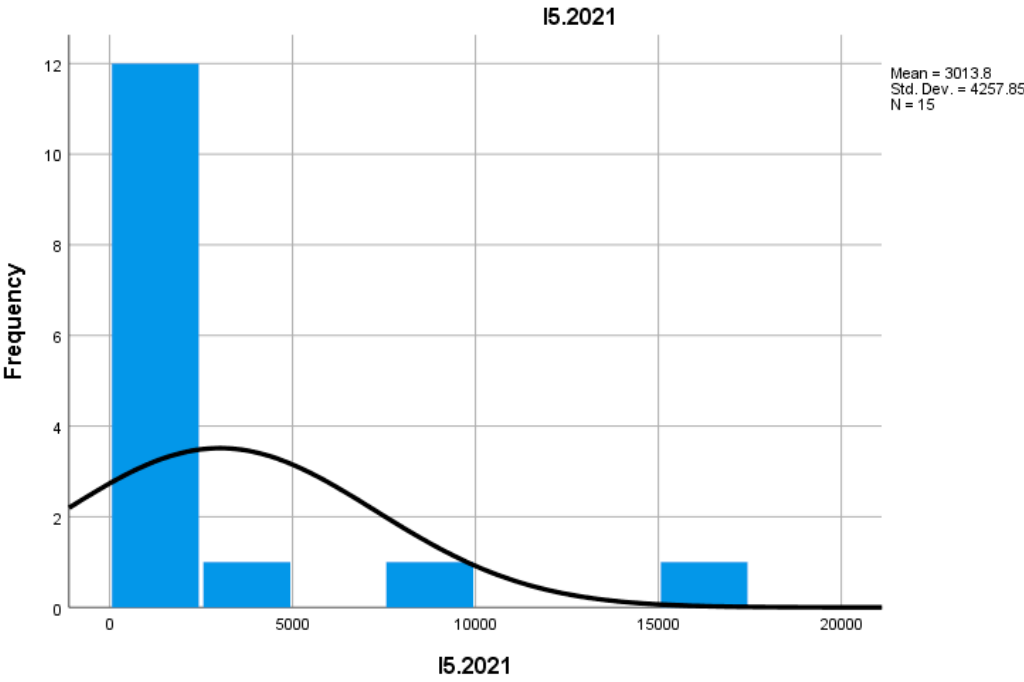
Mountain food and tourism sectors maintain their sustainability through intrinsic rather than extrinsic growth, reflecting an internal adaptation to economic and structural challenges.

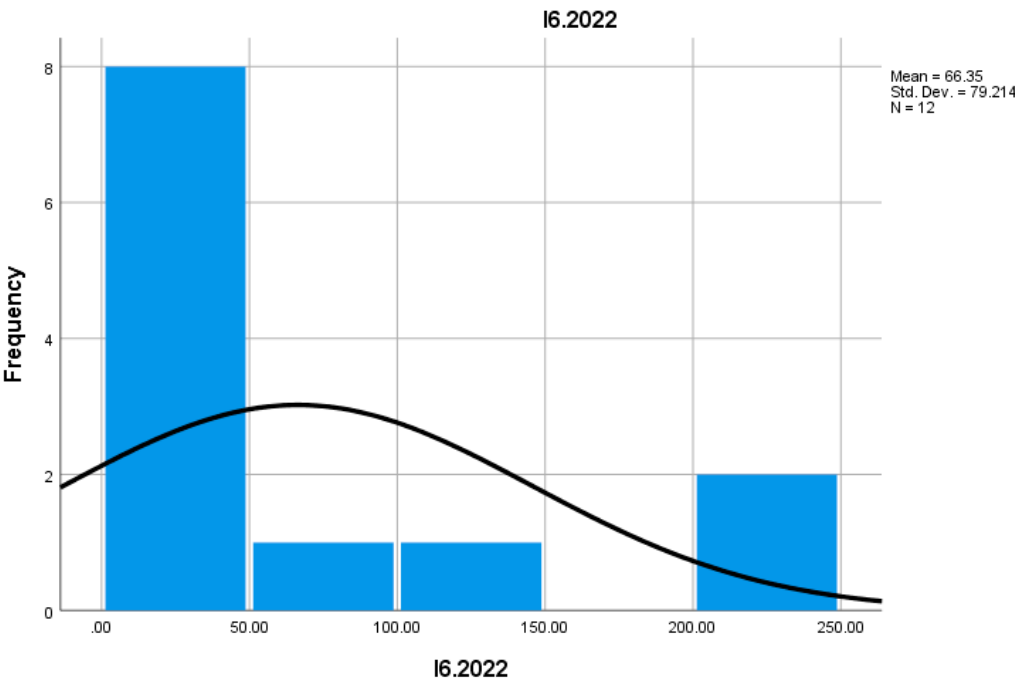
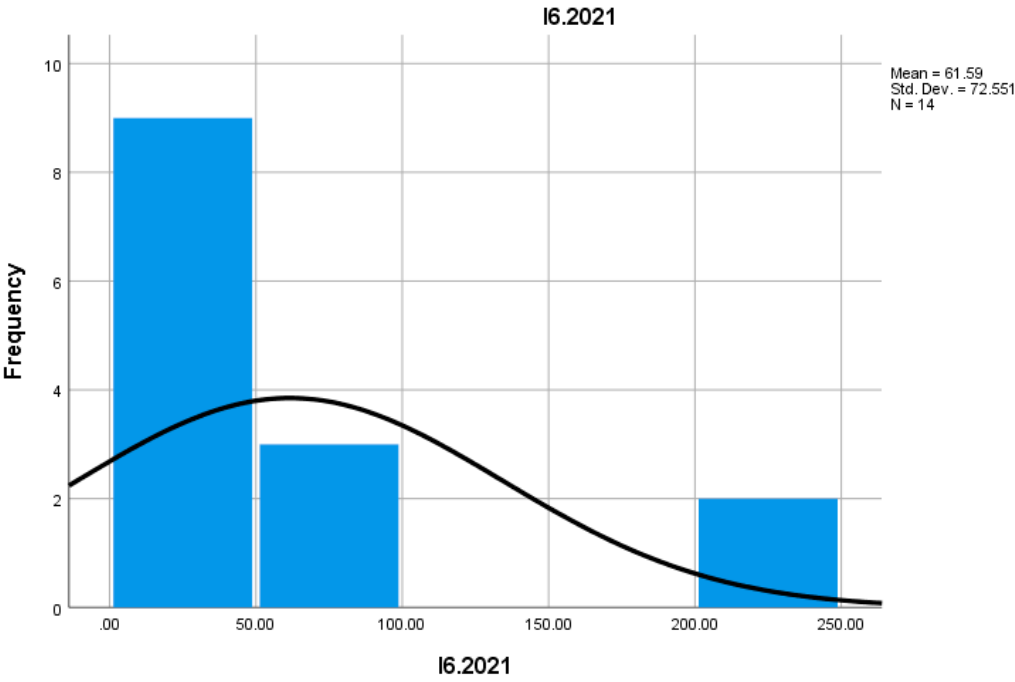


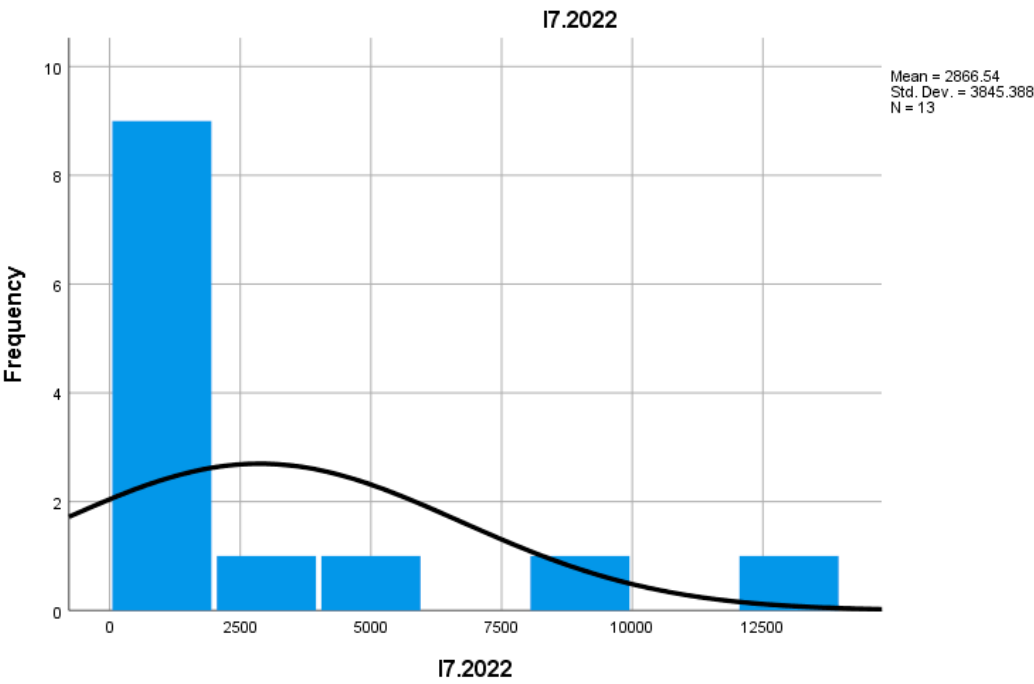
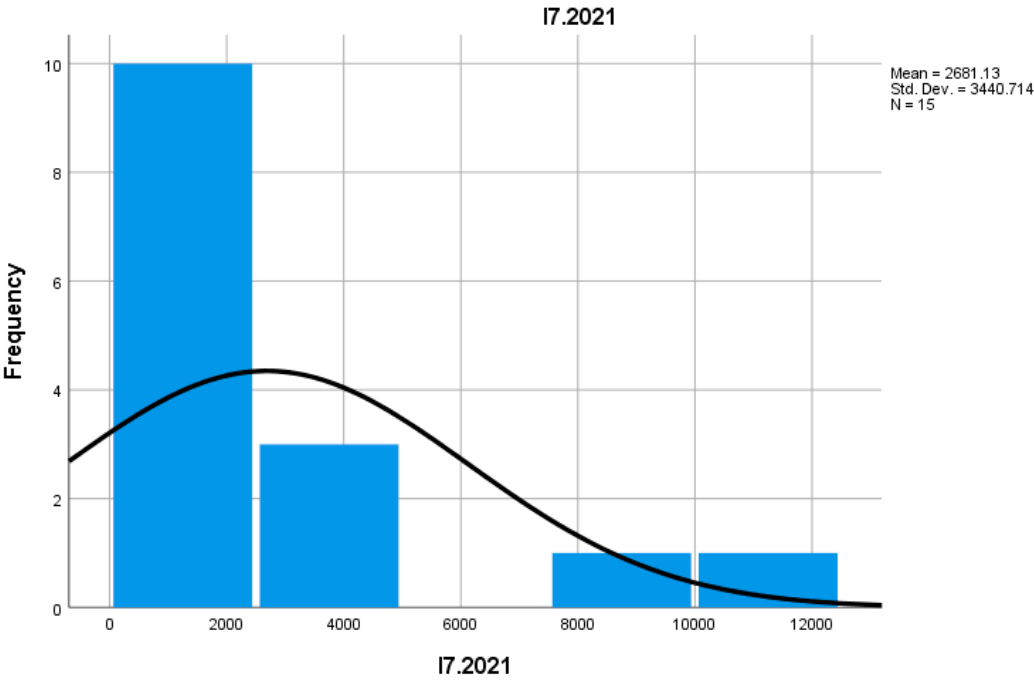


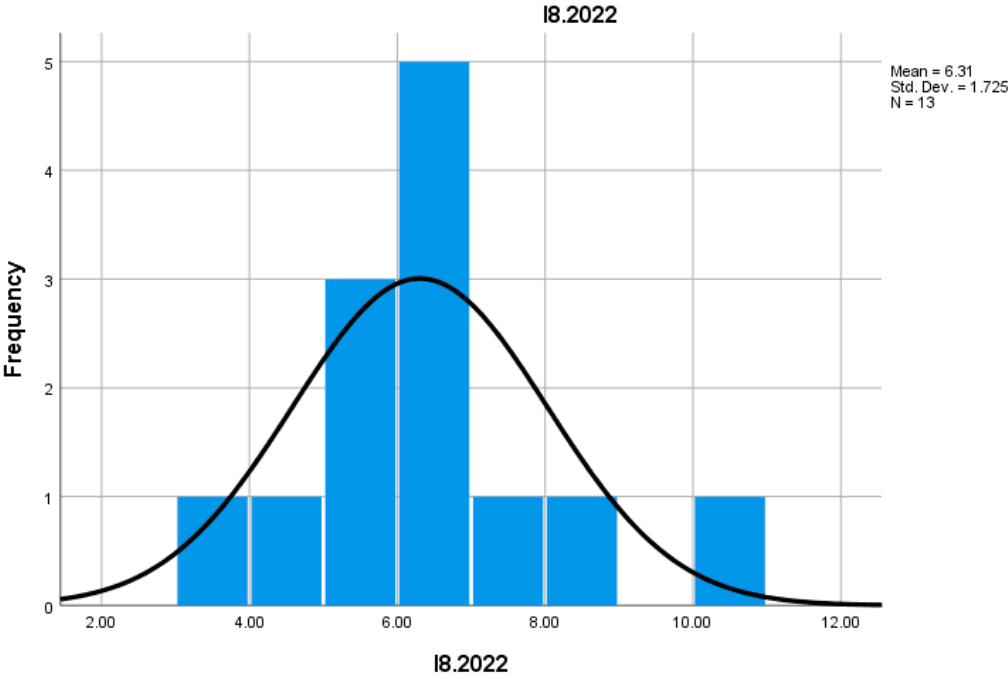
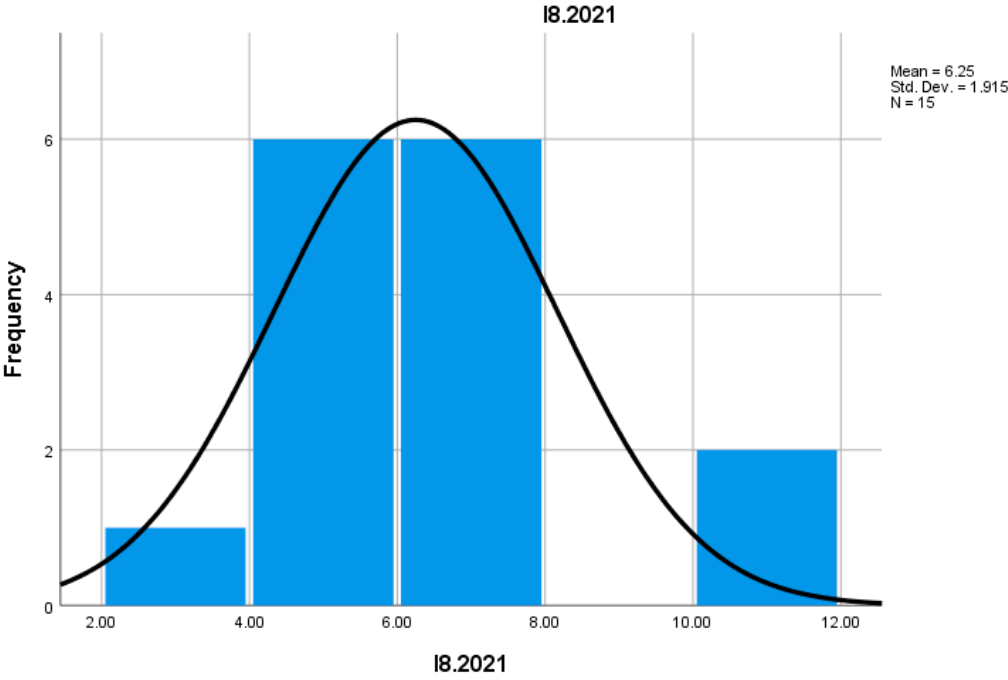


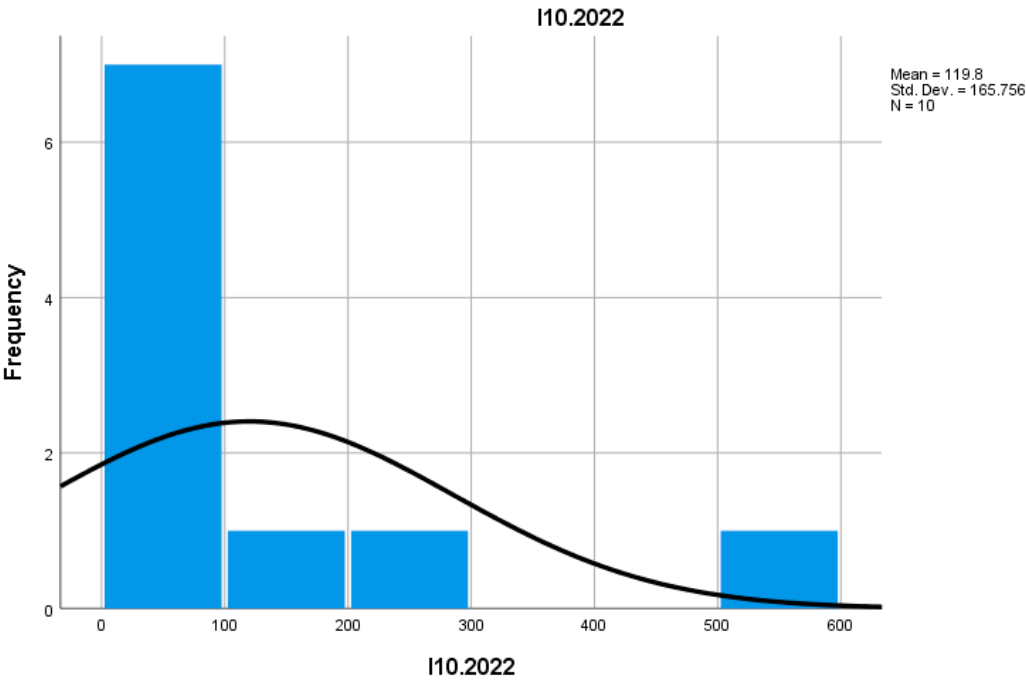
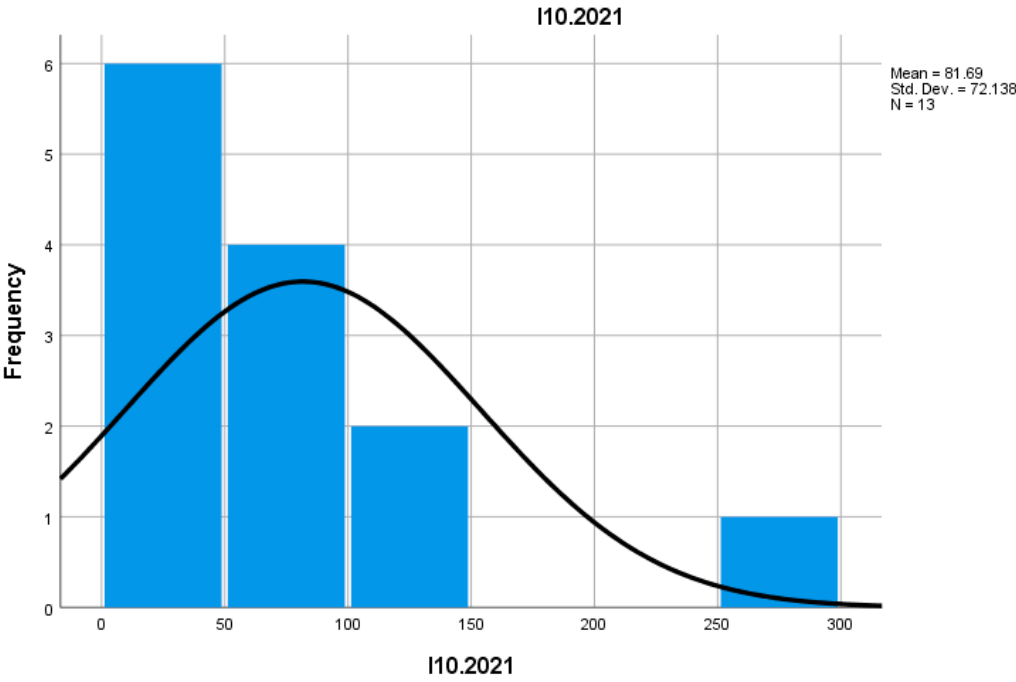


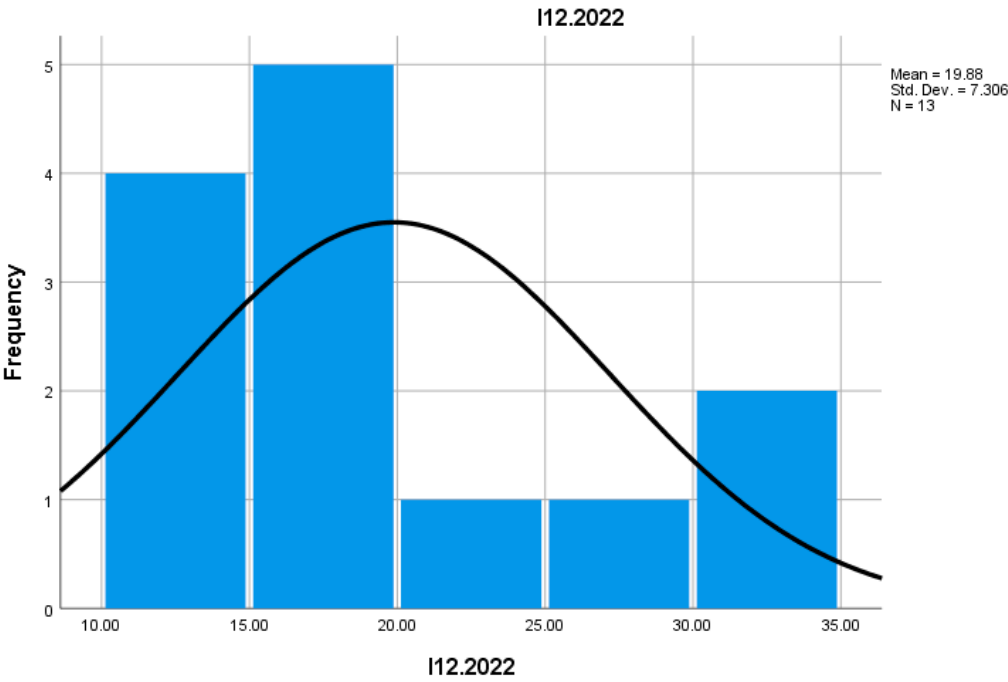
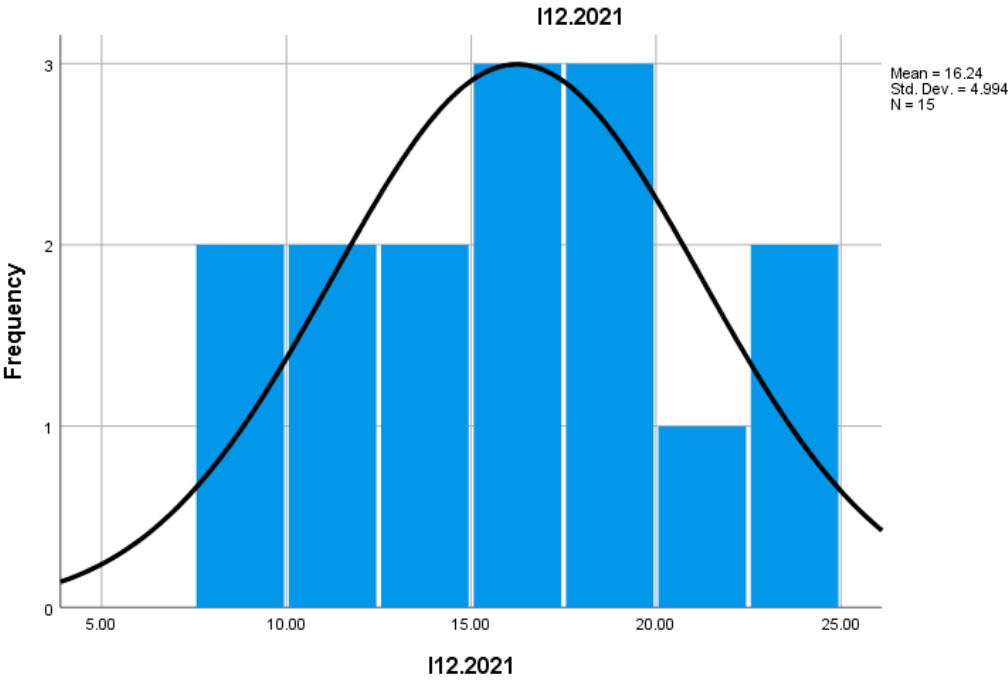


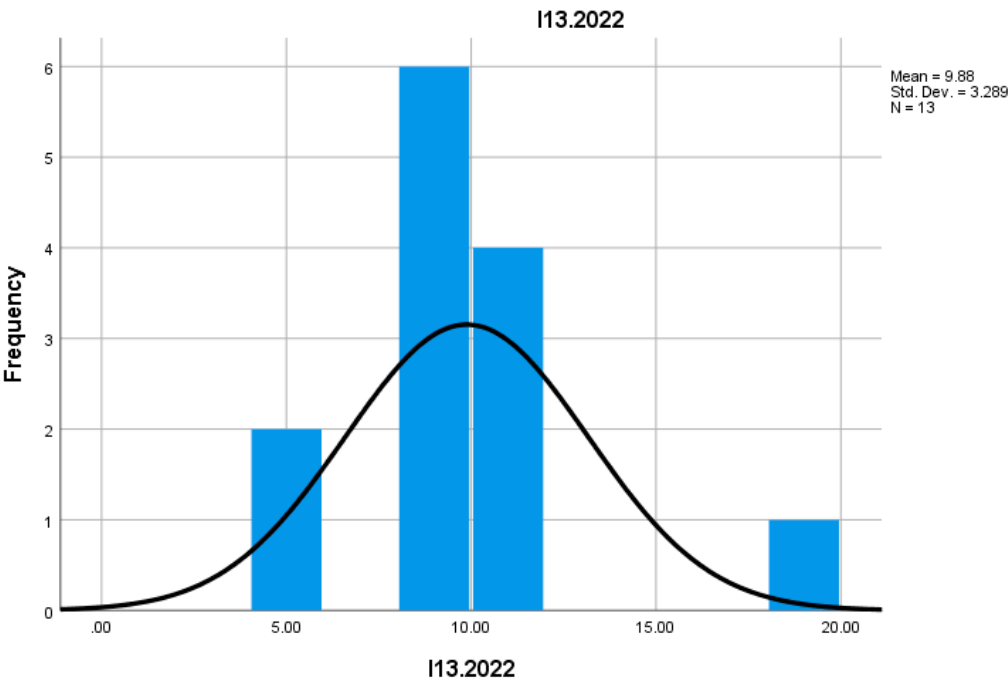
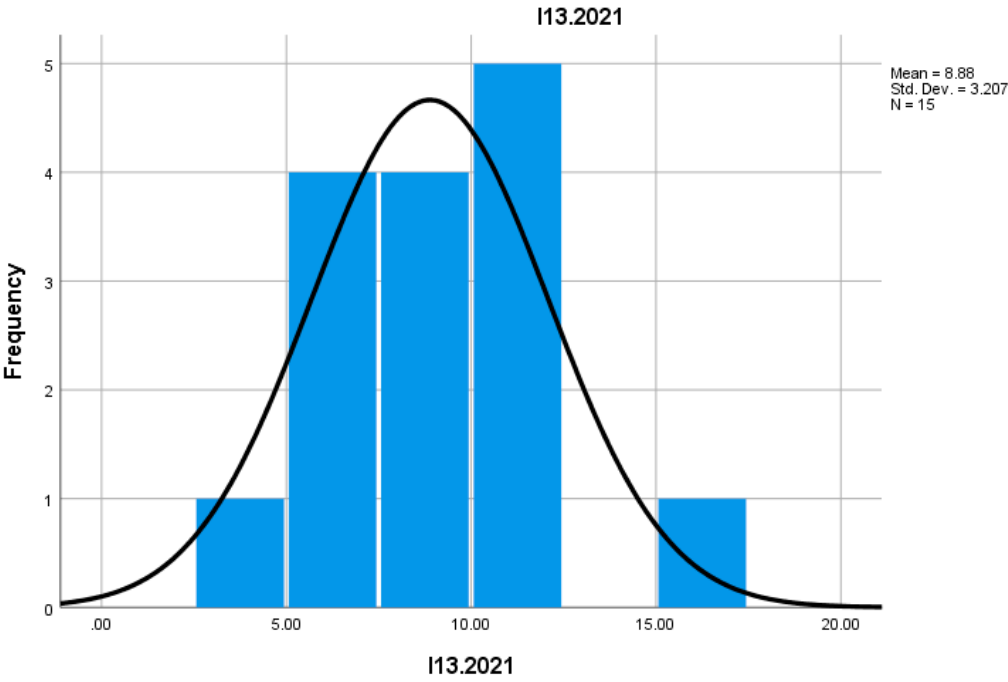


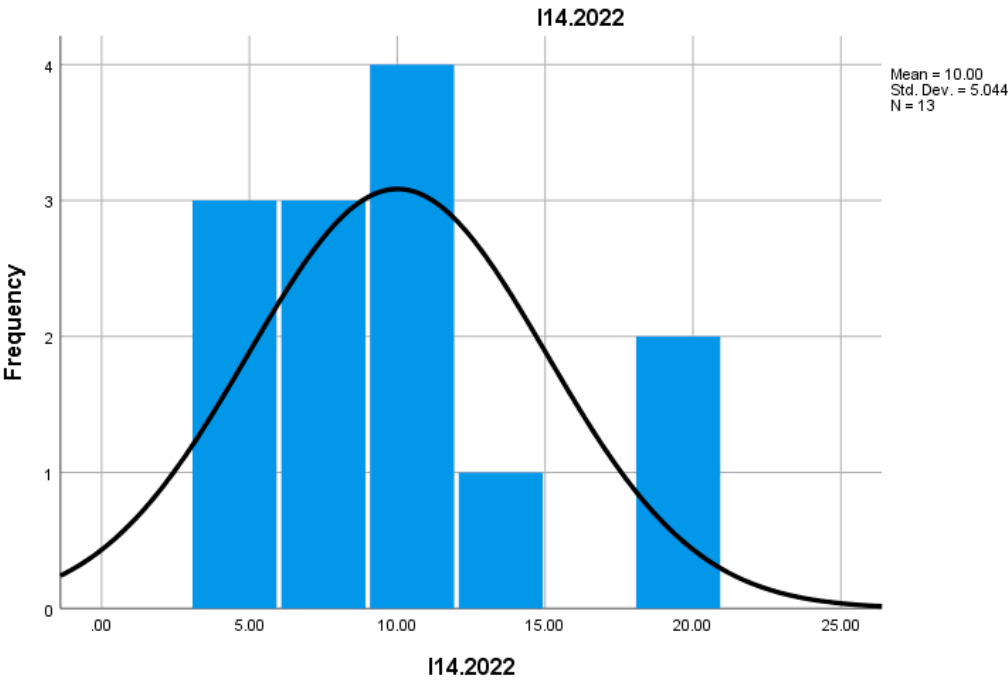
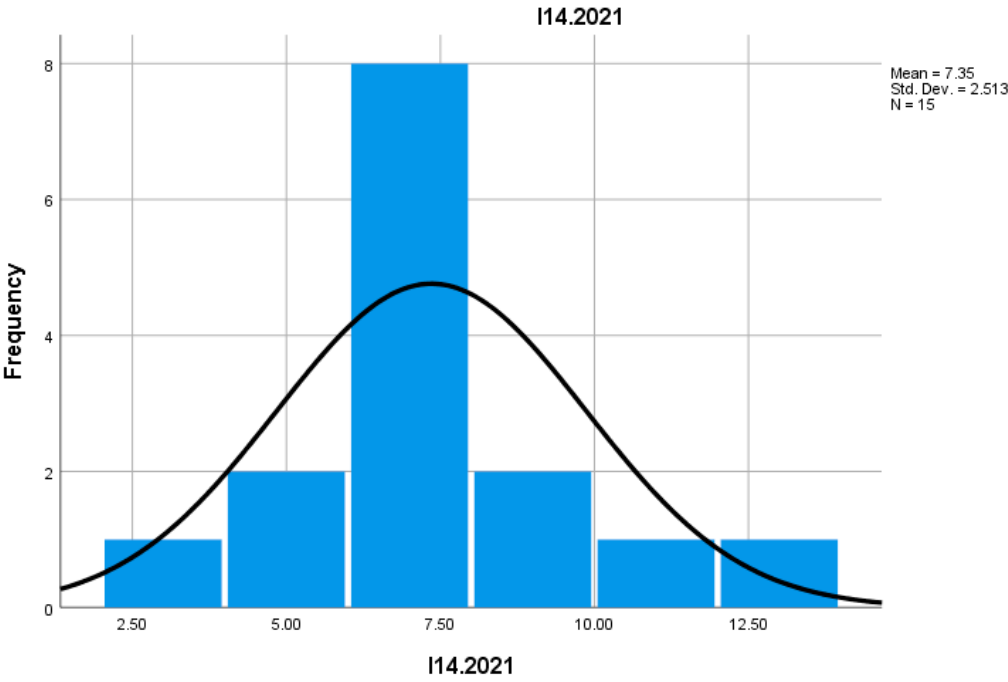


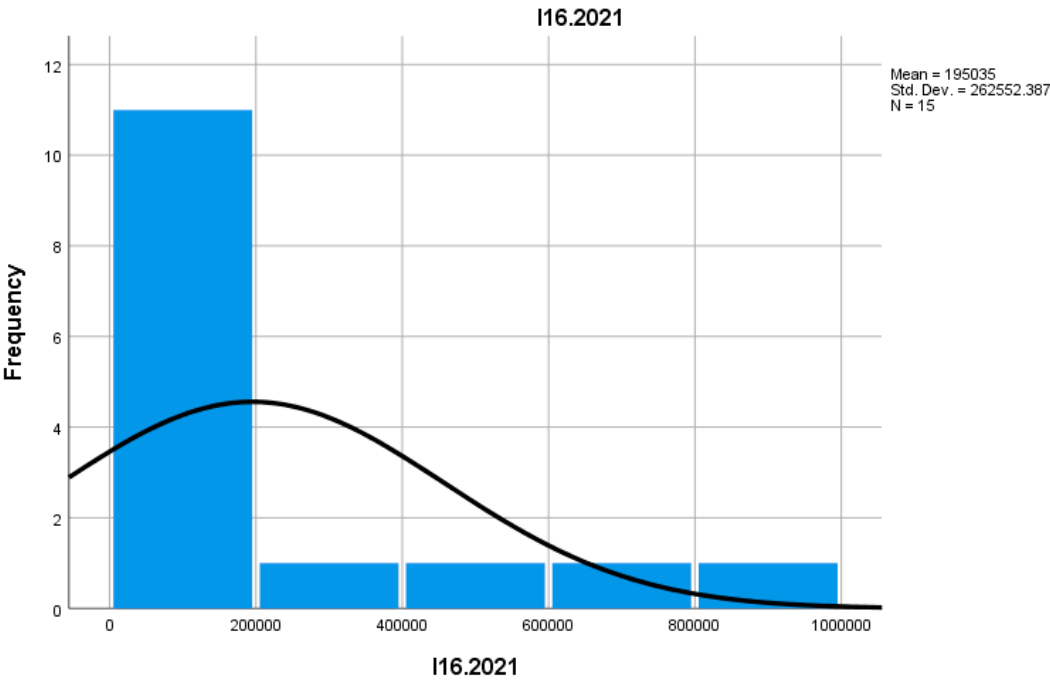
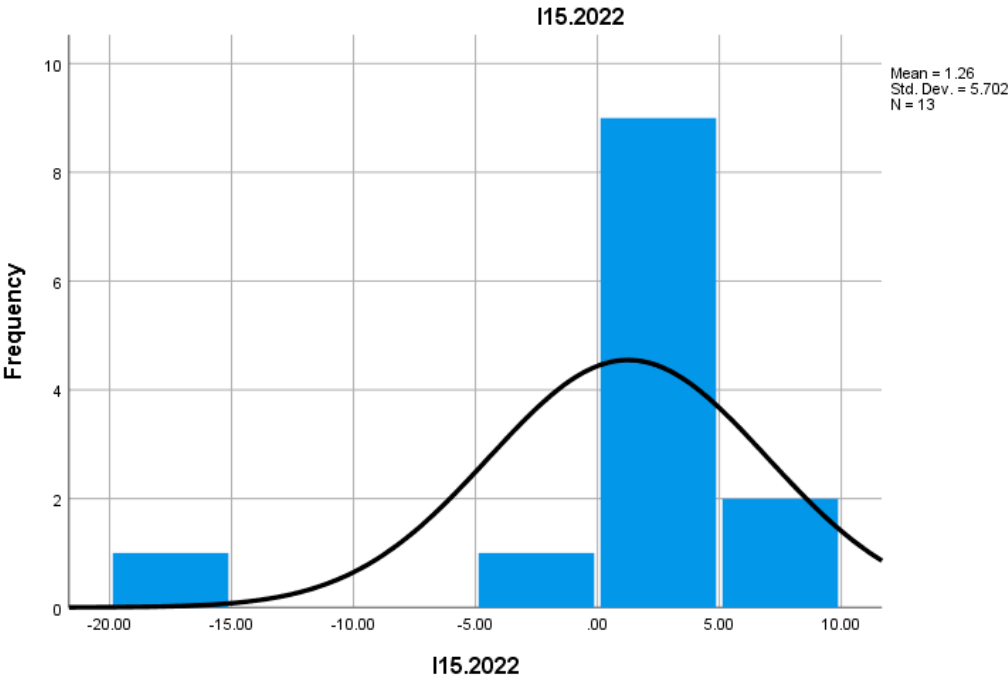


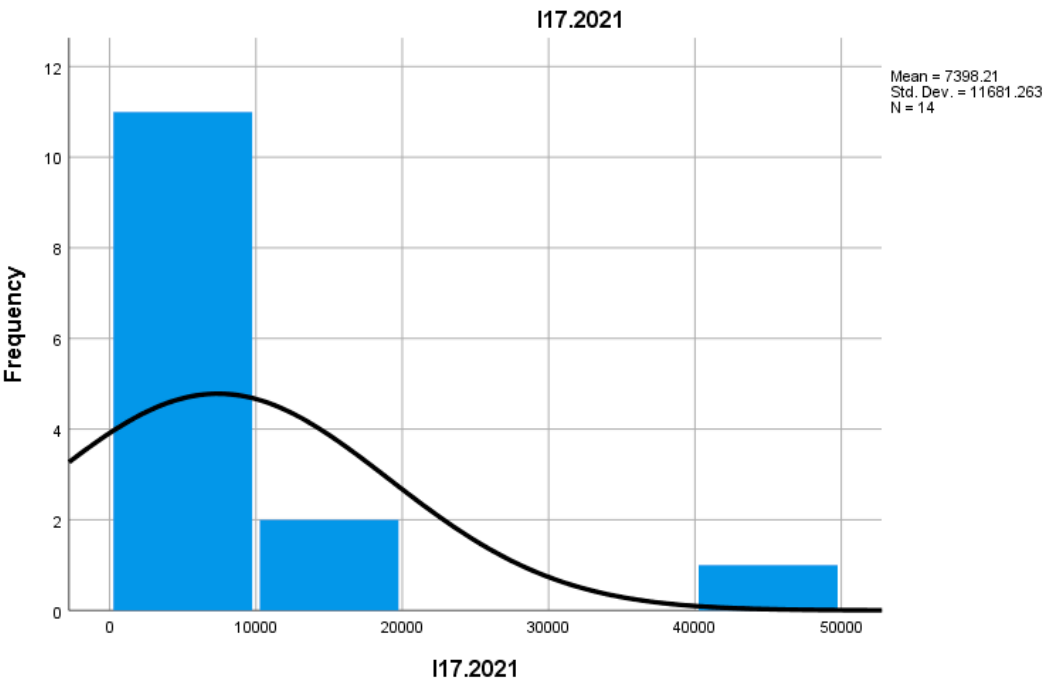
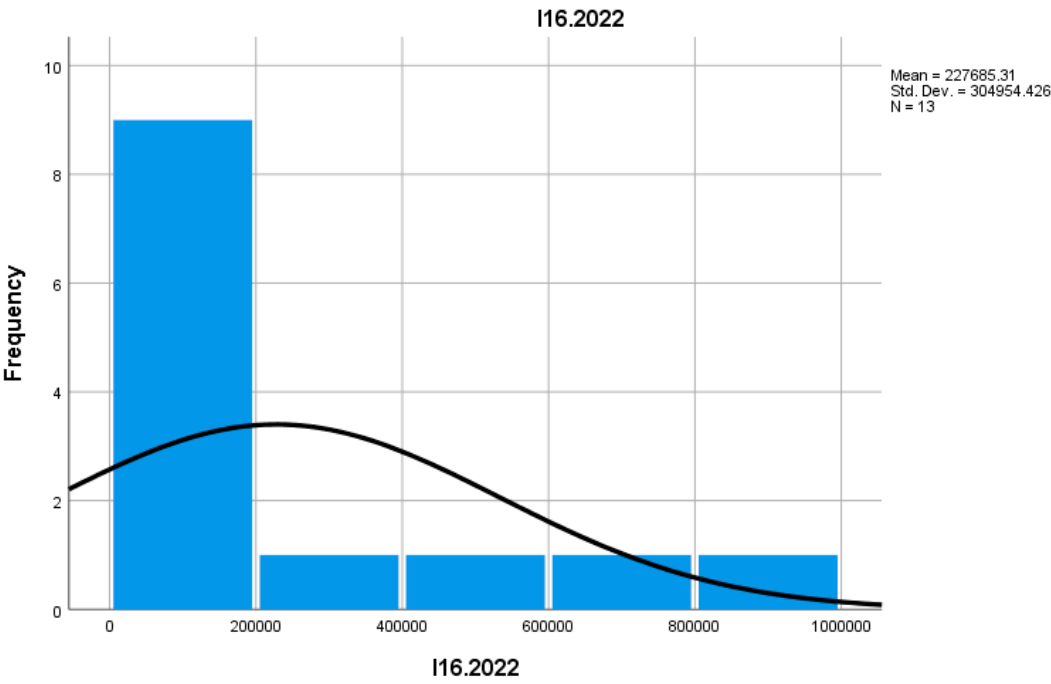


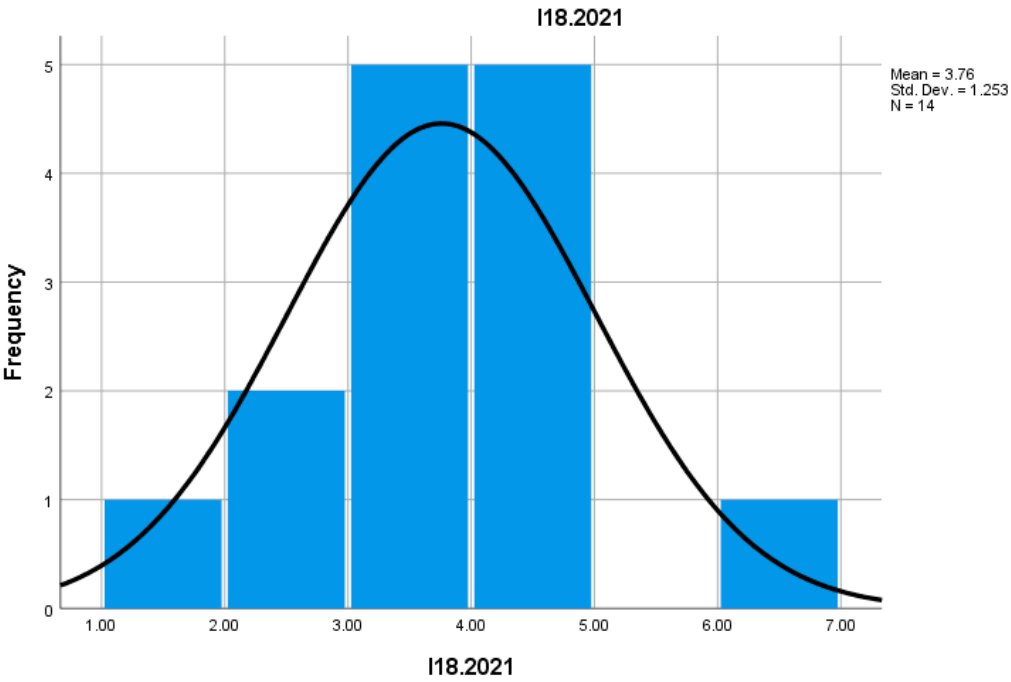
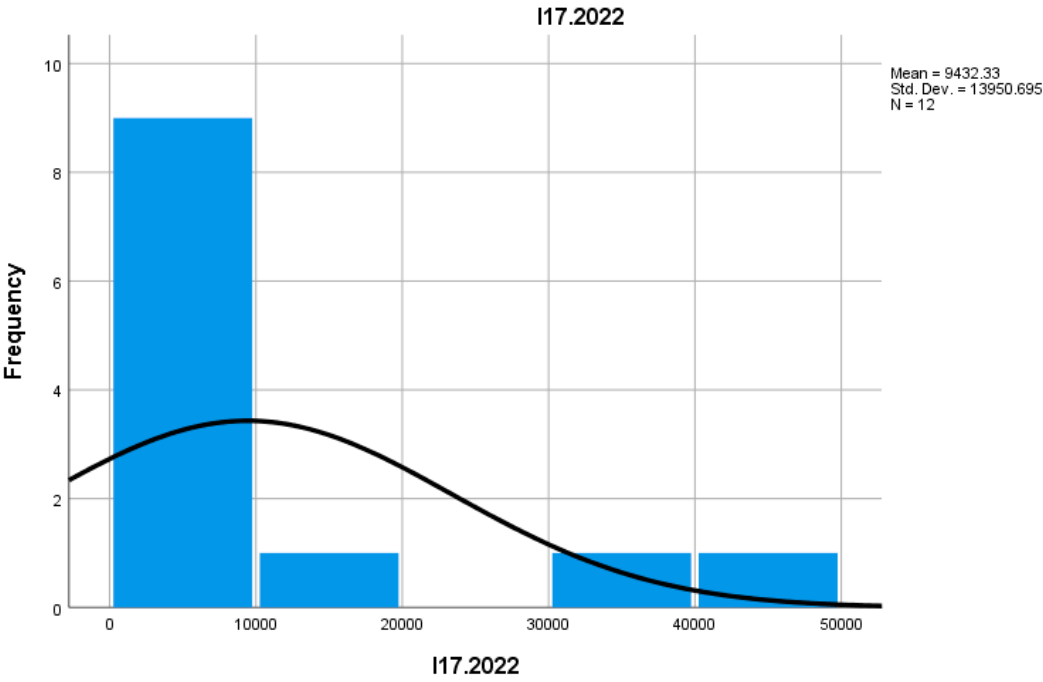


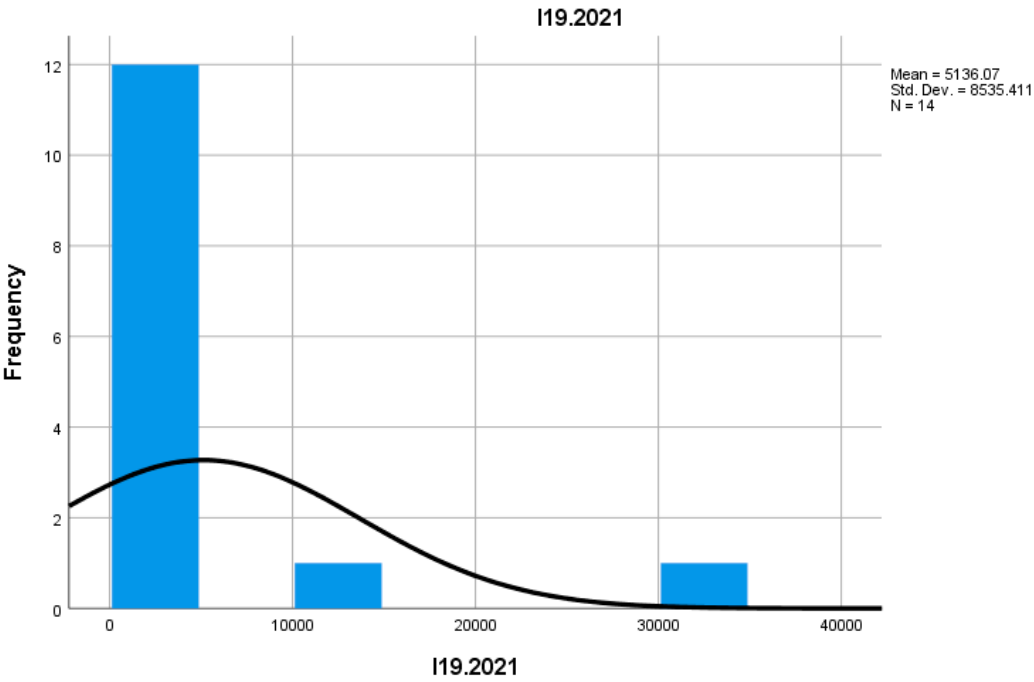
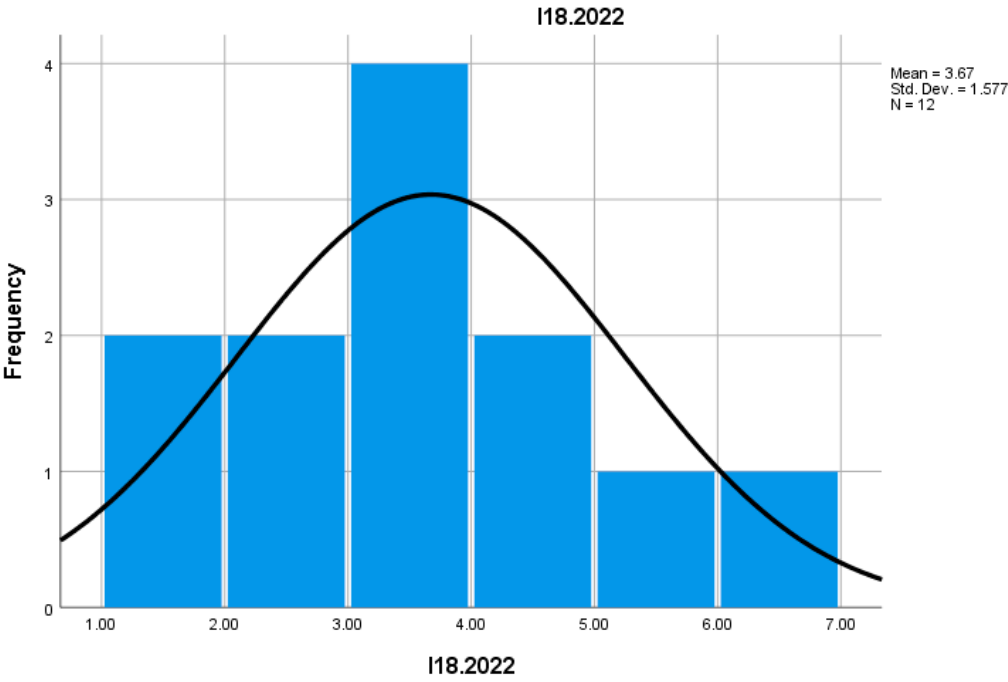


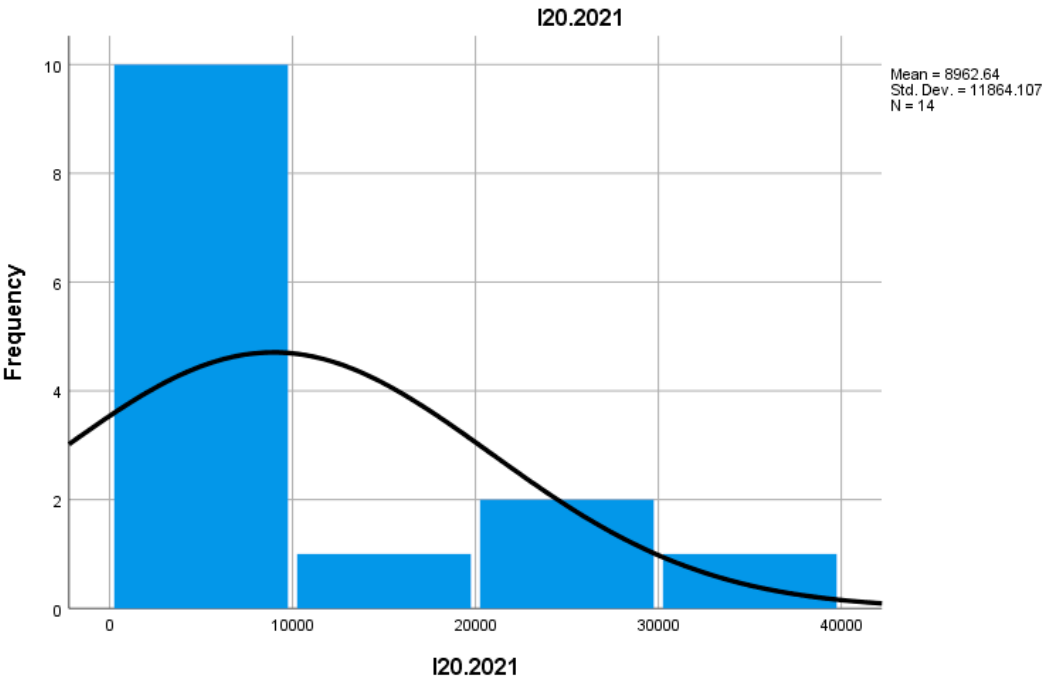
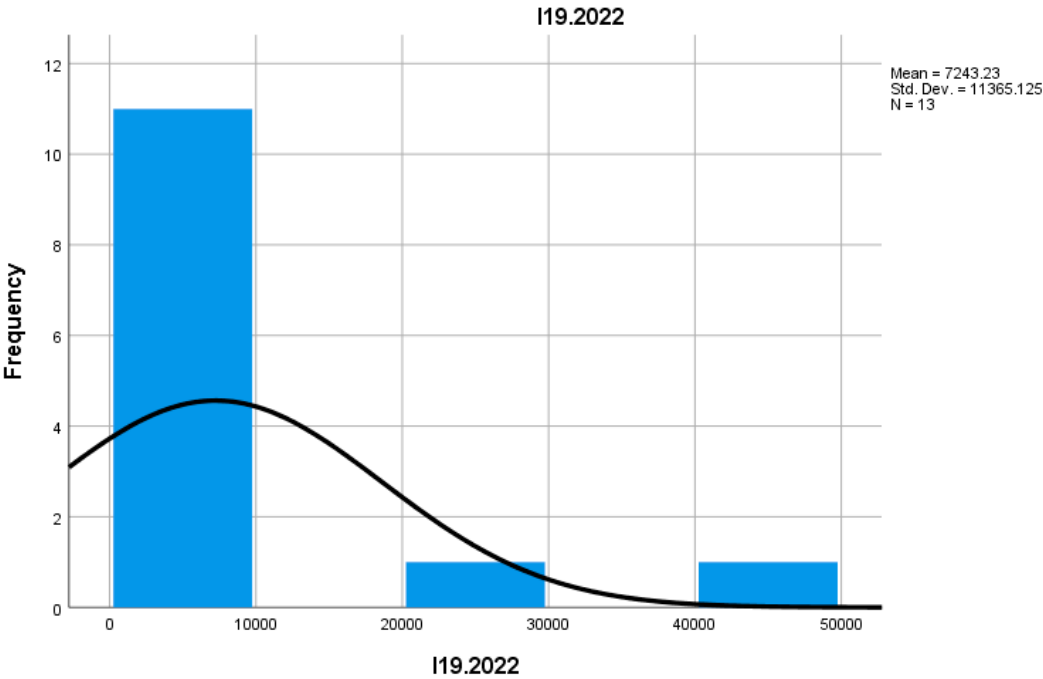


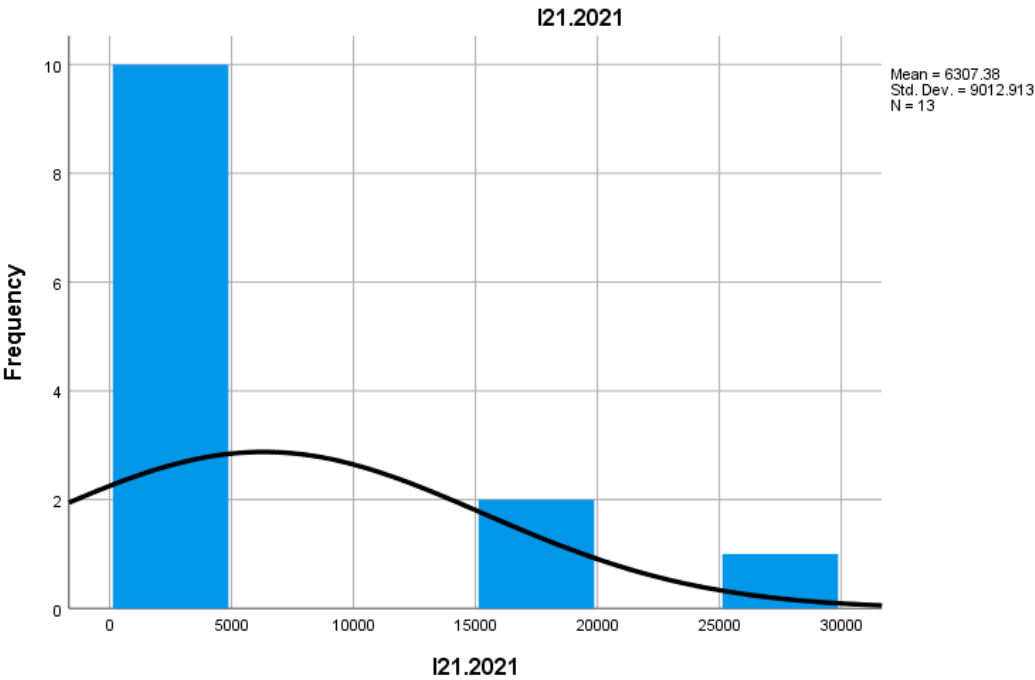
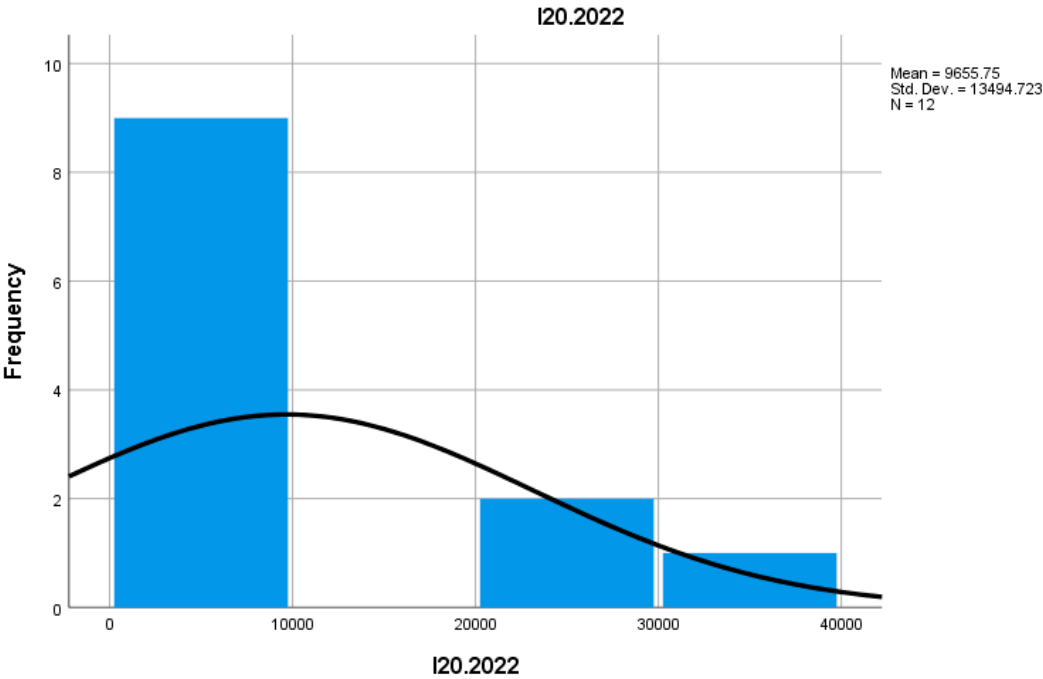


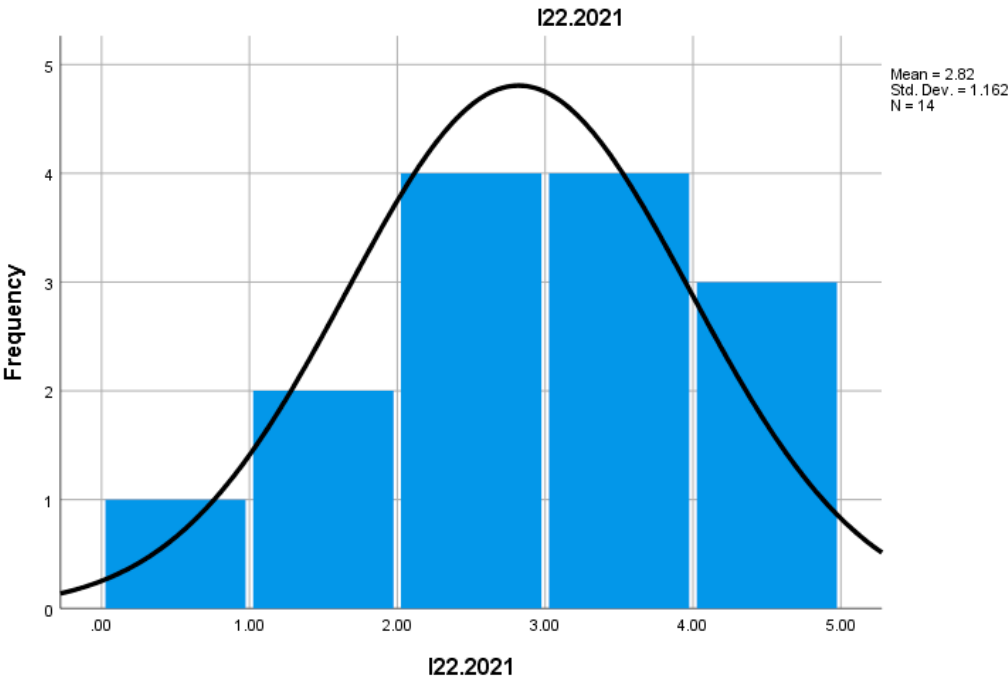
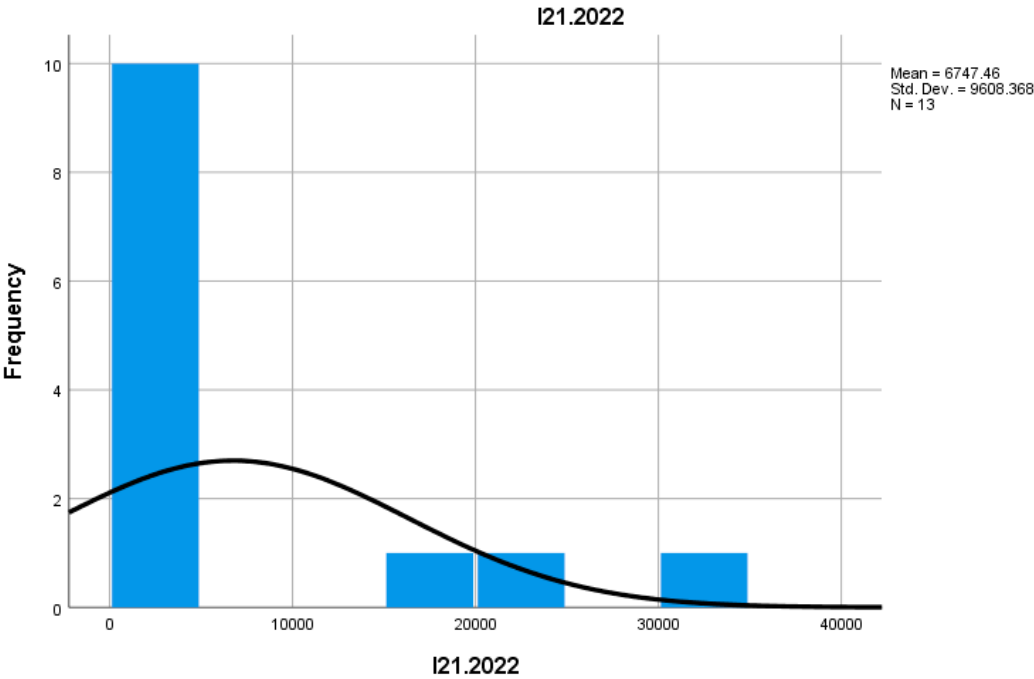


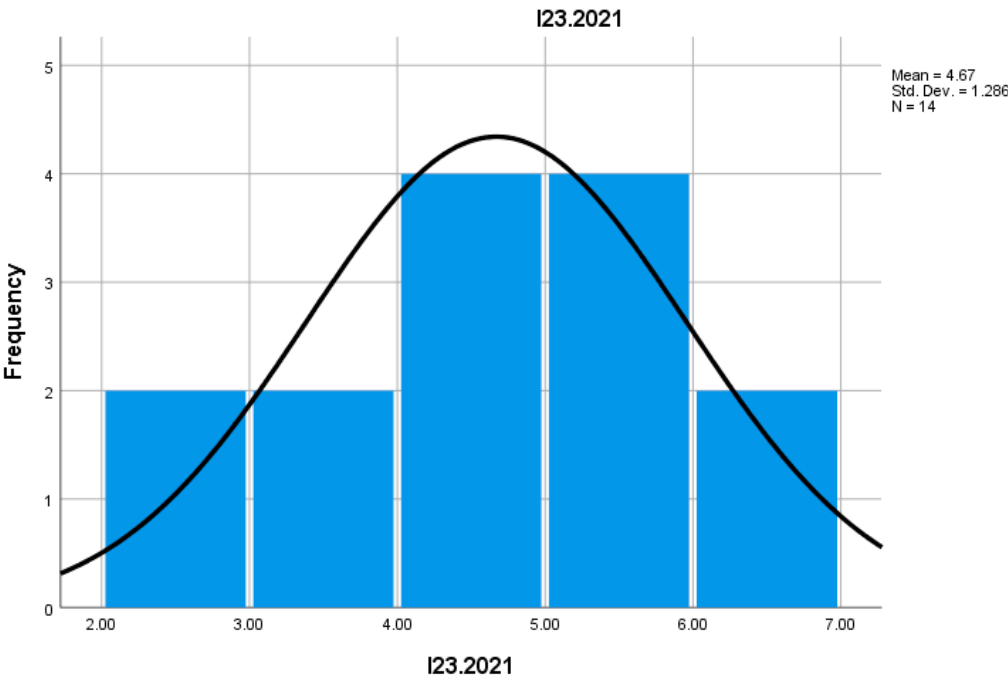
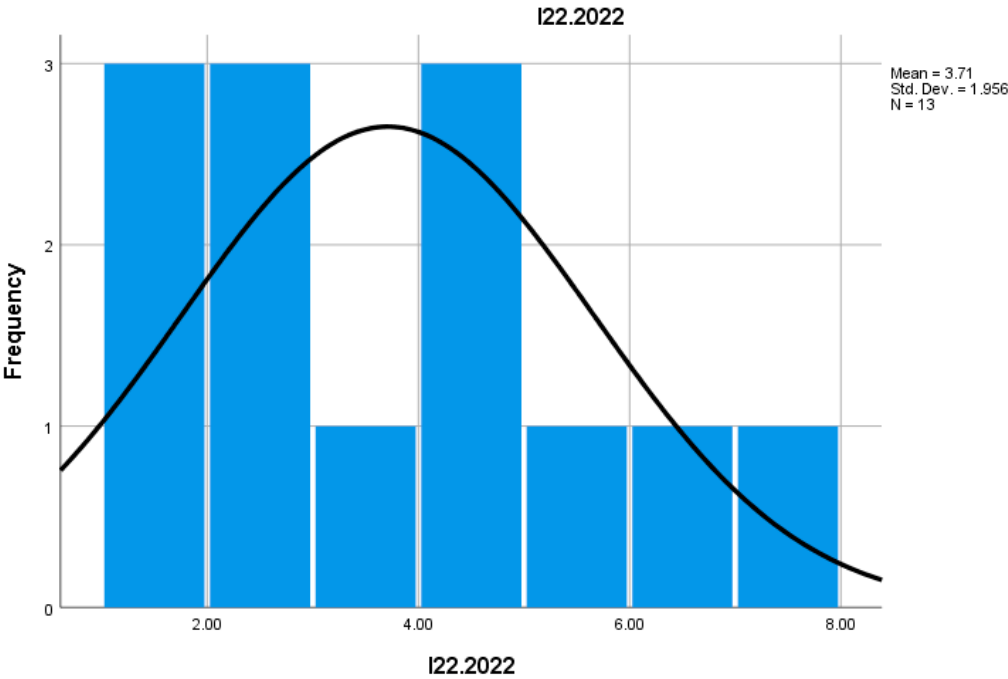


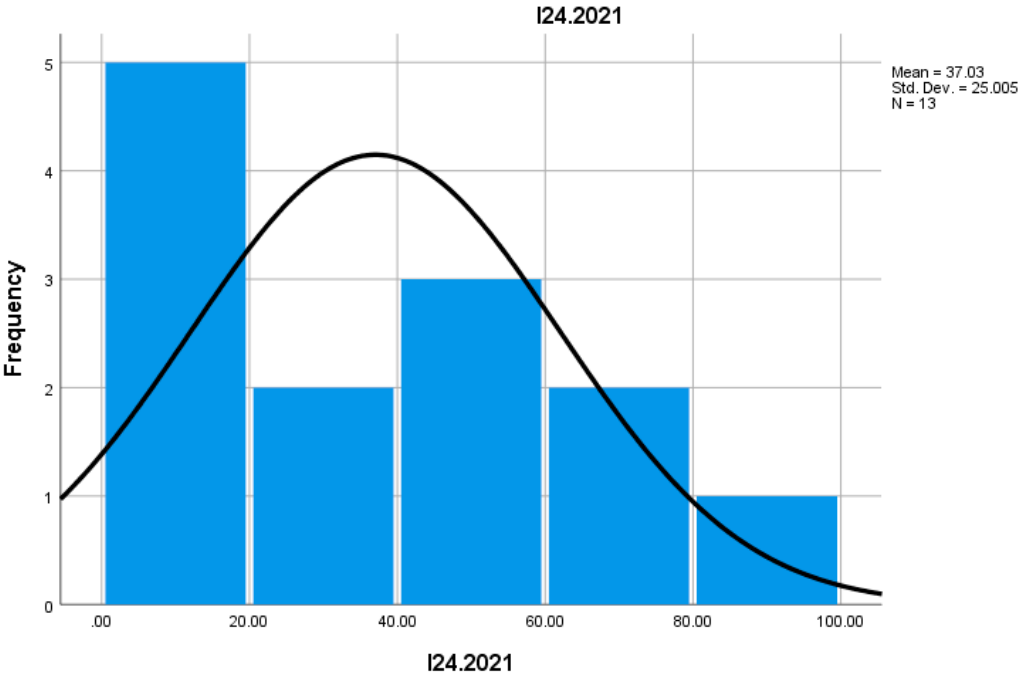
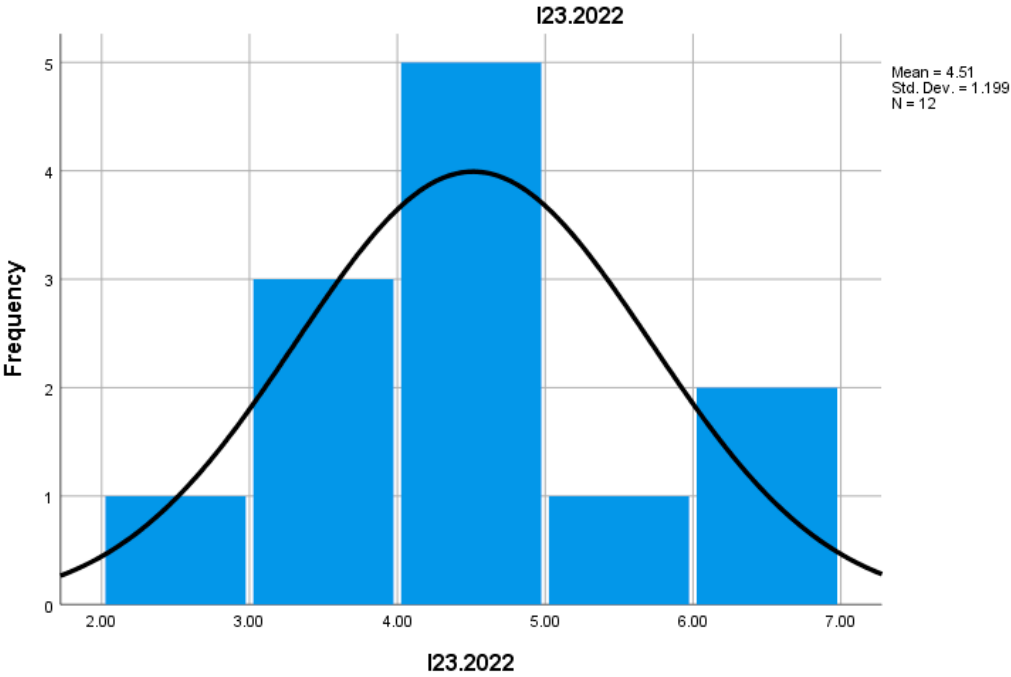


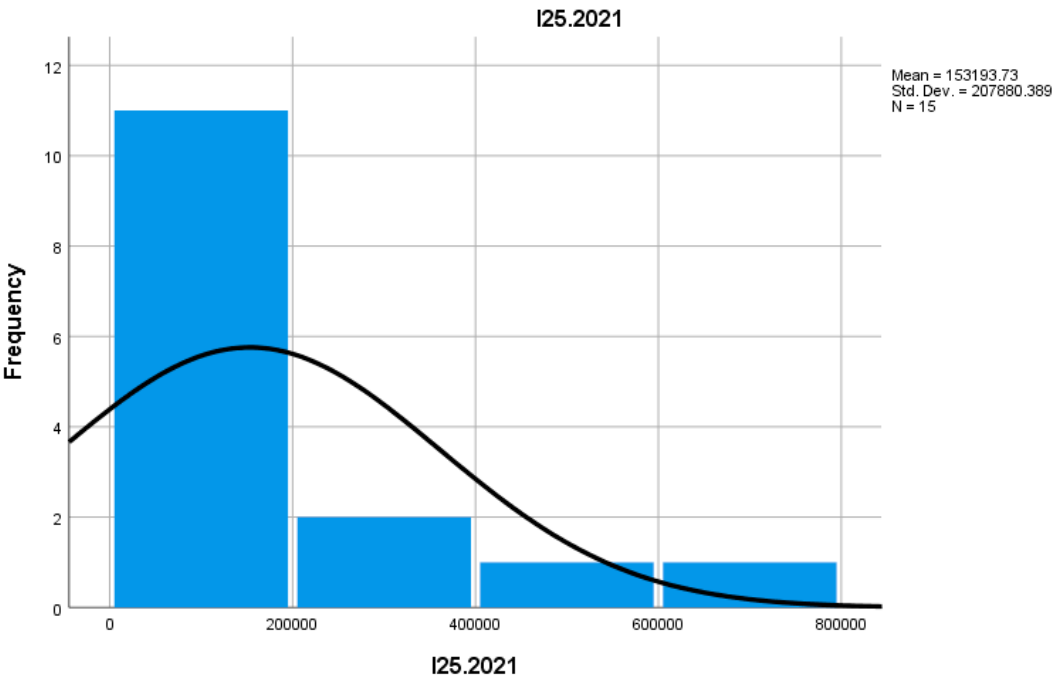
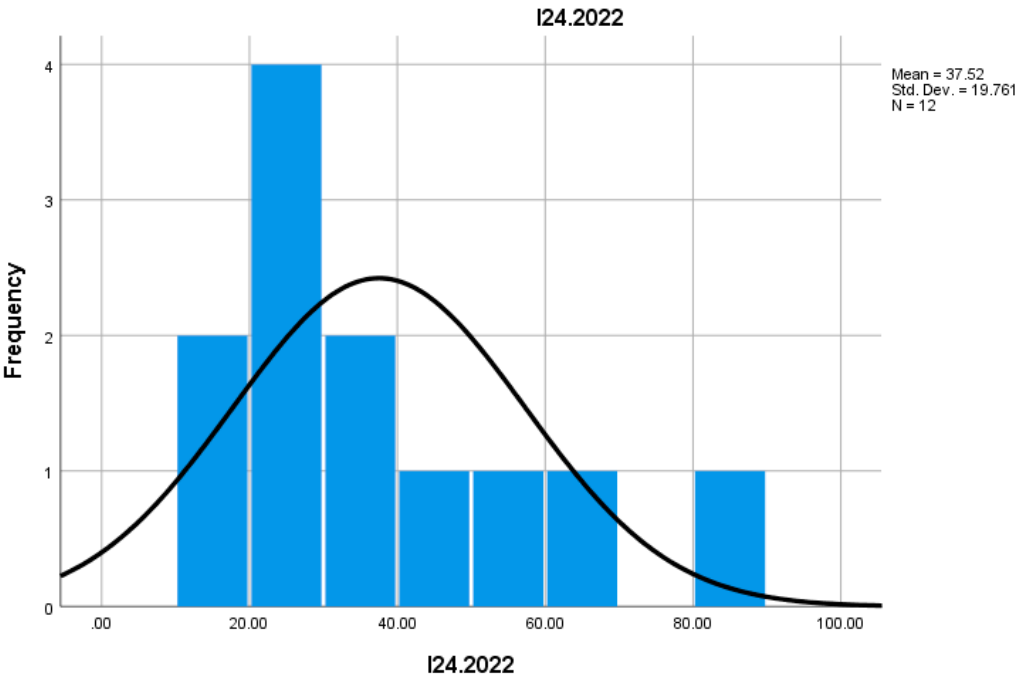


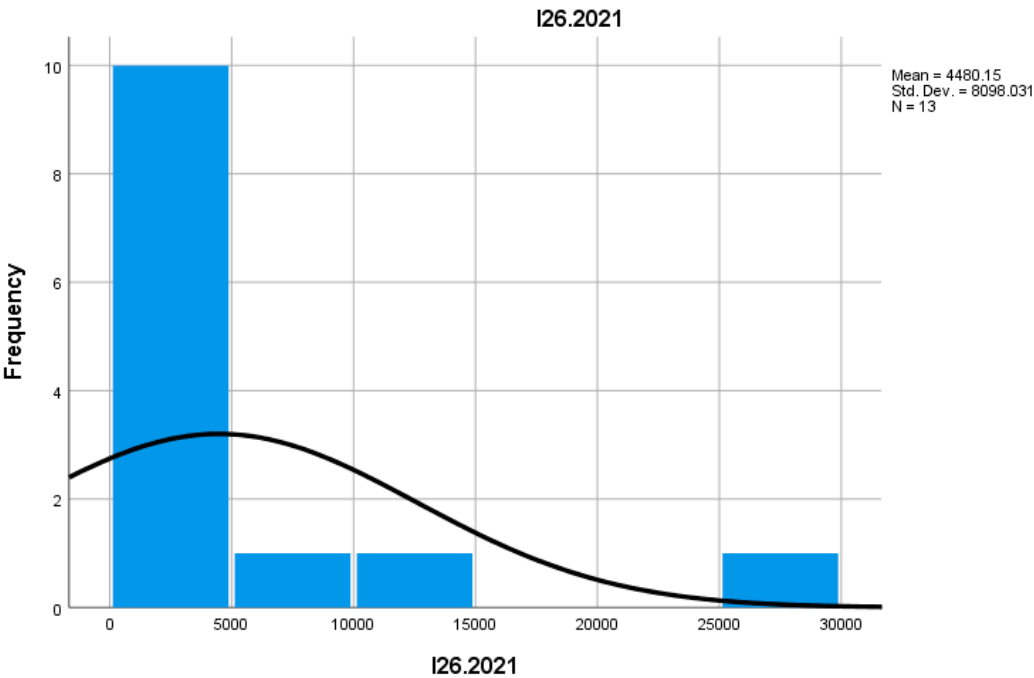
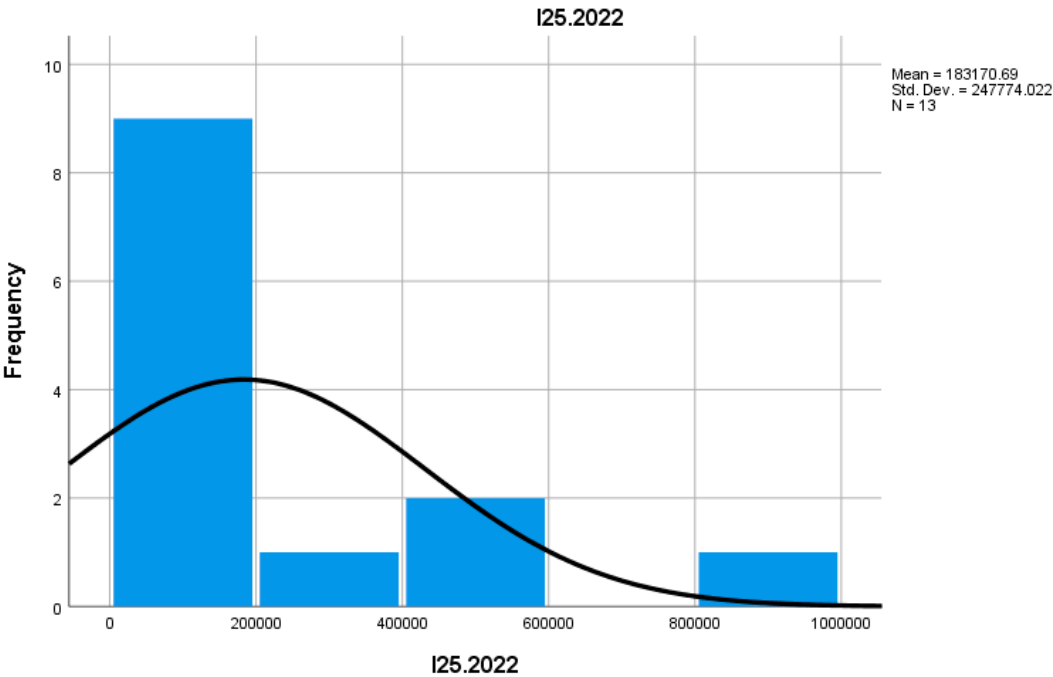


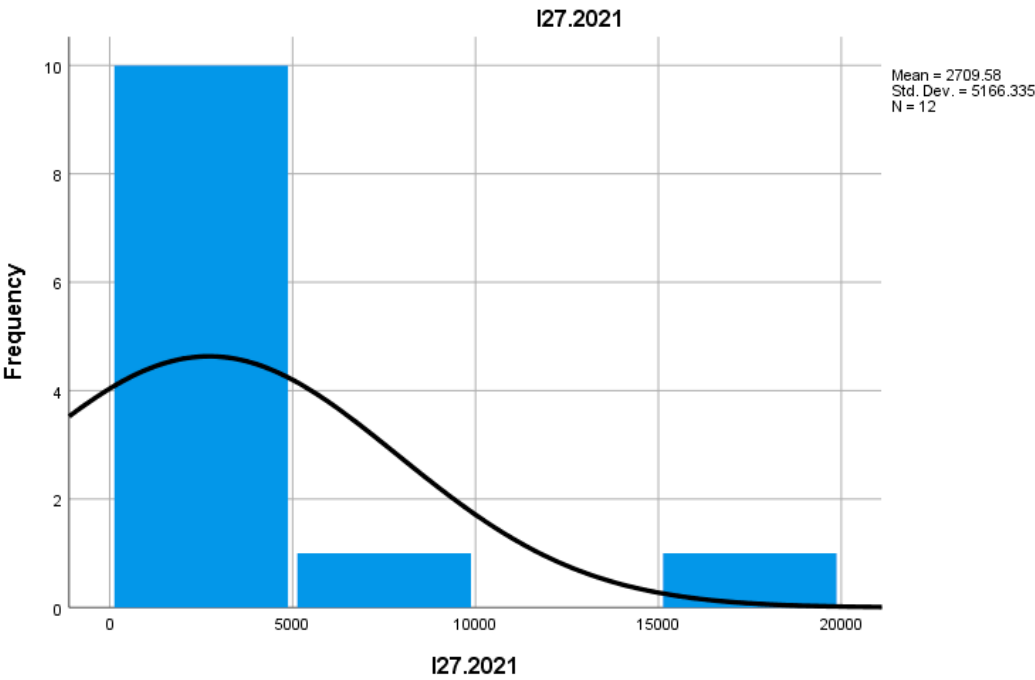
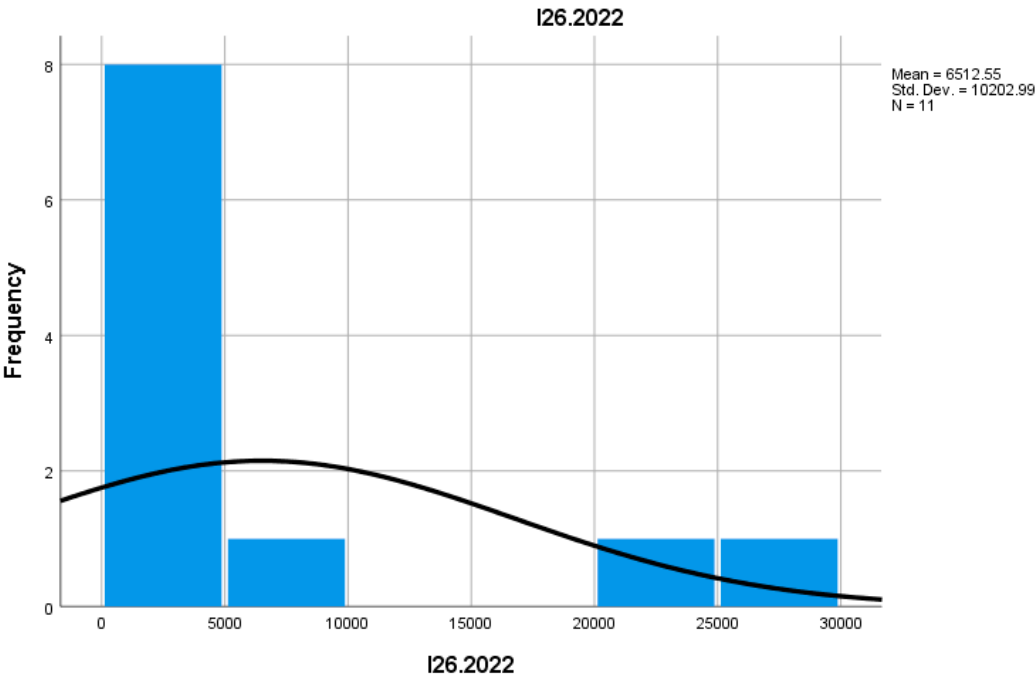


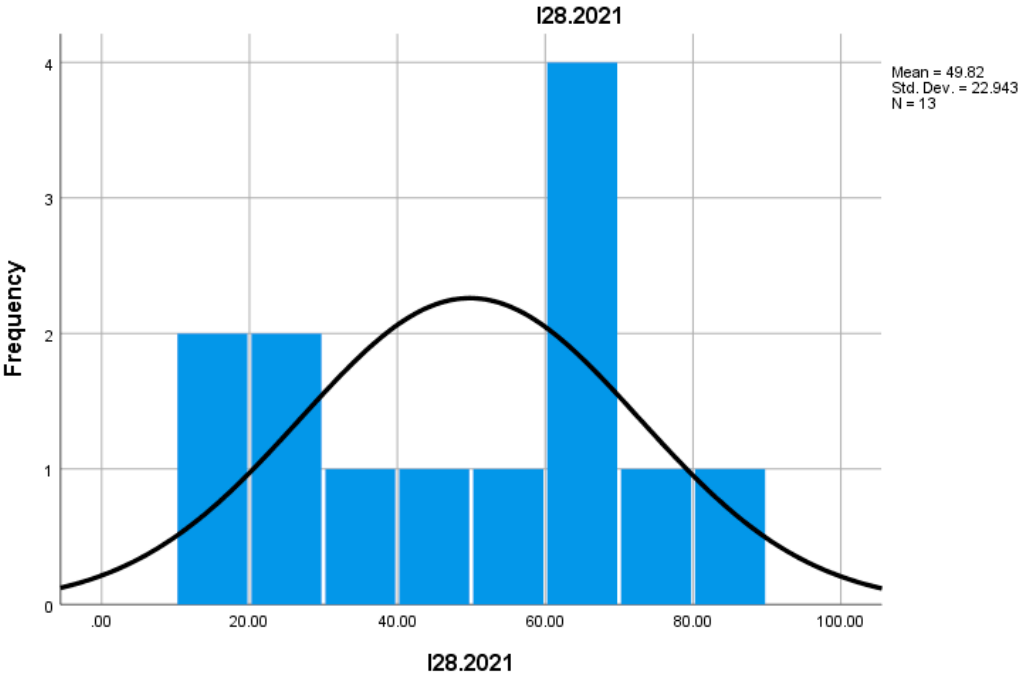
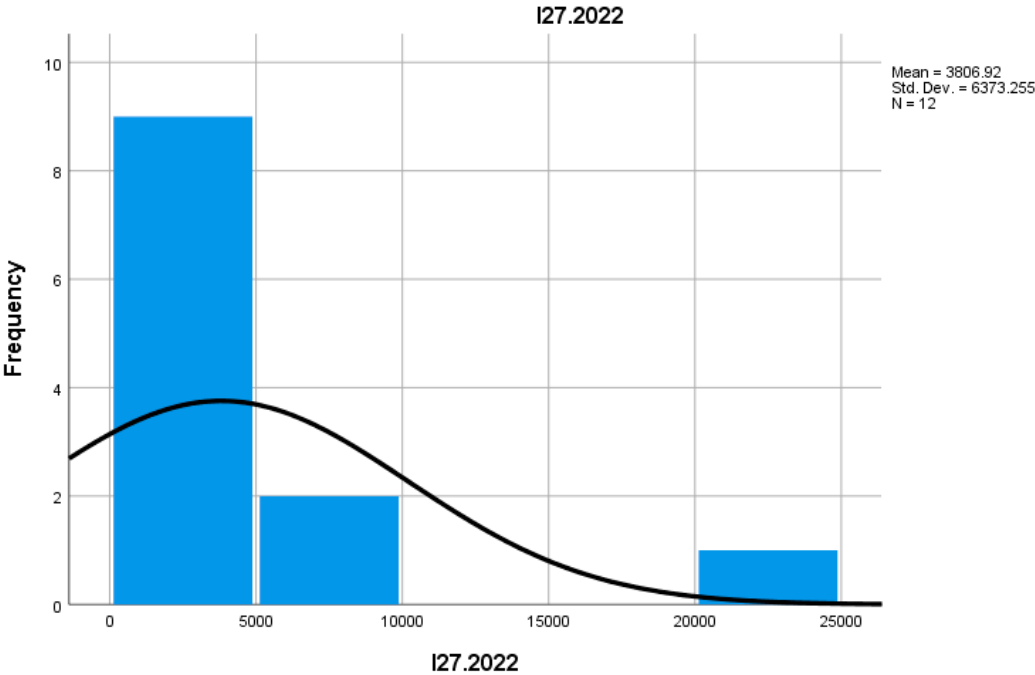


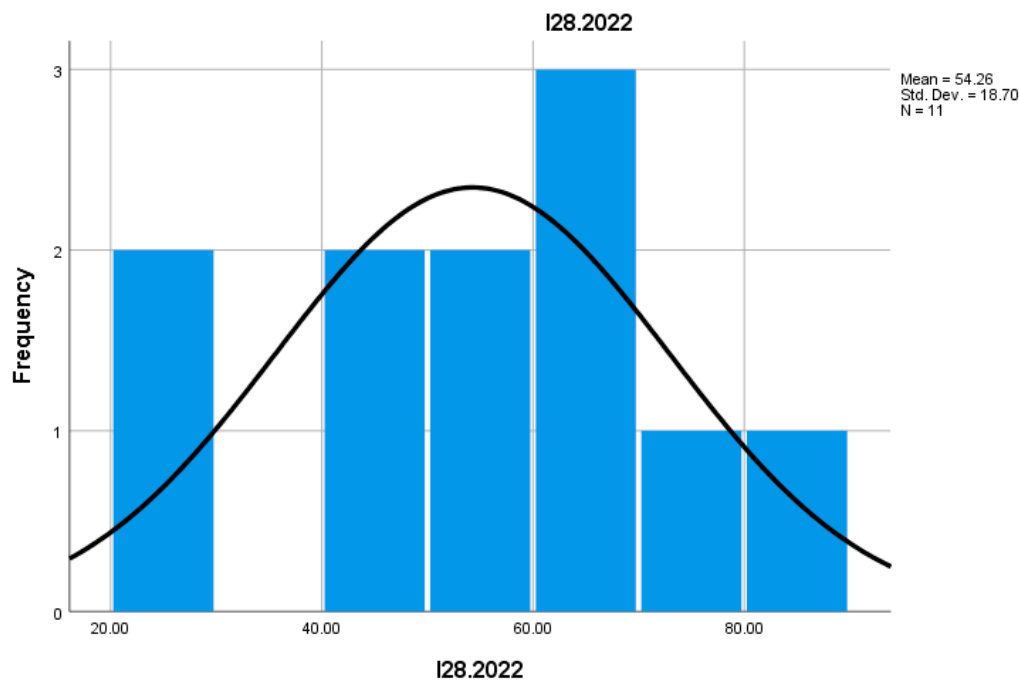












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