

The social structure of the individual in reducing the contribution of neighborhood gangs to spreading violence in residential areas.

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Summary :

of the presentation: The terms violence, crime, and fear have recently become closely associated with certain neighborhoods across many regions of Algeria, where crime has escalated alarmingly due to its devastating consequences, including the spread of terror and intimidation among residents. This phenomenon has repercussions for the security and stability of individuals and society, both nationally and internationally.

The phenomenon of neighborhood gangs is one of the most prominent social challenges facing contemporary societies, particularly in large cities characterized by high population density and significant social and economic disparities. This phenomenon is not merely a limited behavioral deviation, but rather the result of a dysfunction in the individual's social structure, where psychological, educational, economic, and cultural factors intersect. Hence, the importance of the individual's social development becomes clear as a preventive and strategic means aimed at forming a balanced personality capable of positive integration into society, far removed from criminal behaviors and gang affiliation. This has hastened the sounding of the alarm, and the spread of the phenomenon has attracted the attention of many specialists and researchers in various sectors. Through this research paper, we attempt to shed light on the spread of this phenomenon, which has taken on national and international dimensions, by analyzing the contribution of violence to the attraction of young people to neighborhood gangs and identifying the factors that make joining these groups an almost natural choice in their view, and the importance of the individual's social development to protect them from falling into this organization.

Keywords: Social structure, violence, crime and deviance, neighborhood gang, residential neighborhoods.

Introduction:

The study of individual development and formation within the context of socialization institutions is among the most important modern fields of study, both in sociology and psychology. Researchers are interested in the dynamics and patterns of family communication among individuals and how these various relationships influence the overall functioning of the family unit and other socialization institutions. These institutions play a leading role in shaping individual behavior within society, within the framework of a psychologically and socially integrated social structure. The aim is to improve communication, resolve conflicts, and address various problems that may

stem from the individual's socialization within the context of diverse social interactions and indirect influences on behavior. This includes how individuals adapt to and construct their experiences and perceptions of different lifestyles. The psychological and social structure of the individual constitutes a significant part of their personality, influencing their thoughts, emotions, and behavior, and how these interact with others as behavioral or cognitive patterns. These patterns contribute to the formation of the individual's mental or psychological aspect, based on psychological mechanisms that influence the formation and programming of the human personality. Therefore, we find that each of us carries within us a series of thoughts and behaviors that appear without us even knowing their source or being able to control them. These thoughts, which are shaped by various factors, are likely the cause of these behaviors. The aforementioned psychological and social factors help the individual become an integral part of the overall structure of society, harmoniously achieving self-realization and systemic integration within a social framework. Within this scientific framework, the study's problem lies in the reality and prospects of the individual's social development and the relationship between their influence and being influenced by the social environment in curbing the growth of the neighborhood gang phenomenon.

This phenomenon has become a serious threat to both the individual and society due to its spread of crime, violence, and even drug trafficking in residential areas.

Study Objectives: Every study undertaken by a researcher aims to achieve specific objectives. Our study's objectives are as follows:

- * To attempt to uncover the phenomenon of violence and crime perpetrated by neighborhood gangs, particularly the violence inflicted by this organization, which is alien to our society and affects the individual and society, threatening its security and stability.

- * To identify the most important causes and motives leading to the growth of the violent phenomenon and to draw conclusions that bring us closer to understanding this phenomenon, and then to offer some suggestions and recommendations. *An attempt to identify the various problems that may stem from an individual's socialization, considering the diverse social interactions, influences, and factors that lead individuals, particularly during childhood and adolescence, to join neighborhood gangs.

- *An attempt to understand the functions of socialization institutions, especially the family and school, and their impact on shaping the behavior of children, adolescents, and individuals in general, in order to mitigate the escalation of this phenomenon.

Defining Concepts:

Residential Neighborhoods:

From a sociological perspective, a neighborhood is defined as a group of residential areas whose inhabitants share characteristics of social cohesion and common interests,

influencing one another. It is also the place where these residents feel a sense of belonging to the community in which they live.¹

Therefore, a neighborhood is a residential unit whose inhabitants are characterized by specific social traits², which may vary in ideas, traditions, living standards, and even educational levels.

Social Structure:

This refers to the relational, organizational, and legal structures that define and encompass the activities of individuals within a specific social context. It is not merely an environment in the sense of a physical space, but rather a social, cultural, and institutional context that produces finite elements such as language, values, customs, organizations, and economic and social distribution. Some argue that changes in the social structure, whether economic, political, or cultural, generate pressures on individuals, potentially leading to deviant behaviors.

Definition of Violence: It is the act of disregarding a matter and showing a lack of gentleness. A person is violent if they are not gentle in their actions. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that God Almighty rewards gentleness more than violence. To be violent towards someone means to take them harshly and cruelly, to blame and reproach them. To take something violently means to undertake it without knowledge or understanding. To take food or land violently means to dislike it. To take something violently means to reject it. The land itself can also be violently sprouted.

Definition of violence: It is the act of disregarding a matter and showing a lack of gentleness. A person is violent if they are not gentle in their actions. In a hadith, it is stated that God Almighty gives for gentleness what He does not give for violence. To be violent towards someone is to treat them harshly and cruelly, to blame and reproach them. To take something violently is to undertake it without knowledge or understanding. To take food or land violently is to reject it. The land itself is said to be violent when it sprouts on it.³

Violence is physical or verbal abuse, whether in action or words, in a confrontational context with another. It is characterized by individual or collective acts, acts based on reaction, and constitute a psychological and social experience of harming others. However, this experience is inseparable from societal changes and political culture.

Therefore, the meaning of violence is the non-recognition of the other, their rejection, and their transformation into an object suitable for the violent need. The perpetrator of violence observes the victim, portrays and shapes them in a way that allows them to construct an image of the victim and control their destiny.⁴

¹ - Awad El-Sayed Hanafi, *City Inhabitants Between Time and Place*, Alexandria, Scientific Office, 1997, p. 195

² Mahmoud Hamdi Abdel Ghani, *Construction, Systems, and Social Change*, Horus International Foundation for Publishing and Distribution, 2002

³ Ibn Manzur Abu al-Fadl Muhammad ibn Makram, *Lisan al-Arab*, Vol. 10. Cairo, Dar al-Maaref, 1979.

⁴ Jamal Maatouk, *Introduction to Criminal Sociology*, Vol. 1, 1st ed. Algeria, Dar Ibn Mrabet for Publishing and Printing, 2008, pp. 304-305

Violence is a complex socio-psychological problem that requires the expertise of scholars to offer diverse perspectives on this phenomenon. Violence is considered a means of expressing one's inner feelings.

Violence has been classified as a social disease, similar to physical illnesses, that can be transmitted from the afflicted to the healthy. It often affects young people, who are more susceptible to imitation and emulation.

2- The technical definition of violence: Violence is the use of pressure or force in an unlawful or illegal manner that affects an individual's will.

It is also the use of physical force to inflict harm on people or property, as it is any act or treatment that causes physical harm or interferes with a person's freedom.⁵

Violence is also a means of changing what is inside an individual, and it is accompanied by the use of force, whether this force is directed towards individuals or things. Violence has been classified as a social disease, like physical diseases, that spreads from the sick to the healthy.⁶

3- The Psychological Meaning of Violence:

Freud defines it as instinctive and emotional, stemming from a natural self. It is the typical image of forces, and the rebellious and noisy crowds are the typical image of violence.⁷

4- The Sociological Perspective on Violence

Although sociologists do not disregard the insights of psychology, psychiatry, and biology regarding the causes of violence, they focus their attention on social factors. There are two main sociological interpretations of violence. The first, a macro-theory, analyzes societal conditions and views violence as an indirect response to social structures. This response stems from frustration caused by intense social pressures and unfavorable opportunities, chaos and disorder, or dysfunctional social control mechanisms. The second, a micro-theory, focuses on individuals, small groups, and the social interaction of the individual perpetrating violence, emphasizing how violence is learned from others.⁸

Marvin defines violence as physical pain or injury to persons or property, generally referring to violent crimes such as murder, rape, theft, physical assault, and the destruction of antiquities.⁹

Types and Patterns of Violence

1- Types of Violence

The "Police" magazine, published in 1984, presented several classifications of violence. Some scholars categorized violence according to its method, which can include the following types:¹⁰

⁵ Jalal Ismail Helmy, Domestic Violence, previously cited reference, p. 9

⁶ Muhammad Hader Abdel-Mukhtar, Alienation and Extremism Towards Violence, Faculty of Arts, South Valley University, Dar Gharib, Cairo, p. 11.

⁷ Mustafa Amad Al-Tayyar, Domestic Violence, Naif Academy, Saudi Arabia, 1997, p. 15.

⁸ Jalal Ismail Helmy, Domestic Violence, previously cited reference, p. 22.

⁹ Muhammad Yusri Al-Du'aisi, Terrorism, Dar Al-Ma'rifah Al-Masriyah, Egypt, 1999, p. 20.

Physical violence, which is either actual, such as killing and beating, or the threat of violence. Actual violence is usually preceded by a threat, but they are not always concurrent. Authoritarian violence aims to inflict economic, social, or psychological harm. Such violence is often used in individual or group conflicts, between organizations, countries, and peoples, and for political and economic control. Selective violence is verbal or physical violence aimed at assessing the capabilities of a newcomer to society or a new group before engaging in competition or conflict.

This type of selective violence is often common among children's play groups or delinquent gangs of male or female juveniles. There is also illegitimate violence, which is commonly understood as violence that violates the law or morality. Behavior that does not exceed the limits of societal tolerance, such as murder, assault, and other forms of criminal violence, is distinct from legitimate violence. Legitimate violence is violence based on legitimate grounds such as laws, customs, regulations, values, or traditions. Examples include the violence inherent in some athletic events and sports matches, or violence necessitated by the nature of official duty, professional requirements, work demands, or the exercise of a right.

As for Mu'taz Sayyid Abdullah's classification of types of violence, presented in his book "Violence in Collective Life," he focused on dividing violence in society into five main categories:¹¹

Domestic Violence

Violence occurring within the home or any family setting is one of the most common and dangerous forms of violence in many societies, given its serious impact on the family and society as a whole. Twenty percent of homicide victims are killed by family members, and women are often victims of spousal abuse. More than 1,700 women die annually worldwide as a result of domestic violence.

Violence Against Women

In addition to some forms of violence against women within the context of domestic violence, there is another form of violence often perpetrated against women by men: sexual violence. This form of violence is a disturbing manifestation of aggression in many countries around the world, particularly in the United States, due to its potentially unforgettable physical and psychological consequences. Street Violence

Although the home is the most common site of violence, violent behavior is not limited to the family. Many forms of violence occur in the streets between individuals who often don't know each other, with varying criminal motives. Official reports in all countries indicate that street crime rates are increasing annually. This is in addition to the murders, rapes, robberies, kidnappings, detentions, torture, and other crimes reported in newspapers worldwide.

Collective Violence

¹⁰ Adnan al-Douri, *Classifications of Violence*, Police Journal, Algerian Printing Establishment, Algiers, 1984, p. 110.

¹¹ Mu'taz al-Sayyid Abdullah, *Violence in University Life*, Publications of the Center for Psychological Research and Studies, Cairo, 2005, p. 34.

All the forms of violence we mentioned earlier involve an individual acting violently to harm another individual, which is more than what is called individual violence. However, there is another type of violence called collective violence.

This form of violence is a product of all manifestations of intolerance present in society. When intolerance intensifies and reaches a high degree, the interactions between individuals belonging to these groups, with their differing characteristics, transform into widespread interactions and confrontations between these groups. Violence reaches its extreme levels, even to the point of annihilation and destruction, as is happening today in many countries around the world.

School Violence

School violence, a form of youth violence, has garnered significant attention from researchers due to its severity and negative impact on society, particularly violence within schools. There is ample evidence of increasing rates of school violence in most countries worldwide, including the United States, Britain, Germany, Japan, and other major industrialized nations.

The phenomenon of youth involvement in neighborhood gangs is linked to the spread and evolution of violence in its various forms within some urban communities. While violence is generally viewed as a negative phenomenon threatening societal stability, for some young people it represents a means of self-affirmation or self-defense within marginalized and deprived social environments. Violence becomes part of the group's culture and a tool for protecting its members or asserting its presence within the neighborhood. It provides a sense of belonging and recognition, especially in the face of emptiness, lack of opportunities, and socioeconomic problems in certain neighborhoods where conflicts between groups are prevalent. Some young people feel the need to protect themselves, and the neighborhood gang provides a security umbrella based on collective deterrence, thus justifying violence as a defensive measure that opens doors to power and influence. 1- The Frustration and Aggression Theory

Dollard was interested in the manifestations of aggressive behavior in the individual, as he combined frustration and aggression, as he believes that the intensity of aggressive motives varies directly with the degree of frustration. Aggression, crime, and violence of all kinds are among the most famous responses that are aroused in the frustrating situation, and include physical and verbal aggression, as aggression is often directed towards the source of frustration.¹²

Proponents of this theory also believe that aggression is a natural reaction to frustration. Frustration generates pent-up energy that must be released or channeled in some way to provide relief. Aggressive behavior is one method of releasing or discharging this energy. Therefore, aggression, or confronting and abusing others, is not always the only or automatic response to frustration, but rather a way to release this energy.

¹² Jamal Maatouk, Introduction to Criminal Sociology, Dar Ibn Mrabet Publishing and Printing, Mohammadia, Algeria, 2008, p. 167

Furthermore, this theory suggests that when an individual experiences frustration and all possible outlets for aggression are completely blocked, the aggression may turn inward, manifesting as self-hatred, self-criticism, or even suicide.¹³

Thus, we observe that intense frustration drives the individual to seek revenge against the source of the frustration. This could be parents at home, if they were the cause of the frustration, or at school, if a teacher or administration prevented the individual from achieving their goals, or in other areas. If the individual encounters obstacles, they will direct their aggression inward.¹⁴

3- Functional Structure Theory

It can be said that functional structure theory in sociology, particularly in the field of violence and deviance, is a dominant theory due to its prominent position among various sociological theories and its specific approach to these issues.

In functional structure theory, violence is an expression of the breakdown of the cultural structure among members of a particular group. This breakdown occurs when there is a complete disconnect between the group's structure and its members' ability to harmonize with and accept cultural norms. In other words, violence is a manifestation of the separation, lack of cohesion, and incompatibility between the cultural goals and objectives defined by society and the means that society approves for achieving those goals.¹⁵

Functionalists view violence as a marker within a social context; it is either a product of a loss of connection to social groups that organize and guide behavior, or, on the other hand, individuals may be aggressive and resort to violence because they know no other way of life.¹⁶

Thus, most of the behavior that we call deviant behavior reflects the social values of the society in which the violence occurs. Violent behavior may be associated with a certain description, such as that of a drug addict. The individual feels this attitude being transferred, absorbs the idea of others about him, and begins to reshape his personality to fit the expectations of this rigid, stereotypical situation.¹⁷

Aggression, in general, can be defined as the desire to exert power over others in various ways, often leading to what is termed violence. Opinions differ regarding the reasons for resorting to this phenomenon. Some attribute it to unconscious feelings of repression and deprivation, while others see it as an act of extremism against social structures, inciting resentment and opposition from members of society. Still others consider it a psychological disorder in which the individual struggles, resorting to violence due to an inability to control their emotions.

Socialization

¹³ Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁴ 169.

Jamal Ma'touq, Introduction to Criminal Sociology, op. cit., p170.

¹⁵ Jalal Ismail Helmy, Domestic Violence, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁶ Nassira Akab, Socialization and its Impact on the Social Behaviors and Practices of Girls, Master's Thesis in Sociology, University of Algiers, Institute of Sociology, 1995, p. 23..

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 23

Socialization is the constructive process through which an individual acquires everything necessary to interact with their environment.

Therefore, it acts as a link between culture, through which the individual learns how to live with members of their community. Thus, an individual's behaviors and actions are a product of this process and a reflection of the upbringing they receive through socialization institutions such as the family, school, mosque, peer group, and the media. All these institutions collectively play a vital role in shaping an individual's personality through the upbringing they receive. We especially emphasize the family and school, as they are the primary and fundamental pillars upon which society is built.

From a sociological perspective, socialization is defined as learning the codes for joining a social group, and then developing individual readiness to participate in group life until the individual becomes a complementary member of society.

The term socialization is also linked to the social development of the individual from birth. This development relates to the individual's relationship with the society in which they live and the values that govern that society.¹⁸

1- Socialization is a continuous social process.

2- Socialization occurs within a social environment composed of human beings

It reflects an innate characteristic of humankind: that humans are social by nature. This socialization leads to the exchange, modification, and enrichment of behavioral patterns among individuals according to the needs of society.

¹⁹Society has its social institutions that work to preserve it and raise its generations properly, ensuring its continuity. These institutions enable individuals to assume social roles through which they learn proper social behavior and appropriate conduct that does not conflict with the surrounding society.²⁰

2- Objectives of Socialization at the Family Level:

* Preparing the family to be a suitable social environment for developing the child's personal abilities.

* Gaining children's affection and compassion for their parents and bringing joy to the family through play, good manners, and positive behavior.

* Helping the family maintain cohesion.

Enabling individuals within the family to interact with its members, through which they learn many behavioral patterns such as self-esteem.²¹

¹⁸ Amer Misbah, Socialization and Deviant Behavior of Algerian High School Students, previously cited reference, p.28

¹⁹.Zakia Ibrahim Kamel et al., Principles of Education and Educational Systems, Al-Isha'a Library and Printing Press, Egypt, 1st ed., 2002, p. 49.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

²¹ Zakia Ibrahim Kamel et al.: Principles of Education and Educational Systems, Al-Isha'a Library and Printing Press, Egypt, 1st ed., 2002, pp. 52-53.

Domestic violence may drive some young people to seek an alternative space that provides them with the appreciation and support they lack at home.

Objectives of Socialization at School

The school, as a social institution, exists for healthy socialization. Therefore, the objectives of socialization at its level are as follows:

- Completing the social development begun by the family in the individual, through the school's role in providing new experiences and introducing them to broader interactions.
- Cultivating a sense of cooperation and solidarity among children, discouraging selfishness and egotism, and reinforcing the prevailing social values in society.
- Deepening moral commitment among individuals.²²
- Guiding the student's social behavior when interacting with the school community, clarifying the boundaries of their freedom and the freedom of others through monitoring, guidance, reward, and punishment.
- Protecting the individual from deviant behavior. • Transitioning from a limited, child-centered community to a broader community that includes many peers.
- Creating a positive social environment among students to foster relationships based on mutual understanding and cooperation.
- Identifying effective socialization strategies that teachers can adopt in their interactions with students in the classroom to ensure healthy social development within the school.²³

Academic failure makes some students feel excluded and stigmatized, making them more susceptible to joining neighborhood gangs that promise them respect in an alternative based on power, not success.

Violence is not merely an individual behavior but a central force that contributes to shaping social relations within vulnerable neighborhoods. Young people's involvement in a neighborhood gang is the result of a complex interaction between social, economic, and psychological factors, where violence becomes a means of acquiring identity, recognition, and protection. To reduce this phenomenon, efforts should be made to improve living conditions, provide educational, recreational, and cultural alternatives, and strengthen the role of the school and family in building a balanced personality capable of facing the pressures of reality without resorting to violence and delinquency. The objectives of socialization in society: In his book "Educational Sociology," Salah Eddine Shrouh outlines some of the objectives that society should provide for the individual in their proper upbringing, including:²⁴

Definition of a neighborhood gang:

²² Manhoury Rasha Saleh, *Socialization and Academic Underachievement: A Study in Educational Social Psychology*, University Knowledge House, Alexandria, 1995, p. 33.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁴ Salah Eddine Shroukh, *Educational Sociology*, Dar Al-Ulum Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 2000, p58.

As defined in Article 2, Paragraph 1 of Order 03.20. The decree dated August 30, 2020, concerning the prevention and combating of neighborhood gangs, defines a neighborhood gang as any group, under any name, comprising two or more individuals belonging to one or more residential neighborhoods, who commit one or more acts with the aim of creating an atmosphere of insecurity within residential areas or imposing control over the residential community through physical assault, endangering the lives, freedoms, or security of individuals, or damaging their property, using visible or concealed weapons.

In addition, it defines moral assault as constituting the material element of the crime in neighborhood crimes, defined as any verbal assault that carries within its meaning any form of intimidation or terror in others, such as threats, insults, slander, defamation, coercion, or deprivation of rights.²⁵

Establishing a Gang:

Establishing a gang represents the first step in forming a criminal organization. This involves presenting the idea to the members and convincing them of its merits. It demonstrates the convergence of the founding members' wills on a single objective.²⁶

Article 21 of Ordinance No. 20/03 addresses this issue, stipulating a prison sentence of three to ten years and a fine of 300,000 to 1,000,000 Algerian dinars for anyone who establishes or organizes a neighborhood gang, joins or participates in any way in a neighborhood gang while working towards its goals, or recruits one or more individuals for the benefit of a neighborhood gang²⁷.

Miller's Definition of a Neighborhood Gang:

It is a self-organized youth association whose members share common interests.

It has a defined leadership, authority structure, and organizational characteristics, and it collectively strives to achieve specific objectives. These objectives generally include illegal activities and control over a particular area, infrastructure, or company. Its members share common interests, such as controlling a specific area or location, and they collectively participate in criminal activity. This association or group is permanently street-oriented, its identity defined by involvement in illegal activity. It is mostly composed of young people, including minors who spend part of their time on the streets and become involved in illicit activities, united by a specific collective identity.²⁸

The emergence of the neighborhood gang illustrates the extent of the conflict between young people themselves, or between young people and the surrounding society.

The gang's violence displays a Hollywood-esque style of street chaos and random violence, threatening to gradually spread from the neighborhood to a larger area encompassing several neighborhoods, and ultimately to the entire city.

²⁵.- Saïd Elham, Houria, A Reading of the Provisions of the Law Concerning the Prevention and Combating of Neighborhood Gangs in Algeria, *Police Journal*, No. 148, December 2020, p. 74.

²⁶

²⁷ Article 21, Order 20/03 (2020). *Official Gazette*, No. 51.

²⁸ Jean-Pierre Guay and Chantal Frédette, *Le phenomene des gangs de rue et sa mesure*, pp. 167-197

While the term "gang" originally referred to a group of people or neighbors, it has now come to denote an organized group of criminals. Examples include: "The gang of thieves was arrested," "The smugglers' gang was discovered," and "gang warfare." The word "gang" (which in English is often translated as "gang") is sometimes equated with "mafia" in its shared meaning of violence and robbery. However, "mafia" is a more organized criminal entity, typically a large group of people targeting the local, national, or international economy. They traffic in contraband, rob banks and the state treasury, and refuse to abide by state laws, sometimes even operating as a state within a state. "Gang," on the other hand, is a group of criminals who commit acts of violence against others, with or without apparent cause, often stemming from a personality disorder. These gangs can be sporadic and short-lived, rarely exceeding ten people. According to linguistic research conducted by the Italian sociologist Diego Gambetti, the term "mafia" originated in the 13th century with the French invasion of Sicily. This invasion led to the formation of a secret organization to combat the French. Their motto, "Mafia," meaning "Death to the French," was Italy's rallying cry. The immediate impetus for the organization's formation was the kidnapping of a young woman on her wedding night by a French soldier in 1840. 1282, which ignited the flames of anger and jealousy in the hearts of the Italians throughout the city. The Italian revolutionaries killed a large number of French soldiers in revenge for their honor.

On this day, the Italians chanted the Mafia slogan, the same slogan the mother of the kidnapped girl cries out hysterically as she weeps through the streets, searching for her abducted daughter. There are many theories about the origin of the term "Mafia," including the word "Mafioso," meaning aggressive boasting and arrogance. This word may originate from the colloquial Arabic "Mahyas," or it may be derived from the Arabic word "Marfud," meaning rejected. Alternatively, it could be the Sicilian word "Mafiusu," meaning mysterious, a term used by Sicilians in the 19th century to describe a man's virility, courage, arrogance, and adventurous spirit. The feminine form is "Mafiusa," meaning beautiful and attractive. The term "gangs" was also used in the United States.

The United States of America, since 1912, has used this term to express one of three basic groups: family members, neighborhood, and game.²⁹

Motives for Forming Neighborhood Gangs:

Social Motives:

Young people give a variety of reasons that encourage them to join a gang. Gang members seek to fill the void that pervades a large segment of youth.

Other research has shown that the familial atmosphere within gangs is a major attraction.³⁰

²⁹ Salim Mazhoud, "The Concept of the Neighborhood Gang Phenomenon in Algeria: Factors of Presence and Treatment," *Facts Journal for Psychological and Social Studies*, Volume 6, Issue 2, 2021, p. 17

³⁰

The absence of socialization institutions, primarily the family and school, from their roles—or their failure to perform their functions adequately—can disrupt the social system and structure, especially in light of recent changes and crises in society.

These include the emergence of new residential areas as a result of the government's policy to eliminate dilapidated and chaotic housing. These new areas are populated by residents from diverse neighborhoods, differing in many aspects. This diversity has led to what is known as self-assertion, resulting in clashes between certain groups of individuals, referred to as neighborhood gangs. These gangs impose their logic on the neighborhood community, and their objectives are varied, ranging from defending the area to engaging in illicit activities such as trafficking. Drug use, robbery, and theft have led to widespread fear and panic among the population.

The weakening of the family unit, the absence of an educational role, and the decline of traditional values contribute to a social void filled by gang affiliation. Furthermore, the crowded and congested urban environment fosters psychological and social isolation, increasing the likelihood of delinquency.

Economic factors:

Here, we emphasize that the consequences of the Algerian economic reality have created a severe social crisis. Unemployment rates have risen, prices have increased, purchasing power has declined, income inequality and consumption patterns among citizens have become more pronounced, and access to basic services has unequally distributed across different regions of the country.

This has led to disparities in access to basic services. As an extension of the problem of illegitimate social and economic inequality, poverty rates have increased. Official statistics indicate that 14% of the population lives below the poverty line, while 40% live below the minimum poverty line, and 50% of the unemployed live in the outskirts of cities and rural areas, experiencing extreme poverty.³¹

The fluctuating unemployment rates, coupled with the weakening and disappearance of solidarity in Algerian society, have directly impacted the younger generation. This is due to the lack of integrated strategies in successive policies that focus on youth development and instilling in them the principles of rationality and achievement. All of this occurs within the context of globalization, which is considered a factor in instilling values and beliefs contrary to the culture of the local community.

This leads young people who adopt these ideas and beliefs to live in alienation and dissociation from their environment. Furthermore, clashes may occur between their beliefs and those of the individuals with whom they share their physical space, creating a kind of threat and insecurity resulting from the discrepancy between the social control imposed in the neighborhood and the values young people acquire through globalization. The rise in unemployment and the widening gap between the rich and the poor are further exacerbated by these factors. The lack of opportunities

³¹ - Dr. Sayed Ali Moussa, Dr. Taher Souakri, Neighborhood Gangs in Algerian Society, Afaq Journal for Sociology, University of Blida 2, Volume 11, Issue 1, June 2012, pp. 200, 203.

for social mobility pushes some young people to seek illicit economic alternatives such as drug trafficking or organized theft.

Leisure Time:

The misuse of leisure time by young people presents opportunities for deviant peer groups or gangs to recruit them, attract their attention, and entice them to achieve their ambitions through illegal means, provided they pledge loyalty and adopt the same deviant ideologies and activities.³²

Some forms of popular culture, such as gangster films, play a role in normalizing the image of violence and making it acceptable in the collective imagination of marginalized youth.

Motives for Crime:

Scholars and thinkers have been interested in studying criminal behavior since ancient times. Ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle attributed the cause of crime to psychological illnesses stemming from congenital and physical defects.

Some even went so far as to suggest that a person's fate and future were linked to the planet they were born on, whether it was a cursed or auspicious planet. With the advancement of the modern era, scattered studies emerged to investigate the causes of crime, but they lacked a scientific approach. With the scientific and intellectual revolution, research and interest in studying the phenomenon of crime began to emerge using a scientific approach. Explanatory research diversified in different directions, but these trends did not coalesce into a single theory or study that everyone agreed upon.³³

Homes have become "extremely dangerous places" for victims of domestic violence, and new victims have joined the cycle of violence, according to observations made by support and complaint centers in Egypt and various countries around the world. Medical warnings have recently escalated regarding the psychological disorders and behavioral deviations expected if we neglect to treat the effects of violence. Violence against women often increases during emergencies and crises, including epidemics. The risk of women being subjected to violence can be exacerbated by psychological stress, the breakdown of social safety nets, and the financial hardship of families due to increased economic difficulties.³⁴

Nighttime confrontations, as we witness in many neighborhoods, have become almost daily occurrences in neighborhoods and streets between criminal gangs. These gangs

³² Ibid., p. 203.

³³ Zantout Abdelkrim, A Sociological Reading of the Phenomena of Violence and Crime in New Neighborhoods. University of Algiers 2, n.d., p. 57.

³⁴ Diaa, Rahma; (November 2020). Medical warnings of future psychological disorders and behavioral deviations resulting from domestic violence associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Journal of Mental and Psychological Health

engage in assault, theft, and vandalism of cars, and especially instill fear among residents.

The proliferation of informal settlements and exploitation Some people acquire these rights illegally, leading to conflicts among various groups vying for control, or disputes over the placement of stalls in weekly markets, on the streets, or even in front of public facilities. A simple fight between two teenagers can escalate into a street war. The crimes and violence perpetrated by neighborhood gangs manifest themselves to varying degrees, depending on their structure and organization.

Generally, the criminal dynamics of gangs are characterized by a multitude of forms and activities. The most common crimes associated with neighborhood gangs include drug trafficking, vehicle theft, home invasion, concealment, extortion, market crime, and especially drug trafficking.

The relationship between weak social structures

Strengthening the Role of the Family:

As the primary institution for values and behavior, parents must be empowered with sound parenting tools based on dialogue, conscious supervision, and instilling a sense of responsibility and belonging.

Developing the Educational System:

It must transcend its academic role to instill in students life skills, the values of citizenship, cooperation, and respect for the law.

Media and Technology:

Media should be directed towards disseminating positive role models of successful youth and countering the culture of violence and rebellion prevalent in some digital content.

Civil Society:

Supporting youth initiatives and providing cultural and sports spaces, as well as economic and social integration programs, fosters a sense of belonging and value within society.

When individuals are built on solid social foundations, they become responsible citizens who contribute to the development of their communities rather than threatening them. Crime and violence rates decrease, and the sense of belonging and solidarity among members of the same neighborhood is strengthened. Positive social development produces not just organized individuals, but active citizens with collective awareness and social responsibility. The absence of social cohesion and family ties, coupled with the deterioration of the urban environment, leads to deviant behavior and the emergence of gangs as an alternative to traditional social institutions. When schools, families, and the state fail to fulfill their functions, young people seek alternative affiliation within gangs.

According to Marxist social analysis, gangs represent a reaction to class inequality and social exclusion. Marginalized youth are excluded from societal resources such as employment, education, and social standing, leading them to form gangs as a tool for symbolic, and even material, resistance against the existing order.

This underscores that criminal behavior is acquired through daily interaction, modeling, and imitation within a supportive social environment. Individuals are not born criminals; rather, they learn gang values, methods of violence, and rules of loyalty through interaction with their peers. From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon takes the form of urban organized crime, which arises within the context of socio-economic and spatial change. It reflects the involvement of young people and groups within a fragile social context, emerging in the context of urban, economic, and social transformations. The gang represents not only crime but also an expression of a struggle for identity, status, belonging, and power within urban neighborhoods. In Algeria, studies indicate an increase in the activity of gangs in new and marginalized neighborhoods within major cities. Sociologically, the neighborhood gang is viewed as a subculture within the urban neighborhood, arising and transforming as a reaction to specific conditions. For example, a study entitled "The Sociology of Neighborhood Gangs" discusses their spread in Algerian society as one of the most dangerous and complex social phenomena threatening the security and tranquility of communities due to their proliferation in major cities. Their spread represents one of the most prominent symptoms indicating the contradictions of the social structure and its inability to respond to the growing needs of the population. Thus, gangs are not merely criminal gatherings but a social phenomenon with socio-cultural, environmental, economic, and psychological dimensions. Often, a gang is formed from young people from the same neighborhood or neighboring neighborhoods. The gangs come from similar social backgrounds and their social relationships are informal but based on mutual loyalty and control. This loyalty is secured through revenge and prestige. Violence is used as a means to maintain or gain status because the gang provides the protection or belonging that individuals lack in formal society. Thus, the gang becomes a means to achieve social standing or a space to express specific grievances. Some young people's feelings of frustration, aggression, or low self-esteem drive them to join a group that offers them power or protection. Other contributing factors include a lack of social spaces, weak community oversight, or mixed-gender communities with difficult circumstances. A feeling of not belonging or exclusion from formal society leads to the search for a group that provides social support, identity, and protection. Class differences and social status mean that when young people find it difficult to achieve status through legitimate means, they resort to illegitimate methods or gang membership as a means of identity. Unemployment and limited job opportunities for young people in new and marginalized neighborhoods can lead to feelings of despair and isolation, prompting them to seek belonging and status through involvement in organized crime. Poor urban planning in these neighborhoods also contributes to this phenomenon. For social control or regulation: The theory of social deviance indicates that the gap between established social goals and the available means to achieve them pushes individuals towards illegitimate or deviant means. Studies have also shown that the weakening or transformation of socialization institutions weakens social control and adherence to values. The family

and its relationship to the formation of social deviance and crime: it has been found that family failure or structural disintegration leads to a loss of its capacity for social control, and consequently, the emergence of deviance.

Therefore, a strong social structure means that the individual lives in an environment that socially controls them, reinforces their values, and provides them with opportunities for adaptation and self-actualization within a balanced social framework.

Factors in building an individual protected from deviance:

Family rationalization:

As the first social institution that shapes the individual and provides them with standards and values, a weak family structure is closely linked to an increased likelihood of deviance.

School socialization:

It forms a social context in which the individual learns belonging to the group, respecting laws, and coexistence. Socialization institutions play a role in social control and addressing deviance.

Social belonging and group bonds:

An individual's belonging to a group or institution contributes to the formation of their social identity and strengthens their commitment to societal norms. Furthermore, the feeling that one has a role in society, is recognized, and has value helps individuals resist deviant pressures.

Ethical Values and Standards:

Social control through values and standards is a fundamental factor in shaping and protecting the individual, helping them to solidify these values and standards.

Positive Peer Environment:

Peer influence plays a significant role during adolescence. The presence of positive peers reduces exposure to deviant influences.

Studying social structures is important because it reveals the mechanisms that protect individuals from deviance and clarifies how society can rebuild itself in a way that protects its members from involvement in gangs and violence. This is achieved by understanding the causes of deviance and crime and developing effective preventative solutions.

Strengthening the role of social institutions that instill values of cooperation, belonging, and respect, instead of violence and deviance, is crucial, as these institutions serve as a protective and secure shield for the individual. Building awareness programs, reform initiatives, and fostering a sense of belonging and positive social identity is crucial, especially when individuals feel part of a cohesive and just community, thus reducing their need to seek alternative affiliations within neighborhood gangs.

Today's youth have greater opportunities than ever before to experience the violence and dangers of neighborhood gangs. They are currently witnessing record numbers of acts of violence and vandalism perpetrated by this new form of organization in our

environment, posing a threat to the security and stability of individuals. What are the consequences of this escalating aggression and the violent and criminal acts of this organization? This aggression often interferes with the ability to interact personally, particularly in the absence of a proper social framework to protect individuals from being drawn into such organizations that threaten and destroy the social fabric.

Violence is a social phenomenon with negative consequences for both the individual and society. Its prevalence increases due to factors such as illiteracy, poverty, homelessness, lack of oversight, and weak religious values. Algerian society, like other societies, has experienced a diversity of social life. Social institutions that take care of the individual have become targeted as a result of the deviance of some individuals, which poses a danger to society. In light of the openness to Western civilizations and the abandonment of values, this has led to a change in behavior and imitation of what they hear and see through various media outlets.

Conclusion: Addressing the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs cannot be achieved through security solutions alone. It requires a profound approach to the root causes of the problem, focusing on the social reconstruction of the individual based on the values of respect, citizenship, and collective action. A strong society begins with a well-rounded individual, one who is morally and ethically aware, connected to their community, and capable of contributing to security and stability. An individual is not formed in isolation from their community; rather, their awareness, values, and behaviors are shaped within a network of social relationships. The more socialization institutions provide support in all emotional and social aspects, along with clear behavioral standards, the greater the individual's ability to develop a positive social identity and a legitimate sense of belonging. This sense of belonging reduces the need to seek marginal alternatives such as joining neighborhood gangs.

Furthermore, the existence of strong social networks, non-coercive social control, and spaces for a sense of self-worth and appreciation contribute to building a balanced personality capable of resisting negative pressures. Thus, it can be said that the community is not merely a framework for relationships, but a protective factor that reinforces positive social controls and provides the individual with an identity that prevents them from being drawn into criminal behavior or collective deviance. The stronger an individual's social structure, built on supportive relationships, active belonging, and clear community norms, the greater their resistance to gang involvement. This is because a legitimate community provides what gangs typically seek: identity, protection, and recognition, but in constructive, not destructive, ways.

Recommendations:

Strengthen family communication through ongoing dialogue.

Establish positive social discipline based on clarity and respect, without violence or authoritarianism.

Instill moral and social values such as responsibility, cooperation, self-control, and respect for others.

Continuously monitor children's friends and daily behavior without imposing suffocating control.

Create a supportive environment that provides individuals with a sense of security, belonging, and self-esteem.

Develop social skills.

Integrate into a positive community.

Provide community programs targeting vulnerable groups, such as those in impoverished neighborhoods and adolescents. Offer psychological and educational support programs, as well as school and group activities, to promote school discipline.

Establish youth and sports institutions and invest in education and employment.