



Sociological understanding of the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs in Algeria and strategies for preventing them

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Abstract:

The phenomenon of neighborhood gangs represents a social dilemma that has emerged internationally and locally, and has become increasingly prevalent and noticeable, especially in recent years. This has impacted the security and stability of societies, due to the emergence and spread of numerous problems at the neighborhood and urban levels, which have become a threat to the lives of citizens and families. Their impact has also extended to most other social institutions, including schools, particularly among children and adolescents of both sexes.

Accordingly, this research paper aims to study the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs in Algeria, by understanding their nature and their main causes from a sociological perspective. It then presents a set of preventative and deterrent strategies to prevent them, while also setting out a set of suggestions we believe are necessary to prevent and combat this dangerous phenomenon.

Keywords: *Gangs, neighborhood gangs, crime, deviance, Algeria.*

Compréhension sociologique du phénomène des gangs de quartier en Algérie et stratégies pour les prévenir

Résumé :

Le phénomène des gangs de quartier représente un dilemme social qui s'est manifesté à l'échelle internationale et locale, et qui est devenu de plus en plus répandu et visible, en particulier ces dernières années. Cela a eu un impact sur la sécurité et la stabilité des sociétés, en raison de l'émergence et de la propagation de nombreux problèmes au niveau des quartiers et des villes, qui sont devenus une menace pour la vie des citoyens et des familles. Leur impact s'est également étendu à la plupart des autres institutions sociales, y compris les écoles, en particulier chez les enfants et les adolescents des deux sexes.

En conséquence, cet article de recherche vise à étudier le phénomène des gangs de quartier en Algérie, en comprenant leur nature et leurs causes principales d'un point de vue sociologique. Il présente ensuite un ensemble de stratégies préventives et dissuasives pour les prévenir, tout en formulant une série de suggestions que nous estimons nécessaires pour prévenir et combattre ce phénomène dangereux.

Mots clés : *Gangs, gangs de quartier, criminalité, déviance, Algérie.*



Introduction

Crime is a complex social phenomenon with multiple dimensions and diverse motives that differ from one environment to another and from one society to another. This phenomenon has received considerable attention across all academic and practical circles, which have always sought to address it in various ways and mechanisms, whether it concerns individuals or groups, given the devastating effects it has on both the individual and society.

It is noticeable at the global level that there is hardly a society that is free of this phenomenon, which has taken over a large part of our cities and neighborhoods, to the point that we have become afraid for ourselves, our families and our property. It has even become an obsession that worries citizens, especially since it has become very rampant in new neighborhoods, and may spread to other neighborhoods due to the continuous increase in neighborhood gangs on the one hand, and the spread of unemployment and street youth on the other hand, due to the growing phenomenon of school dropouts and suspension, and the lack of financial resources for these young people whose ages range between approximately 15-21 years, as they aspire to quick gain, no matter the means and methods. This is also what makes the actions of criminal gangs take different and dangerous forms such as murder, kidnapping, theft, threats, harassment of others, settling scores, and drug trafficking of all kinds.

Anyone who follows this phenomenon will find that the majority of organized crime gangs first emerged as neighborhood gangs and eventually evolved into a

coordinated criminal organization, as a result of the interaction of a number of stimulating and motivating factors within the environment in which the individual lives.

Recently, there has been much talk about crime and criminal gangs in residential areas in Algerian society, whether by the press, security services, or even researchers and experts, due to the destructive effects this phenomenon causes and leaves behind on the societal system, which has prompted all official and unofficial bodies to sound the alarm and rush to seriously investigate this social dilemma with the aim of containing and treating it from its roots, while taking all measures to limit its spread and prevalence in various parts of society.

This research paper is an analytical study of the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs, with the aim of understanding the phenomenon from a sociological perspective through the elements that we will address during the analysis, while highlighting the most important results we have reached. Based on this, a set of recommendations is proposed.

1. The aim of studying neighborhood gangs in Algeria:

Our aim in studying the topic of neighborhood gangs is to define the sociological concept of the phenomenon, while identifying the most important theories that explain crime as the most important and prominent acts of gangs in general and neighborhood gangs in particular, and to examine the impact of environmental (geographical), cultural, and material factors, the decline of social control, and social movements from one region to another on the emergence of neighborhood gangs in Algeria, and then to present a set of preventive and deterrent strategies to prevent them, while



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putting forward some proposals that we see as necessary in order to prevent and confront this dangerous phenomenon.

2. The sociological concept of the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs:

The emergence of the neighborhood gang illustrates the extent of the conflict between young people themselves, or between young people and the surrounding community. The gang's violence manifests in 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 even to the entire city. What is the concept of neighborhood gangs from the perspective of sociologists? What are the historical circumstances that led to their emergence?

The word "gang", which in English is equivalent to the word "gang", may be equivalent in the common meaning of violence and robbery of others and their property to the word "mafia". However, "mafia" is more of a criminal and collective organization. In most cases, it is a large group of people who target the local, national or international economy, trade in prohibited goods, rob banks and the state treasury, and refuse to abide by the laws of the state. It reaches the point of organizing a state within a state. As for "gang", it is a group of evil people who commit acts of violence against others, for a reason or without a reason, as a result of a personality disorder. It may be random and fleeting, and in most cases does not exceed ten people.

According to linguistic research conducted by the Italian sociologist Diego Gambetta, the term "Mafia" dates back to the thirteenth century, when it emerged with the French

invasion of Sicily, Italy. This resulted in the formation of a secret organization to combat the French, and its slogan, "MAFIA," means: "The death of the French is the cry of Italy."

There are several theories about the origin of the term "Mafia", including the word "Mafioso", meaning aggressive boasting and bragging. The word may come from the colloquial Arabic "mahyas", or be derived from the Arabic word meaning rejected, or from the Sicilian word "Marfud", meaning "mysterious", a term used by the people of Sicily in the nineteenth century to describe a man's chivalry, courage, arrogance and adventurous spirit (Gambetta, 1996, p. 259).

The term "gang" has been used in the United States since 1912 to refer to one of three basic groups: family members, neighborhood, and play (Hobbs, 1997, p. 803). Trasher introduced the concept of "gangs" as primarily "a play group that provides an important source of social support in the transitional period between childhood and adulthood, especially in environments characterized by social and economic marginalization and social chaos, rather than standing in opposition to family and society. Early studies saw the "gang" as providing a supportive social structure based on clearly defined and shared roles; it is an expression of commitments rooted within the community itself" (Whyte, 1943).

In his book, "The Social Order of the Slums," Gerald Dale Suttles saw the emergence of "gangs" as a societal defense mechanism, consisting of hardly the group of unruly and undisciplined youth that we would expect, because neighborhood groups make their members known to all the neighborhood residents and their families. They even create a network of personal acquaintances in other neighborhoods



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to increase their fame and control over a place or group of places. The most prominent qualities and characteristics that define gangs according to their old style are represented in the following points:

- A gang is a form of social organization associated with the urban migration of individuals and families.
- It emerges in areas of weak social organization and authority.
- It is excluded from full participation in mainstream society.
- It is formed through competition for control of territory and areas.
- An internal structure and loyalty reinforced by conflict.
- It is organized hierarchically with clearly defined roles.
- It is a place for the development of a new identity and cooperation according to the gang's ideology. (Suttles, 1968, p. 3).

As for the British researcher, professor of social and legal studies and director of the Centre for the Study of Crime, Professor John Bates, who has advised local authorities and police forces on violent youth gangs in Britain, he distinguishes between two forms of gangs in different neighborhoods:

- **The first form:** organized slums that produced highly organized, highly efficient criminal gangs.
- **The second form:** unorganized slum gangs that produced "neighborhood gangs" focused on violence (Pitts, 2007).

Organized criminal gangs do not usually commit their criminal behavior in the neighborhood, but rather rely on robbing shops, businesses, cars, cell phones, and women's

jewelry, as well as stealing other people's money and valuables. Neighborhood gangs, on the other hand, engage in violence against neighborhood residents or those passing through. They are characterized by stirring up trouble and quarrels, attempting to impose their opinions on residents, subjugate them, intimidate them, bully them, and take their desired items. American anthropologist Oscar Lewis believes that social marginalization was more than just a simple transitional phase in the social environment of a city or nation. This was linked to ideas of integrated cultural forms, which Lewis termed "the culture of poverty," from which the modern gang emerges in four main ways:

1. The modern gang focuses on crime and violent conflict.
2. The modern gang is viewed as a permanent feature of specific marginalized communities.
3. Modern gang studies have focused on racial rather than ethnic differences, particularly in Hispanic and African American communities.
4. The modern gang is situated in an underclass position, where "culture" rather than social structure is viewed as the primary explanation (Lewis, 1966).

The Algerian legislator also defines neighborhood gangs as: "Any group, under any name, composed of two or more persons belonging to one or more residential neighborhoods, who seek to commit one or more acts with the aim of creating an atmosphere of insecurity within residential neighborhoods or in any other spatial area, or with the aim of imposing control over them by assaulting others or endangering their lives, freedom, or security, or damaging their property, while carrying or using visible or hidden bladed weapons. Moral assault includes any verbal assault



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that is likely to create fear or terror in others, such as threats, insults, cursing, slander, intimidation, or deprivation of rights” (Presidential Decree, 2020).

3. Sociological theories explaining the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs:

Not long ago, sociologists, led by Ibn Khaldun, were studying the process of human migration (migration) from the desert to the city and the transformations and changes that this migration process entails for the Bedouin on his way to becoming an urbanite (Al-Maliki, 2016, p. 14). Today, we are faced with another, more complex problem related to the migration of urban residents from one neighborhood to another and the social and security problems that this creates, as well as dangerous changes and transformations in social behavior, especially among young people, which is characterized by the crime practiced by neighborhood gangs among the original (old) residents and the new or immigrant residents. All of this will create radical changes and developments in people’s lives, making people unable to fully and radically adapt to their new environment (Al-Maliki, 2016, p. 177).

This is evident in the form and type of their social practices and behaviors with others. This can be applied to the neighborhood gangs in the new cities in Algeria, where they attempt to impose their presence through force, violence, and crime to assert themselves and their culture over the local culture in the neighborhoods they have arrived in, or to impose a new social order. They have thus become hotbeds not of social change, but of the crimes of the gangs operating there.

This has prompted numerous intellectual efforts, theories, and trends in psychology, society, culture, biology, economics, politics, law, economics, and others, attempting to provide explanations for criminal behavior in general and to investigate its hidden motives, while highlighting its various forms and consequences for the individual and society. A purely specialized scientific tendency has dominated all their work, as psychologists viewed crime as an aggressive psychological behavior stemming from psychological motives, whether instinctive, such as anger, excitement, anxiety, tension, etc., or acquired, acquired by the individual from his social environment.

While sociologists' view was completely different, as they did not go beyond the social framework in explaining the criminal phenomenon and investigating its origins, motives, and effects, their studies focused on it as a negative social phenomenon that affects and is affected by social systems, and not as an individual phenomenon based solely on internal or psychological motives. Accordingly, their studies were primarily focused on investigating the causes, motives, and results of the phenomenon, focusing on factors such as family, cultural, media, economic, educational, social class, gender, and others, which contribute to the formation, development, and reinforcement of criminal behavior. This was in addition to revealing the true relationship between crime as an individual or social act and other social variables such as poverty, social oppression, educational level, place of residence (urban, rural, semi-urban, remote, random place), and social problems such as family disintegration, family size, peer group, media, school dropout, and unemployment (Abu Alyan, 2016, pp. 7-8).



3.1. Functional theory:

The functionalist school or theory views the phenomenon of crime and deviance as primarily the result of various structural tensions and dysfunction, as well as the lack of mechanisms for organizing and moral control in society. Whenever there is an imbalance between what individuals aspire to and what groups seek to achieve, along with the privileges, rewards, and material and moral incentives that society offers them, a lack of harmony and balance appears between what is hoped for and what is achieved in reality. This creates a gap or chasm that gradually widens, leading some members of society to deviate. This is what many scholars and founders of sociology have adopted, most notably Emile Durkheim and the modern sociologist Robert Merton. Emile Durkheim spoke of the concept of "non-normativity" as opposed to loss, to bring to mind the feeling of despair and lack of purpose in the individual, which will gradually develop as a result of the processes of change occurring in the modern world. This is likely to cause social norms to lose their ability to control individual behavior. In addition, he considered that traditional norms in modern societies may suffer a kind of erosion. And the confinement is not compensated by new standards, and thus the individual will lose his features and guiding influences in society, and from here many phenomena begin to appear in social reality, including suicide, but he considered crime and deviance as results of what was mentioned above, representing social facts and events and elements accompanying the development of modern societies, that is, a natural matter for the liberation of people from many of

the controls and restrictions that have an effective impact in traditional societies (Giddens, 2005, pp. 283-284).

He sees crime as a natural phenomenon related to the structure or composition of society, and has a close relationship with the nature of social life, and thus is part of its functions and interactions. Accordingly, he considers that social conditions may cause frustration in some people, leading them to engage in deviant behavior. This is what he describes or explains (deviant behavior) with the term "anomania," which, for him, is "a state of dissatisfaction resulting from a sense of conflict between hopes and levels of ambition and the means available to achieve these levels on the other hand." It is known that any disintegration of the normative structure, or in other words, the absence of the law, may make individuals more inclined to move away from standards and deviate from them, because man, by nature, is eager for renewal and desires it. However, he may be unable to achieve his ambitions in this regard due to his lack of capabilities and their scarcity, so he is forced to use other methods, even if they are characterized by deviant behavior that does not conform to the controls of society or conflict with them and clash with them completely (Khalifia, 2011/2012, pp. 126-127).

As for Robert Merton, who is considered one of the most important pillars of functionalism, he considers deviation in his concept to be a natural response on the part of individuals to the various situations in which they live. Thus, for him, deviation is nothing but the result of potential reactions to the situations of attraction and tension existing between the socially accepted values on the one hand, and the limited means of achieving them on the other hand (Giddens, 2005, p. 285).



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The angle from which Merton views deviance is a purely social angle, and thus he is entrenched in a purely social perspective in his attempt to establish the foundations for analyzing the social sources of deviance, as he makes the analysis of the social structure the basis and starting point of deviant behavior, as he views the latter as a result of the social situation and nothing else. The response in this situation ignores the personal dimension of this problem, and for this reason Merton worked to provide evidence indicating that most of the perpetrators of deviant behavior are not mentally ill. In other words, he denied all psychological trends that tried to explain and attribute this phenomenon to mental illnesses, and this is a limited concept because criminal behavior is governed by psychological, social, and other dimensions (Khalifia, 2011/2012, p. 133).

3.2. Interactional theory:

Interactionist sociologists have focused their attention on criminal and deviant acts as an aspect of a phenomenon that is conceived and constructed from a social perspective. In contrast, they reject linking deviance to innate factors. In their view, every deviation is due to social factors, and society is responsible for the patterns and types of behavior that its individuals and groups engage in, as the result is of the same type as the act. Deviant behavior and its elements are based on society (Giddens, 2005, p. 286).

3.3. Conflict theory:

Conflict theory is not a new phenomenon. Rather, its roots go back to the early 1970s, when a number of scholars,

led by Taylor, Walton, and Young, took it upon themselves to understand the criminal phenomenon in society. This is clearly evident in the study published by these three in what they called "the new criminology." Their view of deviance was special and distinct from those who preceded them, as they relied on the principles of Marxist thought, rejecting the view or theories that deviance is due to biological, personal, or non-normative causes, factors, or genetics, or to social disintegration... They considered inequality in the capitalist system to be the essential basis for the occurrence of deviant behavior and involvement in it (Giddens, 2005, p. 288).

3.4. Social control theory:

Social control theories, especially containment theory, are among the most important social theories that have paid attention to the internal and external environmental factors directly related to deviance and crime. They focus on proving the role of social solidarity in control. One of the most prominent pioneers of this theory is the scientist "Hirshey", as it confirms that the more individuals, regardless of their age group, enjoy high social self-control, the less they have the opportunity to resort to deviance and crime, and vice versa, that is, the lower their self-control, the more the chances of inclining to deviance and committing crimes increase. Social upbringing, which has a negative and ineffective impact, is considered, in the concept of this theory, the primary source of low self-control (Al-Shadifat, 2016, p. 2125).

We also find that contemporary social theoretical trends have also worked to explain criminal behavior, which takes a long time to explain, such as: Tarde's theory of social



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imitation, and the theory of differential mixing (Al-Qahtani, 2010, pp. 19-22).

4. The most important reasons leading to the spread of the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs:

The violence referred to here refers to the physical force used against oneself or another person intentionally, or the coercion of an individual to commit such an act as a result of the pain they feel due to the harm they have suffered (Merriam, 2020). Various uses of the term "violence" refer to the destruction of objects and property. It is used as a tool to influence others, forcing them to give something, perform a certain action, or refrain from doing it. The Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice defines violence as: "All forms of behavior, whether actual or threatened, that result in the threat or destruction of property or the infliction of harm or death on an individual or society" (Al-Essawi, 1984, p. 36). Social violence in neighborhoods takes several forms:

-Physical violence: This involves the use of a bladed weapon, physical assault, or an instrument that can cause disfigurement or obvious bodily harm to the victim, in addition to all forms of kidnapping.

-Psychological violence: This involves the use of threatening gestures and intimidation, such as eye contact or hand gestures, or any other gesture that causes the victim to panic and fear.

-Verbal violence: This involves the use of obscene language that terrifies the victim, insults, derogatory terms, verbal bullying, racist expressions, and any word that expresses hatred and malice, indicating the potential for harm.

-Physical violence: This involves the destruction of property and the taking of valuables, such as phones, money, gold, watches, and other items, using a sharp or harmful instrument, threatening the victim if they do not relinquish these items or one of them.

- Sexual violence: The intentional and coercive perpetration of sexual harm, such as rape, or the harassment of minors, or the indecent acts committed against them, whether by force or otherwise. The most important factors leading to the spread of this phenomenon can be summarized as follows:

4.1. Family factors and the tendency to commit crime:

Socialization alone remains unable to protect children from various social ills, including crime and involvement in criminal groups and gangs. This is because socialization, in turn, is controlled and influenced by various factors, such as social class, family size, economic level, educational level, and parental and family methods in general in developing deviant behavior and crime (such as authoritarianism, overprotection, neglect in its various forms: physical, emotional, educational, economic, psychological abuse, severity and harshness in punishment, and inconsistency in socialization, represented by the lack of agreement on a single approach to dealing with children, and discrimination between them) (Abu Alyan, 2016, pp. 85-91). It is known that during adolescence and youth, individuals tend to establish relationships with their peers, thus distancing themselves somewhat from their family environment. They become more attached to their peers who share the same ambitions and aspirations for the future, whether in schools or outside of them in the social sphere. Accordingly, they spend most of their time outside the home, which gives them another



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culture that may conflict and contradict what they acquire within their families. This culture may take on a marginal or subsidiary character, the most important characteristic of which is the tendency to engage in deviant behavior so that the individual is accepted in those groups [groups of friends or peers] and is not ostracized or assaulted, as if he is seeking protection for himself from criminal and deviant groups, as deviant behavior is usually associated with those subcultures. This is what Cohen approved and considered in building his approach to deviant behavior to have a negative relationship between deviance and the connection with deviant individuals, and contact and interaction with a cultural environment characterized by a deviant criminal value (Khalafiah 2011/ 2012, p. 120).

Studies have shown that it is not just the peer group that is responsible for criminal acts. Rather, the lack of understanding within families may be a direct cause of this, as it causes children, especially juvenile delinquents, to search for the social balance lost within their families. They search for it in their peer group and thus fall into crime.

A study conducted in Germany showed that 63% of the male juveniles surveyed had poor relationships with their fathers, while 82% of the female juvenile delinquents surveyed belonged to families dominated by family discord and lacking mutual understanding. Statistics conducted in France also showed that 40% of first-time offenders were from broken families, and the same was true for 75% of repeat offenders. This is also what studies in Egypt have shown, as they confirmed that 65% of juvenile delinquents who committed crimes had broken families and poor relationships with their families, especially their parents (Al-

Shadifat, 2016, p. 2124). Official Jordanian statistics indicate that 14.3% of general crimes are related to juvenile delinquency cases. As for the age groups that committed or contributed to committing the crime, their ages ranged between 12 and 15 years, and the percentage of juvenile crimes at that age was 46% (Al-Amro, 2007, p. 20).

The 1996 Emergen study on juvenile delinquency also demonstrated the significant impact of the family's nature on children's delinquency. This is clearly evident in the disintegrated family, which is dominated by problems, fragility, and tensions in its family relationships, reaching the point of social frustration, which leads to its children turning to delinquency and crime. The study also confirms that the exposure of family members to various forms of violence, whether within it or in the external environment related to those families, which is characterized by emotional lack, inevitably contributes to the occurrence of delinquency, delinquency, and the tendency to crime. Accordingly, the influence of bad companions, school, or the social environment never rises to the level of the strong influence of the family in the occurrence of delinquency among its children (Al-Shadifat, 2016, p. 2129).

4.2. Unemployment, social status, and the tendency toward crime:

The aforementioned Emergen study showed that unemployment has a significant impact on juvenile delinquency and the tendency to commit crimes. 35% of the study sample were unemployed, while 65% of the sample were self-employed. This means that they are unstable in their jobs or that their wages are often unstable or low. This makes them unable to meet their families' daily needs and



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ensure a decent life. This also drives them to commit crimes, especially theft, embezzlement, and forgery. Conversely, the unemployed, or those unable to find suitable job opportunities that guarantee a wage that suits their work and social status and covers their basic needs, also resorted to committing crimes. The most important focus of the study was that unemployment and poverty are two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated from each other. This means that they are intertwined and have a significant impact on the commission of crimes among the study sample members **(Al-Shadifat, 2016, p. 2134)**.

In a study conducted by sociologist Thrasher in 1927, based on statistical data, court records, observations, personal documents, and interviews in Chicago, 1,313 gangs were identified in Chicago. The researcher identified the most prominent reason for their emergence as the "poverty line" **(Thrasher's, 1927)**.

The existence of gangs does not mean that their members are truly evil, despite their evil behavior. Some young people, when they use hallucinogens and drugs, do so to escape a social or emotional reality they cannot tolerate or adapt to, or to escape a failure in their lives. When they harass, it is as a result of emotional failure or mental and psychological distress stemming from repression. When they engage in violence, they do so not out of a desire for violence, but rather because they believe it is protecting themselves. They then become accustomed to it and become routinely violent (Clauss, Lopez, 2002, p. 270). To the point that some gang members imagine they are protecting their neighborhood, when in reality they are protecting the gang leader and some of its more dominant members, who have

deluded them into believing that their participation is for the benefit of the neighborhood and families. Therefore, social attention to youth, providing job opportunities, preventing marginalization, exclusion, and social exclusion, and achieving the principle of social justice among individuals will give them a sense of social status in their neighborhood and country. This may also be sufficient to eliminate the phenomenon of gangs once and for all. Legal deterrence then becomes a last resort if attempts at social and psychological reform and good treatment fail.

It is important to emphasize that not all violent crimes are the work of neighborhood gangs. Gangs themselves are not uniform in their deviant and criminal behavior (**Moser, & Winton, 2020**).

Some youth gangs engage in bullying and flexing their muscles to alleviate their feelings of exclusion. However, this gradually leads to violence, especially if the environment and circumstances that trigger it exist. Moreover, many gangs are often not part of a larger gang.

4.3. Population movement from one residential area to another:

As a result of the housing policy adopted by the state, residents move from one neighborhood to another, as the new residents carry with them a marginal culture that is not compatible with the prevailing culture of the original or old residents of the new neighborhoods. This creates a clash between the cultures of the two groups. This requires a broad sociological study that examines the main hidden reasons that lead to the clash between the culture of the newcomers and the culture of the local or original residents of the neighborhood, and the impact of this on the



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occurrence of quarrels and fighting between the two groups. Once the first spark of the clash is available, quarrels and altercations occur that usually end in what resembles street or neighborhood wars. The cultural environment plays a major role in spreading the culture of deviance, as the individual finds no choice but to engage in it, deal with it, or accept it at best, as deviating from it represents a deviation from the norms - which are already deviant - that may put him in great trouble, and its owner may be exposed to harassment, revenge, or punishment by gang groups, as is known in the culture of revenge or the culture of the honor code of the thieves' group (**Huwaiti, 1998, p. 10**).

Here, tribal thinking, or more precisely, racism and belonging to the land, may be a direct cause of the lack of acceptance of others or new arrivals, leading to conflict between the two parties. This is in addition to the prevalence of other phenomena, such as school dropout and a lack of interest in vocational training, a trade, or a job, which makes adolescents easy prey for bad friends and gangs.

5. Strategies for individuals to deal with social violence and neighborhood gangs:

Gang activity in a neighborhood impacts the social freedom of neighborhood residents, and may extend to residents of neighboring neighborhoods. It even affects the freedom of gang members themselves. Young people who are not involved in the gang are often restricted in their freedom of movement through neighborhood streets and unpaved roads. Some criminal gangs even require a verbal visa to allow passage for certain young people, particularly those the gang dislikes for some reason. This forces people,

especially young people, to consider how to deal with real or virtual violence through certain strategies that young people adopt when dealing with the violence they encounter or any potential violence from an existing or potential gang, depending on their gender and age. These strategies consist of three basic categories: avoidance, compliance, and participation.

5.1. Avoidance:

It is a logical response, as public places have become synonymous with any potential danger, which may be uncontrollable and can only be avoided by staying far away from these places, by having parents present, or by providing security in or near the place (Pain, 2003). Avoiding potentially dangerous places is one of the best strategies for achieving safety of soul and body. By potentially dangerous places, we mean those where there are frequent fights, areas suspected of drug trafficking, places frequented by gang members or delinquents, or places that are rugged, hidden, far from crowded areas, as well as dark or dimly lit places.

5.2. Compliance:

Some young men and women choose this route to avoid conflict with a gang or a villain obstructing the road. If someone asks them not to go that way, they will not go through it and will take another route to their destination (Walklate, 1998, p. 550).

However, this strategy is successful if the young person informs the police. Compliance is sometimes the solution, especially if resistance leads to heavy losses, provided the police are informed immediately after escaping.



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However, some young people who feel threatened by violence in public places may be forced to choose this route.

5.3. Participation:

They join the gang for protection, not because they are convinced of its deviant behavior, but because they believe they will be safe by joining, and that the security provided by gangs counters individuals' perceptions of their own vulnerability (**Garbarino, 2002, p. 73**).

The participation strategy suggests that logical withdrawal from public life as a preventative measure may backfire, as fear can increase due to ignorance of how to deal with violence on a daily basis. Therefore, awareness of the specific risks of violence in different areas is useful in predicting where and when it will occur. In reality, this is not participation, but rather a pretense of participation (**Pain, 2003**).

While these strategies are useful in some situations, they are only a temporary solution. We, as academics, must seek serious solutions, working with state institutions specialized in this field, the police, legal experts, religious leaders, and imams, to eliminate the phenomenon of gangs in neighborhoods. No matter how useful the solutions are, young men and women, children and adolescents should maintain a safe distance, in order to avoid any deviant person with bad intentions, which makes it easier to deal with any potential dangerous situation (**Walklate, 1998, p550**).

6. International Strategies for Preventing and Combating Neighborhood Gangs: File 3

A number of international programs and strategies have been developed to combat neighborhood gangs. One of the most important strategies adopted in this context is the pioneering European research program "Eurogang" in combating gangs. This program was launched in 1997 in Leuven, Belgium, following the publication of a report by American criminologist Malcolm Klein, a specialist in gangs, which included an urgent warning and pointed to the growing presence of neighborhood gangs in European countries. This prompted the European Union to sound the alarm and organize the first workshops, which were held in Germany in 1998. The workshop was attended by more than forty (40) researchers from (13) European countries. Participants learned about the latest research related to gangs in the United States and Europe, in addition to a number of European studies on criminal groups of young people that may be called street gangs. Researchers have organized a total of nineteen (19) workshops since 1998, the most recent of which was in June 2019 in Canterbury, United Kingdom (File 3).

Esbensen, Maxson, 2014, P 05.

This multidisciplinary project, encompassing social, psychological, and judicial research, adopts an integrative, multidisciplinary approach and has been working for more than twenty years to combat the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs in European countries. Thanks to its solid and serious scientific output, various security services in European countries have adopted its proposals, both in the prevention aspect and the deterrence aspect and combating the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs. The



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analyses and approaches, along with the powerful scientific recommendations and strategies presented by researchers from various disciplines, have enabled the European Union to understand the strategy of the development of neighborhood gangs and to prevent their transformation into organized mafia gangs, as is the case in other countries, particularly in Italy, Eastern Europe, and Russia. Among its most prominent strategies are the following:

6.1. Splitting the neighborhoods:

It involves creating descriptive statistical data that includes changes at the neighborhood level, to provide an overview of the type of presence of gangs or delinquent youth groups.

(Weerman, Cheryl L, Finn-Aage, Judith, Juanjo, and van Gemert, 2009).

6.2. Experts' section:

It involves holding meetings and interviews with local experts who have a good knowledge of the gangs active in the neighborhood or city, whether they are security personnel, professionals, activists in the field, or anyone with knowledge of gangs.

6.3. Prevention and intervention section:

It includes all preventive and intervention programs and measures in neighborhoods in terms of content and type of protocol. This section is managed by decision-makers, with the possibility of integrating experts into its design and monitoring.

6.4. Youth survey split:

This section includes collecting quantitative individual data on youth, whether in schools or youth institutions, with the aim of identifying the types of youth behaviors that could potentially be classified as risky behaviors, and the likelihood of their joining gangs.

6.5. Ethnographic guidelines section:

It contains guidelines and tips for gathering qualitative information about gangs or delinquent youth groups using ethnographic research methods such as observation, in-depth interviews, general inquiries, informant systems, and neighborhood reports.

(Weerman, Cheryl L, Finn-Aage, Judith, Juanjo, and van Gemert, 2009, P 08).

The advantage of the Eurogang project is that it is an international, cross-cultural project that does not focus on the reality of neighborhood gangs in a specific country, but rather can be applied in all countries. In addition, it adopts a multidisciplinary approach, as its contents were designed according to the principles of criminology, psychology, and sociology, with the possibility of incorporating the laws adopted in each country, which gives it the greatest degree of effectiveness in preventing and combating the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs in contemporary societies.

7. Algerian measures to confront the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs:

This phenomenon requires special preventive, procedural and penal measures that are appropriate to its specificity from one society to another, and its difference



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from other crimes. Algeria has taken a set of measures in this regard, namely:

7.1. Preventive measures against neighborhood gangs:

Developing a national strategy for the prevention of neighborhood gangs, which includes, in particular, adopting mechanisms for vigilance and early detection of neighborhood gangs, and raising awareness of the dangers of belonging to gangs, and the effects of using information and communication technology to praise them and disseminate their ideas, in addition to promoting institutional cooperation and providing balanced security coverage for residential neighborhoods, with the necessity of developing a general policy for implementing housing programs that takes into account the requirements of crime prevention.

To implement this strategy, the Algerian legislator established two bodies to prevent neighborhood gangs: a national body and a provincial body. The latter comprises representatives from various ministerial departments at the central level, security services, civil society, and specialists in sociology, criminology, and psychology for the national committee, in addition to a provincial committee composed of representatives from various bodies, security services, and criminology specialists at the local level (Executive Decree No. 21-123, 2021).

It should be noted here that the nature of this serious crime requires continuous efforts to prevent and combat it, focusing on field work through monitoring, visits, and travel to areas where this phenomenon is prevalent, as well as listening to the accused and convicted of this phenomenon

on the one hand, and the victims on the other, in addition to examining the circumstances under which these crimes are committed.

7.2. Measures related to neighborhood gang crimes:

The specificity of this phenomenon has led the Algerian legislator to deviate from the general rules regarding criminalization and necessary measures. These measures include:

- Automatic initiation of public prosecution by the Public Prosecution Office when the crime is likely to threaten public order and public security.
- Granting neighborhood associations and human rights associations the right to file a complaint with judicial authorities and to establish themselves as civil parties in the crimes stipulated in this law.
- Urgency: Article 16 of the Law on the Prevention and Combating of Neighborhood Gangs stipulates that any person who is a victim of one of the crimes stipulated in this law may request the adoption of any precautionary measure to put an end to the assault to which they were subjected. - Victims of neighborhood gangs are subject to special measures to protect victims and witnesses. This is important because it allows for reporting of crimes, on the one hand, and protects victims and informants from retaliation by neighborhood gang members, on the other hand.
- The order also stipulates, among its provisions, that penalties imposed under this order be combined with any other custodial sentence. This constitutes a departure from the general rule that penalties should not be combined, but rather that the most severe



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penalty be applied. However, given the seriousness and gravity of these crimes, it was stipulated that any custodial sentence imposed in other cases be combined with the penalties imposed under this order. - The possibility of resorting to special investigative methods to investigate these crimes, i.e., using infiltration, eavesdropping, or electronic surveillance to combat these serious crimes. Electronic surveillance, vigilance on social media, and infiltration within these groups contribute to eliminating neighborhood gangs and preventing them from operating (Order No. 20-03, 2020.)

These urgent measures, most notably the enactment of a law specifically targeting neighborhood gangs, the first of its kind in the Arab world, along with the establishment of a national committee and provincial committees to combat this phenomenon, are very positive, especially in light of the significant and violent growth of gangs in Algerian cities. However, they will always remain a security solution unless prevention strategies are developed and neighborhood gangs are addressed.

Conclusion:

Combating the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs is not the sole responsibility of the state or society. Rather, the combined efforts of social actors, local and national authorities, media professionals, police, legal professionals, imams, and academics, each from their own expertise and with a serious perspective, will ensure that society achieves

social security and subsequently addresses violence in neighborhoods, schools, and families, as well as self-inflicted violence.

In order to treat the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs from its roots, we offer the following proposals:

- The necessity of conducting in-depth social, psychological, and security studies on the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs, identifying areas where the phenomenon is most prevalent, and then conducting a study of the area to determine the relationship between it and the incitement of violence, as well as the relationships between people. Consider the predominant age groups in the area experiencing this phenomenon.
- Activating the role of formal social institutions, such as the family and schools in particular, mosques, the media, and neighborhood police stations, along with informal institutions such as clubs, charitable organizations, the Islamic Scouts, etc., as they play a role in preventing violence before resolving this social dilemma.
- Containing young people who engage in violence at an early stage. They should not be ostracized from society, as they can be supported and cared for by involving them in charitable work before it spirals out of control.
- Disseminating moral and humane values in youth centers, streets, and neighborhoods through signs and practices that promote good morals. - Disseminate the values of dialogue within families and communities by holding seminars, creating special television programs, and stimulating competitions. Perhaps



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cartoons and films will play a role in disseminating these values if we know how to harness them for the benefit of the individual and the community.

- Avoid broadcasting any television advertisements that include scenes of violence, especially if the viewer is a child or adolescent who has not yet reached the legal age.
- The government must work diligently to provide jobs for young people to eliminate unemployment, and provide a grant for those who have not yet obtained a job.
- Apply the values of justice and respect for the law to everyone without exception, and avoid discrimination between the simpletons and those with wealth and high positions.
- Combat all forms of racial and class discrimination, reject hate speech, and promote a message of love among members of the same society.
- Avoid violating social values when addressing social issues and problems. Rather, present them in a modest manner, demonstrating that such immoral incidents are merely a symptom, indicative of a psychological illness and social disorder, nothing more.
- Encourage the practice of sports and participation in various intellectual and cultural competitions, as this serves as a means of venting and releasing negative emotions in young people who feel psychological pressure or are known for their violence.

- Establish counseling centers to receive abnormal cases with the aim of treating them for their violent behavior toward others.

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