



Sociology of Urban Violence... Algerian Youth as a Model



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Abstract

This article explores the issue of "youth violence" in the contemporary urban environment through a sociological lens, incorporating diverse theoretical frameworks and a multitude of studies concerning the notion of violence and its interconnections with pivotal concepts like urban violence, youth, and the urban milieu.

It seeks to elucidate the situation of young individuals in Algerian cities, particularly how their urban challenges and architectural contexts influence their perceptions of reality and the proliferation of violence within these groups.

Keywords

Violence ;
Urban Violence ;
Youth ;
City.

الكلمات المفتاحية

العنف ؛
العنف الحضري ؛
الشباب ؛
المدينة .

سوسيولوجيا العنف الحضري... الشباب الجزائري نموذجاً

ملخص

يسعى هذا المقال إلى تناول موضوع "العنف لدى الشباب" في المدينة المعاصرة الحديثة من منظور سوسيولوجي، يستند إلى بعض الإسهامات النظرية ومجموعة من الدراسات حول مفهوم العنف في علاقته بمفاهيم أخرى أساسية مثل: العنف الحضري، الشباب، المدينة... إلخ، مع محاولة إبراز واقع الشباب في المدينة الجزائرية ومدى تأثير هذه الأخيرة بمشكلاتها الحضرية والتصميم العمراني لأحيائها عليهم، ورؤيتهم لواقعهم وتفشي ظاهرة العنف بينهم.

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I- Introduction :

The phenomenon of violence represents a critical concern, undermining the fabric and security of human societies, particularly against the backdrop of societal evolution and transformation across epochs. As a cultural and cognitive societal phenomenon, violence has ascended to the forefront of social scientific inquiry, drawing intense scrutiny particularly in the realms of family dynamics, and the issues facing women, children, and youth.

Violence permeates all societies universally, manifesting as a pervasive and detrimental force that inflicts all human collectives, irrespective of their development status. The World Health Organization (2002) observes that violence is an enduring element of human distress, manifest in diverse forms globally, responsible for over a million deaths annually and countless others suffering from non-fatal injuries resulting from interpersonal or collective violence.

Moreover, the mortality rate attributed to violence represents 3% of the global burden of disease and overall ill health (El-Khouly, 2008, p.11). Consequently, many scholars concur that violence, in its myriad manifestations, constitutes one of the most severe social and cultural pathologies plaguing societies today, where violent behaviors pose a dire threat to the civil and human fabric of communities, creating latent 'mines' across various facets of life, poised to detonate at any moment.

Like other societies, Algerian society has undergone significant social, economic, and political transformations in recent years, presenting formidable challenges to the social fabric of the general populace, particularly affecting adolescents and the youth demographic. The issue of violence among youth has emerged as a particularly acute problem, with far-reaching moral and material ramifications on society.

Specialists often link violence to the youthful stage of life, a period characterized by its substantial demographic presence within societies and its role as a societal dynamo. Youth represents a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, marked by significant psychological and physical transformations that profoundly impact their personalities and their capacities to adapt and integrate into both their social environments and the broader milieu.

Building on this, the article aims to tackle the subject of "youth violence" from a sociological standpoint, drawing on various theoretical insights and a compilation of studies concerning violence and its relationships with other essential concepts such as youth, urban environments, social change, etc.

This work endeavors to present a vivid depiction of the lives of young individuals in Algerian cities, examining how urban problems and the architectural designs of their neighborhoods affect their perceptions of their realities and contribute to the prevalence of violence among them.

II– On the Concept of Violence:

Violence is a multifaceted phenomenon that has perennially accompanied human societies, inflicting suffering across eras and civilizations. It is ubiquitous, affecting nations whether they are developing or developed, and communities whether they are urban or rural. Consequently, violence is not a static or absolute concept but a relative one, varying significantly from one society to another and from one era to the next, shaped by the distinct cultures and civilizations of human societies.

The definition of violence often varies, yet there is a universal acknowledgment of its physical perils and its detrimental effects on individuals, societies, and the global community. Across various disciplines, numerous researchers and scientists have employed the term 'violence,' each shaping its definition according to their own intellectual and scientific perspectives. As such, definitions of violence are influenced by ideological disparities as well as differing cognitive and social frameworks.

In linguistic terms, as defined in *Lisan al-Arab*, violence is "the act of breaking with the matter and the absence of gentleness in handling, being the antithesis of gentleness, inflicted with force and harshness. A person is considered violent if not gentle in his actions: he acts forcibly" (Ibn Manzoor, 1968, p.903).

Dr. Sanaa Mohammad Suleiman articulates violence as "either physical or moral coercion, whether individual or collective, inflicted by one human upon another, causing harm to individuals or properties, and is a recourse to force intended to compel others to adopt positions against their will" (Suleiman, 2008, p.25).

Violence encompasses all forms of transgression or infringement upon the freedoms of others and manifests as aggressive behavior between two conflicting parties, each aiming to secure certain gains or to alter a particular social situation. It is

a means not sanctioned by law, and typically, those who resort to violence are often perceived as the weaker party, opposed by another that wields greater power (Ansar, 2017, p. 27).

Philippe Brenot interprets violence as "physical or moral pressure of an individual or collective nature inflicted by one human on another to such an extent that it impedes the exercise of a right recognized as fundamental or a concept of potential human development in a given period" (Philippe Brenot et al., 1985, p.149).

Some view violence as a tool for expression and a means to achieve power and self-affirmation, arising when an individual loses their sense of security and confronts frustration and the erosion of social values due to the absence of justice, self-dignity, respect, and authoritative control over behavior. It represents a spectrum of conflict that can range from mild to severe, potentially escalating from minor physical altercations and verbal abuse to extreme acts such as murder or attempted murder (Rashad Al-Ayash, 2009, p.14).

From a sociological lens, sociologists tend to define violence with a distinct perspective, considering it as well a social phenomenon. H. Newberg, an American sociologist, defines violence as "acts of destruction and sabotage that cause damage and losses, directed at selected targets or victims, environmental conditions, or means and tools, which bear political characteristics intended to modify, restrict, or transform the behavior of others in a bargaining situation, thereby having implications for the social system" (Az Eddin, 1986, p.128).

Violence has been articulated as "behavior exhibited by an individual or a group towards another individual or others, whether physical or moral, positive or negative, direct or indirect, stemming from various motives such as self-defense, protection of property, a desire for revenge, or the pursuit of specific benefits. This behavior intentionally inflicts physical, material, or psychological harm on the targeted party" (Al-Samri, 2001, p.455). Often, this behavior is catalyzed by the social pressures that individuals confront in their daily lives under challenging social and economic conditions.

Consequently, violence has become a pivotal aspect of individual or collective human action that imperils the continuity and stability of societal relationships among individuals in all its material and moral manifestations. Violence is also characterized as the force that directly assails other people and their properties (whether individuals or groups), with the intent of dominating them through means such as death, destruction, subjugation, or defeat (Smook, 2006, p. 37).

From the synthesis of these perspectives, it is evident that there is a consensus among scholars that violence represents a negative behavioral phenomenon, rooted in the language of threat and violation of others' rights through force and domination, both materially and morally.

Thus, violence can be defined as behavior intended to inflict harm on others, whether individually or collectively, materially or morally. It emerges from the absence of dialogue and communication between two parties, where violence serves as a method of coercion, imposition, and humiliation, as well as a mechanism for self-defense or an effort to reclaim usurped rights.

Discussing violence as a phenomenon remains somewhat ambiguous due to its close association with and overlap with many terms and variables, including

II.1. Aggression:

"Burkowitz" suggests that aggression is behavior aimed at causing harm to some individuals and objects. "Baron" defines it as a form of behavior explicitly directed to inflict psychological or physical harm on another person (Kutb, 1996, pp. 20-21). M.M. Salama describes it as an internal feeling of anger, resentment, and hostility, which manifests externally in the form of an act or behavior intended to harm and damage a person or object, and sometimes directed at oneself, appearing as verbal or physical aggression (Kutb, 1996, pp. 24).

These definitions highlight that the distinction between violence and aggression lies in their degree and intensity, indicating that there is a qualitative and objective difference between the two, where violence can be considered the ultimate manifestation of sustained aggressive behavior.

In this vein, the definition by Saad Al-Maghribi (1987) portrays violence as "a behavioral response characterized by an intense emotional formula that may involve a decrease in the level of insight and thought," hence, violence is not necessarily synonymous with aggression nor always associated with malevolence and destruction (Staitia, 2012, pp. 53-54). This delineation confirms the proximity in meaning between the two terms without them being identical.

II.2. Terrorism:

The term 'terrorism' refers to the methods and techniques employed by an organized group, faction, or party to achieve its objectives through the use of violence, force, and cruelty, directed against individuals, whether they are solitary individuals, groups, or representatives of authority.

The concept of terrorism denotes a method or action that explicitly aims to instill terror and fear. There is a near consensus among scholars, philosophers, and thinkers that terrorism is an act of violence that involves a violation of humanitarian laws, as defined by "Maurice" as: "the use or threat of violence in an unusual or unconventional way to achieve political goals, where acts of terrorism are usually symbolic, intended to achieve a greater psychological than material effect" (Al-Dasouki, 2004, p.41).

Thus, terrorism differs from violence in that it is a pathological behavior more dangerous than violence and closer to crime, characterized by its continuity and its creation of an atmosphere of tension and fear to achieve specific objectives. It remains one of the complex challenges where the distinction between self-defense and rights, and blind, destructive terrorism that fosters hatred, death, and non-acceptance of others, is often blurred. In contrast, violence can be merely a precursor or a conclusion, manifesting as an isolated act or event.

II.3. Violence and Social Change:

The interrelation between violence and social change has captivated many scholars who have sought to define and understand social change due to its profound impact on societies through the ages. Nelsen characterizes social consensus change as "the transformation and alteration that occurs within the social structure, allowing it to maintain its continuity and stability simultaneously" (Al-Amouch, Al-Alimat, 2008, p.163).

Social change is an inherent phenomenon in social life and a characteristic of societies that does not adhere to any specific will, emerging from a myriad of factors. It encompasses the transformations that occur within a society without predetermining their directions, impacting all social constructs including systems and relationships, and is influenced by all fields and reciprocally affects them.

The nexus between violence and social change has been underscored by pioneers in this field, who assert that change is invariably accompanied by force and the use of violence.

Frantz Fanon posited that only the violence wielded by the people, organized, conscious violence that enlightens the leaders of the revolution, enables the masses to dissect social reality and to grasp its key elements.

He viewed the process of change as inherently linked to violence, as evidenced by the association of significant social transformations in many countries with the application of force (Krahe, 2021, p.35).

This does not imply that violence is the foundation of social change, but it is undeniably an integral part of this process, although the effects of violence are always limited and secondary given the multitude of non-violent political and economic social actions fundamentally relied upon in this process.

III- Theoretical Interpretations of Violence:

Violence garners attention as a central issue in understanding human life, with humans acting both as agents and victims of violence. This dual role is highlighted by the contemporary American scholar Eric Fromm, who observed about modern humans: "They have reached the peak of their mental development, while their instincts have regressed to the minimum" (Al-Omar, 2010, p.13).

Some researchers assert that violence is an intrinsic part of human nature, a natural manifestation of several repressed aggressive instincts. This perspective emphasizes that violent behavior is inherently entwined with human nature itself. According to Konrad Lorenz, "violence and aggression are expressions of an innate drive, which seeks satisfaction and manifests when triggered by specific circumstances.

In this view, Lorenz considers violence and aggression fundamentally as an instinct to fight, a trait shared by humans with many other creatures" (Ismail, 1990, p.31). This concept resonates with Darwin's theory of social evolution, which similarly highlights the instinctual combativeness in humans and other species.

On the other hand, biological theories explore the roots of criminal violence in the physiological and organic makeup of individuals. Cesare Lombroso, in his research on a group of rebellious soldiers and societal deviants, noted markers such as tattoos on these 'bad soldiers'.

When examining the bodies of deceased criminals, Lombroso identified organic anomalies, including abnormalities in their skulls and teeth, leading him to conclude that human violence and criminality stem from organic anomalies.

He argued that "criminal nature is the result of an evolutionary aberration from primitive humans, suggesting that organic abnormality is merely a reversion to the first savage humans, thereby identifying distinctive traits in criminals which he believed predisposed them to break the law at any given moment" (Dawoud, 2009, p.201).

After the limitations of previous theories in fully explaining violent behavior became apparent, research pivoted towards examining the psychological aspects of individuals and their influence on such behaviors. Psychoanalytic theory, initially developed by Sigmund Freud, links violence and delinquency to disruptions in personality formation during early childhood, a critical period before a child is robust enough to leave home and before reaching adolescence, a time characterized by the quest for independence from the family.

Freud described aggression as "an impulse intertwined with the libido (the drive of drives), and not necessarily a product of childhood deprivations (stemming from a child's desire for the mother and her subsequent rejection, which precipitates the emergence of initial criminal impulses in the child)," and posited that merely satisfying these desires does not eradicate aggression, but rather, it is ineffectual to directly resist aggressive impulses, although we can redirect their aims and manifestations (Michel, 1993, p.67).

Freud, along with adherents of his theory like Adler and Maslow, suggested that the proliferation of violence stems from disturbances within an individual's personality, with previous life experiences, particularly those during childhood, significantly shaping their personality traits.

Subsequent theories have emerged that consider both psychological and social factors in their explanations of violent behavior. One such theory is the social control theory, which assumes that all individuals naturally possess a propensity for deviance and violence, and that some individuals do not adhere to societal values, laws, and customs, thereby engaging in violent acts often characterized as antisocial behaviors.

In his seminal work "The Social System," Talcott Parsons viewed social control as society's response to deviant behavior by individuals, aimed at reinstating equilibrium within the social system.

Emile Durkheim considered the collective conscience as a mechanism that restrains individual impulses, with major social institutions like marriage and family primarily functioning as agencies of social control, reinforcing these societal restraints (Ben Ouicha, 2009, pp. 158-159).

This social control theory thus attributes violence to society's failure to effectively manage its members through established social norms. This overview demonstrates that various theories, through the contributions of their proponents, strive to explain and comprehend both violent and aggressive behaviors, drawing on a range of factors including genetic, instinctual, and biological elements, while others have explored violence through psychological, social, and other multifaceted approaches, underscoring the complexity of studying violent and aggressive behaviors in humans.

IV- Youth Violence as a Sociological Phenomenon:

The necessity of sociology as a discipline has become increasingly evident in modern societies, particularly concerning issues related to youth. The youth demographic is unique and distinguishes itself from other societal groups. Sociologically, youth is considered the most pivotal age group in human development, encapsulating characteristics of both preceding and subsequent life stages. Specialists in youth studies have introduced the notion of "youth culture," a concept that encapsulates the values, attitudes, opinions, and behavioral patterns that are uniquely accepted and propagated among young people.

From this vantage point, youth culture is recognized as one of the distinct subcultures within society that mirrors their interests and aspirations in a cohesive environment. It fulfills a crucial role in bolstering the social status of the youth as compared to that occupied by adults, serving either as a positive, proactive force that channels young energies towards addressing societal development issues or as a dysfunctional and negative influence that markedly deviates from the

accepted social and moral norms, involving violent assaults on the values and standards of behavior prevalent among the youth.

This demographic has increasingly become synonymous with numerous negative societal phenomena, including violence, aggression, and at times, criminal behavior (Ali Mohamed, 1985, p.80).

The studies exploring the phenomenon of youth violence are extensive and diverse, covering a broad spectrum of theoretical and empirical approaches both globally and within the Arab world. These studies aim to elucidate the complex relationship between violence and the youth demographic.

A seminal study by Campbell (1986), cited by Ben Ouicha (2009, p.63), focused on a group of youths in the economically disadvantaged suburbs of a city, finding that street violence is profoundly influenced by the prevailing subcultural norms and the established rules of dialogue and interaction within these communities. In environments where the street serves as a primary space for socialization and recreation, incidents of violence, which can escalate to murder, are not uncommon.

Campbell attributes this phenomenon to two key factors: the first is the preservation of self-esteem by individuals in street settings, and the second concerns the value systems that empower individuals to confront and counteract others when their dignity is perceived as threatened.

This perspective is paralleled by observations of violence among unemployed youths in marginalized neighborhoods, who grapple with the dual burdens of poverty and social exclusion.

In a similar vein, a study conducted by UNESCO (Ahmed Hassan, 2014, p.40) on global youth issues underscores the prevalence of violence among young people, attributing it to a generational conflict, an extensive intellectual and moral rift between the younger and older generations.

This cultural clash can precipitate significant conflicts over opinions, behaviors, and principles, thereby undermining the foundations of contemporary societies. Such conflicts often drive youth towards violence, fueled by factors such as high unemployment rates, poverty, educational deficiencies, and the broader generational divide.

From a statistical perspective, the World Health Organization has documented that 200,000 homicides annually occur within the age group of 10-29 years, accounting for 43% of total global homicides each year. This statistic highlights the extent to which youth violence constitutes a significant global public health concern.

Youth violence spans a spectrum of behaviors, ranging from bullying and fighting to more severe acts such as sexual and physical assaults and homicides. A comprehensive study conducted across 40 developing countries identified several primary factors contributing to the prevalence of violence among youth, including hyperactivity, substance abuse, educational failure, family breakdowns, rapid social and demographic changes, urban expansion, and the absence of supportive state laws, particularly in the realms of education and social protection.

This extensive global overview of youth violence elucidates its pervasive nature and confirms that its spread can largely be attributed to the failure of social institutions to adequately support this demographic group. These institutions often fall short in providing essential developmental programs designed to equip youth with the necessary academic and social skills to prevent and reduce violent behaviors.

Further adding to the discourse, a study by Dr. Tahani Mohamed Muneeb and Dr. Azza Mohamed Suleiman titled "Violence Among University Youth" (Mounib, 2008, p.56) aims to delve into the nature of violent behavior among university students, exploring its various dimensions and the psychological and social drivers behind it.

This study also seeks to determine the correlation between different aspects of violent behavior and variables such as alienation and socio-economic status. The findings reveal that psychological factors, particularly feelings of deprivation, alienation, and a lack of security and safety, are the primary motivators behind both individual and collective acts of violence.

These psychological drivers are followed by familial factors, which include inadequate parental and religious guidance coupled with a higher standard of living, and then by influences stemming from the media's negative portrayal of religious and moral values.

In an extensive study conducted by the State Ministry for Youth Affairs in Kuwait, titled "The Phenomenon of Youth Violence in the State of Kuwait" (Daij, 2014, p.79), researchers sought to unravel the causative factors of violent behavior among youth within Kuwaiti society and explore actionable strategies to mitigate this troubling trend.

The study's primary goal was to furnish policymakers in Kuwait with robust data and informed suggestions to prompt the implementation of urgent and comprehensive measures aimed at curbing the prevalence of violence among Kuwaiti youth. The findings from this detailed field study highlighted several critical insights:

- A significant consensus among participants pinpointed the family as the paramount influence in the acquisition of violent behaviors, underscoring the role of familial interactions in shaping youth conduct.
- It was noted that there exists a dysfunction within the security apparatus coupled with a deficiency in the enforcement of stringent legal measures.
- Media and burgeoning social media platforms were identified as substantial accelerators in the proliferation of violent behaviors among the youth.
- The residential and ecological environments were also recognized as influential factors in fostering violent tendencies.
- Additionally, diminished religious engagement coupled with idleness were cited as significant contributors to the escalation of youth violence.

Parallel to the Kuwaiti study, extensive research has been conducted in Algeria to dissect and understand the phenomenon of violence, especially among its youth—who constitute the most populous and arguably the most dynamic segment of Algerian society. One notable study, "Value Change and Violence among Youth in Algerian Society" by Dr. Mokhtar Rehab (2014, p.23), aimed at examining the state of normlessness among university students and its subsequent impact on their propensity for violent behavior.

This research uncovered a prevalent sense of normlessness characterized by the absence of stable normative values, non-adherence to religious obligations, and a pervasive sense of social insecurity. The study connected these factors to an increased inclination towards violence among youth, particularly those at the university level.

Dr. Khaled Abdel Salam's research, "Social Deviance Factors among Algerian Youth and Strategies for Care and Treatment" (Abdel Salam, 2014, p.56), highlighted an alarming rise in violence and crime among Algerian youth in recent years. This increase persists despite concerted governmental efforts to alleviate the strains faced by this crucial societal group.

The Algerian government has instituted several social integration policies through the creation of economic intermediaries such as the National Employment Agency (ANEM), the National Unemployment Insurance Fund (CNAC), and the National Agency for Youth Employment Support (ANSEJ).

These bodies aim to mitigate unemployment and counteract social exclusion. However, a substantial portion of the youth perceives these efforts as inadequate and ineffective in facilitating their genuine and effective integration into society.

The study also pointed to an increase and diversification in the manifestations of youth deviance, with security reports from 2008 and 2009 indicating that crimes of violence, aggression, theft, along with drug use and trafficking, were particularly prevalent, with the latter becoming a significant means for many youths to achieve quick financial gains and temporarily alleviate their hardships.

This study underscored that the proliferation of youth violence is not attributable to a singular factor or a mere handful of influences but results from a complex interplay of social, psychological, biological, mental, environmental, cultural, and even climatic factors.

It also highlighted the inefficacy of socializing institutions in fulfilling their roles towards this demographic and noted the lax enforcement by state institutions over various social, service, administrative, educational, and judicial security bodies. This laxity has led to an environment where youth increasingly partake in criminal activities without fear of repercussion or deterrence.

The comprehensive review of these studies illuminates that youth violence is a multifaceted sociological phenomenon, encompassing diverse dimensions such as social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors. This underscores the necessity for a concerted and multi-dimensional approach to addressing this critical issue, which poses substantial risks not only to the individuals involved but also to the broader societal structure.

V- The Problem of Youth Violence in Algerian Cities:

The historical transformation currently observed around the globe is accompanied by dynamic phenomena such as population growth, increasing urbanization, the impacts of globalization, environmental degradation, and the proliferation of digital technology.

These phenomena interact in complex ways, significantly influencing the security of inhabitants worldwide, with cities becoming particularly challenging arenas for maintaining human security.

In urban areas, violence and a pervasive lack of security undeniably impact the quality and nature of life, leading to both social and spatial disintegration. Indeed, security is a fundamental necessity that contributes to enhancing the quality of life in cities, which have evolved into large, complex organic entities.

Urban areas have long been a focal point of interest across various disciplines, natural, urban, economic, political, and social sciences, due to their expanding numbers, sizes, and the significant migration from rural to urban areas, alongside the myriad problems that emerge, including those related to planning, demographics, and population density (Ghoneim, 1987, p.31).

From the 1920s onwards, urban studies have aimed to diagnose the multifaceted problems of cities and endeavor to address them through both theoretical and empirical efforts to understand the dynamics of urban reality and its associated challenges.

V.1. The City and Its Problems:

The city is recognized as a social phenomenon, intricately linked to human society and varying in form through different historical and economic stages. Max Weber defined the city as "a social form that leads to the emergence of multiple and tangible patterns in lifestyles and methods, facilitating the highest degrees of social individuality and thus serving as a means for historical social change" (Ahmed Rachwan, 1998, p.58).

Louis Wirth described it as "a permanent location for residence, characterized by large size and high population density, inhabited by socially heterogeneous individuals" (Ghaith, 1995, p.129).

In the current discourse, the topic of the city holds a prominent place in the research and studies of scholars globally. As Algerian cities integrate into the global framework, they exhibit various types and have experienced widespread and unplanned urban growth. This rapid and intertwined transformation has led to many contradictions within the urban social structure and the emergence of numerous problems, including:

- Increased urban growth, denotes the concentration of the population in urban areas, exacerbating the challenges associated with urban living.
- Unplanned growth of residential areas and environmental pollution, this growth leads to the emergence of unplanned urban areas characterized by concentrated populations on lands developing without clear patterns or identity, including non-homogeneous buildings constructed from substandard materials without adherence to safety regulations. These areas often become hotbeds of violence, crime, and social problems, contributing to the distortion of the urban fabric of the city.
- Social problems include the widespread issues of unemployment, begging, violence, and crime, which are prevalent in densely populated urban environments.
- Urban housing issues, manifested in increased rates of overcrowding on land and an imbalance between the supply and demand for housing, along with the emergence of underdeveloped areas, which compound the social challenges faced by residents (Suleiman, 1996, p.83).

Numerous studies in the field of architecture and urban planning have demonstrated that "the process of urban development in the city, from providing adequate housing, designing, and planning residential neighborhoods according to international standards without neglecting the cultural and social needs and desires of the residents, effectively helps

in creating contemporary homes and neighborhoods free from problems and chaos, especially the issue of security in its residential areas."

For over five thousand years, architects have utilized the concept of designing and managing architectural and urban spaces to influence people's behaviors through architectural treatments aimed at establishing internal security and social stability in residential areas (Bocqué, Sintomer, 2010, p.80).

This underscores the hypothesis that the level of design and planning of residential neighborhoods significantly affects the socio-cultural aspect of its residents, particularly the youth, who spend much of their time in these neighborhoods seeking refuge from the specter of unemployment and the perils of idle boredom.

V.2.Violence and the Contemporary City: What is the Relationship?

Violence, as a sociological phenomenon, unfolds with profound complexity and obscurity, ingrained both within the individual and societal group dynamics throughout history. Although predominantly a psychological issue, violence also emerges as a social product, manifested by individuals as an expression of their reaction against the constraints imposed by the societal structures to which they belong.

When individuals feel alienated or constrained by the social, cultural, and religious norms of their society, violence becomes a means through which they express dissent or seek to assert their identity. Thus, as society evolves at the level of its social systems, so too does the nature of violence, adapting and morphing into various forms and styles, especially within urban environments.

In urban settings, symbolic violence becomes a potent instrument for public institutions that adhere to stringent laws and regulations to exert control and assert dominance over society. This dynamic turns the contemporary city into a battleground for social conflicts and a fertile ground for the emergence of diverse patterns of power and vulnerability, such as those seen in social movements.

Violence often originates from the life conditions individuals endure, particularly from their struggle with inadequate employment opportunities that could otherwise help them integrate more fully into the social fabric.

Additionally, the absence of effective security measures in certain urban areas can indirectly foster the spread of criminal behavior, which in turn fuels a sense of dread about the future and a diminishing hope among the populace. This environment places vulnerable groups such as children, youth, and women at a heightened risk of falling victim to various forms of violence.

Furthermore, the proliferation of violence in the suburbs of contemporary cities compels many individuals to contemplate relocating from urban to rural settings, despite cities being hubs of attraction and magnetism for a significant portion of the global population.

However, cities can also become centers of repulsion, driven by the escalation of several adverse phenomena such as environmental pollution, crime, and the challenges posed by population booms exacerbated by factors like illegal immigration. These elements contribute to the emergence of additional urban challenges related to housing, transportation, health, and more, complicating the social landscape of the city (Campbell, 1994, p. 89).

Sociological inquiry frequently grapples with questions about the genesis of violence within urban contexts: How can we explain the emergence of violence in the city? Or, more precisely, how does the city as a spatial construct contribute to the production of violence?

The types of violence observed, criminal violence, political repression, gang violence, and gender-based violence, are manifestations that can be found in any city globally. Urban violence continues to capture the attention of development practitioners, researchers, and specialists in urban sociology, who have been striving since the last century to delineate the causes behind the rise of various forms of violence in cities worldwide.

Their goal is to contribute to developing solutions that address what they term "urban violence," starting from an understanding of "space" as both a cultural and physical dimension that plays a critical role in the process of violence enacted by institutions, groups, and individuals within the urban context (Krahe, 2021, p. 101).

In urban sociology, the concept of "space" holds paramount importance. Scholars like Henri Lefebvre have underscored the critical role of space for human beings. In his influential work, "The Production of Space," Lefebvre highlights the integral roles of both space and time in shaping social life.

He argues that to truly understand social dynamics, one must consider both space and time together and their combined impact on human activities. Space and time, according to Lefebvre, are the most valuable assets humans possess, enabling them to secure their survival by harnessing the energy available within these dimensions, particularly within the processes of production.

Lefebvre emphasizes that a comprehensive understanding of space necessitates addressing its production, which involves considering how space is created and used, and how it influences and is influenced by societal forces.

Sociologists regard space as intrinsically synonymous with society, for no society can exist devoid of its own distinct spatial context. Space is deemed essential for the continuity and survival of any society, characterized by the succession of generations that engage in a diverse array of social, cultural, religious, and political activities within it.

These activities, as George Simmel noted, are not homogeneously practiced across social contexts. Space, according to Simmel, is a fundamental and decisive element in human experience, for all social activities and interactions must be materially contextualized (Campbell, 1994, p 94).

In essence, space transcends mere physical dimensions; it mirrors the intricacies of social organization, drawing significance from the variety of economic and social activities that occur within it.

A sociological understanding of space necessitates the mapping of these activities, analyzing their potency and impact on the evolution of space, especially 'urban space' (Espace urbain), which profoundly shapes contemporary social life. Urban space is notably complex, serving as an external milieu imbued with characteristics that often contrast sharply with the more positively viewed rural or village settings.

From this perspective, contemporary cities may foster the emergence of violence if a majority of their populations adopt beliefs that contravene the values and standards established by municipal laws and regulations. Such discordance can alter the social order, potentially transforming urban conflict into a primarily cognitive battle over the construction of meaning within people's minds.

This shift might significantly contribute to a city's movement towards states of vulnerability, danger, and insecurity, markedly different from the early 20th century's sense of organized communal living, which was grounded in shared historical landmarks and close spatial proximity among community members in daily urban life.

V.3. Urban Problems and Their Role in the Growth of Violence Among Youth:

The discussion of youth and the city unveils the stark realities faced by young people in Algerian cities, notably their inclination towards violence and crime. Scientific investigations suggest that profound urban transformations have precipitated significant social, political, and cultural changes within Algerian society at large, and particularly among its youth movements.

The myriad issues afflicting Algerian cities are not only symptomatic of the nation's broader economic crisis but also serve as critical indicators of a reality that is increasingly complex and interwoven.

This chaotic urban situation has profoundly impacted the youth, engendering a state of ideological confusion, alienation, and a distortion of what was once normalcy, a condition historically described as anomie. The youth find themselves caught between the traditional values with which they were raised and the new, often challenging circumstances they encounter (Manea, 1996, p 73).

An important cultural interpretation suggests that anomie is further linked to a disconnection between means and ends. This disconnect implies that when a culture fails to adequately address the specific problems of a group, new cultural elements or normative methods may emerge, often manifesting as violent behaviors particularly within their residential contexts.

As is commonly observed, the activities and social interactions of the youth are predominantly framed by their neighborhood, which frequently lacks the necessary means for belonging and social integration. "An ordinary passerby in our cities can instantly discern numerous issues such as dirt, environmental degradation, begging, pollution,

unemployment, and particularly the unorganized urban expansion along with the proliferation of underdeveloped neighborhoods.

These factors carry grave implications, threatening the stability and security of the community with each passing day" (Dalimi, 2007, p 3).

Emerging from this context is a socio-cultural perspective that connects the multifaceted challenges of Algerian cities with those faced by its youth and adolescents, highlighting how these challenges foster the proliferation of what may be termed social diseases at various intensities and manifestations.

A significant societal shift has been observed from traditional to modernized urban lifestyles, marked by structural and functional disruptions within social and urban systems. This transformation is not solely defined by increased population density but also by the profound impact urbanization has on the behaviors of its inhabitants, particularly the youth. Algerian cities increasingly struggle to meet the growing needs and aspirations of their younger residents, often failing to mitigate their frustrations.

This inability leads to a deterioration in security, an escalation in violence, and a heightened sense of fear within urban environments, necessitating a thorough examination of the fundamental elements contributing to the spread of uncivil behaviors. Urban residents are generally expected to adhere to public order (respect for others, proper manners, etc.) and maintain civil interactions.

However, reality often shows a breakdown in these expectations, revealing a pervasive chaos in civil behaviors that mirrors a broader social interpretation of uncivil conduct. This breakdown is one of the dangerous cultural indicators that foster the spread of violence and deviance among community members, resulting in social regression and withdrawal.

In light of such challenging realities, it appears unrealistic to expect the youth to adopt a mature and conscious approach to life or to seamlessly adapt and integrate into the ongoing developments of city life, especially when they are viewed as potential continuations or extensions of an older generation whose perceptions they may not share.

At a time when they are not provided with sufficient opportunities to express their energies, aspirations, and skills, the expectations placed upon them can seem particularly burdensome. "In more developed nations, the issue of respecting the younger generation and harnessing their significant energies receives considerable attention with the goal of accelerating developmental processes across various fields to achieve national prosperity and advancement.

Here, a substantial portion of responsibilities and sensitive roles are entrusted to capable youths, leveraging their immense energies in serving their nations and peoples" (Sturmey, 2022, pp 61-62).

VI- Conclusion

The urban reality of Algerian youth illustrates rapid and multifaceted changes, making it exceedingly challenging for them to find viable behavioral, psychological, and social options for integration and adaptation. These conditions are necessary for ensuring a life of dignity and for achieving psychological and social harmony with their ambitions and aspirations.

Hence, there exists a significant correlative relationship between urban challenges and an increase in feelings of anomie and psychological alienation among the youth, as well as a loss of trust in all surrounding social entities. This exacerbates the phenomena of violence and deviance among them.

State authorities and policymakers are called upon to adopt a proactive, youth-centered philosophy by integrating all national energies into the social and economic development process. This approach includes granting the youth the right to invest their intellectual and physical capabilities in developmental projects that enable them to integrate fully into the economic and social dynamics of the Algerian city.

It is crucial to leverage the city's resources for the development of its youth and to gain their trust by providing adequate housing, creating green spaces, and enhancing other amenities. Recent studies have demonstrated that certain planning and design solutions can significantly improve urban infrastructure and security, including the implementation of comprehensive urban management through integrated planning, the provision of essential facilities, and public services.

Furthermore, the re-planning of slum housing areas following their removal and their redesign to be reintegrated into the urban fabric is critical, as is the strategic distribution of security centers throughout the city. This is achieved by developing modern planning standards and controls for optimal placement, along with providing spaces for leisure activities.

This last aspect, which poses a significant threat to this demographic, opens potentially harmful avenues because effectively utilizing leisure time can help alleviate social pressures, release repressed emotions, and bridge the emotional gaps that many Algerian youths currently experience.

VII-References:

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