

The Role of the Algerian Muslim Scouting Movement in Fostering Physical and Athletic Skill Development

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the pivotal role of the Algerian Muslim Scouts in cultivating physical and athletic competencies, with particular emphasis on their contribution to skill development through play-based learning and the promotion of healthy lifestyle habits among members. The findings reveal that the Algerian Muslim Scouts represent a cornerstone among non-governmental organizations in safeguarding social security. Through their guiding principles, structured programs, and volunteer-driven initiatives, they actively foster socialization and instill in individuals a deep awareness of their cultural identity, Islamic values, and the ethos of citizenship and national service. Such engagement not only strengthens communal cohesion but also sustains the continuity and vitality of society. Moreover, the Scouts play a decisive role in nurturing motor, physical, and athletic capacities in youth through diverse, systematically organized activities.

Keywords: Algerian Muslim Scouts; social security; play; health awareness; physical activities.

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الدور المحوري للكشافة الإسلامية الجزائرية في تنمية الكفاءات البدنية والرياضية، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على مساهمتها في تطوير المهارات من خلال التعلم القائم على اللعب وتعزيز أنماط الحياة الصحية بين الأعضاء. تكشف النتائج أن الكشافة الإسلامية الجزائرية تُعد ركيزة أساسية ضمن المنظمات غير الحكومية في الحفاظ على الأمن الاجتماعي. فمن خلال مبادئها التوجيهية وبرامجها المنظمة ومبادراتها التطوعية، تعمل على تعزيز روح الاجتماع لدى الأفراد وترسيخ الوعي العميق بالهوية الثقافية والقيم الإسلامية وروح المواطنة وخدمة الوطن. إنَّ مثل هذا الانخراط يساهم في تقوية التماسك المجتمعي واستدامة حيوية المجتمع وتواصله. كما تؤدي الكشافة دورًا حاسمًا في تنمية القدرات الحركية والبدنية والرياضية لدى الشباب من خلال أنشطة متنوعة ومنظمة بشكل منهجي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكشافة الإسلامية الجزائرية؛ الأمن الاجتماعي؛ اللعب؛ الوعي الصحي؛ الأنشطة البدنية.

1. Introduction

The Algerian Muslim Scouts is a non-governmental organization and an institution for social upbringing that operates on a voluntary basis. It aims to educate young people on upright character, a sense of responsibility, and social and civic awareness. It is also a humanitarian, athletic, moral, and educational organization whose activities focus mainly on community-based volunteer work in order to guide individuals' actions and behaviors toward contributing to social reform and achieving social security.

Scouting is a movement for boys and young people that is flexible and continuously active. It represents both a mindset and a method, established to help children and youth reach their full physical, mental, social, and spiritual potential, and to prepare them as responsible citizens in their homeland and as righteous members of their community drawing from Islam as its fundamental reference.

Physical activity is considered one of the key elements in promoting the health of both children and young people. Motor activities offer opportunities for self-expression, discovering one's abilities, and fostering communication, interaction, and engagement with others.

2. Research Objective and Hypotheses

Accordingly, through this research, we seek to explore the efforts undertaken by the Algerian Muslim Scouts to promote social security and develop the physical and athletic skills of scouts, as these are essential for an individual's psychological, physical, motor, and intellectual growth.

The main research question guiding this study is:

How does the Algerian Muslim Scouts organization contribute to the development of scouts' physical and athletic skills?

This study is based on two main hypotheses:

- The Algerian Muslim Scouts develop skills through play.
- The Algerian Muslim Scouts promote healthy habits among scouts.

To analyze the dimensions of this topic, we applied the descriptive-analytical method, which allows us to describe and examine the phenomenon in depth.

Our aim is to identify the activities of the Algerian Muslim Scouts that contribute to the development of physical and athletic skills, and to highlight the impact of these activities on the psychological, educational, and social aspects of children and young scouts.

The study will address the following points:

- The emergence of the world scouting movement and the establishment of the Algerian Muslim Scouts.
- The fundamental principles and core programs of the Algerian Muslim Scouts.
- Play and the development of physical and athletic skills.
- The promotion of healthy habits among scouts.

3. The Emergence of the World Scouting Movement and the Establishment of the Algerian Muslim Scouts

The Scouting movement emerged at the beginning of the 20th century through the initiative of General Baden-Powell (1857–1941), who derived the idea of Scouting from his study of the customs and habits of the Zulu tribes, which helped him form his philosophy. He published a book entitled “Scouting for Boys” in 1908. Four years later, Baden-Powell and his sister developed a program for girls (the Girl Guides), achieving great success as they introduced this new approach to youth education.

In his handbook, Baden-Powell (Baden, 1992, p.121) emphasized the importance of education, teaching young people self-discipline, altruism, a sense of honor and beauty, as well as solidarity, friendship, and cooperation. He also stressed the development of traits and values that make the individual an active social being who understands the value of his actions and behavior within his community.

Thus, the appearance of the world Scouting movement is attributed to its founder, Baden-Powell, who initially focused on youth engagement during wartime. Later, he conceived Scouting as an educational system based on specific methods and techniques such as the design of the uniform, the division of groups into units, and the establishment of a structured organization aimed at building balanced personalities. The World Scouting Movement is defined as “a school that teaches personal integrity, a sense of responsibility, and social and civic awareness; it is also a school for future leaders in a democratic society” (René, 1983, p. 76). It is also described as a “humanitarian, athletic, moral, and educational organization” (Zaïmi, 2007, p. 162).

Scouting is a voluntary, non-political educational movement, open to everyone regardless of origin or gender (World Organization of the Scout Movement, 1985, p. 3). It is devoted to the education of boys and young people, operating as a flexible and continuous movement that seeks to develop the individual's various capacities physical, mental, psychological, spiritual, and social to form upright, responsible citizens who contribute positively to their communities.

In its early years, the Scouting movement experienced wide expansion, as national non-governmental associations and federations were established in most countries, each adapting to its specific local context (Cheikh, A., 2010, p. 11). This spread did not exclude the Arab countries, including Algeria, where the Algerian Muslim Scouts emerged as one of the institutions that adopted the World Scouting program, embracing the same principles, objectives, and methods, while adapting these foundations to the particular culture and values of Algerian society.

During the 1930s, Algerian youth were influenced by the French Scout movement that operated in Algeria under French colonial rule. As a result, they founded their own organization, naming it the Algerian Muslim Scouts (الكشافة الإسلامية الجزائرية). The first Scout troop, called “Ibn Khaldoun”, was established in the city of Miliana. It was followed by a second troop, founded by Mohamed Bouras, under the name “El-Falah El-Rifi” (The Rural Success) in 1935, which obtained official recognition and legal authorization during the period of the Popular Front on June 17, 1936, in Constantine.

Other Scout groups were soon created in 1936, among them: El-Falah in Mostaganem, El-Iqbal in Blida, and El-Qotb in Algiers, eventually spreading across most Algerian cities. With the growing number of Scout troops, Mohamed Bouras conceived the idea of founding the General Federation of the Algerian Muslim Scouts, which he viewed as a conservative response to the influence of European society (Ali, 2007, p. 382). The initiative was approved by the Popular Front government, and the founding congress was held in El-Harrach under the

honorary presidency of Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis. The congress adopted the famous motto: "Islam is our religion, Arabic is our language, and Algeria is our homeland." (Cheikh, 2010, pp. 15–16). From that point forward, the Algerian Muslim Scouts became a national, educational, utilitarian, and progressive organization, non-political and non-partisan, with open membership to all, regardless of gender or age.

The Algerian Muslim Scouts is a national, educational, humanitarian, and voluntary independent association with a public service orientation, established under Presidential Decree No. 03-217 of May 19, 2003, and Executive Decree No. 05-247 of July 7, 2005. It was officially approved on November 7, 1989, under registration number M.T.M 76/0091, and was originally founded on June 5, 1936, under number 2450. The organization is a member of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM), the Arab Scout Organization, and the Maghreb Scout Union, as well as an observer member of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (Statutes of the Algerian Muslim Scouts, 2018). The Algerian Muslim Scouts derives its programs and guiding principles from : Islam, the principles of November 1954 (referring to the ideals of the Algerian Revolution), the Scout Law, and the World Scouting programs. It seeks to achieve a set of core objectives, the most important of which are illustrated in the following figure :

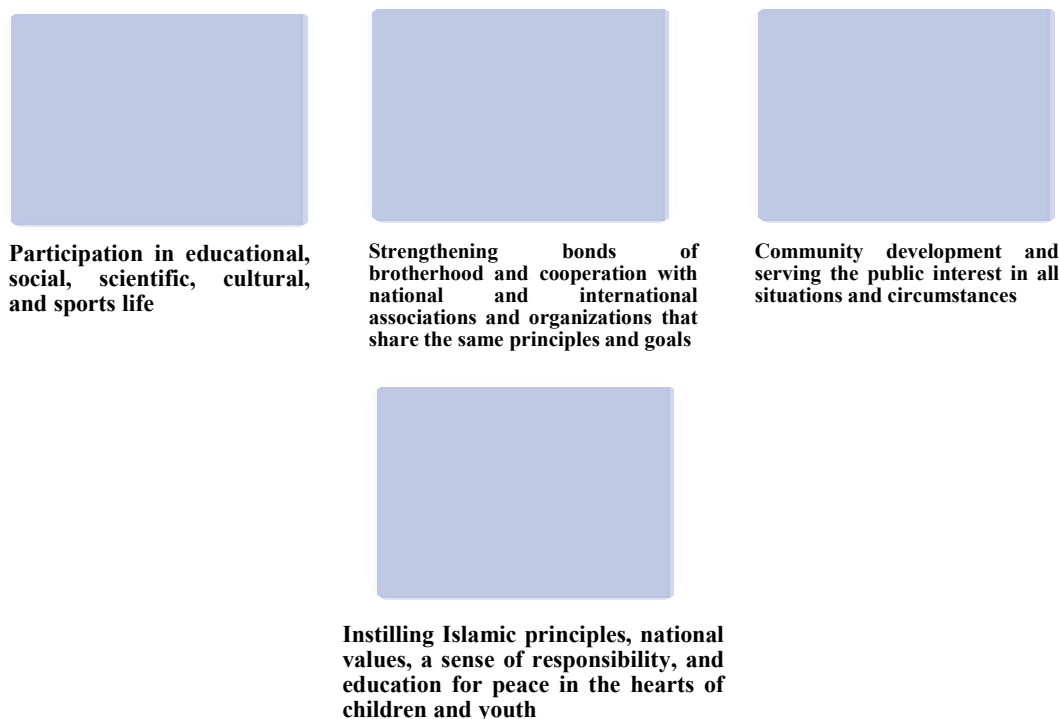


Figure 1: Objectives of the Algerian Muslim Scouts

Source: The Statutes of the Algerian Muslim Scouts: <http://smasba22.freealgeria.com/t3-topic>

The motto of the Algerian Muslim Scouts is “Be Prepared”, which means:

- Being ready to make a positive impact in real life, as the scout serves as a role model among people. Readiness reflects a willpower and strength that enable one to help and cooperate with others.
- Being ready also means accepting guidance and advice aimed at fostering discipline, respect for law, and adherence to the principles of Scouting.

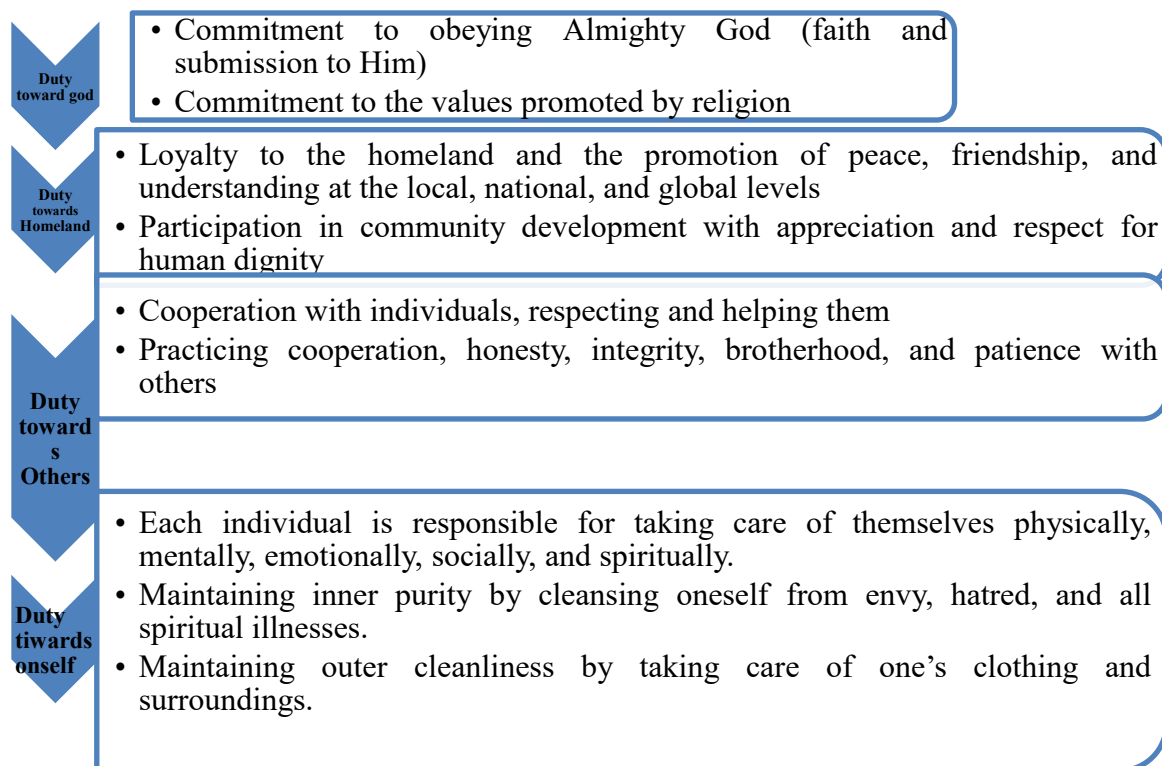
The emblem of the Algerian Muslim Scouts consists of a white jasmine flower, symbolizing purity, composed of five petals representing the Five Pillars of Islam, surrounded by a green crescent symbolizing the Islamic world, with the phrase “Be Prepared” written in yellow. Below it is a white banner inscribed with the word “Algeria” in red. The entire emblem is framed in red, representing the blood of the martyrs, as shown in figure 2 :



3. The Fundamental Principles and Core Programs of the Algerian Muslim Scouts

The Algerian Muslim Scouts are founded upon the following core principles: Duty to God and the Homeland, Duty to Others, and Duty to Self, as illustrated in the following figure :

Source: The Statutes of the Algerian Muslim Scouts, from the website:



<http://smasba22.freealgeria.com/t3-topic>

The duty to God is the primary principle upon which the Algerian Muslim Scouts are built, emphasizing Islamic teachings and religious values. The duty to the homeland is embodied in prioritizing one's country above self and others, while instilling love of country in the hearts of individuals (especially children and youth). The duty to others highlights cooperation, mutual assistance, and solidarity, which are essential for both individual and societal well-being. The duty to self focuses on personal growth and self-development, based on the belief that each individual is a guardian of their own being.

The educational approach of the Algerian Muslim Scouts relies on the Scouting educational method, which is founded upon: the Scout Law, the Promise, Learning by Doing, the Patrol System, the Badge System (proficiency and merit), and Outdoor Life (Statutes of the Algerian Muslim Scouts, 2018, Articles 8–9).

The Law: It outlines a set of virtues emphasizing honor, obedience, perseverance, sincerity to God and the homeland, helping others, fraternity, friendship, love for nature and all living beings, and compassion for the weak. It also stresses that a scout should be cheerful, strong in adversity, prudent and thrifty, pure in heart and body, noble in character, and kind in speech.

The Promise: This represents a voluntary personal commitment upon joining the Scouting movement, where the individual pledges to fulfill their duty and uphold Scouting principles (Sebai, 2002, p. 21). The Scout Promise is as follows: “On my honor, I promise to obey God and His Messenger, to serve my country, to help others in all circumstances, and to act according to the Scout Law.”. This declaration is repeated by every new member, reinforcing from the beginning the four essential duties: to God and His Messenger, to Islamic principles, to the homeland, and to others.

Learning by Doing: This principle emphasizes practical training and fieldwork, encouraging boys and young scouts to engage in activities that serve themselves and others, especially in environmental contexts. It rejects mere lecturing or preaching, advocating instead for active participation in educational and social activities.

The Patrol System: This involves grouping boys and young people into small teams, called packs for cubs, patrols for scouts, advanced scouts, and rovers. This system promotes creativity and healthy competition as each group strives to distinguish itself through initiative and teamwork.

The Badge System: A motivational method in which badges are awarded to cubs or scouts who demonstrate competence and achievement in individual activities.

Outdoor Life: Scouting is primarily practiced in open-air environments forests, mountains, rivers, and beaches where the Algerian Muslim Scouts organize trips, excursions, and summer camps. These experiences cultivate self-reliance, responsibility, and an appreciation for beauty and the Creator’s greatness. Nature reveals the true behavior of young scouts, allowing leaders to reinforce good conduct and correct mistakes. It also strengthens faith in God and reflection upon His creation.

Furthermore, the Algerian Muslim Scouts structure their educational programs according to age groups, ensuring that each stage has an appropriate program tailored to its developmental characteristics. Progression follows the path from the cub, with his simple childhood nature, to the rover, who faces the complexity of adolescence. Programs are adapted to each group’s cognitive abilities and physical capacities. What suits a cub cannot be applied to a scout or rover, all while considering the specific cultural and religious context of Algerian society.

Therefore, through its principles and programs, the Algerian Muslim Scouts strive to develop the individual’s personality, instill the values of love, brotherhood, responsibility, Islamic ethics, and civic spirit. Citizenship, in its civil dimension, represents the web of social and legal relations among citizens a dynamic and interactive connection that goes beyond mere belonging to a political entity. It is about active participation and shared responsibility within

the national community. Citizenship thus emerges as a civic bond based on the will to live together as members of the same nation, fostering participation and shared social space, which in turn generates mutual rights and duties.

Consequently, the Scouts work to instill civic behavior among the youth, aiming to build a generation imbued with the culture of their society, the values of Islam, and the spirit of citizenship and national service all essential for the continuity and cohesion of society and for countering all forms of social dysfunction.

Through their diverse educational programs designed for different age groups and domains, the Algerian Muslim Scouts aim to achieve their educational objectives, equipping members with values, behavioral patterns, and life skills that enable them to harness their physical, mental, spiritual, and social capacities becoming righteous, balanced young citizens who serve both themselves and their country.

4. Play and the Development of Physical and Sports Skills

Play is a means of self-expression and an innate inclination through which the individual attempts to exploit their energy and explore their surroundings. It encourages experimentation, imitation, and the discovery of new methods. Through play, the individual experiences enjoyment, fun, and pleasure (Sharaf, 2001, p. 31). Play also consists of a set of directed or spontaneous practices and activities carried out by individuals—especially children and youth to develop their physical, spiritual, mental, psychological, and social abilities.

Thus, play is of great importance. In addition to its significant role in shaping the individual's personality and creating a psychologically and socially well-adjusted person, it develops the physical aspect and promotes bodily growth (Shaltout & Homs, 2008, p. 185) through:

- Strengthening various body organs and vital systems.
- Acquiring physical qualities.
- Developing the body's ability to adapt to exerted effort, as it helps renew the child's energy.
- Developing motor skills, enabling the child to move with minimal energy expenditure.
- Satisfying the child's natural inclination toward movement and activity.

Physical abilities include endurance, muscular strength, speed, agility, flexibility, accuracy, balance, and coordination. Improving these abilities enhances motor performance and enables learning new skills (Hassan Al-Sayyid, 2002, p. 157). Through play, principles and values are acquired, and educational and scientific horizons are expanded; play teaches social skills such as cooperation, tolerance, and respect (Tayoub, Sighiri & Qaddar, 2020, p. 106).

Play can be classified into several types, including:

- Individual and group play.
- Organized and unorganized (spontaneous) play.
- Active and quiet play.

The Algerian Muslim Scouts emphasize group games in which children play with their peers in team sports and group competitions. As children grow older, they become more capable of cooperating with others, and the size of the groups increases accordingly. Examples of group games include football, handball, table football (baby foot), table tennis (ping pong), and billiards, as well as other collective activities that create joy, fun, and enthusiasm among participants. The Scouts also rely on essential physical activities such as running, jumping, and climbing. Repeated practice of small games for set periods leads to increased muscular activity.

Therefore, through play, the Scouts aim to develop physical and athletic skills by teaching children various movements (up, down, right, left), weight differences (heavy, light), and the rules and regulations of games. They help them perform motor skills, learning sportsmanship and competitive spirit in the process.

The Scouts' physical programs aim to build the Cubs' and Scouts' physical strength by strengthening the body's organic systems and helping them adapt to physical effort, thereby granting them the ability to resist fatigue. As a result, the individual enjoys physical vitality, allowing for optimal physical and mental performance. These programs also help the child acquire essential knowledge such as leadership, followership, courage, self-reliance, helping others, safety, and social adaptability.

5. Developing Healthy Habits Among Scouts

Since one of the principles of the Algerian Muslim Scouts is adherence to the obedience of God Almighty and to the moral and virtuous values advocated by Islam, as well as loyalty to the homeland in harmony with Islamic teachings at both the local and global levels, the organization promotes peace, security, cooperation, and voluntary service for the public good. Among the teachings of Islam and the concept of citizenship are maintaining cleanliness and caring for the body, mind, and soul.

Accordingly, through the Scout educational program, members learn several important healthy habits, such as:

- Engaging in sports and managing time. Sports activities are a means of utilizing the individual's latent energy constructively while balancing study, rest, food, and sleep. Instead of

wasting time on unproductive habits or societal issues (Maamri & Halilou, 2018, pp. 137–138), Scouts are encouraged to fill their time with beneficial and enjoyable activities.

- Learning about balanced nutrition and distinguishing between healthy and unhealthy foods. Proper nutrition ensures that all essential nutrients reach the body in suitable amounts, maintaining optimal health, promoting proper physical and mental growth, and boosting immunity against diseases (Al-Hadi, Ben Mohammed & Marzouki, 2020, p. 139).
- Emphasizing personal and environmental hygiene, including hand washing, dental care, clothing cleanliness, and environmental preservation.

Our analysis focuses on two key aspects: health awareness and environmental preservation, both of which are highly relevant to our topic.

- Health Awareness:

Health awareness is defined as the use of educational tools to make individuals conscious of their behaviors and to warn them against surrounding risks, in order to instill health values in society (Wassatani, 2009, p. 54). It is the process of teaching healthy habits and behaviors. Through educational programs and field activities, the Algerian Muslim Scouts promote health awareness by discouraging unhealthy practices and conducting awareness campaigns, educational workshops, and distributing health awareness materials.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Algerian Muslim Scouts carried out several activities such as distributing masks and cleaning supplies, disinfecting neighborhoods and institutions, providing food aid and meals to needy families, and delivering groceries to the elderly during lockdowns, as illustrated in the following pictures:



Image 4: Distributing Health Awareness Leaflets



Image 3: Providing Assistance



Image2 : Outdoor Disinfection

Environmental Protection and Preservation

In response to growing environmental challenges, the Algerian Muslim Scouts have prioritized environmental issues to strengthen the relationship between humans and their natural and social surroundings. The organization promotes values and attitudes that encourage responsible behavior toward natural resources through environmental education and awareness programs.

Environmental education aims to prepare individuals to assume responsibility and make informed decisions about their personal and collective actions. Its success depends on fostering civic awareness, as a stronger sense of citizenship enhances individuals' commitment to environmental preservation (Abrir, 2020, p.108). Environmental awareness focuses on understanding the environment's components, appreciating the interconnections within nature, and emphasizing the importance of maintaining cleanliness and protecting the environment.

Through its educational program, the Algerian Muslim Scouts instill in their members a profound sense of the Creator's greatness the one who created the universe and entrusted humanity with nature's resources for their benefit. This awareness teaches scouts how to use these resources wisely and responsibly, emphasizing the moral duty to preserve the environment as a divine gift. Within this framework, members are also introduced to Islamic teachings that stress cleanliness, environmental protection, and the care of plants, alongside principles of moderation and sound resource management, such as the conservation of water.

The program discourages environmentally harmful behaviors and fosters adherence to moral and ecological values supported by evidence from the Qur'an, prophetic traditions (Hadith), and instructive stories. Scouts are encouraged to emulate the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the prophets, and the righteous in both word and deed. These principles are reflected in various scout activities.

The Algerian Muslim Scouts' initiatives primarily emphasize community engagement aimed at promoting environmentally responsible behavior and combating pollution, which poses a threat to public health and safety. In this regard, the organization has implemented several awareness and environmental protection activities, including:

Sensitization Days and Exhibitions:

The Algerian Muslim Scouts organize a variety of awareness events aimed at promoting environmental protection and ecological consciousness. These include celebrations such as Environment Day and Tree Day, as well as other nature-related occasions. During these events, educational brochures are distributed, and media outlets are actively engaged to further sensitize citizens to the importance of preserving the environment and assuming responsibility toward their surroundings. The Scouts also employ meaningful slogans such as "The Scout loves plants and sees in nature the will of God" which reinforce religious and moral values within the members' ethical framework.

Tree Planting and Cleaning Campaigns:

The Algerian Muslim Scouts undertake large-scale tree planting and the creation of green spaces to promote a clean environment and to combat desertification and soil erosion. Cleaning campaigns represent one of their regular and prioritized activities, carried out periodically to raise public awareness about the importance of maintaining a clean environment. These practical initiatives serve to instill environmental responsibility and ecological discipline in scouts through direct, hands-on participation.

The cleaning campaigns extend to various spaces, including the maintenance of Scout headquarters, the cleaning of streets, neighborhoods, gardens, cemeteries, and other public areas. The Algerian Muslim Scouts also organize field initiatives aimed at beautifying the environment and removing waste and litter across different neighborhoods throughout the national territory, in coordination with local authorities.



Image 5: Tree planting activity



Image 6: Cleaning the environment and collecting waste

These field practices, in their entirety, constitute physical activities that foster a spirit of interaction and develop various physical and athletic skills. To reinforce these contributions, the Algerian Muslim Scouts signed a cooperation agreement with the Algerian Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energies. This agreement aims to establish mechanisms to coordinate efforts and implement an environmental awareness strategy, particularly concerning waste management, climate change, and biodiversity. Furthermore, both parties agreed to establish environmental clubs within the Scout provincial branches and to set up a joint committee dedicated to safeguarding the health and safety of citizens.

Conclusion

The Algerian Muslim Scouts constitute a key actor among non-governmental organizations in maintaining social security. Through their duties and principles, the Scouts establish a structured program within their voluntary work, fostering social bonds and relationships between the individual and God, the individual and their country, and the individual and others. The Scout educational curriculum is based on several foundations, including adherence to Scout objectives and principles, and the adaptation of pedagogical approaches according to the characteristics, needs, and interests of children and youth, aiming to achieve spiritual, physical, mental, and social development.

The activities of the Algerian Muslim Scouts span multiple domains. They work to promote social security and offer free educational and cultural sessions to cultivate a generation imbued with the values of their society, Islamic principles, civic responsibility, and national service, thereby ensuring societal continuity and addressing various social deficiencies. They also focus on developing physical and athletic skills through a range of activities, including play, which serves as a physical activity that enhances cognitive, skill-based, and emotional capacities. In line with the principle of “a sound mind in a sound body,” the Scouts also foster healthy habits among individuals, such as personal hygiene, proper nutrition, time management, health awareness, and environmental protection and care.

Despite the efforts made and the positive indicators of progress in their activities, the Scouts continue to face challenges that hinder them from fully fulfilling their social security role. Among these challenges is the insufficient number of members, stemming from community reluctance to engage in collective activities due to daily life pressures. This situation exposes the organization to potential influence and control by certain political parties and authorities that may seek to use it for their own objectives.

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