

Drugs in Algerian Society: From the Breakdown of the Socio-Psychological Barrier to the Engineering of Organized Crime

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Abstract

This study examines the psychological and social dimensions of drug proliferation in Algerian society, situating the phenomenon within its broader criminal context from use and addiction to trafficking and organized crime. In recent years, rising levels of smuggling and its deepening links to criminal networks have heightened concern over the threats posed to social cohesion. This concern is reflected in expanding national and international efforts to curb drug production, consumption, and trafficking, as well as in the active engagement of security institutions and academic bodies. The growing number of conferences and forums further underscores its complexity and urgency.

Article info

Received

November 19.2025

Accepted

August 23.2026

Keyword:

- ✓ *Drugs*
- ✓ *Algerian society*
- ✓ *psychological dimension*
- ✓ *social dimension*
- ✓ *organized crime*

1. Introduction

Drugs are not a problem limited to a single country or institution; rather, they represent a global social scourge that threatens the very fabric of human societies. They constitute a health, psychological, social, and economic epidemic that has attracted significant interest from international and governmental organizations, as well as humanitarian and civil bodies, being the most serious threats undermining human resources and the social fabric of societies. Especially as it has become increasingly dangerous due to the evolution of consumption patterns and methods, and its growing and diversified spread, in addition to the security challenges it poses through its connection with other serious crimes. This situation has prompted the intensification of both international and national efforts through agreements, legislation, decrees, and treaties to combat, contain, and ultimately dismantle these criminal networks.

This research paper seeks to shed light on the nature of drugs, the magnitude of their prevalence, as well as their underlying causes and impacts, with the aim of identifying new mechanisms and policy approaches to effectively combat this phenomenon. Drugs today represent one of the most alarming manifestations of criminality, having imposed themselves as a source of profound concern for states and governments alike. The phenomenon has infiltrated all segments of society and age groups children, adolescents, and most critically, youth and has extended into educational environments, unfolding in full view of society.

Drug-related crime ranks among the most pressing issues that command significant institutional and scholarly attention, owing to its growing prevalence and the expanding scope, means, and methods of its practice. It is as one of the crimes that

have deeply burdened nations and societies. This is reflected in the sustained engagement of numerous official institutions including security services, the national gendarmerie, customs authorities, and the judiciary as well as non-governmental actors such as researchers and civil society organizations, all striving to eradicate it. Drug-related crime constitutes one of the most serious and deep-rooted social problems of the modern era, as it encompasses health, psychological, social, and economic effects that profoundly impact both the individual and society. It has evolved into an escalating threat that is not easily confronted at either the global or the national level.

The consequences of the drug abuse phenomenon do not affect only the individual user but extend to the destruction of the family, society, and ultimately the state. Its victims often have no direct connection to the addicts or users themselves, highlighting the pervasive impact of drug abuse across nearly all aspects of social life. This phenomenon can lead to a range of interrelated consequences and crimes such as theft, organized crime, and sexual offenses whose prevalence has grown in parallel within societies, thereby expanding the overall scope of criminality.

Drugs is primarily a social crime, representing one of the most serious challenges to society due to their complex and multifaceted criminal structure based on the material components of the crime, including production, importation, exportation, transportation and trafficking, cultivation, possession, manufacturing, seizure, consumption, and other related activities.

All these aspects provide a broad scope for research and concerted efforts aimed at studying and curbing the rapidly increasing and accelerating spread of this criminal phenomenon in all its legal, religious, social, psychological, and economic aspects, giving its pervasive, deep-rooted, and evolving presence in societies.

Moreover, Algeria no longer faces the problem of drug abuse; it has become a major transit area for various narcotic substances leading to the mobilization of material and human resources in a serious attempt to control its multiple aspects and interconnections. Such crimes are prohibited by religion, condemned and rejected by all societies regardless of race or lineage, and are punishable under all international statutes and laws without exception. They have become a significant obstacle troubling the state in particular and society in general. Their growing threat now extends to every nation leading to intensified cooperation through the adoption of international agreements, treaties, and protocols aimed at containing and eradicating this phenomenon.

The research problem approaches the psychological and social dimensions of drug use within Algerian society, examining the broader criminal context from individual consumption to the structure of organized crime. Drug abuse can no longer be regarded as a mere act of personal deviance; it has evolved into a complex system where psychological and social factors intertwine within the larger network of organized criminal activities. In light of the above, the study seeks to highlight one of the critical aspects related to this criminal phenomenon, as framed in the following research question:

What are the psychosocial aspects of drug-related crime in Algerian society within the context of organized crime?

2. Conceptual definition of terms

2.1 Definition of Drugs

Linguistically, the term khadr (in Arabic: الخدر) refers to a state of heaviness or numbness. It denotes sluggishness, fatigue, or inactivity, and may also imply darkness or obscurity. In a physiological sense, khadr describes a spasm that prevents movement of a limb. A person under the influence of narcotic substances loses sensory perception, mental awareness, and physical vitality (Ismail Ghanim, Khaled, 2016, p.17).

Drugs are defined as plant- based or chemical substances that affect both the mental and physical state of the user, causing lethargy, inactivity, or mental dullness similar to that induced by intoxicants, though without the euphoric effects characteristic of alcohol (Abderrahman El-Wafi, 2012, p.122).

According to Mustafa Swif (1996, p.20), drugs are a set of substances that alter mental activity and psychological state by either stimulating or depressing the nervous system. They may induce hallucinations and fantasies and are the primary causes of addiction, leading to numerous health and social problems.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines drugs as substances that affect the nervous system and cause either psychological or physical dependence. UNODC reports indicate a global increase in the production of certain types of drugs, alongside rising levels of seizures and trafficking across new routes (UNODC, 2023).

In Algerian law, Act No. 04-18 on the prevention of drug use and the suppression of illicit trafficking defines a drug as “any natural or synthetic substance listed in

Schedules I and II of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol.”

Psychotropic substances are defined as “any natural or synthetic substance, or any natural product, listed in Schedules I, II, III, or IV of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances” (Wassim, 2020, p.9).

From a sociological perspective, drugs are substances used by certain social groups to alter their psychological state or escape life pressures. Sociology examines drugs through their impact on society, including addiction, behavioral change, and the social damage resulting from widespread drug use (Abderrahman, 2015, p.112).

They can also be defined as chemical or natural substances consumed to alter an individual's mental or emotional state, leading to disruptions in social interaction and general behavior. Such disturbances may result in isolation, deviation, or criminal conduct, and are considered a major factor in the deterioration of social relations and family disintegration (Zayed, 2010, p.45)..

2.2 Organized crime

Schram (2010) defines organized crime as a systematic criminal activity based on a division of roles among groups or networks of individuals who operate continuously and strategically to generate illicit profit, relying on corruption, violence, and intimidation to protect their interests (Schram, 2010, p.347).

It can also be defined as illicit activity carried out by group acting illegally in an orderly and organized manner on a permanent basis, grounded in the division of labor, operational planning, and the exploitation of legal loopholes and modern technological means to expand its activities

across borders (Labcir, Abdelkarim, 2015, p.42).

According to the United Nations, as defined in the Palermo Convention, organized crime refers to “a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit” (United Nations, 2000, p.5)

2.3 Organized Crime Structure

Organized crime structure refers to the organizational methods through which criminal networks operate, including the division of roles, channels of financing, protection systems, and drug distribution and marketing strategies. Social Learning Theory (Sutherland, 1974), along with theories of market dynamics and informality, provides valuable insights into how such networks mobilize social relationships to create and sustain consumer markets.

it represents the structural mechanisms and processes through which crime is meticulously planned, managed, and organized within a hierarchical network structure in a manner akin to engineering, involving role coordination, task division, technological utilization, and the synchronization of illicit activities. Hence, organized crime does not occur arbitrarily but is constructed upon a deliberate strategy and a well-defined structural framework, rendering it more sophisticated, enduring, and consequently more perilous.

The social forces engaged in illicit drug trade occupy an intermediary position within the broader system of factors contributing to the spread of drug use and

consumption among different social groups. They exploit prevailing contextual conditions such as the weakening of moral norms that regulate behavior to pursue their economic and material objectives and to secure profits that are difficult to obtain through legitimate means.

Organized criminal groups have experienced significant structural growth in recent years. This evolution has influenced their organizational frameworks, making them increasingly complex, and has also impacted their functions by diversifying and multiplying their objectives. This structural development of criminal organizations has manifested in their transformation into transnational and multinational entities. Such growth has expanded the network of interrelations and mutual connections, both between organized crime and other forms of deviance within society on the one hand, and between organized crime and the broader social systems that constitute the overall social structure of society on the other (Jalabi, Ali, 2023, p.145).

Figure illustrating the links between the breakdown of the psychosocial barrier and organized crime (Jalabi, Ali, 2023, p.149).

2.4 Emerging Crimes

Emerging crime refers to offenses that are new to the prevailing social order within a given society. The emergence of this type of crime is attributed to the social change and development occurring within the structure of society. What distinguishes emerging crimes is the difficulty of defining a precise and comprehensive concept for them. A new behavior that constitutes a violation of the norms and values prevailing in society is considered

Political deviation involves corruption and the mobilization of organized crime actors to execute operations such as assassination, drug trafficking, and the co-optation of intellectuals



Economic deviation refers to corruption and the investment of capital; mobilizing actors of organized crime to execute operations such as the suppression of labor unions, arson, the disposal of toxic and illegal waste, and other illicit activities.

Unions of organized crime derive their profits and gains from illicit gambling, prostitution, drug trafficking, the dumping of toxic and illegal waste, arson, and the concealment of stolen goods.



Lower-class deviation includes crimes such as theft to sustain illegal drug-use habits, prostitution, gambling, and drug dealing

an emerging crime particularly when there is no existing legal provision that criminalizes or sanctions it, or when the existing legal framework fails to adequately address it.

El-Sharkawy (2017, p.18) defines emerging crimes as all forms of criminal behavior that were previously unknown. These are new crimes that have recently appeared alongside scientific and technological progress, representing a significant threat to society. Therefore, they must be confronted and deterred through the most effective and stringent measures possible. Although various terminologies have been adopted in many countries, the Algerian legislator summarized them into seven categories as stated in the Criminal Procedure Code, including modern, special, serious, and advanced crimes, among others (Chihani, Omar, p.291).

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), transnational organized criminal groups seek to exploit legitimate activities for criminal purposes, and the methods through which they generate profits have become increasingly sophisticated and inventive (Hind, Najib, 2023, p.4).

2.5 The Concept of the Socio-Psychological Barrier

It refers to a set of internal restraints (such as values, conscience, and fear of punishment) and external restraints (such as family, school, and social traditions) that prevent individuals from engaging in deviant behaviors. The sociological approach suggests that the erosion of these barriers results from factors such as unemployment, urban marginalization, and rapid cultural transformations (Durkheim, 2008; Becker, 1963).

It refers to a state of internal resistance or psychological and mental closure that hinders the individual from interacting normally with their surroundings whether in thought, behavior, or communication and often results from trauma, negative experiences, or the accumulation of social

and psychological pressures (Abu Al-Hatab, Fouad, 2003, p.301).

3 A Multidimensional Engineering Perspective on Organized Crime: Interactions Between Technical Structures and Psycho-Social Drivers

3.1 The Concept of the Socio-Psychological Barrier as an Internal Deterrent Mechanism

This mechanism functions as a form of social conscience or internal deterrent that prevents individuals from committing violence, theft, or assault, even in the absence of external supervision such as law enforcement or legal authority. This concept is directly linked to notions of self-control, informal social regulation, and moral awareness (Rabea, Ahmed, 2017, p60.).

As for the socio-psychological barrier from a criminological perspective, Travis Hirschi (1969, p.16) explains that the strength of social bonds—such as those established through family, school, and religion constructs a socio-psychological barrier that reduces the possibility of criminal behavior. Conversely, the weakening of these bonds leads to the breakdown of this barrier, thereby facilitating deviant conduct.

The socio-psychological barrier in the Algerian context can be defined as the barrier that is governed by customs, traditions, and social norms which act as deterrents to individuals' behaviors. In traditional societies similar to Algeria, this barrier is shaped through socialization and adherence to social conventions. However, signs of its erosion have begun to emerge with contemporary transformations and social change such as globalization, unemployment, the disintegration of family ties, behavioral deviance, and the spread of drug use, explaining the

noticeable increase in certain types of crimes (Boujemaa, Abdelkader, 2020, p.8).

Consequently, this may lead to the formation of criminal gangs and the commission of serious offenses such as murder, theft, organized crime, and emerging form of crimes. The absence of this internal barrier results in a breakdown of compliance with both social and legal norms. Ultimately, the collapse of the socio-psychological barrier legitimizes crime in the individual's perception, leading them to justify or deny their deviant behavior, blame society for their condition, and grant themselves a false sense of legitimacy and justification for their criminal acts.

In this regard, Sykes and Matza (1957), in their work "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency," highlight the results and effectiveness of the socio-psychological barrier within society according to the following equation:

A strong socio-psychological barrier = deterrence of crime and reinforcement of compliance with social norms and behavioral codes.

Collapse of the barrier = legitimization of crime in the individual's perception (justification, denial, and blaming of society).

Sykes and Matza begin from the observation that delinquents or offenders are not entirely detached from social values. On the contrary, they acknowledge prevailing norms such as the idea that theft is wrong or violence is unacceptable yet they develop socio-psychological mechanisms to justify their deviant behavior in order to avoid feelings of guilt or remorse. The socio-psychological barrier thus functions as an internal deterrent against crime; however, among

delinquents and criminals, this barrier is not completely abolished but rather temporarily neutralized through various techniques. In this way, the individual engages in deviant behavior without experiencing a profound sense of contradiction with societal values, resorting to:

1. Denial of Responsibility: The offender consider his behavior as a result of external pressures or unavoidable circumstances (such as unemployment or poverty), In this way, responsibility for the deviant act is transferred from the individual to situational or environmental factors (Sykes & Matza, 1957).
2. Denial of Injury: aiming to minimize the perceived harm caused by the act. For instance, offenders may justify marijuana use by claiming it causes no real harm as defined by law or societal standards (Siegel, Larry J., 2021).
3. Denial of the Victim: The offender perceives the victim as deserving of the harm inflicted, a rationale often evident in contexts such as inter-gang violence or targeting rival dealers (Albanese, Jay S., 2020).
4. Condemnation of the Condemners: deflecting blame onto institutions of control or society itself, accusing them of bias or injustice, thereby undermining the moral legitimacy of social judgment.
5. Appeal to Higher Loyalties: when the offender prioritizes allegiance to a particular group (e.g., gang, family, or

criminal network) over societal norms and laws, justifying his behavior as serving a collective interest or maintaining internal order (Cullen, Francis T.; Agnew, Robert; Wilcox, Pamela, 2018).

These techniques constitute an integral part of the “cultural engineering” within organized-crime networks; they reveal the psychological and moral basis upon which the architecture of criminal organizations is constructed. They enable individuals to adapt to violence, fraud, and violation, and allow organized-crime leaders to justify actions before members and the wider community.

They also form part of the communicative and symbolic strategy within criminal networks, where deviance is normalized and organized- action is justified through a collective discourse based on concepts such as “loyalty, necessity, and self-justice (Yar & Jewkes, 2021).

Thus, Sykes and Matza’s theory offers a crucial entry point for understanding how the psychological and ideological engineering of organized crime is formed: it does not merely explain individual behavior, but also illuminates how a “justificatory culture” is constructed, legitimizing collective deviance and converting it into an organized pattern of life.

While the institutional structure of criminal networks is based on a division of labor and specialization (production, transport, distribution, financing), techniques of neutralization function to ensure the behavioral continuity of members by reducing the internal moral friction that might otherwise push them to withdraw or cooperate with authorities. For instance, denial of responsibility becomes a common rationale among recruits who are economically exploited to enter the supply

chain, whereas appeal to higher loyalties is used to justify violence or secrecy within the organizational hierarchy (Paoli, Letizia, 2014)

From Consumption to Trafficking: Transitional Pathways

The transition from mere drug use to commercial behavior (such as selling or smuggling) is not always a sudden moral leap; rather, it is often a cumulative process shaped by individual, social, and structural factors. Many actors begin as consumers, where engagement within drug-use networks fosters connections with distributors and suppliers, which in turn creates economic opportunities or pressures that push some individuals to join the supply chain as a means of survival or economic advancement within the “alternative market.” In this context, techniques of neutralization play a facilitating role in the transition: denial of injury reduces the perceived harm associated with the activity; denial of responsibility justifies the shift as a response to economic circumstances; and appeal to higher loyalties attaches a moral or social value to participation, framing it as an act of loyalty or protection toward one’s group (UNODC, 2024).

3.2 The Psychological and Social Aspect of Drug Use

Drug use, addiction, and trafficking constitute complex social phenomena that exert a detrimental influence on the social fabric and the overall development of society. They generate multifaceted social, economic, psychological, and health repercussions affecting both individuals and communities.

It is also a pathological socio-criminal phenomenon resulting from multiple factors some related to the individual, others to the family, the broader social

structure, and surrounding circumstances. The gravity of this problem becomes evident in the impact of drug users' and addicts' behavior on the social, economic, and legal conditions of the society in which they live (Hani & Amara, 2010, p. 56).

Contemporary literature indicates that the drug trade is no longer merely an individual or marginal group activity; rather, it has evolved into a structured economic and social system operating according to the planning logic of business enterprises, including supply chains, distribution networks, financing and money-laundering mechanisms, and an internal cultural framework that redefines legitimacy. At the heart of this cultural structure lies the role of psycho-social mechanisms that enable individuals to engage in criminal activities without experiencing strong internal moral restraint. The "techniques of neutralization" model proposed by Gresham Sykes and David Matza (1957) provides a suitable framework for analyzing this phenomenon.

Studies of the drug market indicate that the discourse now revolves around a "parallel economic system" managed by organized criminal networks functioning as "institutions." These networks design sophisticated supply, distribution, and financing chains that resemble the architecture of commercial enterprises from the production or importation of raw materials, through logistics that conceal shipments, to money-laundering mechanisms and the investment of proceeds in a semi-legal economy while also employing encrypted digital platforms, cross-border logistics hubs, and manufacturing and distribution cells (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021; Reuters, 2024).

The multiplicity of deviant behaviors exhibited by drug users undermines the psychological and social barriers that ordinarily protect individuals and society from sliding from normative to deviant conduct. Numerous studies conducted on users of various types of drugs have identified positive correlations between drug consumption and negative psychological, social, and economic characteristics. This relationship underscores the connection between substance use and the personality traits of individuals who regularly engage in drug consumption.

In Garig's (1985) study, which focused on identifying personality traits of opioid addicts, differences were found in passive-aggressive behavior, avoidance, and psychotic tendencies when comparing addicts to non-addicts. The study also revealed differences in antisocial behavior between cocaine and heroin users. Similarly, in Heba Ibrahim Qashishi's (1996) study, differences were observed between cannabis users and non-users, particularly in compulsive behavior, antisocial tendencies, depression, and suicidal ideation, all of which were more pronounced among users (Fayez Qadeeh & Suleiman, 2006, pp. 13–14).

Mustafa Sweif further identified pathological characteristics associated with drug use, including personality deterioration, self-centeredness, lack of concern for others' feelings, a tendency toward anxiety, introversion, and arrogance, along with a lack of responsibility at home and at work and reduced honesty, which could lead to depression and various criminal behaviors (Sweif, 1996, p. 106).

The psychological aspect of drug use can be summarized as follows:

Researchers and theorists in the field of addiction agree, as noted by Hussein Fayed (2006, p. 127), that addiction to any substance is a complex process involving the continuous interaction between the individual, the substance, and the environment, such that these factors cannot be considered in isolation.

In the same context, Spitz and Roscan (1987), as cited in Hussein Fayed's study (2006, p. 128), argue that there are three main factors contributing to the initiation of non-medical drug use, which can in turn lead to psychological dependence. These factors are:

- **The individual:** including personal predisposition and biochemical-genetic susceptibility.
- **The substance:** including the nature of the drug and the method of administration.
- **The environment:** including cultural and familial factors.

Sidi Ahmed Lamsaouri (2008, p. 291) concurs with the aforementioned views, arguing that in the field of drug use, three fundamental components must be taken into account: the use of the substance, its constituents and the interactions between the substance and the addict's personality, in addition to the social and environmental framework that contributes to substance use.

In this regard, Elyat et al. point to three main pillars centered on social control:

- Discrepancy between aspirations and goals related to work or occupation, and individuals' perception of achieving these goals: Individuals who feel frustrated in their educational or professional aspirations tend to

perceive a lack of adherence to societal values, norms, and laws. This often leads to affiliation with deviant peers who use substances, thereby encouraging experimental drug use.

- Poor social organization or the inability of existing institutions to regulate citizens' behavior: Adolescents in such situations experience frustration within the home environment and weak attachment to their parents, particularly in cases of parental separation or divorce.
- Commitment to and identification with role models. (Labriek & Mohamed, 2020, p. 103).

4. Drugs and Organized Crime

Algeria has transformed from a consumer country into a transit hub for illicit substances, as several regions have become sites for the cultivation of cannabis, locally known as kif. The term transit country refers to a state through which illegal drugs and psychotropic substances are transported across its territory (Tahri, Hassan, 2013, p. 5).

This phenomenon is intrinsically linked to criminal behavior in two primary respects:

- First, drug-related activities constitute crimes in themselves, punishable by law. Moreover, numerous studies and statistics have demonstrated a strong correlation between the consumption of alcohol and drugs and the commission of various criminal acts, such as homicide, rape, theft, vagrancy, adultery, sodomy, and other forms of sexual deviance, including incest.

Consequently, crimes arising from alcohol and drug use are compound offenses that generate serious criminal and social repercussions.

-Second, the absence of income among addicts due to unemployment or incapacity to meet their basic needs often leads them to engage in criminal acts such as fraud, deception, or breach of trust. In such cases, individuals frequently experience moral, social, and familial deterioration, manifested in behaviors such as adultery, divorce, polygamy, child neglect, and further substance abuse (Lakhdar Goul, 2020, pp. 18–19).

Drug abuse leads to heinous crimes and an overall increase in criminal activity, as users lose control over their actions. This loss of control stems from the brain's impaired ability to perform its normal functions, being effectively isolated from regulating behavior, speech, and other bodily functions. Among such crimes are:

- Incestuous and pedophilic sexual assault.
- Physical assault against others, including neighbors and passersby, which may escalate to murder, robbery, burglary, and similar crimes.
- Cases of drug use and addiction often result in a loss of rationality or, more precisely, consciousness leading to tragic accidents due to impaired balance and self-control. Crime is closely linked to this condition, manifesting in

behaviors such as rioting, shouting, murder, physical violence, rape, and sexual assault (including incest). It is estimated that up to 70% of crimes are committed under such circumstances (Ismail Ghoneim & Khaled, 2016, pp. 112–113).

Abdel Rahman Mesqir's study (1981, p. 17) confirmed the existence of a relationship between drug consumption and the commission of certain crimes, noting that the compulsive urge to use drugs, along with the need to avoid withdrawal symptoms, constitutes a powerful factor prompting socially harmful behaviors in multiple forms (Ben Abdallah Al-Breithen, 2014, p. 150).

From a criminal psychology perspective, drug use serves as an entry point to crime through three fundamental stages:

- **Stage of psychological and social breakdown:** In this stage, the individual's moral barriers and self-control weaken due to social factors such as poverty, unemployment, and social isolation. This vulnerability makes individuals more susceptible to recruitment and institutional normalization within environments that promote drug use as an economic solution or a psychological outlet (Trucco, 2020; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021).
- **Stage of involvement with organized networks:** At this stage, individuals are transformed

into instruments within transnational drug gangs or mafias. By exploiting their needs and financial dependence, they are shifted from peripheral roles to functional positions within the organization. Drug consumption may be used as a tool for control or to secure members' loyalty, reflecting the interplay between psychological and institutional dimensions in a hybrid digital-physical network that sustains cross-border operations (Koegler, 2022; Ostrosky, 2012; SpringerLink, 2022).

- **Stage of engagement in criminal behavior:** Individuals begin committing minor offenses to finance their addiction. These acts are integrated into logistical chains and experimental operations organized by distributors, where personal risks are transformed into operational costs managed within a structure resembling a business enterprise (ResearchGate, 2022; Reuters, 2024).

Linking the analysis of “crime engineering” with the three stages of criminal psychology offers a comprehensive and practical framework. It illustrates how an individual's suffering and social circumstances are transformed into functional inputs within organized criminal systems, while guiding intervention strategies ranging from psychosocial prevention to the disruption of the technical and financial infrastructures that sustain these networks (UNODC, 2021; Trucco, 2020; ResearchGate, 2022).

Thus, “crime engineering” reproduces a socio-economic-psychological system that contributes to the development of two interrelated pathways:

- **A pathway for criminal activity** (manufacturing, distribution, financing) and a pathway for recruitment and consumption. At the individual level, a combination of psychological and social factors such as poverty, unemployment, social isolation, family distress, and the pursuit of social status or alternative sources of income serves as a trigger for entering drug trafficking networks or engaging in related transaction. Mental health disorders and substance dependence play a dual role, leading to involvement in criminal acts (e.g., to sustain addiction) and simultaneously functioning as mechanisms of control (through coercion or integration via shared substance use) (Trucco, 2020; Little, 2006).
- **Dynamics of recruitment and engagement:** Networks employ multiple recruitment strategies ranging from promises of quick income and social status to exploitation and coercion, or a combination of both. Digital communication platforms are leveraged to conceal operations and coordinate activities, creating an environment that lowers cognitive and ethical barriers among vulnerable individuals (peer normalization/social learning). The analysis of the crime script demonstrates how

operations are divided into distinct stages, each of which can be targeted through policy and technical interventions, rather than relying solely on punitive approaches after the crime has occurred (ResearchGate, 2022; Reuters, 2024).

- **The social construction of the market and psychological risks:**

Crime engineering transforms individual risks into “operational costs” managed within an organizational structure, thereby reducing awareness of the health and psychological hazards for both workers and consumers. The institutional normalization of drugs within commercial networks and local communities generates mechanisms of denial, justification, and identity redefinition (role/work/profit) among actors, reinforcing a cycle between economic need and psychological exposure to risk (SpringerLink, 2022; UNODC, 2021).

- **Dimensions of control and adaptation (psychological and social manipulation):** Advanced networks employ a range of psychological and social techniques such as internal conflict resolution, the cultivation of collective loyalty, the use of violence and economic power, or the integration of consumers into distribution chains through financial or social dependency to manage human resources and

minimize the likelihood of defection or cooperation with authorities. These practices institutionalize functional roles within the network and transform the effects of drug use from a mere public health issue into a mechanism for sustaining a criminal economic enterprise (Ostrosky, 2012; Koegler, 2022).

6. Implications for Interventions and Policies

If the concept of “engineering” is addressed within an integrated treatment framework, intervention should not be limited solely to criminal justice responses (such as arrests and prosecutions). Rather, it should incorporate preventive psychosocial measures (including livelihood support, comprehensive rehabilitation programs, and interventions at the family and community levels), technological measures (such as disabling encrypted communication platforms and monitoring critical logistical channels), and economic measures (such as drying up sources of funding and money laundering). Moreover, employing the crime-script approach proves useful in identifying the most effective intervention points along the continuum of criminal involvement (ResearchGate, 2022; UNODC, 2021; SpringerLink, 2022.)

Addressing the phenomenon of drug abuse in **Algeria** cannot be limited to a punitive approach alone, as this issue extends beyond a mere legal violation to constitute an intertwined psychological, social, and economic system. Drug use often begins with a breakdown in the individual’s psychological and social barriers, weakening self-control and eroding social values, thereby opening the door to

exploitation and recruitment by organized criminal networks (Trucco, 2020; UNODC, 2021).

From this perspective, the analysis of drug use must be conducted through an integrative lens combining criminal psychology, sociology, and organized crime studies. Crime engineering illustrates how transnational mafias exploit individual vulnerabilities, transforming them into functional resources within a parallel economic system managed through complex institutional and logistical mechanisms. Addiction is thus not merely a medical condition but also a tool for control and recruitment, enabling networks to maintain their internal structure and expand their reach across borders (Koegler, 2022; Reuters, 2024).

Accordingly, breaking the cycle of dependency between drug use and criminal behavior requires the development of a **counter-engineering system** that strengthens psychological and social barriers through preventive policies and comprehensive treatment programs,

4. CONCLUSION

The study of the relationship between psychological and social barriers and drug use demonstrates that this phenomenon is not merely an individual deviation or an isolated pathological behavior, but rather a reflection of a deeper dysfunction affecting the social fabric and its capacity to protect its members. When value systems erode and the sense of justice and belonging weakens, the internal walls that once served as psychological and social shields against addiction and crime crumble. In such an environment, drugs become an escape, and criminal behavior transforms into an alternative system exploiting institutional voids.

reintegrating individuals into a balanced social environment. Engaging universities and research centers in field-based studies of the phenomenon is also essential for formulating strategies based on scientific evidence rather than impression, which necessitates enhanced collaboration between security agencies, health sectors, and higher education institutions (WHO, 2020; ResearchGate, 2022).

In conclusion, no national **policy for combating drug abuse** can succeed without a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon's psychological, social, and criminal aspects. What is required today is a multi-dimensional integrative approach preventive, therapeutic, security-oriented, and developmental that contributes to rebuilding the psychological and social barriers protecting individuals and society from the mechanisms of organized crime engineering, while laying the foundation for a resilient and sustainable community environment capable of countering the criminal economy (UNODC, 2021; SpringerLink, 2022).

What is known as “**organized crime engineering**” is not a phenomenon detached from this reality; rather, it represents the flip side of the state's and society's failure to establish effective protective networks. When social justice is absent and communication between citizens and state institutions is weakened, criminal networks assume a parallel role, providing material support and illusory security in exchange for loyalty and submission. Here, crime ceases to be an exceptional act and becomes a parallel system that imposes its own logic while exploiting the psychological and social vulnerabilities of individuals.

Confronting this new form of criminality requires a rethinking of the state's and society's approach as a whole, transforming prevention and treatment from limited sectoral responsibilities into a comprehensive national project. Building psychological and social barriers cannot be achieved through punishment alone but requires justice, dignity, education, and employment. This is a battle that goes beyond mere security to encompass development, and beyond simple deterrence to fostering trust between citizens and institutions

Ultimately, dismantling organized crime engineering is not accomplished solely by breaking down its networks, but by re-engineering the human being: rebuilding awareness, restoring a sense of personal value, and empowering individuals with tools for hope and engagement. Wherever the human being is rebuilt, crime is eradicated at its roots.

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