

RESEARCH
ARTICLE**Social issues and their relation to underdeveloped urban neighbourhoods in the city: The Case of the Merir Lahsen Neighbourhood in Khenchela**

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Social problems, underdeveloped neighbourhoods, city, violence, crime, poverty, pollution.

Abstract

This study aims to identify the main social problems faced by residents of underdeveloped neighbourhoods in the city. These neighbourhoods are poor and marginalised areas, inhabited by impoverished individuals who have not been fortunate enough to secure adequate housing, suitable employment or a complete education, among other issues.

According to studies, research and classical and modern theories relating to urban areas, underdeveloped neighbourhoods are characterised by violence, crime, poverty, pollution and other negative societal phenomena, such as drug use, suicide, divorce and school dropout.

Through this study, the researcher attempted to measure the variables of poverty, violence and pollution in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood, considering these variables to be among the most significant social problems affecting poor or underdeveloped urban neighbourhoods in any city.

The study found that manifestations of poverty, violence and pollution are indeed present in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood, albeit at varying rates and degrees. Solutions and suggestions were proposed to address the social problems in this neighbourhood.

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Introduction

The current era is witnessing the proliferation of numerous social problems affecting individuals and communities in all countries, whether developed or developing. The increase in urbanisation and the expansion of cities has resulted in underdeveloped neighbourhoods – poor and marginalised areas – which are among the most prominent characteristics of urbanisation. These neighbourhoods have emerged primarily due to migration to cities for work, education and to improve living standards, among other reasons.

According to analysts, researchers and classical and contemporary urban theories, these neighbourhoods are hotspots for social issues including addiction, divorce, homelessness, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and school dropout rates. This article will examine the social issues experienced by residents of underdeveloped neighbourhoods through a field study conducted in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood of Khenchela city.

Firstly, the problematic issue:

Underdeveloped neighbourhoods are prevalent in most cities around the world and are often referred to in urban sociology as ‘urban slums’. These areas are a by-product of urbanisation and are among the most pressing urban issues highlighted in numerous studies and pieces of research. They capture the attention of governments and

nations due to their status as environmental problems that threaten urban areas, distort the urban fabric and affect developed urban regions.

Most classical and modern ecological theories affirm that social problems are closely linked to underdeveloped neighbourhoods. For example, Ernest Burgess's concentric zone theory suggests that a transition zone exists around the centre of a city where social diseases such as social disintegration, environmental pollution and old housing are prevalent.

Similarly, Homer Hoyt's sector theory suggests that a city is divided into sectors, including a low-rent area for low-income workers, a middle-rent area for middle-income individuals, and a high-rent area for high-income individuals. According to this theory, cities are divided into different layers, which explains the existence of underdeveloped areas or slums in Algerian cities in general and in Khenchela specifically.

The multiple nuclei theory by Harris and Ullman also confirms the connection between social problems and underdeveloped neighborhoods. According to this theory, there are residential areas on the outskirts or suburbs of the city, inhabited by low-income residents. Harris and Ullman divided the city into a group of multiple nuclei, asserting that the distribution of residential areas around these nuclei influences urban growth and is based on income factors, with some areas designated for high-income residents, others for middle-income, and some for low-income or limited-income individuals.

Among the modern ecological perspectives is Louis Wirth's urban theory, which frames urban life as a lifestyle characterized by three main attributes: size, density, and heterogeneity. As the size of the urban community grows, the scope of individual diversity expands, and the rate of social differentiation increases, leading to superficial, temporary, divisive, and utilitarian relationships, accompanied by a loss of norms and a lack of voluntary participation

The attribute of heterogeneity results in the division of labour, leading to differences and individual disparities.

The attribute of heterogeneity leads to the division of labour and the emergence of differences and disparities between individuals. Meanwhile, density leads to variations and specialisation in living areas and activities, creating physical proximity alongside social distance. This explains why socially, economically or culturally similar groups settle in specific residential areas or neighbourhoods.

This is evident in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood, the focus of this study, which is considered a distinct area characterised by similar economic, cultural and social attributes. Furthermore, Wirth's theory emphasises that density leads to social diseases, while heterogeneity results in the division of the city into categories and layers, creating distinct areas in terms of social, economic, and cultural levels.

Underdeveloped neighbourhoods are rife with social problems. The most prevalent urban issues in poor neighbourhoods include unemployment, addiction, divorce, poverty, illiteracy, pollution, crime, overcrowding and other problems. This paper will conduct an applied field study in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood of Khenchela, considering it a poor, marginalised slum area suffering from numerous problems, urban imbalances, poor housing planning and narrow streets and alleys. The neighbourhood was selected for various scientific and practical reasons, as it possesses characteristics that are relevant to the current study. Based on the above, the following question can be posed:

Are social problems related to underdeveloped neighbourhoods in Khenchela city?

What are the social problems in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood of Khenchela?

The following hypothesis can be formulated for this question:

Social problems are associated with underdeveloped neighbourhoods.

There are social problems in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood of Khenchela.

Alternatively:

The Merir Lahsen neighbourhood suffers from social problems.

Secondly, study variables:

Table No. (01): Illustrating the study variables

- Independent variable	- Dependent variable
- Social issues	- Underdeveloped neighborhoods
- Violence	- Spread of crime manifestations
- Poverty	- Spread of poverty manifestations
- Pollution	- Spread of pollution manifestations

Source: Prepared by the researcher

Third - Defining Concepts:

1. City:

Louis Wirth defined the city as: “the center where the influences of urban life spread to the farthest reaches of the earth, from which the law is enacted that applies to all people.”¹

The city is: “the urban scope of social systems interacting with the physical material structure of the place, and urban life means a style or pattern of daily living for city dwellers.”²

The city: Al-Sayed Al-Husseini defines the city by saying: “the city is not merely a ‘local’ social system subordinate to a (national) social system; it is also a fundamental unit of the comprehensive global structure.”³

Others view the city as: “a distinctive model of human collective life, and it is relatively a home for larger, denser, and more socially heterogeneous individuals.”⁴

The city has multiple meanings; historically, it was seen as merely a concentration of individuals and facilities, and it has also been regarded as a center for human development, characterized by both order and freedom, tribalism and urbanization, destruction and civilization. Sometimes it is a place, and sometimes a concept; it is a homogeneous community according to Plato, a means of freedom according to Machiavelli, a foundation of culture according to Rousseau, a center of knowledge according to Kant, and an aesthetic center according to Bourdieu.

In a short period, the city has become a space for representation, where the individual represents himself within it and outside it; the city has become more than just a community based on objects; it reflects identity⁵.

The definition of the city varies depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. Based on our observations of real-life situations, we can provide the following operational definition: a city is a gathering of people who interact socially, economically, culturally and politically within a defined geographical area where institutions, housing, buildings and services are located, and where there is continuous movement.

The definition of the city has varied and differs depending on the perspective.

2. Urbanism:

Urbanism is considered: ‘a way of life that is usually accompanied by characteristics such as individuality, rapid cultural change, excessive materialism and cultural conflict, as well as a continuous weakening of direct communication’⁶.

Radfield developed a binary opposition between folk and urban societies to understand the characteristics of these communities and the changes that occur when society shifts from a folk to an urban state. Urbanism, which is fundamentally linked to urbanisation, is associated with increased cultural disintegration, a shift towards secularism and the spread of individualism⁷.

From this, we can conclude that urbanism is a lifestyle; it is the culture of city dwellers — a way of living that differs from rural life. We refer to any area touched by the urban radiation extending from the nucleus of urbanisation as an urban area.

3. Problem:

Sociology does not differentiate between problems, deviance and disintegration, considering them to be different degrees of the same thing. All three terms indicate imbalance⁸.

A problem is defined as “a deviation from the rules and standards set by society for correct behaviour”⁹.

The term ‘problem’ refers to any behaviour that is abnormal and outside the norms and standards of society. Each society has its own standards and rules, so what is considered deviant behaviour and a crime in one society may not be in another.

4. Social Problems:

Social problems are difficult to define because they are inherently variable and unstable. They differ from one society to another, depending on cultural customs and traditions. They also change over time, with social problems in the past differing from those in the present. Thus, each era is characterised by its own issues.

However, some definitions can generally be provided to clarify the concept of social problems. They are defined as follows: ‘a situation that requires corrective intervention and arises from the conditions of society or the social environment’¹⁰.

They are also defined as: ‘the deviation of social behaviour from the rules set by society for correct behaviour’¹¹.

Some sociologists describe social problems as follows: ‘functional frustrations, because social problems, regardless of their severity, disrupt the social structure’s ability to perform its functions and hinder individuals from satisfying their needs’¹².

Social problems generally indicate unmet needs among large segments of the population and may stem from inadequacies in social systems¹³.

Social problems: ‘are linked to the values and norms of society and the prevailing social relationships, blending the subjective and objective aspects’¹⁴.

To further clarify the concept of social problems, the following comprehensive definition can be provided: ‘Social problems are individual or community actions or states that violate prevailing values and norms, causing psychological or material harm to individuals or groups within society. They affect a large proportion of the population, who seek collective solutions, and they have causes and effects at individual, group and community levels’¹⁵.

Social problems encompass all manifestations of violence and deviant behaviours that contradict prevailing values and customs, hindering economic, social and cultural development, and conflicting with existing laws and religious norms.

The concept of social problems is broad and may refer to issues such as unemployment, poverty, pollution, divorce, dropping out of school, overcrowding and countless other social problems.

Social problems may include manifestations of violence, deviance and crime, such as drug trafficking and sale, suicide, murder and fighting.

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6. Underdeveloped neighbourhoods:

Underdeveloped neighbourhoods are widespread in many countries around the world, including both developing and developed nations. These neighbourhoods are often referred to by various names, depending on their characteristics and features, such as unplanned neighbourhoods, poor neighbourhoods, or marginalised neighbourhoods.

In American culture, an underdeveloped neighbourhood is a poor area, and scholars have linked poverty to the emergence of such areas, also known as urban slums¹⁶.

Gerald Suttles defined underdeveloped neighbourhoods as follows: 'areas inhabited by poor minorities who live amid unruly behaviour. The residents of underdeveloped neighbourhoods suffer cultural deprivation, unemployment and a range of urban diseases, and exhibit deviant social practices compared to the original community'¹⁷.

It can therefore be concluded from the previous definition that most residents of underdeveloped neighbourhoods are the city's poor and marginalised individuals characterised by deviant behaviours that differ from those of the native population. This suggests that residents of underdeveloped neighbourhoods are migrants rather than the city's original inhabitants, and that these areas are characterised by poverty, with crime and unemployment being particularly prevalent.

On the other hand, Bharat Samaj defined underdeveloped neighbourhoods as: 'Gatherings surrounding the capital city, workplaces and economic and social institutions, where residents, especially children, live in deteriorating conditions and grow up spontaneously'¹⁸.

This definition makes it clear that underdeveloped neighbourhoods are found in shadow areas or on the outskirts of the city, where residents suffer from poor and deteriorating living conditions.

7. Violence:

All societies strive to combat and control violence, a characteristic of human behaviour¹⁹.

The linguistic definition of violence is: 'Severity, which is opposed to gentleness and softness'²⁰. In a terminological sense, it is defined as: 'the raising of one's voice and roughness in dialogue, as well as the use of weapons, oppression and cruelty; the opposite of peace'²¹.

According to these definitions, violence refers to the use of force and roughness in actions, speech or behaviour that harm individuals, animals or the environment.

8. Pollution:

In the twenty-first century, the term 'pollution' has evolved from academic and societal discourse to become politically charged²².

The scientific definition of pollution is 'the occurrence of changes and disruptions in the equilibrium of the components of an ecological system to such an extent that the system is paralysed and deprived of its ability to naturally eliminate pollutants, especially organic ones, through natural processes'²³.

Despite significant technological advances, pollution remains one of the most pressing issues faced by countries worldwide. Pollution has increased due to urban growth, rising population density, the proliferation of fast-food outlets and the expansion of the concept of pollution to include noise pollution.

9. Poverty:

Poverty reveals the true nature of a society²⁴.

There are two foundational definitions of poverty that can be referenced. The first is: 'Poverty is subsistence'²⁵. The second definition is that poverty is 'relative deprivation'²⁶.

'Subsistence' refers to the ability to provide food to meet nutritional needs, i.e. to maintain the capacity to survive and live.

The second concept is broader and encompasses various levels and degrees. Poverty is a state of deficiency and deprivation in providing the necessities of life, such as clothing, food, housing, stable employment and other essentials for a dignified life.

Fourth: Methodological Procedures of the Study:

The methodological procedures of the study include defining the study area and the method used; the type of sample and how it was selected; and the tools used to collect field data.

1. Study area:

The study was conducted in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood of Khenchela city, which is commonly known as “Texas” due to the various manifestations of violence that characterise the neighbourhood.

Migration from nearby rural areas to this neighbourhood began, leading to the formation of a chaotic area, especially since the land has a tribal character. This facilitated the acquisition of building land at a low price, which was developed without intervention from the authorities, since construction in the neighbourhood is considered illegal and does not comply with the city’s planning laws. Thus, Merir Lahsen is an underdeveloped neighbourhood that meets the criteria for the current study, fulfilling both practical and scientific research needs²⁷.

Merir Lahsen, also known as Texas, is a popular neighbourhood located in the northeast of Khenchela city, covering an area of approximately 16 hectares. The housing style is individual with ground-level structures and is estimated to comprise around 877 randomly built homes²⁸.

2. Sample and Selection Method:

A simple random sample was chosen, and 10% of the total number of residences in the neighborhood was selected, resulting in the following calculation:

$10 \times 877 / 100 = 87.7$ residences, which can be approximated to 88 residences or units to be examined. This sample is acceptable for the study and the results obtained can be generalized to the rest of the study population or the remaining residents of the Merir Lahsen neighborhood and similar neighborhoods.

3. Methodology:

The descriptive method was used, which relies on analyzing and interpreting data, especially since it is suitable for this type of study that depends on describing the characteristics of the underdeveloped neighborhood from all aspects. This was done using various methods and techniques such as observation, interviews, and questionnaires.

4. Data collection tools:

1. Observation:

Observation is considered one of the most important data collection tools. It is conducted through exploratory visits to the study area, allowing the observation of neighbourhood features, individual behaviours and existing imbalances. This method provides accurate and realistic insights.

Exploratory trips to the neighbourhood began in March 2024, studying the neighbourhood from all angles and applying the observation technique at every stage. Simple observation revealed many social problems in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood, such as widespread environmental pollution. The researcher used a camera to document the neighbourhood’s pollution, a social issue that characterises most underdeveloped neighbourhoods.

Observation also revealed congestion in the neighbourhood, with overcrowded residences and narrow streets obstructing the movement of pedestrians and vehicles.

Scientific observation also highlighted the severe lack of necessary urban facilities and services, such as transport stops and stations, and parks and green spaces. The only facilities in the neighbourhood are an elementary school and two mosques.

2. Interviews:

In April 2024, interviews were conducted with officials and employees at the Khenchela Municipality to gather the required data and information about the neighbourhood. Most interviews were informal or unstructured, as the required information was clear.

A further interview was conducted with the urban security team in Khenchela, who provided statistics on crimes committed in the city in 2024, as shown in the following table:

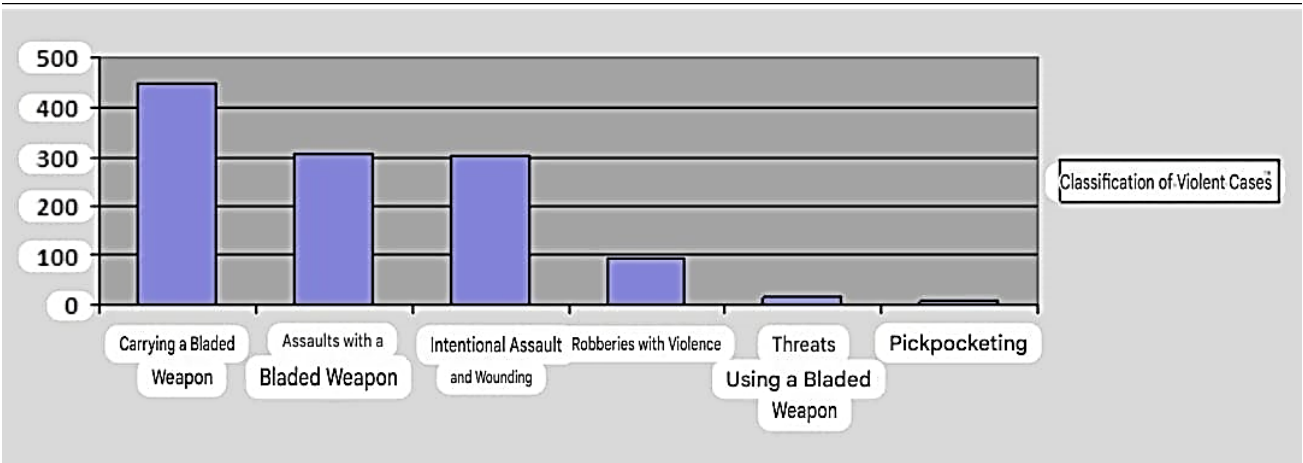
Table No. 02: Statistics on the Phenomenon of Violence in the Urban Environment of Khenchela City During 2024

- Nature of the issues	- Number of registered cases
- Assaults with bladed weapons	305
- Carrying bladed weapons without legal justification	449
- Violent thefts	92
- Pickpocketing	08
- Threatening with a bladed weapon	16
- Intentional assault and battery	303

Source: General Directorate of National Security, Khenchela Security Communication Office, Exclusive Unpublished Statistics, 2025.

According to the obtained statistics, manifestations of urban violence are widespread in the city of Khenchela (<https://www.google.com/search?q=time+in+%D8%AE%D9%86%D8%B4%D9%84%D8%A9,+D>). However, most of the recorded cases and violations involve carrying white weapons without justification, reflecting violent behaviour in interactions. The manifestations of urban violence have been classified and ranked in descending order in the following figure, based on statistics obtained from the Khenchela Security Directorate:

Figure No. (01): Illustrating the Classification of Recorded Violence Cases According to the Statistics of the Communication Office at the Khenchela Security Directorate.



Source: prepared by the researcher based on statistics from the Khenchela Security Directorate in 2025.

3. Questionnaire: The research questionnaire consists of four sections: personal data, violence, poverty and pollution, with a total of 30 closed questions.

The questionnaire was administered to neighbourhood residents, with each family dwelling considered as a unit of analysis. The researcher was present to clarify questions and guide respondents through the question-and-answer format.

The questionnaires were distributed and collected within one week, from 15 April to 20 April 2024.

5. Presentation and analysis of field data:

Table No. (03): Transcription of the Personal Data Section

- Variables	Categories	الفئات	النسبة المئوية
1. Gender	Male	40	45.45
	Female	48	54.55
2. Age	[18-30] years	20	22.73
	[31-43] years	41	46.6
	[44-56] years	18	20.45
	Over 56 years	09	10.22
3. Marital status	Single	25	28.41
	Married	49	55.68
	Divorced	12	13.64
	Widowed	02	2.27
4. Educational level	Illiterate	05	5.68
	Primary	15	17.04
	Intermediate	23	26.14
	Secondary	31	35.23
	University	14	15.91
5. Employment status	Employed	42	47.73
	Unemployed	28	31.82
	Retired	18	20.45
6 . If employed, what type of profession?	Employee	15	35.71
	Craftsman	07	16.67
	Merchant	20	47.62
7. Monthly income (salary)	[20000-10000]	38	43.18
	[40000-20000]	41	46.59
	Over 40,000 DZD	9	10.23

Source: prepared by the researcher based on the questionnaire data.

To describe the study sample, personal data was compiled including gender, age, marital status, educational level, occupational status, occupation type and monthly income. The results showed that the study sample consisted of 54.55% females and 45.45% males. These closely matched percentages resulted in objective and unbiased responses to the questionnaire.

Regarding age, the study sample included all age groups: youth, adults and seniors. The largest percentage, at 46.6%, represented the age group between 31 and 43 years. Another 22.73% corresponded to the 18-30 age

group. A further 20.45% corresponded to the 44–56 age group, while a very small 10.22% represented individuals over 56 years of age.

The questionnaire was designed to cover all age groups, ensuring that the responses were objective and unbiased towards any specific group.

An estimated 55.68% of respondents were married, indicating that most are responsible and mature individuals. Another 28.41% are single, 13.64% are divorced and 2.27% are widowed.

Most respondents have primary, intermediate or secondary education. Specifically, 35.23% have secondary-level education, 26.14% have intermediate-level education, 17.04% have primary-level education, 15.91% have university-level education, and 5.68% have no formal education, meaning they cannot read or write.

Thus, despite the presence of all educational levels, the largest proportion of the sample has not completed their education.

According to most theories and studies describing the characteristics of residents in underdeveloped neighbourhoods worldwide, there is a low level of education among the inhabitants of these urban areas, a finding that is also evident in the current study.

Occupational status is an indicator of families' economic condition and living standards. In this study, 47.73% of participants are employed, 31.82% are unemployed and 20.45% are retired.

The unemployment experienced by some of those surveyed confirms much of what previous studies and theoretical frameworks explain about the characteristics of residents in underdeveloped neighbourhoods.

Most respondents (47.62%) are engaged in trade, while 35.71% are employees and 16.67% work as artisans.

The monthly income indicator reflects the economic and living standards of families. The obtained data revealed the following:

- 46.59% have a monthly income ranging between 20,000 and 40,000 DZD.
- 43.18% have a monthly income ranging between 10,000 and 20,000 DZD.
- Only 10.23% have an income exceeding 40,000 DZD.

Most members of the study sample have low and limited monthly incomes compared to the minimum wage set by the Algerian state. According to Ordinance No. 15-01, dated 23 July 2015, which includes the supplementary finance law for 2015, penalties for violating labour legislation regarding wage payments below the national guaranteed minimum wage of 20,000 DZD were emphasised (Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, No. 40, 2015).

According to most studies and research, low income is considered one of the characteristics of residents in underdeveloped neighbourhoods.

Table No. (04): Transcription of the Violence Variable Section

Categories	Yes		No		order
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %	
8. Are there issues of violence in the neighborhood?	86	97.73	02	2.27	/
9. Are there thefts in the neighborhood?	80	90.91	08	9.09	01
10. Are there fights in the neighborhood?	79	89.77	09	10.23	02
11. Are there manifestations of drug use and trafficking in the	77	87.5	11	12.5	03

neighborhood?					
12. Does the neighborhood suffer from gangs?	45	51.14	43	48.86	04
13. Is there harassment and bullying in the neighborhood?	39	44.32	49	55.68	05
14. Are there cases of suicide in the neighborhood?	21	23.86	67	76.14	06
15. Have there been recorded murders in the neighborhood?	19	21.59	69	78.41	07

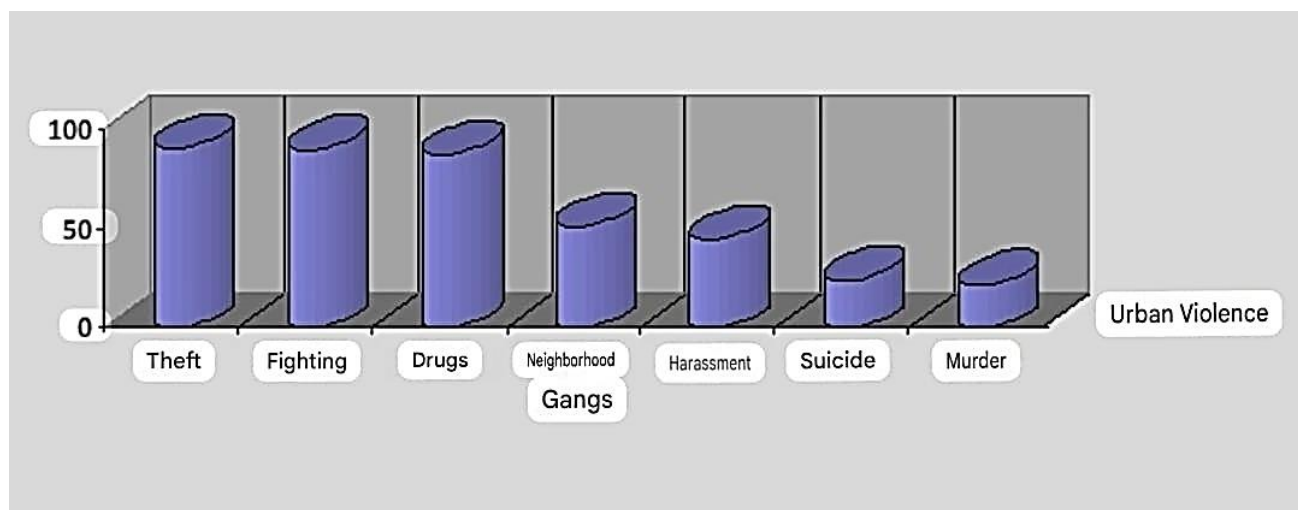
Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the questionnaire data.

According to the information recorded in the table, most of the sample members, at 97.73%, stated that violence problems are widespread in the Merir Lahsen neighborhood, the study area. The most common manifestations of violence in the neighborhood were ranked in descending order from the highest percentage to the lowest percentage, as shown in the table: the highest percentage is the spread of theft at 90.91%, followed by fights at 89.77%, then drugs at 87.5%, then neighborhood gangs at 51.14%, then harassment at 44.32%, then suicide cases at 23.86%, and finally murder crimes at 21.59%.

In Redfield's folk-urban continuum theory, he confirms that the increase in cultural disintegration and the accompanying emergence of urban violence and the deviation of societal values are an inevitable consequence of increased urbanization, larger city sizes, and increased population density.

Ernest Burgess also pointed out in his concentric zone theory that a growing city takes five rings and that the city has a transitional zone or a zone of transformation that witnesses the spread of social diseases, social disintegration, decay, and moral and physical corruption.

Figure No. (02):Shows the descending order of manifestations of urban violence in the Merir Lahsen neighborhood (study area).



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on data from Table No. 04.

Figure No. 2 illustrates the descending order of manifestations of urban violence in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood, which is considered one of the underdeveloped, poor and marginalised neighbourhoods experiencing the spread of crime in all its forms and at varying rates. However, according to residents' statements, theft is considered one of the most widespread crimes, a characteristic feature of underdeveloped neighbourhoods according to most theories and previous studies.

Next comes the prevalence of fights, which are linked to the presence of neighbourhood gangs, according to most of the sample's statements.

Drugs are also prevalent, whether through use or promotion.

Analysis of data related to the violence variable, as shown in Table 4 and Figure 2, confirms findings from previous studies. One such study is that by Algerian researcher Ali Bouanaka: 'Youth and their Social Problems in Urban Cities', published in a book in 2007 by the Center for Arab Unity Studies in the doctoral dissertation series. In his study, Bouanaka emphasised the prevalence of deviance among young people living in underdeveloped neighbourhoods, which experience many social problems such as fights, theft, drug use and promotion.

Bouanaka also affirmed in his study that social conditions and problems cannot be isolated from the environment. He chose Algeria as a case study and concluded that studying youth and their social problems in underdeveloped urban neighbourhoods requires an understanding of the reality of the situation.

Table No. (05): Transcription of the Poverty Variable Section

Categories	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
16. Is your monthly income stable?	48	54.55	40	45.45
17. Are there multiple salaries within the household?	38	43.18	50	56.82
18. Do you borrow money every month?	51	57.95	37	42.05
19. Do you save money each month?	15	17.05	73	82.95
20. Is your salary enough to cover your monthly expenses?	03	3.41	85	96.59
21. Do you pay your electricity, gas and water bills every month?	41	46.59	47	53.41
22. Do you own a car?	23	26.14	65	73.86
23. Does your home have an internet connection?	41	46.59	47	53.41

Source: prepared by the researcher based on the questionnaire data.

To describe the study sample, personal data was compiled including gender, age, marital status, educational level, occupational status, occupation type and monthly income. The results showed that the study sample consisted of 54.55% females and 45.45% males. These closely matched percentages resulted in objective and unbiased responses to the questionnaire.

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Thus, despite the presence of all educational levels, the largest proportion of the sample has not completed their education.

Previously obtained data allow us to infer that most sample members have low living standards and suffer from difficult living conditions. Owning a private car and having internet access have become necessities in urban life in this era, as they are important communication, educational and informational tools.

Likewise, the lack of savings indicates that the monthly salary is insufficient to cover family expenses, leading to a decline in living standards and debt.

Poverty is a defining feature of most of the sample members and can be generalised to the rest of the residents of the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood. As it is considered an underdeveloped neighbourhood, poverty is a defining feature, according to most studies, research and theoretical frameworks, such as Oscar Lewis's "Culture of Poverty" theory. In this theory, Lewis indicates that poverty creates its own culture, with common elements among the poor wherever they are found. Among these important elements or characteristics are lack of popular participation, difficulty integrating the poor into essential community institutions, low levels of skill and education, lack of family organisation, lack of privacy, frequent recourse to violence and feelings of marginalisation and misery.

Table No. (06): Transcription of the pollution variable axis.

Categories	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
24. Does the neighbourhood suffer from pollution?	88	100	00	00
25. Are cleaning campaigns organised for the neighbourhood?	23	26.14	65	73.86
26. Have you contracted an illness caused by pollution in the neighbourhood?	47	53.41	41	46.59
27. Are there solutions to eliminate pollution?	86	97.73	02	2.27
28. Do you dispose of rubbish in the designated area?	88	100	00	00
29. Does the refuse collection truck come every day?	83	94.32	05	5.68
30. Are residents responsible for neighbourhood pollution?	70	79.55	18	20.45

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the questionnaire data.

Pollution is considered one of the most important characteristics of underdeveloped neighborhoods in most cities of the world. According to exploratory field visits conducted by the researcher and relying on simple observation techniques, manifestations of the spread of some pollutants in the neighborhood were recorded, such as sewage

leakage, the spread of dirt and garbage in the streets and roads of the neighborhood, the spread of mud, broken and unpaved roads, old buildings... etc.

However, despite this, six diverse questions were asked about the pollution variable, and the data obtained were as follows:

- 100% stated that the Merir Lahsen neighborhood suffers from pollution, which is evidence of the neighborhood's suffering from pollution.
- 73.66% stated that the residents of the neighborhood do not organize voluntary campaigns to clean the neighborhood, which is evidence of the absence of environmental awareness and environmental culture among the residents.
- 53.41% were exposed to diseases as a result of the neighborhood's pollution, which is further evidence of the spread of pollution and the existence of pollution-related diseases.
- 97.73% are convinced that there are solutions to eliminate the phenomenon of pollution, and this is evidence that most of the sample members are fully aware of ways to combat and eliminate pollution.
- 100%, that is, all members of the study sample, stated that they throw garbage in designated places.
- 94.32% stated that a garbage truck comes every day to collect the garbage, which is evidence that the state, represented by the sanitation workers in the municipality of Khenchela, is doing its part in maintaining the cleanliness of the neighborhood.
- 79.55% of the sample members stated that the residents of the neighborhood are responsible for and cause the pollution of the neighborhood, which is further evidence of the residents' awareness that they are the cause of the spread of pollution, perhaps because it has become a distinctive feature of the residents, as most studies have indicated. Oscar Lewis pointed out in his theory called "Culture of Poverty" that poverty creates its own culture with common elements among the poor wherever they are found in the whole world. Among these characteristics is the characteristic of pollution in underdeveloped neighborhoods.
- The Algerian researcher Ismail Qira pointed out in his study on: "Dimensions of Urban Marginality in the Contemporary Algerian City" that the characteristics of the residents of the underdeveloped neighborhoods in the city are characterized by overcrowding, high population density, poverty, the spread of diseases, pollution, and insecurity in these neighborhoods
- Ismail Qira also indicated in his article published in the "Man and the City" magazine, issue 02 of 2011, entitled: "The Reality of Poverty and the Attitudes of Dominant Groups in Light of the Growing Mechanisms of New Exploitation" that the residents of marginal or underdeveloped neighborhoods practice simple professions, such as workers in workshops, or selling home production, or as craftsmen, or street vendors on the streets and sidewalks, or wage workers, and some of them are unemployed or unemployed and may resort to begging or collecting garbage. This is what applies to and explains what the researcher previously reached in the questions related to the professional status and type of profession practiced by the study sample members.
- We find Al-Sayed Al-Husseini's study on: "The City, a Study in Urban Sociology" in 1981, where he indicated in his study that the residents of underdeveloped neighborhoods are characterized by marginality and live on the outskirts of the city, deprived of urban services
- There is also a study by Tharwat Ishaq on: "Urban Marginality," a study on the neighborhoods of garbage collectors in Cairo, Egypt, in 1984, where he concluded that the residents of underdeveloped neighborhoods do not contribute to the economic development process, that they are characterized by marginality and isolation from the culture of society, and that they are deprived of their rights
- A study by Abdelaziz Boudhen on: "Social Problems of Urban Growth in Algeria," where he confirmed in his study that underdeveloped neighborhoods suffer from the spread of unemployment, crime, delinquency among children, and various social diseases

There are many studies and research that have dealt with the characteristics of the residents of underdeveloped neighborhoods in the city, and despite the differences in the field of study, the characteristics of the underdeveloped neighborhoods and their residents are almost the same in most cities of the world. This result is consistent with what Oscar Lewis reached in his theory about: "Culture of Poverty," where he considered that poverty creates its own culture, and that the poor share one culture wherever they are found in the world.

Sixth: Results extraction:

In this paper, the researcher addresses a field study conducted in the Merir Lahsen neighbourhood of Khenchela city. This neighbourhood is considered underdeveloped and marginalised, suffering from numerous problems and urban imbalances, including poor building planning and narrow streets and alleys. The neighbourhood was selected for several scientific and practical reasons, as well as possessing characteristics that serve the current study.

The aim was to answer the following main question:

Are social problems related to underdeveloped neighbourhoods in Khenchela city?

The answer is yes: social problems are indeed related to underdeveloped neighbourhoods in the city. The Merir Lahsen neighbourhood in Khenchela meets the specifications and characteristics of an underdeveloped neighbourhood, suffering from many social issues such as poverty, pollution and violence. This is confirmed by the results of the field study.

The study sample included 88 housing units, with the residents of these units serving as the sampling unit. They may be the head of the household or a designated representative, provided they are 18 years of age or older – the legal age for providing responses that demonstrate responsibility and awareness.

The study sample included both females and males in comparable proportions. In terms of age, the sample encompassed all age groups: youth, adults and the elderly. Thus, the research questionnaire covered all age groups, ensuring the responses and statements were objective and unbiased towards any specific group.

Most of the sample members are married, indicating that most respondents are individuals characterised by responsibility and maturity.

Regarding the educational level of the majority of the study sample, most have primary, intermediate, or secondary education, meaning they did not continue their education for certain reasons. According to most theories and studies describing the characteristics of residents in underdeveloped neighborhoods worldwide, the low educational level of residents in these areas is applicable to the current study.

Professional status is an indicator of a family's economic situation and living standards. The recorded data show that 47.73% of people are in active employment, 31.82% are unemployed and 20.45% are retired.

Most studies, research and theoretical frameworks that explain the characteristics of residents in underdeveloped urban neighbourhoods confirm that these residents suffer from unemployment. Most of the sample members work as labourers, in trade or as craftsmen.

Ismail Qira indicated this in his article, titled 'The Reality of Poverty and the Attitudes of Dominant Groups in Light of the Growing Mechanisms of New Exploitation', published in issue 02 of 2011 of the 'Man and the City' magazine. In the article, he states that residents of marginal or underdeveloped neighbourhoods engage in simple professions such as working in workshops, selling homemade goods, working as craftsmen or street vendors, or working as wage labourers. Some of them are unemployed and may resort to begging or collecting garbage.

The monthly income indicator reflects the economic and living standards of the family. Data obtained concluded that most members of the study sample had weak and limited monthly incomes compared to the minimum wage set by the Algerian state. According to Ordinance No. 15-01, dated 23 July 2015 and including the supplementary finance law for 2015, penalties are emphasised for violations of labour legislation regarding wage payments lower than the guaranteed national minimum wage of 20,000 DZD (Official Gazette of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, No. 40-2015).

Furthermore, low income is considered a defining feature of residents in underdeveloped neighbourhoods, according to most studies and research.

1. The Merir Lahsen neighbourhood suffers from a high prevalence of violence, as indicated by the data recorded in Table 4. 97.73% of the sample population reported the presence of violence issues in the neighbourhood. Figure No. (02) illustrates the most common manifestations of violence in the neighbourhood, ranked in descending order from highest to lowest. The neighbourhood suffers from theft, fighting, drug use and trafficking, harassment, bullying, and some cases of suicide and murder. According to Redfield's folk-urban continuum theory, increased urbanisation, larger city sizes and higher population density inevitably lead to cultural disintegration, the emergence of urban violence and the deviation of societal values. Ernest Burgess also pointed out in his concentric zone theory that a growing city consists of five rings and contains a transitional zone where social diseases, social disintegration, decay and moral and physical corruption spread. The analysis of data related to the violence variable, as shown in Table No. 04 and Figure No. 02, confirms what most previous studies have found. This includes the study by Algerian researcher Ali Bouanaka on 'Youth and Their Social Problems in Urban Cities', published in a book by the Center for Arab Unity Studies in the doctoral dissertation series in 2007. In this study, Bouanaka emphasised the spread of deviance among young people living in underdeveloped neighbourhoods, which witness the prevalence of social problems such as fights, theft, drug use and trafficking. In this study, Bouanaka also affirmed that social conditions and problems cannot be isolated from the environment. He chose Algeria as a case study and concluded that studying youth and their social problems in underdeveloped urban neighbourhoods must start from reality.

2. The Merir Lahsen neighborhood suffers from manifestations of poverty, as the poverty variable is an important factor in understanding the economic, living, and social standards of the family. All data obtained from Table No. (05) indicate the prevalence of poverty in the Merir Lahsen neighborhood. According to the statements of most families surveyed, their monthly salary is unstable and insufficient to cover monthly expenses; they resort to borrowing or going into debt, do not save anything from their salaries, do not pay their electricity, gas, and water bills monthly, and most do not own private utility vehicles or benefit from internet services. Manifestations of poverty are a distinctive feature of most sample members and can be generalized to the rest of the residents of the Merir Lahsen neighborhood. Considering it an underdeveloped neighborhood, the characteristic of poverty is a distinctive feature of it, according to most studies and research frameworks, such as Oscar Lewis's theory called "Culture of Poverty," where he indicated that poverty creates its own culture with common elements among the poor wherever they are found. Among these important elements or characteristics are the lack of participation, difficulty integrating the poor into essential community institutions, low levels of skill and education, frequent recourse to violence, and feelings of marginalization, misery, and deprivation, etc.

3. The Merir Lahsen neighborhood suffers from pollution, which is considered one of the main characteristics of underdeveloped neighborhoods in most cities worldwide. According to exploratory field visits conducted by the researcher, and relying on simple observation techniques, manifestations of the spread of some pollutants in the neighborhood were recorded, such as sewage leakage, the spread of dirt and garbage in the streets and roads of the neighborhood, the spread of mud, and old buildings, etc. Confirmation of pollution in the neighborhood is indicated in Table No. (06), where:

- The Merir Lahsen neighborhood suffers from pollution, as agreed upon by the study sample, and the spread of diseases resulting from environmental pollution.

- The residents of the neighborhood do not organize voluntary campaigns to clean the neighborhood, which is evidence of the absence of environmental awareness and culture among the residents, as well as the lack of community participation, a characteristic of residents in underdeveloped neighborhoods according to Oscar Lewis's theory of "Culture of Poverty."

- According to Oscar Lewis, poverty creates its own culture with common elements among the poor wherever they are found in the world. Among these characteristics is the pollution of underdeveloped neighborhoods, which aligns with the current study.

- Algerian researcher Ismail Qira, in his study on "Dimensions of Urban Marginality in the Contemporary Algerian City," indicated that the characteristics of residents of underdeveloped neighborhoods in the city are characterized

by overcrowding, high population density, poverty, the spread of diseases, pollution, and insecurity in these neighborhoods. This study also aligns with the results obtained in the current study.

- Ismail Qira also mentioned in his article published in the "Man and the City" magazine, issue 02 of 2011, titled "The Reality of Poverty and the Attitudes of Dominant Groups in Light of the Growing Mechanisms of New Exploitation," that residents of marginal or underdeveloped neighborhoods engage in simple professions, such as workers in workshops, selling home production, or as craftsmen, or street vendors on the streets and sidewalks, or wage workers, and some of them are unemployed and may resort to begging or collecting garbage. This applies and explains what the researcher found in the current study.

The current study aligns with the findings of Al-Sayed Al-Husseini's 1981 study, 'The City: A Study in Urban Sociology', in which he indicated that residents of underdeveloped neighbourhoods are marginalised and live on the outskirts of the city, deprived of urban services.

The current study also aligns with Tharwat Ishaq's 1984 study, 'Urban Marginality', which examined garbage collector neighbourhoods in Cairo, Egypt. Ishaq concluded that residents of underdeveloped neighbourhoods do not contribute to the economic development process, are marginalised and isolated from societal culture, and are deprived of their rights.

Additionally, Abdelaziz Boudhen's study, 'Social Problems of Urban Growth in Algeria', confirmed that underdeveloped neighbourhoods suffer from high unemployment, crime and delinquency among children, as well as various social issues. This study aligns with and reinforces the findings of the current study.

Many studies have addressed the characteristics of residents of underdeveloped neighbourhoods in cities, and despite differences in the field of study, the characteristics of underdeveloped neighbourhoods and their residents are similar in most cities worldwide. This aligns with Oscar Lewis's theory of the 'culture of poverty', which states that poverty creates its own culture and that the poor share a common culture wherever they are found in the world.

Conclusion:

Social problems are a characteristic of the modern era and a by-product of urbanisation and the growth and complexity of cities. Analysts and scholars of urban sociology and city studies, whether working within classical or contemporary theories, confirm that the root of social problems lies in unplanned, underdeveloped, marginal or poor neighbourhoods, regardless of their various names. These areas are often inhabited by migrants from nearby villages and municipalities who have come to the city in search of better living conditions, jobs, education, housing and the other necessities of modern urban life.

However, these migrants face the harsh reality that a lack of suitable housing in the city forces them to live in inadequate dwellings far from the city centre, in the suburbs or in makeshift homes in narrow alleys that do not meet architectural standards. These dwellings lack services and facilities, and are far from good urban and architectural planning. This results in residents of these neighbourhoods consistently enduring unsuitable living conditions and social problems due to a lack of appropriate housing. Such problems include unemployment, divorce, drug use, violence, crime, murder, rape, theft and the trafficking and promotion of drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as other social issues associated with underdeveloped neighbourhoods in cities.

The hypothesis was largely confirmed, as several social problems were indeed recorded in the underdeveloped, poor and marginalised Merir Lahsen neighbourhood, which lacks the most basic conditions necessary for life. It is inhabited by poor and middle-income families who suffer from unemployment, drug use, theft, low income, poverty, large family sizes and ongoing drug use.

Immediate solutions should be implemented to address underdeveloped or unplanned neighbourhoods. This should involve providing suitable housing, making modifications or renovations to informal dwellings and correcting imbalances that cannot be completely eliminated.

Essential services and facilities should be provided in underdeveloped neighbourhoods.

Job opportunities should be created for young people and the unemployed.

Awareness campaigns should be conducted for young people, children and adolescents about the dangers of drug use and psychotropic substances, utilising socialisation institutions such as families, schools, mosques and the media.

- Strict security measures should be implemented against drug dealers, thieves and perpetrators of crime by increasing security oversight in underdeveloped and unplanned neighbourhoods.

- Strict penalties should be imposed on perpetrators of murder, violence, rape, kidnapping and drug trafficking in order to eliminate crime in all its forms and reduce social problems, particularly in poor neighbourhoods.

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Footnotes:

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