

## AFRICAN REFUGEES IN ALGERIAN SOCIETY - ISSUES OF IDENTITY AND THE PURSUIT OF INTEGRATION -

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**Abstract:** *Refuge and migration are among the most pressing global issues, significantly impacting the social quality of life for various groups across different regions of the world. Refuge is, in itself, a profound humanitarian crisis, resulting from successive shocks rooted in conflict, disasters, climate change, widespread drought, poverty, and starvation, particularly affecting regions in Sub-Saharan Africa and the African Sahel. Consequently, many individuals, families, and communities seek refuge in North African countries, especially Algeria, with hopes of eventually crossing to Europe. However, settling in host societies brings forth numerous challenges related to integration difficulties, marginalization, poverty, poor health conditions, and other issues. The question of identity is also deeply tied to cultural diversity, especially in the presence of many refugees or migrants who often bring distinct cultural symbols and behavioral patterns, which may provoke challenges within the host community and for the refugees themselves. Accordingly, this study examines a crucial aspect of Algerian society—the issues of identity and the potential for social, cultural, and professional integration of African refugees, particularly from Mali and Niger, in Algeria. This research explores the everyday realities of these challenges through a descriptive method, analyzing the social conditions experienced by African refugees in Algeria through simple observational insights gained from daily interactions and observations of the lives of refugees and African migrants in our society .*

**Keywords:** African refugees, human identity, social integration, feelings of inferiority, marginalization, belonging, family fragmentation.

### 1. Introduction

Refuge and migration are among the most critical global issues, drawing the attention of governments, nations, and both official and non-governmental organizations due to their potential threats to individual and community security. The experience of displacement, endured by numerous groups across continents and countries, stems primarily from broader humanitarian crises, such as wars, armed conflicts, and acts of genocide inflicted upon various peoples, tribes, and ethnicities. Additionally, poverty, hunger, drought, and widespread famine have exacerbated the severity of these crises, creating a life-threatening situation in several nations, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel region, largely due to climate change. Refugees, often fleeing certain death, face myriad challenges in host societies, such as issues of identity and a constant search for ways to socially and culturally integrate. This struggle is particularly evident among African refugees, especially from Mali and Niger, residing in Algeria.

Talking about identity in our daily existence is deeply tied to the global cultural manifestations and the historical processes that have shaped civilization, architecture, and the emergence of cultural elements across societies within specific spaces and times. Identity is a powerful concept, constantly coexisting with the individual, collective, and societal essence, persistently surfacing in our daily discussions and often sparking scientific, literary, and political debates within contemporary societies. The core nature of social identity has become a primary concern for many thinkers and intellectuals of diverse backgrounds and cultural affiliations. It has emerged as a genuine ontological, cultural, and security challenge, affecting individuals' understanding of their life reality, personal stances, daily behaviors, and even their psychological and intellectual state. Identity is embedded in all types of human relationships, regardless of their depth.

The issue of identity in society is strongly linked to cultural diversity, intellectual plurality, and doctrinal variation, especially given the presence of numerous ethnic and tribal groups and a broad category of refugees and migrants within society. These groups bring with them cultural symbols, value frameworks, and behavioral norms that may raise various challenges for both the host community and the refugees. Additionally, many migrants face difficulties with integration, often living on the margins of the social fabric, enduring poverty, deprivation, feelings of inferiority, emotional distress, lack of secure employment, poor health, the spread of serious diseases, homelessness, and substandard living

conditions. Consequently, this study focuses on identity issues and the potential for social, professional, and cultural integration for African refugees in Algeria, highlighting daily challenges encountered in Algerian society.

This study aims to shed light on key identity and integration challenges facing African families in Algeria, particularly from Mali and Niger, using a descriptive approach to analyze the social conditions of African refugees in Algeria through simple, exploratory observations of their daily lives. The study objectives are as follows:

1. Conditions and factors influencing the migration and asylum of African individuals, families, and communities to Algeria.
2. Social identity issues of African refugees in Algeria.
3. Social integration challenges faced by African refugees and migrants in Algeria.

## **Introduction**

### **Section I: Conceptual framework**

#### **1. Definition of a refugee**

Shantawi (2001) defines a refugee as "any person forced to leave their original homeland in search of refuge, with a justified fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, belonging to a particular social group, or political opinion, and who, due to that fear, is unable to return for fear of persecution." (Boutemer, 2014/2015, p. 46)

Under international law, a refugee is defined as someone who is outside their country of nationality or habitual residence, with a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and who is unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or to return to it for fear of persecution. (wikipedia.org)

The United Nations also defines a refugee as a person who has left their original homeland and habitual residence and is unable to return due to poor integration, life-threatening risks, or any form of violence. (UNHCR, p. 04)

It appears that a refugee is a person compelled to leave their country of origin due to existential threats, such as the risk of death, famine, extreme poverty, severe drought, restrictions on intellectual and political freedoms, civil wars and conflicts, and ethnic, racial, or religious discrimination. Refugees are in urgent need of social support, humanitarian protection, and assistance. This is the case for the large numbers of African citizens who fled their countries due to threats of violence, murder, economic destitution, severe poverty, famine, and widespread drought, as well as the degradation caused by armed conflict, forcing communities and populations to seek refuge in various countries, including Algeria.

#### **2. Definition of identity**

The concept of identity is connected to many aspects of human existence, encompassing mental, psychological, spiritual, social, and cultural attributes. Identity emerges from specific systems of beliefs and values, often serving as a psychological framework within individual psyches. In other instances, it represents a set of symbols, perceptions, mentalities, and behavioral norms within social life. The search for identity, for individuals, is essentially a quest for the best means of cultural and social integration within the laws, values, and established norms of society, which are clearly defined and provide individuals with reference points in their daily lives.

The concept of identity holds a significant scientific appeal for many specialists, as it encompasses various dualities and tripartite characteristics related to human existence across multiple disciplines, such as (conscious, unconscious), (gender, age), (belonging, independence), (integration, differentiation), (trust, desire for existence), (language, religion, customs), and (material, spirit). Stuart Hall discusses one of these critical dualities, namely the emotions of (love, rivalry), within the conceptual framework of identity, highlighting how critical analysis has explored love and competition in numerous social processes. (Stuart Hall, 2003, p. 3)

The concept of identity has deep roots in idealistic and existential philosophy, where philosophers like Hegel and Kant linked it to consciousness and thought, and Heidegger later defined identity as an inherent principle of being and the right of every being to an identity. In the Arab world, the term "identity" evolved as a linguistic derivation from the pronoun (he), and as Fathi El-Miskini points out, "the shift by contemporary Arabs in using the term 'identity' from its ontological meaning, as explored by Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, to its current anthropological and cultural meaning is neither an error nor an arbitrary use. Rather, it reflects the same hidden motive that led early Arab translators to

adopt the pronoun to mirror the Greek concept of 'ousia.' This shift from the grammatical and anthropological (to the ontological) identity) was not accidental but responds to a pre-existing ontological understanding within the structure of the Arabic language.) Bouza (2008, " "

The issue of identity is explored within various scientific domains and cultural literatures, including psychology, anthropology, sociology, history, art, demography, religion, geography, law, geology, customs, language and communication, and politics. Different definitions of identity have been proposed. Alex Micsely describes identity as "a complex of standards that allows defining a subject or an internal feeling, embodying a range of emotions such as a sense of unity, integration, belonging, value, independence, and trust based on a desire for quality." (Micseli, 1993, p. 15)

While Micsely focuses on identity as an inner emotional sense, Richard Jenkins emphasizes the social essence of identity, particularly when individuals engage in social interactions centered on meanings and social evaluations. As noted by Haralambos and Holborn, Jenkins views social identity as "our perception of who we are, who others are, and how others view themselves and others." Identity, according to Jenkins, arises through human interactions, involving comparisons that establish similarities and differences among people. Those who perceive similarities share a distinct identity, separate from those who view themselves as different. Jenkins argues that social identity is fundamentally about meanings. (Holborn, 2010, p. 93)

The scientific debate around the nature of identity and the perception of it raises questions about the sacred, temporal, and traditional significance that societies attribute to their identities, often embedding them with a fixed cultural essence that resists change. This perspective reflects a closed form of identity. Others argue, however, that identity is not confined to heritage and history but rather represents an inherent human inclination toward movement, growth, and renewal.

Jalal Shawqi states, "Identity is an active, dynamic, and creative social existence; this is its authenticity. The social self, or identity, flourishes with social development and changing realities, giving rise to a new culture... a new image of oneself and the world." (Bouza, 2008, p. 83)

In examining the issue of African refugees in Algeria and the challenges they face in terms of identity and integration, it becomes clear that reality brings forth numerous issues requiring study and investigation. African refugees may feel socially marginalized, experiencing an erosion of their original identity amidst Algeria's social norms. Conversely, there are instances where emotions and cultures harmonize to create a unique cultural identity blend, allowing African refugees to integrate seamlessly into Algeria's social, intellectual, and doctrinal fabric, without either side feeling threatened or alienated.

### **3. Definition of integration**

Integration, or inclusion, is a frequently used term in the literature of the humanities and social sciences. It may be highlighted in discussions on workers, institutions, and professional adaptation, or considered essential when discussing social adaptation of individuals within different social groups and communities. This concept becomes particularly important when examining the situation of African refugees in Algeria.

Linguistically, the Arabic root for "integration" suggests a self-driven action, indicating that the integration process is not externally imposed but rather occurs through the individual's interaction with laws and norms or a mutual agreement on integration. In this sense, "to integrate" implies a self-motivated act of conformity, similar to how one might describe the self-driven nature of "a pot breaking" or "a prisoner committing suicide." (Belkacem, p. 9)

Noureddine Ben Belkacem defines social integration as assimilation—meaning alignment and coherence in actions, thoughts, and behaviors among citizens, fostering collective unity across national, tribal, or ethnic groups to serve the public interest. (Belkacem, p. 7)

Thus, integration involves social cohesion and unity among individuals and groups, strengthening the bonds of humanity within society so that all individuals feel they exist for one another, sharing equal rights, duties, religious and cultural freedoms, and opportunities for democratic participation.

In 2007, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs outlined several characteristics of "social inclusion" as a concept closely aligned with social integration. These characteristics include :

- Visibility to raise awareness ;
- Consideration of individual interests and needs ;
- Rights: the right to expression and to claim one's differences and identity, access to quality social services (housing, education, transport, healthcare), the right to work, and cultural participation ;

-Resources for full societal participation: essential social and financial resources.(Shuqair, 2013, p. 08)

In this research, we aim to explore these aspects as central issues facing African refugees in Algerian society to achieve the highest levels of constructive identity and social integration within the community.

## **Section II: Conditions and Factors Driving African Refuge and Migration to Algeria :**

Wars and military conflicts frequently pose direct threats to the lives of individuals and communities. The history of civilizations and states recounts numerous instances of the downfall of nations and empires due to armed conflict. War inevitably leads to social fragmentation and the destruction of cultural, intellectual, and religious structures within society. According to the latest report from the United Nations' International Organization for Migration (2024) assessing global migration trends, the following data highlights the scale of displacement:

In 2022, 117 million people worldwide were displaced, including refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The breakdown of these figures is as follows :

35.3 -million refugees ,

5.4 -million asylum seekers ,

5.2 -million non-refugee asylum seekers ,

71.2 -million internally displaced persons due to conflict, violence, and war, with 8.7 million displaced by disasters. (Kawi, 2023)

Migration to Algeria predominantly comes from the African Sahel, especially from Mali and Niger. The journey of refuge and migration in this context is often compounded by threats to African stability, such as the recruitment of African mercenaries by terrorist networks for armed activities and arms trafficking. For instance, northern Mali hosts extremist groups that actively recruit Africans in the region extending northward to the Algerian border. Although there is no definitive link between groups such as the Wagner Group, Rapid Support Forces, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam walMuslimin, and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, former fighters from northern Mali have engaged in criminal activities, becoming bandits or organized gangs crossing borders. Over time, these individuals have been exploited for recruitment by warring factions across African nations, leading to the formation of organized criminal groups involved in the trafficking of migration and asylum.

Some reports indicate that these groups are located in the African Sahel, specifically in the following areas:

1. Kidal Region: Located in the northeastern part of the Malian Sahara, neighboring Niger and Algeria, this region serves as a transit point with routes extending to southwestern Libya, northern Niger, and Chad.

2. Gao City: This medium-sized city, situated along the Niger River in northeastern Mali, is a base for extremist Islamic groups that actively recruit youth.

3. Oussango Region: Located in northern Mali.

4. Areas Surrounding Timbuktu: Near the historic capital.

5. Northwestern Mali Regions.(Marie McAuliffe and Linda Adhiambo Oucho, 2024, p. 05)

These areas in northern Mali are largely outside of state control and host extremist movements classified as terrorist organizations. Additionally, traditional gold mining operations are present in the northern regions (Taoudenni, Gao, Mesna Basin, Medin Basin in the far northeast), as well as in central Mali. With the spread of artisanal mining (local community involvement in mineral exploration), these regions have also become hotspots for mercenary recruitment. The instability in the Sahel provides pathways for engagement and communication with radical groups, perpetuating threats to residents' safety and prompting migration to North African countries, particularly Algeria. The unemployment rate across African nations reached 40% in 2022, further exacerbated by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the growing waves of conflict in the African Sahel and Sub-Saharan regions, coupled with climate change, drought, and political instability, particularly in countries like Mali and Niger, there has been an increasing movement of people seeking refuge in the north, hoping for better conditions and a life free from fear. Algeria has witnessed a significant influx of African refugees, initially as a transit point to Europe. However, global changes and strict European controls over refugees and migrants have rendered the African dream of reaching Europe a challenging and perilous endeavor. Consequently, Algeria has become the primary North African country hosting African refugees, particularly from Mali and Niger,

fleeing wars, conflict, drought, famine, resource shortages, and inadequate services in their home countries.

According to the United Nations Migration Agency's March 2024 statistics, new conflicts are driving increased displacement in Sub-Saharan Africa, with nine million people displaced in 2022 and 7.4 million displaced due to climate shocks. (IOM, 2024) Additionally, statistics indicate that approximately 90,000 African refugees enter Algeria annually without interception. (Agency)

Regardless of numbers and statistics, the reality shows that the Algerian social fabric accommodates a considerable number of African refugees who now contribute to the daily life of Algerians. They interact within society, populating cities and villages across Algeria from north to south and east to west. This presence raises genuine challenges around identity, integration, and the possibility of cultural coexistence and mutual acceptance between both sides.

### **Section III. Identity and integration challenges for African refugees in Algerian society**

While it is true that issues of identity and integration for African refugees may not dominate the core cultural components of Algerian society, the daily realities are filled with complex human interactions. These dynamics range from positive extremes (respect, understanding, cooperation, support) in the way Algerians engage with African refugees, to negative extremes (humiliation, violence, exploitation, sexual assault, verbal abuse). Additionally, the large-scale presence of African refugees prompts questions around ethnicity, religion, and behavioral norms, particularly as some of these refugees belong to specific religious groups (Muslims, Christians) which may not align with the views of the average Algerian. This complexity makes the identity of refugees a subject of pressing academic study.

Some of the main challenges to be addressed in this study include:

#### **1. Poverty and marginalization**

Social perceptions and self-image are often shaped by the details of one's daily life. Feelings of belonging and social significance are rooted in the cultural imagination and reinforced by the social opportunities individuals find within a society. Discussing identity in the context of Syrian refugees, for example, or the desire to exist meaningfully within the social framework, reflects the capacity to meet human needs and integrate socially by securing employment and opportunities that provide individuals with a sense of importance, status, and value. Access to social benefits like healthcare, education, and housing allows individuals to feel grounded in their existence, rather than merely focusing on whether their identity stands out. This dynamic also applies to African refugees in Algeria.

Daily observations in Algeria reveal numerous instances of homelessness, begging (or "solicited selling"), poverty, and marginalization among African refugees, visible to both government agencies and public institutions. The majority of these refugees represent highly vulnerable groups within Algerian society, suffering from all forms of marginalization, poverty, and, in some cases, subjugation and humiliation .

To support a theoretical understanding of the issue, we reference several definitions of "poverty and marginalization".

Both KorjiDolkan and Chris Baker define impoverished groups as those "...who lack and need money, food, clothing, and shelter and cannot acquire various types and sources of wealth and power within society." (Corey Dolgan, 2011, p. 49) The global charity organization CARE provided a standard classification for the most vulnerable groups in society during its study of Zambian cities and neighborhoods, identifying indicators of well-being to distinguish between the impoverished and the affluent. These indicators include (education level, employment status, housing, ownership of agricultural land, social security, access to clean drinking water, and sanitation systems). (Al-Juhar, 2011, p. 407)

Ismail Qira further explains marginal groups as "those who suffer from a sense of isolation from the surrounding culture and from other nearby groups, as well as difficulty in accessing the services provided by urban society." (al, 2004 , p. 14)

Thus, impoverished groups are those unable to meet their basic human needs for food, clothing, housing, education, and healthcare. Many African refugees face extremely poor health conditions, often living in unsanitary environments without shelter, sewage systems, or clean drinking water, making the spread of serious infectious diseases inevitable. This situation calls for continuous and necessary intervention from Algerian authorities to provide social protection and ensure the safety of these groups. Furthermore, such groups often lack the power and legitimacy to access social resources, relegating them to a culturally marginalized status as a sub-identity within society .

This is especially evident among African refugees, who add to the existing impoverished demographics in Algeria. Observing the current situation, these refugees are often perceived as a distinct cultural or social identity unworthy of significant efforts toward social integration or humanitarian support. Many also face accusations of avoiding social improvement, as they are perceived to favor begging and involve their children in these activities rather than seeking employment or educational opportunities. This creates another point of contention regarding the plight of their children, caught between begging and the necessity of education—a key component of social and cultural identity that fosters individuals' symbolic and cultural integration within society. Education provides the highest levels of social inclusion and shapes individuals into adaptive human beings aligned with collective ethics and values.

It is evident that most African refugees in Algeria belong to the impoverished segments of society. A minority have managed to work in sectors typically avoided by Algerian youth, such as large-scale construction projects and seasonal agricultural harvesting. However, these activities are insufficient, failing to provide the refugees with adequate financial resources to meet daily necessities, and they are not covered by social security. Refugees may also experience wage exploitation by employers in these jobs. The majority, however, live under severe poverty, deprivation, and homelessness, often resorting to marginal activities like begging, either by asking passersby or drivers for money or engaging in “solicited selling” on main roads and city entrances. This form of “selling,” usually of paper tissues, has become a recognized method of begging where drivers often give money as a form of support, without purchasing the items.

Moreover, many African refugees do not enroll their children in schools. Some use their children in begging to cover daily needs, while others cite constant movement between Algerian provinces as an obstacle to regular school attendance. Other families express difficulty in adjusting their children to the Algerian educational curriculum, which differs significantly from the systems in their home countries, particularly Mali and Niger. Furthermore, there appears to be limited official attention in Algeria to the educational needs and challenges faced by African refugees.

In summary, African refugees in Algeria endure conditions of marginalization, poverty, and deprivation. They lack adequate housing, often sleeping in open spaces, isolated areas, or under bridges, with no means to educate their children. Frequently, they are forced to involve family members in begging to cover basic needs, facing extreme poverty and social isolation. This situation makes the issues of identity and social integration a significant challenge for African refugees in Algerian society, especially in the context of poverty, alienation, lack of belonging, and the absence of essential social bonds that any person needs when navigating a foreign society.

## **2. Feelings of inferiority and emotional distress**

Daily life challenges and accumulating hardships often impact human emotions and social interactions. For many African migrants and refugees, the realities of poverty, marginalization, homelessness, and emotional harm in their host countries, coupled with the inability of official and non-governmental organizations in Algeria to address their needs due to their large numbers, foster a deep sense of inferiority and lack of value within Algerian society. The issue of identity becomes particularly complex when addressing feelings of self-worth, respect, and the sense of significance. Identity, both personal and social, is closely linked to the perception of one's worth and social acceptance.

Alfred Adler notes, "Feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and lack of self-confidence shape an individual's purpose in life. We all possess a tendency to seek recognition for our existence, which develops alongside feelings of inferiority, motivating individuals to strive for superiority within their environment." (Adler, 2005, p. 82) Hence, identity is inherently tied to a sense of worth, purpose, and confidence within one's social surroundings, shaping a positive perception of one's existence and essence.

In this context, social integration becomes highly challenging for African refugees grappling with feelings of inferiority due to hardships like deprivation, begging, and homelessness, which obstruct self-fulfillment and foster persistent feelings of inadequacy. Adler further explains, "Feelings of inferiority will intensify as long as the underlying issue persists, adding constant pressure to the individual's struggles." (Adler, *The Meaning of Life* translated by Adel Naguib Bishara, 2005, p. 80)

The situation is further complicated when emotional harm and psychological abuse become commonplace behaviors directed by various individuals and groups towards African refugees in Algeria, not to mention the conflicts that refugees may have among themselves. However, such negative behavior is generally rare in Algerian society, where incidents of insult, bullying, racism, and hate are infrequent, given the Islamic values embedded within the community that emphasize mercy, mutual aid, and social

support. Algerian law also provides legal protections for refugees, penalizing any expressions of insult or hate against foreigners.

Interviews with African refugees reveal that many feel isolated and insignificant, often described as people who have lost their homeland, identity, tribe, and family, unable to integrate fully into Algerian society. They express that Algerians frequently reject the idea of intermarriage with them and their daughters, while they also suffer from verbal abuse and occasional sexual harassment. These experiences deepen their sense of inferiority and inadequacy, particularly as they lack social and self-protective resources, being, as they describe, in a foreign society and a land that is not their own.

### **3. Family disintegration and homelessness**

The family is one of the most significant sources of individual, social, and cultural identity in any society. It provides individuals with values, morals, behaviors, and beliefs, serving as the primary institution defining an individual's identity through name and lineage. The family grants each person a unique social and self-identity within the community. Any threat to the family structure, therefore, poses a threat to identity itself, leaving individuals struggling to express their place in society and amplifying feelings of tension and disorientation as they seek to define their existence.

As Edgar Morin states, "The family name establishes personal identity, and children's growth within the family during the critical years of development plays a crucial role in their destiny. The impressions left by parents remain with children throughout their lives; the father represents authority, and the mother embodies love—two forces that influence individuals' futures. Even the memory of an absent, deceased, or weakened parent is profoundly impactful, as is that of a missing or deceased mother." (Morin, 2009, p. 202)

Fulfilling identity's role in society requires more than simply living within a family; it necessitates families that effectively perform their social functions toward their children. The family provides social warmth, emotional support, and psychological and physical protection, ensuring that each individual develops within a healthy framework that allows them to interact with society's values and norms. This fosters a well-defined social identity and integration into the community's ethical values. Miriam Van Waters emphasizes this, stating, "The home must provide shelter for the child, nurturing their sense of security, keeping anxiety and early turmoil at bay, while providing necessary health and protection and training them to face the standards of protective behavior." (Boukadah, 2007/2008, p. 96.)

In examining the role of the family in the lives of African refugees in Algeria, we observe the widespread family disintegration and homelessness among many African families, especially those from Mali and Niger. These families often rely on begging or "solicited selling" as their primary means of survival, making it challenging to provide children with the security and psychological stability they need. It is difficult to speak of creating a cultural or value-based identity for African families' future under such dire living conditions that lack stable homes, education, and—most concerning—stable family structures. Many African families can be seen homeless on Algerian streets, lacking a basic foundation for their identity formation and integration.

Refugee families in Algeria often seek only the simplest conditions of existence—food, shelter, and clothing—rather than pursuing a deeper sense of identity. Many carry the traumatic memories of war, loss, poverty, and hunger, with some families having lost members to conflict or famine or living divided between Algeria and other countries. As a result, the primary identity concern for these families is survival and reunion rather than a more complex identity formation. Their hope often lies in returning home if conditions improve in their original countries, such as Mali and Niger. While striving for a basic level of integration to ensure their survival, most African refugee families in Algeria hold onto the aspiration of one day returning to their homeland.

### **4. Cultural alienation**

As MokhtarBenabdellawi states, "Alienation is a human problem, a crisis of suffering in an era that demands a clear definition of belonging, which now varies between universal human affiliation and the blending of intersecting identity circles, constantly generating new identities unlike any prior essence." (Blairdouh, 2016)

Today's world is dominated by cultural and ideological hegemony, creating fragmented communities and ideological uncertainty, where people may lack connection to an original or defined cultural identity. This situation is challenging for settled societies but even more severe for refugees fleeing war, hunger, and alienation from their cultural roots.

Although African refugees in Algeria find themselves in a welcoming Muslim society that treats them with humanity and social support, they still experience cultural alienation. This experience may not be as severe as in other host societies, but it raises key concepts like cultural identity, values, and cultural systems. Every society has unique cultural elements, historical legacies, and a distinct linguistic and religious identity. Societies become increasingly aware of their cultural identity, expressed through symbols, customs, traditions, and diverse human activities, forming a shared framework for individuals and groups.

For African refugees in Algeria, many have left behind homes, communities, countries, and even their cultural identity to live in a society with distinct cultural markers. Despite religious similarities, Algeria's cultural landscape differs greatly. Algerian society is culturally diverse, blending Arabic, Islamic, Amazigh, Mediterranean, African, and global elements. It encompasses various groups, including Arabized and Francophone communities, Chaoui, Kabyle, Mozabite, and Tuareg cultures. Despite this cultural diversity, Algerians live in a united, cohesive society under the umbrella of Arab, Islamic, and Amazigh identity. (Rahiema, June 2013, p. 194)

Cultural alienation for African refugees may arise from specific aspects of Algerian society's cultural system. The religious and ethnic backgrounds of some refugees, such as Christians and Jewish Africans, make their social integration challenging, especially as some religious practices may conflict with Algerian social norms or are restricted by laws despite the society's cultural diversity. This alienation often stems from the forced migration and separation from home, creating a sense of meaninglessness and resistance to adopt a new cultural identity. For refugees, alienation becomes a personal crisis of lost purpose and disconnectedness, compounded by homelessness, rejection, and lack of agency. This form of alienation requires psychological and social intervention to address its profound negative effects.

### Conclusion

Scientific discussions surrounding the concept of human existence and its purposes have raised numerous valid questions. Human life is a continuous endeavor to build civilization and structure, providing meaning and definition to existence. Identity, as a distinct ontological concept in human life, encompasses various elements; it is the cultural and cognitive system that defines one's being, the self-awareness of identity, beliefs, history, heritage, and the sense of value, purpose, integration, and belonging. Ultimately, it represents the ongoing quest for social integration. Within this framework, the issues of identity and integration for African refugees in Algeria remain among the most pertinent and pressing topics in Algerian society, visible in daily life.

The African refugee who has left behind their homeland, community, and home has lost a significant part of their identity and seeks integration in Algerian society—a society known for its openness to refugees and migrants. Despite this, the reality shows that refugees live marginalized, deprived, feeling inferior, lacking adequate housing, healthcare, and often suffering from severe illnesses due to living outdoors without suitable shelter. Refugees often reside in medium-sized groups in isolated areas away from Algerian communities. Socially constrained and culturally alienated, the African refugee is frequently rejected from employment, particularly in advanced or clearly defined roles within society.

In a country where even Algerian citizens face limited access to resources, the possibility of a “distinctive,” “creative,” or “multi-cultural” identity remains distant for African refugees. Their primary concern remains survival and meeting basic needs (food, water, clothing). Therefore, for African refugees in Algeria, identity is currently best described as “the identity of someone who simply lives”.

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