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African Immigrant workers and professional orientations in Tamanrasset, Algeria: A sociological Anaysis

Blama Abdelkader, Laboratory of Scientific and Cultural Heritage of the Tamanrasset Region, Department of Sociology, Amin El-Akal El-Amnokal El-Hadj Moussa Ag Akhamouk University, Tamanrasset, Algeria.
blamakader@univ-tam.dz ; Orcid: 0009-0007-0462-8785

Benbia Tarek, Laboratory of Scientific and Cultural Heritage of the Tamanrasset Region, Department of Sociology, Amin El-Akal El-Amnokal El-Hadj Moussa Ag Akhamouk University, Tamanrasset, Algeria
benbia.tarek@univ-tam.dz ; 0009-0004-1825-5818

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Abstract

The present study examines the issue of African labor and the impact of the increasing phenomenon of African migration on the host local community. It specifically investigates its effects on economic activities—particularly on occupations—and its relationship with the professional orientations of local youth, from a socio-professional perspective. The study aims to identify its social and cultural dimensions and assess the extent to which it aligns with prevailing social frameworks in reality, through a theoretical analytical approach.

Furthermore, the study attempts to link these trends to the actual state of professional orientations, especially in light of the growing presence of foreign labor—most notably African migrants—who have increasingly occupied frontline positions in vocational workspaces and workshops. This development has rendered them a direct influencing factor in driving the dynamics of local development. The study also seeks to situate this phenomenon within the broader sociological heritage.

Keywords: African labor; professional orientations; socio-professional.

Introduction

Economic activities assume a central role in structuring labor allocation and supplying the workforce across diverse segments of the labor market, thereby addressing demand for human resources endowed with appropriate skills that meet market requirements. These dynamics are shaped by multiple socio-political determinants, among which foreign labor—particularly in the context of irregular migration—constitutes a salient factor.

In this regard, African migrant labor has become highly prevalent in the city of Tamanrasset, where workers of various African nationalities have come to play a prominent role in the organization of the local labor market, including the distribution of occupations, trades, and vocational specializations. This prominence is driven by sustained demand from employers, private contractors, and owners of economic and commercial enterprises, who increasingly rely on this workforce. The continued expansion of this phenomenon is underpinned by both material and social considerations, notably the availability of low-cost labor, which is often preferred by employers, particularly in a context marked by regulatory laxity. Consequently, this has generated significant repercussions for the socio-economic fabric, especially within the labor market, extending its effects to vocational training seekers and to young individuals enrolling in training centers to determine their future career paths.

Although the majority of occupations occupied by African migrants are concentrated in manual and semi-skilled trades, these positions cannot be regarded as either temporary or marginal. While highly qualified professions such as engineering and medicine remain largely unaffected—particularly in the context of Tamanrasset—the concentration of migrant labor in trades such as blacksmithing, plumbing, carpentry, and construction exceeds 80%. This reality exerts a direct influence on

unemployment rates, especially against the backdrop of rising living costs and the increasing socio-economic expectations of youth in an era characterized by rapid digital and technological transformation.

Sociological scholarship has long engaged with the phenomenon of foreign labor, both historically and in contemporary contexts, from multiple analytical perspectives. Building upon these foundational studies, the present research seeks to extend this body of work by applying a sociological lens to the case of African migrant labor and its impact on the professional orientations of youth in Tamanrasset.

To this end, the study draws on qualitative insights derived from interviews conducted with a sample of young individuals, vocational training officials, and workshop owners. This empirical approach aims to uncover the underlying drivers behind the expansion of African migrant labor as a substitute for local workforce participation across various sectors, with the objective of producing a nuanced sociological interpretation of the phenomenon.

1. Vocational Training: Choice and Practice

Enhancing individual productivity and expanding the size of the labor force constitute fundamental pillars in driving the economic development of any country. In pursuit of this objective, states deploy a wide array of instruments, programs, and developmental strategies—both economic and pedagogical—through the institutional frameworks of education and vocational training, alongside formal schooling systems and universities. These efforts are typically embedded within coordinated policy frameworks aligned with broader economic orientations, with the aim of supplying a skilled and versatile workforce across multiple domains and specializations, including technical, artisanal, and professional occupations. Such occupations function as complementary inputs to heavy, light, and medium industries, encompassing trades such as carpentry, tailoring, welding, mechanics, plumbing, construction, and various forms of self-employment.

From an economic standpoint, individual income is defined as the aggregate returns accrued by an individual as a result of labor effort and ownership of private assets. Variations in income levels can be attributed to several interrelated factors, including differences in occupational structures, wage differentials linked to the relative utility of professions within society, individual capabilities and skill endowments, and broader personal attributes. Additionally, disparities in capital ownership—often shaped by savings behavior and inheritance—as well as the nature and composition of private assets and their evolution in response to changing economic conditions, further contribute to income inequality ¹.

Training represents a core mechanism in completing the vocational formation cycle and in fostering individual competence. It equips individuals with essential knowledge and practical experience, thereby enhancing learning outcomes, expanding skill sets, and enabling the acquisition of competencies that surpass pre-training levels. Moreover, structured training reduces error rates and improves overall work performance. Empirical evidence underscores the effectiveness of supervised training in developing specialized skills. For instance, one study found that the average time required to replace the blades of a movable shear was 29 minutes, a figure that remained unchanged over a six-year period. Following the implementation of a structured training program, this duration was reduced to one-third, reflecting gains in efficiency attributable to enhanced expertise and experiential learning ². These improvements were also associated with reduced stress levels, fewer workplace accidents, and lower rates of absenteeism and labor turnover.

Within this framework, the relevant governmental authority seeks to institutionalize such benefits by integrating practical apprenticeship periods into vocational training pathways. These typically extend from six months to one year—depending on the specialization—or may take the form of alternating training schemes that combine workplace immersion with periodic theoretical instruction delivered on a weekly basis.

Second: Government Policies and Employment

Successive Algerian governments have sought to establish a structural–functional framework for labor and employment through large-scale public initiatives, notably the “One Million Jobs” program and the “One Million University Seats” project. These initiatives reflected a clear state commitment at the time to invest in youth potential, promote social stability, and foster the development of active human capital.

This orientation was operationalized through youth employment schemes supported by facilitated credit mechanisms, particularly via the *ANSEJ* (National Agency for Support of Youth Employment) and *ANGEM* (National Agency for Microcredit Management). In parallel, vocational training graduates were encouraged to enter the labor market by creating

¹ Rashwan, Hussein Abdel Hamid Ahmed. (2002). *Economy and Society: A Study in Economic Sociology*. Alexandria: Modern University Office.

² Belrabah, Mohamed. *Vocational Adjustment*, p. 110. Laboratory of Applications of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Oran, Algeria.

and investing in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), thereby contributing to local economic development and labor market integration ³.

Furthermore, the Algerian government has consistently placed local production and individual productivity at the core of its policy agenda, with the aim of transitioning toward a diversified and resilient economy. This vision is grounded in the development of an educated, skilled, and productive citizenry. To this end, various youth-support initiatives and programs encouraging the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been launched to enhance labor market diversification ⁴.

In this context, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, during his visit marking the 28th National Production Fair, stated that Algeria seeks to build a strong national economy and improve citizens' living standards. He emphasized that the year 2020 would represent a turning point for economic operators, provided they commit to diversification, revitalizing the national economy, and job creation. He further stressed the importance of exporting local products, considering it the only viable path toward gradually reducing dependence on hydrocarbon revenues. These revenues have partially been allocated to training programs both domestically and abroad, aimed at producing a qualified workforce capable of establishing their own enterprises, generating employment opportunities, and acquiring practical expertise through engagement with economic actors, traders, and skilled artisans.

Third: Society and the Culture of Occupational Practice

As the social milieu constitutes the primary framework within which these interactions occur, it both influences and is influenced by the economy. Social problems are often linked to the underdevelopment of production technologies and insufficient capital investment, while economic challenges may, in turn, stem from social factors such as values, norms, and behavioral patterns governing economic activity. These dynamics may result, for instance, in slower economic growth and reduced productivity.

Individual behavior plays a decisive role, shaped by factors such as the willingness to engage in sustained effort, assume responsibility, maintain and preserve productive assets, and adopt modern technological methods. It also depends on individuals' motivation and capacity to acquire skills and expertise, as well as on deeply rooted cultural values, traditions, and inherited social norms ⁵.

Moreover, several social determinants interact to influence the trajectory of economic development, including:

- Social openness and levels of aspiration;
- Modes of thinking that diverge from scientific reasoning, including reliance on fatalism or beliefs such as envy and the evil eye;
- Idleness, time mismanagement, and the undervaluation of time;
- Social perceptions of manual labor, particularly the belief that it implies a lower social status despite technological advancement;
- The degree of collective responsibility awareness, which requires a high level of education and cultural consciousness ⁶.

Returning to the efforts of the Algerian government, it becomes evident that these policies and orientations have been confronted by a set of structural phenomena that have directly affected the labor market in general, and occupations in particular—especially in southern border regions such as Tamanrasset and In Guezzam. Algeria has experienced a continuous annual inflow of African migrants, primarily from Sahel countries. While some migrants settle within Algeria, others consider it a transit zone—a strategic stage through which they accumulate resources to finance their onward migration to Europe.

The Wilaya of Tamanrasset ranks first in terms of the concentration of African migrants of various nationalities, particularly following the tightening of European border controls, which has significantly reduced prospects of onward migration. As a border region and a gateway to Africa, Tamanrasset has become a preferred destination for African youth seeking pathways toward a more stable life, especially in Europe. According to the Algerian Red Crescent, the number of migrants has exceeded 21,500 in recent estimates, subject to fluctuation due to constant mobility in and out of the region. More recently, Algeria has shifted from being primarily a transit country to a destination of settlement for many migrants, particularly in Tamanrasset.

³ Seba, H. (2021). *Sociology of social and occupational mobility*. Dar Al-Bahith, p. 47.

⁴ Echrouk Newspaper. Issue No. 2685, October 2020.

⁵ Rashwan, Hussein Abdel Hamid. *Op. cit.*, pp. 90–91.

⁶ Rashwan, Hussein Abdel Hamid. *Ibid.*, p. 91

As a result, African migrant labor has expanded across various sectors, effectively penetrating multiple occupational fields and imposing its presence within the labor market. This workforce has become increasingly integrated into local economic structures, particularly among employers and the bourgeois class, driven by economic necessity and the migrants' obligation to support families in their countries of origin. Their labor is often exchanged for relatively low wages and limited benefits, which may include informal accommodation in workshops, construction sites, farms, or properties owned by local employers. This arrangement typically involves physically demanding work under informal conditions, making it economically advantageous for employers, particularly in terms of reduced labor costs, absence of social protection contributions, and lower wage obligations.

The range of activities undertaken by this labor force is diverse; however, this study focuses specifically on construction, carpentry, and welding—occupations that are immediately visible to any observer visiting the region, particularly due to their physically demanding nature.

Given that these trades are characterized by high physical strain and relatively low financial returns, they have, conversely, contributed to the withdrawal of local youth from such occupations. This has created a labor vacuum, marked by a scarcity of local workers willing to engage in these professions, especially when compared to the significant presence of African migrant labor. This dynamic is further reinforced by employers' preference for migrant labor in both private projects and artisanal workshops.

Consequently, this workforce has formed a parallel labor structure that provides services across the labor market—not only to the bourgeois class and project owners, but also to private individuals and local residents. Their activities have expanded into numerous productive sectors previously mentioned, directly intersecting with national economic programs and state policies aimed at structuring labor force participation and mobilizing local youth. Their presence in carpentry, construction, welding, and plumbing workshops has become highly visible. These are precisely the vocational specializations prioritized by the Algerian state within its development strategies, particularly through vocational training centers and apprenticeship institutions.

Statistical data from the municipality of Tamanrasset indicate that in the commercial sector there are 150 registered businesses, of which 39 are inactive and 111 operational. In metalwork and related trades—including welding—there are 135 establishments, with 40 inactive and 95 active. In contrast, the construction sector reflects relatively low engagement among locals, with only 117 professional certificates issued since January 1, 2016—a modest figure compared to the scale of construction activity in the municipality. This disparity raises critical questions regarding the impact of the extensive penetration of foreign labor into the professional landscape of the region.

Fourth: Social Perceptions of African Labor

This expansion into professional domains and occupational mobility has significantly influenced social perceptions. It has contributed to the formation of collective representations within society, whereby physically demanding occupations and certain manual trades are increasingly associated with African migrant labor. This phenomenon echoes earlier sociological analyses, notably those of Thomas and Znaniecki, who conceptualized the “social attitude” as an intermediary factor linking motivations, orientations, and goals within social behavior⁷. Sociologists tend to argue that the behavioral norms established by social institutions become foundational principles for organizing the social group. This perspective aligns with Thomas's proposition that social attitudes determine the subjective characteristics of individuals within a social group. He concludes that an attitude is “always directed toward an object, making it possible to predict the actual and potential behaviors of the individual in response to social stimuli.”

If African labor is considered as one of the active socio-professional groups contributing to the dynamics and transformation of labor—both within the internal and external environment of the world of work—then its presence inevitably exerts a measurable influence on social organization and on individuals' perceptions of certain occupations and economic activities. These occupations have become, to a considerable extent, associated with this workforce, given its widespread presence in the labor market, albeit largely within the informal sector⁸.

This labor force is often perceived as less costly and more readily available, and therefore more efficient from the perspective of employers, regardless of formal qualifications or quality standards—competencies that are instead acquired progressively through practice and experiential learning. This situation has, in effect, diverted opportunities that were originally intended for local human capital, particularly graduates of vocational training systems.

Returning to *The Polish Peasant* study, Thomas and Znaniecki developed a set of analytical concepts that are highly relevant for understanding how African labor influences the professional orientations of local youth, particularly through the mediation

⁷ Al-Omari, Salima. A Sociological Reading of “The Polish Peasant” by Thomas and Znaniecki, p. 39. Al-Riwaq Journal for Social and Human Studies, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2020, pp. 28–46.

⁸ Seba, Hisham. Op. cit., p. 22.

of social attitudes and individual adaptation processes. Among these concepts are social change, social pattern, personality, and social situation, each of which provides a framework for interpreting how individuals adjust their orientations and behaviors in response to evolving labor market conditions.

1. Social Change

The study conceptualizes social change as a transformation in the organizational equilibrium of both individuals and social groups⁹. It is a process that begins with disruption or disorganization and culminates in the emergence of new behavioral patterns, followed by the reconstruction of social organization. When this framework is applied to the labor context in the Wilaya of Tamanrasset, it becomes evident that African labor has imposed its own logic, particularly among contractors, artisans, and workshop owners, as well as within society at large.

This is reflected in common expressions associating construction or manual work with African workers—for instance, phrases equivalent to “bring a Sudanese worker” (i.e., an African laborer) for building or carpentry tasks. Such expressions illustrate the diffusion and normalization of this perception within the collective consciousness, shaping social behavior and reinforcing the dominance of African labor in these occupations over local workers. This dynamic is justified by various arguments advanced by members of the local community.

Some perceive African workers as more cost-effective, while others argue that they are easier to manage compared to local workers, particularly regarding reliability and adherence to deadlines. According to several respondents, African workers are characterized by diligence, discipline, and respect for work schedules. One interviewee stated that after experiencing delays with a local construction worker, she replaced him with an African worker upon recommendation, who completed the task in a significantly shorter time frame. In addition to lower wages, the speed of execution further enhances their attractiveness relative to local labor.

Similar justifications are observed among workshop owners, who typically employ between three and six workers, often accommodating them within the workplace. In some cases, these workers perform dual roles, ensuring security at night while working during the day. Such arrangements reflect an embedded system of labor utilization that maximizes productivity while minimizing costs.

2. Social Pattern

According to Thomas and Znaniecki, the social pattern functions as a regulatory framework for organizing social life, grounded in a set of attitudes and values held by individuals. It is closely related to broader lifestyles and cultural orientations. The authors identify three primary social types: the **philistine (conservative)**, the **bohemian (adaptive)**, and the **creative (innovative)**.

The conservative type is characterized by adherence to tradition and established norms, whether within rural or bourgeois contexts, consistently aligning behavior with customary practices. The bohemian type, by contrast, is open to change but does not initiate it; rather, it remains influenced by external forces and primarily engages in adaptive behavior. The creative type represents the agent of innovation, possessing autonomy, personal values, and independent projects.

Thomas and Znaniecki further emphasize that value emerges from the interaction between individual attitudes and collective norms, forming a synthesis between orientation and value systems. This process is realized when individuals are able to satisfy their needs within their social environment.

In this context, the widespread—albeit implicit—acceptance among the population of Tamanrasset of employing African labor across various trades can be understood. Despite the presence of local workers, economic motivations have conferred value upon the services provided by this labor force, overriding initial reservations. Thus, economic rationality has played a decisive role in legitimizing and normalizing reliance on African labor within the local socio-economic structure.

3. Personality

Personality is understood as a system of organized processes resulting from acculturation, highlighting the duality between environment and personality as a mediating link between one situation and another¹⁰. Some scholars argue that social identity is constructed following the achievement of professional identity, making the latter a central objective in the life of the working individual¹¹.

⁹ Al-Omari, S. (2020). Previously cited work.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Chouimat, K. (n.d.). Youth between the search for cultural identity and the achievement of social status. *Journal of Social Studies*, (11), 73–83. Al-Basirah Center for Research, Consulting, and Educational Services.

For the African worker, acculturation operates as a process of cultural adaptation and socialization, enabling the acquisition of language and social values that facilitate integration. Conversely, the local individual seeks to acquire a profession as a means of affirming identity. However, the scarcity of stable employment opportunities—particularly those perceived as socially valuable among youth—and the mismatch between available jobs and individual aspirations often compel local workers to accept unfavorable working conditions, including low wages.

A key distinction between local and African labor lies in the informal nature of the latter's employment, which is often undeclared to official authorities and may lack social protection, such as health insurance. This occurs within a labor environment characterized by weak regulatory frameworks, high fluidity, and the absence of clear standards, thereby undermining job security and wage stability.

Through their widespread presence in certain occupations, African workers have developed a distinct social identity that has led local workers to perceive trades such as construction, carpentry, and welding as domains predominantly reserved for African labor.

4. Situation

The concept of situation refers to the individual's awareness and interpretation of their own positions, as well as their perception of others' positions, which collectively influence both the individual and the group. These perceptions constitute the objective conditions of social action, grounded in consciousness and the evaluation of different situations¹².

Insights derived from *The Polish Peasant* study provide an analytical framework for understanding the attitudes and perceptions held by craftsmen and unemployed youth. These actors develop evaluative criteria through which they interpret situations, shaping their professional orientations. In this context, the widespread presence of African labor significantly influences occupational choices, often limiting opportunities for local youth to acquire professional experience, even temporarily, within workshops.

This reality not only restricts their ability to secure immediate income but also hinders the development of long-term career projects. The situation thus reflects the extensive diffusion of African labor across sectors such as carpentry, welding, and construction, where their presence has become structurally embedded within the local labor market.

Fifth: Career Choice in Vocational Training Centers

Youth career orientations have a significant impact on their personalities and, more broadly, on their future professional lives. They shape the pathways of success and failure, as well as individuals' well-being or dissatisfaction. According to Dr. Izzat Abdel Hadi and Said Hussein, career orientations transform young people into creative and productive capacities, generating substantial economic, social, and psychological benefits.

From an economic perspective, placing the right individual in the appropriate job enhances efficiency, increases the likelihood of promotion, improves income levels, and contributes to the development of professional skills. This alignment fosters job stability, as individuals are less likely to change occupations after investing considerable time and experience in a given field¹³.

A lack of proper vocational guidance leads to a diminished sense of stability and security, accompanied by low morale, anxiety, and psychological distress, which ultimately results in frustration. This condition further weakens the individual's morale, generates feelings of alienation from society, and directs them toward specific occupations influenced by various factors such as peer advice, parental modeling, family traditions, or personal readings on certain subjects.

In most cases, young people do not choose their professions based on a single determinant, but rather as the outcome of the interaction of multiple factors. These may be internal factors related to the individual's innate or acquired characteristics, or external factors linked to their social and cultural environment, as well as to labor market conditions, available job opportunities, institutional employment structures, and the associated benefits.

Based on an interview with a vocational guidance counselor at a vocational training center, and in response to a question regarding students' interest in trades such as carpentry, welding, and construction, she stated: "With regard to carpentry specialization, the center receives seasonally between 20 and 30 trainees. Their motivations can be classified into three categories. The first includes those who inherit the trade, where the young trainee enrolls primarily to fulfill the legal requirements necessary to continue working in a workshop owned by a family member. This reflects a process of social reproduction, or the reproduction of the enterprise within these families¹⁴." Another category intends to invest in

¹² Al-Omari, S. (2020). Previously cited work.

¹³ Ezzat, J., & Hosni, S. (2012). *Vocational guidance and its theory*. Dar Al-Thaqafa for Publishing and Distribution.

¹⁴ Chouimat, K. (n.d.). Previously cited work, p. 84.

the field by benefiting from project financing loans, while the last group aims merely to obtain certification and professional qualification in pursuit of employment, without indicating either a decline or an increase in interest in the trade. The same observation applies to the welding profession. The counselor further noted that, with regard to African labor, most trainees and workshop owners tend to employ such workers in their projects preemptively, although they do not object to hosting trainees for practical training periods within their workshops.

As for the construction specialization, she added that:

“This field has experienced a clear decline and a noticeable lack of interest. The center only opens this specialization upon request from institutions seeking to recruit individuals. In such cases, trainees are directed through an apprenticeship scheme, combining field training with one day per week of theoretical instruction.”

Sixth: African Migrant Labor and Artisan Workshops

The mobility of African labor within the labor market and its widespread presence appear to have contributed to the emergence of a new layer within the social structure, one that, to some extent, monopolizes certain activities and specializes in them. This labor force offers its services broadly to society and particularly to employers, thereby influencing the occupational orientations of local youth.

This situation has led many young individuals enrolling in vocational training centers to avoid certain trades, such as carpentry, welding, and construction, due to the stereotypical image associated with them and the new socio-economic reality they perceive. This raises important analytical questions regarding the role of employers and workshop owners in expanding the scope of African labor participation. Specifically, whether this dynamic has generated a form of socio-professional mobility among local youth, reflected in their declining interest in these trades and their shift toward occupations perceived as offering higher social status.

Such tendencies may be explained by the association of these manual trades, in the mind of local youth, with African labor, or by the emergence of alternative occupations considered easier and more profitable. As Algerian citizens, some youth may perceive themselves as entitled to better opportunities and returns ¹⁵.

A number of authors, in *Cultural Theory*, note that proponents of egalitarianism argue that human beings are inherently good but become corrupted by flawed institutions. This perspective echoes the view expressed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract*, where he states: “Man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains.” Similarly, James Madison argued that the causes of conflict are rooted in human nature itself ¹⁶. Human nature, as argued by James Madison, is characterized by both selfishness and obstinacy. Since no institutional arrangement—except despotism—can entirely prevent individuals from persistently pursuing their private interests at the expense of the broader society, Madison concludes that the political system must be structured in a way that harnesses the inevitable conflicts among individuals driven by self-interest, as well as among competing groups ¹⁷. Madison concluded that the conflict between competing interests generates a political system whose outcome can produce a beneficial collective result—primarily through the limitation and regulation of political power ¹⁸. In this perspective, the private interests of individuals and institutions constitute the primary driving force behind the exploitation of African labor in employment. This is largely motivated by economic considerations, including lower labor costs, reduced obligations such as health and social insurance, and the relative ease of control made possible by the irregular legal status of these workers.

Field observations and direct interactions with these workers indicate that securing employment to meet their basic daily needs remains their foremost priority, despite the existence of clear legal regulations governing such practices. This situation has extended even to formal institutions, which have, in many cases, adapted to this reality and begun to employ African labor in sectors such as construction, carpentry, and welding—even when the contracting entity is a public institution. The same pattern is evident among private employers and workshop owners, who perceive greater advantages in employing African labor compared to local workers in these trades.

From a theoretical standpoint, Karl Marx conceptualized labor as a fundamental force within his analytical framework. The working class occupies a central role, as it engages in the production of goods and simultaneously sells its labor power to the bourgeoisie in exchange for wages and access to basic needs such as housing, integration, and a degree of personal autonomy.

¹⁵ Various authors. (1978). *Cultural theory* (A. S. Al-Sawi, Trans.). World of Knowledge Series, Kuwait. (p. 73).

¹⁶ Sebaa, H. (n.d.). *Previously cited work*, p. 22.

¹⁷ Various authors (n.d.), p. 74.

¹⁸ Various authors. (1978). *Cultural theory* (A. S. Al-Sawi, Trans.), p. 74.

Seventh: Occupational Mobility and African Labor

The concept of occupational mobility in the twentieth century took on multiple forms shaped by economic, social, and political transformations, as well as by social movements resulting from ongoing development. The emergence of new occupations accelerated the process of industrialization. American sociologists highlighted that the inheritance of professions—linked to traditional social systems—initially constrained mobility. However, this situation evolved over time, as the determinants and causes of occupational mobility diversified according to Western thinkers.

Adam Smith's contribution, particularly through the theory of supply and demand, emphasizes the role of market conditions in shaping occupational mobility. He explains how the interaction between sellers and consumers, mediated by purchasing power, influences professional movement. Smith also distinguishes between patterns of mobility in the United States and Europe: the former emphasizes occupations and values within a hierarchical social structure, whereas the latter focuses more on productive forces, surplus value, and class conflict in explaining labor mobility ¹⁹.

Pitirim Sorokin, on the other hand, focuses on the study of mobility variables across temporal and spatial dimensions. He highlights the role of technological and economic development in fostering alignment between family and economic environments. Furthermore, he underscores the impact of educational attainment on family dynamics, as well as the influence of parental authority—particularly in rural societies where occupations are often inherited ²⁰.

From a Marxist perspective, Karl Marx argues that relations of production are the primary cause behind the existence of social classes, dividing society between workers and employers. The relationship between these classes is fundamentally characterized by conflict over the ownership of the means of production. This dynamic entails power asymmetries and symbolic domination exercised by the owning class over the working class, which possesses nothing but its labor power and is thus positioned as the dominated class within Marxist theory ²¹.

Marx argues that every society possesses its own mode of production, through which goods are produced based on individuals' technical capacities, work experience, and manual skills, in conjunction with the network of social relations linking its various groups and classes involved in the production process. These relations emerge through the processes of exchange and distribution of material goods.

Such relations take different forms depending on the mode of production: between masters and slaves in the slave mode of production; between the state and its subjects in the Asiatic mode of production; between lords and serfs in the feudal mode of production; and between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the capitalist mode of production ²².

Marx further maintains that inequality in the distribution of resources within society leads to class stratification, which in turn gives rise to labor movements and social revolutions.

Max Weber also addressed the issue of social stratification, particularly professional classes. He argues that the categories of stratification outlined in his work *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* are fundamentally based on the occupational variable. In Weber's view, occupation plays a central role in determining individuals' group or class affiliations. However, this classification is not solely dependent on occupation in isolation; it is also shaped by factors such as education, training, specialization, skills, and individual talent, all of which influence performance in productive or service-oriented work ²³.

He also pointed to the dimensions of social mobility through social stratification, summarizing them as follows: First: class boundaries, determined by economic ownership and the worker's conditions within the external environment.

Second: influence, derived from individuals' possession of resources.

Third: its foundation lies in political authority, expressed through the roles of the social, economic, and ideological systems.

Émile Durkheim emphasized occupational mobility through the division of society and the division of labor, as well as functional differentiation among individuals, particularly in more urbanized societies where material, moral, symbolic, and normative inequalities tend to emerge ²⁴.

¹⁹ Sebaa, H. (n.d.). *Previously cited work*, p. 34.

²¹ Sebaa, H. (n.d.), p. 37.

²³ Ibid., p. 38.

²⁴ Hisham Saba, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

These dynamics are applicable, albeit on a smaller scale, to the situation of African labor in Tamanrasset. Each of these dimensions can be observed in the local context of the province. Social and occupational mobility has manifested in the form of changes in young people's professional orientations, particularly in their choice of occupations as a means to obtain loans or establish small workshops. These are often operated through the employment of African labor, or sometimes merely pursued for the acquisition of certification, as noted by a vocational training guidance counselor. To some extent, this allows us to link the effects of collective mobility within a single generation or across multiple generations, within an implicitly structured division of roles—socially endorsed—between African and local labor in certain professions that have witnessed a wide of such labor.

Conclusion:

Although African labor does not constitute a direct pressure mechanism bound by formal contractual obligations whose violation may lead to disputes, its impact on the social and economic structure of Tamanrasset—and similarly affected provinces such as Adrar, Ouargla, and Ghardaïa—remains evident, if not already realized. This calls for intensified academic research and systematic studies on the subject.

The spread of African labor in Tamanrasset, in particular, may generate social effects, especially among youth. These effects may discourage them from acquiring certain professions due to negative perceptions or distorted images associated with these occupations, or due to the belief that engaging in jobs such as construction, manual labor, or security—often associated with African workers—may diminish their social status. Consequently, physically demanding occupations in Tamanrasset become less attractive career choices, especially in the absence of genuine institutional support.

This situation necessitates the adoption of a strict and intelligent policy aimed at restoring the true value of professions in the minds of young people and encouraging their engagement. It also requires the development of a national strategy to balance the presence of African labor in certain occupations with effective mechanisms for youth vocational training and skill acquisition, ensuring professional competence. At the same time, stricter monitoring of African labor movements—and the related issue of irregular migration and its associated phenomena—is essential.

Furthermore, providing a rigorous sociological explanation of labor mobility and assessing its long-term impact—particularly regarding the replacement of local competencies with foreign labor—constitutes an urgent research priority. Such efforts could contribute to forecasting trends, regulating labor dynamics, and formulating policies that enhance the effectiveness and positive outcomes of professions. This would, in turn, stimulate investment, activate youth potential, and strengthen the local economy, market dynamics, and economic diversification—objectives that align with Algeria's long-term development strategies, which rely fundamentally on the capacities of its own workforce.

Sociological studies thus remain a fundamental compass for understanding and managing social phenomena that directly influence socio-professional mobility, both at the regional level and across Algeria as a whole.

This study establishes a foundational framework and offers critical empirical insights into local labor dynamics, serving as a catalyst for future longitudinal and large-scale quantitative research. Subsequent investigations utilizing robust official data will be essential to fully elucidate the complexities of this phenomenon. Ultimately, this evidence-based approach will inform policymakers, facilitating the design of strategic, context-specific labor and migration policies in Tamanrasset and across Algeria.

List of footnotes:

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