

The social Suicide Rates: A review on Durkheim social thought

Abstract

Suicide is a sickness of society. Various philosophers have expressed different points of view regarding the causes of suicide. However, Ken Morrison's Marx, Durkheim, Weber : Formations of Modern Social Thought contains a detailed discussion of Emile Durkheim's suicide. This study demonstrates Emile Durkheim's theory of suicide. It is demonstrated how he describes the many sorts of suicide using two cases. Most importantly, it demonstrates how suicidal thoughts consume people.

Keywords: Social integration, Social regulation, Egoistic Suicide, Altruistic Suicide, Anomic Suicide, Fatalistic Suicide.

Introduction:

While Durkheim was incarcerated at Dorden VX in 1888, he started researching the issue of suicide. While he was writing an article about suicide and the birth rate, the issue caught his attention. Statistics that Durkheim gathered included records of suicide fatalities that were broken down by age, religion, sex, occupation, and status.

Prior to Durkheim's work, sociological analysis replaced the psychological view of suicide as a psychological cause. When Durkheim started researching suicide, it was widely believed that it was a neurological condition and that its causes came from indivisible psychological states. There are various reasons why Durkheim chose to focus on suicide at that time. The reasons are-

First, Suicide was a growing social problem in Europe by 1850 and many felt that it was associated with the development of industrial society.

Second, Industrial society had made economic institutions dominant over other social institutions and served to place individual self interest and economic gain over the collective forces of society.

Third, The political affairs dreyfuss affair in 1894 was a series blow to france national unity.

Fourth, Societies linked suicide to social factor such as industrial change, occupation, family life and religion and this served to focus attention on society and social institutions rather than on psychological factors.

Durkheim's view on suicide:

Durkheim had a totally different strategy. Instead than focusing on personal motivations or psychological conditions. He started by examining the "Social Suicide Rate" in various nations. After researching suicide rates, Durkheim came to the following key conclusions:

First, he noticed that the suicide rate varied from society to society.

Example: They were higher in France in comparison to Germany or lower in Denmark in comparison to England.

Second, He observed that between 1841 and 1872, the number of suicidal deaths in each country did not change dramatically and were considered to be stable.

Example: Between 1841-72 the number of suicidal deaths in France was 2814 and 2866 respectively whereas in Germany for the same years they were 290 and 318.

It implied that, in addition to a specific number of suicide deaths occurring in every culture, certain social processes were also at work to achieve what Durkheim named the "Yearly precision of rates."

Third, The observed stability of the rates meant that each society was a distinct social environment with different social characteristics, different religion, different patterns of family life, different military obligations and thus different suicidal characteristics.

Fourth, When compared to mortality rate, Durkheim noticed that the suicide rate greater than general mortality rate.

Suicide and the concept of Social integration:

One of the central concepts used by Durkheim in the study of suicide is social integration. Social integration can be defined as the extent to which individuals are linked to and feel allegiance for social groups to which they are attached.

Durkheim's theory of suicide is divided into two explanatory parts:

- i. Social integration
- ii. Social regulation

The concepts of social integration, which refer to the strength of social ties between the individual and society, were used by Durkheim to explain suicide.

The second element of the theory, which relates to the societal constraints placed on individuals to pursue their desires and demands, was articulated by Durkheim by using concepts of social regulation.

According to Durkheim,

Social integration	Less integration	Egoistic suicide
	More integration	Altruistic suicide

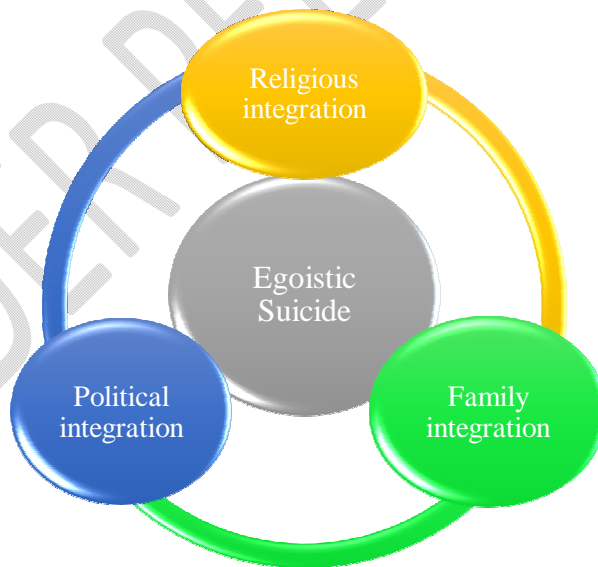
Social regulation	Less regulation	Anomic Suicide
	More regulation	Fatalistic suicide

Suicide the integrative role:

Egoistic suicide:

According to Durkheim, the disintegration of social bonds is the root cause of egoism. Egoism can be defined as the process by which people isolate themselves from society by focusing on themselves and withdrawing from the outer world. It is characterized by excessive introspection and withdrawal from social interactions. In a society where social integration deadlines have passed, gaps between people and their points of social contact with religious, familial, filial, and national organizations are to blame for egoistic suicide.

Egoistic suicide can be described in three integrative poles. These are



Catholics supposedly accept their doctrine without doubt or critique, according to religious integration. The low suicide rate is due to this. As per family integration, a person's family and home life tend to have an impact on their decision to commit suicide. Suicide and marriage have a correlation. Political integration asserts that Durkheim started by referencing famous instances of political turmoil and suicide. Politics-related crises don't have a high suicide rate. However,

the suicide rate is rising in the absence of social integration. For instance, the aforesaid concept was developed by looking at the rate of suicide and the war situation in various nations across time.

Therefore, it may be claimed that the lack of social integration and the disintegration of the ties that bind people to groups outside of themselves are the causes of egotistical suicide. It happens when the bonds connecting an individual to larger society weaken and when individual goals take the place of societal goals.

Altruistic Suicide

The complete antithesis of egoistic suicide, altruistic suicide, caught Durkheim's attention. In the context of altruistic suicide, those who commit suicide do so to preserve their dignity and spare their families from humiliation.

Durkheim first made his observations about altruistic suicide by looking at tribal societies. He lists three specific types of suicides. These are-

- i. The suicide of older men threatened with severe illness.
- ii. The suicide of women on the death bed of their husbands.
- iii. The suicide of followers on the death of their chiefs.

Durkheim thought that the cause of altruistic suicide in tribal societies is to be found in their excessive degree of social integration.

Suicide, the regulative pole (Anomic and Fatalistic Suicide)

Durkheim's theory of suicide, egoism and altruism formed the two polar extremes of social integration. On the contrast, anomic and fatalistic suicide formed the two polar extremes of social regulation.

Anomic Suicide

The loss of societal control might be called to as anomia. According to Durkheim, industrial society's unrestricted economic progress was the source of anomic growth. His study of the suicide rates during economic crises, such as the financial recession and periods of economic downturn, serves as the starting point for his concept of anomic suicide.

In accordance with Durkheim, anomic suicide happens when society is unable to impose limits on individual needs and wants and to determine the appropriate level of constraint. Social control is either absent or very weak in this situation. For instance, Durkheim believed that if we take economic data at face value, we are bound to believe that people commit suicide as their lives become more challenging, especially when there is economic unrest.

Fatalistic Suicide

The final category in Durkheim's theory, fatalistic suicide, represents the polar opposite of suicide brought on by changes to social regulation. According to Durkheim, a sort of suicide known as "fatalism" takes place when there is too much social regulation. According to him,

fatalistic suicide occurs as a result of an excessive amount of regulation and an overly developed regime, whereas anomic refers to the absence of regulation.

Example: Durkheim cited the suicide of slaves who, seeing no alternative to enslavement under the master, take their own lives.

References

Morrison, K. (2006). Marx, Durkheim, Weber (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications. Retrieved from <https://www.perlego.com/book/1431428/marx-durkheim-weber-formations-of-modern-social-thought-pdf> (Original work published 2006)

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