

## The social Suicide Rates: A review on Durkheim's theory of suicide

### Abstract

Suicide is a societal disease. Various philosophers have offered opposing opinions on the reason of suicide. However, Ken Morrison's *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formations of Modern Social Thought* contains a lengthy study of Émile Durkheim's suicide. This research looks into Emile Durkheim's idea of suicide. Two examples are presented to demonstrate how he describes various sorts of suicide. Above all, it demonstrates how suicide thoughts engulf people. Why people committed suicide is explored in detail for four types of suicide.

**Keywords:** *Egoistic Suicide, Altruistic Suicide, Anomic Suicide, Fatalistic Suicide.*

### Introduction:

The scope of Émile Durkheim's examination of the connectivity of suicide with social and environmental phenomena is so broad and varied that it is impossible to cover all of its avenues and byways in the length of this introduction. Durkheim has treated or touched on normal and abnormal psychology, social psychology, anthropology (especially the concept of race), meteorological and other "cosmic" factors, religion, marriage, the family, divorce, primitive rites and customs, social and economic crises, crime (especially homicide) and law and jurisprudence, history, education, and occupational groups within the confines of one not overly long volume. However, a brief assessment is still conceivable because, throughout Durkheim's work on all of these themes related to suicide, the core notion that suicide appears to be However, a brief assessment is still possible because, throughout Durkheim's work on all of these topics related to suicide, the basic theme is that suicide, which appears to be an individual phenomenon, is actually explicable aetiologically with reference to the social structure and its ramifying functions. (Baudelot & Establet, 2008)

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:

a) Suicide was a growing social problem in Europe by 1850 and many felt that it was associated with the development of industrial society, b) 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, c) The political affairs dreyfuss affair in 1894 was a series blow to France national unity. d) 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 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:

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.

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."

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.

When compared to mortality rate, Durkheim noticed that the suicide rate greater than general mortality rate. (Hodwitz & Frey, 2016)

### **Suicide and the concept of Social integration**

According to the hypothesis presented in Durkheim's *Suicide*, there are four different sorts of suicide: egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic. According to Durkheim's two explanatory variables, integration and regulation, egoistic suicide occurs in social situations with low integration, altruistic suicide occurs in those with high integration, anomic suicide occurs in those with high regulation, and fatalistic suicide occurs in those with low regulation. We are particularly interested in Durkheim's idea of egoistic suicide and his theory of social integration. We disregard altruistic suicide under the notion of integration as well as Durkheim's theory of regulation. Altruistic suicide occurs, according to Durkheim, in militaries and primitive communities. Comparative testing is not feasible for this aspect of his integration theory. Additionally, we do not include the theory of regulation and, more specifically, the theory of anomie because newly published empirical tests of the theory (F Durkheim's *Theory of Egoistic Suicide.Pdf*, n.d.)

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 (*F Durkheim's Theory of Egoistic Suicide.Pdf*, n.d.)

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.

**Table:1**

|                    |                  |                    |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 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:**

The three basic claims are stated in Durkheim's treatment of egoistic suicide (1966:208): Suicide rates are inversely correlated with the level of religious societal integration. The rate of suicide varies inversely with the level of domestic social integration. The rate of suicide varies inversely with the level of political social integration. (*F Durkheim's Theory of Egoistic Suicide.Pdf*, n.d.)

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.

### **Religion:**

Religious impacts on suicide have seen significant theoretical and empirical developments in the last 15 years. Three Durkheim-related ideas were tested: (a) the standard Durkheim integration approach; (b) the religious commitment viewpoint (Stack, 1982); and (c) the contextual or networking perspective of Durkheim (Pescosolido, 1990). Traditional approaches to religion and suicide have focused on Protestant-Catholic disparities. Catholicism was regarded of being a historical religion with many similar doctrines and customs. Protestantism, on the other hand, was the religion of the future, with less shared ideas and practices, allowing the individual greater independence or "egoism" in religious life. Durkheim's contention that Catholicism should protect against suicide while Protestantism should aggravate it has garnered conflicting reactions. Although the percentage of Catholics was associated to suicide rates in US counties, a study by the same authors that utilized the same dataset but added additional control factors discovered that the percentage of Catholics was not related to suicide rates in US counties (Kowalski, n.d.). Similarly, research on 404 county groups yields inconsistent results, with percent Catholic being unrelated to suicide. According to a survey of Louisiana counties, the percentage of Catholics increased the suicide rate, which contradicts the Durkheimian viewpoint. Breault (1988) discovered that the percentage of Catholics decreased county suicide rates; however, the percentage of Protestants also decreased suicide rates and was more closely related to suicide decreases than the percentage of Catholics. Furthermore, the percentages of Lutherans, Methodists, and Southern Baptists reduced county suicide rates. The suicide rate in Canadian provinces was unrelated to the percentage of Catholics. Finally, a reanalysis of 19th-century data, as well as statistics for The Netherlands in 1905-1910, casts doubt on the validity of Catholic-Protestant distinctions in three countries. Catholic deaths were very low in aggregate and individual terms due to suicide, but relatively high due to a variety of other external reasons. This shows that some suicides were misclassified as "sudden deaths," "undetermined causes," or other categories (Van.Pdf, n.d.).

Part of the current discussion concerning religion and suicide can be handled by exercising caution in the definition and selection of religious groupings that are still highly integrated. An new study of the Islam faith solidly verified the traditional Durkheimian concept that religions with high social integration should minimize suicide. Taking Islam as a religion characterised by complex ritual and individual obedience to the group, Simpson and Conklin (1989) discovered in their study of 71 nations that the higher the percentage of Islam in a nation, the lower the suicide rate. In contrast, the proportion of Catholic or Protestant persons in a country was unrelated to suicide. Perhaps the levels of integration of these two large Christian faiths have grown too low to reduce suicide. However, specific denominations or groups within these faiths may still take action to minimize suicide. n.d. (Modernization and.Pdf)

## 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.

According to Bartholin's book, *De Causis contemptae mortis a Danis*, Danish warriors regarded it a disgrace to die in bed of old age or sickness, and they killed themselves to avoid this ignominy. The Goths also thought that individuals who died naturally would spend eternity in tunnels full with deadly monsters. On the Visigoths' border stood a lofty pinnacle known as The Rock of the Forefathers, from which old men would throw themselves when they were tired of life. The similar habit was observed among the Thracians, Heruli, and others. "They are a nation extravagant with their blood and prepared to meet death," Silvius Italicus said of the Spanish Celts. As a result, individuals who committed suicide were awarded a pleasant subterranean home, while those who died of sickness or decrepitude were assigned a terrifying subterranean home. India has traditionally practiced the same custom. This acceptable attitude toward suicide may not have been in the Vedas, but it was surely very old. Plutarch says of the brahmin Calanus' suicide, "He sacrificed himself with his own hands, as was customary with sages of this region." And, according to Quintus Curtius, "among them there are a kind of savage and bestial men whom they call sages." The expectation of death is a source of pride for them, and they have themselves burned alive as soon as age or illness begin to bother them. Death, they believe, is a shame to life; consequently, no honors are bestowed upon those corpses that have been destroyed by old age. If the fire did not take the human sacrifice while still breathing, it would become tainted." Similar facts have been recorded in Fiji, the New Hebrides, Manga, and other places. At Ceos, males who had outlived a certain age would gather for a somber event in which they happily drank the hemlock with their heads decked with flowers. Similar rituals were observed among the Troglodytes and the Seri, both of which were renowned for their morality. (Baudelot & Establet, 2008)

Aside from the old males, women are frequently forced among the same peoples to commit themselves upon the death of their spouses. This barbaric practice is so embedded in Hindu norms that English efforts to stop it are fruitless. In 1817, 706 widows committed suicide in one province of Bengal, while 2,366 were discovered in India in 1821. Furthermore, when a prince or chief dies, his followers are obligated to abandon him. In Gaul, this was the situation. According to Henri Martin, chiefs' funerals were bloody hecatombs in which their clothing, weapons, horses, and favorite slaves were gravely burned, along with the personal followers who had not died in the chief's last battle. Such a follower would never outlive his master. (Baudelot & Establet, 2008)

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

1. Suicides of men on the threshold of old age or stricken with sickness.
2. Suicides of women on their husbands' death.

3. Suicides of followers or servants on the death of their chiefs.(Lester, 1991)

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.

Furthermore, according to the Durkheimian approach, loss of job should upset an individual's degree of control, leading to the anticipation of increasing suicide rates among the unemployed. Multivariate analyses support the existence of a link between individual-level unemployment and suicide. Powell (1958) examined 20 years of data for a small US community and concluded that work status was the most important explanatory factor in male suicide. Blakely, Collings, and Atkinson (2003) investigated the link in a New Zealand population and discovered that unemployment increased the probability of suicide. (Blakely, 2003) The link between individual-level unemployment, self-rated importance of work, measures of dissonance, and attitudes toward suicide was investigated in this study. It is believed that the link will be positive; unemployed people will consider suicide to be more sensible than employed people. Furthermore, the individual-level analysis intends to contribute to the discussion of the role of gender in suicidality and anomie, as well as to analyze anomie in general. Numerous studies have found that men are more prone than women to commit suicide. (Canetto & Sakinofsky, 1998)

#### **Fatalistic Suicide**

Durkheim's fourth type of suicide is fatalistic suicide, which is virtually the inverse of his third type, anomic suicide. It is the effect of excessive regulation, such as that of people whose futures are stifled by oppressive discipline or who live under physical or moral oppression. Suicides by very young husbands and slaves are extreme cases. Fatalistic suicides are an attempt to escape a normative circumstance from which there is no way out. We predicted that the rate of fatalistic

suicide would be proportional to the degree of political totalitarianism or overregulation in society. Overcontrol is created by conditions such as the prohibition of political parties, the imprisonment or exile of opposition leaders, the declaration of martial rule, and the closure of newspapers and other aspects of the mass media for censoring reasons. Suicidal people have an additional reason to consider life as pointless and commit suicide in such a totalitarian atmosphere, defined by comparatively limited freedom and respect for human dignity.(Baudelot & Estabiet, 2008)Porterfield proposed a theory of suicide based on the level of societal progress or the scope of industrialisation. As society progresses along a continuum, similar to Toni's gemeinschaft-gesellschaft polarity, from a simple, agrarian organization based on shared, traditional, and unquestioned norms, values, and beliefs to a complex industrial mass society based on heterogeneous, changing, and tenuous norms, values, and beliefs, we can expect suicide to rise. Quinney, Ridker, and Stack (28) proposed that industrialization reduces the degree of status integration in society by increasing the confusion in the normative order controlling behavior. There is a larger likelihood of disagreement in industrial society over what expectations should be linked with a status.The higher the level of development, the lower the level of status integration and the higher the rate of suicide.(Porterfield, 1952)

## **Conclusion**

Coming to conclusion,The Great Recession affected millions of people and sent waves through society's social fabric. Durkheim once prophesied that any social or economic development would result in less restrictions on human appetites and desires. He specifically claimed that this transitory collapse will lead to an upsurge in suicides. We tested the premise that a large-scale economic crisis will effect overall suicide rates by applying this theory to the macro level. In this paper, I attempted to demonstrate Durkheim's stance toward suicide and how he explained suicide. Durkheim essentially explained suicide in two ways. Furthermore, several sorts of suicide were explained with instances. We discovered that other researchers agreed with Emily Durkheim. The research will provide a better understanding of suicide and educate the general public about the many types of suicide.

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