

Hello everyone, I'm Dr. Sonal Thakker  
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Today we will be learning about Durkheim's views on suicide.

The outline of my session is Emile Durkheim's theory of suicide and Durkheim's typology of suicide. At the end of this module, you will acquire an understanding of Durkheim's sociological perspective on suicide. Durkheim wrote this famous work *Le Suicide* in 1897. He held the view that there are no societies in which suicide does not occur. He rejected most of the theories of suicide. He believed that suicide is not an individual fact, carried out due to personal motive. That is loss of love or money. He claims suicide is primarily a social phenomena and he attributes it to some power over and above the individual. Durkheim is of the view that there are social forces or what he terms as suicidogenic impulses running through society whose origin is not the individual but the collective forces which are real and the determining cause of suicide. The decision to commit suicide is because of external and coercive factors.

Coming to Durkheim's definition of suicide - "Every case of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act performed by the victim himself and which strives to produce this result, that is, a positive act would be to shoot oneself in the temple or to hang oneself. A negative act would be to remain in a burning building, or to refuse nourishment in order to die due to starvation.

He analyzed suicide rates. He Gathered mass data from many societies and cultures. He Claimed that suicide rates vary with age, sex, religion, marital status, Parenthood, and so forth. He establishes comparison by simple statistical methods. He compiled his data and made a typology of suicide. He links suicide to integration and regulation in society.

This shows that Durkheim's typology of suicide when he believed that when integration is very high people commit altruistic type of suicide and when it is very low then it is termed as egoistic suicide.

Then coming to regulation by society or excessive social control. Those kind of individuals are going to be called as fatalists or fatalistic type of suicide. And When regulation is very low, It was termed as anomic suicide. Integration will refer to the degree to which collective sentiments are shared and regulation refers to the degree to which external constraints are imposed on individuals.

Now this shows about the integration when it is low. Like I said in the previous slide, it's egoistic suicide and when it when it's very high, it's altruistic suicide, when regulation is low it is anomic and when it's high, it is fatalistic suicide.

Now coming to the first one egoistic suicide. These kind of people think primarily of themselves. They are self centred here. Collective Conscience is weak. People do as they wish to pursue self-interest. Such unrestrained egoism leads to personal dissatisfaction. All needs cannot be fulfilled and for some it may lead to frustration and they may commit suicide. There is a disproportion between expectation and fulfilment. The examples of these type of suicide are socially isolated and individualistic persons in a nutshell. When

people are extremely individualistic and they're aloof from others, when social integration is very low and they are the I, me myself kind of personality.

Coming to the next one, altruistic suicide, here, excessive group domination and compulsions. Life is vigorously governed by customs and habits that is high commitment to social group and they feel it's their duty to die. There is increased likelihood of suicide - Springs from hope for it depends on the beliefs in In a beautiful perspective beyond this life.

Instances of heroic or religious suicide, that is, altruistic suicide are the sati system in India where women jumped on the funeral pyre of their husband and they thought that they were doing it for the larger collectivities, the family, then the captain of a sinking ship. He believes that it is dishonourable to abandon a sinking ship and he couldn't bear the loss of it. So, he went down with the ship. That is also a type of an altruistic suicide, also old people. They are thought of as a burden economically, to the children, so they also commit suicide. They have a higher commitment to the social group. They do not want to be of bother to anyone.

Altruistic suicide in a nutshell here, the community is overvalued. They obey whatever the group ordains, they subordinate, own desires and submerged their identity. Individual sacrifice, conformity with social imperatives or obligations.

Next is the anomic suicide. Here, there is weak social regulation. It comes from the term sociological term anomie, which means normlessness or dysregulation in society. Individuals are in endless competition with one another. There is an atmosphere of restlessness, rootlessness and dissatisfaction, and this favours growth of what their kind calls suicidogenic impulses. Here we could cite examples of economic boom when there is sudden prosperity, people cannot handle it. They're not used to sudden wealth or economic depression. People who are mainly kind of a very comfortable and then suddenly there is a crisis they cannot cope with this and they are more likely to commit anomic type of suicide. Anomic suicide is further subdivided into the first one. Acute economic anomie that is again continuity of the previous increase or drop in wealth. They cannot cope with this one. Very famous example is the Great Depression of America in 1930. Then chronic economic anomie chronic means perpetually at a certain level, either low or high. Capitalists cannot accept loss. Our economic crisis because they are always used to amassing a lot of profit. So if there is a problem, they are more likely to commit suicide because they cannot cope with the loss of money. Then the next is the acute domestic anomie.

This is related to the family life. When either partner dies, the other commits suicide. That is, when either the man dies, the woman is a widow or the woman will die and the man is a widower. So, they kind of feel disoriented. They no longer belong to a group and they were very used to their companion, so they are more likely to commit acute domestic type of suicide

Then the last one - is chronic domestic anomie here that is weakening of ties, binding an individual to the group like in case where couples separate that is divorce takes place. The partner can or one of the partner may not be able to cope up with this and they may commit. Anomic type which we can label as anomic type of suicide.

In a nutshell, anomic suicide occurs due to normlessness and dysregulation that is weakening of cohesive glue, unbridled passions, no checks and controls on behaviour.

The next is fatalistic suicide, where social regulation is excessive. Fatalists are persons whose futures are pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline. They have too many dictums like don't do this. Do this and so forth. Hopelessness is associated with strict control of every action, so too much regulation. Restraints and restraints unleash currents of melancholy that is feelings of deep sadness from which they cannot come out.

We could cite examples of dowry- where women were harassed and they felt that there is no way out - slaves, drunkards, childless women, young husbands. Why I give this example? Young husbands? Because when there is sudden responsibility from bachelorhood to married status, they cannot cope up with the household responsibilities at a young age. Lovers because they cannot get married and there are restrictions. Prisoners, whose future is blocked within the four walls of the prison.

Fatalistic suicide in a nutshell. When regulation is excessive and there is too much oppression; hopelessness and sadness, and they lose zest for life.

There are a few criticisms Durkheim's theory, although very widely accepted as a good sociological perspective. However, we look at these criticisms he overlooked biological or personal factors. Also, he laid too much stress on social factors. He ignored economic, psychological and other factors.

Thank you.