

Anatomization of Anomie as Psychological Construct

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Abstract:

Durkheim referred to anomie as the generalized condition of meaninglessness & disorder in modern; mass society. Durkheim supported that social curbs are necessary for the regulation of impulse tendencies and maintained that human wants & desires are insatiable and tend to soar to infinity. This paper elucidates a number of closely related researches reviewing the concept of anomie. Further, specific Focus group interview of 10 young adults from Delhi-NCR in the ages of 25- 35 years was conducted and then assimilated into various sub themes. The results post detailed focus group interview of young adults exude that fulfillment of desires are transitory & the hidden motive is the driving force for attaining gratification or psychological contentment.

Keywords: Anomie, Human Sexuality, Impulse, Libido

I. INTRODUCTION

Durkheim quoted that, "Sadness does not inhere in things; it does not reach us from the world and through mere contemplation of the world. It is a product of our own thought. We create it out of whole cloth."

The first sociological use of the term "anomie" is usually accounted by the founder of modern sociology, French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) in his book "The division of labor in society", originally published in 1893 (Durkheim, 1960). In the division of Labor in Society, Durkheim described anomie as one result of an inequitable division of labor within the society (Abrahmson, 1980). In other words, according to Durkheim anomie refers to "normlessness". The concept is comprehensive and includes constructs of Powerlessness, Alienation, Confusion regarding rules (Fisher, 1973; Martin, 2000; Melloskey & Schaar, 1965; Thorlindson & Bernberg, 2004).

Durkheim was one among the first to describe anomie as "Derangement" and "an insatiable will". He stated that it refers to an environmental state where society fails to implement adequate regulation or constraint over the goals and desires of its individual members. He believed that anomie is common when there is a significant discrepancy between the ideological theories and values commonly professed and what was actually achievable in everyday life (the gap). This was contrary to previous theories on suicide which generally maintained that suicide was precipitated by negative events in a person's life and their subsequent depression.

It is also described as the human capacity for feeling which in itself is an insatiable and bottomless abyss. One of the major changes that happened in the last quarter of the 20th century was the third wave of democratization (Hungton, 1991). One of the consequences of democratic evolution was the Spread of Anomie. All nations developed normative behaviour patterns and belief systems in the evolutionary change

process. During the transitional period, such as movement from rural to urban society, the diffusion of new norms and values interrupts the balance of traditional societies and breakdown the religious institutions, traditional beliefs and ascribed states relationship. The new gradual organic social relationship allowed the individuals at that time to challenge the traditionally old cultural values and societal norms, which further resulted in rapid escalation of anomie.

Anomie is further understood as the breakdown of social bonds between an individual and the community, e.g., under disruptive scenarios resulting in disintegration of social identity and rejection of self-regulatory values. Tiryakian, E. (1981) in his research paper on, Sexual Anomie, Social Structure, Societal Change, concluded that the question and meaning of sexual relations will become a central concern for the social order of advanced modernity, and therefore should be reconsidered as a major variable in societal change.

Robert K. Merton (N.D) studied the causes of anomie, or normlessness, finding it severest in people who lack an acceptable means of achieving their personal goals. Goals may become so important that if the institutionalized means—i.e., those means acceptable according to the standards of the society—fail, illegitimate means might be used. Greater emphasis on ends rather than means creates a stress that leads to a breakdown in the regulatory structure—i.e., anomie. If, for example, a society impelled its members to acquire wealth yet offered inadequate means for them to do so, the strain would cause many people to violate norms. The only regulating agencies would be the desire for personal advantage and the fear of punishment.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study a number of closely related researches reviewing the concept of anomie.

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2. To understand the perspective of young adults in reference to the gratification of needs.
3. To understand the construct of anomie in comparison to the traditional and modern society.

III. HYPOTHESES

1. Immediate gratification of needs would be high amongst young adults.
2. Existence of anomie in modern society is higher than in traditional society.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Sample

This study was conducted by collecting samples from universities of Delhi/NCR. There were 10 young adults. Participants' ages ranged from 25-35 years.

Procedure

The review of multiple relational studies analyzing anomie as psychological construct was carried out. The participants were psychoeducated regarding the nature, purpose and the objective of the study and informed consents were taken from them. Further, Specific Focus group interviews of 10 young adults from Delhi-NCR in the ages of 25- 35 years were conducted investigating the research topic. Various sub-themes were collected that emerged out of the focus group interview discussions for further thematic analysis.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Collection of Themes and Subthemes

SUBTHEMES	CONCEPTS	THEMES
1. Circumstance in which society provides diminutive moral guidance to individuals. • It is the breakdown of social bonds between an individual and the community • Refers to fragmentation of social identity • Concerns with rejection of self-regulatory values • General mismatch between personal or group standards and wider social standards	Anomie is described as "Normlessness" or "derangement", and "an insatiable will". Also understood as moral deregulation and an absence of legitimate aspirations. Characterized by a rapid change of the standards or values of societies.	<i>Anomie is an associated feeling of alienation and purposelessness. The immediate society currently is undergoing significant change in its economic opulence due to which there is a significant discrepancy between the ideological theories and values commonly professed and what was actually achievable in everyday life; this discrepancy propagates Anomie.</i>
2. Anomie is the disastrous rash of apathy caused by a careless generation (youth). • Youth disengagement is actually a result of frustration and perceived inequality. • Youth are accused of ignorance and laziness (http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/views-expressed/2014/03/anomie-new-apathy-youth-participation-and-politics) • Anomie -- not apathy -- is reflected in statistics and the undercurrents of recent social movements.	Experience of personal unrest, alienation, and uncertainty that comes from a lack of purpose or ideals. The resilience of youth is witnessed a lot through various strikes, political movements, oppositional political supporters, raising concerns of ageism and disempowerment	<i>Youth is critical & experimental about the nature of existence currently. New levels of frustration, perhaps misled by the 'revolutionary' sentiments of media, are causing youth to boycott democracy totally. Youth disengagement is a 'learned-helplessness behavior.' They feel disconnected from society and experience a sense of anomie." At its worst, that anomie can result in a complete disregard for civic issues "because it's a lot easier not to care than to feel something."</i>

3. In Durkheim's outlook, traditional religions often provided the basis for the shared values which the anomic individual lacks. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anomie>)
- the division of labor that had been prevalent in economic life since the Industrial Revolution led individuals to pursue egoistic ends rather than seeking the good of a larger community.
- Robert King Merton also adopted the idea of anomie to develop strain theory, defining it as the discrepancy between common social goals and the legitimate means to attain those goals.
- An individual suffering from anomie would strive to attain the common goals of a specific society yet would not be able to reach these goals legitimately because of the structural limitations in society.
- As a result, the individual would exhibit deviant behavior.

According to one academic survey, psychometric testing confirmed a link between anomie and academic dishonesty among university students, suggesting that universities needed to foster codes of ethics among students in order to curb it.

Another study, anomie was seen as a "push factor" in tourism.

Proponents of anarchism (traditional approach) claim that anarchy does not necessarily lead to anomie and that hierarchical command actually increases lawlessness in society and so the condition of anomie or normlessness. The modern approach states that complex societies, particularly industrial and post-industrial societies, directly cause conditions such as anomie by depriving the individual of self-determination and a relatively small reference group to relate to, such as the band, clan, or tribe eventually.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to investigate the following objectives:

1. To study a number of closely related researchers reviewing the concept of anomie.
2. To understand the perspective of young adults in reference to the gratification of needs.
3. To understand the construct of anomie in comparison to the traditional and modern society.

A number of closely related researches conclude in relation to Durkheim ideology that collective consciousness, values, and rules are critical to a functional society. It also pointed out that the youth is critical & experimental about the nature of existence in the current times.

The themes are that society is unable to exert its regulatory and disciplining influences and so Human desires are left unchecked and unbounded the individual therefore a current condition of young adults that aspires to everything and is satisfied with nothing in life. The focus is on simply immediate gratification of needs without any clarity on purpose.

The sub themes also pointed out that the current stream of young adults are experiencing the growing despair, dissatisfaction & stress due to the constant pursuit of limitless goals. The themes gathered pointed that the condition of Anomie is occurring in the society due to little influence on individuals' tendency to follow rules and norms, and individuals are, therefore, left without moral guidance.

The research also found out that there exists a relational conditioning of young adults in the context of fulfillment of desires. Early fulfillment of desires hampers the growth of defined goals thereby creating vacuum in the lives these young adults who then drive towards meaninglessness. It is also found out that it exude that fulfillment of desires are transitory & the hidden motive is the driving force for attaining gratification or psychological contentment. It further concluded that modern society is creating a situation of anomie in young adults. The parasitic ideologies &

dynamically changing perspectives of young adults are leading to a situation of anomie wherein now social curbs are necessary for the regulation of impulse tendencies. The theme found out that inadequate regulation of sexual desires can produce high rates of anomic suicide among certain social groups.

The research points out that one sphere of social life are actually in a chronic state of anomie. As Durkheim says:-

“Where far reaching economic goals are continually sought and —greed is aroused without knowing where to find ultimate foothold”

For Durkheim, anomie arises more generally from a mismatch between personal or group standards and wider social standards, or from the lack of a social ethic, which produces moral deregulation and an absence of legitimate aspirations. It was evident in the responses of the research participants that they believe this to be a nurtured condition.

Thus, the discussion generalized that a society with too much rigidity and little individual discretion could also produce a kind of anomie. Fatalistic suicide arises when a person is too rule-governed. Outlining the social (and not individual) causes of suicide, characterized by a rapid change of the standards or values of societies (often erroneously referred to as normlessness), and an associated feeling of alienation and purposelessness.

When a social system is in a state of anomie, common values and common meanings are no longer understood or accepted, and new values and meanings have not developed. According to Durkheim, such a society produces, in many of its members, psychological states characterized by a sense of futility, lack of purpose, and emotional emptiness and despair. Striving is considered useless, because there is no accepted definition of what is desirable.

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