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Q2(b)

Explain Durkheim's basic arguments on suicide. Can you analyse high suicide rates of contemporary Indian society with Durkheim's theory?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- Explain **Durkheim's** basic arguments on **suicide**. Can you analyse high **suicide** rates of contemporary Indian society with **Durkheim's** theory?
- Keep the answer within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

- **Durkheim:** **suicide** rates as social facts of integration and regulation.
- **Four types:** egoistic, altruistic, anomic, fatalistic.

Indian farmer suicides read as **agrarian anomie**; exams as isolation plus unbounded race.

Gendered fatalism must be added.

NCRB files need the same caution as his European records.

Introduction

Emile Durkheim argued that **suicide** rates are social facts produced by integration and regulation. Contemporary Indian high rates in some groups can be read with that theory if official files and new institutions are named, not if we only moralise despair.

Body

Durkheim's basic arguments

- The object is the rate, not the isolated motive.
- **Egoistic suicide follows weak integration:** too little belonging.
- **Altruistic suicide follows excess integration:** obligatory death.
- **Anomic suicide follows weak regulation:** norm collapse in boom, crash, or marital disruption.
- **Fatalistic suicide follows excess regulation:** oppressive discipline.
- Psychological, climatic, and racial accounts fail the comparative pattern.

Contemporary India

- **NCRB** series are constructed data, like **Durkheim's** official records.

- **Farmer suicides in commercialised agrarian belts fit *anomie*:** debt, price shock, and thinned village regulation, with caste and contractor extra.
- Student and exam suicides mix egoism of competitive isolation with *anomie* of an unbounded credential race.
- Women's deaths need fatalism and gender, which *Durkheim* underwrote.
- War-like altruistic types are rarer; honour and family coercion can still produce obligatory deaths.

Limits of the transplant

- Agrarian markets, informal labour, and media shame are institutions *Durkheim* did not map.
- Undercounting and legal labelling bias the Indian rate.
- The theory still beats a purely psychiatric national story.

Flow diagram

Durkheim rates -> Integration regulation

Integration regulation -> Four types

Indian farmers students gender -> Four types

Official coding -> Constructed data

Conclusion

Durkheim's arguments tie *suicide* rates to integration and regulation through four types. Indian farmer, student, and gendered deaths can be analysed in that grammar if debt, exams, and family discipline are treated as social regulators. The files remain official constructions.

Facts & figures

Suicide (1897)

Founding demonstration of rates as social facts.

Anomie

Normative deregulation, used for economic and marital shock.

NCRB

Indian official series on accidental deaths and suicides, a constructed file.

Agrarian anomie

Debt, crop, and market shock as a *Durkheimian* reading of farmer deaths.