

**DURKHEIMIAN SOCIAL SOLIDARITY THEORY AND PREVENTION OF
SUICIDAL BEHAVIOURS AMONG STUDENTS OF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO
UNIVERSITY, ILE IFE**

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Abstract

Suicidal behaviour is currently becoming a social and health problem affecting the overall wellbeing of students in most of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria especially the Southwestern region of the country. Previous studies on prevention of suicide have been largely from medical, religious and counselling perspectives with insignificant attention paid to how to apply Durkheim's social solidarity theory to curb prevalence of suicide among university undergraduates. The aim of this paper is to shed light on how Durkheimian theory of social solidarity can be applied to curb the prevalence of suicide among students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State which is also applicable to other Nigerian Universities. Data were collected through an in-depth oral interview from the Unit Head of Guidance and Counselling Unit of The Division of Student Affairs of Obafemi Awolowo University who attends to cases of suicide among the students while 3 other staff members who are charged with the responsibility of handling suicide cases were equally interviewed. Data were descriptively analysed in sociological context. The research work found out that the underlying cause of suicide among the students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife was family disruption or dysfunction. Durkheim's theory of social solidarity presupposes that social support, cooperation and love can encourage students to have hope and positive mind when going through life stresses which mostly resulted to suicide.

Keywords: Social solidarity, Suicide, Durkheim, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

Introduction

Suicide, as a mental, social and public health phenomenon is becoming a global concern in recent times due to its increase at an alarming rate. The upsurge in suicide rate all over the world especially among students of tertiary institutions calls for serious attention from different stakeholders in the society (Gibbons & Studer, 2008). Okoedion and Okolie (2019:51) posit that "Suicide is one of the most serious social and public health problems in the world as it is currently the third leading cause of death for youths between the ages of 15 and 30 years. Youth suicidal behaviour has continued to be a significant national problem in need of urgent attention by Nigeria government." Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people aged 15-44 years, and ranks second for adolescents between ages 15 and 19 years old (Alabi *et al*, 2015). "Students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are more susceptible to committing suicide compared to other groups in general population". (Nyorere, James & Patricia, 2020:922). People in this age bracket has increased rate of suicide because it is filled with ambition, life pursuit and stress (Hogan, 2001).

Wanyoike (2015) discovered that the rate of suicide among University students in Kenya has increased greatly. She found out that depression as a psychological causative factor and social

pressure as a sociological causative factor rank 39% and 10% respectively among the students. Similarly, loneliness takes 10% of the cause of suicide among University students in Kenya. According to WHO, using age-standardized approach, Nigeria ranked 15th in the world and 7th in Africa (while Lesotho tops the chart in Africa) in 2016 estimates with suicide rate of 17.3 per 100,000 people (WHO, 2016). In Nigeria, suicide rate among students of tertiary institutions between 2015-2021 has skyrocket to an unprecedented level in which hardly was there any month without a media report of a student committing suicide. According to Omigbodun *et al*, (2008) adolescents in Nigeria are among the set of people who have the highest suicidal ideation and attempts. This, according to them, has far reaching negative implications for adolescents who are known to be the potential nation builders and leaders of tomorrow.

According to a local newspaper “Daily Trust”, students top the list of 42 Nigerians who committed suicide in 6 months in the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2019. 11 out of the 42 Nigerians were students in which 15 of the total 42 suicide victims drank 'sniper', a local poisonous chemical substance for mortalising rats and for agricultural purpose (Mac-Leva *et al*, 2019). The leading cause of suicide among the youth is depression arising from frustrations as a result of life difficulties such as academic failure, low self- esteem, poor financial status, rejection, relationship break-up, family problems among others. According to the list of 35 suicide cases in Nigeria tertiary institutions between 2019 and 2021 compiled by the writer, Obafemi Awolowo University had the highest cases of suicide as reported in various national dailies (Nigerian National Dailies, 2019-2021). Hence, this paper aims at applying Durkheim's social solidarity theory to curb the prevalence of suicidal behaviours among the students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. Students in any nation are potential nation builders and as such are the bedrock of the nation and their mental and physical health need to be monitored and taken care of.

Research Methodology

Structured and unstructured in-depth oral interview was employed. Reliable information on the incidence of suicide among the students through an in-depth oral interview was gathered from the Head of Guidance and Counselling Unit of the Division of Student Affairs who handles every case of attempted suicide. The writer also interviewed Head of Department of Mental Health and Medicine who handles treatment and rehabilitation of students who attempted suicide. To substantiate the information gathered from the two above, he also interviewed one of the senior staff members in the Division of Student Affairs and a Professor from the department of Material Science and Engineering. The data gathered from this oral interview was descriptively analysed. Scholarly materials were equally consulted.

Suicide: A Conceptual Clarification

Etymologically, the word suicide is derived from two Latin words: “*sui*” (of oneself) and “*cidium*” (killing) and can thus be defined as the deliberate killing of oneself (CASR, 2015). Suicide is defined by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC, 2013) as: “Death caused by self-directed injurious behaviour with any intent to die as a result of the behaviour”. According to Dzurghba (2005:65), “suicide is an act in which someone kills himself or causes himself to die”. To Albert *et al* (2006), “suicide is the deliberate taking of one's life.” In another similar view, “suicide is the intentional taking of one's own life or the failure, when possible, to save oneself when death threatens” (Cavan, 1965). World Health Organisation (WHO) defines suicide as the

act of deliberately killing oneself.

Literature Review

Assessment of risk factors and its effective reduction or elimination is a precursor to diminishing the incidence of suicide (Hogan, 2001:268). The complex nature of suicide make many scholars suggest various prevention strategies that can be used to prevent suicide by addressing the various risk factors predisposing an individual to suicide. Previous studies have identified the following factors in curbing suicide among students of tertiary institutions namely medical, religious and counseling prevention strategies:

Scholars in the field of medicine hold to the view that suicide is pathological as well as psychological in nature and can be treated medically. In order to do this, the underlying medical factor must be identified while the appropriate medical treatment will be carried out on the patient and necessary drugs prescribed. The medical factor identifies depression and mental illness as a major predictor to suicidal behaviours. There are two approaches employed in medical field to deal with depression and mental illness (Shearer,2005:14), (Oladele & Oladele, 2016:2095-2096), (Peltzer *et al*, 2013, 459). They are pharmacotherapeutic approach (Sher, 2004:27-29), (Erlangsen, Canudas-Romo & Conwell, 2008:448), (David-Ferdon *et al*, 2016) and psychotherapeutic approach (Jobes, Au & Siegelman, 2015:365-366).

Religion, as a preventive approach, focuses on psychosocial and psychotherapeutic support for its adherents. “Religious beliefs and rituals can act as buffers against stress and provide an element of comfort to distressed individuals” (Bhugra, 2010:1497). According to Bhugra (2010), religion and religious values play a key role in attitudes to depression and suicide. A finding made by Dervic *et al*, showed that suicidal attempts among depressed patients were less likely in patients who had religious affiliations compared with those who did not. Religious influence on suicide can be found in their beliefs and practices. The relevance of religious inclination as a factor in curbing suicide rate gained currency in the classic *Le Suicide* by Emile Durkheim where he compared the suicide rate between the Catholics and the Protestants. Emile discovered that the rate of suicide among the Catholics was lower to the Protestants (Durkheim, 1897, 1970).

Another suicide prevention strategy advocated for students is Counselling. According to WHO (2006), professional counselling is designed as the application of mental health, psychological, or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioural or systemic intervention strategies. Professional counsellors can address wellness, personal growth, and career development issues, as well as mental health pathology. There are various ways in which counsellors can render professional services to people suffering from suicidal ideation.

Durkheim's Social Solidarity: A Theoretical Discourse

Emile Durkheim's theory of Social Solidarity posits that the more socially integrated a person is – that is, the more he or she is connected to society, possessing a feeling of general belonging and a sense that life makes sense within the social context, the less likely he or she is to commit suicide. (Crossman, online) The theory refers to the social unity of the group (Mechtraud, 1955). Social solidarity is the bond that unites individuals. It emphasises the independence between individuals in a society, which allows individuals to feel that they can enhance the lives of others. It is a core principle of collective action and it is founded on shared values and beliefs among different groups in society. Social Solidarity is a form of social integration and supports where

group of people lend support to one another and bear one another's burdens.

Suicide among students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria formally known as University of Ile-Ife, is one of the three Universities established in Nigeria between 1961 and 1962 (History of O.A.U, Ile Ife). The University hosts a community of above five thousand (5,000) staff while the student population has risen steadily from two hundred and forty four (244) in 1962/63 to over thirty thousand (30,000) at present (History of O.A.U, Ile Ife).

According to some cases of completed suicide as reported in the Nigeria Newspapers, Obafemi Awolowo University has four (4) completed cases between 2017 and 2021. One completed case occurred in 2017 (Afolaranmi Mercy 'F'), two in 2019 (Kola Olowoporoku 'M' and Opeyemi Dara, 'F') and one in 2021 (Emmanuel Adedeji 'M') (Nigerian National Dailies, 2017-2021). As reported by The Punch on 5th August, 2019, a female student, Opeyemi Grace Dara, Department of English committed suicide by drinking a lethal substance popularly known as sniper. Another student, a male, from the Faculty of Administration, department of Management and Accounting, Emmanuel Adedeji committed suicide in April 2021. According to the Chief Security Officer of OAU, Mr Babatunde Oyatokun, Emmanuel died after consuming a popular pesticide, sniper. He advised students to use the Counselling Unit of the school when battling with psychological or academic issues (PM News Nigeria, 2020).

The HOD, Mental Health and Medicine Department confirmed the completed cases but claimed that the department does not keep log of completed cases but only have data of attempted cases. The department of Mental Health and Medicine that handles the treatment and rehabilitation of attempted cases could not disclose the actual figures and identities of students who have attempted suicide within the period under review on ethical grounds. As at the time the researcher got to the department on 10th June, 2021, two attempted suicide cases were being handled (Oral Interview-Mosaku, 2021).

The Unit Head, Guidance and Counselling Unit also confirmed that some students committed suicide. She said every suicide case is referred to her but they did not keep records of completed cases. She also confirmed the two cases of attempted suicide mentioned by the HOD of Mental Health and Medicine (Oral Interview-Obisakin, 2021). One of the Senior Staff members in the Division of Student Affairs hinted on two male students who attempted suicide recently as at the time the researcher visited the University. One of the two students was into hard drugs.

The commonest means of committing/attempting suicide among the students of Obafemi Awolowo University is by drinking sniper, a poisonous substance used for agricultural purpose to mortalise pests, rodents and other unwanted living things on the farm (Oral Interview-Mosaku, 2021). In other cases compiled by the researcher, sniper tops the list of methods used to commit/attempt suicide among students. A victim usually locks him/herself up in the room with or without suicide note and then gulps this poisonous substance once. This chemical causes organ failure within few minutes of gulping it which will result in the victim foaming from the mouth (Oral Interview-Obisakin, 2021).

According to both the HOD, Mental Health and Medicine department and Unit Head of Guidance and Counselling Unit of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, the immediate cause of suicide among students is poor academic performance. A case in view was a student, Kola

Olowoporoku, Male who committed suicide for repeatedly failing some courses on the 23rd April, 2019. Another one, Opeyemi Dara, Female who committed suicide on the 3rd August, 2019 because of poor academic performance. Another female student, Afolaranmi Mercy who committed suicide in October, 2017 for having an 'E' in Chemistry 101, a dreaded course among year one students of Sciences (The Independent Newspaper, 2019). Poor academic performance may result in carry over, spending extra years, change of course or being a drop out. This can cause emotional breakdown and depression which may trigger suicidal ideation.

The remote cause of suicide among female students is sexual molestation which result in psychological breakdown that affects their academic performance. The Head Unit of Guidance and Counselling Unit cited several examples of female students that were sexually abused by close relatives. The remote cause of suicide among the male students is drug abuse. According to the school policy, part one students stay on campus while part two students and above can choose to stay off campus. These boys mix up with bad boys in town who give them free food where they put cannabis inside it. These drug barons in town give them these drugs free of charge at times in order to draw them closer. The parents at home do not bother to know what is happening to their children. They do not check on them.

The staff of O.A.U, Ile Ife that were interviewed opined that the root cause of suicide among students stem from the social gap between the students and their parents. This is what creates avenue for sexual molestation and drug abuse which results in poor academic performance. This social gap at home followed the children to school who also adopt a lifestyle of social isolation and rejection in school believing that what is obtainable at home is also the case in school. Lack of social cohesion, support and integration from home led some male students into drugs which affected their academic performance.

A Senior Staff member at the Division of Student Affairs corroborated the submission of the Head of Unit, G & C, that the major underlying factor was from home. She cited the example of two boys who attempted suicide recently. One of the boys was involved in the use of hard drugs. He started using hard drugs under the nose of his parents before he was admitted in 2013 which led to the death of his mother. His father latter remarried without developing any social relationship with his children except sending money for their upkeep (Oral Interview-O.A Adeoye, 2021). She identified social gap at home, peer group influence and social isolation from neighbours. The parents provide whatever these children want. They keep them indoors and do not allow them to face life challenges. According to her, when these children get to school and face few challenges beyond their emotional capability, the next thing is suicidal ideation.

A Professor from the department of Material Science and Engineering also affirmed the fact that parents are responsible for this spate of suicide among students (Oral Interview-M. O Adeoye, 2021). According to him, the atmosphere at home is not socially conducive. The children are getting frustrated by what they see, hear and involve in which leads them to engage in drugs, sexual perversion, taking of alcohols, gangsterism, etc. He said further that the communal spirit which Africans are known for has been eroded by western civilisation. Some children can bury their heads on the internet for long without socially interacting with anybody. Some parents over-pamper their children to the extent that they lack nothing. When they get to school, they are not able to handle life challenges. They even shed tears like toddlers. The next thing in their mind

when facing tough situation is suicide.

The management of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife put some preventive measures in place to curtail the menace of suicidal behaviours among her students. The preventive measures include student advisory system where each student is attached to a lecturer who develops a healthy cordial rapport with the student in order to share his/her fears, agitations and concerns with the lecture (Oral Interview-Mosaku, 2021). When a student is discovered not to be doing well academically, the lecturer tries to interact with the students to identify why he/she is not performing well. This is like lending a shoulder to the students where they can lean on. The school also established guidance and counselling unit under the Division of Student Affairs established the Guidance and Counselling Unit where Counselling Psychologists are engaged to interact cordially with the students and build trust and confidence in an atmosphere of friendship, rapport and social interaction which enables the students to feel free and share their challenges (Oral Interview-Obisakin, 2021). Also, there is a synergy strategy between the Division of Student Affairs and the department of Mental Health and Medicine. Fresh cases of attempted suicide are referred to the Guidance and Counselling Unit of the Division of Student Affairs who counsel the victims and try to understand the root cause of the action. The victims are then referred to the department of Mental Health and Medicine for treatment if it has to do with mental disorder.

Durkheim's Social Solidarity: A Theoretical Discourse

Emile Durkheim, born in 1858, was a French Social philosopher who developed the 'positive philosophy' and also a pioneer of functional school of sociology (Ogunbameru, 2015:133-134). He developed the theory of social solidarity in his doctoral thesis titled in French '*De la division du travail social: Etude sur l'organisation des societes superieures*' 1893 (The Division of Labour in Society: A Study of the Organisation of the higher societies 1893) (Merton, 1994:17). Emile holds that for a society to function effectively there must be a factor holding it together and this factor is the social solidarity it enjoys. The theory of Social Solidarity posits that the more socially integrated a person is – that is, the more he or she is connected to society, possessing a feeling of general belonging and a sense that life makes sense within the social context, the less likely he or she is to commit suicide. The theory refers to the social unity of the group (Mechtraud, 1955). It is a core principle of collective action and it is founded on shared values and beliefs among different groups in society. Social Solidarity is a form of social integration and supports where group of people lend support to one another and bear one another's burdens. It is a form of communal spirit that makes people show concern to one another. To Emile Durkheim, “social solidarity is a completely moral phenomenon which, taken by itself, does not lend itself to exact observation nor indeed to measurement” (Durkheim, 1893/1933:64).

In relation to the study of suicide, Durkheim categorised social solidarity into two namely social integration and social regulation. He contended that suicide rates depend on these two social variables. Social integration is the degree to which a group of people are connected to one another (Abrutyn & Mueller, 2014:329). The more socially integrated a person is, the less likely he or she is to commit suicide. Social regulations are the norms, standards and values enunciated by the society to regulate social integration in other to ensure its continuity and resist any deviation from it (Wray *et al*, 2011:508).

Emile Durkheim set the relevance of social solidarity in perspective through his monograph, *Le Suicide* (Suicide) published in 1897 (Gupta, 2005). Emile Durkheim submitted that suicide results when social bonds erode. “What defends us from self-destruction is being part of a society” (Gupta, 2005:73).

In order to substantiate his argument for social solidarity, Durkheim embarked on a research on why suicide rates were different among certain groups of people in the society. He examined the official records on suicide in his native France. Émile Durkheim was interested in explaining the social phenomenon of suicide. He gathered data on large groups of people in Europe who had ended their lives. When he analysed the data, he found that suicide rates differed among groups with different religious affiliations. For example, the data showed that Protestants were more likely to commit suicide than Catholics. To explain this, Durkheim developed the concept of social solidarity. Social solidarity described the social ties that bind a group of people together such as kinship, shared location, or religion. Durkheim combined these concepts with the data he analysed to propose a theory that explained the religion-based differences in suicide rates. He suggested that differences in social solidarity between the two groups corresponded to the differences in suicide rates (Lecture Note by Idowu-Fearon, National Open University of Nigeria, 2016:207).

Emile Durkheim's findings show that suicide among Catholics are lower than that of the Protestants because of the former's spirit of communalism as against the latter's individualism (Crossman, 2020). Emile applied the theory of social solidarity in suicide to explain how individual behaviour can be understood within a social context. He pointed out the influence of groups and social forces on what had always been viewed as a highly personal act (Schaefer, 2005:8). Durkheim concluded that suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration within a social group: “When society is strongly integrated, it holds individuals under its control, considers them at its service and thus forbids them to dispose wilfully of themselves.... For they cling to life more resolutely when belonging to a group they love, so as not to betray interests they put before their own” (Durkheim. 1897/1970:209-210). Therefore, the relationship between Durkheimian theory of social solidarity and suicide is inverse. This means that the higher the social solidarity in any society, the lower the rate of suicide in that society. Durkheim submits that “suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of religious society, domestic society, political society” (Durkheim:1897/1952:167).

Durkheim's Social Solidarity and Prevention of Suicide among students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Emile Durkheim strongly believes that suicide is a social factor that can be curbed by studying the social variables that trigger suicide in both an individual and a social group. According to him, the first major approach is to detect which of the social facts or variables triggers the suicidal ideation and then identify the particular component of social solidarity proposed by Emile.

Although, poor academic performance tops the overt reasons for suicidal behaviours among the students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife but the covert reason is the challenge at the home front where individual victim came from. Emile strongly believes that social solidarity plays a major role in holding together the key units of the society namely family, economy, religion and politics (Okafor, 2020:39). Hence family as a major social unit that shapes the

worldview of Nigerian students of higher institutions can be a predictive factor in suicidal behaviours among students.

Based on the underlying factor predisposing students of O.A.U, Ile Ife to suicidal behaviours, the following are the components of Durkheim's social solidarity that can curb suicidal behaviours among the students:

Domestic Social Solidarity

Emile Durkheim believes that the social environment at home is a precipitator to suicidal tendency in all the members belonging to that social group. Several studies agree with Durkheim that the psychosocial situation in the family can contribute to suicidal tendency in children or other members of the family (Oladele & Oladele, 2016:2096, Omigbodun *et al*, 2008:41, Strother, 1986:758, Okoedin & Okolie, 2019:55). Domestic social solidarity refers to the blood ties that bind members of a domestic environment together who reside in the same place and share things in common. This can be divided into two namely conjugal solidarity which is the social solidarity between husband and his wife and family solidarity which is the social solidarity between parents and their children or other family members.

Studies have shown that there are several factors involving a man and his wife that can create social unrest to other family members which can expose them to suicidal ideation. The factors include divorce, single parenting, wife abuse/battery, infidelity (breaking of marriage vows), pursuit of money and career at the expense of the home, parental psychopathology (Okafor & Okafor, 1998).

It has been discovered that children who come from homes having the above challenges suffer from mental and emotional imbalance which predisposes them to suicidal ideation (Posner *et al*, 2007). According to the information gathered from the respondents, one of the boys who attempted suicide came from home where parents were not in cordial relationship. Divorce affects children negatively. Family social solidarity focuses on the relationship between parents and their children. Durkheim finds out that family that have children is less likely to commit suicide than the family without children. Sociologically, the family is seen as the smallest unit of the society or the basic social group united through bonds of kinship or marriage (Lecture Note by Williams, NOUN, 2006). Family is the first point of socialisation in children. It has great influence on the children and shapes their worldviews which will eventually determine how they relate and interpret whatever they encounter in the larger society.

Members of the family sustain mutual relationships that might be termed domestic sentiment where there is collective revenge, collective responsibility and mutual heredity. Emile argues that the social life of a family is made up of common beliefs and practices (Durkheim, 1893/1984:127 & 130). The common beliefs and practices is the social regulation that provides the normative framework that guides the social integration existing between members of the family.

Emile Durkheim posits that the family is one of the vital organs of the society invested with special functions (Durkheim, 1893/1984). Family members are allocated functions which solidify their relationship and functions to one another. "They express the special solidarity that unites the members of a family as the result of the domestic division of labour" (Durkheim,

1893/1984:78). Family cohesion results from exclusively a communality of sentiments and beliefs. Each family member by nature are assigned with distinct functions which at first are undivided and overlapping and later gradually separate out and are distributed among the various relatives according to sex, age and dependent relationships so as to make each relative a specialised functionary in domestic society. It then shows that if any member fails to perform his or her own function, it will affect the functionality of the other member and the whole system may collapse. Parents who fail to perform their functions in all ramifications will affect the psychosocial well-being of their children which can make coping with life stresses a challenge.

In the findings of Emile Durkheim (1897/1952) on suicide, it has been discovered that family troubles is one of the motives for committing suicide. This submission is supported by many recent studies on the social causes of suicide among students of tertiary institutions. According to Mba (2010), family disruption in whatever form can predispose students of tertiary institutions to suicidal ideation. Finding shows that stressful family life experiences such as parental divorce, improper parenting style, and social problems of family members among others are risk factors that can lead to suicidal ideation among students (Xing *et al*, 2010). For instance, too much of expectations from their children academically can make parents push them beyond their limits which can lead to suicidal ideation. Some parents mount academic pressure on their children that they must have nothing below Second Class Upper. When such a child repeats a course or fails to meet up with parental expectations academically, this can lead to suicidal behaviours (Zhai *et al* ,2015).

Application of Durkheim's Social Solidarity

As it has been discovered earlier on, the causative factor precipitating suicide among students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife is family disruption. Although the overt causes are poor academic performance, financial constraints, break in romantic relationship, sexual molestation, drug addiction and so one, findings show that the underlying factor triggering the above overt causes is family disruption. Hence the focus of the aspect of Durkheim's social solidarity that will be applied to handle this is what he calls domestic social solidarity or in another way family support. In order to improve social solidarity in the various families of the students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife in particular and tertiary institutions in Southwestern Nigeria in general, Emile Durkheim made the following submissions in relations to domestic social solidarity:

Promotion of family norms and values

Durkheim asserts that the bedrock of any social solidarity is collective conscience or consciousness. This means that every member of a particular social group must be aware of what hold all of them together which they are conscious of not violating. He further substantiates this by positing that social beliefs and practices drive the vehicle of the society which is the reason why a particular society remains for long. Emile strongly holds that in order to promote social solidarity in the family, there must be common sentiments and beliefs. "It is very often believed, Durkheim submits, that what brings about this family cohesion is exclusively a commonality of sentiments and beliefs" (Durkheim, 1893/1984:78). Africa has a belief system or family norms and values that are held in high esteem similar to what Durkheim describes. Social cohesion becomes very impossible without social norms and values. A norm is a standard behaviour. The social values and norms include love, companionship, respect, tolerance, honesty among others.

Performance of individual functions in the family

Emile Durkheim applies his structural functionalist theory to describe how social solidarity thrives within the social context of family solidarity. He describes family as having different parts or organs in which each of them work independently and interdependently to ensure the survival of the family system. To Durkheim (1893/1984) every member of the family is assigned a function to perform in order to keep the family together. Family members are allocated functions which solidify their relationship and functions to one another. They express the special solidarity that unites the members of a family as a result of the domestic division of labour. The individual family functions include the reproduction function which includes nurture and acculturation in the atmosphere of intimacy which prepares a child for adulthood (Lecture Note by Idowu-Fearon, NOUN, 2016). and socialisation function involving inculcating into children the norms, values, culture, customs, religious beliefs and practices of the society he or she finds him or her (Lecture Note by Kwaghmande, NOUN, 2006). It has been found out that children who are not well cultured from the infancy stage tend to engage in social deviants such as drugs addiction, sexual immorality, thuggery, bullying, truancy, prostitution, etc. when they become young adults, the result of which can predispose them to suicidal ideation. Some parents make life appear as bed of roses to their children. So when they experience any little psychosocial stress beyond their psychological capacity, they result to suicidal ideation. The individual family functions also include the economic support function. Financial frustration has been identified as one of the reasons why some students commit suicide. There is also the emotional support function involving a warm, affectionate relationship within the family circle. Lack of love, care, and intimate responses from people we look up to can lead individuals to the brink of emotional instability and possible neuroses. Another function is protection function and spiritual function

Maintenance of cooperation and harmony

For a domestic social solidarity to serve as a workable tool in providing psychosocial support necessary in curtailing suicidal tendency among family members, there is a need for cooperation among family members and harmonization of their various functions within the domestic division of labour. Family cooperation and harmony is very important in social solidarity because of functional difference (Durkheim, 1893/1984). Cooperation and harmony enables the functions of individual member to produce expectant results. When there is no cooperation, there will be duplication of functions and the functions of the individual members will not complement one another Cooperation promotes reciprocal obligations in which each member of a family reciprocates the role played by other member. “Now such reciprocity is only possible where co-operation exists and this in turn does not occur without the division of labour. To cooperate, in fact, is to share with one another a common task.” (Durkheim, 1893/1984:79).

Students in tertiary institutions still need the cooperation of their parents till they can stand on their own. As it has been earlier observed, some parents mount too much academic pressure on their children giving them a particular grade they must attain before they can do this or that for them. If that particular child is unable to meet up with such high expectation, he or she feels disappointed and may be suicidal in thoughts. Parents need to cooperate with their children in order to see them attain the lofty height they expect from them. The students of tertiary institutions need encouragement and assistance to overcome life stressors. Siblings are also expected to cooperate with one another. In discharging domestic chores, there is a need for cooperation so that the work does not weigh down another member. A child can go to school with

the issues in the family vis-à-vis how he or she is being treated at home. This can trigger an emotional reaction that is capable of precipitating suicidal ideation in such individual.

From the foregoing, we have been able to see clearly what Emile Durkheim felt was important to promote healthy family environment which is essential in promoting psychosocial wellbeing of the students both at home and in school. They include adherence to family norms and values, performance of individual functions and cooperation with one another. The importance of a socially conducive family environment over the overall wellbeing of students cannot be overemphasized. The psychosocial climate of the family can make the home attractive or repellent to the students (Nyorere, James & Patricia, 2020). A psychosocially conducive home promotes companionship, cooperation and absence of emotional tension which is what a student needs to balance up with whatever challenges he or she faces in school. It sustains marital stability where attempts are made to meet the needs of the children. Children who enjoy social support from their parents are emotionally stable unlike children who experience social isolation from home. “Therefore, to a large extent parents determine the emotional climate of a family...this has been associated with the suicidal behaviour among University students” (Nyorere, James & Patricia, 2020:125)).

Recommendations

To curb the menace of suicide among students of tertiary institutions within the context of the theory of social solidarity, the following recommendations are made:

Parents should provide socially conducive family environment to their children and other members of the family by living in peace, sincere love and honesty with each other. Similarly, parents should provide adequate social support to their children by showing them care and concern and being always there for them both at home and in school.

Parents should inculcate in their children the importance of communalism, brotherhood, kinship and helping one another. Also, family social norms and values should be promoted and extolled among members.

The school should provide the kind of socially conducive environment which can make up for the one lacking at home or complement the one that already exists at home. Lecturers should see and treat these children as their biological children and relate with them in such a way that they can be free to come to them for counselling or personal issues that need elderly experience.

The school should organise seminars or a curriculum that teaches the importance of family social support and how to be one another's brothers' and sisters' keepers.

Programmes that can focus on promoting healthy social relations in the family and society should be put in place by government.

Conclusion

This study examined how Durkheim's theory of social solidarity can help in curbing suicide among the students. The study found out that the root cause of suicidal behaviours among students of tertiary institutions is family problem. Although poor academic performance, depression, financial constraints, sexual abuse, drug addiction, relationship breakdown among other things are causative factors which people can deduce or based on any suicide note left

behind by the suicides, the underlying factor is social disruption in the family. The spirit of communalism, brotherhood and friendliness characterising an African society should be resuscitated and inculcated in every member of the society. An emotionally and socially conducive family environment is a *sine qua non* to promoting psychosocial wellbeing in students which will forestall any suicidal ideation.

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