



Management Of Anomie In Nigeria: A Psycholinguistic Perspective

¹Adekunle, Morufu A. & ²Chibabi, Darlington M. Ph.D

¹Department of Social Sciences & Humanities, Federal Polytechnic, Idah, Kogi State, Nigeria

²Department of Languages & Liberal Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Idah, Kogi State, Nigeria

*Correspondence: adekunlemarroof@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to examine the management of anomie from the psycholinguistic perspective. Theoretically, the paper also reviews the causes and psychological outcomes of anomie. The study revealed that anomie theories explain factors of or the basis of deviance in the society as a result of breakdown in moral constraint. To this end, text analysis was adopted through the method of thematic analysis with mode of discourse. The findings revealed that Nigeria is experiencing social anomie as government has abdicated its responsibilities. However, the paper concludes that anomie is an abnormal or a pathological state with implications for the security of Nigerians and stability of Nigeria. The paper recommends among others, that there is the need to strengthen the three institutions of family, education and polity which all together have the potential to prevent anomie.

Keywords: Anomie, Management, Psycholinguistics.

INTRODUCTION

In sociology, anomie refers to state of society characterized by chaos, the eroding of social regulation and moral values. Since its introduction in sociology by Durkheim (1893/1997, 1897/1987) many scholars have presented different interpretations of anomie.

Bjarnason (2009) observes that generally anomie has been viewed as an abstract and multidimensional construct simultaneously referring to social and political structure as well as individual interaction within that social and political structure. As a psychological construct, anomie is defined as the collective subjective perception about the state of society encompassing two conditions: the break-down of social fabric (i.e. lack of trust and moral decline) and the breakdown in leadership (i.e. lack of legitimacy and effectiveness) (Teymoori, 2016).

Oxford Dictionary of Psychology defines anomie as a state of society in which rules and standard of belief and conduct have weakened or broken down, or as an analogous condition in an individual, characterized by hopelessness, disorientation, loss of belief and sense of purpose and social isolation (Colman, 2003). In a simple sense, it means lawlessness or normlessness. Anomie has been used to describe the state of society in many nations. For example, a society that does not provide enough jobs that pays a living wage, so that people can work to survive; many will turn to criminal methods of earning a living. Also, many other countries including Nigeria with high level of unemployment, crime, emergence of terrorism and extremist activities are experiencing anomie or better still are in a state of anomie.

The primary psychological effect of anomie is the failure to satisfy four fundamental human needs including a need for meaningful life, a need for self esteem, a need to belong and a need to have a sense of personal and collective control (Teymoori, 2016).

Management on the other hand refers to the act or skill of dealing with situation in a successful way (Hornby, 2015). Incidentally, managing social anomie in Nigeria poses a serious challenge and requires a decisive step on the part of government.

Despite the volume of studies on anomie in sociology, criminology and political science, the concept has been rarely studied in psychology. As a result, theorizing within psychology is not well equipped to reflect on instability/chaos or individuals behaviour in societies characterized by social, economic and political crises or societies engaged in war and/or intractable conflicts. Given that psychology is well equipped to study individuals within their social context (Tajfel, 1982), therefore this paper aims to use psycholinguistic approach to investigate the concept of anomie. Utilizing this approach to understand anomie would help to distinguish anomie from its psychological outcomes because of the “power and subtlety with which psychology shapes our language” (Ibbotson 2020).

The main objective of this study is to analyze anomie from psychological perspective while using language. Among other specific objectives are;

- To review the causes of anomie and its psychological outcomes.
- To suggest ways of managing anomie in the Nigerian society

Theoretical Framework

The major theories of anomie are adopted to provide explanation on the causes of anomie and review its conceptualization. And they include: Durkheim, Merton and Institutional Theory.

Durkheim’s Theory of Anomie.

Emile Durkheim was primarily concerned with the collective and integrity of modern societies and societies in transition. Durkheim proposes that anomie is a condition in which the coherence and integrity of society are at risk. He further posits that anomie takes place when the moral standards and regulation of society breakdown. As such, Durkheim considers the high prevalence of moral disruption within society as an important feature of anomie.

Merton’s Theory of Anomie

Merton (1938) proposes that the disparity between cultural goals (ends) and legitimate norms (means) may be followed by a more diverse set of responses than suicide. He identified five different responses to anomie which he labels “modes of adaptation”. These are conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. He further reflects on the fit between cultural norms and the legitimate means of complying and conformity to those norms and goals. According to Merton (1938) anomie arises if there is a societal imbalance between the cultural aspiration and legitimate means to achieve them.

Institutional Theory of Anomie

Messer and Rosenfeld (2001) proposed that anomie is a state of society and that anomie is an institutional based phenomenon. And in a state of high anomie, the institutions that maintain the balance in society have weakened. Messer and Rosenfeld (2001) identified four major institutions including economy, education, family and polity and posit that anomie emerges when non-economic social institutions, as agent of control and balance in society, are becoming dominated by economic values which weaken their control capability.

In their theory, Messer and Rosenfeld (2001) revised Merton’s socio-economic based argument of social structure and extend it by proposing an important role for institutional-based social structure. According to institutional theory of anomie, anomie refers to the disintegration of social controls and moral norms due to the malfunctioning of social institutions.

In summary to the three different theories, the main premises of these theories are presented to expose similarities and differences in conceptualization of anomie in the Table 1 below;

Theories of Anomie

Theorists of Anomie	Causes of Anomie	Definition of Anomie
Durkheim (1893/1997,1897/1987)	Anomie as a result of crisis or social change (e.g. modernization).	Lack of proper regulation over individual insatiable desires during a social transition, or crisis.
Merton (1983,1968)	Anomie as a cultural and socio-economic status product.	Gap between culturally desirable aspirations and legitimate means to achieve them.
Messer & Rosenfeld (2001)	Anomie as an institutional based anomaly.	Domination of strong economic purpose upon non-economic institutions like education and family.

Source: Teymoori, 2016.

From the above, it is discerning that major theories of anomie are polarized between considering anomie as either a state of mind or a state of society.

All these perspectives under anomie theories have succeeded in giving a clarification/conceptualization of what relationships exist between social structure and deviance; social institution and deviance and morality. Judging the Nigerian social institutions, the theories from different perspectives explain the extent of degeneration and moral decadence which have plunged Nigeria into a serious chaos.

METHODS

In this study, the descriptive research design was used. And text analysis was adopted by merging it with thematic analysis and mode of discourse. This is to enable the researchers provide answers to the questions. What is anomie? When, where, how and why does it exist?

However, the researcher’s generated secondary data from the textual analysis of a newspaper publication using manifest content approach as illustrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Manifest Content of the Newspaper Text

Words	Sentences	Paragraphs
Insecurity and social anomie: Call for decisive action by Abiola Daisy		
1723	85	16
Source: The Guardian, 22-23 March, 2021		

In addition, the data generated was analyzed based on theme-rheme structure of mode in the text using coding technique of thematic analysis as presented in Tables 3 and 4 below;

Table 3: Theme-Rheme Structure of Mode in Text

Unmarked Topical Theme	Marked Topical Theme	Textual Theme	Interpersonal Theme
Abiola Daisy's Commentary in the Guardian Newspaper with Title: Insecurity and social anomie: Call for decisive action (22-23 March 2021).			
We inform that where the provision for economic well being and the safety of lives has eluded a country or a people, the basis for sovereignty and patriotism are hopelessly eroded. (3), [4,6,9,11,12,20,22,23,25, 26,29,30,31,32,34,36, 39,40,41,42,47,48,49,50, 51,52,53,54,55,59,61,62, 64,65,66,69,70,71,72, 73,74,78,79,80,81,83], We must preempt the deterioration of the Nigerian situation to the experiences of Liberia from Samuel Doe to Charles Taylor or Yomi Johnson [85].	In Edo State, the only people that are safe presently are the political rulers who move about with sirens and carefully selected and effectively armed policemen [5], [7,13,14,16,17,18,21, 27,33,35,37,43,45,46, 56,57,58,60,63,68,82] Let our government know that to intimidate the citizenry and narrow the space for debates or totally submerge the freedom of the people to express their pains opens the door to a nihilistic option [84].	While in the past, the point at issue was the problem of hunger and general poverty being experienced by the Nigerian people, in recent times the provocation has been escalated to the inability of the Nigerian state to provide security of lives and property, we all agree that the Nigerian government has failed woefully in that respect [1], [2,8,10,15, 24,28,38,44,67,75,76], How many of the criminals that were released in the ENDSARS jailbreaks have been rearrested. [77].	When these youths are confronted with poverty arising from the incapacity of the state, their indulgence in criminal activities for the purpose of survival becomes predictive [19].

Source: The Guardian, 22-23 March, 2021

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of Theme-Rheme of Mode in Text

Text	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarked Topical Theme	48	57%
Marked Topical Theme	23	27%
Textual Theme	13	16%
Interpersonal Theme	01	0%
Total	85	100%

Source: Adekunle and Chibabi, 2021

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the textual analysis, it was found that Nigeria is experiencing a state of anomie which if care is not taken could degenerate into state of high anomie as highlighted in unmarked topical theme, textual theme and interpersonal theme of Table 3. Also under marked topical theme of Table 3, it was revealed that government has abdicated its responsibility of providing security for lives and properties of its citizenry. From all indication, anomie is a social-psychological problem on our economic and political space that has implications for the stability of a given society. More importantly, psycholinguistic analysis of anomie presented in this paper reveals an understanding of individual experience within a destabilized, crumbling and/or chaotic social context. However, it was observed that anomie theories represent attempt to explain factors of or the basis of deviance in the society as a result of breakdown in moral constraint in the society.

In conclusion, the analysis evidently showed that anomie is an abnormal or a pathological state with implications for the security of Nigerians and stability of Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations were suggested for effective management of anomie in our society.

- (1.) There is the need to strengthen the three institutions of family, education and polity which all together have the potential to prevent anomie.
- (2.) There is need to understand the interaction between micro and macro level effect of anomie to open up opportunities to disentangle processes that contribute to the emergence of anomie and also to overcome a state of high anomie in society.
- (3.) Combating anomie involves both changing individual level behavior and shaping macro-level perceptions of the society at large. For instance, subsequent to anomie, tribalized groups might politicize and engage in social change which may lead to emancipatory responses to the unfairness of a totalitarian authority and bring a society back out of anomie (Teymoori, 2016).
- (4.) Other ways to overcome anomie also involve macro level interventions in the lead up to the emergence of anomie whereby authorities take preventive measures that can reverse the development of the perceived breakdown of social fabric and leadership.
- (5.) There should be good governance at all levels to ensure effective leadership.

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