
Durkheim's Social Solidarity and the Division of labour: An Overview

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Abstract

This article aims to review Durkheim's concepts of division of labour and social solidarity, especially how social solidarity developed through the division of labour and how the interplay between the two gives rise to the functionality of the social system. This study, too, explains the relevance of such concepts to studying contemporary society. This study concludes that some underlying shortcomings need addressing without denying Durkheim's attempt to provide a sound methodological and theoretical foundation for sociology as a discipline. Durkheim's contention that the Division of labour forms social solidarity is deterministic and subscribes to the law of rigidity. Individuals' occupational function is seen as a determinant and therefore has nothing to do with human free will and individuals' subjectivity to meaning. It is a sort of reductionism because it eliminates the entire propensity of human nature. It reduces the conditions of society to that of the organism of a living being. As a result, it is tough to replicate Durkheim's solidarity model to explain the complex nature of current urban societies.

Keywords: *Emile Durkheim, Division of labour, Social Solidarity*

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendiskusikan konsep Durkheim tentang pembagian kerja dan solidaritas sosial, terutama bagaimana solidaritas sosial berkembang melalui pembagian kerja dan bagaimana interaksi antara keduanya memunculkan fungsi sistem sosial. Artikel ini juga menjelaskan relevansi konsep-konsep tersebut untuk mempelajari masyarakat kontemporer. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahwa dalam konsep tersebut terdapat beberapa kekurangan mendasar perlu diatasi tanpa menyangkal fakta bahwa Durkheim telah memberikan landasan metodologis dan teoretis yang kuat untuk sosiologi sebagai suatu disiplin. Pendapat Durkheim bahwa pembagian kerja membentuk solidaritas sosial adalah deterministik dan menganut hukum kekakuan. Fungsi pekerjaan individu dipandang sebagai penentu dan karena itu tidak ada hubungannya dengan kehendak bebas manusia dan subjektivitas individu terhadap makna. Ini adalah semacam reduksionisme karena menghilangkan seluruh kecenderungan sifat manusia. Ia mereduksi kondisi masyarakat menjadi kondisi organisme makhluk hidup. Akibatnya, sulit untuk mengadaptasi model solidaritas Durkheim untuk menjelaskan sifat kompleks masyarakat perkotaan saat ini.

Kata Kunci: *Emile Durkheim, Pembagian Kerja, Solidaritas Sosial*

A. Introduction

Durkheim rejects the notion of individualism in society (Morrison, 1995). He subscribed instead to the idea of social solidarity. Society, according to him, would cease to exist unless there is minimum solidarity therein (Durkheim, 1984). Therefore, solidarity is, he contends, a positive function for society to work. Further, he distinguishes two kinds of solidarity: organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity. If the former is based on kinship, tribes, and face-to-face relationships mostly found in primitive society, the latter is based on the economic association among individuals. To the latter, Durkheim holds that this solidarity is contingent upon the Division of labour of individuals functioning as a collective consciousness of the community to keep society from withering away.

So important is this notion that Durkheim pays a large amount of attention to verifying it as a fundamental prerequisite to survival in any given society. His subsequent research on Suicide, written in 1897, is highly regarded as a scientific verification he wanted to introduce to confirm his social solidarity. Until recently, the Division of labour is seen as a very important concept to understand how society and its macrocosmic structure emerge through a web of micro-interconnectivity that binds a society together albeit all differences.

A considerable amount of recent literature has shown the importance of Durkheim's solidarity and Division of labour in understanding contemporary society. Research has utilized Durkheim's model of forming solidarity during the covid pandemic (Mishra & Rath, 2020; Flynn, 2022). Others have analyzed Durkheim's solidarity and its legal formation in the modern world (Johnson et al., 2017) and the formation of solidarity during the disaster (Alfirdaus et al., 2015). In theoretical discourse, the work of Durkheim provides answers to the question of how individuality relates to social structure as a whole while being more autonomous at the same time (Jacobs, 2022; Finn, 2016; Rawls, 2012) and how it gives rise to organizational culture (Lincoln & Guillot, 2004).

However, researchers have also found incoherency in Durkheim's theoretical standpoint. Durkheim, for example, is seen as unable to demonstrate the superiority of the Division of labour as an integrating force in modern organic society and fails to explain the macrostructural view, particularly on how the Division of labour forms solidarity (Thijssen, 2016), inadequacy in offering the relation between individuality, the value of justice and class struggle in the formation of solidarity (Thilakarathna, 2019). Another research argues that Durkheim's Division of labour leads to an ambiguity in that, on the one hand, choices individuals have is reduced by the Division of labour due to dependencies among them. On the other hand, the complex structure of urban society necessitates a wide variety of additional possibilities of choices (Lenhard, 2011).

This paper attempts to shed light on and add insight to Durkheim's theoretical discourses. Hence, the paper tries to succinctly review Durkheim's Division of labour and social solidarity, mainly how social solidarity might be possible through the Division of labour and how the interplay between the two gives rise to the functionality of social system and order. The paper also explains the relevance of such concepts to today's society.

B. Method

This article was a qualitative study with a document analysis approach (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022). Data are generated from examining documents and relevant literature and are systematically analyzed and interpreted. The paper collects primary sources from its original texts written by Durkheim, namely *The Division of labour in Society* which Halls W. D. translated in 1984). Secondary data are collected through a literature review of relevant sources.

C. Result & Discussion

1. Social Solidarity

Durkheim divides two kinds of solidarities that are categorically polar opposite, namely mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. According to him, social life stems from shared consciences and the Division of social

labour (Durkheim, 1984). On the one hand, the expected share of consciences forms the so-called mechanical solidarity. This solidarity is a kind of social cohesion based upon the shared values and likeness among individuals in a society, largely dependent on religious beliefs and common practices. "A social solidarity arises because a certain number of states of consciousness are common to all members of the same society (Durkheim, 1984, p. 64). In this solidarity, each member of society acts and performs almost identical routines. This eventually brings about a collective conscience among all members and binds individuals to be contingent upon the total social system rather than on others. On the other hand, when society begins to industrialize, labour becomes increasingly specialized and massively divided, and individuals are neither behaving in the same routines nor have the same interests and are not necessarily sharing the same attitude toward life. In this condition, organic solidarity is formed. This solidarity is based upon individuals' reliance on the existence of the division of labour.

"Individuals are linked to one another who would otherwise be independent; instead of developing separately, they concert their efforts. They are solidly tied to one another and the links between them function not only in the brief moments when they engage in an exchange of services, but extend considerably beyond" (Durkheim, 1984, p.21)."

Though individuals perform nonidentical labours and have different experiences and interests, society's equilibrium and survival depend on how society members perform their respective specific tasks. This reliance on each other is necessary for social survival and becomes the source of organic solidarity. Hence, organic solidarity is a social order that relies on the interconnection of each member of society. Because of Durkheim's functionalism, people are obliged to behave in certain ways and perform distinct and specialized tasks on which they rely on their basic needs to survive.

This interdependence is why the Division of labour does not disrupt but strengthens and maintains social order. In short, Durkheim believes that the basis for understanding this organic solidarity is found in the principles of

natural ecology (Durkheim, 1984). As explained by Morrison (1995), Durkheim provides a methodological framework of how Durkheim conceptualizes social solidarity in society and how it works in relation to the Division of labour, as follows. First, by defining a working system of solidarity which is seen as the system of social association linking individuals to society without which individuals would be independent. Second, identify a linking system among individuals and society as a whole. Third, identifying the system of social interchange that surpasses economic transactions and links individuals to form social unity and, eventually, social solidarity. Fourth, describing the extent of social cohesion connects individuals to the out-group associations.

2. The Division of labour

The Division of labour refers to the process of specialization of labour in that different tasks are performed by different people (Durkheim, 1984). Durkheim distinguishes two perspectives on the Division of labour. First, from an economic sense, the Division of labour refers to the process of specializing labour into separate and special operations to increase the rate of production. In a sociological sense, it refers to the principle of integration emerging in societies whose social links evolve from how individuals interact due to their separate and specialized occupational functions. Durkheim holds that "the division of labour produced by contributing to the maintenance of the equilibrium of societies" (Durkheim, 1984, p. 179). This Division of labour is characterized by systemic cooperation that is automatically produced through the pursuit of individuals' different interests. Therefore, it is simply the distinction and specialization of works among society members.

As society experiences population growth and rapid industrial and technological development, it must become more specialized to survive. Individuals are linked more to each other than they are to society as a whole. The development of the Division of labour creates this new form of relations and makes individuals dependent on different economic functions performed

by others. Consequently, this condition integrates individuals into their economic and occupational functions as a means to "social cohesion" (Durkheim, 1984, p. 141). Their ties to society become indirect and operate through the Division of labour. Social association between individuals is not enforced by contracts, kinship affiliation, or the force of customs or religious beliefs. Instead, it is formed by the increased dependency on their separate occupational functions.

Thus, the Division of labour alters the nature of the social interconnection. Nonetheless, according to Durkheim, such conditions have no negative consequence on society even if he recognized that they would not bring about "total harmony" (Durkheim, 1984, p. 300). Instead, it is, he argues, a positive function for society to be more integrated, and it does in specific ways bind individuals together through the form of organic solidarity, and it, furthermore, becomes a common conscience or a collective conscience of a society. Durkheim elucidates:

" The image of the one who complements us becomes inseparable within us from our own, not only because of the frequency with which it is associated with it, but above all, because it is its natural complement. Thus, it becomes an integral, permanent part of our consciousness to such a degree that we can no longer do without it" (Durkheim. 1984, p. 22).

Durkheim uses the term collective conscience to refer to "a body of beliefs, practices and collective sentiments, which are held in common by all members of a society" (Durkheim. 1984, p. 131).

3. The Division of labour: The Causes

According to Durkheim, primary causes leading to the Division of labour happen when segments in societies are widespread (Durkheim, 1984). As the segments become increasingly scattered and permeable, society becomes less resistant to change. As a result, society and social life disperse over separate segments. Durkheim argues that "societies are generally more voluminous the more advanced they are and consequently labour is more divided up in them" (Durkheim. 1984, p. 203). He explains further:

"The Division of labour varies in direct proportion to the volume and density of societies and if it progresses in a continuous manner over the course of social development it is because societies become regularly more dense and generally more voluminous (Durkheim. 1984, p. 205)

He subsequently identifies three primary causes of the Division of labour. First is the change that occurs in the geographical closeness of individuals. The population begins to concentrate in more populated areas. Second is the growth of cities, which occurs due to population growth and increasing social density. This paves the way to more intense interaction between individuals that, at the same time, leads to an increase in the overall social accumulation as well as creates the unifying of divisions into coordinated social organs. The third is the growth of social volume that occurs when social interaction produces an intensity of communications and the need for transportation. This leads to an increase in social relations and frequency of contact among individuals.

Durkheim states that Division of labour develops as the competition for existence increases due to increasing population density. Individuals living in close physical proximity but having no emotional ties find that they must live in cooperation with others. However, there must be a line of demarcation between tasks and functions that leads to specialization of labour functions to meet the various materials the individuals need.

Consequently, a system of social relations emerges from the interdependent among individuals produced by the Division of labour. Strengthening the system of mutual relations among individuals, particularly in the case of social deviance and abnormality, requires coercive norms in the form of laws and social rules. The relations between these legal rights and social rules derive from a moral framework, which serves as the basis of social cohesion. The moral guidance regulating how people acquire material needs gives rise to the principle of social cohesion based on the functional Division of labour itself.

4. How the Division of labour forms social solidarity

As the Division of labour developed, a major social function was broken down into smaller units in society, each having distinctive functions. As such, individuals play a rather important role and become the heart of the system of social cohesion. This condition creates a new form of the social system and social cohesion because individuals, on the one hand, are more independent of society while, on the other, being more autonomous individually. Thus, individuals are related through the Division of labour rather than through beliefs, values, and customs since they rely upon others for things they cannot produce on their own. In other words, as labour is divided into specialized functions, individuals no longer produce goods and services to their needs. However, to meet their needs, they must depend on social relations with others who produce things and services they cannot. As a result, the Division of labour governs individuals to be reliant on various sectors of society for basic needs and services for them to be able to maintain their existence. Its functionality works in analogy to that of biological organisms.

"This solidarity resembles that observed in the higher animals. In fact, each organ has its own special characteristics and autonomy, yet the greater the unity of the organism, the more marked the individualization of the parts. Using this analogy, we propose to call 'organic' the solidarity that is due to the Division of labour (Durkheim, 1984, p. 85)

This creates a new social interconnection and cohesion which is no longer determined by custom and belief as in the mechanical solidarity. Values, customs, and beliefs become more ambiguous since individuals adhere only to those values which are functionally necessary for their occupational links to the Division of labour. As a result, the Division of labour is the nexus that changes and shapes the system of social cohesion by governing individuals' behaviour to create social functionality based on occupational links through individual performance in specific economic roles and specialized functions.

5. The Anomic of the Division of labour.

The abnormal condition of the Division of labour is called "pathological forms" (Durkheim, 1984, p. 291). The term is derived from biological senses to indicate the occurrences of the disease in an organism. Social body is just like the human body, which can suffer from diseases. "In the same way, cancer and tuberculosis increase the diversity of the organic tissues without it being possible to see a fresh specialization of the biological functions" (Durkheim, 1984, p. 291). Durkheim examines three important aspects of this abnormality. The first is on what deregulates individuals from society. The second is on what deregulates social functions among its members, and the third is the excessiveness of labour. The first is an anomic division of labour that arises when an industrial crisis occurs due to massive commercial failure. "This nature is provided for us by industrial or commercial crises, and by the bankruptcies that are so many partial breaks in organic solidarity" (Durkheim, 1984, p. 292).

This crisis would result in the dysfunction of social solidarity and a decline in social cohesion. This anomic condition, according to him happens in two distinct senses. The first is in the inability of individuals to understand all of the separated functions of society as a whole. This occurs when society becomes so extensive in its scope, and that makes individuals unable to visualize its processes and cannot comprehend society as a united social whole. Second is the forced Division of labour. "The division of labour cannot, therefore, be pushed too far without being a source of disintegration." (Durkheim, 1984, p. 294). This occurs when the functions of specialization and the social organ representing them become an instrument for power disposition to certain social classes and their interest at the expense of other social classes. In addition to class interests, representing organs and functions to the social function in such a way that they become unrelated to the natural demands of society and begin to represent divisions based on special interests' groups resulting in society dysfunctional. Therefore, the Division of labour no longer provides a working system of association for social cohesion but serves certain social groups'

interests. This happens, for example, when labour qualification is based on social segregation and classes instead of meritocracy, abilities, and professional qualifications.

Lastly, Durkheim also argues that excessive specialization that goes beyond the need of society would, at the same time cause excessive regulation and constraint and would eventually be "a threat to social solidarity" (Durkheim, 1984, p.301) and result in "the weakening of the collective consciousness" (Durkheim, 1984, p. 301). In this abnormality, the Division of labour fails to provide a working mechanism to integrate individuals. Consequently, it needs a system of laws to maintain the Division of labour and bring about harmony eventually.

6. Critical Overview

Durkheim's Division of labour in society has been of great significance to the growth of sociology as a discipline. It remains a core sociological theory and the foundation of modern sociology. However, it also contains some underlying shortcomings that have limited its appeal to modern sociology and society. Durkheim seems to hold the ideas that the Division of labour is not only necessary but also regarded as the supreme law for human societies and progress. It is a moral law that governs humans as an external force. It is a moral rule that compels humans to do certain things within the category of those laws. By this, it implies that the rule of individuals in organic collective conscience is merely to maintain its occupational functions to maintain the highest form of solidarity as in a biological organism. If society were an animal, its individuals' occupation is its organs. Here, individuals' occupational function is simply seen as a determinant and has nothing to do with human free will.

Then the questions arise such as: can humans be self-sufficient? are humans to be but as a part of a whole organ of an organism? In other words, it seems that natural law or moral rule governs human's natures and activities from somewhere like planets governed by its laws so that those planets would always revolve in the same way, moving in an elliptical orbit from day one till

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the end of the day. Thus, if this kind of rigidity law governs human nature, why is it so, and to what degree? This is something explained ambiguously as to how solidarity is possible, mainly when there is a massive conflict and rebellion or massive movement in society.

The idea of the Division of labour as a positive function to society as its collective consciousness seems to be a sort of reductionism. It eliminates the entire propensity of human nature. It reduces society's conditions to a natural rigidity. For this reason, the Division of labour is simply reductionism and therefore is no more than a form of the generality of Durkheim in comprehending the development of modern society. This kind of reductionism is thus insufficient to explain how the complex natures of modern societies are functioning. It is hard to rationalize organic solidarity by merely focusing on self-regulating quality of the Division of labour. Therefore, it is vehemently insufficient to explain the problem of modern life, such as the crises of commercial and industrial, class conflict, alienated labour, abusive management over its labour in the free market, labour-management conflicts, compartmentalization between self, work, and family, lack of rules of conduct and et cetera.

This seems to go unnoticed by Durkheim. He suggests, however, that the lack of social solidarity or the existence of conflict is pathological as a consequence of the incomplete transition of society and would not be present in the normal functioning of society. The external laws, in the form of sanctions and regulations provided by the state or government, reflect the collective conscience's existence in coping against abnormality. As Durkheim suggests, it is merely an instrument and therefore is not sufficient to explain the existence of solidarity. Because solidarity and coercive regulation are two different entities. While the former is voluntary in nature, the laws and regulations are coercive acts. Unfortunately, Durkheim does not sufficiently discuss and provide logical reasoning for this pathological situation, given why he decides to suggest that laws and customs as external force formed out of moral conditions of the Division of labour. Lastly, Durkheim's analysis of organic solidarity is sort of a

utopian thought. Durkheim seems to pinpoint the conditions for the successful functioning of organized societies by giving particular attention to the voluntarily self-regulating Division of labour without giving any kind of roadmap as to how this organic solidarity grows and reaches its final destination.

D. Conclusion

Durkheim supports the ideas of society's dynamic development. Society, therefore, shall progress from one particular stage to another. He holds that there are two types of society. The first is primitive society, and the second is modern society. Its collective consciousness governs these two societies. The collective consciousness that governs the first society is social bonds such as beliefs and values systems. The second society is governed by Division of labour as its collective consciousness because, in this second type, the nature of society has vehemently changed as compared to that of primitive society. As society modernises and industrialises, labour becomes more specialized and divided. Individuals are no longer performing the same tasks. Beliefs and values bound have been unable to be the force for social cohesion.

As a result, the collective nature of consciousness naturally changes as well. Within this new nature, individuals are knitted to form a social integration through the Division of labour. The differences in the type of labour pave the way to social cohesion since individuals are dependent on labour and services provided by others. In addition, society, in order to exist has to have its minimum integration. For this reason, Durkheim argues that regulations are needed to handle the problem of constraints or so-called "anomie" in society. These regulations are formed as a moral reflection of collective consciousness.

However, the contention that the Division of labour forms social solidarity is deterministic and subscribes to the law of rigidity. Individuals' occupational function is simply seen as a determinant function and has nothing to do with human free will and individuals' subjectivity to meaning. At the same time, It is a sort of reductionism because it eliminates the entire propensity of human nature. It reduces the conditions of society just as the organism of a living being.

As a result, it is very difficult to try to explain the complex nature of current urban societies using the Durkheim model of organic solidarity.

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