

Anomie and Relative Deprivation: Two Competing Theories Explaining Deviant Behavior

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Individuals, including drivers, commit daily acts which are considered immoral, unethical, often to gain material advantage. Acts such as cheating on taxes, avoiding transport fare or violating traffic regulations are considered by many people to be wrong, yet they do them. Some of these acts may not be formally illegal, but are considered morally dubious and may be labeled “deviant behavior.”

This presentation introduces and explains the concepts of anomie and relative deprivation and their comparative association with the tendency towards individuals’ deviant behavior. The results of analysis of a recent World Values Survey data testing both constructs concurrently are presented and discussed. Using statistical analysis tools, both theories (anomie and relative deprivation) were found to be associated with the tendency towards deviant behavior of an individual. However, anomie was perceived to be more likely to justify deviant behavior than relative deprivation.

A limited survey carried out to measure the perceivness of Jordanian drivers on the act of driving over the speed limit. The results showed that 20% consider the act always justifiable, 30% consider it justifiable and 50% consider it never justifiable.

Finally, the theoretical and practical implications of these findings are presented and discussed.