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Artículos Científicos

# Percepción de anomia en población urbana salvadoreña: pesimismo, desconcierto y aislamiento

Perception of Anomie in Salvadoran Urban Population: Pessimism, Bewilderment and Isolation

Percepção de anomia na população urbana salvadorenha: pessimismo, perplexidade e isolamento

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### Resumen

La percepción de anomia constituye una expresión de alienación esperable en contextos caracterizados por la exclusión, la incertidumbre vital o la debilidad normativa, tal es el caso de la sociedad salvadoreña actual. En el marco de una investigación por encuesta, se exploró la percepción de anomia en una muestra representativa de habitantes mayores de 15 años de edad del Área Metropolitana de San Salvador (AMSS). La medición de anomia percibida fue desarrollada a partir de la depuración de dos escalas clásicas de anomia que dieron como resultado una escala definitiva compuesta por 13 ítems. La escala obtenida es internamente consistente ( $\alpha = .71$ ) y cuenta con una clara estructura factorial de tres dimensiones (pesimismo, desconcierto y aislamiento) que en conjunto explicaron 44.20 % de la varianza. Los resultados principales obtenidos evidencian que los niveles generales de anomia percibida son altos en los habitantes del AMSS, aunque son estadísticamente mayores entre aquellos con peor situación socioeconómica e instrucción educativa o entre quienes no trabajan. El constructo general correlaciona con variables de victimización e inseguridad (e. g., se tiene o se quiere tener un arma de fuego para protección)





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y de cultura política (e. g., ineficacia política), variables que corroboran una asociación entre la anomia percibida y experiencias de amenaza y de distanciamiento social e institucional. En síntesis, se obtuvo un modelo de regresión lineal múltiple constituido por siete variables a partir de los correlatos de inseguridad y cultura política mencionados que explicaron 33 % de la varianza de la percepción de anomia. La discusión resalta el cumplimiento del objetivo exploratorio del estudio y la convergencia entre los hallazgos centrales y los antecedentes teóricos y empíricos encontrados de otras latitudes sobre el tema. Asimismo, el vínculo reforzante que parece existir entre la percepción de anomia y el autoritarismo de derechas, el predictor principal de la percepción de anomia según el modelo de regresión lineal estimado. Las conclusiones sugieren tomar distancia de aproximaciones funcionalistas y acríticas al estudiar el fenómeno, reconocer la necesidad de trascender el carácter exploratorio del estudio, ofrecer algunas líneas generales para futuros esfuerzos investigativos que podrían consolidar la propuesta de medición de percepción de anomia, así como resaltar la relevancia de la subjetividad social y sus consecuencias en la realidad concreta. **Palabras clave:** alienación, anomia, autoritarismo, escala, violencia.

### Abstract

The perception of anomie constitutes an expectable alienation expression in contexts characterized by exclusion, vital uncertainty or normative weakness, such as the current Salvadoran society. Within a survey-based research framework, the perception of anomie was explored in a representative sample of older than 15 years of age inhabitants of the San Salvador Metropolitan Area (SSMA). The measurement of perceived anomie developed from the refinement of two classic anomy scales that resulted in a definitive 13-item scale. The obtained scale is internally consistent  $(\alpha = .71)$  and has a clear three-dimensional factorial structure (pessimism, bewilderment and isolation) that accounted for 44.20% of the variance. The main results showed high levels of perception of anomie in SMMA's inhabitants but statistically higher levels among those with worse socioeconomic situation and educational instruction or among those unemployed. The general construct correlates with variables of victimization and insecurity (e.g., gangs are problem in the neighborhood, have or want a firearm for protection) and political culture (e.g., political inefficacy, eroded sense of community), variables that corroborate an association between perceived anomie and experiences of threat and social and institutional detachment. A multiple linear regression model constituted of seven variables was obtained using the insecurity and political culture correlates aforementioned that explained 33% of the variance of the perception of anomie. The





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discussion highlights the fulfillment of the exploratory objective of the study and the convergence among the central findings and the theoretical and empirical backgrounds on the subject found elsewhere. Likewise, the reinforcing link that seems to exist between the perception of anomie and the right-wing authoritarianism, the main predictor of the perception of anomie according to the estimated linear regression model. Conclusions suggest taking distance from functionalist and uncritical approaches when studying the phenomena, acknowledge the necessity to transcend the exploratory scope of the study, offer some general suggestions for future investigative endeavors that, in addition, can consolidate the proposed measure of perception of anomie, and highlight the relevance of social subjectivity and its consequences on concrete reality.

Keywords: alienation, anomie, authoritarianism, scale, violence.

### Resumo

A percepção da anomia constitui uma expressão da alienação esperada em contextos caracterizados por exclusão, incerteza vital ou fraqueza regulatória, como é o caso da sociedade salvadorenha de hoje. No âmbito de uma investigação de pesquisa, a percepção de anomia foi explorada em uma amostra representativa de habitantes acima de 15 anos na Área Metropolitana de San Salvador (AMSS). A mensuração da anomia percebida foi desenvolvida a partir da purificação de duas escalas clássicas de anomia que resultaram em uma escala definitiva composta por 13 itens. A escala obtida é internamente consistente ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ) e possui uma estrutura fatorial tridimensional clara (pessimismo, confusão e isolamento) que juntos representam 44,20% da variância. Os principais resultados obtidos mostram que os níveis gerais de anomia percebida são elevados nos habitantes da AMSS, embora sejam estatisticamente maiores entre aqueles com pior nível socioeconômico e instrução educacional ou entre aqueles que não trabalham. O construto geral se correlaciona com variáveis de vitimização e insegurança (por exemplo, você tem ou deseja ter uma arma de fogo para proteção) e cultura política (por exemplo, ineficiência política), variáveis que corroboram uma associação entre anomia percebida e experiências de ameaças e distanciamento social e institucional. Em resumo, foi obtido um modelo de regressão linear múltipla, composto por sete variáveis, com base nos correlatos de insegurança e cultura política mencionados, que explicaram 33% da variação na percepção de anomia. A discussão destaca o cumprimento do objetivo exploratório do estudo e a convergência entre os achados centrais e os antecedentes teóricos e empíricos encontrados em outras latitudes sobre o assunto. Da mesma forma, o elo de reforço que parece existir entre a percepção de anomia e o autoritarismo de direitos, o principal





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preditor da percepção de anomia de acordo com o modelo de regressão linear estimado. As conclusões sugerem afastar-se de abordagens funcionalistas e acríticas ao estudar o fenômeno, reconhecendo a necessidade de transcender a natureza exploratória do estudo, oferecendo algumas linhas gerais para futuros esforços de pesquisa que possam consolidar a proposta de medir a percepção de anomia, além de destacar a relevância da subjetividade social e suas conseqüências na realidade concreta.

Palavras-chave: alienação, anomia, autoritarismo, escala, violência.

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## Introduction

The high level of violence and criminality is one of the most distinctive features of contemporary El Salvador. With homicide rates around 100 deaths per 100 000 inhabitants, the country is considered - in the absence of a formal war declared - the most dangerous on the planet (Mc Evoy and Hideg, 2017; United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2018). This is evidenced in different forms of crime - theft, robbery, assault, sexual abuse, etc. - that reach epidemic levels (University Institute of Public Opinion [Iudop], 2014). Violence in the country has been a historical constant whose increasing complexity has become more evident in the last 30 years, since the signing of the 1992 peace agreements, which ended the war and generated a series of vertiginous transformations in Different spheres of national life.

Indeed, in the 1990s, war violence was giving way to criminal forms rooted in the social fabric, such as "common crime", gang violence or organized crime (Walter, 2018). Since then, a new democratic electoral, public security and justice institutional institution was inaugurated in El Salvador while important modernization processes took place (eg, sophistication of telecommunications, access to new forms of leisure, consumerism). All this joined a new neoliberal economic model that was implemented in parallel to the social and political changes pointed out (Orellana, 2012), which caused relevant and simultaneous turbulence for people's daily lives, with repercussions that continue until now .

For example, in a progressive manner, the actions of the gangs have reconfigured territorial delimitations that regulate the forms of coexistence, economic exchange and even political participation (Hernández-Anzora, 2017; Iudop, 2014; Walter, 2018). Indeed, this last area - which then led to the establishment of new electoral routines and rules of democratic play - today accuses the deterioration of democratic culture (eg, less support for democracy), antipathy towards political





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parties and citizen distrust of institutions electoral (Córdova Macías, Rodríguez y Zechmeister, 2017; Latinobarómetro, 2017).

The new economic model, in addition to the privatization of state institutions or dollarization, aggravated inequality and socioeconomic exclusion, including the social lag in terms of educational and technological capabilities, which caused labor instability and informal work to consolidate as the livelihoods of the major majorities (Department of Economy UCA, 2017; Orellana, 2012; UNDP, 2013). Internal migrations caused by the abandonment of the countryside, as well as natural disasters or violence contribute to family disruption and to increase marginality while adding pressure to the disorderly urbanization. Migration to the United States has been sustained as a cumulative effect of the conditions described, with the cultural, economic and family readjustments that such processes generate (State of the Nation Program [PEN], 2016; UNDP, 2013, 2018).

This tight synthesis of some facets of El Salvador in recent decades, as well as other parallel processes that take place (insecurity, precariousness, increased social gaps, uprooting, etc.) and the incidence of global processes marked by uncertainty or ruptures meaning (eg, economic crisis, terrorism, discrediting of traditional institutions) allow us to assume that we are facing an anomic context, that is, circumstances in which the social regulations governing the behavior of individuals suffer breakages that can lead to tensions capable of leading them to incur social deviations (Agnew and Passas, 1997; Passas, 1997).

Anomie constitutes a classic construct of sociological theory that, for more than a century, has been consolidated as a mainly criminological theory, hence the commission of crimes of different gravity (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007) constitutes the concrete social deviation of Greater interest in that theory. This allows us to affirm that the existence of high levels of violence and criminality in the country constitutes a sufficient confirmation of the sociological presence of the phenomenon (UNDP, 2009), although it is worth noting that the perception of anomie also refers to an intersubjective interpretation or construction of a state of society that, therefore, may lack objective corroboration (Teymoori *et al.*, 2016).

This means that the theory of anomie has macrosocial dimensions and readings - the normative break or the well-known "absence of norms" (Durkheim, 1897/2004; Merton, 1964) - and microsocials - tension or pressure that can lead to behaviors deviants (Agnew, 2000) -. However, the recognized criminological aspect and the macro-micro continuum of the theory of anomie, as well as its theoretical or phenomenological possibilities are broader. Regulatory





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fractures that feed social deviation (eg, crime) characterize both an anomic society and the fragmentation of its social fabric. Anomie, therefore, also implies other relevant processes and expressions of psychosociological nature.

### Anomie as a psychosocial phenomenon

The criminological vision that identifies personal states resulting from the pressures that an individual may experience under an anomic context (frustration or anger, according to Agnew, 2000) and that can lead to criminal behaviors do not exhaust the psychosocial interpretations of the phenomenon. According to Passas (1997), sociological anomie implies an attitudinal aspect referred to the tendency to reject social standards (of course in the disjointment between Merton's social media and ends, 1964). But, in addition, anomie can be associated with the shared perception of social breakdown that, among other things, implies the breaking of the sense of integration of the individual with respect to society. In other words, we are facing a psychosocial reading, and not merely psychological of the phenomenon. Such a sense of social distancing would occur, first, as a product of the communicative and relational overlapping of an individual in an anomic context whose spheres of existence are perceived as fractured or exclusive (eg, employment, politics) and, then, because establishing reliable social ties with others is problematic under these circumstances (eg, interpersonal distrust) (Teymoori, Bastian and Jetten, 2017).

However, the beginning of anomie as a topic of psychosocial discussion occurred in the 1950s, although within a broader term: alienation. This concept can be generally understood from an objective (macro or social) and subjective (micro or individual) point of view. In the first case, it refers to overwhelming social organizations or the separation between historical products and their creators (ie, traditional Marxist reading), while the subjective reading of the phenomenon refers to the splitting or uprooting of the person with respect to himself itself or others, the community or institutions (Nisbet, 1977; Seeman, 1983, 1991). Ultimately, it is a state that erodes the feeling of individual control over interpersonal relationships, the sense of events, the protection of the community or the general relationship of the person with the social order (Seeman, 1983).

Various contemporary authors to the original discussion on the subject (Citrin, McClosky, Merrill and Sniderman, 1975; Fischer, 1973; Nachmias, 1974; Seeman, 1983) coined to refer to alienation expressions such as the following: lack of power, lack of power norms, cynicism, nonsense, pessimism, estrangement, rejection of values, social isolation, withdrawal, social protest





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or distrust. However, the passage of time has reduced alienation to six dimensions (Fernández Ríos, 1994; Smith y Bohm, 2008):

- a. Powerlessness: Expectation that the behavior is not related to future results or that there is no control over vital events
- b. (meaningless): Difficulty in understanding personal and social events, which compromises the ability to plan or the ability to achieve existential leadership
- c. (normlessness): Tendency to privilege illegitimate or socially rejected behaviors to achieve socially desirable goals
- d. (isolation): Poverty of social contacts and perception of social rejection
- e. and. Self-strangement: the individual's tendency to engage in activities that are not gratifying
- f. (cultural strangement): Rejection or devaluation of beliefs and values commonly accepted by society.

Smith and Bohm (2008), on the other hand, they maintain that in the theoretical relationship between alienation and anomie a restricted vision has predominated that links the latter with the normlessness dimension (absence of norms). To this, Lytkina (2015) adds helplessness or lack of power, while other authors do not refer to any of the above (Taymoori et al., 2016). These conceptual divergences give reason to Legge, Davidov and Schmidt (2008) when they affirm that the conceptual basis and operationalization constitute relevant aspects of the debate that occupies the study of anomie as a psychosocial phenomenon. In any case, it is clear that the different dimensions of alienation reviewed clearly show that alienation always depends on others, in terms of affective company and immediate material, but also in terms of symbolic incarnation of groups, affiliations, institutions, values and shared means to achieve certain goals. Therefore, as a psychosocial manifestation, anomie can be understood as an expression of alienating character propitiated by an (sociologically) anomic means.

## Classic and current metric drifts of the phenomenon

Considering the theoretical and methodological commitment of their contributions, and especially for the bold psychosocial aspect of their proposals, the classic works of Leo Srole, as well as those of Herbert McClosky and John Schaar merit being highlighted when addressing historical measurement efforts of the perception of anomie - a debate between the authors can be found in McClosky and Schaar (1965a) and Srole (1965) -.





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Srole (1956) was a pioneer in defining anomie as an individual experience. This would appear in a sociopsychological continuum with two dimensions: a molar - referred to the variation in the degree of unification of social systems or their subsystems - and a molecular one - linked to an individual's perspective of being integrated in the fields of action of the interpersonal relationships and reference groups. The individual-society relationship would oscillate between eunomia (the ideal of social order) and anomie (the opposite pole). From this molecular perspective, Srole saw the opportunity to overcome existing methodological and operational difficulties through the use of survey methods that would allow individuals to be placed in the eunomia-anomie continuum.

Throughout this continuum, according to the degree of anomie that is experienced, people can generate a generalized sense of "belonging to others" or, conversely, a reading of "distance or alienation" from others . Srole (1956) refers to the integration / individual distance with respect to social structures such as the reference groups located "beyond the radius of action itself" (p. 711). In this way, we seek to portray the peculiarity of those who are situated in the eunomial-anomie continuum as a result of the complex and "reciprocal" action of sociological and psychological factors, present and past. In a relevant way, Srole hypothesizes that the perception of anomie implies rejection towards exogroups (outgroups) in general and minorities in particular.

Understanding anomie at the subjective level as a breakdown of the individual sense of "attachment" with others, with society, their fields or their institutions, Srole (1956) developed a measurement scale that explores notions such as the following: the leaders of the community are indifferent or act contrary to individual needs; the perception that the world is inconstant, chaotic and difficult to anticipate; socioeconomic setback, that is, a reading that one or people as one are unable to meet the material goals set; the lack of norms and vital sense, such as the openly indebted dimension of Durkheim according to which there is difficulty in internalizing norms and finding meaning in life and, finally, the feeling of isolation, of the social framework of reference and support. Srole proves that his measurement of anomie correlates positively and with more intensity with hostile attitudes towards minorities compared to the relationship between the latter and the "F scale", known in the classic study of authoritarian personality.

On the other hand, McClosky and Schaar (1965b) begin their reflection on anomie by observing the interest that psychological states receive in their explanatory scheme. The authors aim to explore the relationship between anomie - or anomy, as it is referred to as a psychological states regardless of social aspect such as social status.





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Without denying that certain objective conditions derive from anomie, they affirm that "anomic feelings" are often not considered. They define this state as "the feeling that the world and oneself are adrift, disoriented, lacking clear rules and handles" (McClosky and Schaar, 1965b, p. 19).

According to McClosky and Schaar (1965b), anomie is linked to dimensions such as "stunning" (or "cognitive disorientation," according to Legge et al., 2008), pessimism and political futility. Likewise, as psychological correlates of their measurement of anomie are cognitive factors such as the difficulty to learn or to correctly interpret reality and even mysticism, low intellectuality, low education and acquiescence. Regarding emotional factors, the authors find inflexibility (intolerance to ambiguity, rigidity, obsessiveness), manifest anxiety, low "ego strength" (sense of personal inadequacy and distortion of self-concept: guilt, vital dissatisfaction, frustration with status, among others) and aggressiveness (hostility, intolerance, contempt for the weak). Finally, relations with dehumanizing belief systems such as fascism and misanthropy. Anomie can be interpreted as the perception of deregulation and vital disorientation, which, in the background, constitutes one of many forms that can take a hopeless view of one's life and the surrounding community. A Spanish translation of the Srole and McClosky and Schaar anomie scales can be found in Rodríguez (2006). The perception of anomie is currently used in studies developed in different latitudes in theoretical agreement with its classical formulation. For example, recent studies have found that perceived anomie acts as a statistical predictor of derogatory provisions toward others, such as right-wing authoritarianism or prejudices towards socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (Hövermannac, Großac, Zick and Messner, 2015; Orellana, 2018a). Likewise, that positively correlates with states such as collective defenselessness, hopelessness, unemployment and inequality indicators, while negatively correlating with social cohesion, as well as indicators of corruption control, social and economic stability (Teymoori et al., 2016).

Likewise, it correlates negatively with religiosity and marital status, and positively with criminal behavior in athletes (Carter and Carter, 2014) or with antisocial and criminal behavior in young offenders (Vera Noriega, Bautista, Ramírez and Yáñez, 2012). In the organizational sphere, anomie erodes the worker's commitment to the company and their desire for permanence, professional self-concept and the perception of social support at work (Abreu, de Sousa and de Oliveira Fleury, 2018; Fandiño, Souza, Formiga , Menezes and Bentes, 2015). In general, it correlates negatively with indicators of human well-being (Blanco and Díaz, 2005; Muratori, Delfino and Zubieta, 2013).





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At present, the approach of the phenomenon is specified in attempts of theoretical construction or novel measurement, both at the macro or sociological level (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007; Messner, Thome and Rosenfeld, 2008; Schoepfer, 2015) and at the micro or psychological (Benbenaste, Etchezahar and Del Río, 2008; Hövermannac et al., 2015; Teymoori et al., 2016). Beyond updates and debates about the construct and its measurement, the proposals of Srole and McClosky and Schaar continue to find echo in contemporary studies, in full or with modifications, in different organizational and cultural contexts, as an approach to the perception of Anomie associated with the existence of anomic social conditions (eg, Blanco and Díaz, 2005, 2006; Carter and Carter, 2007, 2014; Legge et al., 2008; Teymoori et al., 2016). Classic works can be considered as precursors of the attempt to approach complex realities that exacerbate the experience of social fragmentation, uncertainty, low sense of vital self-efficacy, distrust of institutions and that, more than half a century ago, began what is now concretized on numerous scales that have tried to measure expressions of the anomie-alienation dyad (Lytkina, 2015).

### **General Research Objectives**

Against the background of the previous reflections, two major research objectives are formulated for this exploratory work. The first is to describe the level of perceived anomie in a representative sample of inhabitants of urban sectors of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (AMSS), El Salvador. Second, determine the link between the perception of anomie in relation to sociodemographic, victimization and insecurity and political culture variables.

## Method

### **Participants**

The sample was formed based on the population parameters of the population projections for 2010 (General Directorate of Statistics and Census of the Ministry of Economy [DIGESTYC], 2009). There was a representative sample of the inhabitants 15 years of age and older from the AMSS, a geo-administrative region heterogeneous in socioeconomic terms, almost entirely urban and with high rates of violence and insecurity. The sample was selected randomly and its size was established from the presumption of the infinite character of the population of origin (95% reliability (Z), variance of 50% (p) and a sample error (E) of less than 4.8%).





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Specifically, 421 inhabitants of both sexes (44.2% men and 55.8% women) with an average age of 39.2 years (SD = 17.2) participated. Almost half of the sample (48%) was located in a low social stratum; more than a third (35.4%) belonged to middle sectors and the remaining 16.6% was located in the upper or upper middle sector. The average monthly family income was \$ 528.35 USD (SD = \$ 562.72 USD). As for formal education, 41.1% had completed a ninth grade at the most, 28% had a baccalaureate degree, while the rest (30.9%) had completed technical or higher education.

### Instrument

The scale of perceived anomie used in this investigation arose from the fusion and metric purification of the classical scales of Srole (1956) and McClosky and Schaar (1965b). Both record the perception that the world and oneself are disoriented, lacking clear rules and normative or relational handles, regarding people, groups or institutions. In their form, the scales were translated and contextualized freely considering the original works of the authors, taking into account the expanded scale of Srole presented by Seeman (1991) and based on the writing and translation of items used by Rodríguez (2006).

The validity of the content of the scale used can be taken for granted by constituting a derivative of the classical scales generally recognized as measures of perceived anomie. However, the fusion of these in search of the strongest possible measurement of the construct, suggested debugging - firstly - the set of items of both scales to then establish their resulting factorial structure. The first was carried out based on the review of the content of each item, internal consistency analysis and exploratory factor analysis applied to both scales. In the end, a measurement scale of perceived anomie was obtained, composed of 13 items whose scores were unified on a response scale of 0 to 10 points, where the higher score means more perception of anomie.

The Srole and McClosky and Schaar scales total 18 items, nine for each scale. In the debugging process described above, the item Politicians are not really interested in what happens to the common Salvadoran was removed from the Srole scale. From the scale of McClosky and Schaar the following four items were eliminated: Many things that were important to our parents are being lost, The problem today is that most people really don't believe in anything, You often feel uncomfortable and out of place and people were better in the times before, when everyone knew exactly what they had to do.





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The internal consistency of the scale was satisfactory ( $\alpha = .71$ ) according to the specialized literature (Taber, 2017). Likewise, the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO = .78) and those of the Bartlett sphericity test ( $\chi 2$  [78] = 681.121, p <.001) confirmed the adequacy of the data for the performance of an exploratory factor analysis to determine the final factor structure of the construct. Table 1 shows the items that finally constituted the scale of perceived anomie, its origin according to the original scales and its distribution by factors.

Tabla 1. Origen, enunciado de ítems y distribución factorial de la escala de anomia percibida

Escala			Factores		
de origen	Ítems	1	2	3	
	Aislamiento				
McyS	A otras personas se les hace más fácil decidir qué es lo correcto.	.498			
Srole	En la actualidad, uno tiene que vivir el día a día y no pensar mucho en el futuro.	.455			
Srole	Junto a la salud, el dinero es la cosa más importante en la vida.	.626			
Srole	A veces no queda más que preguntarse si las cosas valen la pena.	.667			
Srole	Para hacer dinero no hay maneras correctas o incorrectas, solo formas fáciles o difíciles.	.662			
	Desconcierto				
McyS	En estos días, todo cambia tan rápido que da problema decidir cuáles son las reglas correctas a seguir.		.556		
McyS	Es difícil saber qué le va a pasar a uno de un día para otro con el estado de desorden en que están las cosas.		.75 2		
McyS	Hoy en día lo que escasea es el antiguo tipo de amistades que duraban toda la vida.		.64 0		
McyS	Hoy en día, con las cosas tan inseguras, parece que casi cualquier cosa podría suceder.		.56 4		
	Pesimismo				
Srole	A pesar de lo que se dice, a mucha de la gente común le está yendo peor.			.558	
Srole	Es casi injusto traer niños al mundo por como se ve el futuro.			.674	
Srole	En estos días uno no sabe realmente con quién puede contar.			.734	
Srole	A la mayoría de la gente no le importa lo que le suceda a los demás.			.601	

Fuente: Elaboración propia

The exploratory factor analysis was carried out through the principal component extraction method and a Varimax rotation was used. As can be seen in Table 1, the construct of perceived anomie obtained from the classical scales is composed of three clearly defined factors that together explain 44.20% of the variance of the results. Factor 1 consists of five items: four from the Srole scale and one from the McClosky and Schaar scale, and explains 14.90% of the variance of the





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results. The second factor manages to explain 14.80% of the variance with four items, all from the McClosky and Schaar scale. Finally, factor three brings together 14.50% of the explained variance and is integrated by four items of the Srole scale.

Considering the terminology of the alienation-anomie investigations and the dominant content of the items that make up each factor, factor 1 has been called isolation, the second confusion and the third pessimism. Each subscale of the factors of perceived anomie is one-dimensional (they account for a single base factor) and reach modest levels of internal consistency according to Cronbach's alpha coefficient (isolation .57; confusion .56; and pessimism .59). In this paper it is assumed that the three first order factors found empirically can be treated differentially although, together, they constitute the perception of anomie as a general second order factor.

The analyzes of internal consistency of each of the original anomie scales show levels of reliability below the constructed construct: the Srole scale reached a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .63 and that of McClosky and Schaar a coefficient of .69. Likewise, the construct obtained has the potential to be more sophisticated and parsimonious in theoretical terms due to its clear three-dimensional structure. Original research such as contemporary applications of the Srole and McClosky and Schaar scales usually show moderate or low levels of internal consistency (eg, Blanco and Díaz, 2005; Muratori, Delfino and Zubieta, 2013), so that the indications of reliability found in this opportunity converge with the available background. The theoretical congruence of the existing statistical relationships between the perception of anomie and other social and political variables that will be reviewed in the results may be interpreted as indications of validity of concurrent criteria.

The classic scales of anomy administered were included in a questionnaire in a survey format consisting of a total of 117 items, mostly with a closed response format. The survey consisted of questions and scales distributed in the following five sections: sociodemographic questions (sex, educational level, etc.), opinions on the situation of the country, victimization and insecurity, values and beliefs (in this section they were placed separately the classical scales of anomie) and aspects of political culture. The different scales and questions were distributed throughout the questionnaire in order to counteract the dispersion of attention, fatigue or acquiescence in the response trends of the interviewees.

To meet the research objectives set, some of the sociodemographic questions (sex, age, social status, religion, occupation and economic situation), others on insecurity and victimization and some more on political culture were chosen from the questions and scales available in the





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survey. Table 2 shows the variables of victimization and insecurity, while table 3 shows the variables of political culture chosen to carry out the analyzes, as well as their respective operationalization.

Variables	Operacionalización
Ha pensado en irse del país por temor a	
la delincuencia.	$1 = \mathbf{S}\mathbf{i}, 0 = \mathbf{N}\mathbf{o}$
Ha sido víctima de crimen.	1 = Si, 0 = No
Familiar/amigo ha sido victimizado.	$1 = \mathbf{S}\mathbf{i}, 0 = \mathbf{N}\mathbf{o}$
Vio a una persona asesinada en la calle	
en el último año.	$1 = \mathbf{S}\mathbf{i}, 0 = \mathbf{N}\mathbf{o}$
Arma de fuego para protección	1 = Tiene o le gustaría tener una, $0 =$ No tiene ni le gustaría
	tener una
Pandillas son problema en el barrio	1 = Mucho/algo, $0 =$ Poco/nada
Desconfianza interpersonal	Escala convertida a un rango de 0-10 puntos que combina
	dos ítems: La hipocresía está aumentando en nuestra
	sociedad y La mayoría de personas están interesadas en
	su propia conveniencia (a = .69).
Prejuicio hacia delincuentes	Escala convertida a un rango de 0-10 puntos que combina
	cuatro afirmaciones: dos sobre el carácter nato o
	patológico del delincuente y dos sobre su supuesta
	inferioridad moral ( $\alpha = .43$ ).
Miedo al delito	Escala convertida a un rango de 0-10 puntos que registra
	la intensidad del temor ante la posibilidad de sufrir ocho
	tipos de delitos (homicidio, robo, abuso sexual, etc.) ( $\alpha$ =
	.88).

Tabla 2. Variables	de victimización e	inseguridad v su	operacionalización

Fuente: Elaboración propia





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Variables	Operacionalización
Confianza institucional	Escala convertida a un rango de 0-10 puntos que registra el grado
	de confianza hacia 14 instituciones sociales (e. g., iglesias) y
	políticas (e. g., asamblea legislativa) ( $\alpha$ = .79).
Legitimidad (preferencia por	1 = Indiferencia por régimen político/prefiere autoritarismo, 0 =
régimen político autoritario).	prefiere democracia ante cualquier otra forma de gobierno.
Interés en política	0 = Nada, $1 = $ Algo, $2 = $ Poco, $3 = $ Mucho.
Ineficacia política (Montero,	0 = Muy en desacuerdo, $1 =$ Algo en desacuerdo, $2 =$ Indeciso, $3 =$
Gunther y Torcal, 1998)	Algo de acuerdo, 4 = Muy de acuerdo. El ítem mide la percepción
	de capacidad para incidir en la política a pesar de su complejidad.
Erosión de sentido de	Escala convertida a un rango de 0-10 puntos que combina tres
comunidad	ítems: Nuestros líderes no saben lo que hacen, No hay acuerdo
	social sobre temas importantes y urgentes y La situación que
	vivimos hace pensar que la protesta social crecerá ( $\alpha$ = .55).
Autoritarismo de derechas	Escala tridimensional de 0-10 puntos: sumisión autoritaria,
(Orellana 2018b)	agresión autoritaria y convencionalismo ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

Fuente: Elaboración propia

### Process

The data collection took place in 2010. The sampling used at the time was called stratified probabilistic, through systematic selection of sample elements (Bordens and Abott, 1999; Hernández-Sampieri, Fernán¬dez-Collado and Baptista Lucio, 2006). This procedure, to ensure dispersion and sample representativeness, implements a polypathic mechanism in which the sample units are chosen randomly within the region of interest and based on particular inclusion characteristics (both sexes, age, diverse socioeconomic origin, etc.). The surveys were administered by a team of trained specialists. Informed consent, confidentiality, proper identification of the interviewer and the possibility of contacting researchers in the event of security or procedural questions were part of the ethical protocol for the application of each survey.

## Results

Based on the research objectives set, this section is divided into two: the first describes the results of the perception of anomie and its dimensions in relation to the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample. In the second, correlations between the construct and the variables of victimization and insecurity and political culture are presented, and then show a regression model that allows to identify statistical predictors of the perceived anomie in the Salvadoran population





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that inhabits the AMSS. All major and secondary scales used in the analyzes were converted to scores ranging from 0 to 10 using the SPSS program, version 24.

Table 4 shows the averages of the perception construct of anomie, as well as its dimensions (bewilderment, pessimism and isolation) in relation to some sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.

	Anomia	Desconcierto	Pesimismo	Aislamiento
Variables	M(DE)	M(DE)	M(DE)	M(DE)
TODOS/AS	7.2(1.6)	8.4(1.9)	7.5(2.1)	5.7(2.4)
Sexo				
Masculino	7.2(1.5)	8.4(1.8)	7.4(2.0)	5.7 (2.4)
Femenino	7.2(1.7)	8.4(1.9)	7.5(2.2)	5.6 (2.4)
Edad				
15 a 34 años	7.3(1.5)	8.5(1.8)	7.6(1.9)	5.7(2.3)
Más de 35 años	7.1(1.6)	8.3(1.9)	7.3(2.2)	5.7(2.4)
Nivel educativo				
0-9 años de escolaridad	7.4(1.6)	8.4(1.9)	7.6(2.1)	6.2(2.3)
Bachillerato	7.2(1.6)	8.5(1.7)	7.5(2.1)	5.7(2.4)
Técnico/universitario	6.9(1.5)*	8.3(1.9)	7.5(2.0)	4.9(2.3)*
Estrato social				
Alto/medio alto	6.6(1.7)	7.9(2.2)	6.8(2.2)	4.9(2.6)
Medio	7.3(1.6)	8.5(1.8)	7.7(2.1)	5.7(2.2)
Bajo	7.3(1.5)*	8.5(1.7)*	7.5(2.0)*	5.9(2.3)*
Religión				
Ninguna/otra	7.4(1.6)	8.4(1.9)	7.8(1.9)	5.9(2.4)
Católica	7.3(1.6)	8.5(1.8)	7.5(2.1)	5.7(2.4)
Evangélica	7.1(1.5)	8.3(2.0)	7.3(2.1)	5.6(2.3)
Ocupación				
Trabaja o estudia	7.0(1.5)	8.3(1.8)	7.3(1.9)	5.4(2.4)
No trabaja	7.4(1.6)*	8.5(1.9)	7.6(2.2)	6.0(2.3)*
Situación económica				
Ha mejorado/sigue igual	6.9(1.7)	8.0(2.0)	7.1(2.2)	5.5(2.4)
Ha empeorado	7.3(1.5)*	8.5(1.8)*	7.5(2.0)	5.7(2.3)
Nota: * <i>p</i> < .05.				

 Tabla 4. Medias y desviaciones de la escala de anomia y sus dimensiones según variables sociodemográficas

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Table 4 shows that the level of perceived anomie is high in the AMSS population (M = 7.2, SD = 1.6). The level of isolation can be considered moderate (M = 5.7, SD = 2.4), but pessimism (M = 7.5, SD = 2.1) and especially the confusion (M = 8.4, SD = 1.9) reach high levels; Even both dimensions have a fashion of 10, the highest possible score on the scale. In general terms, the levels described are maintained throughout the sociodemographic variables recorded in the survey, but





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there are no statistical differences between the perceived anomie or its dimensions with respect to sex, age or religion.

There are, however, significant differences between the means of perceived anomie (F (2,418) = 4,531, p = .011) and isolation (F (2,418) = 11,033, p <.001) according to the educational level Those with nine years of schooling or less have a significantly higher average perceived anomia (M = 7.4, SD = 1.6) compared to those with a technical or university education (M = 6.9, SD = 1.5), but both categories do not they differ in their averages with respect to those with high school degrees. The isolation averages are statistically different between the three categories of study level.

The three social strata considered present significant differences between them compared to the perception of anomie and its dimensions (Anomie: F(2,418) = 6,893, p = .001. Dimensions: pessimism, F(2,418) = 4,280, p = .014; confusion, F(2,418) = 3,636, p = .027; isolation, F(2,418) = 4,234, p = .015). As can be seen in Table 4, in all cases, the high / medium high social stratum has smaller averages of the constructs considered in comparison with those of the middle and low strata, but the latter two do not differ statistically from each other as far as to the perception of anomie or any of its dimensions. On the other hand, those who do not work show a statistically higher level of perception of anomie (t (419) = -2,369, p = .018) and isolation (t (419) = -2,952, p = .003) than those They study or work. The average perception of anomie (t (419) = 2,045, p = .042) and of confusion (t (419) = 2,124, p = .034) is also significantly higher among those who considered that the economic situation had worsened against who thought that it had improved or had not changed at the time of answering the survey.

As expected, the dimensions of perceived anomic correlate positively with each other, so that pessimism increases as the isolation (r = .39, p < .01) and confusion (r = .41, p < .01), and the latter increases concomitantly with isolation (r = .24, p < .01).

On the other hand, Tables 5 and 6 present, respectively, correlations between the perception of anomie and variables of victimization and insecurity, and between that and variables of political culture. The perception of anomie correlates positively with having seen a person killed in the street, if a firearm is counted or wanted for protection, as gangs are perceived as a problem in the neighborhood, as interpersonal distrust increases and the fear of crime Regarding the variables of political culture, the perceived anomie correlates positively with showing indifference or preferring an authoritarian regime, with the sense of political inefficiency and with the erosion of the sense of community.





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### Tabla 5. Correlaciones entre anomia percibida y variables de victimización e inseguridad

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
(1)	Anomia percibida										
(2)	Ha pensado irse del país por temor a la delincuencia	.08									
(3)	Ha sido victimizado	.07	.13**								
(4)	Familiar/amigo fue victimizado	.01	.16**	.26**							
(5)	Vio a una persona asesinada en la calle	.13*	.23**	.19**	.29**						
(6)	Tiene/gustaría tener arma de fuego para protección	.17**	.15**	.09	.10*	.10*					
(7)	Pandillas son problema en barrio	.21**	.17**	.13*	.16**	.30**	.08				
(8)	Desconfianza interpersonal	.33**	.03	.02	.09	.10*	.02	.09			
(9)	Prejuicios hacia delincuentes	.28**	.02	.03	.01	.05	.17**	.02	.22**		
(10)	Miedo al delito	.12*	.22**	.15**	.20**	.20**	.05	.24**	10	.03	

#### Fuente: Elaboración propia

### **Tabla 6.** Correlaciones entre anomia percibida y variables de cultura política

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
(1)	Anomia percibida							
(2)	Confianza institucional	08						
(3)	Indiferente/prefiere régimen autoritario	.10*	09					
(4)	Interés en política	08	23**	11*				
(5)	Ineficacia política	.26**	01	.07	22**			
(6)	Erosión de sentido de comunidad	.29**	15**	04	02	.12*		
(7)	Autoritarismo de derechas	.41**	.07	.16**	17**	.22**	.07	
Nota:	p < .05, **p < .01.						Х	Х

### Fuente: Elaboración propia

Finally, a multiple linear regression model was used in which the perception of anomie served as a dependent variable, while the sociodemographic, victimization and insecurity and political culture variables that turned out to be statistically related in the bivariate analyzes constituted variables Predictors Table 7 shows a statistically significant model made up of seven variables that together explain a third of the variance (R2Aj. = 0.331) of the perception of anomie of the inhabitants of the AMSS. The variables that turned out to be predictors of perceived anomie were authoritarianism of rights, erosion of the sense of community, interpersonal distrust, belonging to socioeconomically disadvantaged social strata, prejudice towards criminals, not working for different reasons and experiencing political inefficiency.





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Tabla 7. Modelo de regresión lineal múltiple para la escala percepción de anomia

	B	Error	B	Т	Sig.		
Constante	2.132	.427		4.996	.0001		
Autoritarismo de derechas	.274	.042	.299	6.531	.0001		
Erosión de sentido de comunidad	.131	.028	.205	4.615	.0001		
Desconfianza interpersonal	.134	.030	.200	4.426	.0001		
Estrato social descendente	.202	.071	.120	2.843	.005		
Prejuicio hacia los delincuentes	.085	.033	.116	2.568	.011		
No trabaja por distintos motivos	337	.131	107	-2.577	.010		
Ineficacia política	.099	.041	.101	2.391	.017		
$[F(7, 397) = 29.560, p < .001] R^2 = 0.343, R^2 A$	Ajustado = 0.331						
Nota: Fue aplicado el método por pasos (stepwise). Las variables independientes del modelo han sido							
ordenadas a partir del peso del coeficiente beta estandarizado. La operacio nalización de variables coincide con lo expuesto en las tablas 2, 3 y 4, con excepción de la variable							
estrato social pues aquí responde a la codific		•	-				

*estrato social*, pues aquí responde a la codificación siguiente: 1 = Alto, 2 = Medio alto, 3 = Medio bajo, 4 = Obrero, 5 = Marginal.

Fuente: Elaboración propia

## Discussion

Perceived anomic constitutes a subjective derivative of social life that develops in anomic contexts, such as contemporary Salvadoran society. In this, for the great majority of the population, the exclusion of spheres of citizenship (eg, employment, education, health), as well as the permanent risk of violence and criminality, governs. Under these conditions, human ties are forced to repeatedly manage everyday life through flexibility, production or violation of formal and informal codes, which does not exclude the implementation of emerging codes that empower themselves and strangers to resort to violence.

The results obtained show that the perception of anomie constitutes a generalized reality among the inhabitants of the AMSS. The fulfillment of the research objectives leaves no doubt: the urban inhabitants older than fifteen of the AMSS experience high levels of perception of anomie (and even higher in the case of some of its dimensions). But from the bivariate analyzes performed (see table 2), it can be said that the perception of anomie or some of its dimensions is more pronounced to the extent that it descends on the socioeconomic scale, which has less schooling, not you work for different reasons or you experience the worsening economic situation. That is, in the case of the inhabitants of the AMSS, the perceived anomie seems to respond especially to conditions of disadvantage and socio-economic exclusion, where day-to-day life is more arduous and in accordance with the events of national life from the margins of the society.





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The results obtained are consistent with those found in the available literature. The perception of anomie is revealed as an expression of alienation, distancing and difficulty of the individual to make his social environment intelligible (Legge et al., 2008; Passas, 1997; Seeman, 1983). Therefore, the sociodemographic evidence and the correlates identified, as well as those of victimization and insecurity - having seen a person killed in the street, distrust others, etc. (see table  $5\neg$ ) - and those of political culture - perceived surpassed by the complexity of the policy or that the sense of community is broken, etc. (see table 6) - they are consistent with conditions of vital dissatisfaction, of interwoven readings of perplexity in the face of events, of demoralization before the exchange with others, as well as defensive attitudes, fear, distrust of the public thing and democracy or interpretations of rupture of the current social order (Blanco y Díaz, 2005; Legge *et al.*, 2008; Muratori *et al.*, 2013; Teymoori *et al.*, 2016).

Likewise, it should be emphasized that the psychosocial aspect that implies the theoretical foundation that underlies the construct perception of anomie never translates into a psychological interpretation of the phenomenon. This is demonstrated by the existing analytical links with the sociological reading of the phenomenon, its relationship with aspects of context (eg, violence, exclusion) or when considering correlates that far from engaging in strictly psychological variables, consider sociomaterial conditions (eg, economic situation), quality of human ties (eg, interpersonal trust) or dimensions of political psychology or political culture (eg, political inefficiency, erosion of the sense of community).

In fact, regarding the political culture factor, classical and contemporary works agree that the perceived anomie warns and is related to the existence of discriminatory and antidemocratic tendencies (eg, Hövermannac et al., 2015; Srole, 1956). Therefore, it is relevant to have found correlates such as indifference to the political regime or preference for an authoritarian court, or that the main predictor of anomie perceived in the regression model obtained is the authoritarianism of rights, which is also fulfilled in the opposite direction (Orellana, 2018a). In other words, at least in the country, and considering that in a model there are always more explanatory variables, it can be argued that the relationship between authoritarianism of rights (conventionalism, punitiveness and complacency with the established order) and the perception of anomie (isolation, bewilderment and pessimism) demands a dynamic of mutual strengthening that takes place within the framework of an essentially precarious, violent and normatively lax reality, such as that of Salvadoran society.





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In this auspicious scenario, authoritarianism manifests itself as endogroup rigidity, hostility towards different ones and strengthening traditional worldviews (Orellana, 2018a, 2018b), while anomie, like a perverse mirror, reflects withdrawal from the state of affairs, disappointment and perplexity before the conviction of the social breakdown and "loss of values" (of which certain social groups are responsible for all this). It could be said that the perception of anomie ratifies the authoritarian individual that there are reasons to fear, and the authoritarian fears - and will seek to defend himself from - the insistent fears that anomia confirms.

These results are fully compatible with the recent reflections of Teymoori et al. (2017, p. 9), who argue that the perception of anomie can lead to a "contraction" of the "personal and social self," which results in authoritarianism or tribalism. That is, trends that, although they return a sense of control over their own circumstances by swelling the symbolic walls (eg, stigmatization) that point to and exclude others considered as threats, while they are adopted end up reinforcing the shared conviction of anomic social breakdown and the same anti-democratic social orientations fueled by this. It is a vicious circle that strengthens objective and perceived anomie and its implications, a process of gradual erosion of the social fabric, respect for norms and citizen coexistence.

The model obtained accounts for an important 33% of the variance of perceived anomie (see table 7). The variables included in the regression model are also consistent with the theory of perceived anomie by suggesting constructive links with discriminatory tendencies (prejudice towards criminals, authoritarianism of rights), social and political fragmentation (erosion of the sense of community, interpersonal distrust and political inefficiency) and situation of social exclusion (not working, belonging to a lower social stratum).

From the adequate internal consistency, the clear factor structure and the theoretically coherent correlates found, it can be affirmed that the scale constructed from the classical scales of Srole (1956) and McClosky and Schaar (1965b) has sufficient indications to be used as a valid and reliable instrument for the study of perceived anomie in contexts considered as anomic. For purposes of conceptual clarification, provisionally and generally, the isolation dimension could be understood as the avoidance of exchange with others through confinement, indifference, the search for anonymity or the decrease or resistance to interaction and association with others. The confusion would consist of the difficulty to make an intelligible or reliable reading of the demands and expectations of the interaction with others or with areas of the surrounding environment (eg,





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news, politics). Finally, pessimism would refer to the tendency to expect the worst possible outcome, expect nothing or distrust the course of events or the actions and efforts themselves.

## Conclusions

Intentionally, important theoretical reflections and debates regarding the phenomenon and the theory of anomie have been avoided due to the principality given to the data. It must be reiterated, for example, that far from functionalist or homeostatic positions (usually associated with Durkheim's work), this work assumes the preponderance of unstable processes and realities that challenge any idea of naive mechanism based on the supposedly desirable social integration (as a parallel process or opposed to anomie). El Salvador is a conflictive context where the social integration of large majorities, if at all, is necessarily paradoxical when it occurs most of the time from positions of social exclusion to persist in them or for requiring adaptive efforts to violent or precarious conditions (eg, live in gang-controlled territories, labor informality). It means that the maladjustment to a reality like Salvadoran - to its informal idiosyncrasy, its ubiquitous violence, its institutional weakness, its prudish convention - can, in fact, imply a form of lucid resistance.

On the other hand, having had a representative sample confers empirical and social relevance to this work, since there are no precedents in the country and similar efforts are unknown, at least in the Central American isthmus. Likewise, there are no known inquiries in the Latin American context with real populations that empirically corroborate the link between anomic and authoritarian tendencies that highlight the most recent research. These aspects, by the way, should contribute to dispel any doubt about the validity of the data presented, since the basic reflection, the measurement, the results obtained and the discussion that the subject raises are fully valid given the current research trends of the phenomenon and especially the immovable reality of a country like El Salvador.

However, work limitations and some recommendations should also be noted. The way forward, for example, refers to overcoming the general limitation of its exploratory character to advance in the theoretical deepening of the phenomenon and in confirming the metric quality of the instrument used. In theoretical and analytical terms, the rationale and interpretation suggested here that Salvadoran society - or similar societies, e. g., the North Central American triangle— constitutes an anomic context. It becomes necessary, therefore, the development of research that seeks theoretically relevant and creative explanatory links.





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Likewise, some empirical possibilities to continue with the study of perceived anomie can focus on the search for links with realities such as the following: expressions of vital uncertainty (eg, helplessness, anxiety, citizen insecurity), antisocial tendencies (eg, substance use , crime, corruption), hostility towards minority groups (eg, LGTBI people, migrants), quality of relationships in a group (eg, organizations, communities), loyalty to collective projects (eg, movements, political parties) or linkage or distancing of the individual with social spheres or integration policies (family, employment or political participation). That is, problems that currently plague Latin American societies in general and particularly those in the northern part of Mesoamerica.

Ultimately, this article is about a perceptual derivative resulting from certain peculiar conditions of social life, which in turn impacts and reinforces those same vital conditions. The "subjective social facts" (perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, etc.) say something of the reality in which they take place and carry consequences of interest to the social sciences (eg, solidarity or contempt for others, affiliation or rejection of projects collective and political). In this sense, the perception of anomie in the country constitutes the confirmation of the daily struggle of a population mostly subject to difficult, changing and dangerous conditions, to give meaning to a project of society that, despite having undergone important transformations in the In recent decades, he has accused old cracks caused by the cumulative effect of inequality and exclusion, persistent migration, citizen suspicion towards politics or the imperishable fondness for mutual predation.





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