

## EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY SELF-CONSTRUALS AND SUICIDAL ATTITUDES

Nalan Kazaz, Dilek Özerhan Zengin, page 129-146

### ABSTRACT

In our research, the relationship between self-construals and suicide attempts is included. Here, the concept of family is taken into consideration in general. Also; Its definition, elements, features and development are subjected to analysis. Another concept that sheds light on the subject is the self-concept. Once defined self-concept, self-structures are defined, and is divided into two types of self structures is mentioned briefly on the work carried out in Turkey. Then, the concept of suicide is discussed conceptually in a narrow and broad way, the factors underlying suicide are classified, and suicide cases are revealed through numerical data, and a comprehensive literature review is made on the subject. In the same section; The positive and negative reflections of family self-construals and suicidal attitudes on each other, the relationship between them, Turkish and foreign studies on the subject are emphasized.

**Keywords:** Family, Family Self-Construct, Suicide, Death Rates

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In our research, the relationship between family self-construals and suicidal attitudes is analyzed. Examining the relationship between family self-construal and suicidal attitudes; positive and negative reflections on each other, investigating whether there is a significant relationship between attitudes, and Turkish studies and foreign studies are analyzed.

When the questions within the scope of our study are examined;

- What are the positive effects of family self-construal on an individual's life?
- What are the negative effects of family self-construal on an individual's life?
- Is there a significant relationship between family self-construal and suicidal attitudes?

When the assumptions of our study are wanted to be analyzed, family self-construal stands out as they affect the life of the individual in various ways. When other assumptions are examined; other assumptions such as gender may be an important variable in suicidal attitudes and there may be changes in suicidal attitudes according to family self-construal types stand out.

In our study, family self-construal was examined based on 3 types of families and the relationship between types and suicidal attitudes was analyzed. This criterion constitutes the limitation of our study.

## **1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY SELF-CONSTRUAL AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS**

### **1.1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY**

This piece focuses on definitions, elements, features and development of the concept of family.

#### **1.1.1. Description and Elements**

A family is a group of people of the same blood and lineage in the community. Family members meet, talk, spend time together with each other more compared to relationships with other people. The reason for the separation of the family from other institutions in society is it takes an important role in the first socialization process of the individual and affects the attitudes and behaviors of the individual. (Kavut, 2015)

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From a different perspective, family also refers to order. What is seen as a bridge between the individual and society is the social order. Young individuals learn values such as taking care of other people, loving, being loved, respecting, etc. in the family. The adoption of these behaviors by society creates the social order. The family protection situation occurs as a result of negative behaviors that occur in society. Foundations,

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<sup>1</sup> KAVUT, A.g.e., s. 10.

associations, and ministries are established for family protection. (Doğan, 2013) There are different types of families. Structure and functions are the determining factors in these types. The number of members of the family and the family culture creates this diversity. These are divided into three as:

- Nuclear family,
- Extended (traditional) family,
- Single-parent family.

### 1.1.2. Characteristics and Development

The family is a dynamic system, is the institution where the results of social changes are seen most clearly, and gender ideology is shaped within the family. Women are in the position of giving birth, looking after, raising, feeding, and managing the house in the family, while men are the ones who are successful in the public field, earn the money to provide for the family, regulate the relations of the family with the outside world, and protect the family. (Zeybekoğlu, 2013)

**Table 1.** Basic Characteristics of the Family

As a psychological institution, it is a primary group because of the intense emotional relationships between its members.
As an economic institution, it has a structure that consumes as much as it produces.
As a political institution, it serves to ensure social order
As a legal institution, it is a sub-institution due to its organizational structure and content.

**Source:** BAYRAK, D., Ailenin Tanımı, Önemi ve Toplumsal Gelişimi, 2018, s. 4.

As a result of these radical changes in society, the family unit has also been affected, and the roles within the family have changed. the influence of customs and traditions has gradually decreased in modern societies, the influence of the religious institution weakened, gender taboos have been largely destroyed, and thus the role and importance of women in society and family have also changed.<sup>2</sup>

It can be seen that the changes of the concepts of motherhood and fatherhood, which gain new meanings with social changes, are related to each other in the historical process. In the 17th and 18th centuries, fathers were accepted as moral educators of children, taught their children a craft, and spent time at home with their children just like their spouses. Fathers started working in factories with the economic changes in the 19th century and the evolution of capitalism. Public space and family life were sharply separated in the West and the interior of the house began to be seen as a woman's space. In the 1970s, the changing economic conditions caused women to participate intensively in business life and the father's ability to provide for the household by himself has weakened. Women have demanded more participation from their husbands in housework and childcare.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT SELF-CONCEPT**

In this section, it is planned to deal with the self-concept comprehensively. Both the description and species and the studies conducted in Turkey are mentioned.

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<sup>2</sup> ZEYBEKOĞLU, a.g.e. s. 297-328.

<sup>3</sup> ZEYBEKOĞLU, a.g.e. s. 297-328.

## 2.1. Description and Types

As the concept of self-concept can be defined as "the way people perceive and comprehend their own self", it is also defined as 'an individual's opinion of himself, which consists of attitudes, feelings, perceptions, values, and behaviors unique to him'. (AKSOY, 2007) self-concept describes the integrity of the philosophy of life and behaviors that make the person special and distinguish him from others. An individual is unaware of some of his personality traits. He may also have wrong information about some of them. Self-concept is the individual's self-perception and how he perceives himself. In this regard, as self-concept can be defined as the subjective side of personality (AKIN, 1993) it can be evaluated as an organized cognitive structure derived from the experiences of the individual. (ADAMS, 1995)

Rosenberg (Baykaya, 1992), defined the self-concept as the whole of the feelings and thoughts that the individual attributes to himself as an object. According to Burn<sup>4</sup> self-concept is the combination of all your assessments and beliefs about yourself.

According to Allport, the self-concept is the power of self-creation and the aspect of the individual in which he says to himself "this is me, I can do this".<sup>5</sup>

About the self-concept, Maslow (1987)<sup>6</sup> mentioned the purpose of self-actualization and the fact that it is an active process that continues

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<sup>4</sup> BURN, R., "Self-concept development and education", New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> TAN, H., Psikolojik Yardım İlişkiler "Danışma Ve Psikoterapi, İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1986, s. 80-90.

<sup>6</sup> ALLPORT, G. W., Pattern and growth in personality. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961.

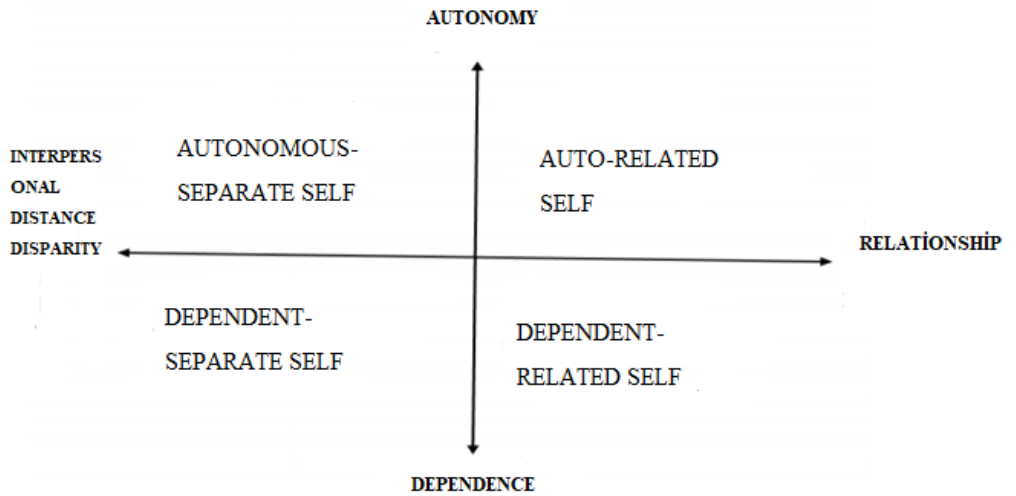
throughout life. On the other hand, regarding the development of self-concept, Maslow believed that this process would continue as self-actualization continues but the effect of social interaction is not a major factor in this process.

In many studies about the self, the self is handled with a western conceptualization, and “autonomy” and “relationality” were considered as opposites in these studies, however, studies show that these two developmental pathways in which these opposite dimensions can be seen together are basic human needs and autonomy and relationality are not opposites.

According to Kağıtçıbaşı<sup>7</sup> even the theory and research on self-constructs was done in different places, at different times, between different disciplines, they basically approach each other on the fact that the person is separated from others or is in relationship with others. Therefore, the degree of relationality and disjoint of the self emerges as a fundamental dimension.

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<sup>7</sup> MARKUS, H. R., and KITAYAMA, a.g.e., s. 224-253; SİNGELİS, vd., a.g.e., s. 315-341;



**Figure 1.** Competence, Self in the Context of Interpersonal Distance

**Sources:** KAĞITÇIBASI, Ç., *Benlik, Aile ve insan Gelişimi*, İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2010.

Markus and Kitayama<sup>8</sup> define the independent (autonomous) self as "an entity that has important innate characteristics and is disconnected from the context". Individuals with independent self feel separate from others and have a strong desire to be alone. Maintaining autonomy and isolation from others is an important dimension of the autonomous self. Individuals with autonomous self-regulate their behavior according to their own inner characteristics, thoughts, and feelings rather than others. These individuals believe that they and others are independent of each other, and people stay the same over time and context.

There is strong sympathy for social goals, a feeling of commitment, and an interest in maintaining harmony within the group in

<sup>8</sup> MARKUS, H. R., and KITAYAMA, S., "Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation", *Psychological Review*, 1991, 98(2), s. 224-253.



collectivist cultures, and personal goals come after the community goals, i.e., the focus is on group goals rather than individual goals in collectivist cultures. (USKUL, HYNİE, & LALONDE, 2004)

Independent and interdependent self-constructs are generally based on individualistic and collectivist cultural differences.<sup>9</sup> According to this, people in collectivistic societies have high interdependent self-confidence and low independent self-construction while people in individualistic societies have the opposite self-construct. (Voronov & Singer, 2002) Accordingly, these different self-constructs that people have affected their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors and shed light on explaining the differences between cultures. The fact that which ego structure will be more dominant is affected by the culture in general and the socialization efforts of the family in particular. Studies on individualism-collectivism focused on the effects of the culture in which the person lives on the self-development of autonomy or relationality.<sup>10</sup>

### **3. SUICIDE AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS**

#### **3.1. Definition of Suicide and Its Underlying Factors**

In this section, attention is paid to the definition of the concept of suicide and the underlying factors.

The suicide concept is defined in many ways by both psychologists and psychiatrists. It was derived from the combination of Latin words *sui*, i.e., I, and *cedere*, i.e., to kill.

The combination of these words refers to suicide in English and is expressed as killing oneself. (Yalvaç, 2006)

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<sup>9</sup> MARKUS and KİTAYAMA, a.g.e., s. 224-253.

<sup>10</sup> KAĞITÇIBAŞI, a.g.e., 2000.

According to the Turkish Language Association (TDK), the suicide concept is defined as ending one's own life because of one's own or social reasons.<sup>11</sup>

Suicide can be seen in an audience ranging from "normal" individuals who respond to stressful life situations to patients with severe mental problems. Therefore, identifying individuals at risk of suicide and taking necessary precautions is a fundamental problem faced by practitioners working in the healthcare industry. The variables that can predict suicidal behavior is a subject that has been intensively researched to find a solution to this problem. According to the results of these studies, one of the most important variables predicting suicide and suicide attempts is the suicide idea. (Hughes & Neimyer, 1990)

Unlike the common belief that people who talk about suicide do not intend to commit suicide, it has been determined that about 50 to 80% of people who attempt suicide share these ideas to their environment either explicitly or implicitly.<sup>12</sup>

Suicide attempts may occur only in depression as a result of the severity and persistence of the factors listed below. Serious events that result in death can be encountered after a suicide attempt. These factors, which are present in depression and when it gets worse, it consists of a phenomenon that results in behaviors up to suicide, are; (KÜEY)

- Verbal expression of the death wish, especially the presence of suicide plans,
- Very deep hopelessness and low self-esteem,

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<sup>11</sup> Türk Dil Kurumu (TDK), Türkçe Sözlük, Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Basımevi, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> LESTER, G.D., Suicide: The Gamble With Death. New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971.

- Social withdrawal,
- Substance abuse,
- Inability to enjoy life in general,
- Suicide attempt, accident proneness, frequent risky behaviors,
- Severe loss of function in professional roles,
- Preparations to distribute their private property, transfer their business,
- Not having a child under the age of 18,
- Severe physical/chronic illness.

### 3.2. Literature on the subject

Many studies and research have been conducted on the suicide subject. Some of these studies classified suicide with various classifications. For example, Durkheim divides suicide into three main categories. These are;<sup>13</sup>

- Selfish, i.e., egoistic suicide: Suicides that come to the fore as a result of the isolation of people are selfish suicides.
- Altruistic suicide: These are suicides that occur as a result of over integrating people with the social structure. Also, they have opposite characters with selfish suicides.
- Anomic suicide: These are suicides that occur as a result of rapidly developing changes in social structures.

When Shneidman's suicide classification is examined;<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> DURKHEIM, E., *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, (Çev.: John A.), Spaulding and George Simpson, New York, Roudledge Classics, 2002, S. 202-232.

<sup>14</sup> MARIS, R.W., *American Association of Suicidology, Assessment and Prediction of Suicide*, New York, The Guildford Press, 1992, s. 73.

- Selfish, i.e., egoistic suicide: It is a type of suicide that occurs when a person isolates himself from everything, humiliates himself over time, and thinks that he is the only one suffering.
- Couple suicide: Suicide occurs when the person is not satisfied, blocked, and disappointed by the person with whom he is in a relationship.
- Isolation suicide: It is the type of suicide in which the person isolates himself and alienates himself from all people. This alienation is in the form of alienation from production, ancestors, lineage, and all humanity.

When Menninger's suicide classification is examined;<sup>15</sup>

- Chronic suicide: Some suicides bring death gradually. In this type, death does not happen with any practice. When we need to provide examples of chronic suicides, we can talk about psychosis, antisocial behavior, martyrdom, asceticism, alcohol addiction, neurotic disability.
- Focal suicide: It is a type of suicide that is carried out by injuring a part of the body. The following can be considered among the suicides included here;
  - Sexual impotence
  - Multiple surgeries,
  - Pretending to be sick,
  - Unconscious voluntary accidents,
  - Self-harming
- Organic suicide: It is the event that the person suicide by using an overdose of drugs after losing the will to live. There is a constant

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<sup>15</sup> MENNINGER, K., *Man Against Himself*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovsnovich Publishers, 1966, '<http://books.google.com.tr>', (Çevrimiçi: 04.01.2021).

need for love. When this need is not met, the person starts to feel hatred. If the person cannot reflect his hatred to the other party, he reflects this organically and resorts to suicide.

#### **4. EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY SELF-CONSTRUCTS AND SUICIDE ATTITUDES**

##### **4.1. Positive and Negative Reflections on Each Other**

When the relationship between self-construal and suicidal attitudes is briefly examined;

- It is accepted that many reasons are underlying the development of a suicidal attitude and some attitudes are acquired from the family, and in some cases, they bring up the factors that prevent suicide and, in some cases, increase the tendency towards suicide.
- Another important factor is the close relationships within the family. It is easier for individuals who are in close and sincere relations with their families to have a suicidal attitude to emerge or be noticed. Also, the suicidal attitude weakens or the emotions that will prevent it may stand out as a result of the relationships he establishes with his family based on closeness and devotion. Apart from all these, the individual who tends to suicide will be more easily noticed by the family members with whom he is in a close relationship and intervention may be possible according to the seriousness of the situation.
- Although there are not many studies on the topic, it is thought that autonomy, independence, and individualistic approaches in Western societies are handled according to autonomous-disjoint self and do not create positive and constructive results in terms of suicidality.

## **4.2. Examining the Meaningful Relationship Between Attitudes**

Considering the effects of culture and cultural structure on the self, it is natural to talk about different family types according to self-construal. Here;

- When the autonomous-disjoint self-attitudes are examined;
  - It is seen that it is generally analyzed according to Western societies.
  - The individual has gained his/her independence, is autonomous, and thinks that he/she can or should be self-sufficient.
  - A person's relations with his family are more liberal and distant.
  - Here, it may take a long time for the suicidal attitude to be understood or noticed, or it may not be understood until the event occurs.
- When the dependent-relational self-attitudes are examined;
  - Studies are carried out on eastern societies.
  - Regardless of whether the individual is dependent or not, he always stays in close relations with his family members.
  - The closeness of the family plays an important role in recognizing the excess of shares and this situation, directly or indirectly, the psychological state of the individual.
- When the autonomous-relational self-attitudes are examined;
  - The individual has gained independence but still shares deep ties with his family.
  - Many issues related to the life of an individual who can take and make their own decisions are known or noticed by the family as a result of close relations.

## **RESULTS**

Death and life have always reminded themselves since the existence of mankind. Many factors such as family, work-life, and personal traits influence individuals in the life cycle. While some individuals can cope with these situations, some experience challenges.

Considering the role of the family in raising individuals and shaping many of their characteristics, it is important to analyze family self-construal well. In our study, we aimed to examine the foundations of the relationship between family self-construal and suicidal attitudes, which are discussed in three categories.

Classifying family self-construal (autonomous-disjoint self, dependent-relational self, and autonomous-relational self) and addressing the dimensions separately, conducting more studies on the subject, and analyzing the place of closeness between family members in this situation is considered important. Also, it should be noted that family self-construal varies from society to society, and each self-construal will find a different evaluation area within its own social structure. Considering cases of suicide with the developing technology and the increase in stress and needs on people, it is necessary to increase the qualified studies on this subject.

It should never be forgotten that suicide and suicidal attitudes differ from country to country and even from region to region within the same country. From this point of view, it is important to increase the number of such studies in a way that represents each region and different cultural structures. Considering the various dynamics that each culture and family life have within itself, conducting more studies is recommended. Thus, action plans determining the relationship between family self-construal and suicidal attitudes and the prevention of suicide

attempts and social awareness should be implemented. We hope that our study will contribute to the literature in this regard and emphasize the importance of the subject.

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