

## ŞAHSİYET BOZUKLUKLARI VE İNTİHARLAR

### PERSONALITY DISORDERS AND SUICIDE :

#### A STUDY ON SUICIDE IN ISTANBUL (TURKEY) SHOWING THE INFLUENCE OF THE CULTURAL CHANGES ON PERSONALITY DISORDERS MARKED BY SUICIDES

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*Bu incelemede, İstanbul'daki, intihar olayları ele alınmakta ve 1927-1946 ile 1950-1960 yılları arasındaki istatistiklere göre kadın ve erkeklerde intihar olaylarındaki artış, kültür değişmesinin sebep olduğu bir şahsiyet bozukluğu olarak manalandırılmaktadır.*

*In this paper, the problem of suicides between the years 1927 - 1946 and the years 1950 - 1960 is studied. According to the statistics there is an increase in the suicide rates of both men and women, which is probably due to personality disorders caused by the cultural changes.*

The problem of suicide, especially the prevention of committing suicide, proves its importance more and more all over the world. Suicide is always considered as a repulsive act by religion and public opinion. And it has become an interesting topic of study in present times, not only for philosophers, and sociologists, but also and mostly for psychologists, who are taking in hand the problem of suicide from the point of view of the dynamics of the personality and psychologists are trying to take preventive measures by giving influence on these dynamics.

The research I made on suicide cases (attempts and real suicides) in Istanbul concerns 2 periods, the first is the period between the years of 1927 - 1946, coming after the war of Independance of Turkey and the Re-

volution of Atatürk. This period (especially the first years) was marked by an epidemy of suicides, mostly among young women and the married ones. And in a second part, between the years of 1950-1960, we may see a different rate of suicides : single people committing suicide more than married ones. This study is showing the influence of the cultural changes on the dynamics of the personality giving way to personality disorders. These personality disorders were marked by a real suicide problem in Istanbul.

To show the influence of the cultural changes on the rates of suicides, we have to give a quick glance on the socio-cultural changes that occurred in Turkey during the first quarter of the century.

Since 1923, Turkey was a big Empire (the Ottoman Empire), then after the World War I, and the War of Independance, it was a question of being or not being for Turkey. So Atatürk, with his social revolution, changed Turkey from a decadent empire into a republic.

Apart from other changes, Turkey became a laic republic, the Moslem religion lost its legal domination, the Latin alphabet replaced the Arabic one, the Civic Code taken from Switzerland, put an end to the possibility of polygamy, and to the easy divorce system applied by the wish of men. Even the costumes for men (western hat instead of fez), and for women (western uncovered costumes instead of the veil covering the face), became the official costume for Turkish people under the guide of Atatürk.

So the Westernization movement, realized only from the military point of view under the reign of Selim III, and Mahmut II, and with the words of Toynbee,».. always in the least and always too late.. became whole under the influence of Atatürk.»

Turkish people are far from being psychologically and sociologically homogeneous in all parts of Turkey. Istanbul, being the ancient capital for centuries, the biggest town, and the cultural center of Turkey, is greatly different from other parts - especially from the villages. So the suicide rates and the rates of divorces, may show the repercussion of cultural changes of personality. The changes in these rates are a consequence and at the same time, a proof of the psychological, social changes in the population of Istanbul.

We can see the influence of these changes in the structure of personality, and in the structure of the family, when comparing the rates of suicides during the following two periods :

1. **1927-1946** : Period just coming after the proclamation of the

Republic (1923), and the social changes bringing in Turkey the Western style of life. This period is characterized by the exceptionally high rates of suicides among married people, particularly among women.

TABLE I

<i>Females</i> , attempts:	married ———— = 2,32 single	Real suicides:	married ———— = 6,43 single
<i>Males</i> , attempts :	married ———— = 1,25 single	Real suicides :	married ———— = 1,15 single

2. 1950 - 1960: This period is relatively far from the repercussions of the social changes and the movement of Westernization is mostly accepted and assimilated in Istanbul. We may add to this the influence of the World War II, which was influential all over the world, as well as in Turkey, and particularly in a big and in a sense an international city like Istanbul.

TABLE II

<i>Females</i> , attempts:	married ———— = 2,003 single	Real suicides:	married ———— = 3,3 single
<i>Males</i> , attempts :	single ———— = 2,49 married	Real suicides :	single ———— = 2,05 married

If we try to summarize the results shortly, we may say that, in the first period, the much higher rates of suicides among married people, especially women, and suicides ending by death (6,43), is just the opposite of the rates in Western countries. Taking in view the Turkish Revolution, and the Westernization of Turkey, we may try an interpretation of this fact as **Anomic Suicides**. Family conditions being highly changed, we may characterize these rates among married people as a **Conjugal Anomic Suicide**.

The social changes and the new Western style of life, was demanding a new personality and family structure. With the laicization, and the separation of the religion system from the State affairs, all the personal and social values have had to be changed.

**Personality Structure had to be changed :**

For centuries, the Turkish family was one of an authoritarian and of a patriarchal type. Men had the opportunity of polygamy and of divorce. Women were dependant, throughout their lives, first upon the authority of their father, then upon the authority of their husband, from all points of view: economical, social, etc.

The social values were coming from the religious Moslem restrictions and also from the social and cultural prohibitions, given especially to women, a very **dependant**, and **frustrated** personality with a severe superego, and a childish, weak ego.

With the Revolution coming after the proclamation of the Republic (1923), there was a sudden change in the value systems of men and particularly of women. In an authoritarian society, people are frustrated. Then suddenly liberty gives way to aggressivity and hostility, and with a weak ego, the subject directs the aggressivity to himself, and suicides attempts are the results, particularly among women.

Instead of religious beliefs, fears of sin, shame, and the «guilt culture», women have to control themselves by their new, personal and legal value systems. We have to think also, of the interaction between men and women, equipped with totally new social and cultural values and new rights-independence, and finally of the interaction between them and still living old mentality.

The new learning of the changed social values, and Western style of living ask a new structure of personality. And only a strong ego is able to realize this structure. But the dependant weak ego have to face many problems : adjustment to new values, getting an independant, responsible personality. But this sudden change gives insecurity, followed by anxiety, emotional instability giving way to **rigidity**, one of the most important factors of suicide (according to Drs. Sheindman and Farberow) in their works and studies on suicide, the high rates of suicides are easily explained. And the fact that this rate is much higher among married people, especially

among women, is a natural result of interaction between two people having difficult psychological and social problems to confront with.

If we summarize, we may say, that the anomic type of suicide is easily explained in Istanbul for the years 1927-1946: men, particularly women, have to learn their new roles in respect to the new social values. It is a problem of adjustment asking for a new social personality structure and a strong ego. But **the insecurity and anxiety created by these new conditions are making an inhibition for them in learning their new roles.** The failure in such learning is due to a lack of flexibility which is a vital factor in adjustment to a rapid social change. So we characterize these high rates of suicides as anomic and mostly as **conjugal anomic types** of suicides.

In Table II, concerning suicide rates of the period between 1950-1960, the rates are totally changed: like in all Western countries and according to Durkheim's view, marriage shows its protective role and the rates are much more higher in single people than in married people.

We may say that, the adjustment is making its way. The personality structure is adjusted to the Western-like **individualistic type of family.** The change is making its way from group-oriented, to self oriented type of society. And individuals are much more concerned with the **egoistic goals** than with group goals. The new type of personality with self-determination and self-sufficiency, is much more realized.

Instead of impulsive, rigid reactions with a weak ego, leading to suicide, we see in the last years astonishingly high rates of divorces in Istanbul. After the social changes there were we may say, Anomic-Conjugal type reactions leading to suicide, and with the new type of personality we see, in a sense a **Sexual Anomy** with high rates of divorces, particularly with adultarian causes among them.



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