



Dictionaries and encyclopedias on suicide: a lexicographic analysis of four books in English and Spanish published from 2003 to 2016

Dicionários e enciclopédias sobre suicídio: análise lexicográfica de quatro obras em inglês e espanhol publicadas entre 2003 e 2016

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ABSTRACT: There are some studies that analyze definitions of the term “suicide” in academic works, as well as in generalist dictionaries and encyclopedias in several languages, but there still seems to be no investigation focused on specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias (SDEs) on this topic. Hence the general objective of this study was to describe the suicide SDEs available in the literature. To accomplish this purpose, a basic, quantitative, qualitative, descriptive, bibliographical, and documental method was used. The 12 criteria proposed by John Humbley in 2018 for the analysis of SDEs were determined as the main theoretical foundation. From 2017 to 2022, through an integrative review in 6 languages and 4 databases, 8 SDEs were excluded. The 4 included ones were 2 dictionaries and 2 encyclopedias published between 2003 and 2016, 3 in English and 1 in Spanish. One of the most relevant findings was the fact that the SDEs examined try to address the various aspects of this object, instead of adopting a reductionist perspective. However, as only 4 books were analyzed, it was not possible to identify a clear pattern about all 12 criteria and all 4 sources. For example, it is not known which terms would be more feasible to include in a work of this nature nor the optimal way to predicate them. Even so, this paper is a relevant contribution to the studies on language and suicide, providing elements for the evolution of dictionaries and encyclopedias specialized on this binomial.

KEYWORDS: Language. Lexicography. Mental health. Public Health. Suicidology.

RESUMO: Existem alguns estudos que analisam as definições do termo “suicídio” em trabalhos acadêmicos, bem como em dicionários e enciclopédias generalistas em vários idiomas, mas ainda parece não haver uma investigação focada em dicionários e enciclopédias especializados (DEEs) no tema. Diante desse cenário, o objetivo geral deste estudo foi descrever os SDEs de suicídio disponíveis na literatura. Para tanto, foi utilizado um método básico, quantitativo, qualitativo, descritivo, bibliográfico e documental. Os 12 critérios propostos por John Humbley em 2018 para a análise de DEEs foram selecionados e adaptados como o principal fundamento teórico. De 2017 a 2022, por meio de revisão integrativa em 6 idiomas e 4 bases de dados, excluíram-se 8 DEEs. Os 4 incluídos foram 2 dicionários e 2 enciclopédias publicados entre 2003 e 2016, sendo 3 em inglês e 1 em espanhol. Uma das constatações mais relevantes foi o fato de os DEEs examinados se esforçarem para abordar os

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diversos aspectos desse objeto, ao invés de adotarem uma perspectiva reducionista. No entanto, como a análise incluiu apenas 4 livros, não foi possível identificar um padrão claro sobre todos os 12 critérios e todas as 4 fontes. Por exemplo, não se sabe quais termos seriam mais viáveis de incluir em uma obra dessa natureza nem a forma ideal de predicá-los. Mesmo assim, este artigo é uma contribuição importante aos estudos sobre linguagem e suicídio, fornecendo elementos para a evolução dos dicionários e enciclopédias especializados nesse binômio.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Lexicografia. Linguagem. Saúde mental. Saúde pública. Suicidologia.

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1 Introduction

The meaning of suicide goes much beyond its Latin etymology *sui* ‘oneself’ + *caedere* ‘to kill’. Psychiatrist Edwin Shneidman (1985), one of the pioneers of modern suicidology, begins his book *Definition of suicide* arguing that, to comprehend the phenomenon, it’s necessary to understand the word, here initially defined as ‘the act of killing oneself’. He even states that he depends on the work of linguist David Daube (1972), whose paper shares a deep contrastive analysis of the words ancient and modern languages have to represent the concept of suicide.

When one desires to understand a word or a term, maybe the most common strategy is to seek a dictionary, an encyclopedia or a similar source. After all, they tend to be considered “truth repositories” or “transcriptions of the world”, as says Humblé (2006, p. 113). Even nowadays, when a search is conducted on Google, the results might be from some Oxford Languages dictionary or a Wikipedia page.

Preliminary searches on Google Scholar suggested that the only scholarly work that specifically linked suicide to dictionaries and encyclopedias was LV *et al.* (2015), but this is more a database to feed algorithms than properly a resource to be consulted.

Trying to fill this gap and resume the reasoning of Shneidman (1985), an exploratory study based on 31 dictionaries and encyclopedias in 6 languages showed that dictionaries tend to present the literal meaning ‘the act of killing oneself’ and the

figurative meaning 'the act of harming one's interests', while encyclopedias prefer to detail the many facets of the concept (Costa, 2021). Another investigation examined 19 theoretical arguments and 58 definitions in 7 languages and verified that most definitions refer to suicide as something intentional, although there was not found a consensus between the arguments (Costa, 2022a).

Those papers contribute to fill a gap in language studies, which still produce just a few works linked to suicidology. However, they decided to analyze only generalist sources, not the ones specialized on suicide. According to Humbley (2018), specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias (SDEs) are lexicographic works that allow one to overcome common knowledge. Deepening the analysis is a convenient strategy, because the topic here is an object whose meaning oscillated in a considerable manner throughout history (Cholbi, 2021).

Besides that, the suicidological literature tends not to present any definition of suicide and to use terms indiscriminately (Silverman, 2006). However, as recommended by the World Health Organization (2012), providing access to quality information on this subject helps people in need to overcome the stigma and seek assistance from healthcare professionals.

Therefore, the research question that motivated this study was: **what are the main characteristics of the dictionaries and encyclopedias specialized on suicide?** Hence the general objective was to describe the suicide SDEs available in the literature. Aiming to achieve this proposal, the specific goals were:

- to choose relevant lexicographic criteria to analyze the SDEs;
- to select a set of suicide SDEs; and
- to perform a lexicographic analysis of those works according to the established theoretical foundations.

Next, Section 2 defines the criteria used to conduct the analysis, Section 3 describes the methodological aspects of this research, Section 4 presents a detailed analysis of 4 suicide SDEs, and Section 5 reveals some important conclusions.

2 Theoretical foundations

According to Humbley (2018), SDEs merge dictionary-related and encyclopedic methods in their composition. Besides, they might have different goals, such as helping the user to acquire specialized knowledge, to read specialized text or to perform specialized translation.

Maybe because of those characteristics, SDEs first appeared as tools to support health students and professionals. After all, a precise diagnosis demands a non-ambiguous definition (Shneidman, 1985).

An important antecedent was the medical encyclopedia *al-Tasrif*, by Abu Al-Qasim Al-Zahrawi, who wrote it near 1000 CE (Humbley, 2018; Bionity, 2023). This 30-volume work is known in English as 'The method of medicine', but its original Arabic name was *Kitab al-tasrif leman ajiz an al-taalif*, meaning 'The arrangement of medical knowledge for those who are not able to compile a book for themselves' (Chavoushi *et al.*, 2012). The manuscript was later translated to Latin and became a major reference both to Islamic and European doctors for about six centuries (Bionity, 2023).

In Modern Europe, particularly in France, the actual SDEs were first published as sections of language dictionaries that had no specific purposes and afterwards gained autonomous, specific shape, as Meuve's *Dictionnaire pharmaceutique* 'Pharmaceutical dictionary', released in 1677 (Humbley, 2018).

In order to analyze current suicide SDEs, the lexicographical criteria compiled by Humbley (2018) were taken as a primary reference. This was the most up to date, comprehensive, reliable, relevant source found in the literature.

2.1 Criteria for analyzing dictionaries and encyclopedias on suicide

As stated by Humbley (2018), under an empirical point of view, specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias vary considerably. Aiming for an improved understanding of the works selected by the current paper, it was decided to adapt Humbley's terminology and presentation order, just as follows:

- **author:** the physical or legal person who signs the work, usually an expert in the topic;
- **field of specialization:** one or many topics related to the same subject;
- **degree of specialization:** projecting a target audience considered more or less knowledgeable about the topic;
- **type of specialization:** the aspect according to which the topic is dependent or independent of culture;
- **number of languages:** the number of languages to which a dictionary or encyclopedia is dedicated;
- **linguistic information:** the description of the words themselves, not only of their conceptual dimension;
- **media:** the print or electronic means of publishing the work;
- **degree of autonomy:** to what extent a work exists by itself, so as to be an independent one or just a section inside another source;
- **front material:** the introductory content that prepares the reader to entering the main part of the work;
- **macrostructure:** how the entries of a dictionary or the articles of an encyclopedia are selected, organized and presented;
- **microstructure:** the mode of organizing the information inside the entries or the articles, by using headword, domain, definition, context, usage label, reference, synonym or variation, note, image, etc.; and
- **back material:** the final content of a reference work, such as a bibliography or an index.

Those criteria are clarified in a contextualized manner when applied to the suicide SDEs, in Section 4.

3 Method

This item details which type of research was conducted, as well as its procedures and data.

3.1 Type of research

Considering the typology presented by Gerhardt and Silveira (2009), the investigation reported here was:

- strategically basic regarding its nature;
- quantitative and qualitative in terms of its approach;

- descriptive in relation to its goal; and
- bibliographic and documental according to its procedures.

Quantitative research prioritizes generalization and replication of results, while qualitative studies focus on understanding a phenomenon (Patias; Hohendorff, 2019). In the current work, quantification is seen in defining criteria and measuring results, and qualification appears in interpreting the suicide SDEs.

Strategically basic research is executed with some future application in mind, although one does not precisely recognize which process or product might be delivered (Salter; Martin, 2001). From this perspective, the study analyzed the suicide SDEs in order to understand how to compose optimized, reference works in the future.

Descriptive research aims to analyze a phenomenon or to understand the relation between certain variables (Gil, 2002). The results of this paper were achieved by an effort to comprehend the link between the variables “dictionary”, “encyclopedia” and “suicide”.

Bibliographic research is based on already published material, usually books, papers, dissertations and theses (Gil, 2002). It was used a type of bibliographical technique called integrative review, which is not as undetermined as the narrative one nor has the precision of a systematic review yet allows to identify and synthesize relevant information scattered in the literature (Souza; Silva; Carvalho, 2010). Accordingly, the integrative review made it possible to select and to integrate relevant, suicide related sources.

In a similar fashion, documental research is also based on already published material, the difference being that documental sources (reports, letters, videos etc.) tend not to receive the same analytical treatment then scholarly works do (Gil, 2002). Nevertheless, important references were found, in order to validate the academic and professional background of the SDEs’ authors, among other aspects.

3.2 Procedures and sources

As detailed in Chart 1, the bibliographic research was an integrative review performed in April 2022 on four databases:

- A Russian Database (henceforth RD);
- Google Books (GB);
- Open Access Theses and Dissertations (OATDs); and
- Brazilian Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses (BDLDT).

Chart 1 – Search criteria used in 2022.

Language	Database	Keywords
Portuguese	GB	<i>(dicionário OR enciclopédia) AND suicídio</i>
	RD	<i>dicionário suicídio; enciclopédia suicídio</i>
	OATDs	
	BDLDT	
English	GB	<i>(dictionary OR encyclopedia) AND suicide</i>
	RD	<i>dictionary suicide; encyclopedia suicide</i>
	OATDs	
	BDLDT	
Spanish	GB	<i>(diccionario OR enciclopedia) AND suicidio</i>
	RD	<i>diccionario suicidio; enciclopedia suicidio</i>
	OATDs	
	BDLDT	
French	GB	<i>(dictionnaire OR encyclopédie) AND suicide</i>
	RD	<i>dictionnaire suicide; encyclopédie suicide</i>
	OATDs	
	BDLDT	
German	GB	<i>(Wörterbuch OR Enzyklopädie) AND Selbstmord</i>
	RD	<i>Wörterbuch Selbstmord; Enzyklopädie Selbstmord</i>
	OATDs	
	BDLDT	
Italian	GB	<i>(dizionario OR enciclopedia) AND suicidio</i>
	RD	<i>dizionario suicidio; enciclopedia suicidio</i>
	OATDs	
	BDLDT	

Source: made by the author.

On RD, the absolute, included and excluded results were counted. Google Books, however, did not provide the number of absolute results, which are necessary to calculate how many documents were excluded.

On Google Books, for the purpose of finding more relevant results, it was decided to use keywords and Boolean operators (the latter not supported by RD). It was also decided to set Google Books to exhibit Portuguese only results, then English only and so forth.

Another important distinction to note between those databases regards the number of result pages taken into consideration. RD will only return any results if the search terms are found exactly as they were typed, while Google Books searches for both the original keywords and the corresponding morphological variations, synonyms and semantically alike terms. Due to this difference, the first website returned significantly less results, allowing the researcher to analyze all the search results pages. Google books discovered a number of results humanly impossible to analyze. Most of them had low or no relevance, according to preliminary searches based on the first five search result pages. Therefore, only those five ones were considered in the inclusion-exclusion process.

On OATDs and BDLDT, the words “dictionary”, “encyclopedia” and “suicide” and the equivalent terms in the remaining languages were looked up only on the titles, thanks to advanced search tools. Filters were used to exclusively search for master theses and doctoral dissertations.

On all four databases, if a book did not fulfill all the criteria shown in Chart 2, it was counted in the absolute results, but excluded from the analysis.

Chart 2 – Inclusion and exclusion criteria of the 2022 search.

Inclusion	Exclusion
being a dictionary or an encyclopedia	using a title that does not correspond to a dictionary or an encyclopedia
directly approaching the subject of suicide	having as its central topic a subject that is not suicide itself, even if it is related to suicide

being fully available on the internet for free	being only a printed book or a document unavailable on the internet for free or without full access
using 1 of the 6 defined languages as its only or primary one	published in a language different from the 6 chosen ones
having not more than 1 copy per title	being a duplicate of a work already included

Source: made by the author.

4 Results

For the sake of a better understanding, this section begins with the quantification of the results and afterwards presents the qualitative analysis.

4.1 Quantifying the results

The integrative review found five absolute results on RD, an undetermined number on Google Books, which did not display this information, and none both on OATDs and BDLDT (see Chart 3). The only exclusion was a duplicate of Evans and Farberow (2003).

Chart 3 – Results of the integrative review.

Language	Speech genre	Database				Inclusion
		RD	GB	OATDs	BDLDT	
English	Dict.	1	?	0		1) Suicide: a medical dictionary, bibliography, and annotated research guide to internet references (J. Parker; P. Parker, 2003)
	Enc.	3				2) The encyclopedia of suicide (Evans; Farberow, 2003) 3) Encyclopedia of suicide (Torres, 2016)
Spanish	Dict.	1				4) <i>Diccionario del suicidio</i> 'Dictionary of suicide' (Janín, 2009)
	Enc.	0				0
Portuguese	Dict.					

	Enc.				
French	Dict.				
	Enc.				
German	Dict.				
	Enc.				
Italian	Dict.				
	Enc.				

Source: made by the author. Caption: Dict. = dictionary; Enc. = encyclopedia; RD = Russian Database; GB = Google Books; OATDs = Open Access Theses and Dissertations; BDLDT = Brazilian Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses; ? = unknown number of total results.

Google Books allowed to find eight suicide SDEs:

- English “The encyclopedia of suicide” (Gold; Adamec, 2016);
- English “Suicide in the entertainment industry: an encyclopedia of 840 twentieth century cases” (Frasier, 2002);
- English “An encyclopedia of famous suicides” (Lester, 1996);
- English “Suicide dictionary: the history of Rainbow Abbey” (Lonely, 2007);
- Portuguese *Dicionário de suicidas ilustres* ‘Dictionary of illustrious suicidal people’ (Toledo, 1999);
- French *Dictionnaire des suicides* ‘Dictionary of suicidal people’ (Volant, 2001);
- French *Le suicidologue: dictionnaire des suicidés célèbres* ‘The suicidologist: a dictionary of famous suicidal people’ (Negroni; Moncel, 1997);
- German *Der Suizid des Individuums: eine Enzyklopädie der individuellen Freiheit* ‘The suicide of the individual: an encyclopedia of individual freedom’ (BEICHTER, 2011).

In order to recognize the existence of those publications, they were included in the list of works cited in this paper, yet excluded from the analysis, because they were not available to be fully accessed in digital format. Additionally, it was not possible to check if they met other criteria informed in Chart 2, such as being actually a dictionary or an encyclopedia.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

By applying the twelve criteria of Humbley (2018), it was possible to identify relevant similarities and differences between the included publications, as summarized in Chart 4 and detailed afterwards.

Chart 4 – Overview of the lexicographic analysis.

Criteria	Dictionaries and encyclopedias of suicide			
	Dictionary of J. Parker and P. Parker (2003)	Dictionary of Janín (2009)	Encyclopedia of Evans and Farberow (2003)	Encyclopedia of Torres (2016)
1) Author specialized in suicide	Editors apparently no; authors maybe	No	Editor Evans apparently no; editor Farberow yes; entries' authors maybe	Editor apparently no; chapters' authors yes
2) Field of specialization	Many topics related to suicide			
3) Degree of specialization	Non expert audience			
4) Type of specialization	Culture-dependent			
5) Number of languages	1 (English)	1 (Spanish)	1 (English)	
6) Linguistic information	No	Yes		No
7) Media	Electronic			
8) Degree of autonomy	Part of another work	Autonomous work		
9) Front material	Almost the whole book	Introduction	Contents, foreword, preface, acknowledgments and introduction	Contents and preface
10) Macrostructure	Criteria not provided	Presentation criteria provided; other criteria not provided	All criteria provided	Criteria not provided

11) Microstructure	Headword and definition		Headword, definition and note	Does not apply
12) Back material	Index	Bibliography, index of names, index of entries	Appendixes, bibliography and index	Index

Source: made by the author, according to Humbley (2018) and the selected books.

4.2.1 Author

The author is the natural or juridical person that signs the work and generally corresponds to an expert in the topic (Humbley, 2018).

According to the dictionary of James Parker and Phillip Parker (2003, p. v), the first editor holds a bachelor in psychobiology and is a medical doctor, while the second editor holds a doctoral degree in humanities, but no formal healthcare education and no specific work on suicide. Nonetheless, it is possible that the body of the dictionary was written by experts in suicide and later published by ICON Group, at which both editors are responsible for a collection of medical dictionaries (Academic, 2022).

More explicitly, Carlos Janín (2009, p. 9) opens his introduction by stating that he is not an expert in suicide nor a psychologist, jurist, philosopher or fireman. The author adds that he did not pretend to be exhaustive. Searches in online bookstores confirm that Janín presents himself as someone interested by the topic of suicide, as well as a writer of fictional literature and coauthor of Spanish and French vocabularies (Amazon, 2022; Casa Del Libro, 2022).

The encyclopedia of Glen Evans and Norman Farberow (2003, p. xiii) does not provide a section about the editors, but it acknowledges the American Association of Suicidology and many other similar institutions for their contributions in writing and reviewing the book. This recognition means the encyclopedia was built by a large group of suicide experts. No specific information about Evans was found on the internet. Farberow, however, is referred to as a psychologist specialized and pioneer

in the scientific study of suicide, along with psychiatrists Edwin Shneidman and Robert Litman (Silverman, 2016; Fox, 2015).

In the case of Oliver Torres (2016), his encyclopedia does not present any information about the editor's curriculum, and searches on Google found no reference about this aspect. Yet, since the publication is part of a psychology series, it is believed Torres holds some academic degree in this area. Besides, this book is not a traditional form of encyclopedia, but a set of scholarly papers, something closer to a handbook or conference proceedings. Therefore, it is plausible that all the specific chapter authors are experts in some facet of suicide.

Considering those differences and similarities between the editors' and authors' curriculums, it is worth noting that suicide tends to be investigated in the health care areas, especially mental health, as pointed by Pompili (2018).

Health professionals have delivered a valuable service to humankind, by supporting suicidal patients and grieving families, besides planning and executing suicide prevention campaigns. However, according to the World Health Organization (2019), no isolated approach can significantly impact such a complex phenomenon as suicide.

The creation of suicidology is usually attributed to Edwin Shneidman, but suicide was already a subject of medical research in the beginning of 19th century (WHITE *et al.*, 2015), a philosophical topic of Plato's ancient Greece (Cholbi, 2021) and even a potential ending for an ancient Egyptian writer struggling with ambivalence (Ali; El-Mallakh, 2021).

It is important to highlight that this paper does not assess whether someone is capable or authorized to talk about suicide, but simply tries to apply a lexicographic criterion. It is not clear which academic and professional background would be enough to qualify a person as a suicide expert. Maybe it is more adequate to understand that the study verified if the editors or authors presented themselves as suicidologists, in

the sense of someone that researches on suicide, and not necessarily holds an expertise in such a complex, ancient object of inquiry.

4.2.2 Field of specialization

The field of specialization refers to one specific topic or many topics about the same subject (Humbley, 2018).

J. Parker and P. Parker (2003, p. 1) state their dictionary presents where and how to find trustworthy information about virtually all the topics related to suicide, from the more basic to the more advanced level of research. In practice, however, its headwords in the section “Suicide dictionary” (p. 429) are too generic, and the definitions do not even mention the word “suicide” nor equivalent ones. This section starts with “3-dimensional”, “abdomen”, “abdominal”, “aberrant”, “ablate”, “ablation”, “abscess”, “acceptor”, “acculturation” and proceeds until the end with a list of words which are mostly irrelevant to the topic of suicide.

Differently from this book, the dictionary of Janín (2009) approaches any term regarding the subject, but includes headwords significantly more relevant and provides definitions that directly comment about suicide. Some examples are the headwords *alcohol* and *Al Qaeda*, whose respective definitions refer to the intentional ingestion of certain substances and to the suicide attacks by terrorist groups (p. 20 and 24).

From an even wider perspective, Evans and Farberow (2003) edited an encyclopedia dedicated to a large set of terms related to suicide and complementary topics. As reviewed by the American Psychological Association, this is the deepest work ever published about suicide, having more than 500 articles that encompass psychological, statistical, philosophical, sociological, and religious questions on the subject, besides any other aspect of it.

Also under a wide angle, the articles edited by Torres (2016) approach the many interfaces between suicide and other categories, such as violence, neurotransmitters

and geography. It is worth remembering that this book is entitled as an encyclopedia, but it follows a handbook structure. Hence it is understandable that each study reveals a specific cut about the theme and that the whole work is so diverse.

The analyzed suicide SDEs, therefore, are aligned to the increasing number of publications that propose to go beyond the clinical viewpoint, so as to develop also critical and alternative approaches (White *et al.*, 2015; Page; Stritzke, 2020), such as in sociology (Durkheim, 1897), anthropology (Tatz, 2001), phenomenology (Pompili, 2018), aesthetics (Greenman, 2008) and linguistics (Daube, 1972; Costa, 2021, 2022a, 2022b). This epistemological diversity demonstrates that indeed no isolated approach can significantly impact the complex phenomenon of suicide, as understood by the World Health Organization (2019).

4.2.3 Degree of specialization

The degree of specialization is a projection of a target audience, which is considered more or less knowledgeable about the topic (Humbley, 2018).

J. Parker and P. Parker (2003, p. 1) are the only editors that specify the intended readers of their dictionary: medical professionals and students, in addition to any person interested to know as much as possible about suicide, while using advanced tools and taking the shortest time.

Janín (2009, p. 9) does not explicitly refer to the target audience of his dictionary, but it is possible to infer that the book is not meant to suicide experts. The first reason is that the work assumes a panoramic view about the subject. Besides, the author does not consider himself a suicide expert. Janín states he expects the reader just to be delighted with the book and learn (by examining such a complex topic) that our convictions are too relative.

The encyclopedia edited by Evans and Farberow (2003, p. ix) also does not explicitly inform whom they aim to address, because it simply states their target audience are a wide group of teenagers, adults and elderly people. According to this

publication, suicide prevention is everyone's responsibility and possible to achieve by using the information available in the encyclopedia and having the will to collaborate with the professionals who possess the adequate tools.

The work by Torres (2016, p. ix) declares it provides important information on suicide, yet it does not make any reference to the book's target audience. Despite that, it is plausible to assume the intended readers are a more restricted group of people, in comparison to the other SDEs' audiences. The motive is that the encyclopedia by Torres is composed of scientific papers, which tend to exclude lay people and concentrate the reception on scholarly readers.

On the one hand, it is estimated that most of the people who seek suicide SDEs are health professionals, researchers and students, mainly from psychology and psychiatry. This tendency is seen in the medical dictionary of J. Parker and P. Parker (2003) and on the scholarly papers compiled by the encyclopedia by Torres (2016). After all, according to Pompili (2018), suicide is usually examined from a psychopathological perspective. On the other hand, even among mental health experts, such as Scavacini (2018) and Ivbijaro (2021), there is a certain consensus that suicide prevention is everyone's responsibility, not only a clinical duty. This wider standpoint is quoted by the encyclopedia of Evans and Farberow (2003) and indirectly perceived in the dictionary of Janín (2009).

As discussed in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, it is worth remembering the requirements to recognize an author or editor as a suicide expert are not clearly established, because of the high complexity of this topic. By analogy, neither is it clear which requisites would be necessary to qualify a reader as an expert in suicide.

4.2.4 Type of specialization

The type of specialization describes the aspect according to which an SDE topic is dependent or independent of culture (Humbley, 2018).

The meaning of suicide has fluctuated in human history, among different religions, legal systems and areas of knowledge. The encyclopedia Britannica (2022) reports that suicide has already been condemned and forgiven by various societies. In the same sense, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Cholbi, 2021) explains that this controversial object has evoked a wide range of reactions, including perplexity, repudiation, glorification or romanticization, sympathy, anger and moral or religious condemnation.

Therefore, the mere fact of choosing suicide as a theme already implies that all four works analyzed in this article examine a very culturally dependent topic. The possible variation between the particular ways in which each SDE approaches the subject does not mean that suicide ceases to be culturally dependent. For example, Janín (2009, p. 9-10) announces that, in his dictionary, cries of various polemics resound, between cowardice and courage, between condemnation and recommendation. Evans and Farberow's encyclopedia (2003, p. xv) explains that attitudes towards suicide vary greatly, usually as a reflection of the society's psychocultural history. These examples demonstrate that the value attributed to the same object changes from time to time, from one society to another. An equivalent way of expressing this finding is to say that the very meaning of suicide oscillates between people, spaces and times, applying here the definition of meaning as the value that an individual attributes to the environment, according to Zlatev (2002).

4.2.5 Number of languages

As for the number of languages, specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias can be monolingual, bilingual or multilingual (Humbley, 2018).

All SDEs included are monolingual. Three are in English, namely:

- "Suicide: a medical dictionary, bibliography, and annotated research guide to internet references" (J. Parker; P. Parker, 2003);
- "Encyclopedia of suicide" (Evans; Farberow, 2003); and
- "Encyclopedia of suicide" (Torres, 2016).

The *Diccionario del suicidio* (Janín, 2009) was written in Spanish, but includes entries in languages other than that, such as “jackass” (English), *yihad* (Arabic for ‘an effort that each Muslim should perform’), *banzai* (a Japanese battle cry); and a huge amount of proper nouns, especially those corresponding to suicidal people and suicide-related works.

In view of these choices made by authors and editors, it is worth noting that English is the most used language in the world, totaling about 1.5 billion speakers as a first or second language (Ethnologue, 2022). English is also the most used language in science (Elnathan, 2021). Spanish is in fourth place internationally, spoken by approximately 550 million people, as a first or second language (Ethnologue, 2022). In the academic context, only around 1% of articles in scientific journals is published in Spanish or Portuguese (Bonilla, 2021).

It can be seen, on the one hand, that the choice of those two languages, especially regarding English, helps the information about suicide to reach a considerable portion of lay speakers and those who conduct research on this subject, inside and outside Brazil. On the other hand, the fact that no works were found in Portuguese is a possible access barrier for Brazilians who do not feel able to study suicide literature in English or Spanish.

4.2.6 Linguistic information

The linguistic information is used when an SDE not only describes the concept of a term, but also the word that represents this concept (Humbley, 2018).

The dictionary of Janín (2009), in some cases, shows both conceptual and linguistic information. According to the author, *banzai* is a Japanese term that initially corresponded to the cry of “long life” gave by kamikaze pilots in the World War II or by any Japanese fighter during this conflict; and later *banzai* became an adjective

equivalent to 'suicidal', even as a toponym that characterizes a cliff from which thousands of Japanese people jumped into the sea.

Similarly, in the encyclopedia of Evans and Farberow (2003), the English term "parasuicide" is described as the non-fatal act in which one deliberately causes self-injury or abuses any prescribed dosage of a substance. As explained in the book, "parasuicide" was proposed in 1969 by Norman Kreitman as a substitute for "attempted suicide", which would cause some misunderstanding about intention, consciousness and degree of injury, among other variables, but the former term fell into disuse.

Mostly because of how they were structured, the books of J. Parker and P. Parker (2003) and Torres (2016) do not have proper space to present linguistic information. As mentioned previously, the former is a commented bibliography followed by a so-called "suicide dictionary" whose entries are direct quotations of a health institution. The latter could actually have a chapter on the relation between language and suicide, but it does not include such a document.

This paper's introduction mentioned some studies that highlight the importance of understanding language in order to understand suicide. Some contributions already summarized here are those by Daube (1972), Shneidman (1985), Silverman (2006) and Costa (2021, 2022a, 2022b). Another example is psychologist Benoit (2016), who dedicated his whole doctoral dissertation to propose alternative definitions of suicide, encompassing intentional, non-intentional and pathological types.

Although scarce in the literature, those investigations imply that suicide SDEs should deepen the linguistic aspects of such object. Besides the semantics of suicide, another dimension to be advanced is the continuum between the Werther effect (when talking about suicide influences people to kill themselves) and the Papageno effect (when talking about suicide prevents someone to do it). Those effects were respectively proposed by Phillips (1974) and Niederkrotenthaler *et al.* (2010), validated

by a number of systematic reviews according to the World Health Organization (2008, 2017), but could be further understood in terms of speech acts theory and the role of music, not just regarding suicide news.

4.2.7 Media

There are basically two media options for an SDE: printed or electronic, the latter being offline or online (Humbley, 2018).

The books reviewed here are all PDFs. It is important to remember they were found in the Russian search engine RD, but they themselves do not provide the ease of use offered by dictionaries and encyclopedias in search engine format similar to Google. When in PDF format, it is indeed possible to search for words using a text box tool, yet this implies humanely checking all occurrences of a term in the entire file, which are scattered among entry terms, definitions, footnotes, etc.

This brings to mind that, two decades ago, Hartmann and James (1998) had already signaled that one of the most representative changes in the creation of dictionaries and the like was the shift of focus to the user experience. More recently, Humbley (2018) recognizes that reference works have become terminological banks.

Thus, on the one hand, there is an opportunity to create suicide SDEs in search engine format and accessed online for free. Some examples whose formats could initially serve as general references are the Oxford English Dictionary, the encyclopedia Britannica and the several other websites analyzed by Costa (2021, 2022a).

On the other hand, this greater ease of use and access to suicide SDEs, although based on an intention to prevent suicide, also carries the risk of causing it. Worried about such pragmatic ambiguity, Sher and Vilens (2009) problematize that online information about suicide is a double-edged sword, sometimes providing education and relief for those in need, sometimes inducing suffering or suicide because of the low quality of certain resources.

4.2.8 Degree of autonomy

With regard to the degree of autonomy, an autonomous work exists by itself, whereas a dependent work is just a section within a larger title (Humbley, 2018).

Among the four analyzed works, the dictionary by Janín (2009) and the encyclopedias by Evans and Farberow (2003) and Torres (2016) are autonomous, because they do not constitute parts of larger works (here not considered a larger work a collection).

The dictionary by J. Parker and P. Parker (2003) uses the category “dictionary” in the title, but the only section that comes close to a dictionary is the glossary at the end of the document. The remainder corresponds to the annotated bibliography, referred to in the title by the expression “bibliography, and annotated research guide to internet references”.

4.2.9 Front material

The front material usually includes preface, introduction, and the like (Humbley, 2018). In this analysis, elements of minor relevance for understanding how suicide is addressed in the works (cover, back cover, catalog sheet, etc.) were disregarded.

As discussed in the previous item, the work of J. Parker and P. Parker (2003) is a compilation of annotated bibliography plus a dependent (non-autonomous) dictionary. For this reason, among the publications analyzed here, it presents the largest number of front elements before reaching the “Suicide dictionary” section:

- “Disclaimer”;
- “Acknowledgements”;
- “About the editors”;
- “About ICON Health Publications”;
- “Table of contents”;
- “Foreward”;
- Chapters, from 1 to 9;

- “Appendix A-C”; and
- “Online glossaries”.

Another source that uses a considerable number of elements prior to the section of entries from A to Z is the encyclopedia edited by Evans and Farberow (2003):

- Three epigraphs on death;
- “Contents”;
- “Foreword”;
- “Preface”;
- “Acknowledgements”; and
- “Introduction: the history of suicide”.

At the extreme of minimalism, the dictionary by Janín (2009) places only one element before the entries, the *Introducción* (introduction), between pages 9 and 12. This is a brief explanation of what to expect from the work and how complex the theme of suicide is.

Still in this line of very few elements before scientific articles, Torres (2016) begins his encyclopedia with “Contents” and “Preface”.

In view of these different organizations of front material, the encyclopedia by Evans and Farberow (2003) stands out. The work, in the introduction, provides extensive detail on the etymology of suicide and the variations that the meaning of this phenomenon has undergone since Antiquity, through Middle Ages and Modern Period, until reaching contemporary times. In this regard, Humbley (2018) indicates that, in a specialized work, the introduction plays the role of didactically presenting the theme to the reader, who is generally not an expert in the subject.

Speaking of advance clarifications, a question arises: should a suicide SDE define the word “suicide”? If so, would it be appropriate to do it in some front material or to reserve an entry or an article for this?

Among the four works under analysis, only Janín (2009, p. 358-367) includes a separate entry for suicide, while the other entries are proper names, such as *Suicidio*,

El 'The suicide' (name of an Argentinean play), and types of suicide, such as *suicidio asistido* 'assisted suicide'.

In turn, Evans and Farberow (2003, p. 218-221) do not reserve an exclusive entry for suicide, but present a greater diversity of related terms, including proper names of works (as the book "Suicide in America") and organizations ("Suicide Information and Education Centre"); types of suicide ("suicide by cop", suicide in which a person provokes a police officer to shoot him); and expressions with the adjective "suicidal" ("suicidal crises, acute").

As discussed in previous sections of this paper, the dictionary by J. Parker and P. Parker (2003) is a compilation of bibliographic lists and a section called dictionary, whose entry terms have little relevance to the theme of suicide. Therefore, a work thus organized does not reserve a specific definition for the word suicide.

Also for organizational reasons, the encyclopedia by Torres (2016) does not present an article whose purpose is to define suicide or discuss definitions of this word, as do, for example, Daube (1972), Silverman (2006) and Costa (2021, 2022a, 2022b).

4.2.10 Macrostructure

The macrostructure is how the entries of a dictionary or the articles of an encyclopedia are selected, organized and presented (Humbley, 2018).

In the dictionary of J. Parker and P. Parker (2003), the section "Forward" mentions which type of information the work provides (abstracts and references, for example), but it does not specify how the terms in the section "Suicide Dictionary" were selected, organized and presented. As already said in previous items of this paper, one can observe a lower degree of relevance of the terms that compose the book, since most, if not all, are not directly linked to suicide, both in the headwords and definitions. It appears the terms were automatically selected by some software that

counted the more frequent words used in the publication and later linked them to their respective definitions, extracted from health institutions websites.

Janín (2009, p. 9) does not inform how the terms were selected. Instead, he employs different arguments probably to mitigate the risk of being criticized about how he built his dictionary. For instance, he states:

- he is not a suicide expert;
- this is a very complex topic;
- no reader would claim to miss absent terms; and
- a dictionary is never finished.

Nonetheless, at the end of the introduction, the author registers a note in which he explains some details about the organization and presentation of the terms followed by an asterisk.

The encyclopedia of Evans and Farberow (2003, p. xi) also does not reveal those macrostructural criteria. The editors, however, announce they tried to include and present the most up-to-date and trustworthy information on suicide, in such a wide perspective that made it possible to cover the types of suicide, popular biographies and even international statistics.

Among the analyzed SDEs, the encyclopedia by Torres (2016, p. ix) is the vaguest regarding macrostructure, as it simply states it presents important research on suicide. The editor does not say anything about selecting, organizing and presenting the terms that represent the topics of the scientific papers, not even in an indirect mode, as the other books do.

It is clear that none of the publications justify those macrostructural criteria. For example, it is not known why Janín (2009) includes so many proper nouns (of authors, artistic works etc.), even from other languages, if he argues he does not pretend to be exhaustive. It is also unclear what led J. Parker and P. Parker (2003) to select such a great number of terms which do not directly refer to suicide.

Given the options chosen in each book, it is believed one of the most fundamental decisions a suicide dictionary should make is to focus on the words each language provides to represent the concept of suicide and related concepts, supporting contrastive analysis as of Daube (1972) and Costa (2021, 2022a). A suicide encyclopedia would have a higher inclination not to emphasize linguistic aspects, but noun phrases about the subject, including both proper and common nouns, as identified by Costa (2021). Finally, an encyclopedic dictionary of suicide would possess greater freedom to merge the linguistic focus with the conceptual details, as found on the *Lexicon Technicum*, by Harris (1704), one of the pioneers of this hybrid genre, and the “Inter-regional encyclopedic dictionary of psychoanalysis”, by the International Association of Psychoanalysis (2022).

4.2.11 Microstructure

Microstructure is the way of organizing information within entries or articles, through elements such as entry, domain, definition, equivalent, context, usage label, source, synonym or variant, note and illustration or the like (Humbley, 2018).

In the dictionary of J. Parker and P. Parker (2003), considering only the section “Suicide dictionary” (p. 429-520), the microstructure is formed by headword, definition and source, as can be seen in this example: “Ablation: The removal of an organ by surgery. [NIH]” (p. 429), in which NIH stands for National Institute of Health.

Janín (2009) uses a leaner microstructure, without citing the source at the end of the entry. In addition, at times, the author builds proper definitions, in which a term such as *suicidología* (suicidology) is predicated as a discipline that studies the various aspects of suicide: “*Suicidología. Reciente disciplina científica que tiene por objeto el estudio de los diversos aspectos relacionados con el suicidio, su prevención y el tratamiento de los supervivientes. [...]*” (Janín, 2009, p. 367)

In other cases, the Spanish author makes free, encyclopedic comments. For example, when dealing with *danza* (dance), instead of explaining what this term means, he says all the arts inspired suicide and cites a Mexican show based on this theme: “*Danza. No hay arte, ni siquiera la música, al que no haya inspirado el suicidio. En Mérida (Yucatán, México), en agosto de 2005, [...] estrena un espectáculo de danza contemporánea titulado ‘Una vereda en el viento’ dedicado todo él al suicidio.*” (Janín, 2009, p. 116)

Evans and Farberow (2003) similarly present the entry and definition fields, but include, in their encyclopedia, a note at the end of the microstructure, with indications for consulting other terms. Another aspect resembling Janín (2009) is that the predications are sometimes free comments: “accident prone [:] Authorities speculate that many ‘accident-prone’ individuals are actually suicide attempters. For example, fatal auto accidents account for about 37 percent of all deaths in the 15- to 24-year-old group. [...] See also AUTOCIDE.” (Evans; Farberow, p. 2)

Sometimes the definitions appear more as predicates following the structure “x is y”, as illustrated here: “acting out [:] Term used by professionals to describe the use of behavior instead of words to express emotional conflicts. [...] See also DISTRESS SIGNALS.” (Evans; Farberow, p. 3)

Of the four publications analyzed, the one that most distances itself from these examples is the encyclopedia by Torres (2016). The expected fields of a microstructure do not apply to this source, as it is a set of academic articles structured in title, author, abstract, background, methodology, results, conclusion and references.

The comparison between these works raises a methodological doubt: considering that a specialized lexicographical work has as one of its objectives to help a usually non-specialized reader to understand the terms referring to a topic (Humbley, 2018), is there an optimal microstructure for a suicide SDE? The four works commented here diverge more than they converge, so that a clear pattern of what the

microstructure tends to present in this type of document on this subject was not identified.

Even so, it was expected that dictionaries, according to Ceia (2009), would display less free comments and more definitions about what the defined things are and are not (for example, what is “suicide” and to what extent it is not “homicide”, “accident”, “natural death” etc.). Still from this point of view, it was also expected that encyclopedias would begin with a definition of the term and then proceed with the detailing of the concept, as performed by Britannica (2022) and MedlinePlus (2022). Both sources begin the respective suicide articles by predicating it as the intentional act of taking one’s own life.

4.2.12 Back material

The back material are elements placed after the main content, generally being a bibliography, indexes and appendices (Humbley, 2018).

At the end of their work, J. Parker and P. Parker (2003) present only an index, which contains the entry terms in alphabetical order and accompanied by the page numbers on which they appear. It is worth remembering that this dictionary is basically an annotated bibliography, which, instead of being presented at the end of the file, is shown along the sections.

In addition to this type of index, the dictionary by Janín (2009) has an index of proper names, a subset that facilitates consultation by the reader more interested in biographical information. The author also lists references to the work in a bibliography section.

The encyclopedia by Evans and Farberow (2003) closes the entries section with an extensive list of appendices, in which the editors gather names, addresses, telephone numbers and similar data of suicide prevention organizations, especially those located in the United States and Canada. The appendices also include a table

with the number of suicides by country, from 1984 to 1999. The publication then presents the bibliography and an index.

Remembering that the encyclopedia by Torres (2016) is, in fact, a book whose chapters are scientific articles, one can realize that each article ends with a list of bibliographic references. At the end of the work as a whole, there is only an index.

It is possible to note that all four works analyzed used some index, which facilitates navigation through the work, according to the interests of each reader. In addition, all publications provided a list of bibliographic references, so that people have the chance to deepen the study of a topic. After all, as understood by the World Health Organization (2012), increasing access to quality information about suicide helps people to overcome stigma and seek assistance from health services.

5 Conclusion

This work partially fulfilled its general objective of describing the dictionaries and encyclopedias specialized in suicide available in the literature. The lexicographical analysis of these sources revealed some convergences and several divergences regarding who says it, what is said, how it is said and the target audience of a suicide SDE.

On the one hand, the lexicographical analysis based on twelve criteria and complementary references allowed a very detailed discussion of the constituent aspects of the four works included, in addition to reducing the researcher's bias. One of the most relevant findings was the fact that the SDEs examined make an effort to address the various aspects of this object, instead of adopting a reductionist perspective.

On the other hand, eight publications of this nature were excluded from the analysis because they were not available for full reading on the internet. As only four very different works were analyzed, it was not possible to identify a clear pattern that holds for all criteria and sources. For example, it is not known which terms would be

more feasible to include in a work of this nature (from synonyms of suicide and proper nouns of suicidal people to any more or less related words) nor the optimal way to predicate them (definitions, articles, examples, free comments etc.).

Even so, this paper is a relevant contribution to studies on language and suicide, as it delivers a contrastive analysis of four dictionaries and encyclopedias published in two of the most popular international languages and specialized in one of the toughest subjects in human history.

To overcome the limitations identified here, it is recommended that future studies review the search procedures and the inclusion and exclusion criteria. It is also suggested to experiment with the application of theoretical foundations different from those used in this research.

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