

ABSTRACT

The research explores and compares attitudes toward suicide among Israeli and German individuals by means of open interviews. 26 Jewish Israeli and 24 German (non Jewish) persons were interviewed in their own countries concerning their attitudes about life, death and suicide by open dynamic explorations. The evaluation of the interviews was assisted by German- and Hebrew-Speaking persons. The final results of the interviews were interpreted and enriched by small group discussions in Israel and in Germany. I assumed that significant differences in the suicide rate between Germany and Israel (14.9 in Germany and 6.7 in Israel a year for 100.000 habitants) as well as the low suicide rate in Jewish communities world wide correspond with their attitudes toward suicide. Since September 2000, the suicide rate in Israel has been decreasing following the wave of almost daily terrorism attempts. Suicide researchers in Israel expect a further decrease in the suicide rate following escalation of the political situation in this country. I have presumed that the contrasting political situations between Israel and Germany, along with cultural differences between the two countries, bear on attitudes toward life, death and suicide. The interpreted results have been discussed in terminal stage of this study with "suicide experts" (Prof. Israel Orbach, University Bar Ilan in Israel) in order to find correlations with other intercultural studies on suicide. The research found significant differences in social and general attitudes toward suicide in view of a complex of cultural, historical, philosophical and political components. Significant differences between Israelis and Germans individuals were found in their general attitudes toward their country, history as well as in their moral sense. This research tries to demonstrate the political and cultural impact on the attitudes to suicide and also on the action itself. This comparison research could additionally shed light on more general dynamics related to suicide and sociopolitical contexts, such as the low rate of suicide during the German Holocaust.