

Suicide: “intentional” act of killing oneself? A review of nineteen theoretical arguments and fifty-eight definitions in seven natural languages

Roger Vinícius da Silva Costa*

Abstract

Perhaps intentionality is the most problematic category in the definition of suicide. However, there still seems to be no literature review of relevant theoretical arguments and main dictionaries of different languages. Given this situation, the general objective of this study was to understand how to treat the category of intentionality in the definition of suicide. A qualitative, quantitative, exploratory and bibliographic methodology was used. A narrative review based on 27 authors from different areas included 19 theoretical arguments, organized on a matrix. 7 arguments are applicable in defense of the thesis that suicide is intentional, another 7 to defend the opposite thesis that this phenomenon is not intentional and the remaining 5 apparently in favor of either. Moving forward to an integrative review guided by 8 criteria, 58 definitions of noun and/or verb were extracted from 36 monolingual, digital dictionaries of Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, Italian, German and Russian. 72.22% of the selected dictionaries refer to suicide as intentional, and 27.78%, including all Portuguese ones, do not characterize it as such. In the first group, intentionality was referred to mostly by lexical items equivalent to “intentional”, “voluntary” and “deliberate”, as well as adverbs based on them. The conclusion is that it is not feasible to include intentionality in the definition of suicide,

* Linguistics Doctoral Student at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC Minas). User Experience Writer at Wellz, a mental health benefit by Gympass. ORCID: 0000-0003-2636-2774

because academic and lexicographic sources lack consensus. It is recommended to overcome the qualitative and quantitative limitations of this study, as well as to consult more than one definition of suicide and in different languages.

Keywords: Dictionary; intentionality; meaning; suicidal ideation; suicidology.

Suicídio: ato “intencional” de se matar? Revisão de dezenove argumentos teóricos e cinquenta e oito definições em sete línguas naturais

Resumo

A intencionalidade talvez seja a categoria mais problemática da definição do suicídio, todavia parece ainda não haver, na literatura, uma revisão de argumentos teóricos relevantes e principais dicionários em diferentes línguas. Diante desse quadro, o objetivo geral deste estudo foi entender como tratar a categoria da intencionalidade na definição do suicídio. Utilizou-se uma metodologia qualitativa, quantitativa, exploratória e bibliográfica. Mediante uma revisão narrativa baseada em 27 autores de diversas áreas, incluíram-se 19 argumentos teóricos, organizados em forma de matriz. 7 argumentos são aplicáveis em defesa da tese de que o suicídio é intencional, outros 7 para advogar a tese oposta de que esse fenômeno não é intencional e os 5 restantes aparentemente a favor de qualquer uma das duas. Avançando para uma revisão integrativa orientada por 8 critérios, foram incluídas 58 definições de substantivo e/ou verbo extraídas de 36 dicionários digitais monolíngues de português, espanhol, inglês, francês, italiano, alemão e russo. 72,22% dos dicionários selecionados referem o suicídio como intencional, e 27,78%, incluindo todas as obras de língua portuguesa, não o caracterizam dessa forma. No primeiro

grupo, a referência à intencionalidade foi repetida por itens equivalentes a “intencional”, “voluntário” e “deliberado”, bem como pelos advérbios neles baseados. Conclui-se que é pouco viável incluir a intencionalidade na definição do suicídio, pois não há consenso entre as fontes acadêmicas e lexicográficas. Recomenda-se superar as limitações qualitativas e quantitativas desta pesquisa, bem como consultar mais de uma definição de suicídio e em diferentes línguas.

Palavras-chave: Dicionário; ideação suicida; intencionalidade; significado; suicidologia.

Recebido em 19/03/2022. // Aceito em 30/09/2022.

Introdução

“If you want to kill yourself, how come you don’t want to kill yourself?”: in Fernando Pessoa’s poem (1998, p. 92), the lyrical subject ironizes the reader’s desire to die and presents several arguments for the person to perform the act. While this article recognizes the cathartic potential of art and the artists’ freedom of expression, it does not give itself the right to mock one’s suicidal ambivalence or advise them to take action. After all, inducing or instigating someone to commit suicide would deny any research ethics, and, according to the Penal Code of Brazil (1940, article 122), be a crime.

Depressive people, drug addicts, lovers, terrorists, martyrs, soldiers, careless drivers, terminal patients... If suicide means “the intentional act of killing oneself”, why does not every suicidal person seem to want to die? Why are there some cases categorized as martyrdom, accidents, executions, etc.? Is the relationship between suicide and intentionality as obvious as one might think?

Stating that he depended on the work of linguist Daube (1972) and that comprehending suicide requires understanding this word, psychiatrist Shneidman (1985) devoted an entire book to the definition of suicide and believed that it must be composed of the nucleus “the act of killing oneself” and an indispensable periphery of hypotheses such as accidental ingestion of poison, dangerous driving, being ordered to kill oneself, etc. Later, also in Psychiatry, Silverman (2006) reinforced the importance of relying on some definition and avoiding the indiscriminate use of words in Suicidology. Psychologist Benoit (2016) even proposed a typology of the object, in order to avoid the analytical

difficulties of intentionality. More recently, linguist Costa (2021) analyzed dozens of dictionaries and encyclopedias, concluding that the meaning of suicide ranges from “the act of killing oneself” to the non-lethal, sometimes playful instances of “the act of harming one’s interests”.

However, there seems to be no literature review that examines the most relevant theoretical arguments applicable to the suicide-intentionality binomial and the definitions of the phenomenon in the main dictionaries of different languages, in order to identify patterns and maybe redefine paths. Researchers, health professionals, police detectives, grieving families and other parties might benefit from better understanding of to what extent a given death was suicidal and/or intentional.

Considering the referred context, this paper was based on the following research question: **is it feasible to include intentionality in the definition of suicide?** The hypothesis was that it seemed unfeasible, as intentionality causes numerous theoretical and methodological difficulties.

In this sense, the study’s general aim was to understand how to treat the category of intentionality in the definition of suicide. To fulfill this broad goal, the specific objectives were: 1) to identify relevant theoretical arguments applicable to the relationship between suicide and intentionality; and 2) to verify if and how definitions of suicide in Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, Italian, German and Russian refer to the intentionality of such phenomenon.

In order to clarify this whole process, this article is divided into 4 more sections: Section 2 details the research methodology; Section 3 records and comments the selected theoretical arguments; Section 4 presents and analyzes the included

definitions of suicide; and Section 5 reveals the conclusion, from which are derived some implications for suicidologists and dictionary makers.

1 Methodology

A quantitative, qualitative, exploratory and bibliographic methodology was used, as these aspects seemed to be the most appropriate to the nature of the sources needed to answer the research question, as well as to the initial stage of the Linguistics doctoral investigation to which this article is linked.

According to Patias and Hohendorff (2019), both quantification and qualification represent valid perspectives of scientific knowledge production, so one is not better than the other, but rather have different purposes: quantitative research prioritizes the generalization and replication of results, while qualitative research is more dedicated to understanding a phenomenon. In this sense, the World Health Organization (2019) warns that no single approach is capable of significantly impacting a problem as complex as suicide. Nevertheless, it was considered that understanding the relationship between suicide and intentionality asked for a greater effort in interpretation, other than in measurement.

The exploratory methodology aims to approximate the researcher to the object and usually starts with bibliographic research, which is based on material already published, mainly books and academic articles (GIL, 2002; GREEN; JOHNSON; ADAMS, 2006). More specifically, the theoretical arguments were obtained with a narrative review, and the definitions by an integrative review.

1.1 A narrative review of theoretical arguments on suicide and intentionality

The theoretical arguments emerged unsystematically, as the researcher came closer to the object, so a narrative review was performed. This type of bibliographic study is important to build a broad perspective of a topic covered by several publications scattered in the literature, however it is more subject to author bias and does not follow precise and replicable inclusion and exclusion criteria (GREEN; JOHNSON; ADAMS, 2006). From 2011 to 2022, the main situations in which the sources appeared were graduate courses and events of a Linguistics program from a university located in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil; and exploratory readings carried out by the author outside the academic environment. Although employing a narrative review, care was taken to select works by researchers and institutions recognized as national or international authorities.

In 2022, during the writing of this article, doubts arose about the best way to present the theoretical arguments to the academic community. Would it be appropriate to considerably bias the reasoning, by selecting only those that are closest to what the researcher finds valid? Would it be possible to build a model, since several arguments are diametrically opposed and most of them do not directly regard suicide? Would it be worth to simply make a random list of quotes? After several writing tests, it was decided that the best alternative was to build a matrix and provide brief comments on the references. This tool seeks to graphically summarize how it would be possible to apply the arguments of different authors to the suicide-intentionality binomial. Besides, it allows readers to draw their own conclusions.

1.2 An integrative review of definitions of suicide

The definitions of suicide were collected in February 2022, by performing an integrative review. This other type of bibliographic research, more rigorous than the narrative and less than the systematic ones, aims to synthesize available references and enable their application (SOUZA; SILVA; CARVALHO, 2010). Therefore, it was possible to build a synoptic table dedicated to supporting both the research of suicidologists and the work of dictionary makers. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are detailed in Table 1, as well as the justifications for the choices:

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the integrative review of dictionaries

Inclusion	Exclusion	Justification
1) Discourse genre: dictionary	1) Encyclopedia, machine translator or scholarly work	A dictionary is possibly the most consulted genre to understand the meaning of a word, especially as a reference for scholarly studies.
2) Language: Portuguese or Spanish or English or Italian or French or German or Russian	2) Multilingual dictionary or in a language other than the specified ones	Monolingual sources focus on definitions, not pairs of equivalent terms. The author is a native speaker of Portuguese, has advanced knowledge of Spanish and English and elementary level of Italian, French, German and Russian.

3) Year of publication: undetermined	3) (Any year)	The indeterminacy of the publication year reflects the exploratory nature of the research, as this information was not known <i>a priori</i> .
4) Topic: unthemed	4) Dictionary of Psychology, history or any specific topic	It was chosen unthemed dictionaries to reduce definition bias and because specific-topic ones seem to be less accessible to researchers.
5) File type: desktop program or online page	5) Printed book	A digital document facilitates data collection and analysis, even when the volume is high.
6) Access: paid or free	6) Not available to the public	The researcher has worked as a proofreader and translator since 2009, so he has easy access to paid and free sources.
7) Part of speech: noun and verb	7) Adjective and other parts	Some dictionaries define suicide as “the act or effect of committing suicide”, and more specific classes and words are semantically based on the noun or verb.
8) Definition: only the first one of the entry	8) Second and other definitions	Preliminary searches indicated that the first definition is the most relevant one to verify whether or not the dictionary refers to suicide as intentional.

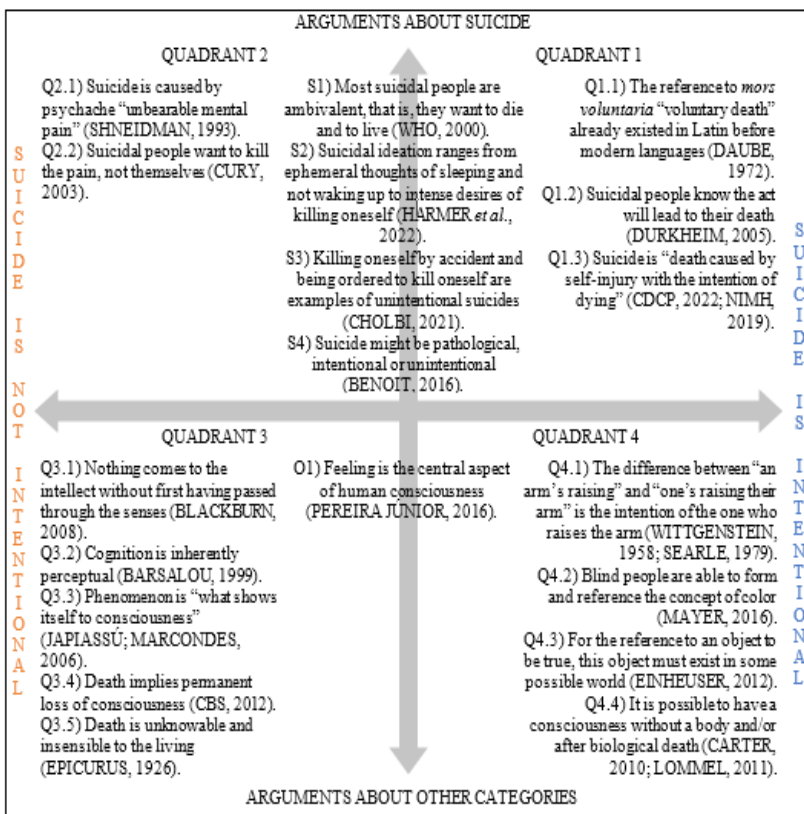
Source: made by the author

After applying those 8 criteria, the included definitions went through 5 phases of analysis: extraction, tabulation, counting, interpretation and writing. In the extraction, the definitions were pasted on Microsoft OneNote 2019, desktop version, in order to facilitate data manipulation and avoid repeating searches on the original systems. During the tabulation, the reference to the intentionality category was humanely measured using Microsoft Excel 2019, also desktop, by counting the absolute frequency and using a simple percentage formula. After the tabulation was finished, a chart was generated, also in Excel. From there, the interpretation began, the more properly qualitative phase, in which the theoretical arguments were applied to the selected meanings. Finally, the article was written in the last phase. Advanced statistical resources were not used, due to limitations of the researcher, nor automatic extraction and analysis tools, as it was believed that they would not be capable of providing quality comparable to that of the interpretation by a human being before the proposed research question.

2 Theoretical Arguments: from Epicureanism to contemporary Suicidology

Based on 27 authors from different areas, 19 theoretical arguments applicable to the relationship between suicide and intentionality were included, as shown on the matrix corresponding to Figure 1.

Figure 1: A matrix of theoretical arguments on suicide and intentionality



Source: made by the author, according to the quoted references.

Q = quadrant. S = suicide. O = other categories. CDCP = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NIMH = National Institute of Mental Health. WHO = World Health Organization. CBS = Canadian Blood Services.

Taking the Cartesian plane as the basis of the reasoning, 2 crossed axes are identified: the horizontal one represents the distance between the theses “suicide is intentional” (on the right) and “suicide is not intentional” (on the left); and the vertical one refers to thematic relevance, with specific arguments

about suicide (above) and the others regarding other categories (below). As usual in taxonomic analyses, several arguments did not conform to the pre-defined types (the quadrants), so they were allocated in 2 fuzzy regions (see ZADEH, 1965): the first one among the mentioned theses; and the second one between suicide and other categories. A brief comment on the authors is provided now.

2.1 Suicide is intentional

Quadrant 1 represents suicide-specific arguments that defend the thesis “suicide is intentional” (from Q1.1 to Q1.3). The etymology of “suicide” and equivalent nouns in other languages (*sui* “of oneself” + *caedere* “to kill”) does not refer the intentionality of the phenomenon, but Daube (1972) explains that the Latin *mors voluntaria* (voluntary death) already existed long before modern languages terms (Q1.1). In the 19th century, this intuition continues in Durkheim’s definition (2005), according to which suicidal people know that the act will produce their own death (Q1.2). A similar reasoning remains on the websites by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) and the National Institute of Mental Health (2019), as both define suicide as death caused by self-injury with the intention to die (Q1.3).

Quadrant 4 is also composed of arguments that support the thesis “suicide is intentional”, but refer to other categories (from Q4.1 to Q4.4). Summarizing Wittgenstein (1958) and Searle (1979), the difference between the event “one’s arm raising” and the act “one raising one’s arm” is one’s intention to raise one’s arm (Q4.1), so any human act would be intentional. However,

would humans be able to desire and refer to death, something apparently unknowable and non-existent (Q3.1 to Q3.5)? The doctoral thesis of Mayer (2016) demonstrated, theoretically and empirically, that blind people are able to form and reference the concept of color (Q4.2). According to Enheuser (2012), for a reference to an object to be true, this object must exist in some possible world (Q4.3). If consciousness can subsist without a body and/or after biological death (Q4.4), as Carter (2010) and Lommel (2011) discuss about near-death experiences and related categories, the human being is able to know and to feel death, lose body and keep consciousness, in which memories of past lives would remain and the possibility of wishing for one’s own death again. This argument, however, seems to go beyond what is acceptable as science.

2.2 Suicide is not intentional

At the other extreme, Quadrant 2 brings together suicide-specific arguments, which support the thesis “suicide is not intentional” (Q2.1 and Q2.2). After decades of research, Shneidman (1993) concluded that suicide is caused by psychache, which means “unbearable mental pain” (Q2.1). Complementarily, Cury (2003) proposed the metaphor that a suicidal individual wants to kill the pain, not oneself (Q2.1).

Quadrant 3 also groups arguments that would imply the already mentioned apparent impossibility of suicide being intentional (from Q3.1 to Q3.5), but refer to other categories. As Blackburn (2008) summarizes it, the philosophers Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Leibniz converge in the sense that nothing reaches the intellect without first passing

through the senses (Q3.1), an argument that echoes in Barsalou (1999), for whom cognition is inherently perceptual (Q3.2). Still in this line of reasoning, if phenomenon is what shows itself to consciousness, as defined by Japiassú and Marcondes (2006) (Q3.3), and if death implies permanent loss of consciousness, according to the consensus of the Canadians Blood Services and the World Health Organization (2012) (Q3.4), so Epicurus (1926), some 2,300 years ago, was right to insist that death means nothing to the living (Q3.5).

2.3 Suicide is and is not intentional

The upper fuzzy region concentrates suicide-specific arguments that claim it is intentional and unintentional (from S1 to S4). The World Health Organization (2000) postulates that most suicidal people are ambivalent, that is, they want to die and to live (S1). Although generally defined in a simplistic way, suicidal ideation, according to the extensive problematization by Harmer *et al.* (2022), is a heterogeneous phenomenon that ranges from ephemeral thoughts of sleeping and not waking up to the most intense and lasting desires to kill oneself (S2). Further on, in Cholbi (2021), not knowing that the action is lethal and being forced to kill oneself are examples that it is possible to commit suicide without wanting to die (S3). Trying to avoid the theoretical and analytical difficulties of intentionality, Benoit (2016) proposes to categorize suicide into 3 types: pathological, intentional and unintentional (S4).

Finally, the lower fuzzy region presents 1 argument referring to other categories than suicide and apparently applicable in defense of any of the 2 theses. In Pereira Júnior's (2016)

Triple Aspect Monism, feeling is the central aspect of human consciousness (O1). However, it would be possible to infer both that suicide is intentional, because suicidal ideation is “to feel like”, as well as that suicide is not intentional, as the individual would actually want to eliminate an unbearable mental pain (Q2.1).

3 Definitions of Suicide: quantifying and qualifying intentionality

As recorded in Table 2, the included data represent all 7 languages, albeit disproportionately, and correspond to 58 noun and/or verb definitions extracted from 36 digital dictionaries.

Table 2: An overview of the sample

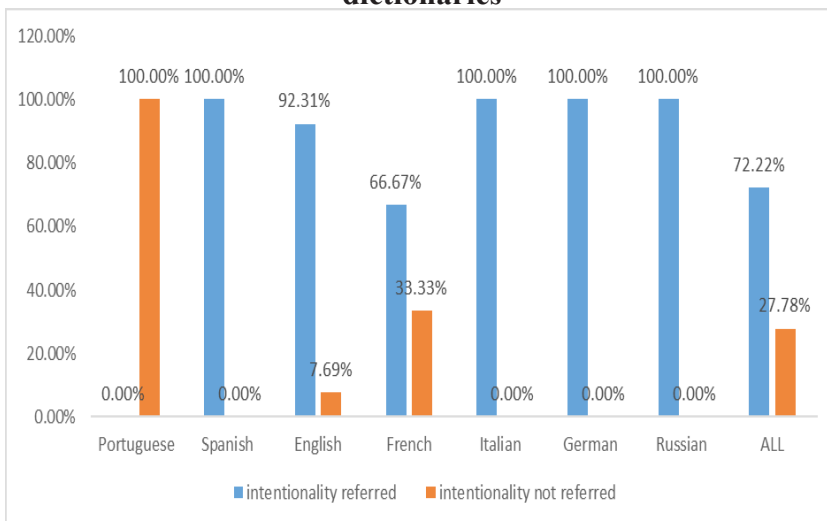
Languages	Dictionaries	Definitions	Nouns	Verbs
Portuguese	7	14	7	7
Spanish	2	4	2	2
English	13	17	12	5
French	6	12	6	6
Italian	2	4	2	2
German	2	3	2	1
Russian	4	4	4	0
Totals	7	36	35	23

Source: made by the author

Besides the differences regarding the number of dictionaries between one language and another, some of them do not define the verb “suicide” and its equivalent terms. Furthermore, sources that refer to intentionality do so sometimes in one part of speech, sometimes in another, sometimes in both. In order to

avoid quantification problems and facilitate the understanding of the results, it was decided to build Chart 1 based on the number of dictionaries, not of definitions. This way, works that refer to intentionality in 1 or 2 parts of speech were only tabulated 1 time as 1 occurrence of this category, while sources in which intentionality was not stated received occurrence 0.

Chart 1: Distribution of intentionality across the dictionaries



Source: made by the author

Chart 1 shows that most of the selected dictionaries (72.22%) refer to suicide as intentional, while the others (27.78%), including all Portuguese sources, do not characterize the phenomenon in this way. On the following paragraphs, more qualitative, specific comments are made on the definitions, transcribed and translated in Table 3. Before doing so, with the aim of providing the best comprehension and facilitating the access to the references, some graphic conventions are presented.

It was chosen not to quote the sources only by the surname or exclusively by the first words of the title, as determine the Brazilian norms, but sometimes by the surname of an individual (Houaiss) or name of an institution (Oxford), sometimes by the proper name (Aurélio), giving preference to the term that better identifies the dictionary. The definitions were taken from the respective dictionaries and translated by the researcher when they were not in English. Bilingual dictionaries, machine translators and search engines were used to perform some validations. The transliteration of Russian (from Cyrillic to Latin alphabet) follows the one used by Google Translate. As all the works are websites and computer programs, the quotations have no page numbers, hence the omission of this data. Initials have been lowercased and periods suppressed. The abbreviations are “n.” for noun, and “v.” for verb; where one of them is missing, it means that the dictionary does not have a definition for that part of speech. As for symbols, “=” is used to separate a term from its definition; and “[]” to indicate the Portuguese translation. Finally, the blue color highlights the words that represent intentionality.

Table 3: Included definitions of suicide

26 dictionaries that refer to suicide as intentional		
Language	Author	Definition
Spanish	Moliner (2008)	suicidio (n.) = “acción de matarse a sí mismo” [the action of killing oneself] suicidarse (v.) = “matarse voluntariamente a sí mismo” [voluntarily killing oneself]
Spanish	<i>Real Academia Española</i> (2021)	suicidio (n.) = “acción y efecto de suicidarse” [the action or the effect of to suicide] suicidarse (v.) = “quitarse voluntariamente la vida” [voluntarily taking one’s life]
English	Oxford (2004)	suicide (n.) = “the action of killing oneself intentionally ” suicide (v.) = “ intentionally kill oneself”
English	Collins (2006)	suicide (n.) = “people who commit suicide deliberately kill themselves because they do not want to continue living ”
English	Merriam-Webster (2003a)	suicide (n.) = “the act or an instance of taking one’s own life voluntarily and intentionally especially by a person of years of discretion and of sound mind” suicide (v.) = “to commit suicide”
English	Merriam-Webster (2003b)	suicide (n.) = “the act or an instance of taking one’s own life voluntarily and intentionally ” suicide (v.) = “to commit suicide”
English	Chambers (2003)	suicide (n.) = “the act or an instance of killing oneself deliberately , usually in the phrase commit suicide”

English	Macmillan (2007)	suicide (n.) = “the action of deliberately killing yourself”
English	American Heritage (2022)	suicide (n.) = “the act or an instance of intentionally killing oneself” suicide (v.) = “to kill oneself; die by suicide”
English	Merriam-Webster (2022a)	suicide (n.) = “the act or an instance of taking one’s own life voluntarily and intentionally ” suicide (v.) = “to commit suicide”
English	Oxford (2022)	suicide (n.) = “the act of killing yourself deliberately ”
English	Cambridge (2022)	suicide (n.) = “the act of killing yourself intentionally ”
English	Collins (2022)	suicide (n.) = “the act or an instance of killing oneself intentionally ”
English	Macmillan (2022)	suicide (n.) = “the action of deliberately killing yourself”
French	Larousse (2010)	suicide (n.) = “acte de se donner soi-même la mort” [the act of giving death to oneself] se suicider (v.) = “se donner volontairement la mort” [to give death to oneself voluntarily]
French	Larousse (2022)	suicide (n.) = “acte de se donner volontairement la mort” [the voluntary act of giving death to oneself] se suicider (v.) = “se donner la mort; se tuer, se supprimer” [to give death to oneself; to kill oneself, to eliminate oneself]
French	Universalis (2022)	suicide (n.) = “action de quelqu’un qui se donne lui-même la mort” [the action of who gives death to oneself] se suicider (v.) = “se donner volontairement la mort” [to give death to oneself voluntarily]

<p>French</p>	<p><i>Cordial</i> (2019)</p>	<p>suicide (n.) = “action de quelqu'un qui se donne lui-même la mort” [the action of who gives death to oneself] se suicider (v.) = “se donner volontairement la mort” [to give death to oneself voluntarily]</p>
<p>German</p>	<p><i>Duden</i> (2022)</p>	<p>Selbstmord (n.) = “das Sich-selbst-Töten; vorsätzliche Auslöschung des eigenen Lebens” [killing oneself; willful annihilation of one’s own life] Selbstmord begehen (v.) = “sich selbst vorsätzlich töten” [to kill yourself intentionally]</p>
<p>German</p>	<p><i>Union der Deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften</i> (2022)</p>	<p>Selbstmord (n.) = “vorsätzliches Beenden des eigenen Lebens durch aktives Zufügen einer tödlichen Selbstverletzung, Einnahme einer tödlichen Substanz o. Ä.; Beendigung des eigenen Lebens durch passives Unterlassen lebensnotwendiger Maßnahmen bzw. Veranlassen, dass diese unterbleiben” [willfully ending one’s own life by actively causing fatal self-harm, ingesting lethal substance or similar; ending one’s own life by passively failing to take vital measures or causing them not to be taken]</p>

Italian	Treccani (2022)	suicidio (n.) = “il fatto, l’atto di togliersi deliberatamente la vita” [the fact, the act of deliberately taking one’s life] suicidarsi (v.) = “togliersi deliberatamente la vita (sinon. più specifico di <i>uccidersi</i> , in quanto sottolinea esplicitamente la volontarietà)” [to take one’s own life deliberately (more specific synonym of self-killing, as it explicitly emphasizes voluntariness)]
Italian	Corriere (2018)	suicidio (n.) = “gesto di chi si toglie volontariamente la vita” [the gesture of one who voluntarily take one’s own life] suicidarsi (v.) = “togliersi la vita” [to take one’s own life]
Russian	Ozhegov (2022)	samoubiĭstvo (n.) = “ namerennoye lisheniye zhizni” [intentional deprivation of life]
Russian	Efremova (2022)	samoubiĭstvo (n.) = “ namerennoye lisheniye sebya zhizni” [intentional deprivation of one’s own life]
Russian	Kuznetsov (1998)	samoubiĭstvo (n.) = “ namerennoye lisheniye sebya zhizni” [intentional deprivation of one’s own life]
Russian	Ozhegov e Shvedova (2022)	samoubiĭstvo (n.) = “ namerennoye lisheniye sebya zhizni” [intentional deprivation of one’s own life]

10 dictionaries that do not refer to suicide as intentional		
Language	Author	Definition
Portuguese	Aurélio (2004)	suicídio (n.) = “ato ou efeito de suicidar-se” [the act or the effect of to suicide] suicidar-se (v.) = “dar a morte a si próprio” [to give death to oneself]
Portuguese	Houaiss (2009)	suicídio (n.) = “ato ou efeito de suicidar-se” [the act or the effect of to suicide] suicidar-se (v.) = “pôr termo à própria vida; matar-se” [to put an end to one’s own life; to kill oneself]
Portuguese	Michaelis (2022)	suicídio (n.) = “ato ou efeito de suicidar-se” [the act or the effect of to suicide] suicidar-se (v.) = “pôr termo à própria vida; cometer suicídio, matar-se” [to put an end to one’s own life; to commit suicide, to kill oneself]
Portuguese	Aulete (2022)	suicídio (n.) = “ação ou resultado de suicidar-se” [the action or the result of to suicide] suicidar-se (v.) = “acabar com a própria vida; matar-se” [to end one’s own life; to kill oneself]
Portuguese	Priberam (2022)	suicídio (n.) = “ato ou efeito de se suicidar ou de tirar a própria vida” [the act or the effect of to suicide or of to take one’s own life] suicidar-se (v.) = “tirar a sua própria vida” [to take one’s own life]

Portuguese	Infopédia (2022)	suicídio (n.) = “ato ou efeito de suicidar-se; morte dada a si mesmo” [the act or the effect of to suicide; the death given to oneself] suicidar-se (v.) = “dar morte a si mesmo” [to give death to oneself]
Portuguese	Dicio (2022)	suicídio (n.) = “ação de acabar com a própria vida, de se matar” [the action of ending one’s own life, of killing oneself] suicidar-se (v.) = “matar-se ou acabar com a própria vida” [to kill oneself or to end one’s own life]
English	Longman (2022)	suicide (n.) = “the act of killing yourself”
French	Littré (2009)	suicide (n.) = “action de celui qui se tue lui-même” [the action of who kill oneself] se suicider (v.) = “se donner la mort à soi-même” [to give death to oneself]
French	<i>Académie Française</i> (2022)	suicide (n.) = “action de celui qui se tue lui-même” [the action of who kill oneself] se suicider (v.) = “se tuer” [to kill oneself]

Source: made by the author, according to the dictionaries

While none of the Portuguese language dictionaries link suicide to intentionality, 2 of them adopt an emphatic, almost redundant stance. In English, however, Merriam-Webster (2003a) characterizes suicide as voluntary and intentional. Further on, Collins (2006) states that suicidal people deliberately kill themselves because they do not want to continue living. Such positions appear to reflect the arguments of Quadrants 1 and 4 (especially Q1.3 and Q4.1), as both claim that suicide is clearly an intentional act.

The dictionary by the *Union der Deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften* (2022) is the only included one that represents an active and a passive dimensions of intentionality. It understands that suicide implies an active movement of inflicting on oneself fatal mutilation, ingestion of lethal substance or something similar, but also the “non” movement of failing to take vital measures or causing them not to be taken. This double reference was probably a way of incorporating part of the definition proposed by Durkheim (2005), for whom suicide results directly or indirectly from an act, positive or negative, performed by the victims themselves and that they knew would produce that result.

As for the lexical choices, the reference to intentionality was repeated, in 6 languages, by items equivalent to “intentional”, “voluntary” and “deliberate”, as well as by the adverbs based on such terms. A thesaurus query demonstrates the semantic proximity between those words (see Table 3).

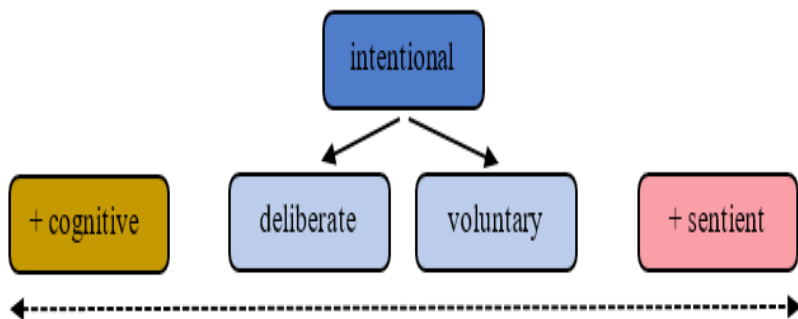
Table 3: Synonymy between “intentional”, “voluntary” and “deliberate”

Intentional (adjective)	Voluntary (adjective)	Deliberate (adjective)
<p>- Single definition: “made, given, or done with full awareness of what one is doing”</p> <p>- Synonyms: “conscious, deliberate, intended, knowing, purposeful, purposive, set, voluntary, willed, willful (or wilful), witting”</p>	<p>- Single definition: “done, made, or given with one’s own free will”</p> <p>- Synonyms: “freewill, self-imposed, uncoerced, unforced, volitional, volunteer, willing”</p>	<p>- Definition #2: “made, given, or done with full awareness of what one is doing”</p> <p>- Synonyms: “conscious, intended, intentional, knowing, purposeful, purposive, set, voluntary, willed, willful (or wilful), witting”</p>

Source: made by the author, based on Merriam-Webster (2022b)

Trying to advance in the description of this synonymy, it seems plausible to assume that, regarding the suicide-intentionality binomial, “intentional” is a hypernym of “voluntary” and “deliberate”, that is, it represents a type that encapsulates the other two adjectives. As for these, it seems that “voluntary” is closer to the sentient aspect of consciousness (feeling like committing suicide) and “deliberate” closer to the cognitive aspect (deciding to commit suicide) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: A fuzzy synonymy between “intentional”, “voluntary” and “deliberate”



Source: made by the author, according to Pereira Júnior (2016) and Merriam-Webster (2022b)

In this sense, it is possible that some people intend to hurt themselves more because they feel like it and less because they have reached a high level of analysis, planning and related operations; whereas other persons also have the intention of harming themselves, but more because of a process of knowing options, formulating plans, not so much of feeling like it.

An intuitive typology of suicide allows one to visualize how the adjectives “intentional”, “voluntary” and “deliberate” come closer or distant. Depressive suicidal people feel the urge to kill

themselves or eliminate their unbearable suffering. Euthanasic patients also want to die to end the pain, but such pain seems to be caused by illness or old age, not precisely because they hate themselves. Lone wolf suicide terrorists who attack the school where they studied and were bullied at have more of a desire to kill people than to die. Suicide bombers of so-called Islamic groups want very much to kill enemies for revenge, but also dream of dying to receive heroic treatment in the last moments of life and alleged rewards in the afterlife.

Conclusion

Confirming the hypothesis, this study come to the conclusion that it is not feasible to include intentionality in the definition of suicide, as neither the theoretical arguments nor the dictionaries nor the conjunction of both types exhibit sufficient consensus. Therefore, the decision should be made by each researcher or professional, according to specific interests. When the phenomenon is already pre-defined as intentional, it is assumed that every suicidal person wanted to die, which creates a number of theoretical and methodological difficulties.

On the one hand, it is believed that this narrative review of theoretical arguments and integrative review of definitions of suicide represent a relevant contribution to linguists and suicidologists, both in the broad sense of demonstrating the importance of linguistic and interdisciplinary research for Suicidology, and in the specific use of the provided sources as inputs for new studies.

On the other hand, the main limitations of the present study might be the use of a narrative and integrative rather

than a systematic review, as well as the difficulties caused by the author's limitations and by the conflicts in or between the selected arguments. It does not seem clear enough to what degree the selection and interpretation of sources were biased, considering that suicide tends to be a highly passionate, complex object of inquiry.

Given the gaps shown in this paper, some opportunities for future work are partnering with other linguists, as well as experts in mental health, security and related categories; determining more precise inclusion and exclusion criteria, both in the collection of theoretical works and of dictionaries; performing robust quantitative analysis, based on statistical concepts and techniques; and advancing from exploratory to descriptive and explanatory methodologies, by clarifying, for example, whether it is the researchers who most influence the lexicographers or the opposite, in addition to why none of the Portuguese dictionaries referred to suicide as intentional.

Despite the several limitations of this paper, the results allow one to glimpse some relevant implications. As for researchers interested in the phenomenon of suicide, they should understand that the definition of this object is important and not obvious. It is recommended to consult more than one dictionary and in different languages; not to select a definition just because the author is an internationally recognized institution or due to personal preferences about certain works; and to compare the dictionaries to specific academic works on suicide, intentionality and other relevant categories. Regarding the implications for dictionary makers, the foreign lexicographers should follow the Brazilian ones, that is, stop attributing the category of intentionality to suicide. It is of paramount importance for comprehension and intervention to reflect on the risks of confusing suicidological studies and increasing lay people's mental suffering.

References

ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE. **Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française**. [S.l.]: AF, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/8ScgK3Q>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

AMERICAN HERITAGE. **The American heritage dictionary of the English language**. [S.l.]: HarperCollins, 2022. Available at: <https://ahdictionary.com/>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

AULETE, F.J.C. **Dicionário online Caldas Aulete**. [S.l.]: Lexikon, 2022. Available at: <https://www.aulete.com.br/in->. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

AURÉLIO. **Novo dicionário Aurélio da língua portuguesa**. [S.l.]: Positivo, 2004. 1 CD-ROM.

BARSALOU, L.W. Perceptual symbol systems. **Behavioral & Brain Sciences**, [S.l.], v. 22, n. 4, p. 577-660, 1999. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/BSckvY3>. Accessed on: 12 Dec. 2021.

BENOIT, J-F. **Proposition de définition des suicides**. 2016. 70 f. Doctoral dissertation (Doctorate in Psychology) — L'Université du Québec, Trois-Rivières, 2016. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/AzKF70t>. Accessed on: 4 Mar. 2021.

BLACKBURN, S. **The Oxford dictionary of philosophy**. [S.l.]: Oxford University Press, 2008. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/rSckIdO>. Accessed on: 5 Nov. 2021.

BRASIL. **Decreto-lei n. 2.848, de 7 de dezembro de 1940**. Brasília: Presidência da República, 1940. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/OSckAI2>. Accessed on: 4 Nov. 2021.

CAMBRIDGE. **Cambridge English dictionary**. [S.l.]: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/JScg4Bp>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

CANADIAN BLOOD SERVICES; WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. **International guidelines for the**

determination of death: phase I. Montreal: CBS; WHO, 2012. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/5SckJPC>. Accessed on: 17 Dec. 2021.

CARTER, C. **Science and the near-death experience:** how consciousness survives death. [S.l.]: Inner Traditions, 2010.

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION. **Facts about suicide.** [S.l.]: CDC, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/YSckLg1>. Accessed on: 7 Jan. 2022.

CHOLBI, M. **The Stanford encyclopedia of Philosophy.** [S.l.]: Stanford University, 2021. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/4SckBaQ>. Accessed on: 10 Nov. 2021.

COLLINS. **Collins English dictionary.** [S.l.]: Collins, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/nSchylp>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

COLLINS. **Collins COBUILD advanced learner’s English dictionary.** [S.l.]: HarperCollins, 2006. 1 CD-ROM.

CORDIAL. **Dictionnaire Cordial.** [S.l.]: Synapse Développement, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/5SchpAe>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

COSTA, R.V.S. Definir, entender, intervir: análise comparativa de definições de “suicídio” em 6 línguas naturais. *In:* MISSIAS-MOREIRA, R.; SEQUEIRA, C.A.; CARVALHO, J.C. (Eds.). **International handbook for the advancement of public health policies:** psychosocial aspects and mental health policies. Porto: Publicações ESS, 2021. Cap. 4. p. 63-75. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/QV8M9eo>. Accessed on: 4 Mar. 2021.

CURY, A. **Pais brilhantes, professores fascinantes.** Rio de Janeiro: Sextante, 2003.

DAUBE, D. The linguistics of suicide. **Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior**, [S.l.], v. 7, p. 132-182, 1972. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/iSck0Uw>. Accessed on: 1 Nov. 2021.

DICIO. **Dicionário online de português**. [S.l.]: 7Graus, 2022. Available at: <https://www.dicio.com.br/>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

DUDEN. **Wörterbuch**. [S.l.]: Bibliographisches Institut GmbH, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/4SchEnD>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

DURKHEIM, É. **Suicide: a study in Sociology**. London: Routledge, 2005. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/IScleq7>. Accessed on: 2 Feb. 2022.

EFREMOVA. T.F. **Tolkovyy slovar' russkogo yazyka**. [S.l.]: Chto Oznachayet, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/wAiQpme>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

EINHEUSER, I. Inner and outer truth. **Philosopher's Imprint**, [S.l.], v. 12, n. 10, p. 1-22, 2012. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/IScliiB>. Accessed on: 15 Jan. 2022.

EPICURUS. **Letter to Menoeceus**. [S.l.]: Manchester University, 1926. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/uSc1f3d>. Accessed on: 1 Nov. 2021.

GIL, A.C. **Como elaborar projetos de pesquisa**. São Paulo: Atlas, 2002.

GREEN, B. N.; JOHNSON, C. D.; ADAMS, A. Writing narrative literature reviews for peer-reviewed journals: secrets of the trade. **Journal of Chiropractic Medicine**, [S.l.], v. 5, n. 3, 101-117, 2006. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/ISclEjJ>. Accessed on: 15 Nov. 2021.

HARMER, B.; LEE, S.; DUONG, T.H. SAADABADI, A. **Suicidal ideation**. [S.l.]: StatPearls, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/sSc1PCu>. Accessed on: 6 Dec. 2021.

HOUAISS, A. **Dicionário eletrônico Houaiss**. Version 3.0. [S.l.]: Objetiva, 2009. 1 CD-ROM.

INFOPÉDIA. **Dicionário de língua portuguesa**. [S.l.]: Porto, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/GSchFvH>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

JAPIASSÚ, H.; MARCONDES, D. **Dicionário básico de Filosofia**. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2006.

KUSNETSOV, S.A. **Bol’shoy tolkovyy slovar’ russkogo yazyka**. Sankt-Peterburg: Norint, 1998. Available at: <http://gramota.ru/>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

LAROUSSE. **Dictionnaire de français**. [S.l.]: Larousse, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/sSch1Ev>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

LAROUSSE. **Le Petit Larousse Multimedia**. [S.l.]: Larousse, 2010. 1 CD-ROM.

LITTRÉ, É. **Dictionnaire Le Littré**. [S.l.]: Redon, 2009. 1 CD-ROM.

LOMMEL, P. **Consciousness beyond life: the science of the near-death experience**. [S.l.]: HarperOne, 2011.

LONGMAN. **Longman dictionary of contemporary English**. [S.l.]: Pearson, 2022. Available at: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

MACMILLAN. **Macmillan English Dictionary**. [S.l.]: Macmillan, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/iSch3nU>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

MACMILLAN. **English dictionary for advanced learners**. [S.l.]: Macmillan, 2007. 1 CD-ROM.

MAYER, F.A. **A importância das coisas que não existem: a construção e referenciação de conceitos de cor por pessoas com cegueira congênita**. 2016. 284 f. Dissertation (Doctorate in Linguistics) – Postgraduate Program in Portuguese Language and Literatures, Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, 2016. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/iSc1CBQ>. Accessed on: 7 Dec. 2021.

MERRIAM-WEBSTER. **Merriam-Webster's dictionary**. [S.l.]: Merriam-Webster, 2022a. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

MERRIAM-WEBSTER. **Merriam-Webster's thesaurus**. [S.l.]: Merriam-Webster, 2022b. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus>. Accessed on: 1 Mar. 2022.

MERRIAM-WEBSTER. **Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary**. [S.l.]: Merriam-Webster, 2003a. 1 CD-ROM.

MERRIAM-WEBSTER. **Merriam-Webster's unabridged dictionary**. [S.l.]: Merriam-Webster, 2003b. 1 CD-ROM.

MICHAELIS, H. **Dicionário brasileiro da língua portuguesa**. [S.l.]: Melhoramentos, 2022. Available at: <https://michaelis.uol.com.br/>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

MOLINER, M. **Diccionario de uso del español**. [S.l.]: Gredos, 2008. 1 CD-ROM.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH. **Suicide**. [S.l.]: NIMH, 2019. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/tScxkq9>. Accessed on: 6 Dec. 2021.

OZHEGOV, S. I. **Tolkovyy slovar' Ozhegova**. [S.l.]: Chto Oznachayet, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/wAiQpme>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

OZHEGOV, S. I.; SHVEDOVA, N. Y. **Tolkovyy slovar russkogo yazyka**. [S.l.]: Chto Oznachayet, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/5NTUbVJ>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

OXFORD. **Oxford advanced learner's dictionary**. [S.l.]: Oxford University Press, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/QScj1V6>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

OXFORD. **Concise Oxford English dictionary**. [S.l.]: Oxford University Press, 2004. 1 CD-ROM.

PATIAS, N.D.; HOHENDORFF, J. Critérios de qualidade para artigos de pesquisa qualitativa. **Psicologia em Estudo**, [S.l.], v. 24, p. 1-14, 2019. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/rScxPWQ>. Accessed on: 10 Nov. 2021.

PEREIRA JÚNIOR, A. **Monismo de Triplo Aspecto**: uma Filosofia interdisciplinar para o séc. XXI. [S.l.]: Research Gate, 2016. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/3Scuqa>. Accessed on: 1 Nov. 2021.

PESSOA, F. **Poems of Fernando Pessoa**. [S.l.]: City Lights, 1998. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/7ScplA>. Accessed on: 1 Nov. 2021.

PRIBERAM. **Dicionário Priberam da língua portuguesa**. [S.l.]: Priberam, 2021. Available at: <https://dicionario.priberam.org/>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA. **Diccionario de la lengua española**. [S.l.]: RAE, 2021. Available at: <https://dle.rae.es/>>Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

SEARLE, J.R. The intentionality of intention and action. **Inquiry**, [S.l.], n. 22, p. 253-280, 1979. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/mScczb3>. Accessed on: 22 Dec. 2021.

SHNEIDMAN, E. Suicide as psychache. **The Journal of Nervous and mental disease**, [S.l.], v. 181, n. 3, p. 145-147, 1993. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/iScCOi>. Accessed on: 2 Nov. 2021.

SHNEIDMAN, E. **Definition of suicide**. Los Angeles: Rowman & Littlefield, 1985.

SILVERMAN, M.M. The language of Suicidology. **Suicide and Life-threatening Behavior**, [S.l.], v. 36, n. 5, p. 519-532, out. 2006. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/xzKSTdj>. Accessed on: 14 Nov. 2021.

SOUZA, M.T.; SILVA, M.D.; CARVALHO, R. Integrative review: what is it? How to do it?. **Einstein**, São Paulo, v. 8, n. 1, p. 102-106, 2010. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/QScSe4>. Accessed on: 1 Nov. 2021.

TRECCANI, G. **Vocabolario**. [S.l.]: Treccani, 2022. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/sSckiAi>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

UNION DER DEUTSCHEN AKADEMIEN DER WISSENSCHAFTEN. **Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache**. [S.l.]: Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2022. Available at: <https://www.dwds.de/>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

UNIVERSALIS. **Dictionnaire Cordial**. [S.l.]: Universalis, 2022. Available at: <https://www.universalis.fr/dictionnaire/>. Accessed on: 18 Feb. 2022.

WITTGENSTEIN, L. **Philosophical investigations**. New York: Macmillan, 1958.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. **Suicide**. [S.l.]: WHO, 2019. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/8Qeqhor>. Accessed on: 10 Nov. 2021.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. **Preventing suicide: a resource for primary health care workers**. Geneva: WHO, 2000. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/iScvw1Y>. Accessed on: 13 Dec. 2021.

ZADEH, L. Fuzzy sets. **Information and Control**, [S.l.], v. 8, p. 338-353, 1965. Available at: <https://cutt.ly/SScvuOf>. Accessed on: 1 Nov. 2021.