

**REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**SCIENTIFIC-METHODOLOGICAL AND TACTICAL-  
PROCEDURAL FOUNDATIONS OF FORENSIC  
PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION IN SUICIDE CASES**

Specialty: 5612.01 – Criminal Procedure, Criminalistics and  
Forensic Expertise; Operative Search Activity

Field of Science: Law

Applicant: **Natig Nuraddin Abdullayev**

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The work was performed at the Forensic Centre the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Scientific supervisor: **Doctor of Law  
Fardin Yashar Khalilov**

Official opponents: **Doctor of Law, Professor  
Kamil Nazim Salimov**  
**Doctor of Philosophy in Law  
Orkhan Kamal Yagublu**  
**Doctor of Philosophy in Law  
Nargiz Mirzali Abbaszadeh**

Dissertation Council ED 2.45 of the Supreme Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan operating at the National Aviation Academy.

Chairman of the Dissertation council: **Doctor of Law, Professor  
Aykhan Khankishi Rustamzadeh**

Scientific secretary of the Dissertation council: **Doctor of Philosophy in Law  
Sahil Zahir Huseynov**

Chairman of the scientific seminar: **Doctor of Law, Professor  
Midhad Seyidahmad Gafarov**

## **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION**

### **Relevance and degree of development of the research topic.**

The establishment of a democratic, secular, and rule-of-law state in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the large-scale implementation of reforms, and the development of market relations are characterized by profound transformations across various spheres of social life. Collectively, these changes are also accompanied by a range of negative social and economic factors that adversely affect the human psyche.

Unfortunately, not all individuals are able to cope with life's difficulties or adapt to ongoing social changes. In some cases, emotional states may override cognitive and intellectual capacities, and individuals who fail to adjust to new living conditions may, without fully understanding the social and moral consequences of their actions, perceive suicide attempts as the simplest way out of complex and seemingly intractable situations.

Suicide attempts, as a complex socio-psychological phenomenon, remain one of the most pressing issues in contemporary society. In recent years, many countries have reported a rise in such cases. According to the World Health Organization, suicide is a leading cause of death in most developed countries, with a suicide occurring approximately every 40 seconds and nearly 800,000 deaths annually.

Individuals involved in suicide attempts represent all age groups, genders, professions, and levels of education and culture, including socially active and physically healthy people capable of productive work. This underscores the need to address suicide attempts as a significant social, legal, medical, and psychological problem and highlights the importance of its systematic study.

Scientific research and statistical data indicate that the problem of suicide attempts is associated with the negative consequences of technological progress, increasing loneliness, the weakening of intergenerational ties, and the erosion of the family institution, as well as of moral, ethical, national, and religious value systems. Researchers also identify the uncertainty of the future as either a cause or a symptom of self-destructive behaviour. Suicidologists highlight a number of factors accompanying suicidal behaviour, including the weakening of the family structure as a result of urbanization, early sexual maturation of adolescents in urban environments, perceived negative consequences of women's emancipation, the influence of mass media on public consciousness, as well as the nature of religious beliefs and other socio-cultural determinants of public life. For many countries of the world, which differ in terms of socio-political systems, ethnic composition of the population, and level of cultural development, this issue has become a critical socio-psychological and legal problem that necessitates the development and implementation of comprehensive preventive measures.

The analysis of data presented in the World Health Organization's 2022 global ranking of suicide rates indicates that countries with high and very high levels of suicide include Lesotho (72.4), Guyana (40.3), South Korea (28.6), Lithuania (26.1), Russia (25.1), Ukraine (21.6), Belarus (21.2), and Latvia (20.1).

Countries with moderate levels of suicide include Slovenia (19.8), Belgium (18.3), Kazakhstan (17.6), Hungary (16.6), Croatia (16.4), the United States (16.1), Japan (15.3), Finland (15.3), Estonia (14.9), Sweden (14.7), Austria (14.6), Switzerland (14.5), France (13.8), Slovakia (12.1), Canada (11.9), the Netherlands (11.8), Portugal (11.5), and Singapore (11.2).

Countries characterized by low suicide rates include Ireland (9.6), Georgia (9.2), Chile (9.0), Pakistan (8.9), Argentina (8.4), China (8.0), Spain (7.7), Kyrgyzstan (7.4), Brazil (6.9), the United Arab Emirates (6.4), Israel (5.3), Iran (5.2), Greece (5.1), Albania (4.3), Tajikistan (4.3), Azerbaijan (4.1), Iraq (3.6), Cyprus (3.6), Tunisia (3.3), Kuwait (2.9), Peru (2.8), Algeria (2.5), and Türkiye (2.4), among others.

As can be seen, the World Health Organization classifies Azerbaijan among the countries with a low suicide rate.

Statistical data indicate a significant increase in suicide cases in Azerbaijan in recent years. Thus, while 165 suicide cases were recorded in 2009, in 2023 a total of 620 completed suicides and 820 suicide attempts were registered across the Republic. This reflects an approximately 3.8-fold increase compared to 2009.

Regarding the reviewed suicide cases, preliminary investigative materials in 585 incidents led to decisions to refuse the initiation of criminal proceedings. In 5 criminal cases (Absheron, Shamakhi, Shamkir, Jalilabad, and Neftchala districts), investigations were carried out following decisions to bring individuals in as accused persons. Of the 620 recorded suicide cases, 460 involved males and 160 involved females. In terms of marital status, 354 individuals were married, while 266 were unmarried. Among the total cases, 38 were classified as involving minors. The analysis of causative factors indicates that 351 individuals had been suffering from mental disorders or other health-related conditions. A further 44 cases were associated with alcohol or substance dependence, 26 with family conflicts, 12 with financial difficulties, 12 with unsuccessful romantic relationships, and 9 with the death of a close family member or relative. Furthermore, in 166 cases, other contributing factors were identified, including unsuccessful examination outcomes, unwillingness to continue living, inability to repay credit

debts, feelings of remorse over personal actions, illness of close relatives, self-inflicted death following the commission of a criminal act, divorce, parental disciplinary pressure, as well as so-called unexplained suicides and similar circumstances.

Experts note that official statistics may underestimate the true scale of suicide, as such cases are often underreported due to families' reluctance to disclose them. Urban areas, particularly Baku, show higher rates than rural regions. Therefore, although Azerbaijan's overall suicide rate is relatively low compared to many countries, suicides cannot be regarded as isolated incidents.

An analysis of the scientific literature indicates that the problem remains insufficiently studied in the Republic. Consequently, scholarly works addressing the scientific-methodological and tactical-procedural foundations of forensic psychological expertise in cases of suicide and suicide attempts are extremely limited.

Experts emphasize that official statistical data may not fully reflect the actual scale of the phenomenon, as suicide cases are often subject to underreporting due to families' reluctance to disclose such incidents. Within the country, urban areas — particularly Baku — account for a comparatively higher proportion of suicides than rural regions. Thus, although the overall suicide rate in Azerbaijan is not as high as in many foreign countries, this does not imply that suicides occur only as isolated incidents within the country.

Nevertheless, certain studies focusing on specific aspects of suicide phenomena in the country do exist. For instance, the work of B.S. Zahidov provides a comprehensive analysis at both international and national levels of the criminological, sociological, and psychological dimensions of suicide phenomena and related

behaviours.<sup>1</sup> In another publication prepared by a team of authors, suicide has been analyzed both as a socio-psychological phenomenon and from the perspective of criminal law provisions.<sup>2</sup> A doctoral dissertation by B.H. Aliyev is devoted to the scientific-theoretical and practical aspects of forensic psychological examination, as well as to the methodology, and its methodological and procedural foundations.<sup>3</sup>

The scientific-methodological and tactical-procedural foundations of forensic psychological examination in suicide cases remain insufficiently developed, particularly considering contemporary realities and the needs of judicial and expert practice. Key issues include the role of specialized psychological knowledge, the clarification of the examination's concept, subject, objects, aims, and tasks, the identification of its procedural and tactical features, and the organization and conduct of complex examinations, including psychological-psychiatric and psychological-linguistic ones.

Furthermore, particular scholarly attention should be devoted to the nature, content, and structural composition of forensic psychological expert conclusions in suicide cases; the structure and principal stages of the expert psychologist's psychodiagnostic activity; the system of methods applied in such examinations; the tactical and methodological features of linguistic and psychological analysis of suicide letters written before death; the methodological challenges inherent in the conduct of forensic psychological examinations in this field; as well as the development of reliable

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<sup>1</sup> Zahidov B. *Suicide (Criminological, Sociological, and Psychological Studies on Life and Death)*. Baku: Law Literature, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Aliyev N., Asgarova N., Gasimova Y. *Suicide and Incitement to Suicide (Social Phenomenon and Crime)*. Baku: Press of the Anti-Corruption Directorate under the Prosecutor General's Office, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Aliyev B. *Problems of Forensic Psychological Examination in Criminal and Civil Proceedings*. Doctoral dissertation in Psychological Sciences. Baku, 1998.

methodology for the expert evaluation of socio-psychological characteristics of individuals in the course of investigating suicide attempts, among other related issues.

Forensic psychological examination in cases of suicide is characterized by a number of specific features which give rise to certain difficulties within judicial and investigative practice, particularly in the appointment of such examinations, the formulation of expert questions, and the preparation of relevant case materials.

One of the main causes of these challenges is the insufficient development of the theoretical and methodological framework of this type of expertise. Although some practical experience exists, inadequate attention has been given to its scientific substantiation and the systematic development of its theoretical and methodological foundations.

Thus, forensic psychological examination of cases of suicide, which is in its formative stage, is a new type of psychological examination, the scientific-theoretical and methodological foundations of which have not yet been fully formed, and currently, no monographic studies have been conducted dedicated to the scientific-theoretical and methodological problems of conducting this type of examination.

**The object and subject of the research.** The object of the research is expert, investigative, and judicial practice concerning the appointment and conduct of forensic psychological, comprehensive psychological, and forensic psychiatric examinations in cases of suicide and suicide attempts. The subject of the study is the system of specialized knowledge that forms the scientific-theoretical and methodological foundations of these examinations, as well as the regularities governing their application in expert practice.

**The aim and objectives of the research.** The aim of the study is to develop the scientific-theoretical and methodological

foundations, as well as the subject, object, tasks, and methods of forensic psychological examination, including its application to suicide cases, and to examine key issues related to the appointment and conduct of such examinations, as well as complex psychological-psychiatric and psychological-linguistic expertise in cases of suicide and suicide attempts. To achieve the stated aim, the following tasks were set for the research:

- to examine the emergence and development of forensic psychological examination, as well as its current state as an independent field of research that is still in the process of formation and evolution;

- to develop and substantiate a scientifically grounded system of classification of forensic psychological examinations;

- to identify the essence, content, and distinguishing features of traditional and non-traditional types of forensic psychological examinations;

- to elaborate the scientific-theoretical foundations of forensic psychological examination in cases of suicide;

- to determine the subject matter and objects of forensic psychological examination under contemporary conditions;

- to define the subject matter, objects, and tasks of forensic psychological examination in cases of suicide, as well as to clarify and systematize the range of questions that may be posed before this type of expert examination;

- to analyse the most significant, including controversial, issues related to the appointment and conduct of forensic psychological examinations in cases of suicide and suicide attempts, and to identify possible approaches to their resolution;

- to determine the system of general scientific and specialized methods constituting the methodology of forensic psychological

examination in suicide cases, and to clarify their essence and content in relation to this type of expert activity:

- to identify perspective directions for the development of methodological support for forensic psychological examination in cases of suicide;

- to investigate the specific features, as well as the organizational-methodological and tactical-procedural aspects, of the appointment and conduct of forensic psychological examinations in cases of suicide and suicide attempts;

- to examine a number of actual issues related to comprehensive forensic psychological–psychiatric and psychological–linguistic examinations in cases of suicide and suicide attempts.

**Research Methods.** The methodological foundations of the dissertation are based on the fundamental principles of cognitive theory, the theory of science, forensic examination theory, criminal procedural law, criminalistics, and psychology, as well as a system of scientific research methods.

Alongside these, both general and specialized scientific methods were applied in analysing the research subject, including historical-legal, logical-legal, systemic-structural, comparative, complex, statistical, and psychological approaches. In addition, forensic psychological examinations in suicide attempt cases employed a range of psychodiagnostic tools forming the methodological basis of the study. These include: the Leonhard-Shmishek character accentuation questionnaire; the Social-Psychological Adaptation Test; the Multilevel Personality Questionnaire “Adaptivity”; self-assessment scales; methods for studying self-attitude; frustration tests; tests for measuring asthenic (negative emotional) states; projective drawing techniques (“Family,” “Non-existent Animal,” “House–Tree–Person”); the method for

diagnosing indicators and forms of aggression; a constructive image of a person from geometric figures; the method for assessing individual self-regulation of mental states; stress resistance and social adaptation assessment techniques; depression scales; progressive matrices (Raven's Progressive Matrices Test); the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT); the Luscher Color Test; the "Incomplete Sentences" method by M. Saks, S. Levy; the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (adult version); and Aaron T. Beck's "Suicidal Tendency" scale, among others.

### **Provisions Submitted for Defence:**

1. In the present work, an authorial approach to defining the subject matter of forensic psychological examination in cases of suicide and suicide attempts has been proposed and substantiated. Thus, during the forensic psychological examination of the fact of suicide, the subject of psychological research is primarily the mental state of the person being examined in the period before death, the mental activity and individual-mental characteristics of the suicide.

In this context, the tasks of the forensic psychologist include assessing the victim's pre-suicidal mental state, clarifying its structural-dynamic features and type, evaluating the state of consciousness and emotional experiences prior to the act, analysing the interaction between personality and situational factors, and determining the goal orientation and semantic-motivational characteristics of the suicidal behaviour.

2. In the present study, an authorial approach has also been proposed and substantiated regarding the objects of forensic psychological examination in cases of suicide and suicide attempts. Thus, the objects of research of this type of expert examination are the following information reflected in the case materials and important for the work: the deceased's mental activity, actions, behavior, condition, relationships, circumstances of death,

information about the causes of death, materials characterizing the deceased, his social environment, development conditions, connections and relationships, information revealing personal-psychological characteristics, value system, tendencies, interests, orientations, etc. Sources of information may also include statements of deceased loved ones, relatives, friends, colleagues, eyewitnesses and others, protocols of investigative actions, medical histories, other medical documents, psychological examination protocols; personal-psychological conversations, pre-death letters attached to the case, business and other correspondence, diaries, photographs, other creative products, etc.

3. The author has also defined a set of exemplary questions that may be posed within the framework of forensic psychological examination in cases of suicide. Thus, when appointing a forensic psychological examination during the investigation of suicide or suicide-related incidents, judicial and investigative authorities may formulate the following questions for the expert psychologist:

What individual psychological characteristics did the deceased possess, and how were these characteristics manifested in the act of suicide? What psychological and emotional state did the deceased experience in the period preceding death, and which factors contributed to the formation of this state? What were the causes underlying the development of an extreme psychological condition (such as physiological affect, stress, emotional tension, frustration, etc.) in the deceased? Is there a causal relationship between the actions of the accused (for example, sexual violence, cruel treatment, or systematic humiliation of the victim's dignity, etc.) and the psychological and emotional state experienced by the deceased in the period preceding death?

4. In the study, the author proposes and justifies a conceptual framework concerning the set of experimental-psychological

methods applied in forensic psychological examination of suicide attempts. Thus, it can be included in the complex of experimental-psychological methods of forensic psychological examination of suicide attempt cases: methods of studying cognitive processes, intellect; methods of studying temperament and properties of the higher nervous system; methods of studying individual aspects of character, personality; methods of studying values, social orientations; methods of studying the emotional-motivational sphere; methods of studying self-regulation; methods of studying emotional states.

5. The study also presents and substantiates an authorial approach to the methodological foundations and methodological support of forensic psychological examination proceedings in cases of suicide attempts. Thus, the methodological basis and methodological support for the conduct of forensic psychological examination of cases of suicide and attempted suicide are psychological tests related to the identification of cognitive processes, emotional-volitional sphere, and individual-mental characteristics of the personality. These include the The Ten Words Personality Inventory (10WPI); the "Image-based Memory" method; Raven's Progressive Matrices; the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT); The "Fourth is Extra" method; Simple Analogies; Identification of Essential Features; Comparison of Concepts and Classification of Objects; the Luscher Color Test; "Incomplete Sentences" method by M. Saks, S. Levy; the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (adult version); the Cattell's 16 Personality Factors Test; Rosenzweig Frustration Test; and Aaron T. Beck's "Suicidal Tendencies" scale (consists of 3 scales: Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSS), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS)). During an expert study, these or other methods are selected by the expert psychologist based on the

questions submitted for expert examination and the information in the case materials that characterize the person being examined.

6. Since forensic psychological examination in suicide cases is conducted when the individual is no longer alive, the conclusions of expert opinions, based on the materials submitted, are predominantly probabilistic rather than definitive in nature. Within the framework of such examinations, a psychological analysis is carried out of various characterizing data concerning the deceased, including information about their personality, character references from their place of residence and employment, medical records, and other relevant documentation. The individual's pre-mortem psychological characteristics, as well as the emotional states experienced prior to the incident and their influence on deceased behaviour, are performed through the psychological analysis of witness statements and testimonies contained in the case materials. On the basis of statements and explanations provided by individuals forming the deceased's immediate social environment, such as family members, relatives, colleagues or classmates, friends, and acquaintances — a psychological profile is constructed using the method of "independent characteristics." Through the application of this method, the forensic psychologist synthesizes diverse accounts, conducts a comprehensive psychological analysis, and develops a structured psychological portrait of the individual. This enables the identification of their individual psychological traits and the emotional-volitional states preceding the event, which ultimately form the basis for the expert conclusion.

7. Post-mortem forensic psychological examination of a suicide consists of the following stages: 1) analysis of the materials of the criminal case; 2) analysis of the individual psychological characteristics of the suicider based on the case materials and other documents attached to the file; 3) examination of the pre-mortem

circumstances, including the assessment of their subjective significance and traumatic impact for the individual, as well as a systematic analysis of the victim's final day; 4) retrospective analysis of the dynamics of the individual's mental state in the period preceding the suicide, including the assessment of the psychophysiological condition at the moment of the suicidal act; 5) analysis of the interaction between the personality of the suicider and legally significant circumstances (situations).

8. The author has identified and substantiated the specific features related to the appointment and conduct of forensic psychological examination in suicide cases. In particular, it is considered inadvisable to appoint such an examination at the stage of initiating a criminal case, as at this stage there is typically insufficient material to ensure a comprehensive expert assessment and the formulation of a well-founded conclusion. It is deemed more appropriate to appoint a forensic psychological examination in suicide cases during the course of the preliminary investigation, after the collection of sufficient evidentiary material. This includes, *inter alia*, the questioning of witnesses and other informed individuals, the conduct of scene inspections, searches, seizures, and other investigative procedures, which collectively provide an adequate empirical basis for expert analysis and opinion formulation.

9. The analysis of the modality of suicide notes, in correlation with the author's personality, compositional structure, and underlying psychological motives, makes it possible to classify such texts into the following groups: texts expressing the author's final will; texts containing statements aimed at removing responsibility for the suicide from other individuals; texts identifying persons whose social behaviour is perceived by the author as having led to the suicidal act; texts explaining the suicide through specific economic conditions or life circumstances; texts functioning as a means of psychological

influence on close relatives or significant others; texts in the form of “evidentiary” statements; texts representing “commitments” or declarations of intent.

10. The author has identified and substantiated the specific features of the appointment and conduct of comprehensive forensic psychiatric and forensic psychological examinations in cases of suicide and suicide attempts. Thus, during the complex forensic psychiatric and forensic psychological examination of cases of suicide and attempted suicide, the expert psychiatrist diagnoses the mental state of the person before the suicide, and if a mental disorder or mental illness is detected in this person, he diagnoses leading psychopathological syndrome and the type of its clinical dynamics, etymology, and dependence on psycho-destructive and other exogenous and somatic influences. Based on the analysis of medical documents, both the forensic psychiatrist and psychologist may assess the severity of the current state of maladjustment, the characteristics of traumatic experiences, the nature of suicidal ideation and attempts, and the individual’s attitude toward them. On the basis of the data obtained, the forensic psychiatrist evaluates the medical risk factors of suicidal behaviour and provides a clinical characterization of the pre-suicidal mental state, primarily from a psychopathological perspective. The forensic psychologist, in turn, focuses on revealing the structural-dynamic characteristics and typology of the suicider’s psychological state (e.g., frustration, crisis), and, based on the analysis of creative products, suicide notes, and, in cases of non-completed suicide attempts, psychodiagnostic examination results, clarifies the content of consciousness and subjective experiences in the pre-suicidal period. Additionally, the forensic psychologist examines the nature of intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts, identifies the content of experiences, and analyzes the interaction between personality and situational factors.

Where possible, attention is also given to the individual's value orientations, as well as to the determination of goal-directed and semantic types of suicidal behaviour. On the basis of the collected data, the forensic psychologist assesses the semantic and individual-psychological risk factors of suicide and provides a characterization of the pre-suicidal mental state primarily from the standpoint of personality-meaning structures and motivational dynamics.

11. The study also identifies and substantiates the specific features of comprehensive forensic psychological-linguistic examination in suicide-related cases. In the course of such analyses, the forensic psychologist examines the psychological orientation of the informational material (text) submitted for expert evaluation, as well as the psychological direction of communicative activity aimed at shaping an individual's inclination toward self-destructive behaviour. Such orientation may manifest in the formation of a positive psychological disposition toward self-inflicted death in a given individual. The components of this orientation can be distinguished as follows: at the cognitive level — awareness of methods of self-inflicted death; at the affective level — a positive emotional attitude toward suicide as an acceptable means of resolving difficult life circumstances; and at the behavioural level — a readiness or intention to deprive oneself of life. The development of interest in self-destructive behaviour, positive emotional attitude and readiness to act suicide, may be regarded as psychological indicators of phenomena legally defined as "inducement to suicide" or "assistance in suicide." In such cases, the questions posed to the expert may be formulated in different ways. For example: Is the material (text) aimed at the formation of a psychological orientation towards suicide, a readiness to deprive oneself of life? Alternatively, the question for psychological-linguistic examination may be framed as follows: Does the material (text) contain psychological

(psychological-linguistic) indicators aimed at fostering an inclination toward self-destructive behaviour?

12. The study proposes and substantiates the introduction of a revised version of Article 125 of the Criminal Code, including the incorporation of a new qualifying element — “when committed through the use of information and telecommunication networks (including the Internet)” — as well as the addition of a separate “Note” provision to this article.

13. The study also puts forward and substantiates a proposal to introduce a new article into the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan entitled “Inducement or Assistance to Suicide.” This proposal is justified by the fact that in recent years a significant increase in suicide cases among adolescents has been observed, including suicidal behaviours influenced by materials disseminated through social networks and Internet platforms. This issue is being actively discussed by journalists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and legal scholars. It should be noted that, taking this factor into account, a number of countries (including the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Belarus, and others) have introduced relevant amendments to their criminal legislation, establishing specific crime elements that provide for criminal liability for inducement or assistance to suicide through counselling, instructions, or the provision of informational content.

14. The study puts forward and substantiated a proposal to amend Article 140 of the Criminal Code by introducing a provision on the appointment of forensic psychological and forensic psychiatric examinations in the investigation of crimes related to incitement to suicide. In cases where the suicider leaves a suicide letter, it is also proposed that forensic handwriting and forensic linguistic examinations be mandatory.

**Scientific Novelty of Research.** For the first time in Azerbaijan, issues related to the appointment and conduct of forensic psychological examinations in suicide cases have been studied at a monographic level using a system-structural approach. The subject, object, and tasks of such examinations have been defined, and the range of relevant expert questions has been systematized. The methodological principles have been clarified and structured, and a system of research methods has been developed and explained in terms of content and application. The specific features of appointing and conducting these examinations have been identified, along with key issues in complex psychological-psychiatric and psychological-linguistic expertise in such cases.

**The theoretical and practical significance of the research.** It is determined by the fact that the proposed theoretical provisions, methodological approaches, and developed methods are inextricably linked with the demands and requests of forensic expert practice. In general, they substantially enhance the capabilities and effectiveness of forensic psychological examination, including forensic psychological assessment of suicide cases.

The scientific and theoretical provisions reflected in the dissertation, as well as the formulated conclusions, proposals, and recommendations, may be applied in the activities of forensic expert institutions with the aim of improving the theoretical, methodological, and practical support of forensic psychological examination of suicide and attempted suicide cases. They may also be used in the training of experts in the field of "Forensic Psychological Examination," in advanced qualification courses, and in the development of specialized curricula for such programs.

**The approbation and implementation.** The main findings of the study, the provisions submitted for defense, and the key proposals and recommendations developed in the monographic

research have been published in scientific journals recommended by the Supreme Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and presented at a scientific-practical conference.

**The institution where the dissertation research was carried out.** Forensic Expertise Center of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

**The structure of the dissertation research.** The total volume of the dissertation is 261619 characters, excluding spaces, the bibliography, and appendices. The individual structural sections of the dissertation, excluding spaces, are as follows: the introduction comprises 32763 characters, Chapter I comprises 70717 characters, Chapter II comprises 50374 characters, Chapter III comprises 88079 characters, and the conclusion comprises 19686 characters.

## **MAIN CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH**

**The introduction section** presents the relevance and degree of development of the topic, the object and subject of the research, its aims and objectives, research methods, the main propositions submitted for defence, the scientific novelty of the study, its theoretical and practical significance, as well as its approbation and implementation. It also specifies the name of the institution where the dissertation was carried out. Furthermore, the total volume of the dissertation is indicated by a symbol, with the volume of the structural sections of the dissertation separately noted.

The dissertation entitled **“Scientific and Theoretical Foundations of Forensic Psychological Examination in Cases of Suicide and Suicide Attempts”** consists of three sections in its Chapter I.

**In the first section of the Chapter I, entitled “The Emergence and Historical Development of Forensic**

**Psychological Expertise,”** it is noted that, based on the works of well-known jurists and psychologists such as E.N. Kholopova, V.N. Kitayeva, M.I. Enikeev, A.R. Ratinov, F.S. Safuanov, M.M. Kochenov, and others, it is possible to distinguish four stages in the formation and development of forensic psychological expertise theory:

1) Early stage of the development of forensic psychological examination (from the beginning of the 18th century up to the 1870s);

2) The emergence of forensic psychological examination and the period of its initial practice (from the 1880s of the 19th century to the 1920s of the 20th century);

3) The Soviet period of development of forensic psychological examination (from the 1920s to the end of the 1980s);

4) The modern period that characterized by the formation of the scientific-theoretical and methodological foundations of forensic psychological examination and the emergence of its non-traditional types (from the 1990s of the 20th century to the present).

In the second paragraph of **Chapter I, entitled “The subject and object of forensic psychological examination, its traditional and non-traditional types,”** it is noted that the subject of forensic psychological examination is facts related to a person's mental activity in circumstances that are important for justice and have legal significance - the characteristics and regularities of the course of mental activity.

In this sense, during a special study by an expert psychologist, mental processes, individual-mental characteristics, and the emotional-volitional sphere that are of great importance for the work being examined are studied. The object of forensic psychological examination is a legally significant situation and a complex of materialized sources of information reflecting the mental

characteristics of a person, its components, mental activity and behavior in those circumstances. Materialized sources of information include criminal and civil case files, materials reflecting a person's life and activities, records of behavior, actions and conduct in legally relevant situations, protocols documenting the course of experimental psychological studies, and other relevant documents.

The study of forensic investigative and expert practice, as well as specialized literature, provides a basis for classifying forensic psychological examination into the following types:

- forensic psychological examination of the ability to perceive circumstances relevant to the case and to give accurate testimony about them;

- forensic psychological examination of a person's capacity to understand the nature of actions directed at them and their own actions;

- forensic psychological examination of juvenile defendants;

- forensic psychological examination of psycho-emotional states;

- forensic psychological examination of suicidal behavior;

- forensic psychological examination of criminal groups;

- forensic psychological examination related to road traffic incidents;

- forensic psychological examination of accidents occurring during the operation of automated control systems.

New types of forensic psychological examination also include examinations related to psychological influence and psychological violence (such as cases of fraud, psychological coercion during the commission of unlawful acts, psychological influence during testimony and other investigative procedures, etc.), expertise on the compliance of the psychophysiological characteristics of the subject with the requirements for certain activities in objectively complex

situations (primarily related to accidents in transport and production), expertise on the determination of moral damage.<sup>4</sup>

**In the third paragraph of Chapter I, entitled “The subject and object, tasks, and scope of issues (questions) addressed by forensic psychological examination of suicide cases,” it is noted that forensic psychological examination of suicide cases is one of the types of absentee forensic psychological examinations and belongs to the group of the most complex expert examinations in criminal proceedings. This is due to the fact that such examinations are conducted without direct examination of the person, based solely on the study of various materials characterizing the deceased individual, primarily the materials of the criminal case file.**

A post-mortem forensic psychological examination of a suicidal case, that is, a suicide attempt, is performed on individuals whose mental health was beyond doubt while they were alive.

To address the tasks of forensic psychological examination in suicide cases, experts must obtain information on the individual's emotional reactivity, mood stability, response patterns to psychological stress, and susceptibility to depressive disorders, which are among the key factors associated with suicidal behaviour.

In this context, the deceased's behaviour should be analysed to determine whether signs of a psychogenic depressive reaction to stress were present prior to death. Such reactions may include sadness, fear, apathy, anxiety, agitation, hopelessness, resentment, and related emotional states.

During the execution of a forensic psychological examination in cases of suicidal behavior, the expert assesses individual psychological factors of suicide risk, primarily characterizing the

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<sup>4</sup> Abdullayev N. The Subject and Object of Forensic Psychological Examination, and Its Traditional and Non-Traditional Types. Current Issues of Forensic Expertise, Criminalistics, and Criminology. Baku, 2025, No. 69, pp. 104–109.

pre-suicidal mental state from the perspective of personality meaning structures and motivational aspects. The competence of an expert psychologist includes assessing the degree of conflict and the psychotraumatic nature of the situation, the mechanisms of cumulative (accumulated) psychological impact, and the type of suicide.

According to the “Sample List of Questions Posed to Forensic Experts” manual, investigative bodies, when appointing forensic psychological examinations in the investigation of suicide cases, suicide-related incidents, may pose the following questions to the forensic psychologist:

1) What are the individual psychological characteristics of the suicider, and how were these characteristics manifested in the act of suicide?;

2) What psycho-emotional state did the suicider experience in the period preceding death, according to investigative hypotheses, and what factors conditioned this state?;

3) What were the causes of the development of an extreme psychological state (such as physiological affect, stress, emotional tension, frustration, etc.) for the suicider?;

4) Is there a causal relationship between the actions of the accused (to be specified precisely, e.g., rape, cruel treatment, or systematic humiliation of the victim’s personal dignity, etc.) and the psycho-emotional state experienced by the victim in the period preceding death?<sup>5</sup>

**The Chapter II of the dissertation, entitled “Methodology and scientific-methodological foundations of forensic**

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<sup>5</sup> Abdullayev N. The Subject and Object of Forensic Psychological Examination in Suicide Cases, Its Tasks, and the Scope of Issues (Questions) Addressed. In: International Scientific-Practical Conference “History and Development Prospects of the Azerbaijani Police,” dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Azerbaijani Police, Baku, 20 June 2018, pp. 296–302.

**psychological examination of suicide and attempted suicide cases,”** consists of two paragraphs. **In the paragraph titled “Methodological principles of forensic psychological examination of suicide and suicide attempt cases,”** it is noted that the principles of science express its methodological foundations. Unlike the principles of classical psychology, new principles of modern psychology — such as determinism, the unity of consciousness and activity, and the development of the psyche through activity — have been further elaborated in recent years and have effectively become guiding research strategies. Alongside these, several other important principles have been developed, among which the principle of systemicity holds particular significance.

As a procedural act, the following principles of forensic psychological examination can be distinguished:

- principle of legality – the organization and conduct of the examination must be strictly carried out in accordance with legal norms forming the legal basis of forensic expert activity;

- principle of respect for human and civil rights and freedoms (justice and humanism) – this is expressed in adherence to constitutionally guaranteed rights, primarily the protection of privacy, honor and dignity, as well as the safeguarding of family and personal confidentiality, among others;

- principle of objectivity – this requires the expert to conduct research and formulate conclusions on the basis of scientific-methodological and practical foundations consistent with the current level of development of the relevant field of knowledge. This principle implies impartiality and the inadmissibility of subjectivism;

- principle of comprehensiveness of research – the expert must have access to all necessary initial data for the study, consider all alternatives, cover all general and specific expert hypotheses as well

as counter-hypotheses, and comprehensively identify and evaluate all features and findings of the examination:

- principle of completeness of research requires that the expert's conclusions address all questions posed by the appointing authority. All relevant objects must be examined, and the study must employ all necessary methods and tools to ensure a thorough investigation and a well-founded expert opinion.

In the paragraph entitled **“Methods and Methodological Foundations of Expert Research in Cases of Suicide and Suicide Attempts,”** it is noted that in suicide cases, forensic psychological expert opinions are based on the materials of the criminal case, as direct examination of the individual is no longer possible. Consequently, such conclusions are typically probabilistic rather than definitive.

For this purpose, the case materials should include comprehensive biographical information on the deceased, covering the period from birth to the time of the incident, along with character references from places of residence or employment, medical certificates from relevant institutions, and other relevant documentation. At the same time, it is necessary to carry out a psychological analysis of witness statements and testimonies contained in the case file to reconstruct the individual's pre-mortem psychological characteristics, behavioural patterns and their dynamics, as well as the emotional states experienced prior to the event.

It is also necessary to conduct a psychological analysis of witness statements and explanations contained in the case materials to examine the individual-psychological characteristics of the deceased in the pre-mortem period, as well as their behavioural patterns, dynamics, and possible emotional states prior to the incident.

Based on statements from close and distant relatives, friends, acquaintances, classmates, colleagues, and others, the “independent characteristics” method is applied to construct a psychological profile of the deceased, which serves as a basis for identifying case-relevant circumstances. As these accounts often differ, the personality traits and psychological features of the deceased may be described inconsistently across sources. Through synthesis and generalization of this information, the forensic psychologist forms an integrated psychological profile, allowing for the identification of key individual psychological characteristics and the emotional-volitional sphere in the period preceding the event, which underpins the expert conclusion.

In addition, content analysis is applied in cases of suicide and suicide attempts. This method involves systematic identification and examination of linguistic patterns, emotional tone, and thematic content within texts. It is particularly useful for analysing materials from social media, news platforms, forums, and blogs.

The general tactical principle is that an expert examination should be appointed and conducted only in the following circumstances:

- 1) when issues arise that require specialized knowledge for their resolution;

- 2) when sufficient materials necessary for the expert to provide a well-founded opinion have been collected.

In this regard, it is considered appropriate to introduce amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code, in particular by supplementing Article 140 with a provision such as “investigation of suicide or suicide attempt cases,” with a view to expanding the scope of situations in which the appointment of expert examination is deemed necessary.

It should be noted that Article 125 of the Criminal Code establishes criminal liability for incitement to suicide. Although the disposition of this provision refers to the victim's material, service-related, or other forms of dependence on the perpetrator, psychological dependence is not explicitly mentioned. In practice, this omission complicates legal qualification and may lead to an overly broad interpretation of the term "other forms of dependence." For this reason, it is proposed that psychological dependence — one of the most encountered forms — be expressly included in the disposition of Article 125 of the Criminal Code. In addition, to ensure clearer legal qualification in practice, it is recommended that a legal definition of "psychological dependence" be introduced in the "Note" section of Article 125.

"Note: For the purposes of this Article, 'psychological dependence' shall be understood as maintaining another person in a dependent state through psychological influence for one's own benefit, exerting psychological pressure and coercion on the victim, and applying forms of psychological intimidation (including keeping the victim under fear and blackmail, threatening to disseminate defamatory information, or inducing the victim into an extreme mental state such as stress or depression)."

Taking into account that investigators and judges may not possess sufficient expertise regarding the scope of issues and questions to be resolved within forensic psychological examination, it is recommended that, in complex cases, investigators preliminarily consult with the head of the forensic institution. Such consultations should address the range of questions that can be resolved by experts, as well as the nature, content, and volume of materials required for conducting the examination.

**In the second section of the Chapter III, entitled "Topical Issues of Comprehensive Forensic Psychological–Psychiatric and**

**Psychological–Linguistic Examinations in Suicide Cases,”** It is noted that, in comprehensive forensic psychiatric and psychological examinations, the forensic psychiatrist assesses the individual’s mental state prior to death or the established suicide act. Where a mental disorder is present, the expert identifies the leading psychopathological syndrome, its clinical dynamics, etiology, and its relationship to psychotraumatic, exogenous (e.g., intoxication), and somatic (e.g., illness or its complications) factors. On this basis, the forensic psychiatrist evaluates medical risk factors for suicidal behaviour and characterizes the pre-suicidal mental state primarily from a psychopathological perspective. The expert psychologist clarifies the content of the suicide’s consciousness and experiences in the pre-suicidal period based on the structural-dynamic characteristics and type (frustration, crisis) of the psychological state of the suicide’s (suspected or identified) personality, creative products and antemortem notes, and the results of a psychodiagnostic examination in the case of an incomplete suicide attempt. Based on the data obtained, the forensic psychologist evaluates the semantic and individual-psychological risk factors of suicidal behaviour and characterizes the pre-suicidal mental state primarily from the standpoint of personality-meaning structures and motivational dynamics.

Within the scope of joint expert competence, particular attention is given to assessing the degree of conflictogenicity and psychotraumatic impact of the situation, the mechanisms of accumulation of psychogenic influences, the characteristics of pre-suicidal maladjustment, and the content of consciousness and subjective experiences during the pre-suicidal period. Additionally, joint competence encompasses the evaluation of the internal phenomenology of suicidal behaviour, the typology of suicide.

characteristic risk factors, and the causal relationships underlying such behaviour.<sup>6</sup>

The legal significance of the psychological-linguistic examination of informational materials lies in determining whether the acts correspond to provisions of the Criminal Code establishing liability. In this context, legal notions include “aiding suicide through advice or provision of information” and “organizing activities aimed at forming suicidal intent through dissemination of methods of suicide or calls to commit it.” Advice, instructions, informational content, and inducements are considered elements of speech and communicative activity (speech acts), which are identified and analysed using linguistic methods in forensic examination.

Assistance, inducement, or incitement may be expressed both explicitly and directly, as well as implicitly through concealed psychological influence. Without direct appeals, information may be transmitted in a manner that gradually shapes an emotional and semantic orientation toward self-inflicted death, potentially developing from initial interest in death to desire and intent.

In this context, it is proposed that key expert-psychological constructs include the “psychological orientation of informational material (text)” and the “psychological orientation of communicative activity aimed at forming an individual’s inclination toward self-destructive behaviour.” Such orientation is reflected in a positive psychological disposition toward self-inflicted death. The development of interest in suicide, together with a positive emotional-semantic attitude and readiness to act, may be considered

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<sup>6</sup> Abdullayev N. “Issues Addressed by Comprehensive Forensic Psychiatric and Forensic Psychological Examinations in Cases of Suicide and Suicide Attempts.” *Current Issues of Forensic Expertise, Criminalistics, and Criminology*. Baku. 2017, pp. 208–213

psychological indicators of phenomena legally defined as “the emergence of suicidal inclination” and “assistance to suicide.”

Questions posed to the expert may be formulated in various ways. For example: Is the material aimed at shaping a psychological orientation toward self-inflicted death or readiness to carry out such an act? In psychological–linguistic examination, it is generally accepted to formulate questions reflecting both linguistic and psychological aspects of phenomena such as incitement to hatred, promotion of violence or cruelty, and similar manifestations. Does the material contain psychological (psychological–linguistic) indicators aimed at fostering an inclination toward self-destructive behaviour?

It is evident that the foregoing considerations are general in nature and largely theoretical. It is argued that, given the growing social danger of such acts in recent years, the inclusion of relevant provisions in the Criminal Code to strengthen preventive and legal response measures will become increasingly necessary. Taking this into account, I have made certain considerations to demonstrate the possibility, in principle, of conducting complex forensic psychological-linguistic examinations in possible cases of incitement to suicide and assistance in committing suicide.

In the conclusion part, the main theoretical generalizations, the analysis of statistical data for the period 2020–2024, and the corresponding proposals are presented in a systematized manner.

In the appendix, tabulated data are presented on the number of examinations conducted by the staff of the Psychological Examination Department of the Forensic Expertise Center in various fields for the period 2020–2025, as well as on the number of completed suicides and suicide attempts during the same period. Statistical data on suicide and suicide attempts in Azerbaijan for 2008–2020 are also provided in diagrammatic form, illustrating

trends of increase and decrease. The appendix further includes examples of final (suicide) notes encountered in forensic psychological examination practice in suicide-related cases.

**The author has published the following scientific works on the topic of the dissertation:**

1. Co-author of the methodological guide entitled “Preventive Recommendations for the Elimination of Suicide Cases,” Baku 2013, p.63.

2. Certain Issues of Comprehensive Forensic Psychiatric and Forensic Psychological Examination in Cases of Suicide and Suicide Attempts. Proceedings of the Türkiye – Azerbaijan International Congress on Forensic Medical Expertise and Pathology, Baku 13-16 October 2016, Poster, p. 44.

3. Methodological Principles of Forensic Psychological Examination. In: Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference “East–West: Partnership in Forensic Expertise. Current Issues in the Theory and Practice of Forensic Expertise, Almaty city, 27 October 2016, p.18-21.

4. Psychological Assessment of Suicidal Behaviour in Individuals Who Attempt Suicide. In: Current Issues of Forensic Expertise, Criminalistics, and Criminology, Baku 2016, p.167-172.

5. Issues Addressed by Comprehensive Forensic Psychiatric and Forensic Psychological Examinations in Cases of Suicide and Suicide Attempts. In: Current Issues of Forensic Expertise, Criminalistics, and Criminology, Baku 2017, p.208-213.

6. The Subject Matter and Object of Forensic Psychological Examination in Suicide Cases, Its Tasks, and the Scope of Issues (Questions) Addressed. In: Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference “The History and Development Prospects of the Azerbaijani Police,” dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Azerbaijani Police, Baku 20.06.2018, p.296-302.

7. The Emergence and Historical Development of Forensic Psychological Examination. In: Current Issues of Forensic Expertise, Criminalistics, and Criminology, Baku 2018, p.196-208.

8. Suicide and Suicide Attempts as a Global Problem of Humankind. In: Current Issues of Forensic Expertise, Criminalistics, and Criminology, Baku 2019, p.120-124.

9. Methods and Methodological Foundations of Expert Research in Cases of Suicide and Suicide Attempts. In: International Scientific Conference Modern Methods and Priority Directions for the Development of Forensic Expertise, Tashkent - 22-23 September 2023. səh.244-255.

10. Comprehensive Forensic Psychological and Psychiatric Examination in Cases of Suicide and Suicide Attempts. Qanun Journal, Baku 2024, p. 83-90.

11. Features of Determining and Conducting Forensic Psychological Examination of Suicide Cases: Organizational-Methodical and Tactical Procedural Aspects European Perspectives. 2024. №2, p.244-249.

12. Forensic Psychological – Linguistic Examination in Cases of Suicide and Suicide Attempts. In: Current Issues of Forensic Expertise, Criminalistics, and Criminology. Baku 2024. № 68, p.106-111.

13. The Subject and Object of Forensic Psychological Examination, and Its Traditional and Non-Traditional Types. In: Current Issues of Forensic Expertise, Criminalistics, and Criminology, Baku, 2025, No. 69, pp. 104–109.



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