



Self-Alienation After Traumatic Terror Experiences

Terör Yaşantıları Sonrası Kendine Yabancılaşma

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Abstract

It is an important necessity for individuals to feel the psychological effects of the events they experience at a minimum level and to continue their lives without being alienated from themselves, without experiencing identity confusion and to continue their lives within the public awareness and social unity. Meeting of this need is related to dealing, examining and fully understanding of the self-alienation problem together with terrorist attacks. In this respect, the aim of this review was to examine the terror and its ideological structure and to underline the problem of self - alienation which is considered to be related to the terrorist attacks.

Keywords: Mental health, terror, trauma, alienation.

Öz

Günümüzde yaşanan terör saldırıları sonrasında bireylerin, yaşadıkları olayın ruhsal etkilerini minimum düzeyde hissetmeleri ve kimlik karmaşasına düşmeden, kendilerine yabancılaşmadan, toplum birliği ve toplum bilinci dahilinde yaşamlarına devam etmeleri önemli bir ihtiyaçtır. Bu ihtiyacın giderilmesi, kendine yabancılaşma sorununun terör saldırıları ile birlikte ele alınması, incelenmesi ve durumun tam olarak anlaşılması ile ilgilidir. Bu doğrultuda derlemede, ilk olarak terör ve ideolojik yapısının ele alınması, sonrasında terör saldırıları ile ilişkili olduğu düşünülen kendine yabancılaşma kavramı ve neden olduğu sorunların incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Ruh sağlığı, terör, travma, yabancılaşma.

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SINCE incidents that can lead to trauma show a dynamic and chronic structure, the probability of a trauma on the social scale is very high (Benjet et al. 2016). According to DSM-5, trauma involves situations such as "a real death or death threat, serious injury or exposure to sexual violence" (APA 2013). In this context, when we look at the traumatic events of violence that are directed at the physical and spiritual integrity of mankind in today's conditions, it is seen that terrorist attacks take the first place (Benjet et al. 2016, Ferreri and Weir 2018).

Even when terrorist attacks do not harm the physical integrity of individuals, they directly or indirectly affect the mental health of individuals and society. In fact, as a result of social changes caused by terrorism, mental problems may be seen in individuals, and there may be situations where a large number of people have to continue their lives under unfavorable living conditions (Ferreri and Weir 2018). Most importantly, individuals, who are members of a family in a traditional society and who are readily presented their social identity, may become distant to their traditional ties with the mental changes they experience as a result of social traumas and face the problem of 'self-alienation', which is an identity problem (Şimşek 2002, Güçlü 2015, Kılınç et al. 2017).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that the problem of self-alienation is not addressed after terrorist attacks. However, it is an important need that individuals do not remain indifferent to the events experienced after terrorist attacks and act without experiencing an identity confusion and without being self-alienated and with community awareness (Cheek 1982, Güçlü 2015). Therefore, it has been determined as an important need to analyze the concept of self-alienation in depth in order to meet this need. It is important for this concept to be known, especially in terms of the approaches of professional members serving in the field of community mental health towards individuals and their families subjected to trauma. Because it is considered necessary for the concept of self-alienation to be known and to create awareness about this concept in terms of determining the strategy and standards of the approach towards individuals and society with a traumatic experience. In this regard, firstly, it was aimed in this review to examine terrorism and its ideological structure and then to examine the problem of self-alienation of the psychological effects of terrorist attacks.

Terrorism

The word terror was borrowed from the Latin word "terrere" meaning a very strong feeling of fear. In this etymology, terrorism reflects some concepts such as fear, threat, illegality, and mainly violence (Doğan 2009).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that the concept of terror was first included as "terrorist system, the regime of terrorism" in the annex of Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française published in 1979 (Altuğ 1979). The same concept is defined in the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences as "the method used by a violent group to achieve predetermined goals" (Tacar 1999), and as "acts of violence installing fear and disgust applied to disrupt public authority or societal structure" in the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Political Terms and Organizations (Seyyar 2014). However, it is impossible to make a universal definition for the concept of terrorism that has been tried to define in terms of the field of academics, state policies and politics (Horgan 2004, Hoffman 2006). Because terrorism and terrorist attacks are defined as "war of freedom"

in terms of some individuals, societies, organizations or states, and this situation is summarized as "one person's terrorist is another one's freedom fighter" (Akgün 2001). Therefore, it is seen that terrorism has an ideological infrastructure and development process within this opinion (Borum 2004) (Figure 1).

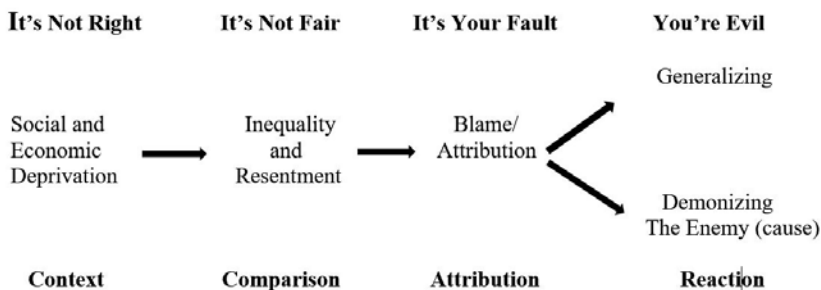


Figure 1. The process of ideological development (Borum 2004)

Ideological structure and development constitute the political starting point of terrorist attacks (Borum 2004). The purpose of the actions of terrorist groups they call "political education" is to have their own members adopt the ideology they have adopted and to educate them in line with their desired goals (Gençtürk 2012). This process starts by describing an unsatisfactory event or situation as injustice. Individuals or nations are accused of unjust political order and use the unjust political order as a justification for acts of violence (Crenshaw 1985, Post 1990).

Violence is the most important element of terrorism, and terrorist groups see violence as a means to achieve the goals they have set in line with the ideologies they have adopted (Borum 2004, Gençtürk 2012). The aim here is to install fear into the society with acts of violence, to create a sense of disgust and frustration in society, to undermine the nation's trust in the state and to create a chaotic environment in this way. The main and primary aim of these actions is to draw attention to a case or a political dispute with the fear and terror installed in the society as a result of the acts of violence. Another aim is to reduce the resistance of the society by creating chaos and to weaken the societal support behind the social and political order through violence (Crenshaw 1985, Borum 2004).

Terrorism and Its Effects

As known, terrorist attacks are a universal public health problem that is carried out by people and is one of the causes of death, while also significantly disrupting the bi-psychosocial health of survivors (Bebiş and Özdemir 2013). At this point, evaluating the results of terrorist attacks, it is seen that society is most affected in terms of mental health (Khoshnood 2017). Because violent terrorist attacks cause psychological destruction throughout society (Muş et al. 2015).

Since the violence and the content of the terrorist attacks are not erased from the memory of the society for a long time, these societies may experience chaos and conflict (Borum 2004, Muş et al. 2015). In particular, in regions where terrorist attacks are frequent, individuals directly or indirectly witnessing terrorist attacks may relive these

events they have witnessed in the early periods of their lives while they are asleep and awake and may lose their autonomy. The individuals' perceptions towards themselves, the world and the future can be adversely affected. In addition, individuals may feel suspicion and anger towards themselves and others and may become increasingly isolated and experience identity problems (Birkeland and Heir 2017, Monfort and Afzali 2017) because they are socially withdrawn wanting to escape the situations that remind them of the terrorist attacks they have witnessed indirectly or directly (Cheek 1982, Bilgin 2007).

Identity is the entirety of the answers given to the questions, "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?". It clearly distinguishes the individual from "others" and states that he/she is independent and unique. Identity makes the individual feel valuable. It enables the individual to be recognized, approved and supported and to develop close relationships with other members of the society and the belonging of the individual in the society (Dalbay 2018). However, negative life experiences can have a negative effect on the existing identity and cause identity problems (Şimşek 2002, Kanat 2014). Especially as a result of the chaotic situation occurring due to global and local pressures, internal conflicts and terrorist attacks, the problem of self-alienation, which is an identity problem, can be seen in individuals (Borum 2004, Kanat 2014).

Alienation and Conceptual Framework

The concept of alienation is of Latin origin, is derived from the verb "alienare" and means "belonging to someone else, relating to someone else" (Cevizci 2010). The inability to be internally connected to something, being disconnected from one's environment and ongoing relationships, indifference, abstraction, withdrawal and senselessness against objects are considered as indicators of alienation (Rodney and Manzduk 1994, Sidorkin 2000).

The concept of alienation, as old as the history of humanity, has been defined and dealt with in different fields. The field of sociology has defined alienation as lawlessness, normlessness, inability to be involved in social processes and separation of individuals from their environments, while the field of psychology has defined alienation as hopelessness, feeling of loneliness, pessimism and loss of self (Gerson 1971). Fromm defined alienation as "a person's detachment from others, their surroundings and themselves" and stated that alienation is a state of disease. He also stated that the words *aliene* in French and *alienado* in Spanish were used to describe "psychosis" and that alienation was a mental illness (Fromm 1996).

Alienation was first based as a problem on the teachings of Plotinus and according to Plotinus: the unchanging reality is God, that is different and separate from the material world. Everything except God is matter and exists from God. Therefore, beings can be alienated towards themselves in every relationship they establish with other matters in time (Tuğcu 2002). Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel considered the process of alienation as a serious problem and defined it as a process of a simple composition dissolving into a more complex composition, a disintegration, loss of reality. According to Hegel, alienation can occur as a result of a distinction between a human's physical and spiritual existence. Therefore, it is possible for the soul to become emotionally distant to the world it has created or differentiate and transform into another (Hegel 1998).

Karl Marx looked at the concept of alienation from an economic aspect, one he thought Hegel could not see. He put forward that the most important reason of alienation was work being compulsory for a person to be able to afford their lives and it forming a pressure force in the life of the person. In other words, according to Marx, alienation occurs as a result of socio-economic conditions and can be corrected by eliminating these negative conditions (Marx 2003).

Existentialist thinkers have started to examine the states humans experienced as a result of the events of the XX century, such as meaninglessness, powerlessness, lack of communication, loneliness etc. and approached the concept of alienation as the effects of states humans experienced, such as pain, illness, depression on humans, a basic human problem. As a result, the concept of alienation was problematized as an individual-oriented problem in the form of detachment of individuals from their integrity and differentiation in terms of thought, attitude and behavior due to external factors (Kızıltan 1986, Marx 2003).

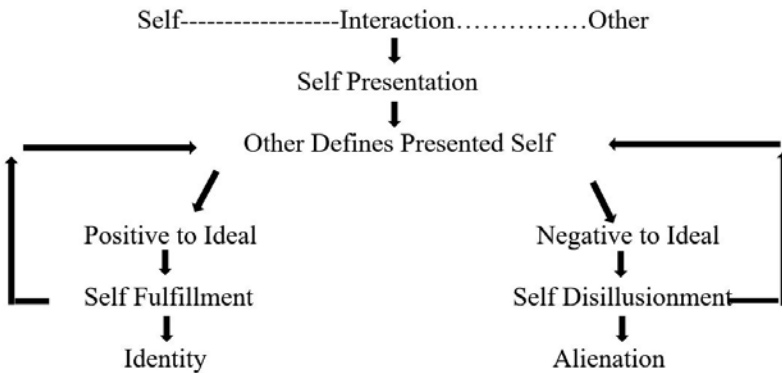


Figure 2. The interactional identity and alienation (Lauer ve Warren 1977)

Self-Alienation

Self-alienation is defined as the values, norms, needs and desires of individuals not complying with their own behaviors. The negative effects of the events individuals experience with the other individuals they interact with are shown as the cause of this condition (Kızıltan 1986, Marx 2003).

Individuals define the meanings of what other individuals do for them in the society they live in as positive or negative according to their own ideals. Things that are defined as positive by individuals meet their expectations, while those defined as negative cause them to be disappointed, and individuals try to realize themselves in both cases. However, individuals can realize themselves with an approved identity by positive definitions, but may experience continued disappointment with negative definitions (Lauer and Warren 1977, Rosenberg 1979).

If individuals are in a sense of detachment from society and the people they are connected with due to the disappointment experienced, a meaninglessness may occur in their human relations. In fact, the answer to the question "Who am I?", which is often asked when defining individual identity, may be insufficient, and the individual may experience a sense of detachment from themselves in their inner world (Fettahloğlu

2006). Therefore, individuals may not be aware of their existence and their relation with their existence and may experience feelings of weakness, meaninglessness, normlessness and isolation (Seeman 1983).

Individuals experiencing a sense of weakness may think that their own future is determined by external factors or institutions and not by themselves (Seeman 1983). In addition, the lack of expectations, the lack of right to speak about the works done, acting with the will of others in their lives and the inability to make sense to these wills may cause the sense of weakness to intensify, and a sense of meaninglessness may occur (Tutar 1970, Seeman 1983). With the sense of meaninglessness, individuals may no longer know what to believe as a result of the events they experience, the things taught to them as right may lose their meaning and they may lose their belief that they will get results with the truths they have acquired (Bolton 1972). As a result, defined as the lack of value judgments of individuals, normlessness (that is the detachment of individuals from the social values they have adopted for the continuation of their desired lives and to achieve their purpose and have accepted as the truth) may occur (Seeman 1983, Kılıç 2010). The detachment of individuals from the social values and the social environment they interact with day by day brings with it their detachment from themselves and their alienation towards themselves (Fromm 1996) (Figure 2).

Self-alienation is the result of a process, not a formation of momentary emotions, and the individual is alienated against its own essence, its own self. The individual may not find satisfaction in factors that has satisfied it in its life or may be indifferent to the factors that provide satisfaction. As a result, individuals may be unconsciously detached from their own emotions, from themselves, that is, from the "I" (Koç 1999, Özen and Gülaçtı 2010).

A theoretically strong and healthy concept of "I" develops in the process of narcissism by the ability to internalize the events and situations the individual perceives from their environment as conflictless, and the inadequacy in this formation may lead to a lack of expression of themselves and their beings. Individuals may experience a fear of harm to their physical integrity due to this inadequacy, but individuals can create a perception that they will continue their existence with the positive things they internalized in the process of narcissism. In self-alienated individuals, the narcissism process may not function properly, and may therefore prevent the development of a healthy "I" (Hartman 2009). Because the alienated individual questions the effects of the events that they experience directly or indirectly on themselves and the norms that direct them and the society (Hegel 1998, Koç 1999). When this questioning results negatively, they may blame themselves about every situation they have experienced, were unable to accept, were insufficient in dealing with and he may feel inadequate. They may see themselves as a means of carrying out the attitudes and behaviors they and society expect from them (Pawlet 2013, Güçlü et al 2015). As a result, instead of a healthy concept of "I", a concept of "another" that lives by meeting their own needs may emerge in individuals as a consequence of becoming detached from their own essence, that is the concept of "I", and from the social interactions they have continued (Koç 1999, Gülenç 2014).

When individuals become alienated and transform into someone else, they may feel the need to reflect the situations and events that include their negative and weak characteristics outside. Because individuals cannot create a strong concept of I with insuffi-

cient self-perception, they may have to create a stronger and perfect I by trying to reflect the weak parts of I outside. In addition, they may try to resemble other individuals accepted and liked by the society. Therefore, individuals trying to continue their lives may acquire unhealthy personality traits and become obliged to live as others desire. The worst is, the individual alienated from objects other than its own may try to destroy them and show a tendency towards violence (Hartman 2009, SPCR 2015).

Relationship of Self-Alienation with Terrorism

Alienation is a complex concept that is rich in terms of meaning and association. The complexity and richness of this concept are derived from the socioeconomic, political and cultural events that it expresses. This shows the deep and comprehensive effects of alienation on individuals' perceptions of the universe and the human, as well as on their identities, self-respects, activities and ways of thinking. In addition, it reflects the mutual relations between individuals and groups. Therefore, it is a concept that should be taken into consideration when dealing with human relations and traumatic events damaging human relations (SCPR 2015).

One of the traumatic events that people are frequently exposed to and that negatively affects human relations is terrorist attacks, and it has a violent content (Kanat 2011). Events of violence, and thus terrorist attacks, emerge with the existence of humankind, and all forms of these events constitute a major obstacle to the freedom of individuals (SCPR 2015, Arent 2016). The goal to reach by terrorist attacks is to destroy social integrity, and they use individuals as a hidden tool for their own interests to reach this goal. It acts to detach individuals from their own selves, to destroy their freedom, to batter individuals and society materially and morally and to dissolve individuals in their inner worlds, and it exploits individuals and violates their personal rights by targeting their senses of self (SCPR 2015). Consequently, individuals may choose to continue their lives as a whole physically and spiritually and to make their lives easier rather than acting freely and with a sense of self, and with the frustration it forms regarding nothing can recover, they can detach from themselves, transform into someone else and become alienated (Lauer and Warren 1977, Rosenberg 1979, Gülenç 2014).

Alienation towards their own lives may cause individuals to legitimate events of violence and acts of violence. Because for someone who is alienated towards their own life, the life of someone else may not matter, and therefore an act of violence can turn into an ordinary event. Because individuals may have preferred to escape their self or to hide their own self in order to preserve their physical and spiritual integrity and may have been desensitized against other individuals, their surroundings and societal events. Now the common goal of individuals in continuing their lives is to meet their basic needs and to remain strong on their own (Rosenberg 1979, Özen and Gülaçtı 2010, Gülenç 2014, Kılınç et al. 2017).

Self-Alienation from a Mental Health Perspective

According to ego psychology, when individuals encounter a traumatic event that threatens their physical and spiritual integrity, the self, shaken by the fear and horror of extinction, may lose its capacity to reflect on what has happened, become numb and lose its vitality. In addition, in such cases, individuals may feel emotions such as being

isolated from others and the fear of being alone, aside from the need of maintaining their psychological integrity and to protect their value of self (Seeman 1983, Gençtan 2016).

Freud argues that individuals are innately wild and are domesticated in the society. Wanting to realize themselves by their nature, when cannot find this opportunity, they cannot achieve the balance between "id" and "ego". Because the existence of individuals is determined by the social structure, and their negative experiences in the social process contradicts the self individuals have. Hence, life is in a two-way relationship: a natural relationship that reflects the essence of individuals on the one hand, and social relations and events that determine the existence of individuals on the other. In the process where this relationship contradicts, individuals suffer mentally and lose their own self-experience, that is, they become self-alienated (Ayyıldız 1998, Gençtan 2016).

Self-alienated individuals are governed by the desires of others and direct everything that is of their self to this desire. This situation psychologically weakens individuals in the process and makes them slaves to their own self, as much as slaves to others. Disorders and traumas in individual and social relations are the biggest obstacles in individuals realizing themselves. Therefore, while healthy individuals who have realized themselves overcome situations they face and fear with the defense mechanisms they apply to and without damaging their personalities, it is not easy for self-alienated individuals to find solutions to the contradictions they face with the defense mechanisms they apply, and mental disorders are seen in these individuals (Fromm 1996, Ayyıldız 1998). For this reason, the concept of self-alienation should be dealt with from the perspective of mental health in the organization of community mental health services planned for traumatized individuals and families, and mental health professionals should be informed about the concept of self-alienation in this context.

Mental health services to be provided psychosocially to individuals and families and consequently to the whole society by the mental health professionals after traumatic terrorism experiences can be both protective and healing. The services provided may be beneficial for individuals and society in coping with mental problems that may arise from the effects of acts of violence experienced directly or indirectly (Hansen 2009, Arnborg 2011). It can also reduce the risk of developing mental health problems. In addition, both aspects of the mental health service can contribute to the development of psychological durability in individuals against the psychological reactions that can be seen after traumatic terrorism experiences and the difficult living conditions that may arise due to other possible attacks and the self-alienation that may arise after a long process (Hansen 2009, Arnborg 2011, SCPR 2015).

In the mental health services planned to increase the durability of individuals and society, families and individuals should be addressed with their cultural understanding. Because knowing the family structures, relationships, social values and cultures of the individuals in the society where they live can facilitate the determination of the spiritual needs of the families and individuals. It can also help families and family members support each other and help individuals make sense of the experienced event. Most importantly, planning a psychosocial mental health service by evaluating families within a community with a certain cultural understanding may provide family members with a sense of belonging to a particular society, and individuals may have the awareness of who they are, the values and the culture they have after further traumatic events they

may face (UNCHR 2008, Hansen 2009). Therefore, mental health services to be provided psychosocially to individuals and families should be community-based, and their primary aims should include the following two items (Hansen 2009):

- a. To help the affected individuals achieve their previous living standards in terms of both material and spiritual aspects,
- b. To revitalize hope, dignity and spiritual and social well-being.

Conclusion

Social acts violence today can support the emergence and spread of the problem of alienation. Because in cases where there is social violence and conflicts, the inability of individuals to escape from the negativities and the insufficiencies of their defense mechanisms may bring with it problems of alienation due to their different identities and cause mental disorders. For this reason, mental health professionals should be informed about the concept of self-alienation, especially in the organization of services for the protection and development of community mental health.

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