

Abstract

Suicide Rate in Jamaica and The Prevalence of Mental Disorders and Stressful Life Events Among Suicide Victims in Kingston and St. Andrew and St. Catherine in 1998.

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The suicide rate of Jamaica was reviewed using available police records.

The prevalence of mental disorders and stressful life events in 1998 suicide victims in two parishes in Jamaica was investigated.

A psychological autopsy interview method was used to interview relatives and acquaintances of 32 suicide victims over a 4 month period. Hospital records and telephone interviews supplemented information. The DSM IV criteria and a stressful life event categorisation was used to diagnose mental disorders and assess year long exposure to stressful events. It was confirmed that Jamaica's suicide rate (2.8 per 100,000) had increased but remained one of the lowest in the Caribbean. Young men and older men were most at risk. At least 90% of the victims were diagnosed as having a mental disorder at the time of suicide. The most common diagnosis was depression, followed by schizophrenia, alcoholism

and personality disorder. There was significant comorbidity with substance abuse disorders - marijuana and alcohol abuse.

There was a significant level of stressful life events in the suicide victims. The category of interpersonal losses and problems was the most common, followed by health related injuries and living conditions. The category of financial, job related and legal issues was least prominent. The author recognises limitations in time, methodology and analysis. The findings on the prevalence of mental disorders were similar to other psychological autopsy findings. Case controlled studies and regression analyses could give further insight on the role that mental disorders and stressful life events play in suicide. Recommendations are made for prevention and control of suicide in Jamaica.