

## ABSTRACT

In January 1998 Jamaica, had a suicide rate of 3 per 100,000. There are insufficient strategies for dealing with suicide attempters and there was no evidence of a study which approached attempted suicide from the viewpoint of the subjects' perceptions. It is against this background that the study was carried out.

Sixty six of the 74 suicide attempters admitted to one hospital over a 13 month period were interviewed by the author, using a 36-item structured questionnaire supplemented by interviews and information from hospital records. The age range of the respondents was 14 through 78 years, and the male:female ratio was 1:15. Twenty and twenty four persons respectively gave a past history and a past family history of psychiatric disorder. The main influences seen by the subjects as contributing to their suicide attempts were: interpersonal conflict (58 subjects), inability to discuss personal matters (50 subjects), lack of demonstration of love within the family (49 subjects), low self-esteem (42 subjects), and childhood physical and sexual abuse (32 of 40 who reported such abuse). Books and media were judged by only seven respondents as being capable of influencing them to make a suicide attempt.

Of the 32 adults who reported moderate to severe conflicts with a partner, nineteen were cohabiting. Nineteen of the twenty nine adolescents in the study reported conflicts with their mothers. For 32 of the subjects this was a first attempt while for sixteen it was a second attempt, and seven had made five or more attempts. Although doctors interacted with all of the subjects, it was the social worker who was identified by 10 of the 13

subjects she saw in hospital, as having contributed most to their recovery. It is recommended that the involvement of a social worker should be stipulated for all cases of attempted suicide, that further studies be conducted from the perspective of suicide attempters and, as the statistics show that a high proportion of completed suicides chose hanging as the means of ending their lives, (53 of 72 in the year 1998), that hanging as a method warrants further investigation.