

Anti-Suicide Laws in Nine African Countries: Criminalization, Prosecution and Penalization

By

Mensah Adinkrah

Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work
Central Michigan University

Abstract

Although several countries and jurisdictions across the globe have repealed their legal statutes criminalizing suicide attempts (or nonfatal suicidal behavior), suicide attempt remains a crime in several African countries. In these countries, a suicide attempt puts the suicide attempt survivor at risk for criminal apprehension, prosecution and penalization. The current article provides an overview of anti-suicide laws in nine selected African countries. In addition, it presents the results of a brief survey of the popular electronic and print media conducted to discover evidence of legal prosecution and penalization of suicide attempt survivors in the selected countries. The data show that criminal prosecution of suicide attempt survivors occurs in all but one of the societies where suicide attempt is criminalized. The article concludes with a brief overview of the arguments for penalization and depenalization of suicide attempts. Advocates of decriminalization argue that suicidal behavior is a symptom of a medical or psychological problem; therefore, suicidal persons need medical, psychological or psychiatric services, not judicial penalties. Opponents of decriminalization contend that suicide is inherently evil, immoral, or sinful; therefore, continued legal prohibition and judicial sanctions are defensible.

Introduction

A recent inspection of the penal codes of several countries and jurisdictions around the world revealed that attempted suicide, also known as “nonfatal suicidal behavior,” “failed suicide attempt,” “nonfatal suicidal attempt,” or “parasuicide,” is regarded as a criminal offense in several countries, including Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kuwait, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda and Singapore. Attempted suicide is also considered a crime in many Islamic countries (Adinkrah, 2013; Khan & Syed, 2011; Musoni, 2011a, 2011b; Sareen & Trivedi, 2009; Za’za, 2011). Incidentally, a large number of the jurisdictions where attempted suicide is illegal comprise former British colonial territories. In each of these countries, existing anti-suicide statutes form part of a corpus of laws imposed on the society during the period of colonial governance. Although the United Kingdom abrogated laws criminalizing and penalizing attempted suicide in 1961, several of its former colonial

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territories maintain legal codes that continue to criminalize and penalize nonfatal suicidal behavior, despite their achievement of political independence. In some of these countries, notwithstanding recent recurrent entreaties from mental health professionals, suicide prevention advocates, suicidologists, and concerned citizens, for the decriminalization of attempted suicides, no discernible action towards decriminalization has been initiated or undertaken (Adinkrah, 2013; "Jail Time for Suicide," 2013; Osei, 2011; Mwangi, 2011).

The continued criminalization, prosecution and penalization of attempted suicide in former British colonies raise several provocative questions. For instance, what is the social, moral or legal basis for the retention of anti-suicide laws? How rigorously are these anti-suicide laws enforced? What are the commonly prescribed judicial penalties for attempted suicide? What arguments are proffered to justify the push towards the depenalization of anti-suicide laws? Does the legal prohibition of attempted suicide lead to fewer suicide deaths and suicide attempts? Will decriminalization of attempted suicide result in significant increases in the rates of suicidal behavior in these societies? This article has multiple objectives. The first purpose is to examine the nature of suicide laws in nine selected African countries where attempted suicide is currently legally proscribed. Second, the article also reports on media-profiled cases of criminal prosecution of attempted suicide survivors for the selected countries. Information on these cases was obtained through a review of the lay press, an important source of data on suicidal behavior in Africa (Adinkrah, 2011a, 2012, 2013, 2014). The article concludes with a discussion of arguments commonly adduced for penalization and depenalization of suicide, as well as suggestions for future research. A discussion of the "causes" of suicide falls outside the scope of this article. However, for a sample of single-country studies of factors contributing to suicidal behavior in Africa, interested readers can refer to studies on Ghana (Adinkrah, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2014), Nigeria (Offiah & Obiorah, 2014; Eze & Ebuonyi, 2014) and Uganda (Kinyanda et al., 2011).

The present study of suicide laws in Africa has the potential to advance current knowledge and understanding of suicidal and criminal behavior in Africa. First, to the best of this author's knowledge, no existing published study provides a review of suicide laws in Africa. The present study therefore fills an important gap in the literature. Second, there is increasing acknowledgement that suicide mortality is a growing public health problem in several African countries (Adinkrah, 2011a). Notwithstanding this situation, many of the countries profiled in this study lack national suicide prevention programs and there may be a sense that heightened enforcement of current anti-suicide legislation will culminate in a reduction of suicide rates. Third, the criminalization of suicide and the subsequent prosecution and penalization of suicide attempt survivors has the potential to negatively impact suicide rates in a given society. This thereby warrants an examination of, and familiarity with the suicide laws by suicidologists and other suicide researchers.

Suicide Laws in Nine Selected African Countries

This section examines the suicide laws of the nine African countries selected for this study (Botswana, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). In addition, the section describes examples of enforcement of suicide laws against persons who attempted suicide, in contravention with existing anti-suicide laws.

Botswana

Attempted suicide is not a crime in Botswana. However, aiding or abetting the suicide of another person constitutes a criminal offense under Botswana law. Chapter 08:01, Section 222 of the Penal Code titled “Aiding Suicide” stipulates that “Any person who (a) procures another to kill himself; (b) counsels another to kill himself and thereby induces him to do so; or (c) aids another in killing himself, is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for life.”

There is ample evidence in the Botswana mass media to suggest that fatal and nonfatal suicidal behavior is a significant and growing social problem. The print and electronic media in Botswana regularly report incidents of suicide deaths and attempted suicide (e.g. “Concern Over Rising Suicide Cases,” 2013; Pinielo & Botlhoko, 2010; “Suicide Pilot Destroys Air Botswana Fleet,” “21 Police Officers Commit Suicide,” 2013). However, since the act or behavior is not forbidden by the penal code, no legal action is taken against the survivors of nonfatal suicidal acts. Survivors of suicide attempts receive medical treatment for their injuries, and are released without further incident. For example, in February 2013, a 37-year-old man ingested rat poison in a bid to terminate his life, following a quarrel with his cohabiting girlfriend. Following his rescue by a cabal of friends, he was treated and discharged from a local hospital (“Tutume Man Attempts Suicide,” 2013).

Gambia

Attempted suicide is prohibited by Gambian law. The country’s anti-suicide laws are covered under Chapter 21, Sections 205 and 206 of the Gambian Penal Code. Section 205 captioned “Aiding Suicide,” stipulates that “Any person who (1) procures another to kill himself; or (2) counsels another to kill himself and thereby induces him to do so; or (3) aids another in killing himself, is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for life.” Section 206 is titled “Attempting Suicide.” It stipulates that “Any person who attempts to kill himself is guilty of a misdemeanor.”

In Gambia, a person who survives a suicide attempt is typically reported to law enforcement authorities, arrested, and turned over to the court for prosecution. Upon conviction, they are subjected to judicial sanctions in the form of monetary fines or penal custody. To illustrate, in July 2009, a man stabbed himself three times in the stomach in a bid to kill himself over troubles in his relationship with his girlfriend. Following his treatment at a local hospital, he was apprehended by police and turned over to the court

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for prosecution. He was convicted of the crime and asked to pay a fine of D3,000 (US\$80). In default, he was to serve a six-month prison sentence (Baldeh, 2009).

Ghana

In Ghana, nonfatal suicidal behavior (attempted suicide) is a crime under the country's penal code. According to Act 29 section 57, subsection 2 of the *Consolidation of Criminal Code* (1960), "whoever attempts to commit suicide shall be guilty of a misdemeanor." Ghanaian law also criminalizes the abetment of suicide. According to Act 29, section 57, subsection 1 of the penal code, "Whoever abets the commission of suicide by any person shall whether or not the suicide be actually committed, be guilty of first degree felony."

A review of criminal justice records and lay media press reports shows that the country's anti-suicide laws are stridently enforced. In Ghana today, a person who fails to successfully execute a suicidal act is quickly apprehended by police and placed in jail. He or she is arraigned in court at the nearest court date and prosecuted for the offense of attempted suicide. Upon conviction, which invariably is the case, he is subject to a custodial sentence of variable length—from 3 months to two years. Alternatively, he may be asked to pay a heavy fine. In some instances, the convicted defendant receives a combination of a financial penalty and a custodial sanction. To illustrate, in August 2005, a circuit court in Ghana sentenced a 20-year-old male student to 24 months imprisonment for attempting to kill himself. The man, who at the time of the suicide attempt was being held in a police cell pending a criminal trial on a charge of grand larceny, used the sharp, serrated edge of a plastic material he found in his cell room to attempt to cut off his penis. When he failed, he was hauled before a local magistrate and charged with violating Section 57 (2) of the criminal code which prohibited suicide attempts ("Student Jailed For Suicide Attempt," 2005). In another incident of legal enforcement, in May 2011, a Ghanaian farmer attempted to kill himself but was unsuccessful. Law enforcement officials reported that his motivation for engaging in the act was the social rejection he faced from his village community. While slashing his neck with a knife, he was discovered by a neighbor who intervened, stopped the suicide, and reported him to law enforcement authorities. He was arrested and given medical treatment at a local hospital for his injuries. Upon recovery, he was tried in court, convicted of the charge of attempted suicide, and given a 3-month custodial sentence in a prison facility (Osei, 2011).

Kenya

Kenyan laws regarding nonfatal suicidal behavior and the abetment of suicide are contained in Chapter 63, Section 225 of the Kenyan Penal Code which stipulates that "Any person who (a) procures another to kill himself; or (b) counsels another to kill himself and thereby induces him to do so; or (c) aids another in killing himself, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for life. Chapter 63, Section 226 of the same code deals with suicide attempts. It stipulates that "Any person who attempts to kill himself is guilty of a misdemeanour."

A review of media reports originating from Kenya shows several instances of criminal prosecution of suicide attempt survivors. For example, in 2012, a 23-year-old man was charged in court with the offense of attempting to kill himself. The man who used a waist belt and a sweater to try to hang himself, fell to the ground when his weight could not sustain the noose. Prior to the attempted self-hanging, neighbors recollected hearing him screaming that he was tired of life and wanted to terminate it. Following his rescue, he was transported to the local police station and retained in custody. He was subsequently arraigned in court over charges of attempting to kill himself. Eyewitnesses at the arraignment reported that the man appeared dazed and confused during the entire arraignment, which raised questions about his mental sanity at the time of the incident. He however pled guilty to the offense and was remanded for sentencing. At the time of this writing, the dispositional outcome of the case was not publicly available (Wainaina, 2012).

In another case, in November 2011, a man was given a 3-year custodial sentence for attempting suicide. After a quarrel with his brothers, the young man attempted to hang himself with a rope tied to the rafter of his house ("Attempted Suicide and Kenyan Law," 2013). In another case, in August 2013, a 33-year-old man old jumped from a five story building in an attempt to kill himself. He survived the fall and received medical treatment for his injuries. He was subsequently arrested and prosecuted for the crime of attempting to terminate his life. Regarding the motive for the suicidal act, he revealed to police that he felt his reputation had been tarnished by a false accusation that he was a violent robber. Following the conviction, he was granted bail and released on a 200,000 shilling (US\$2,300) bond. The dispositional outcome of the case was not available at the time of this writing ("Attempted Suicide and Kenyan Law," 2013).

Malawi

Chapter 21 sections 228 and 229 of the Malawi Penal code deal with the crimes of abetment of suicide and attempted suicide respectively. According to Chapter 21, Section 228 titled "Aiding suicide," "Any person who (a) procures another to kill himself; or (b) counsels another to kill himself and thereby induces him to do so; or (c) aids another in killing himself, is guilty of a felony, and shall be liable to imprisonment for life." Chapter 21, Section 229 of the Penal code titled "Attempting suicide," stipulates that "Any person who attempts to kill himself shall be guilty of a misdemeanour."

An examination of media reports shows that incidents of attempted suicide in Malawi are routinely followed by criminal apprehension, prosecution, conviction, and punishment. On March 12, 2012, the *Nyasa Times* reported a case in which a 17-year-old girl was arrested by police for attempting suicide by hanging. The parents of the girl were living overseas and had reportedly telephoned to castigate her over reports they had received from community members regarding her alleged sexual promiscuity. The parents had also threatened to cut off support for her education. Daunted by the shame of the accusation and parental chastisement, she attempted to hang herself in her bedroom with a rope. The

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rope broke, causing her to fall, leading to her scream for help. She was taken to the local police who charged her with the crime of attempting suicide under section 229 of the penal code ("Police Arrest Student for Attempting Suicide," 2012). On November 20, 2012, the same newspaper reported the conviction of a 17-year-old Malawian boy for an attempt at suicide. The boy was confronted by his mother with accusations of stealing a large sum of money belonging to her to hold parties. He responded to his mother's accusation by hitting her with a chair. He then locked himself in a room and attempted to kill himself by hanging. He was subsequently arrested by police, charged, and prosecuted under the country's anti-suicide law ("Malawian Teen Boy Convicted for Suicide Attempt," 2012). In November 2013, a 32-year-old man was arrested and charged with attempted suicide under section 229 of the Malawian penal code. The man pled guilty to the charge, admitting that he wanted to terminate his life because his wife had denied him sexual intimacy (Magombo, 2013).

Nigeria

Nigerian Federal Law criminalizes nonfatal suicidal behavior. According to the country's penal code (Nigeria Penal Code, Chapter 27, Section 327), "Any person who attempts to kill himself is guilty of a misdemeanour, and is liable to imprisonment for one year." Nigerian law also criminalizes abetment of suicide. According to Chapter 27, section 326 of the Nigeria Penal code: "Any person who (1) procures another to kill himself; or (2) counsels another to kill himself and thereby induces him to do so; or (3) aids another in killing himself; is guilty of a felony, and is liable, to imprisonment for life."

It is notable that Nigerian law concerning attempted suicide specifies therein the amount of punishment associated with violation of the law. This is unlike the Ghanaian attempted suicide law which although stipulates that the crime constitutes a misdemeanor, does not stipulate the length of custodial sentence to be imposed.

Although attempted suicide is a crime in Nigeria, actual prosecutions against those who attempt it appear to be rare. A meticulous internet search did not yield any evidence of criminal prosecution of suicide attempt survivors in Nigeria. However, there were reports of threats by the Nigerian Railway Authority (NRC) to treat people who rode atop the roofs of moving mass transit trains as suicide attempters. In January 2013, it was reported that 300 persons had been arrested and charged with attempted suicide for riding on railway coaches and an official of the Nigerian Railway Corporation was quoted stating that "Those who hang on the trains are hooligans. And we have been using the police to arrest and prosecute them. We charge them with attempted suicide. Last year alone, we arrested and charged to court over 300 people. Some of them have been convicted and fined" ("300 People Arrested by NRC for Attempted Suicide," 2013; "26 Arrested Over Alleged Attempted Suicide," 2013). The decision by the NRC to take this action stemmed from the fact that several persons who rode on the roofs of mass transit trains or hung on to moving mass transit trains had fallen to their deaths. It was reported that the imposition of financial penalties on commuters who rode on train roofs had not been a sufficient deterrent penalty. For this reason, the NRC was petitioning the court to impose custodial sentences for the same offense.

Tanzania

Chapter 21, section 216 of the Tanzania Penal Code deals with the offense of “aiding suicide.” According to Section 216, “Any person who (1) procures another to kill himself; or (2) counsels another to kill himself and thereby induces him to do so; or (3) aids another in killing himself, is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for life. Chapter 21 section 217 deals specifically with the offense of “attempting suicide.” It states: “Any person who attempts to kill himself is guilty of a misdemeanor.”

Evidence of the enforcement of the country’s anti-suicide law exists in local newspapers and internet websites. Persons who attempt suicide but are unsuccessful in Tanzania are typically arrested and turned over to the courts for prosecution. In November 2012, a District Magistrates court in Tanzania sentenced a man to a 2-year prison term for attempting to end his life. The man, who complained that his estranged wife had stolen 36,000 shillings (US\$25) and a mattress from him, tied a rope to the rafter of the ceiling in his living room and tried to hang himself from it. Neighbors heard his cry for help, rescued him, and alerted law enforcement authorities. He was convicted of the offense and sentenced to 2 years imprisonment. Passing sentence, the presiding magistrate commented that “the sentence would serve as a lesson not only to the convict but also to others who would commit similar crime in the future” (Siyame, 2012). In another incident which occurred in July 2013, Tanzania police arrested and detained for future prosecution, a 22-year-old male engineering student for attempting to kill himself by jumping from the fourth floor of a multi-story hospital building. The student was agitated over the delay in the release of his examination results which was being held up by the country’s examination board (Nabatanzi, 2013).

Uganda

Similar to the majority of the countries examined already, Uganda also criminalizes the abetment of suicide as well as nonfatal suicidal behavior. Under Section 209 of the Penal code of Uganda, “Any person who—procures another to kill himself or herself; counsels another to kill himself or herself and thereby induces him or her to do so; or (c) aids another in killing himself or herself, commits a felony and is liable to imprisonment for life.” Ugandan criminal law also criminalizes suicide attempts. Section 210 stipulates that “Any person who attempts to kill himself or herself commits a misdemeanour.”

In Uganda, an abortive suicide attempt is followed immediately by the physical arrest of the offender and his or her prosecution. In June 2013, a young Ugandan man attempted to kill himself over the failure of an examination board to release his academic certificate to him for a course he had completed. He jumped from the fourth floor of a five-story building. Following medical treatment at a local hospital, he was arrested by police, jailed for a month and then prosecuted and convicted in criminal court for the offense of

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attempted suicide. During sentencing, the prosecutor appealed to the presiding magistrate to impose a custodial sentence on the defendant in order to “keep him in a safe place where he could not commit suicide.” The prosecutor further argued that a custodial sentence would help the defendant “change his attitude about taking his life.” The magistrate concurred and imposed a 6-month custodial sentence (“Jail Time For Suicide,” 2013).

Zambia

Attempted suicide is no longer a crime in Zambia following a repeal of a prior law that criminalized suicide. Chapter 89 of Zambia’s penal code is titled “The Suicide Act.” This was “An Act to amend the law relating to suicide, and for purposes connected therewith and consequential thereon [27th January, 1967].” Chapter 89, Section 3 titled “Suicide not to be an Offence,” states that “The rule of law whereby it is an offence against the common law for a person to kill himself is hereby abrogated.” With the abrogation of the law against suicide, there are currently no legal consequences for suicide attempts in Zambia. Survivors of suicide are not liable to judicial penalties.

A search of the electronic media shows that suicide is not an uncommon phenomenon in Zambia. In January 2013, a 28-year-old Zambian medical doctor committed suicide by jumping to his death from the balcony of his fifth-level apartment located in a multi-story apartment building (“Medical Doctor Commits Suicide,” 2013). In another case, in January 2014, a Zambian air force pilot died by suicide. He locked himself in his family’s apartment and hanged himself with a waist belt in the wardrobe of the master bedroom. (Musonda, 2014).

Criminalization or Decriminalization of Attempted Suicide?

The preceding sections of the article have examined the various suicide laws in nine African countries. Legal prohibition of attempted suicide has been controversial (Adinkrah, 2013; Musoni, 2011a, 2011b). Those who support criminalization of suicide raise a number of objections against the depenalization. First, they argue that taking one’s life is inherently evil and objectionable; suicide, they argue, violates prevailing moral standards, and is a depraved act that should be formally prohibited and punished. It is argued that God provides life and only God has the authority to take life. Second, those who support criminalization argue that the fear of such punishments as financial penalties or imprisonment acts as a deterrent to suicidal acts. They argue that people will desist from engaging in suicidal behavior if they are aware that an abortive attempt will lead to their apprehension, prosecution, conviction and penalization. Opponents of decriminalization of current laws on attempted suicide argue that abrogation of current laws will lead to an increase in suicides as suicide ideators and suicidal persons will consider suicide as a legitimate option for dealing with personal problems. Third, it is argued that in a situation where a person has not been deterred by the suicide law and has engaged in a nonfatal suicidal act, the temporary incarceration is necessary to prevent additional attempts or the completion of a suicide. By being temporarily confined in a jail or prison, the individual will not have the ability to carry out the act. While under incarceration, the individual will

also have the time to reflect on his misdeed and refrain from ever engaging in another suicidal act.

Those who support decriminalization and depenalization of nonfatal suicidal behavior argue that suicide is a symptom of treatable mental illness (e.g. depression, schizophrenia), despair and economic and social problems. The argument is that African governments should attend to underlying problems that cause suicidal behavior rather than prosecuting and penalizing those who engage in nonfatal suicidal behavior. First, those who support decriminalization and depenalization argue that suicidal persons are in need of such mental health treatment modalities as psychological counseling or psychotherapy or economic and material assistance rather than financial penalties or punitive incarceration. It is further argued that suicide prevention programs are to prevent suicide rather than serving as a specific or individual deterrence targeting those who have attempted and failed at suicide.

Third, it is argued that in countries where an attempt at suicide is a crime, data about rates of suicide attempts are likely to be highly unreliable. Given that attempted suicide is a criminal offense, there is substantial under-reporting of nonfatal suicidal acts and persons who engage in non-medically serious suicide attempts are unlikely to come to the attention of the authorities. At-risk individuals will not receive the requisite psychological counseling, medical care or material assistance necessary to prevent a recurrence of suicide attempts. This hinders the ability of suicidologists to accurately determine suicide risk and protective factors, thereby hampering the proper design and implementation of effective suicide prevention programs.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has provided a broad overview of suicide laws in nine African countries. Among other things, the article has explored the key legal ingredients of the anti-suicide laws for these countries, revealing a number of findings through their analysis. First, there are substantial similarities in the laws of the countries under study, in many instances, with identical legal language. Second, aiding or abetting suicide is a crime in all nine countries. Third, attempting to kill oneself is considered a criminal offense in the majority of the countries studied. In seven of the nine countries, attempted suicide is a misdemeanor. Fourth, with the notable exception of Nigeria, there is vigorous prosecution of suicide attempt survivors in all the countries where suicide attempt is proscribed by law; persons who attempt suicide but fail are subjected to criminal charges under current law, are prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to monetary fines or short to moderate periods of incarceration from 3 months to 3 years.

According to local and international data, fatal and nonfatal suicide rates in most African countries are relatively low compared with rates in Western industrialized countries (Adinkrah, 2011a, 2011b; Windfuhr & Kapur, 2011). It is however, unclear whether the

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lower rates are linked to the threat of judicial sanctions for failure to complete a suicidal act. Existing data suggest that for most African countries, other factors may be important in explaining low suicide mortality and attempted suicide rates, including ubiquitous anti-suicide religious beliefs and mortuary practices that discourage self-inflicted deaths (Adinkrah, 2015; Vaughan, 2010), availability of social support to despairing individuals, limited access to potentially lethal methods of suicide such as firearms, sleeping pills, etc. Also, because attempted suicide is illegal, it is likely to be under-reported and under-recorded. Generally, people may be unwilling to see a suicidal relative, friend or neighbor become the subject of criminal prosecution for suicidal behavior.

In recent years, a number of concerned individuals and groups have agitated for the repeal of anti-suicide laws (Adinkrah, 2013). Most of the individuals advocating decriminalization are professional psychiatrists and other mental health professionals as well as members of nongovernmental agencies working in the field of suicide prevention. They argue that persons who attempt suicide need psychological counseling, medical help or material assistance rather than judicial punishment.

For anti-suicide laws to have the anticipated deterrent effect, it is essential that citizens be aware of the illegality of attempted suicide. To date, no study has been done to determine the extent to which citizens are aware of anti-suicide statutes. This means it is not known how many suicidal persons have been constrained from carrying out a suicidal act because of their awareness of extant legislation that criminalizes suicidal behavior.

As noted previously, suicide is becoming a major public health concern in many African countries (Adinkrah, 2011a, 2013; "Concern Over Rising Suicide Cases," 2013; Mwangi, 2011; Pinielo & Botlhoko, 2010). In most African societies, it is difficult to assess the number of suicide deaths and suicide attempts that occur each year. This is due to the fact that incidents are not systematically recorded or collated. Concurrently, the data are not reported to the World Health Organization. One fact about attempted suicides, however, appears unequivocal. Research shows that persons who attempt suicide are at elevated risk of fatal suicide. Attempted suicide is a good predictor of repeat self-harm and suicide. Those who have attempted suicide are at heightened risk of further suicidal behavior in the future. Suicidologists in Africa should focus on discovering patterns of suicide and the social forces that produce suicidal behavior so that they can formulate intervention strategies for a reduction in the suicide rate. Future studies should focus on determining the efficacy of anti-suicide legislation and criminal prosecution in deterring suicide attempts. It needs to be determined whether arrest, court experience, and judicial sanctions do effectively deter future suicidal behavior. This is necessary if we are to achieve a better understanding of suicide.

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