

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

While there has been quite a substantial amount of research that was carried out overseas on the subject of suicide and attempted suicide, more need to be done within the Malaysian context. While currently most research was carried out from the medical perspective, this research will look within the counseling aspect.

The purpose of this study was to identify female youth who are likely to be suicidal. To determine the underlying factors that instigate the intention to attempt suicide and to discover the feelings and thoughts of attempters so that possible remedial actions could be taken to protect and prevent them from suicidal behavior.

Bearing in mind the above purpose, the following research questions were addressed in this research:

1. Who among the female youth that are inclined to suicidal acts?
2. What are the causes that made attempters want to kill themselves?
3. What are the thoughts and feelings of attempters that prompt them to contemplate the idea of suicide?
4. What are the effects of the attempt and how do they feel after the attempt?
5. Do the suicide attempters know of any social organization that they could go to for emotional help?

The research findings are presented both in quantitative and qualitative format. .

With regard to the first and fifth research question “ Who are the female youth that are inclined to suicidal acts? ” and “Do the suicide attempters know of any social organizations they could go to for emotional help?”, the approach to answering the two questions will be quantitative in nature, using descriptive statistics for its analysis. While the remaining three questions will be addressed based on presentation of eight case studies which would then be analyzed. The case studies give an account of the life and experiences of the eight subjects interviewed.

### **Quantitative Presentation**

There were a total of one hundred and seventy-seven patients referred to the psychiatric unit for psychiatric assessment and evaluation. Out of the one hundred and seventy-seven, 47 % (eighty-four patients) were described as having attempted suicide. However, upon assessment and evaluation by the psychiatric doctors it was found that thirteen of them were not really acts of suicide but accidental in nature, while five patients denied that they attempted. Out of the total of those who were found to be genuine suicide attempters, one absconded and three were discharged prior to interviewing them. Thus the total number of patients interviewed for the research was sixty-six. Among these, Indians accounted for 57% (38 attempters), followed by Chinese at 20% (13 attempters) and the Malays at 18 % (12 attempters). Out of the sixty-six attempters two were below 16 years old. As the target of this research was to identify those female youth within the ages of 16 to 30 years old, these two girls were not included in the tabulation for the female youth category, but they were included in the overall statistical findings. The following data were tabulated to answer the first research question “ Who are the female youth that are inclined to suicidal acts?”



**Table: 4.1****Frequency Distribution of Suicide Attempters In Relation To Age and Sex**

Status	Number of cases	Percentage
Young Women (Age 14- 30)	27	41
Young Men ( Age 14-30)	9	14
Adult Women ( Age above 31)	22	33
Adult Men ( Age above 31)	8	12
Total	66	100

Table: 4.1 shows the frequency distribution of suicide attempters in relation to age and sex. As shown in the table, there is a higher proportion of youth (both male and female) at 55 % who had attempted suicide, among whom 41 % were female youth who are 30 years old and below.

Table: 4.1 also shows that 74 % of those attempters were women compared to only 26 % men, with a ratio of 1:2.88.

**Table: 4.2****Frequency Distribution of Suicide Attempters in Relation to Past History of Attempts – Comparison between Female Youth and Others**

<b>Status</b>	<b>First Attempt</b>	<b>Previous Attempt</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Young Women (Age 14- 30)	17 (26)	10 (15)	27 (41)
Young Men ( Age 14-30)	7 (11)	2 (3)	9 (14)
Adult Women ( Age above 31)	14 (21)	8 (12)	22 (33)
Adult Men( Age above 31)	6 (9)	2 (3)	8 (12)
<b>Total</b>	<b>44 (67)</b>	<b>22 (33)</b>	<b>66 (100)</b>
Mean age: 28.83, Mode: 16, Std. Deviation: 11.21			

Table: 4.2 presents the frequency distribution of suicide attempters in relation to history of suicide attempts made. It is shown that 67 % (44) or two thirds of suicide attempters are those who attempted for the first time, while 22 (33 %) had a previous suicide attempt.

Female youth out number the others both in terms of being first time attempters as well as repeat record of attempted suicide at 26 % and 15 % respectively.

**Table: 4.3****Frequency Distribution of Female Youth Attempters According to Age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>First Attempt</b>	<b>Previous Attempt</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
13- 18	6 (24 %)	5 (20 %)	11 (44 %)
19-24	8 (32 %)	4 (16 %)	12 (48 %)
25-30	2 (8 %)	0 (0 %)	2 (8 %)
<b>Total</b>	<b>16 (64 %)</b>	<b>9 (36 %)</b>	<b>25 (100 %)</b>

Mean Age: 19. 52, Mode: 16, St. deviation: 2.96

Table 4.3 shows the frequency distribution of young women suicide attempters according to age and the number of attempts made. Two suicide attempters were excluded from this study because they were 14 and 15 years old respectively.

The table shows that 64 % (16) of the young women who have attempted suicide are first time attempters. Out of the 16 young women, 32 % (8) are within the ages of 19 to 24 years. It is also seen that 92 % (23) of the young women who attempted suicide are within the younger age range of 13 to 24 years old. Moreover, a higher incidence of those who had previously attempted suicide at 20 % (5) are between the ages of 13 to 18 years old.

**Table: 4.4****Frequency Distribution of Female Youth Attempters According to Race**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Malay	9	36
Chinese	2	8
Indians	12	48
Others*	2	8
Total	25	100

\* Indonesians

Table 4.4 presents the frequency distribution of attempters according to race. It is shown that there are more Indians at 48 % who attempted suicide, followed by the Malays at 36%.

**Table: 4.5****Frequency Distribution of Female Youth Attempters According to Education**

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Primary	4	16
Secondary	18	72
College and Above	3	12
Total	25	100

Table 4.5 presents the frequency distribution of young women suicide attempters according to education.

The table shows that all the young women had basic education. However, the majority of attempters 72 % (18) had a secondary level of education.

**Table: 4.6****Frequency Distribution of Female Youth Attempters According to Marital Status**

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Single	21	84
Married	4	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.6 presents the frequency distribution of young women suicide attempters according to marital status.

As shown in the table, the majority of young women who attempted suicide are singles.

**Table: 4.7****Frequency Distribution of Female Youth Attempters According to Employment**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Student	7	28
Employed	15	60
Unemployed	3	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.7 presents the frequency distribution of female youth suicide attempters by occupation. It shows that 60 %(15 attempters) of the youth are gainfully employed at the time of their attempt while 28 % (7 attempters) are still pursuing their education.

**Table: 4.8****Frequency Distribution of Female Youth Attempters by Nature of Injury**

<b>Nature of Injury</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Paracetamol	7	28
Paracetamol and others	6	24
Multiple drugs	3	12
Chemicals (detergent, pesticide, insecticide)	9	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.8 presents the frequency distribution of the suicide attempters by the nature of self-injury. As presented in the above table, that paracetamol and combination of paracetamol at 52 % was the most popular method used for self harm followed by chemicals.

**Table: 4.9****Frequency Distribution of Counseling Awareness among Female Youth Attempters**

<b>Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not Aware of Counseling Services	16	64
Aware of Counseling Services	9	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4.9 presents the status of awareness of counseling services among young women suicide attempters. It is noted that the majority of these youth were not aware of places that they could go to for counseling in their times of need.

**Table 4.10****Premeditation of Act Among Female Youth Who Attempted Suicide**

<b>Premeditation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Impulsive or within an hour of the act	19	76
Considered less than a day	5	20
Considered more than a day	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.10, presents the time frame these young women premeditated their suicidal act.

Seventy-six percent (19 persons) did not make any prior plan before the act, but instead acted on impulse with no prior suicidal thoughts, while only one person had contemplated the act for more than 24 hours.

**Table: 4.11****Reasons For the Attempt Given by Female Youth Suicide Attempters**

<b>Type of Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<u>Interpersonal conflict</u>		<b>23 (77%)</b>
Quarrel with close family members	2	
Scolded by parents	4	
Marital discord	4	
Quarrel with partners	8	
Worried about future	2	
Family problems	3	
<u>Other reasons</u>		<b>7 (23%)</b>
Financial problems	1	
Difficulty with studies	2	
Physical illness/symptoms	1	
Hallucination	1	
Employment	2	

Table 4.11 presents the reasons given by the young women attempters that prompt them to self-injury. As presented interpersonal conflicts at 77 % were given as the main reason for the attempt. Within the category of interpersonal conflict, quarrel with a partner ranked first, followed by being scolded by parents. It is also noted that all four of the married young women had marital discord as their reason for attempt.



## Interpretation and analysis of quantitative data

This research study intends to identify who among the female youth that are inclined to suicidal acts and to find out if these youths know of any sources that they could go to for emotional help. The statistical data obtained thus answers the first and the fifth research questions.

Who among the female youth that are inclined to suicide acts and do the suicide attempters know of any social organizations that they could go to for emotional support

As shown in Table: 4.1, there is a higher proportion of the young population at 55% who have attempted suicide. Out of this (41%) or twenty-seven are young women 30 years and below. This included the two attempters who are 14 and 15 years old, which has been excluded from this research.

The research findings show that the highest rate of suicide attempters (Table: 4.2), both in terms of first time attempts and previous attempts are found to be among young women at 26 % and 15 % respectively from the total 66 suicide attempters interviewed. One of the suicide attempter, a 14-year-old girl had attempted three times. Prior to her hospitalization she attempted to jump from a 13-floor apartment block.

With reference to Table: 4.3 it was also found that twenty-three (92 %) out of the twenty-five female who attempted suicide are within the younger age range of 13 to 24 years old. Moreover, a higher incidence of repeat attempts, five (20 %) of the nine repeat attempters are within the age of 13 to 18 years old.

Out of the twenty-five female youth who had attempted suicide sixteen (64 %) of them was their first attempt, and half, eight (32 %) are within the age of 19 to 24 years.

It seemed that these female youth that are prone to suicide attempts are within the age of 13 to 24 years old. According to G. Stanley Hall and Erik Erickson, at these age,

the youth is at the stage of their life which is full of emotional upheavals, while they are struggling to achieve intimacy versus a sense of isolation (Dacey & Kenny, 1997).

With regard to race, it seemed that a young Indian women (48 %) would be most likely to attempt suicide, followed by a Malay girl (36 %). In the research there were a total of twelve Indians, nine Malays and two Chinese young women who attempted suicide. Indonesian Muslims made the balance two.

As regards religion, twelve of them were Hindus, eleven Muslims, one Buddhist and one belongs to the Christian faith.

All these youth have had some basic education with the majority having secondary level education. However, majority completed only up to Form: 3.

With some basic education, the majority of them are (sixty percent) employed, while seven (28 %) are still pursuing their education. Four at school, two at college, and one at the university. The kind of work they do included clerical, tailoring, sales, factory operator, and waitress. Four of them work as GRO's.

Still young, most of them are single. That is, eighty-four percent, or twenty-one out of twenty-five are unmarried.

Most of these young women gave interpersonal conflict as the reason for their attempt, accounting for 77 % of the cases. Out of the various types of interpersonal conflict, quarrel with partner came up top within the category followed by four of the married young women gave marital discord as their reason for attempt.

Over half of the suicide attempters were carried out on impulse, as seventy six percent of them reported thinking seriously about the act for less than an hour, and 20 % for a period less than a day. Only 4 % had contemplated taking overdose for more than 24 hours.

The most popular method used for self-injury was paracetamol and chemicals (detergent, insecticide or pesticide). The reason could be that both these items are easily assessable either from home or obtained from the nearby shop.

The majority, sixty-four percent, of these young women are not aware of counseling services that they might be able to source in times of crisis and the balance thirty six percent, despite being aware did not make use of the services available.

Based on the above, the profile of a young woman who could be a potential suicide attempter would generally be single, with some secondary education. Chances are she would be an Indian or Malay girl within the age of 13 to 24 years old, who is going through some form of interpersonal conflict. She is also in an environment where she can easily get access to the means to inflict self-harm, while not aware of a place that she could go to for help in her time of crisis.

### **Qualitative Presentation**

In-depth interviews were conducted with the eight female youth that had attempted suicide and were warding at the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital. They were selected based on them meeting the required criteria outlined in Chapter III. As described in Chapter III, each interviewee was interviewed one or two times using unstructured interview techniques. The interviewees were asked open-ended unstructured questions (Appendix: 4) and were encouraged to respond in any way they wished. The interviews lasted from 80 to 120 minutes.

After all the interviews were carried out, the researcher then transcribed the tapes. The researcher then reviewed the transcripts to identify themes and categorized them in

an effort to allow the subject's frame of expression and explanation is unveiled in a more sequential and systematic manner.

The interviewees' description of who they are, how they feel, what they think and what actually happened are presented as eight case studies. No headings or subheadings are highlighted in the presentation of the cases so as to ensure a smooth flow in the presentation of the sequence of events and circumstances that occurred. However, as a guide, each story starts with the background information, followed by the problems experienced plus the emotions and thoughts that were experienced. The final part described the after effect of the attempt.

The descriptions in each of the cases are based on what was accounted by the interviewees. Each of the interviewees had their own flow of thoughts, giving different emphasis in the interview depending on their experiences and the problems confronted. The cases depict the individuality and uniqueness of each of them as a person. These descriptions provided an insight into what goes on in the youth's mind and heart during the emotional upheaval. While bearing in mind the need to organize a systematic presentation of the data, the researcher tried to ensure that the uniqueness of each interviewee's description was retained. Thus, where necessary original quotes from the interviews were used to reflect the emotions and thoughts of the interviewees.

The purpose of this section is to present the information collected in the interviews as expressed by the respondents. Moreover, all the cases provided a context for understanding and answering the research question. The eight people that were interviewed were Anise, Mala, Yuma, Anita, Nonie, Marina and Sima and the following are their account.

### Case Study No: One – Anise

Age	: 18 years old
Race	: Indian
Religion	: Hindu
Marital Status	: Single
Employment	: Unemployed
Person living with	: Parents
Nature of injury	: Overdose of 30 tablets of paracetamol and 12 tablets of antibiotic
First attempt	: November 1999
Second attempt	: April 2000 ( six months later)
Date Interviewed	23.04.2000
Suicide Intent Score	: 17 ( high range) – Appendix: 6

#### Background information

Anise is the 2<sup>nd</sup> child in a family of five children. The eldest is a boy, followed by her, two younger brothers and one sister. In the house she expressed that her parents practiced double standards. The boys are treated better than she is. While the boys get away with a lot of things she will be reprimanded and beaten for any wrongdoing. As an example she quoted that her elder brother has many affairs but he is not being judged for it. However if she wants to have a relationship it is not allowed and scolded for such an action. In addition, any little mistake she made would be highlighted, while her siblings would get away with it. She felt victimized in the house.

One of her younger brothers disappointed her because he tried to molest her while she was asleep. She was shocked with disbelief when it happened and was hurt that her own brother would do that to her. When she reported it to her parents they did not believe her. They accused her of making it up and ignored her plea. To Anise, her brother had made a grave offense and she was fearful not only for herself

but for her younger sister too. Fearful that he might repeat it, she wanted her parents to protect them. However, she said he got away with it. She felt her parents were unfair for not taking any action against her brother, whom she deemed, should have been reprimanded.

She felt that nobody loves nor cares for her in the family and they wished her dead. Even her younger sister is disrespectful, not listening to her and treats her as a slave. As she was not working they expected her to do the housework. Her sister was not willing to help, giving the excuse that being at home Anise should do the work and should not expect her to work since she goes to school. She said her sister is rude to her and disrespectful and would say words like “...kau ni tak ada guna langsung hidup.” (*There is no use at all for you to be a live*)

She longed to have a healthy and communicative relationship with her mother. To be able to share and express herself but it seems impossible, although she tried. She expressed that although her parents may love her, she was not certain, for they never showed it. In fact at times she felt they hate her. Instead of showing love and advising her in a loving and caring way, they were rude and bellowed at her. They demand obedience and do not consider her point of view. In fact she was not allowed to express herself, and if she did she would be branded as a disrespectful daughter. When she tried to defend herself, she would be howled at and accused of being an ungrateful daughter. She perceived them to be pretentious showing her love and concern only in public, while at home she was reproached and beaten.

In school, Anise is a sociable, mixing around easily and as she is beautiful, she was popular in school. She felt that her friends knew how to win her heart, and made her cheerful. In contrast to her situation at home, she felt happy in school. People

were attentive to her and she was considered 'top in school' because of her beauty. Boys were protective over her and so were some of the 'butch' girls. However, her mother disapproved of her friends saying that they were wild. Although she agreed that they smoke and drink, she said it did not mean that she would do the same. Thus, she could not appreciate her mother's opinion.

She finds her parents strict and conservative. Anise expressed that her parent's controlled her activities and the fact that she is beautiful does not help either. They were very domineering and she felt stifled and trapped by them. Trying to escape from the home environment, she applied and got a job as an air stewardess. However she was not allowed to take up the offer.

She feels that she can never do anything right in her parent's eyes. She said that she was always reminded that she constantly create trouble and mess things up for everyone. She felt that the constant reminder convinced her that she is the bearer of trouble and had doubts about her abilities.

### **Problems, feelings and thoughts prior to the suicide attempt**

There were several incidents that hurt her and made her feel useless and worthless to live. As she explains, a slow process of being convinced by her parents, in particular her mother, that she is jinx, Anise attempted to kill herself twice within a short period of six months.

Once when she was feeling miserable she saw the part time counselor in school for counseling. Believing that the counselor would uphold the issue of confidentiality she told him about her brother's act. The counselor however reacted by involving her parents and threatened to get the police involved. Fearful of her

brother's position she retracted her words. Her parents were mad at her and scolded her for creating unnecessary problems. She regretted her actions, as she perceived her parents were now convinced that she was a liar and a bad person, for creating stories about her brother to an outsider.

At work, her parents had spies who reported her activities. But what hurt her were the lies they told, saying that she spends time with boys instead of working. Despite her explanation that they were her school friends who visited her once in a while, her mother dismissed her as a liar.

At work, as a clerk, she got into trouble when a group of people harassed her and took pictures of her. Her boss suspected them to be gangsters who abduct and sell girls. The boss made a police report, although she expressed that she did not want that. She got frightened and resigned from the job. For this, her mother scolded her and said that she does not deserve to live, because she creates so much trouble anywhere she goes. Anise quoted her mother:

“Awak ni, satu tempat, satu masalah mesti ada.”

and

“Awak ni hidup pun susah... lebih baik mati.”

*(Any where you go for sure a problem will arise." And "You only bring trouble in life, you are better of dead.)*

Her mother said that she was to be blamed for overdressing. But she could not help but feel that it was improper to have sloppy dressing as an employee.



She remarked to her friends:

“ Kan ada banyak perempuan yang lebih cantik dari saya. Dia orang hidup gembira. Kenapa saya seorang jadi macam ni. Kenapa saya seorang saja asik timbul masalah.”

*(Aren't there other more beautiful women than me? They live happily. Why does this have to happen only to me? Why am I alone constantly faced with problem after problem.)?*

Even going to the temple did not give her peace. An issue arose when an old man took a liking to her and wanted her as a daughter in-law. Her mother scolded her and reproofs her for being prominent, trying to do good deeds just to attract attention. She felt even doing well can bring her problems. She was perplexed about what to do and what not to do, as problems seem to occur all the time. She could not understand why she has to be blamed for everything wrong or bad that happens.

She felt lost and confused, not knowing how to please her parents. Everything seemed wrong. When boys approached her at weddings or parties, asking for her phone number she avoided them and informed her mother. If she did not inform her, she was fearful that if she was found out, she would be scolded for hiding the truth. However when she did tell her mother she was scolded for entertaining the boys. Either way she loses.

Thus she was fearful when boys approach her, for fear of getting into trouble. To solve her problem, she stayed home, not venturing out, unless with her parents. However she added that being at home.

“... tak gembira, tapi tak suka. Senangnya sebab tak ada masalah. Cuma masalah keluarga, masalah rumah.”

*(I am not happy, and I do not like it. The good part is there is no problem; only family issues.)*

As it is in Anise's nature to socialize and because she hungers for love and care that was missing at home, Anise at 16 years old had a relationship secretly. When they found out, it became a big issue, where family and friends gathered around and started questioning her about it. She felt humiliated by the interrogation. Moreover, she felt betrayed by the guy who claimed it never happened while she admitted that she loved him. She was angry, hurt and disappointed with the boy because now they perceived her as a bad and loose girl. Her mother called her a whore and said she should work in Chow Kit. She felt hurt, angry and embarrassed. She could not imagine how any mother could call her own daughter a whore. She felt worthless and degraded. Now, moving around the neighborhood she perceived people look at her strangely, as a whore. For this act of hers, her parents punished her by sending her away to Johore to stay with her aunt, only to return after her Form 5 examination.

Although meant as a punishment she found love there. Her aunt was kind and loving, and she had someone to share and express herself to. She was happy there. Moreover, she fell in love with her cousin. Hearing her aunt's lament about her unruly son whom she said won't be able to find a mate, Anise felt that she could redeem herself by making him a better and responsible person.

“Lepas tu saya fikir orang cakap saya tak betul, mungkin dengan cara ini saya boleh jadi baik ke, dengan menjadikan lelaki tu baik. Boleh saya jadi baik ke.”

*(Everybody says I am bad, maybe I can redeem myself, maybe I can make him turn around, and I shall be good too.)*

Anise perceived that in the boy she found what she did not have from home and her ex-boyfriend. She said that he respected and trusted her. He accepted her despite being told about her miserable past and her reputation. While her parents and others never believed her, she feels very happy that he did. She was touched that when others told him she is a loose girl he did not take heed. He did not punish nor scold her; she felt that he loved her. However, her parents did not approve of the relationship. When her cousin asked for her hand in marriage it was rejected.

Returning to KL, after SPM, living in the nightmarish world at her parents, trapped in a house with no love, he was a constant pillar of strength. She frequently contacted him. She said that his support kept her going, otherwise she would have killed herself long ago. In fact she hinted to him to take her away soonest, for otherwise he would be responsible for what would happen to her. However, he did not pick up the cue. Basically Anise could not bear going through the constant fear that something may just go wrong and she would be punished.

Anise revealed that life was a torture in KL. She was always crying and feeling sad. She felt cheap and dirty as people perceived her as a whore. She could not accept that not just one person, but the whole family scolds her and does not love her. Thus she felt there is no point in living. She was made to feel that everything she does is wrong and that she only brings problems to the family. In her prayers she asked

God the reason her life was full of suffering. She questioned why this was happening to her when everybody else seems happy.

The thought of death and suicide loomed in her mind. She felt that life was not worth living. She felt hopeless, and sometimes wished that she were dead. So notwithstanding the knowledge that to kill oneself is wrong both in the eyes of God and the law, she felt she had no alternative. She said:

“ Tapi dia orang kata saya ni hidup pun salah, sebab tu..macam tu...hidup pun salah, mati pun salah, dua dua pun salah sebab tu saya nak mati. Sebab tu lah saya ambil... dia orang kata saya hidup pun salah, semua salahkan saya, kalau saya mati pun salah, lebih baik saya mati. Berapa lama saya nak tahan? Kalau saya hidup, selalu aja salah macam mana.”

and

“ Saya rasa diri saya tak guna langsung, hidup apa pun tak untung, saya hidup mati pun sesiapa pun tak nangis tak ada apa –apa buat saya untuk hidup.”

*(They say there is no use in me being alive; I should be dead. Since it is wrong for me to be alive, and it is wrong for me to die too, so I am better off dead anyway. How long can I stand this? If I live, this will be how I live, how can I cope with it; and I feel that I am hopeless, there is no gain in my living, and even if I die nobody will cry for me, so what is the point of living.)*

She reflected that even while in hospital recuperating from the attempt, nobody visited her, confirming to her that they do not love her and thus she was better off dead. Their excuse was that they had things to do. And when they did come, very late in the night, she got scolding instead of love and care. They scolded her for bringing shame to the family and that she was a useless girl to do such a useless thing.

Anise's first attempt was after her SPM examination in November 1999. It was triggered when her mother found a love letter in her bag. According to Anise it was written by a boy whom she had no interest in, but not wanting to hurt his feelings she kept the letter. When her mother opened her bag and found it, she suspected her of having an affair. Without verifying the facts, both her father and uncle beat her. They scolded her and called her names, like prostitute. Again she was told that she was useless and worthless. Feeling hurt physically, mentally and emotionally, she gave up and took a bottle of "ubaturut Cina" (Chinese massage oil)

"Dia orang kata saya bohsia, saya pelacur, saya tak guna langsung, dia orang kata saya ni tak pandai nilaikan...dia orang kata macam tu saya fed-up, saya minum ubaturut Cina, saya makan satu botol, saya tinggal dekat hospital. "

*(They called me bohsia, a prostitute, useless. They told me I do not have self worth. When they said all that I gave up and I drank a bottle of the Chinese medicated oil. I was hospitalized. )*

Anise lamented that "Masa tu pun saya tak mati juga" *(Even then I did not die)*

About six months after the first attempt in April, 2000, Anise was still not happy. She felt trapped in the house, while constantly being scolded by her mother and other family members. Always fearful that she would encounter a problem, the announcement by her mother that she intended to visit Johore brought fear and anxiety in Anise. She foresaw trouble upon her mother's arrival in Johore, because she would then find out the truth about her spending time with her cousin, which she had denied.

On the night before her mother's departure, Anise was restless. Feeling worried and anxious she could not sleep. She was nervous about her mother discovering the truth. She felt fearful and tearful. She started imagining all the horrors that she would face and the mental torture that she would receive. Her imagination went wild, thinking that she would be the cause of the fights and quarrels that would be stirred up within the families. She was also worried that her mother would perceive her cousin as bad, and will be nasty to him. She felt that she was to blame for what was happening. At the same time, feeling insecure, she was fearful that her boyfriend would betray her. She was afraid that he would disclose their meetings and discussions, despite her making him promise not to tell.

In the anxiety, she at first considered running away. She wanted to be alone, however she realized the impossibility of the plan. She had no work, no money and nowhere to go to. She saw this move as creating more problems, so she thought:

“Jadi saya fikir kalau saya dah tak ada, ini semua saya tak akan tengok. Kalau mengaku pun saya tak akan tengok, mereka tak akan marah saya. Mungkin saya boleh...lepas saya dah mati buat apa mereka nak marahkan saya lagi. Dia orang tak akan tanya lagi. Sebab itulah saya ambil. ”

*(So I thought if I am no more around, I will not see all these. Even if he admits, I will not know, they cannot scold me. Maybe I can escape, as when I am dead, it would be no use for them to get angry with me. That is why I took it. )*

That night she decided that that would be her course of action. However, she decided to execute it the next day after saying goodbye to him. Determined to be

successful she planned to wait for the right time when her family members were not around.

She said that at the time of taking the pills she felt afraid because she never quite liked taking pills. But remembering the pain, the fear and headache that she was going through she was determined. She took it little by little. She related that when asked by a doctor “Tak sakit ke, dia orang masuk tuib?” (*Is it not painful putting all these tubes in your body?*), in reference to the medical treatment, she responded by saying that the hurt and pain in her heart was more painful than anything they had given her.

“Saya kata lagi sakit hati saya. Lagi sakit daripada ini semua, hati saya memang lagi sakit. Lagi sakit.”

*(I said, my heart hurts more. More than all these. It is truly more painful. More hurtful)*

After taking the pills, Anise spoke to two persons - her boyfriend and another good friend. They were two people she thought cared for her. The friend had told her once that he would die with her, when he was asked what he would do if she were to kill herself.

She told her boyfriend to find another woman for himself. When he asked her why she was making such remarks and she was behaving strangely she did not disclose anything.

To her good friend who sees her as a cheerful girl, she told:

“Jaga diri baik baik. Jangan ingat saya, mesti selalu gembira.. Saya kata saya nak pergi tempat lain . Dia tanya tempat mana?. Saya kata Batu Arang. Saya tipu sajalah, cakap dekat Rawang, tak ada talifon lagi saya tak boleh talifon awak.”

*(Take good care of yourself, don't think of me, and be happy always. I told him that I am going to a new place. When he asked me where, I said Batu Arang. I just lied. I told him it is near Rawang, and there will be no phone so I will not be able to contact him)*

When asked why she did not tell them her intention, she said that she did not want them to help. However she did ask the boyfriend how he would react if, hypothetically, she had an overdose. He said he would not do anything, as he doubted that she would do such a thing. Her reasoning with regard to his response was that she had always showed a happy front so he could not imagine her wanting to kill herself.

### **Feelings and thoughts after the suicide attempt**

After a few days at the hospital, Anise dreaded going home. She saw her future as uncertain. She reflected that even while in hospital recuperating from the attempt, nobody visited her. To her it shows that her family did not love her nor care for her. Their excuse was that they had things to do. And when they do come, very late in the night, she got scolding instead of receiving love and care. They scolded her and called her a useless girl to do such a purposeless thing. So, she does not expect anything to change at home. However, she expressed that she could only be sure upon



reaching home, and see how her mother treats her. In fact, she is fearful of what could possibly happen at home, as even now at the hospital she was cursed and scolded for bringing shame to the family, instead of been shown love and concern for her. She imagined the neighbors gathering around and drilling her with questions and her mother scolding her. She was fed up with it all. She said she could not stand the scolding and the blame. So, she is not happy to live; she hates her life.

“Saya tak tahan dia orang selalu marah saya, sebab dia orang cakap saya selalu salah. Sebab itu saya tak suka hidup, sekarang dah hidup memang saya benci hidup saya.”

*(I cannot stand it, they are always scolding me and they say I am wrong.*

*That is why I do not like to live. Now that I am still alive I hate my life.)*

However now, she would not try to kill herself again, because it does not seem to be successful, so there is no point. She feels even God doesn't want her.

“Tengok Tuhan pun tak nak terima saya.”

*(Look even God doesn't want me.)*

She decided not to live with her parents anymore. Although she has no idea of where she wants to be, she wants to be alone, away from her parents.

### Case Study No: Two - Mala

Age	23 years old
Race	Indian
Religion	Hindu
Marital Status	Single
Employment	Part time Waitress
Person living with	On her own at a welfare home
Nature of injury	Ingestion of rat poison
First attempt	17 years old
Second attempt	May 2000 ( six years later)
Date interviewed	10.05.2000
Suicide Intent Score	14 ( high range) – Appendix: 6

#### Background information

Mala is the first child in a family of three children. She has a sister who is already married and a younger brother. Her mother died when she was about 3 years old. Her auntie whom she thought was her mother took care of her, while her father brought up her siblings. She only knew about her adoption when she was 15 years old.

Upon noticing that the name on the birth certificate was different from what she was familiar with, she questioned her aunt, and the truth was revealed. According to Mala her aunt was worried that if she found out the truth she would leave her. However, she assured her that she was her mother and she would not leave. She felt grateful that her aunt took care of her and brought her up to be a healthy and decent person with education. She loves her as a mother. Later when she was introduced to her father, at the age of 22 she ignored him. While her father wants to make amends,

she was not interested. She felt that he only wanted to make amends because she is an adult and working. She was hurt when told that he abandoned her because she was a dark and ugly baby. So she couldn't accept him now and disclaimed him as a father. While she senses that her father loves her she could not love him. She met her siblings twice, but is not close to them.

While she was happy living with her aunt/mother, who loves her, she said nobody else loves her in the house. She felt that her other aunts do not like her because she is dark and ugly. They remarked that she does not belong with them and chased her out of the house, which hurt her feelings. Moreover she suspected that her aunts are jealous of her because her mother made a will giving the house they were living in to her. This created a rift between the sisters. Because of this she decided to leave home. She was then 20 years old.

Another reason why she left home at 20 years old was because her relationship with her mother deteriorated when she did not agree to stop schooling, and get married. Mala considered that she was still young for marriage. All she wanted was to further her studies and care for her mother, while her mother felt that as her age was catching up, she wanted to ensure that Mala is taken care off before she dies. Mala felt sad that because of a small issue they became strangers. They began to have little misunderstandings, which gradually became big, leading to quarrelling often. When her mother made the final decision with no more negotiations, she left the house. She moved to Gombak, to her uncle's place.

Mala claimed that even at her uncle's place she did not feel welcome and there was no love. When they wanted her to marry their son she disagreed, for she did not think that the man would be able to care for her. She felt that they have no right over

her choice of life partner, as they were not decent folks themselves, as her aunt is a drunk. Because of the constant arguments too, she again left, and this time moved to live in a welfare home. There she felt there was love. People at the home were caring and concerned unlike her family members. She considered them family now.

In school, Mala said that she was reserve but a helpful student. She said she preferred to be alone. Although she enjoyed being alone, when others talked to her and asked for help she was willing to assist. She perceived herself as a good student. As a prefect she was very strict. She followed instructions; she is a stickler for rules and was not truant. While her schoolmates were busy falling in love she was concerned about studies. She focused on studies and hoped to work so that she could support her mother.

### **Problems, feelings and thoughts prior to the suicide attempts**

Mala's problems started when she found herself a job as a waitress and fell in love with one of her colleague at the restaurant. Here, she met a 42-year-old man from India whom she feels has shown care towards her and loves her. He treated her well, was gentle, kind and generous towards her. When she was sick he was very concerned and tended her lovingly. She felt touched by his actions as no one had treated her so special, and fell in love with him. When he asked her to marry him she was quite prepared to do so.

Mala a pious Hindu, before deciding on accepting the proposal visited the temple for guidance and to get God's blessing for her impending marriage. She wanted to ask God whether she was making a wise decision to marry him.

However, when the result of the archanai (prayerful request) did not indicate a favorable response, she felt hurt, disappointed and resentful with the outcome of her prayer. She doubted the results and contemplated to re-doing the archanai but decided otherwise. However at the same time she felt that this result may shown some omen that she should be concerned about. She was disturbed by the result and she told the man about it. He however assured her not to be too concerned about it.

However, a couple of days latter, trouble set in when she found out that he was a married man in India with daughters as old as she is. She was shocked with disbelieve when she heard the news from a friend. She suddenly felt sad, restless, and needed to confront the issue, as she could not bear the thought of destroying another woman's marriage. She met with him and questioned him about his intention of marrying her, while he was already a married man. She felt guilty. However he assured her that his wife is aware of his plans and promised her that he would care for them both. She was moved when he went on his knees begging her to be his wife, professing that he loves her and wants to care for her.

Again he showed his kindness when she fell ill. He tended to her dutifully. Mala could not make up her mind, and felt alone wondering why, and how could a man love her that much. Although she felt the need to talk, she kept it a secret, as she felt ashamed to be in love with a married man. After two days she agreed to tell him that she loves him too and was willing to marry him as long as he cares for her. If he does not show it, then the relationship will be off, she told him.

Nonetheless, despite seemingly having made up her mind, Mala felt restless and guilt-ridden. She said:

“ Tau (referring to the fact that he is married) tapi walaupun saya setuju nak kahwin dengan dia, hati saya rasa macam nak buat salah dalam hati saya. Hati saya suka, tapi lagi satu hati saya macam nak buat salah.”

*(I know he is married, but yet I agreed to marry him. In my heart I felt that I was doing some grave error. My feelings are mixed. On one hand I felt happy but on the other I felt that I was doing something so wrong. )*

She had restless nights and her whole persona changed. She was not the happy and gay person she was before. All her friends commented on her change, but she was not able to disclose the reason, not even to her best friend, René, whom she treats as a big sister and confidante.

René had always given her good advice, and she had high respect for her. However when faced with this love affair she was not able to share her feelings. She was afraid to say anything because René had high expectations of her. Mala felt that she had failed her by making the mistake of falling in love with a married man, as René had advised her to seek a single man as her life partner. Moreover, René saw her as an educated person, who can differentiate between good and bad. Perceiving that she had not made a wise decision she was ashamed to be truthful and embarrassed to face her. While she felt at fault and thus self-conscious to tell the truth, she was also fearful that René may be capable of stopping her from getting married which she did not want to face up too. Thus she chose not to disclose anything. For Mala said:

“ Saya tak cakap dengan kawan, sebab dia tentu sakit hati. Kenapa Mala buat macam ini, dia betul betul nak stop saya. ”

*(I did not talk to my friend because she would be hurt. She would ask me why I was doing this. She truly would have wanted to stop me.)*

Thus on her own, she was desperately analyzing the pros and cons of her actions, looking for some logic and justification for what she was about to do. Although deep in her mind she wanted the man, her conscience pricked her about making such a decision.

Thus for one week she felt burdened with guilt and confused about what to do as her mind was toying with so many ideas and possibilities. She felt paralyzed and not able to function, while not being able to talk to anyone. At times she felt suicidal, at times scared and uncertain. She said:

“Dalam hati saya seminggu dah, minggu lepas. Masa tu macam takut, nak mati, entahlah, Ya.masa tu nak mati, takut, nak mati tapi saya senyap.”

*(It has been going on in my heart for a week. At times I feel scared, I want to die, I don't know. Yes, at times I want to die, afraid, want to die, but I keep quiet.)*

Her dilemma arises because of her religious and moral beliefs. Morally a righteous person there was a lot of struggle within her, between her emotional needs and wanting to do the right thing.

In the first place, she felt that marrying him was against her character as she does not want to destroy someone else's happiness, but yet she defied her very nature by agreeing to marry him. She empathizes with the wife whom she felt would be hurt and heart broken. She felt it was unfair to do onto her what she would not want to experience herself. She felt sorry for the lady, and being a devout Hindu, considered

her action would be sinful. Moreover, polygamy is not allowed in Hinduism so that pricked her conscience too.

Trying to convince herself that marrying him is not the right decision, she debated whether he if he would be able to care for her since he would already be burden with responsibilities of supporting the wife and family in India. However the memories of his kindness and care for her during her sickness flashed in her mind. She felt loved and fearful at the same time. Thus, she assured herself that since his wife is away in India, and he needed to be cared for, she could take on that role here. On his part, he could care for her while he is in Malaysia and she would not hold him back when he wants to return to India.

Basically Mala saw in him as someone who could fill up the void in her life. This is because she wants love and care, which was not forthcoming from her family, especially now that she is living alone. She expressed that she felt unloved and unwanted, and here was a man who loves her and needs her. Seeing him as a good person, who could give her love, she could not let him go. She wanted him but she was full of guilt to.

Remorseful, she decided to go to the temple again, to find peace and to forget all the thoughts and emotions that she was experiencing. For she believed:

“ Dia (referring to God) cakap, kalau you buat salah ke, datanglah ke temple minta maaf, sembahyanglah nanti hati kamu dapat tenang dan duduk, tutup mata dan relax. Lepas tu tak ada sesiapa pun kacau, lepas tu apa yang kamu ingat tu hilang.”



*(God encouraged wrong doers to come and ask for forgiveness by praying to him and meditating. Then you will find peace and relaxation and your mind will be cleared.)*

In tears, she prayed to the wife, begging for forgiveness, as she had wronged by falling in love with her husband. She pleaded that she be accepted as a sister. She prayed that she would not harbor any anger towards her and the husband and to give them her blessings. Then she prayed to God, ventilating to him. Doing this, she felt at peace and decided to go ahead with the marriage.

“ Hati saya ni macam baik bila saya keluarkan perasaan saya pada Tuhan. Tak ada sedihke apa ke lepas tu. ”

*(My heart felt at peace after I have ventilated my feelings to God. I did not feel sad anymore.)*

However, upon reaching home and looking at his photograph, reality hit her. It seemed that every time she looked at the photograph she felt tense, full of guilt, and wished that she was dead. As she grew tearful, scared, panicked and lost, not knowing what she should do, she wished she was dead.

“Saya fikir itu macam juga semalam, Lebih baik saya mati macam tu, tak nak hidup lagi sebab yang perkara ini masalah dan kesilapan in saya buat, saya fikir.”

*(I felt like that again last night. It is better that I die, I do not want to live anymore because of this problem and mistake that I have made.)*

Unable to hold it in any longer and looking for solace, she told the truth to the supervisor at the Welfare Home. She said:

“ Saya cakap dengan dia orang, terus terang hati saya tak berapa baik, dan saya tak tau apa nak buat, hati saya macam nak mati. Saya tak tahan nak menangis, saya minta bagi saya ubat mati, saya nak mati sekarang.”

*(I was frank with them, I told them I don't feel good, I feel so lost, I don't know what to do, my heart feels that I want to die. I can't stand it; I felt like crying, I asked them for some poison, so that I can die now.)*

The supervisor and others at the home, instead of giving her comfort, reminded her of how wrong her thoughts were, and advised her on what they perceived to be the right thing to do. She was given instructions on what she should say to him to breakup the relationship and told it was important to return the photograph. They reasoned with her that not only was he a married man, but that he was as old as her father was and her future would be so uncertain. Although at first hurt and angry at their remarks, she was later convinced, especially when some of the elders begged her to leave the man. They also reminded her not to consider suicide as an alternative. Touched by their care and concern, she agreed to their pleas.

Thus, determined to end the relationship and return to him the photo on the following day, she tried to sleep. However that night she felt restless. In fact she felt worse, pressured now by her newfound family to do the right thing. She prayed to God and asked for guidance and courage to breakup the relationship and return the photograph. However, when she was face to face with him she could not do it. Again she felt she wanted to die. While pressured to return the photo, she was afraid to do so

because the man had informed her that if she breaks the relationship he would die. She was afraid of the responsibility of causing his death.

“Perasaannya macam nak mati, bila tengok muka dia, rasa macam nak mati, aku

buat kesilapan nak mati, tak boleh buat kerja apa –apa.”

*(I couldn't look at him. I felt like I want to die, I am wrong. I could not function.)*

When the members of the welfare home insisted that the right thing to do was to return the photo, she did not tell them the complexity of returning it as the photograph had special significance. When he gave her the photograph, he said he would rather die if he had to live without her. Thus she felt that returning the photograph would drive him to suicide. She felt that she would sin against him and his family who would be lost without him. As an alternative she considered throwing it away but thought otherwise for she did not want him to think that all was okay with the relationship. Mala was torn between being responsible for his death or lying to him and her loyalty to her friends who had advised her. She decided that rather than him being dead, and lying to her friends, she is better off dead herself.

So Mala, a pious person, who believes in right and wrong, a stickler for rules and regulations, was perplexed when faced with a dilemma that challenged her very being. Torn between loving a man whom she thinks can love and care for her, and faced with the reality that what she would be doing is wrong in the eyes of God, society and even herself, it was mental anguish. She battled within herself for one week. Towards the end her desperation got the worse of her. When the man was kind

and polite to her, showing concern that she was looking distraught; she felt intense tension and broke down. Not able to take it anymore, feeling pressured, needing to escape; she fled to the kitchen. Feeling lost and not knowing what to do, on impulse she took rat poison she saw. Mixing it with water, she drank it as quickly as possible and she went to the room to sleep.

While Mala may seem to have taken the rat poison on impulse, the fact was that the thought of killing herself had been in her mind for the past two days, although she did not have a concrete plan. She did however, on the night before her attempt, write a note declaring that she was giving RM 500.00 to her mother. The letter wrapped in a cloth stated that if she dies the money should go to her mother.

This however was not Mala's first attempt. Her first attempt was when she was 22 years old, at her uncle's house in Gombak. As she recalled, her uncle wanted to marry her off to his son. While not interested in marriage, she also found the boy useless, a drunk with no job, and not fit to be a husband to her. She disagreed. When she disagreed, her aunt and uncle scolded her. She felt powerless and angry towards them. She wanted to defend herself but felt powerless and incapable of screaming or yelling at them. In her anger and sense of hopelessness she cut her wrist. The act gave her a sense of relief. She had no intention of dying then.

### **Feelings and thoughts after the suicide attempt**

At the hospital for her second attempt, Mala was bombarded with advice from all quarters - her friends, the nurses and the doctors. Despite all the advice she still felt uncertain if she was happy or sad that she survived. Although happy to be alive, and hoping that she will eventually forget him and be the gay person she is, she could not

help but feel sad that she can't be with him. She felt life was meaningless to her. Moreover, she anticipated that it would hurt her when she meets with him again. However she did make following insights:

She felt that she acted foolishly when she took the easy way out by poisoning herself. She should have talked and discussed matters with the man. She was remorseful for her actions and said that she would not do it again.

She did not want to destroy her future by marrying the man, and neither did she want to destroy his marriage. She decided to break the relationship. However, knowing it would be impossible for her to continue working at the place if the man was there, as his presence would affect her emotionally and mentally, she plans to resign if he does not. She did not mind resigning, as it is a temporary job. She said she might also consider furthering her studies. She also decided that she would go visit her mother.

### Case Study No: Three – Yuma

Age	22 years old
Race	Malay
Religion	Muslim
Marital Status	Single
Employment	GRO
Person living with	On her own
Nature of injury	Ingestion of 70 tablets of paracetamol
First attempt	April 2000
Second attempt	Nil
Date interviewed	17.04.2000
Suicide Intent Score	13 (high range) – Appendix: 6

#### Background information

Yuma is the second child in a family of four children. She has an elder brother, 25 years old, followed by two sisters, 21 years old and 17 years old respectively. She also has an adopted sister who is 30 years old. While she lives in Kuala Lumpur, her parents live in Negeri Sembilan. Her brother and her 21-year-old sister also live in Kuala Lumpur, but they live separately.

According to Yuma, she had a happy childhood and was well provided for. Special occasions like birthdays were celebrated with festivity with the family members. She is close to her parents and can easily talk to them, especially her mother. Her parents encouraged her to participate in activities and do not restrict her, even allowing her to go for camping trips.

She was an active girl in school. A sporty person, she plays netball, volleyball and badminton. In fact she represented the school for badminton. She enjoyed the competitive spirit in sports and strives to win. However, even if she did not win the fun of it all and being with friends pleases her. She was happy even to get a

consolation prize. She also got along well with her teachers. In fact she missed school life, and wished she had continued with her studies like her best friend who is now at university.

Yuma mentioned that her father is an Imam in her hometown. So, as a child she was brought up to follow strictly to the teachings of Islam. In fact she wore the “tudung” during her school days up until Form 5 when she shifted to Kuala Lumpur.

Yuma, although happy staying with her parents, was attracted to city life. She wanted to find out what it was like to study in Kuala Lumpur and intended to work in the city. As she wanted her independence, she convinced her parents to allow her to further her studies in the city and stay with her elder brother in Kuala Lumpur.

Being in the big city, she said she was very much influenced by the way of life of the city folks. Having new friends who were more open, less religious and more sociable, different from the sort in the village, she stopped using her “tudung” as she socialized with them. She also stopped praying regularly, although when she goes back to her hometown, her father will force her to do the daily prayers. She believes that praying must come from the heart, and not be forced. As such, she seldom follows her father’s instruction, although she wears the “tudung” when in her hometown. She explained that her faith weakened as she became more distanced from her parents.

In Kuala Lumpur, after her Form5 she was eager to start work. She joined the public sector. Happy to have her own money to spend, she decided to work after receiving her SPM results despite being encouraged by parents to continue with her studies. However, after a while RM450.00 per month was not sufficient to sustain her in KL, thus she opted to be a teacher in a private school. Here she made RM 900.00

per month. Though the pay was slightly better she could not handle the job. She felt pressured dealing with the children and ended up caning them. This got her into trouble with the headmistress and parents. Desperate to find another job, she met up with her ex- schoolmates who worked as Gross. They encouraged her to join them. At first she was hesitant and perceived it as a dirty job, requiring to have sex with the clients, and she declined. But later her friends managed to convince her that the job was more decent than what she imagined it to be. Moreover, she saw that they were rich, having cars and houses. Lured by the amount of money that she could make and an escape from the pressures of teaching, she decided to join them.

#### **Problems, feelings and thoughts prior to the suicide attempt**

Feeling certain that she wanted to become a GRO she decided to talk to her boyfriend about her intention. Her involvement with her boyfriend and her job as a GRO changed her life and later would cause her to consider suicide.

When she told her 2-month-old boyfriend her intention of becoming a GRO, he cautioned her that she may get cheated and be sold. Thus, he suggested that he be involved to ensure it does not happen. Moreover, he proposed that she join his friend's contact as it was in a better location compared to her friends contact. However, when she wanted to have a clear picture of how the place works, what kind of arrangement it would be, he was evasive and non-committal. While she was not satisfied with his response and wanted more answers she kept quiet about it. She was afraid that he might think she doubted him and was anxious not to hurt his feelings. More so, fearful that he may abandon her, she did not pursue the subject, leaving him to make the arrangements.



She said:

“ Saya takut, kalau dia tinggal kan saya...itu saja yang saya takut, sebab itu saya takut, sebab itu saya tak kisah dia buat apa saja. ”

*(I was afraid, that he might leave me. I was fearful of that, because I was afraid to lose him. I didn't care about what he wanted to do. )*

Figuring that she is now an adult, having this new job, a boyfriend whom she was in love with, she decided to leave her brother's house. On her own, she felt that she could have more time to know him better. She began to feel closer to him and loved him more. From then on her life was for him. Thus, began her lonely road to isolation and despair.

Before her attempt Yuma felt that he was a good man who showed her lots of attention and care. She was convinced because he told her that he would never have sex with her as he loves her and does not want to destroy her future. That made her love him more.

She said:

“Bila saya dah kenal dengan dia, saya dah jadi macam orang gila.

Sanggup bagi dia apa yang dia nak. Saya dah jadi bodoh dah masa tu...

Saya dah tak boleh berfikir langsung masa tu. Saya dah terlalu sayang sangat dekat dia.”

*(When I got to know him, I became like a mad woman. I was willing to do anything for him. I became a fool, and I couldn't think straight. I was truly in love with him.)*

The man slowly made her dependent on him emotionally and isolated her from her family and friends by restricting her from meeting with them.

He was everything to her and her life revolved around him only. She listened and followed his instructions for she loved him and did not want to lose him. He has a bad temper, but she coped with it. Though they have misunderstandings often, and he disappointed her on many occasions, he was persuasive and charming, asking for forgiveness. She could not help but relent. This became a viscous cycle, but she lived with it, for she became subservient as she grew more distance from her family and friends.

He restricted her movement and discouraged her from socializing, preferring her to stay home, although going out with him and his friends was permissible. She was happy with this arrangement then as it meant she could be with him.

He isolated her from her family. While before she goes back home regularly, now she hardly did so. Since knowing him for six months she only returned home twice for Hari Raya celebrations. Whenever she wanted to go home, he would give many excuses for her not to and sometimes challenged her by saying “Do you love your Mom or me?” That made her feel torn and guilt-ridden for she loved them both. Not wanting to create a scene she would succumb to him, justifying to herself that she could always go home the next weekend. She said her parents became less significant in her life, and he became a priority. This went on for months and she gave her parent's excuses like having a heavy workload for not going home.

Life with him was fine, although she could only feel happiness when he was happy. When he was mad at her she felt miserable and nothing could make her feel

better, not even being with her family. She needed him emotionally. However, this happiness came to an end when they had a fight with regard to her income as a GRO.

Yuma noticed that the other GROs were getting a lot more money than her. Thus, she checked with the lady in charge about her income. She was shocked to find that her income was more than double what she had been given by her boyfriend. Puzzled and a little suspicious, she asked him about it, trusting that he would give her a reasonable explanation. She was hoping it was the boyfriend's friend who was taking her money. Instead he got angry and scolded her for being suspicious of him.

“Dia kata: jadi tak percaya saya ke?. Awak tak percaya saya, kalau tak percaya sudahlah. ”

*(He said "So you don't believe me? If you don't believe, then that is the end of it.)*

She felt trapped for she really wanted to have a decent conversation and get an explanation but instead he accused her of not trusting him.

Yuma is a sociable person, cheerful and happy all her life. She always got her way, and had never been restrained from participating in activities and socializing. She was a free and happy child, full of life. Being with him changed that. She was restricted, trapped, and stifled in the relationship, though she was willing, for in some ways she was still happy she had him. But when he left her after the misunderstanding she was miserable for she felt her whole world had collapsed. She could not handle the void she felt in her life.

While she felt the need to talk to someone about what she was going through, she could not think of anyone whom she could confide in. While normally her

problems were minor which she could easily solve, now she could not handle this situation. As much as she wanted to confide in her mother she could not, for it meant she would have to reveal that she is a GRO. She was too ashamed to tell the truth. Also she felt that they would be angry and she would be reprimanded instead of getting support. It would just make matters worse for her, as she was already feeling tense and pressured. She thought of her younger sister, since they had always had an open and sharing relationship. But she felt being the elder it was not proper that she get advice from her. She also could not bring herself talk to her friends for she felt that this was something personal.

Thus, feeling isolated from her family members, not having any friends who she could share with, and not knowing of anywhere or anyone whom she could confide in she tried to contact him to reestablish the relationship.

So, after the third day of the quarrel, feeling desperate and lonely, she called him to apologize. She wanted it to be like before. However he was cold, unapproachable, and did not want to take responsibility or show care towards her anymore. She remarked:

“Dia kata: biarlah, suka hati youlah, tak payahlah, you punya pasallah.”

*(He said: " don't care, you go and do what ever you want, it is all up to you now, it is your business, not mine. ")*

Lost for words, and not knowing what to do, she could only threaten him with self- harm.

“ You nanti tak menyesal kalau saya buat apa apa.”

*(Wait until I do something drastic, and you will regret it).*

And when he responded with “Ya, memang saya tak menyesal, buatlah apa yang awak suka”....

*(Yes, truly, I will not have any regrets, go ahead and do what ever you like)*

...she was broken.

At that moment she believed she had lost him. Thus she felt scared, tense and a sense of hopelessness. Despite all that she had sacrificed she felt that he did not value her. In retrospect, she remembered her friends saying that a man who really loves a girl and thinks her special would never allow the girlfriend to work in a degrading job like a GRO. She felt worthless. She felt that all this while he had only used her. He never really loved her but only wanted the money that she could make for him. She felt betrayed, unloved, unwanted and miserable.

To Yuma, to be alive one has to be happy, for if there is no happiness there is no point in living. Thus since happiness to her is to love and be with him, she felt that there is no more meaning in her life.

“...hidup sentiasa gembira. Hidup memang ada yang gembira ada yang tak gembira, tetapi bila terlampau banyak yang bagi saya tak gembira, menjadikan saya rasa hidup tak bermakna. Itulah yang bila saya terlampau sayang sangat dekat dia, saya rasa hidup saya untuk dia lepas tu bila dia dah tak ada, bila dia tinggalkan saya, saya rasa dah tak ada makna dah hidup saya.”

*(Life should always be happy. Yes there are times when we are happy and times not happy, but when there is more unhappiness, I feel then there is no meaning in life. That is why when I loved him too much and I felt that I only live for him, when he left me I felt there was no more meaning in my life.)*

Feeling rejected by someone she truly loved, she felt lost. Unlike her normal teenage problems that could easily be solved, she felt this was beyond her ability to handle. Not having her parents to help her this time around, she felt powerless. Without anyone to guide her she felt stuck. Not knowing what to do, she resorted to taking her life as the alternative, for she felt that her life was meaningless without him.

She debated if she should jump from a high rise building. However, for fear of heights and not knowing of any high rise building, she decided against it. Then it occurred to her to take paracetamol. She went to the grocery shop and purchased them.

However before taking paracetamol, she decided to pray. After her prayer she wrote in her diary:

“Andai saya masih ada lagi , itu jodoh saya untuk bertemu kamu semualah. Andai tiada doakan saya.”

*(If I am still alive, then it is fated that we are to meet again. However, if it is not fated, pray for me.)*

She expressed that she had a deep desire to die for she said:

“Saya memang tak ingat nak hidup lagi dah, saya akan berusaha untuk mati.”

and

“Lepas tu (referring the instance after her prayer) saya terus makan panadol, saya dah nekad, bagi saya hidup saya dah tak ada seronok dah, tak ada gembira lagi dah. Tu kadang kadang kalau tak gembira saya rasa saya tak nak hidup.”

*(I really did not want to live anymore. I will make sure that I die; and after that, I took the paracetamol. I was not going to think anymore, I was determined; for me my life has no happiness now. When I sometimes feel unhappy I feel that I do not want to live.)*

She took 20 tablets at 4:00 p.m. Disappointed that it only had a dizzying effect on her, she took an additional 60 tablets, which made her vomit. She felt happy when she saw it was working and her intention to die could be fulfilled. She perceived that by her death he will feel sorry for what he had done and realized how wrong he had been. She believed that by her death she would be able to get him to repent.

Feeling the terrible pain, she again tried to communicate with him, pleading that he go to see her as she was in terrible pain, although she did not tell him what she did. His response hurt her more as he brushed her off by asking her to handle it herself. Feeling the terrible pain at 2:00 am she called for the neighbor's help. At the doctor's she lied about what she had done, though the doctor suggested she go to the hospital. She ignored the advice, and instead swallowed the medicine given. She went through the night and the next day in pain, she was puzzled about why she was still alive. Towards the evening her boyfriend's friend came to visit her, and was shocked at her condition and insisted that he take her to the hospital. Yuma remembered telling him about what she had done.

“Ah... dia tak sayang saya, bukan dia yang datang... saya aja sayang dekat orang tapi orang tak sayang saya.”

*( Ah... he does not love me; he did not come. It is only I who shows love, he does not love me.)*

### **Feelings and thoughts after the suicide attempt**

For the next three days she was barely conscious in the hospital. Yuma was hospitalized for eight days. During her stay at the hospital, as she began to recuperate she also began to switch off and blocked off her feelings and emotions before the attempt. She wanted to forget it all him included. It was a bitter and painful experience and she never want it to happen again. She kept everything a secret from family and friends. Only her sister knew that she overdosed. Everybody else thought she had gastric problems. She didn't want the truth to be known to all. While a lot of her family members and friends from near and far came to visit her, her GRO colleagues, her boyfriend and his friends never did. She felt thankful and touched that her family took the trouble to come to see her, for she said if not for them she would have felt very sad, especially since her boyfriend did not come at all. Her experience in the hospital, thinking things over again, she could not help but compare her parents to her boyfriend. She realized what a fool she had been. She felt regret and wanted to make amends with her family. She also expressed that what happened may actually be a blessing in disguise for she felt if it had not occurred she could have been dragged into a worse scenario, with no turning back. She was remorseful over her act, and was



very thankful to Allah for giving her a second lease in life. She made the following insights:

She realized that he was not a good man who used her to his advantage and as such he does not deserve a good person like her. She decided that she wants to break all ties with him.

She also decided that she would not continue with the job, as she wants a clean break with a new beginning. Before starting with a new job she wanted to go back to her hometown, to relax, recuperate and be with her family.

She also would like to consider furthering her studies in business management to better herself.

Basically she wants to be her old self, the happy person that she is with her family.

### Case Study No: Four- Anita

Age	: 19 years old
Race	: Malay
Religion	: Muslim
Education level	: Failed SPM
Marital Status	: Single
Employment	: Factory Operator
Person living with	: With brother's family
Nature of injury	: Ingestion of 20 tablets of paracetamol
First attempt	: November 1999
Second attempt	: May 2000
Date interviewed	: 20.05.2000
Suicide Intent Score	: 9 (medium range) – Appendix: 6

#### Background information

Anita is the youngest child in a family of ten children. Anita has eight brothers and one sister. Her sister died when she was 16 years old. Her death was very painful for Anita because not only did she love her sister very much, she was her confidante. Being the only two girls in the family, they were very close. She had another brother whom she was close to, but only for a while, for they later drifted apart. Now she is not attached to anyone in the family.

Anita disclosed that she did not grow up in a happy family environment. She longs to have a warm family atmosphere at home like other families. Instead she felt that despite nine of them in the family, which by volume alone should bring joy and merriment, however, the truth is there is no sense of togetherness. Everybody is left on their own. They never have meals together. Normally after cooking, food will be served for father, while everybody else grabs the food on a first-come-first-served basis. She feels that when faced with a problem, all the members should get together and work things out as other families do, instead there is a lot of fights among her

family members. This she expressed gave her a lot of pressure, thus she would rather spend less time at home.

In fact she is very annoyed and angry at some of her brothers who are just like vegetables at home, not working but yet taking money from mother, who would give despite being told off by her father. While her two other brothers who have their respective jobs are stingy and calculating with their income. Anita felt frustrated that with her meagre income she cannot fully help to support her parents whom she feels needed financial assistance. This is because while her parents have high monthly expenditure and debts her father's income is subject to the fluctuating price of palm oil as he works in an oil palm estate.

### **Problems, feelings and thoughts prior to the suicide attempt**

Anita explained that the reason she tried to commit suicide by an overdose was for three basic reasons that had been building up within her, and that she felt she couldn't handle. So, when her boyfriend chided her, that was the last straw. She broke down and decided that she had enough. She took the tablets, and left it in the hands of Allah. The three reasons she gave that played a major role in her wanting to end it all were family, boyfriend and work pressure. Up to a point she felt that she could not take the stress anymore. She said:

“Ada perselisihan faham sikit sikit dengan dia.(referring to boyfriend) Lepas tu pasal famili sikit sikit, pasal kerja sikit, dah jadi sikit sikit,lama lama jadi banyakkan, dah jadi macam tu,rasa tertekanlah, jadi tension.”

*(I had some misunderstanding with him. Then because of my family a little, problems with work a little, after a while all this added up to a lot. So I feel stressed out, tension.)*

With regard to family she explained that her parents and brothers are not strict with regard to neither her dressing nor her religious inclination, however they are very rigid about her socializing. They reign with an iron chain; short of abusing her they are very restrictive and controlling.

She was not allowed to live on her own, but instead had to live with her eldest brother, whom she is very afraid of. According to her he is very fierce and controls her every move. It seems her brother has spies everywhere who report on her activities.

She said as a girl she liked the company of boys, but since she had been restricted against mixing with them, she played truant in school and hung out with the boys smoking or just having fun. She did express that as much as she enjoyed the fun she knew her limits and would not get involved in sex.

While at school she played truant. At work, she gave doing overtime as an excuse, so that she could go out to have fun, instead of being home. According to her she needed the time and space to be with friends and go places to relax. Despite feeling fearful of her brother, she felt stifled, needing to socialize with her friends. She took the risk of cheating and lying despite the possibility of being caught. When caught she would be scolded and reprimanded, and she would apologize. She expressed that her brothers although seldom beat her up, would scold her with anger and used nasty language at her. She said that since she is a sensitive girl who cries easily, she was hurt by their remarks.

Anita is a very sociable person who wants to enjoy life, see the world, and try new things. She feels that as an individual she has the right to enjoy life, however at the same time she feels that it is the rightful duty of her brothers to care and ensure the safety and chastity of the only sister they have. So while she hates the feeling of being powerless and not in control of her life, she feels that she needs to be controlled by her brothers for otherwise she believes that she would go wild and brings shame to the family. She explained that her sister had caused a lot of shame and disgrace to the family when she got pregnant before marriage. Thus family members, her brothers in particular are very protective and controlling over her. The fear of embarrassment is constantly there. She being the way she is feels afraid that she may just brings more shame to the family. She feels responsible that it should never happen again. Thus Anita is torn between her personality that enjoys socializing and her constant fear that she could at anytime cause shame and disgrace to the family. Added to her own personal anxiety, and guilt, is the controlling nature of the brothers that made her feel stifled and constricted. She feels useless and she also feels she causes an extra burden to the family, who has to watch over her, as she is the only surviving sister. She felt pressured and tension because of this. She said:

“Abang dia orang marah marah Anita kan jadi Anita rasa macam Anita dah menyusahkan dia orang...dia orang kena jaga Anita sebab Anita seorang dia orang kena jaga semua. Macam nak jaga Anita ni kan, kalau nak jaga lembu sekandang lebih senang daripada nak jaga adik perempuan sorang.”

and

“Mungkin Anita rasa tak guna, sebab dah banyak menyusahkan orang.”

*(When my brothers are angry and scold me, I feel like I am a burden to them, creating so much problems for them. They all have to take care of me. And to care for me is so difficult; it would be easier to care for a herd of cattle than to care for me. I feel it is pointless to live as I have caused so much problems and have been a burden to everyone.)*

Added to the burden of having brothers who are controlling and restrictive, not allowing her freedom, is the boring and mundane job that she has. She finds working 12 hours a day standing while sorting out tissue boxes, with minimum rest time, very exhausting. She gets very tired and when she reaches home all she wants to do is to sleep. However, her sister-in-law does not appreciate this and insists she should eat first before sleeping. Though she felt that her in-law had good intentions, she also felt the scolding was unnecessary.

Moreover, the working environment is not conducive to work in, dusty and noisy. She expressed that most of the staff are elderly thus she feels alone with no friends. The only company she has is her boyfriend, and when they are not on talking terms, it really disturbs her.

Anita has been going out with this man for the past one year. Though they love each other they seem to have frequent misunderstandings. According to Anita, the man, not having any experience with girls, does not know how to treat a lady. He is always getting angry with her. As she is sensitive, his actions and words affect her, and hurt her. Moreover, she finds it unfair that it is always she who has to give in to the relationship even when she feels that he is in the wrong. The worst was when he insisted that he read her diary when he suspected that she was going out with another man. She felt her diary was something personal not to be read by others. In her hurt

and anger, Anita burned her diary and since then never writes in them anymore. There were times too when he would insist that she stoop to her knees to ask for forgiveness. That was a big issue as she felt that as a daughter she never had to do that with her parents, as such she could not see the logic of doing it to him, as there is no tie between them. Despite all these, she finds him a very good man, who respects her as a woman and does not demand physical contact. This made her feel comfortable with him. Moreover, the family members approve of him.

However their constant misunderstanding puts her under a lot of pressure and the last straw was when, she feeling in her worst mood, was hurt and offended by her boyfriend's snide remark that she is a stranger to him. She felt very sad and was in tears for she considered him special. She felt unloved. On the bus home from work with tears in her eyes, feeling sorry for her self, Anita thought her life was miserable with a mundane job, that provides low satisfaction and income that makes her feel helpless in trying to support her parents. Added to this are a broken family, brothers who are dictatorial, and the pressure to conform or bring shame to the family. As though this is not enough she felt that even her love life is not going right as she has a boyfriend who demands that she give him all her love while he does not understand her feelings and thoughts. Memories of her beloved sister and a sense of loss since she was not around for her in her times of trouble were very painful. Her retrospective account of her life made her feel overwhelmed with misery and tension.

Not believing in sharing her problems, as she feels embarrassed and that it is not right to burden others, she always held back her pent-up feelings. She would rather suffer than burden others. Thus on that day, at her weakest moment, Anita felt constricted and pressured, and could not hold it in any longer. Feeling sad and numb,

needing to escape from it all, and wanting a peace of mind, her mind when blank. All she could think of was to take the paracetamol and a bottle of coke to release the pressure.

When asked what her intention was in taking the paracetamol, she replied:

“Entah... mungkin... bagi Anita, kalau Anita buat tu (referring to the taking of panadol) mungkin dia boleh hilang.”

and

“Ada juga (referring to thoughts of death) ... tapi kalau betulah Allah nak ambil hari khamis tu Anita terima saja.”

and

“Entahlah bagi Anita, Anita mati ke tak mati ke Anita terima aja, sebab yalah Anita fikir Anita ni dah banyak menyusahkan orang. Anita sendiri pun fikir memang Anita tak suka diri sekarang ni.”

and

“Untuk hilangkan tension dan menenangkan perasaan.”

*(I don't know, maybe for me, if I were to do this I can forget; I do have such thoughts.... if God really wanted to take my life on that Thursday I was most willing; I don't know, for me, to be a live or dead, does not matter. I shall just accept it because after all I feel that I have been a burden to others. I personally feel that I do not like myself anymore; and to release tension and to have peace of mind.)*

Anita was thus ambivalent about her feelings of survival and unbearable stress. Even taking the pills she thought that 20 may not kill her, but she felt that



should do for the time being, for if need be she could take more. She actually did not anticipate that she would be hospitalized.

She also hinted to her ex-boyfriend that if she did not turn up at work on Friday evening, he was to come over to her house to collect some documents to be given to her boyfriend. She chose this man to tell her intention indirectly because she found that he understands her. However he did not pick up the cue.

Anita still feeling angry and also fearful of her boyfriend went through the pain and agony for 1½ days, without telling him or her sister. At times she thought she was going to die, but she did not tell anyone. After continuous vomiting and feeling very weak, her sister suggested going to the hospital. She agreed hoping to get a medical certificate, as she did not think she could go to work. At the hospital she was hospitalized for an overdose of paracetamol.

### **Feelings and thoughts after the suicide attempt**

Anita hoped that after the overdose things might change for the better. She hoped that her boyfriend might understand her a little more, and her family members would change for the better. She feels this would really make her happy. She also wished to try her best to work on the relationship and make it work.

Anita admitted that although she was remorseful for her act, she couldn't change what had happened. However, she was uncertain whether she is happy or sad. She is fearful that she may do it again, as she had, after all, done it before when she was in Form 5. At that time she felt stressed by her examination. She did not feel confident of herself despite making promises to her parents and sister-in-law that she

would not do it again. She expressed that if nothing changed in her life, she is fearful that she maybe driven to it.

She also felt guilty for her act as now she had created more trouble for her family members, as they had to come all the way from Pahang to visit her in the hospital. Moreover she felt ashamed and felt that she had lost a hold on her religion for someone who is religious would not act in the manner that she did.

### Case Study No: Five – Lammy

Age	:	24 years old
Race	:	Chinese
Religion	:	Christian
Marital Status	:	Single
Employment	:	University student
Nature of injury	:	Overdose of 15 tablets of paracetamol and 10 tablets of ponstan
First attempt	:	October 1999
Second attempt	:	May 2000 ( six months later)
Date interviewed	:	02.05.2000
Suicide Intent Score	:	7 (medium range) – Appendix: 6

#### Background information

Lammy is the eldest child in a family of three children. She is now residing in one of the local universities in Kuala Lumpur. Her sister Mei Mei, who is 22 years old, has a mental illness. She is living with their father in Penang. Her 20 years old brother, Ronny, is furthering his studies in Japan. Her mother died of cancer when she was 17 years old. Her mother's death devastated her, as she was very close to mother. She felt the loss of her mother was the turning point in her life, for the worse. Being the eldest, she took the heavy burden of caring for her siblings and she found life terrible and difficult to cope with. Without her mother, she felt a sense of emptiness and while still grieving, was angry and disappointed with her father who decided to remarry after only one year of her mother's death. Three years after her mother's death her sister fell ill. She felt responsible for her mental sickness.

While she is very close to her siblings, she has anger and hate toward her father. She finds him authoritative and controlling. She is also scared of the father and dreads going back to her hometown, as he constantly bombards her with what the

duties of a daughter should be and demands that she repay him upon graduation. She feels that he doesn't perform his fatherly duties. She said:

“ Sometimes, I feel that why do you want to give birth to all of us and than you just don't care, don't want to care about us. And than he just keeps telling us we are a burden. We don't have choice to be born in this world right... every time he keeps telling us that we are a burden. So we are very disappointed with him.”

She recalled an incident when her father chased her out of the house. Feeling hurt, she had not gone back home since the incident, even on special occasions like Chinese New Year.

From early childhood, Lammy had been drilled to be the best. In school she was expected to attain a top three position in class. If she failed she would get a reprimand from father. In standard six she nearly had a nervous breakdown. She had dreams and nightmares about her exams. After this incident her mother didn't pressure her with her studies. When her results slipped, her father took the extreme by ostracizing her. Lammy reflected:

“When I study form: 1 my results was dropping so my father was very...don't want to talk to me, even when he talk to my mother he refused to discuss anything concerning me. I feel very hurt, very very hurt. So from that time onwards I catch up with my studies, my mother cannot do anything, I work very hard, and I get first in class. .... I cried...because for one year my father

didn't time to talk to me I just feel now..... now I have the result my father will speak to me."

### **Problems, feelings and thoughts prior to the suicide attempt**

Now Lammy is completing her final year at university. Determined to do her best, she chooses a challenging project. A project that she started with an air of confidence as she felt that it is achievable, and she would sail through it, turned into a nightmare and made her feel inadequate. Working on her final project paper, she faced a deadlock, as she could not obtain the results in her research. She couldn't understand why she is not able to find the correct outcome while the seniors who did it before her were successful. The experiments that she carried out were not getting any proper conclusions despite trying so many materials and using various methods and techniques. It confused and frustrated her. Since she was not able to find the outcome she was unable to finalize her report. She began to lose her confidence. She realized she doesn't know a lot of things and that confidence alone is not the key to success. She had to learn many new things and within the four weeks before the deadline she felt that she would not be able to achieve them all. She felt scared and anxious that she could not finish it on time for submission. She felt the urgency more when everybody else had completed their project and submitted their report.

She felt stuck, as she cannot foresee completing the project despite getting an extension from February to June. As May approached, having about a month left, she felt desperate and tensed, as she did not anticipate getting the outcome that she needed to complete her report. She was also afraid that if she could not complete the project paper successfully, it would mean that she had to extend another semester. Not

wanting to extend another semester, she felt pressured. Seeking an escape she overdosed. She said:

“ I very scared that I cannot finish the thing I do. ... I am very anxious that.... I cannot just.... pass up the thing in time I am suppose to pass up. I was very upset about the project.”

Feeling like a failure for not being able to complete the project, having to extend another semester and perhaps to do a fresh project she disclosed that was part of the reason she took the overdose.

Apart from feeling a sense of failure, another reason why she felt pressured was due to her financial status. Her father was not willing to sponsor her studies, so she had to take a loan for her education. However the loan that she had secured was due to expire and could not be extended. Thus if she was forced to continue for another semester she would not have the money to support herself.

While the church elders offered her financial assistance she wasn't happy or certain if she should take up the offer. This is because she had another reason for considering not extending a semester, that is, her sick sister. She felt torn between prolonging a semester and the urgent need to be with her in Penang.

So, tying in with the problem of her unsuccessful project paper is her desperate need to be with her sister. As she can only be with her after graduation, the status of her sick sister loomed in her mind.

It was agreed between her and Ronny that she should take her away from the father as soon as possible as currently her father is abusing Mei Mei, despite doctor's warning that these actions can further deteriorate her mental state. This worries them

both as the father is a moody person and does things, as he likes. Recently Ronny being impatient, is forcing her to move to Penang immediately to care for Mei Mei. Nonetheless she feels frustrated, worried and helpless as problems with the project is not allowing her to achieve this. She voiced:

“ I know his feeling, he say my sister was suffering there so he see pain in his heart, and than he cannot do anything, For me is also the same every time when I heard my auntie tell me...my sister was beat by my father and than many things I just feel, felt, feel helpless, I cannot do anything...two of us very hate our father.”

Apart from her brother, her relatives and her father who expects her to do something about her sister, she herself feels the need and responsibility as the eldest. Despite having this noble thought of taking care of her sister she doubted her ability to cope with the care. She is fearful if she cannot meet the expectations.

Added to this, is the fact that she was guilt-ridden for deserting Mei Mei when she decided to leave her hometown to study in Kuala Lumpur, as she could have continued her studies in Penang. She chose to be in Kuala Lumpur for her own personal reasons. As now she felt that her family was more important to her than her personal self, she blamed herself for her sister's illness. She wondered if she had been there for her, Mei Mei would not have been ill.

As such feeling guilty and torn between needing to be home for her sister, and facing the reality that she may have to extend another semester, she felt scared and trapped in an impossible solution which she could not share with anyone.

Lammy explained that despite showing a strong front to her siblings and the rest of the world, she was constantly scared and alone and fearful of making a wrong decision. While she has friends and the church elders who cares for her it was difficult for her to express herself. Putting up a front has been her habit for the past seven years, she was not able to disclose her pain and suffering to others. She always feels that she needs to be strong and is embarrassed to show otherwise. So people see her as the strong and spiritual one. She said:

“ I don’t know how to tell them that I am also weak.”

and

“ I also have my weakness.”

The only person that she could turn to, confide and be herself was with God. To him she did not pretend. She puts in a lot of time in prayer, begging him for help. However when none came, she felt angry and at times disappointed with God. She uttered:

“Before Jesus I didn’t pretend. I just tell him I cannot go through but why still have so many problems.. so sometimes I refuse to talk to him (crying) ... but I know he is always there... “

and

“Yes, at first I ask, I just give up lah, just give up.”

Alone, she felt that her life was in turmoil. She felt like she was going through a similar scenario to her previous experience in October 1999 when she first attempted suicide. At the time she was pressured with three issues, that is, the project,



family and personal problems. Then she overdosed on 30 paracetamol. It looks like nothing has resolved. She was going through the same emotions.

She felt restless, tense, scared and could not go to sleep on the first of May 2000. She was hearing voices, one encouraging her to die and stop it all and the other not too. While these voices have been there since October 1999, subsiding when she is more positive in life, it became very loud on that day especially the negative voice. She did not know which of the voices she should listen too. She believed that every thing was going downhill and she could not solve it. She felt unsafe and wanted to escape but she does not know where to run too. She tried to talk to God asking for his forgiveness, and help, but she felt weak to reach out to him. She uttered:

“I don’t know how to turn to him. I just keep telling him that I ‘m sorry I’m sorry I don’t know how. I just want to have a rest, I don’t want to struggle anymore.”

In her hopelessness she tried contacting her friends as she needed to talk to someone but none of her friends were around.

Lammy has high expectation of herself, both as a student and as the eldest in the family. Thus pressured to complete a project that has no solution in hand, burdened with self blame and the urgency to care for her sick sister, followed by financial constraint, she was not able to face the world when the dateline approaches. Not having anyone to confide to and feeling that God had forsaken her, she couldn’t decide what she should do. She was afraid that the decision she made could be wrong, and is fearful of the repercussions.

She then resorted to overdosing herself because she felt not capable of making a decision for her next course of action that she perceived as pressingly needed to be finalized. She remarked:

“ I extended one more semester it means that I cannot really take care of her this few months.”

and

“I just feel, so I'm scared now, to choose now, to make a decision, So I just don't... after the decision I make is there anybody will get hurt or something I don't know. “

and

“ I don't know if it is a wise decision for me to continue the new semester and than my sister I don't know how both side I can settle with a good solution.”

She took the 15 tablets of paracetamol and 15 ponstan pills to erase all the conflicting thoughts that were going through her head.

When asked what her intention was at the time of the attempt Lammy said:

“ I want to die lah. I still have the intention I don't know why... Although I try to live, try to ... because I need, for me to live again I need more strength I really try hard to be strong to have a new start. So, I just realize I still have the intention in me... although the voices are very weak but still there, I know it is still there. So this time the voice become just loud suddenly.”

Lammy was thus in a state of ambivalence having conflicting feelings of survival and unbearable stress.

**Feelings and thoughts after the suicide attempt**

While in the hospital Lammy had lots of time to think, read and recuperate. She found the time in the hospital peaceful and gave her opportunities to reflect and reformulate her thoughts. She was glad that she recovered and the following insights were made:

She decided to discuss with her lecturer to determine the status of her project and if need be to reconsider the possibility of working on a new project.

She decided that if she has to extend another semester she would consider the offer made by the church elders who were willing to provide her with some financial assistance.

With regard to her sister she believed that a couple of months more she would be able to be with her sister. She intended to work in a job that is not too demanding so that she can have time for her. In the meantime she will check on her and find out more on her sickness. She would also see to it that her aunty looks after Mei Mei until the time she can be there.

She observed that now she felt that she was in control of herself and sense that the intention is gone. She felt confident that she would not attempt again.

### Case Study No: Six –Nonie

Age	18 years old
Race	Malay
Religion	Muslim
Education level	Diploma
Marital Status	Single
Employment	Student
Person living with	Friends
Nature of injury	Multiple drug overdose
First attempt	February 2000
Second attempt	May 2000
Date interviewed	05.05.2000
Suicide Intent Score	6 ( medium range) – Appendix: 6

#### Background information

Nonie is the second child in a family of seven children. Her elder sister whom she normally confides in is currently studying in ITM. Nonie is closed to her two sisters who are now three years old. According to her she took care of them for one whole year thus her attachment to them.

Nonie explained that her family lives quite comfortably now. However, at one stage of their life they were very poor and lived by borrowing for one year. Life was difficult then, and her mother had to sell her piece of land to make ends meet. Friends and relatives shunned them, and were not willing to help. However, she is thankful that her father managed to start a new business and now life is much better for them. Nonie disclosed that despite everything, her parents are kind and fair to all of them. There is no favoritism; every one of them was treated equally. Her parents fulfilled all her needs and she felt loved by them.

School front, Nonie was not an active student as she would rather spend time with her friends and concentrate on her studies. Right now doing her Diploma in

Technology Management, she dreams of furthering her studies in UPM. However, to be able to achieve this she needs to get a good grade average consistently for the next two years. However she is worried that this ambition of her's is being hampered by one of the lecturers who gives her very low marks compared to her other papers. She is able to score well in all other papers but felt frustrated that for this particular lecturer she was not able to perform. Last year the lecturer had given her a "C" for one of the papers, which was a disappointment to her. She was afraid that it would be the same again this year since she was going to be under the same lecturer the next semester. She is fearful that because of him she would be deprived of going to UPM.

Nonie explained that the particular lecturer seemed to be biased with his marks. When they voiced it out to the lecturer, he gave excuses that were not acceptable. This has been carrying on since last semester. She felt helpless since despite voicing out to both the lecturer and to the management nothing concrete was achieved. This made her and the others frustrated and angry, so much so that some of the students did not even attend the lectures.

### **Problems, feelings and thoughts prior to the suicide attempt**

Nonie is very achievement orientated and has high expectations of herself. She always compares her marks with others and gets very disappointed when she does not score better than her friends do. As such when she received her preliminary results that showed that she scored 20 out of 50 marks, while others scored high, she was depressed. Despite knowing that they were bound to score better than she because of the lecturer's favoritism she could not accept it. Added to that, she felt panic for it meant her probability of getting three points for the paper would be very slim, as no

matter how well she does for the final exam the 20 marks scored earlier would pull her total marks down. She expressed:

“ betul dah stress dah, lagi pun dah dekat nak exam, carry mark 50%, marks sikit... kita orang join venture dengan UPM, so carry mark untuk college lepas tu final exam 50%. Carry mark saya baru terlalu sikit, baru dapat 20+, final 10 haribulan, jadi saya panik, final sepuluh haribulan, preparation saya pun saya tak puas hati, sebab dah tengok carry mark macam tu, dah rasa stress betul, tertekan betul dengan carry mark tu.”

*(I feel so stressed, the examination which carried 50 % of the marks was so close, and now I received my results for the preliminary 50 % score of which I only scored 20+. It is so little, and my final is on the 10<sup>th</sup>, so I panicked. Looking at my results, I became dissatisfied with my preparation. I feel so stressed up, and I feel so pressured and disappointed with the results)*

Apart from being worried about not getting a place at UPM Nonie was also worried about her loan. If she fail, her loan will be withdrawn and she could not afford that. Although she admitted that her father could help support her in her studies, she was afraid that she would deprive her younger siblings. Moreover her sister too was planning to further her studies. Thus she needed to pass with flying colors, so that she will not lose the loan. Moreover, she felt embarrassed to tell her parents if she did not do well in her papers.

Nonie put a lot of pressure on herself to succeed as she has a desire to further her studies to university. Thus when she discovered that her results were very low she felt broken, as it meant her expectation will not be met. Dependent on a loan that

could be revoked if she does not perform, and too embarrassed to admit failure to her parents, and the uncertainty of a place in varsity due to her results, she felt tensed and scared on the day she received her results. She couldn't help but feel cheated and wronged by the lecturer. She felt he was being unfair and that she needed to pay him back for all the wrong that he had done to her. While she felt angry and wanted to punish him, she also felt strained and stressed up.

“ Ya..saya nak dapatkan 3 pointer sebenarnya. Jadi kalau paper tu saya fail, atau dapat D ke C ke, benda lain semua turut terjejas.”

and

“ Saya stress dengan lecturer tempat saya belajar. ”

and

“ Saya rasa dia tak adil.”

and

“Sebab kita orang dah dapat carry mark, tiga hari lepas dapat tu mark, lepas tu dah nak finalkan, so rasa dah macam makin tertekan.”

*(Yes, I wanted to get a 3- point average, so if I failed or only managed a D+ or a C, all my other results will be affected; I am so stressed by this lecturer; I feel that he is not being fair and because we have received our preliminary results three days ago, then it was the final examination, so I felt so pressured by it all)*

Pressured by the impending exam and burdened by the low score that she had, for two days after getting her results she could not sleep. Although she felt better after talking about it to her other course mates, when night came she felt restless. Normally when she feels tense she resorts to eating, on that day despite quantities of food

consumed, she still could not cope with the thought that was going through her mind. Wanting to sleep and forget it all, she decided that taking the pills would release all her anxiety. So, Nonie overdosed on multiple drugs that she found in the refrigerator at her shared apartment. She expressed:

“Sebab saya rasa lepas (referring to after taking the pills) tu boleh tidur ke pengsan ke...sebab masa tu saya dah fikir pasal masalah tu jadi saya tak nak fikir lagi, nanti bila saya tidur pun saya terfikir lagi. So lebih baik saya makan ubat nanti saya tak payah fikir apa apa. ”

*(Because I felt that after that I can either sleep or faint as I don't want to continue thinking about the problem. Even in my sleep I was still thinking about it. So it is best that I take the medicine so that I do not have to think anymore.)*

Apart from wanting to release her tension Nonie also wanted to punish her lecturer for what he had done to her. She felt that by overdosing herself, the lecturer would feel remorseful and realize what wrong he had done. She had no intention of killing herself but only to release her tension, to sleep it off and punish her lecturer

She said:

“ Saya makan sebenarnya nak lepaskan tension.”

and

“Boleh tidur.”

and



“So, jadi saya ambil tindakan macam tu saya nak rasa saya punya lecturer tu bersalah. Saya rasa dia tak adil. Jadi saya harapkan apa yang saya buat ni nanti buat dia menyesal.”

and

“ Tak ada tujuan nak mati, Nilah supaya lecturer tu sedar, Apa yang dia buat.”

*(I took the pills because I wanted to release my tension; I wanted to sleep; I took such an action so that my lecturer will realize his mistake. I feel he had not been fair, so I hoped what I had done would make him feel remorseful)*

However to Nonie's surprised after taking the pills she did not fall asleep but instead got a different sensation. She mentioned that during her first semester, because of the same tense feeling she took ten tablets of 500 grams paracetamol with coke to release her tension. But this time around she felt the effect of the pills. She felt headache and her whole body was shivering and she went to lie down. She perceived that she was dying and felt remorseful over her act while at times she thought maybe she was only going to faint after all. When her friends saw her shivering and stiff they asked her what had happened to her. Although at first reluctant to tell, after being pressured and forced by them she told them. Her friends then brought her to the hospital.

So Nonie who had been pressured by the same lecturer for the past one year giving her only a C in the previous semester, was frightened that she would at best score a C for this paper. Not only was she fearful of her current results she was also fearful that for her next semester the same lecturer would be offering a marketing paper. She felt that she was doomed to fail and will never achieve what she wants. Fearful of her future, worried about the present and depressed about her past, she felt

tense and could not function normally. She became restless and sleepless, pressured to do well but realizing that she will not be able to do so. She could not face it and wanted to run away from it all and chose to take the pills to sleep it of.

Despite being pious, at that moment of anxiety she said her emotions took the better of her, and she forgot the Almighty. She expressed that at that time she could not think of anything else except her emotions that took over, as she was burned out. Only after taking the pills and feeling the pain that the realization came back and she asked for his forgiveness.

“Walaupun kita sembahyang sekali pun, sembahyang tu adalah sebagai satu kewajipan, kalau nak buat perkara ni, dia orang memang tak boleh nak ingat Tuhan, dia cuma masa tu ingat diri dia orang saja dan perasaan dia orang. Masa tu Tuhan dah lupa, perasaan take over. Kita dah tak teringat. Bila dah lepas makan, bila sakit tu baru Ya Allah apa yang aku buat ni.”

*(Despite the fact that we pray, praying is part of our responsibility. But when you do this, it is natural that you will not think of God, as at that moment you can only think of yourself and your feelings. At that time God is forgotten, your feelings take over. We can't think of anything else. But after taking it, feeling the pain, a realization will come and Allah's presence will be felt)*

Nonie justified herself by saying that at the time she took the pills she was having her menses and as Muslims are not allowed to pray during those times she felt weak and susceptible to the influence of Satan. However she felt thankful that she did not die for otherwise she would have truly sinned. This is because she believes that

even if she had not the intention to die, but if she accidentally died that would be seen as an act of suicide is considered a sin in Islam.

### **Feelings and thoughts after the suicide attempt**

During her stay in the hospital Nonie had the following insight:

She realized the stupidity of her act. She said that while she wanted to punish her lecturer, the truth of the matter was that her lecturer was not even aware of her act at the moment, but instead she was in pain. Thus it was a foolhardy effort.

Going through the pain and the medical treatment that she had undergone, she regretted her act and promised that she would never try this again.

She intended to tell the lecturer that he had not been fair to them and negotiate for better marks.

She decided to gather a petition among her course mates, and make an appeal to the management that they be released from the lecturer for the next semester.

### Case Study No: Seven – Marina

Age	24 years old
Race	Malay
Religion	Muslim
Education level	Diploma
Marital Status	Married
Employment	Student of Fashion and Designing
Person living with	On her own
Nature of injury	Pain killer – six tablets
First attempt	May 2000
Second attempt	Nil
Date interviewed	15.05.2000
Suicide Intent Score	5 (medium range) – Appendix: 6

#### Background information

Marina is the eldest child in a family of five children. Her siblings are 21 years old, 15 years old, 14 years old and the youngest is only 9 years old. As the big sister, Marina feels that she has to set a good example for her siblings. As such she is very careful that she does not misbehave.

She is an obedient child and follows instruction. If her parents do not give her permission to go out with friends, she would not defy them. According to Marina, her parents are kind and gentle and she was never abused. She expressed that she is close to her mother but not her father although her mother is very stern while her father is sweet-tempered and kind. She talks more openly with mother who acts as the middle person between her and father. Her father is an Imam (religious leader) in the village, thus she was brought up in a religious way. She has been praying since she was three years old.

Marina explained that her life had been good for the past 24 years. While she had problems, they were small and she could handle them. However, three weeks ago

all this changed. Suddenly, she was faced with a problem that she felt was extremely complex, that was beyond her. She was afraid and felt incapable of accepting that it was happening to her. She discovered that her husband of six months, was a married man.

### **Problems, feelings and thoughts prior to the suicide attempt**

The news that her husband was married prior to marrying her came as a shock, as she had known him for six years. She was in love with him and it hurt her terribly. Moreover, according to her because of love, for the first time in her life, she defied her parent's choice when she decided to marry him. Thus she felt ashamed with what had happened.

What puzzled her, was, during their courtship he had seemed honest and truthful. While he mentioned having had a relationship, it was supposed to be over. However, now, she found out that he married the ex-girlfriend before marrying her. Despite his explanation, that it was a marriage of convenience as the ex- girlfriend was pregnant with somebody's child and he felt obliged to protect her image, and that it was over between him and her, she could not accept it. She did not believe him. It hurt her that she knew it from another source and not from him. Moreover, she felt he was more concerned about the woman and not sensitive to how she would feel. She felt if he had been genuine, he would have not kept it a secret from her and they as a couple could have sorted it out. She was confused, for in her mind if his objective was to protect the woman he should not have had any qualms about telling her. So, she felt uncertain of the relationship and sense that he was hiding the truth from her. She felt betrayed and cheated by his actions. While she suggested that she meet up with the

ex-girlfriend, to verify that all is over between them he denied her request, and instead assured her that he will settle everything and she need not worry. She worried, and furthermore, it convinced her of his infidelity despite him telling that they had never been physical since the marriage.

For three weeks she debated on the issue. She expressed that while before she felt special to him, now she felt insignificant and deduced that her existence meant nothing to him. She was hurt, angry and disappointed. She felt restless, with no direction, although prayers helped her to have a certain level of calmness. The thought of him married, and her sense of being deceived and dishonored kept playing in her mind like a broken tape recorder. She was fearful that there could be a tug of war between her and the other woman. Now, considered as second wife she perceived her position as weak and was fearful of losing her husband. She was also worried that society would label her as one who had stolen another woman's husband. But most of all she felt fearful that her husband could still harbor feelings for the woman. In her logical mind, it did not make sense for him to agree to marry her, unless he had feelings for her.

Nonetheless, all this while, for three weeks, she was in denial, hoping that all this was only a bad dream. However, reality hit her when she saw in one of her husband's files of documents the marriage certificate and the birth certificate of the child. Suddenly she felt a heavy burden in her heart and felt suicidal. She expressed:

“Nampak benda ni (referring to the marriage and birth certificate), rasa macam...satu barang orang kata timpa dekat atas diri saya tu terlalu besar. Bebannya terlalu.”

and

“Ya... terasa banyak sangat penderitaan yang saya tanggungkan. Sampai saya rasa hidup saya ni macam ..lebih baik saya mati. Sebab saya fikir saya pun dah terlalu rungsingkan. ‘

and

“Yang saya dapat tahu macam semalam saya boleh nikan  
(referring to her attempt of taking her life) sebab saya nampak surat nikah  
ah.19/1/99. ...tahun lepas.”

*(When I saw it, I felt like a big load pressed on me. It was huge and extremely suffocating; Yes, I felt there was too much agony and suffering that I had to go through, to the extent that I felt that my life is pointless, I would be better of being dead because I felt overwhelmed with distress; I did it because I saw the marriage certificate, they were married on 19/1/99, last year. )*

Moreover, Marina felt she would be ashamed and embarrassed if her parents found out about her husband being a married man and thought that she would rather die than face the humiliation. She dreaded the thought that her parents would harp on her that it was her choice, while they had another man in mind for her. Thus it was her doing. Marina expressed regret over the marriage, wishing that she had listened to her parents. Now disgraced, she could not face her parents, as it would be admitting that she had made the wrong choice. When asked how she felt when taking the painkillers she expressed:

“Saya fikir lebih baik saya mati daripada saya menanggung malu macam ni.  
Saya rasa malu nak berdepan dengan keluarga saya sebenarnya. Orang lain

saya tak kisah, tapi keluarga saya. Sebab saya tolak pilihan dia orang, kerana saya cintakan dia. Tiba tiba tu dia buat macam nikan.”

*(I thought I would be better of dead rather than am burdened with this shame.*

*The truth is I feel embarrassed to face my family members. I don't care much about others, but not my family. This is because I said no to their choice of man and wanted my husband because I was in love with him. But now suddenly, this had to happen.)*

Marina felt stuck, trapped in a marriage with no certainty of what the future was going to be, there was no turning back for her. But she could not face the reality that she is the second wife. She does not want to be one, yet she does not want to lose her husband. She felt despair.

In her time of despair Marina had no one whom she could confide in. She was definitely not able to seek her family's help, as she was too ashamed to approach them. Basically a private person, preferring to keep things to herself, she was not able to disclose to her friends the whole story, as she felt this was a personal issue thus unwise to talk to others about it. She was also afraid that her husband might not like her telling on him and their family affairs. Furthermore, she felt people may be biased and their advice might just confuse her further, thus she would rather keep it to herself. She would rather figure out her own solution to the problem, not expecting that she would take such an extreme act. Alone she tried to pray to calm herself for she was fearful that she could behave sinfully. She said:

“Fikiran saya tak boleh nak fikir dengan baik. Saya cuba juga sembahyang, ingatkan Tuhan, takut saya ni akan buat....macam orang kata yang dilarang



oleh ugama. Tapi makin lama saya sabar makin rasakan diri saya ni terasa dipermainkan sangat. Rasa tergugat maruah saya. ”

*(My thoughts were not straight anymore. I tried to pray, to think of God, for I was fearful that I might act in a way that is forbidden. But the more I tried to be patient, the more I felt like a fool and being used. I felt disgraced as a woman.)*

But even prayers did not seem to help her totally for she was still disturbed. She said:

“Bila waktu sembahyangkan kita rasa memang tenang, tapi bila kita fikir fikir balik, tapi kadang tu setan lebih banyak, walau macam mana pun dia sengaja kadang tu bagi fikiran kita berkecelaru lebih teruk. Bila dah celaru lebih teruk ni buat, kita tertekan, jiwa rasa tertekan, fikir apa jalan yang kita fikir tak nak fikir dah ambil jalan yang mudah lah orang kata.”

*(When I was praying I actually felt calm, but when I started to recall the past, the influence of Satan seemed overpowering. It made our minds muddle up, and when we are so confused, we feel so stressed up. Overwhelmed with it all, we tend to think of the most unlikely things and that is how we can end up taking the easy way out.)*

Despite praying and trying to stay calm, she was unable to focus. She began to doubt his love, for she felt that if he loved her he would not hurt her the way he had. She felt used and made a fool of as he had made a joke of their marriage. She felt disgraced and lost her sense of dignity as a woman.

Feeling restless and confused, torn between wanting her husband and not wanting to be the second wife, unsure of his love for her, feeling ashamed towards her family for the grave mistake that she made, she could not face the reality of the

situation. Exhausted, not knowing what to do, on impulse noticing the painkillers, she felt that the painkillers were “inviting” her to take them and help solve all her troubles – “makanlah ubat, makanlah ubat, ubat tu cakap makanlah saya, makanlah saya selesai masalah awak. ” (*Take the painkillers, take the pain killers, the medicine asked me to take them. Take me and solve all your problems*) She took them and landed herself in the hospital.

Despite saying that she wanted to die, Marina actually felt ambivalence about living or dying, for she added when asked if her intention of taking the pills was to die:

“Hati kata mati, sebab ubat tu kata makanlah saya... untuk matilah. Tak adalah habis habis untuk mungkin saya ingat cara bila saya ambil ubat tu bila...mungkin saya boleh lupakan dulu. Buangkan masalah ketepi, bila kita sakitkan, kita mesti fikir sakit, tapi kita tak fikir sebenarnya apa masalah yang kita alami.”

and

“ Ikut orang kata ajal maut di tangan tuhan, itu aja yang saya fikir, tapi saya fikir kalau boleh biarlah mati, biarlah mati, itu yang saya fikir, mati tak mati saya rasa terpulang kepada takdir.”

*(My heart says to die, because the painkillers say eat me so that you will die and solve all your problems, but I think at the end of it I hoped by taking the pills I could maybe forget it all, I can put it aside. I would be sick, then my concern is about my sickness, then I need not have to worry about my problem; and according to*

*others, life and death is in the hands of God. Although I hoped to die, whether I live or I die, I left it to God).*

After taking the pills Marina started to vomit. She struggled with the pain from noon till evening. Although her husband was around and was sympathetic, she did not disclose to him what she had done. She only disclosed it to him when she began to feel suffocated. He insisted that he take her to the hospital. While at first disagreeable she later relented after being persuaded by a friend.

### **Feelings and thoughts after the suicide attempt**

At the hospital, recuperating, Marina disclosed that she felt uncertain whether she should feel glad or sorry that she recovered as she still felt uncertain about her future. She had however the following insights:

She was remorseful over what she had done. She felt it a stupid act that does not help solve anything, but instead created more problems, as now she is sick.

She felt that she needed to relax, have a clear mind before deciding on the next course of action. However, she is considering meeting up with the first wife without the husband's knowledge to know her side of the story before she makes her next decision.

She felt that ventilating her feelings and thoughts helped her to unburden her pent-up emotions and she was agreeable to go for counseling.

### Case Study No: Eight – Sima

Age	16 years old
Race	Malay
Religion	Muslim
Marital Status	Single
Employment	Student
Person living with	Parents
Nature of injury	Overdose on 30 tablets of paracetamol
First attempt	3 rd April 2000
Second attempt	Nil
Date interviewed	05.04.2000
Suicide Intent Score	4 (medium range) – Appendix: 6

#### Background information

Sima is the fourth child in a family of five children. She has two elder sisters aged 23 and 22 and a younger sister who is 12 years old. Her brother, the third in the family, died at 6 months old thus Sima never really knew him. Sima's parents had been previously married, but her half siblings are not staying with them. However, her father quite frequently goes to the East Coast to visit them.

Although Sima expressed that she is happy at home she doesn't have a close attachment to her family. She feels her parents do not talk much to her and that her mother gives more love to her younger sister. Generally, she feels lonely at home. She expressed that she doesn't get much attention and care from them and wished that they could show more concern for her. She perceives that while her physical needs are being fulfilled there is not enough love. She revealed:

“Mungkin dia orang didik dengan se elok eloknya.. tapi...saya.. terasa... saya kurang dapat kasih sayang.”

*(Maybe they have brought me as best they can, but I feel that I do not get enough love)*

While she wanted their attention, she disclosed that most times she is left on her own, making her own decisions and even when she fell ill, it would go unnoticed unless she informed her parents.

At school, Sima has two group of friends, the studious group and the playful/lazy group. Not being able to secure a seat with the studious group, she mingled with bad company even though she is not very attached to them. Recently the studious group ignores her when she asked for their assistance and started shunning her. Not able to understand their behavior she spends most times alone. She feels ostracized by this group of friends and finds school boring. She truants a lot. Her school attendance has been poor to a point that she received warning letters. With such a record her relationship with her form teacher is not good. The teacher is distrustful of her and suspects her motive of nonattendance.

Normally when she truants, she spends time at her boyfriend's place, helping him work. However, lately because of misunderstanding with him, she stays home when not in school.

### **Problems, feelings and thoughts prior to the suicide attempt**

In March this year, a month before her attempt, her school attendance is at its worse. The reason she gave was because her boyfriend has been placing her under too much pressure. The strain that she felt includes, suspecting her boyfriend of having another girlfriend and his sexual demands, whilst she wanted love and friendship. In addition he accuses her of being physical with his friend.

Not getting enough love from home, and feeling lonely at school, and the need for friendship she turned to her boyfriend for companionship. However even in love she meets with disappointment. Sima had this to say about her three years relationship with the boy.

"Saya cuba cari seorang yang memahami saya punya hati, perasaan, saya nak kasih sayang dari dia. Tapi saya harapkan lain, lain yang jadi."

*(I try to find someone who understands me, my feelings; I want love and care. But what I hope for and what I get is totally different.)*

This is because in the last three months she discovered that he has another girl whom seemed to play a more important role in his life. She couldn't understand and cannot accept that he writes in his diary about how special the girl is, but never about her. She felt that she is nothing to him and only to be used as a sex object. She also suspects that they have had a physical relationship and questioned him about the girl. Before she had full trust in him, and remains faithful to him, hoping that he would reciprocate, however now she feels betrayed, used, hurt, angry and confused as the person whom she depended and hoped could give her care and love had disappointed her, and only wanted her body. She reflected

" Saya harapkan kasih sayang dia...tapi dia... perlukan saya untuk memuaskan nafsu dia."

and

"Sekarang pun dia paksa juga, saya lebih tertekan lagi, dia kata dia nak tinggalkan saya tapi dia nak benda tu lagi."

and

"Dia hanya berkawan dengan saya hanya nak gunakan saya aja."

and

"Siapa yang tak sakit hati, orang yang saya harapkan mengecewakan."

*(I hoped for love, but he only wants me to satisfy his lust; even now he still forces me, I feel stressed up, he said he wants to leave me, but he still wants it; he make friends with me, only to use me and, who would not get hurt and angry, the person that you have hopes in, disappoints you.)*

She further elaborated that she was forced into sex, and not that she wanted it. She explained that he pressured her into it, assuring her that all be all right, although she worries about the possible consequences.

Feeling rejected and unloved and partly to spite her boyfriend she started getting close to a boy who seemed to show interest in her. With him she confides her troubles and started to have feelings for him. She felt very assured that he cares for her.

However, despite getting close to the new boy, when her boyfriend wanted to break off giving the excuse that she was having an affair with his friend, she felt hurt and angry and was not able to accept the break up. On the evening of the quarrel when he was rude to her and disclaimed her in front of the new boy, wanting to end the relationship she took 20 panadols. The reason she took parecetamol was:

"Sakit hati... ."

and

“Sebab ...saya punya... sebab saya dah pernah buat perhubungan dengan dia. Sebab bukan saya yang putuskan hubungan ini, dia yang cakap.”

*(Hurt and angry; because I had sex with him, because it is not me who wanted the break up, he said it.)*

The break up would not only mean that she doesn't have a boyfriend but loss of love and care. She also expressed that since she lost her virginity at the age of 13, it was difficult for her to have a relationship with other boys, as she felt ostracized among them. She felt that not being a virgin has demeaned her as a woman and feels regret that she had allowed it to happen. Moreover she is fearful and worried that her boyfriend would tell on her and that would jeopardize her position with other boys.

She seemed to be torn between wanting him and rejecting him as she felt she loved him and yet at the same time felt betrayed and used. What makes matters worse was the presence of the new guy who has showed her care and guidance. She is confused, as while indirectly glad that the relationship is over she is also fearful that the new guy may not accept her if he knows her sexual past. She is scared that the boyfriend will tell on her.

Another aspect of her worries arises from her newfound belief and awareness in her religion. Coming from a non religious background, her recent involvement in a religious club in school brought her into a different perspective as to what is right and wrong. Also, mixing with the new guy, she started wearing "tudung". She now feels that she wants to further her understanding of Islam. However, her boyfriend, a non-Muslim, drinks and is not concerned about her religion although she has advised him to stop drinking and encouraged him to familiarize himself with Islam. With her new



involvement in religion, she sees having sex is a big sin and thus the boyfriend's constant sexual demands pricked her conscience. Feeling guilty she uttered:

“Saya tak sanggup. Saya dah fikir dah benda tu. Dosa besar.”

and

“Salah, Saya dah tak nak buat, tapi dia paksa.”

*(I can't. I've thought about this. It is a big sin; Wrong. Now I do not want to do it, but he forces me.)*

What puzzles her too is that while he wants to leave her, he still demands sex with her.

Not able to face the reality of losing the love and care that she longs for, while uncertain of the ability to establish a new relationship; feeling hurt and angry for the betrayal; pressured into doing an act which she feels is sinful, she had a mental block. All she wanted was to have a peace of mind and be away from her problem.

With all these in her mind, she elaborated that she took paracetamol because she felt restless and could not think anymore. She felt being in the hospital she would have a peace of mind. She had no thought or intention of dying, but only to be warded. So after one and half days of experiencing headaches, not able to eat and throwing up after every meal, she got worried and told her mother that she needed to go for a medical check up. Sima revealed:

“ Tak saya tak fikir saya nak mati, sebab saya telan 20 biji saja.”

and

“ Saya rasa saya nak masuk hospital . Saya nak lari dari masalah. “

and

“Sakit hati, tak ada niat nak bunuh diri langsung, untuk tenangkan fikiran.”

*(No I didn't think that I will die, I only took 20 pills; I just feel that I want to be hospitalized. I want to run away from my problems; I was hurt and angry, I have no intention of killing myself and to get a peace of mind.)*

When asked if she told anyone that she overdosed, she expressed that she was too afraid to tell her parents, while her good friend Ana had seem distant from her for the past two weeks so she had no one to talk to. However, she mentioned it in passing to her boyfriend.

“Mmm...cakap dengan Devan ajalah. Sambil lewa.”

*(Mmmm...I only told Devan in passing)*

The day after taking the pills, she when to visit him. According to her she wanted to have a chat with him. When she started vomiting in front of him, she told him that she had taken lots of panadol. However her boyfriend was most concerned that she could be pregnant, and when she assured him that she was not, he ignored her.

While her parents were not conscious of her physical state her boyfriend disregarded it. Feeling abandoned and worried about the effects of the paracetamol, she initiated going to the hospital with the help of her uncle. She said:

“Dah dia tak percaya, lepas tu saya ajak pakcik saya pergi ke hospital.”

*(Since he did not believe me, later I asked my uncle to take me to the hospital)*

At the hospital she requested that she be warded.

### **Feelings and thoughts after the suicide attempt**

Sima expressed that while she liked being in the hospital ward, she didn't like the medical treatment that she had to go through. While she was glad to have recovered, she never felt remorse over her actions. After couple of days at the ward she had the following insights:

She decided that she would be better off with the new guy as he is a Muslim and will be able to guide her to the correct path.

“Yang mana yang saya akan pilih, orang yang sanggup membimbing saya atau orang yang sanggup menghancurkan hidup saya, saya dah fikir masak masak, saya akan pilih orang yang sanggup membimbing saya dari dunia ke akhirat.”

*(Which should I choose, the one who is willing to guide me, or the one who wants to destroy my life, I've thought deeply about it, I have decided that I shall choose the man who will guide me through this life and the hereafter.)*

She decided that for the moment she would concentrate on her studies rather than relationships, and that she will attempt to mingle with the studious friends. She would concentrate on preparing for her SPM and would stop playing truant in school.

## **Interpretation and Analysis of Qualitative Data**

Interpretation and analysis of the information collected is presented using the research questions as a guide.

What are the causes that made attempters want to kill themselves?

The causes that are found to have led these youth to want to kill themselves are divided into three factors. The factors are triggering factors, precipitating factors and underlying factors.

### **Triggering factors**

The immediate causes for these female youths to attempt suicide can be seen by the triggering factors that were mentioned by the eight respondents and the other young women.

Yuma, Anita and Sima, had relationship problems that led to misunderstandings or break ups. Not being able to accept and face with the situation, they decided to escape from this painful reality by overdosing. In contrast, Mala who also chose death as a way out had a totally different kind of relationship problem. Based on her religious and moral upbringing she experienced an emotional turmoil when she fell in love with a married man and considered marrying him. In a dilemma whether or not to break the relationship, on impulse she took rat poison. Marina faced marital discord when she found out her husband of six months, was actually a married man before she married him. After six years of courtship, she could not face the truth when she saw his previous marriage certificate. Moreover, she felt ashamed as she

had made the choice of marrying him while her parents wanted her to marry another man.

What differentiated Nonie and Lammy from the others was that being students they faced educational problems. Having high expectations, when faced with disappointments or failure in their studies they were devastated. Nonie felt stressed when she received low results in her mid-term examinations. She anticipated that despite all the efforts that she had put in for the final examination, her chances to secure a place in the university were jeopardized by her earlier poor results. Lammy, on the other hand, already in university, felt desperate as the deadline for the submission of the project paper approached and she still failed to secure the answers and conclusions to her research. Failure to submit would mean she would not be able to graduate that semester which frightened her.

With regard to Anise, fear and anxiety of being branded a liar and the possible repercussions that was anticipated if her mother found out that she had spent time with her boyfriend was the reason given by Anise for wanting to die.

In general, the triggering factors given by the twenty-five youths were related to interpersonal conflicts and quarreling with partners as the primary factor given for the overdose.

### **Precipitating factors**

While the triggering factors were the immediate stimuli for the suicidal act, each of them had precipitating factors that provoked the triggering factors that prompted them towards self-harm. As they are individuals experiencing their own unique problem, the researcher wishes to present the factors individually so as not to lose the essence of each person's emotional turmoil.

With regard to Anise, she was moved to suicide because of the regular physical and mental abuse inflicted on her by her family members. She felt unloved and uncared for especially by her mother who showed deep resentment towards her. Added to this was the fact that she is constantly faced with problems that overwhelmed her, but she had no one whom she could ask for help. She had no support from her family. The final straw was having a relationship that was not approved by her parents.

For Mala, the precipitating factor for her eventual suicide attempt was because she perceived that God and society did not sanction her affair with a married man. Being a pious woman her emotional needs was in conflict with her high moral and religious values that pressured her to conform. Moreover, she was pressured by her friends to end the relationship. Lacking love from her family, while needing love and care, Mala felt pressured and worried that she would lose her friends if she continued the relationship while at the same time worried that the boyfriend might harm himself if she were to break the friendship. Being torn between these two aspects, Mala was driven to a suicidal tendency.

With regard to Yuma who was away from her hometown, she was unable to adjust to the new way of life in the city and was easily influenced by the environment. What made matter worse was her over-dependence on her boyfriend, while being isolated and alienated from family and friends. Faced with the break up in the relationship she felt hopeless and alone. Unable to reach out to her family and friends due to her embarrassment to admit that she works as a Guest Relation Officer (GRO) at a nightclub, a demeaning job, she chose suicide as the alternative.

Anita was burdened with three issues that eventually drove her to suicide. They were family, job and boyfriend. While her working environment was not conducive and unrewarding, her relationship with her boyfriend was shrouded with misunderstandings and lack of communication. At home, her brothers were controlling, stifling her personality and movement. Moreover, Anita had lots of bottled up emotions as she battled with her conscience whether to conform to the traditional values upheld by her family for fear that she may bring shame and disgrace from her outgoing personality and “wild” behavior. In addition, Anita is still moaning over the death of her elder sister who was her confidante. Feeling lost and alone, quarrels with the boyfriend thus drove her to attempt suicide.

Lammy was driven to suicidal behavior because she was burdened with financial problems and a fast approaching deadline to complete her project paper. Having high expectation of self, her inability to find the outcome to the project makes her feel like a failure. In addition, she was also pressured to care for her mentally ill sister. The poor relationship with her father was a tremendous strain on her. Amid all the problems, Lammy found it difficult to cope with the constant façade that she had to maintain in front of others. She felt pressured to appear strong and capable while actually she was feeling afraid, alone and fearful of her future.

For Marina, discovering her husband’s unfaithfulness and losing trust in him drove her to contemplate suicide. Moreover, the awareness that she carried the status of a second wife was a painful reality. Disobeying her parents on the choice of a husband, she was not able to obtain their help in her time of need, as she felt embarrassed and ashamed to admit her mistake. Alone and unable to ventilate her frustrations and anger she was driven to suicide.

With regard to Nonie, she paved the way to suicide by having high expectations to do well in her examination despite knowing that the odds were against her. An additional pressure to perform was because her study loan was dependent on her good performance. In addition, the longstanding problem with her lecturer and the apathetic attitude of the school management by ignoring the complaints made by her regarding the lecturer frustrated her and made her feel helpless. Thus, when her preliminary examination result was not satisfactory, Nonie felt pressured and fearful of her future. Thus, the circumstance drove her too suicidal act.

Sima seemed lonely and isolated, as she had no friends in school and did not receive enough love and care at home. Thus, when her only companion decided to abandon her, she was unable to accept it and chose to resort to an overdose. Moreover, she felt that after losing her virginity it would be impossible for her to start a new relationship, as she was fearful that other boys would not accept her. Coupled with the fear of being alone again is her sudden awareness of her religious belief that seem to clash with her current behavior of having sexual relationships. Sima thus wanted to escape from the mental pressure and decided to an overdose as a last resort.

Thus, although the act itself seemed to be impulsive as a reaction to something that happened immediately prior to the suicide act, in actual fact there were many other factors that frustrated the individual. These are the factors that eventually drove the person to a suicidal behavior.

### **Underlying factors**

While the above two factors were immediate and obvious other underlying factors were also seen to be significant among these female youths. The underlying factors included "Unhappy Childhood and Family Background", "Loss or lack of



attachment", "Loss of Investment", "Lack of Faith" and "Isolation". Other factors include the absence of a listening ear (support and counseling), easy access to the means of self-injury, and suicide too was seen as a coping mechanism as a way out of a desperate situation.

**Unhappy childhood and family background.** It is seen that while Sima, Lammy, Anise, Anita and Mala experienced an unhappy childhood and teenage life, Nonie, Marina and Yuma expressed that they had a good family environment.

Lammy had a father who was demanding, authoritarian and controlling. As a child she was pressured to do well in school. Due to the pressure, she almost had a mental breakdown during her school days. When she did not do well her father punished her by ostracizing and ignoring her existence. While her father physically abused her sister, she was mentally abused. Not able to stand his abuses, on the first opportunity she left home. Anita too, felt suffocated by her controlling brothers, who not only restricted her activities but also had spies to check on her so as to ensure that she did not misbehave. For this, she resorted to playing truant and lying to get her freedom for she was an outgoing person who loved to experience new things. With regard to her family environment she expressed the wish to be part of a "keluarga yang bahagia", (a happy family) as she felt there was no sense of unity and togetherness in the home. She expressed that her family members argued often which she hated to witness.

Sima, on the other hand, had a disengaged family. While she wanted attention and some kind of adult control in her life, her parent's left her to fend for herself. She wanted love and care instead she was neglected. She felt that her mother loved her sister more and she felt unwanted. According to her, even when she was sick, it might

go unnoticed if she did not inform. This seemed to be true, for even when she was sick after the suicide attempt; she only initiated going to the hospital after two days' of vomiting.

Anise seen as the black sheep and labeled a "jinx" was abused both physically and mentally. She was constantly told that she was "good for nothing" and bearer of problems, it became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Her mother even labeled her "bosia" and prostitute. When her younger brother tried to molest her, her parents ignored her pleas claiming that she made it up. Anise felt that her parents discriminated against her and that no one in the family loved or cared for her. Even her younger sister made remark "kau ni tak ada guna langsung hidup" (*you! there is no point in being alive*)

While Anise's family made her life miserable, Mala discovered that she was adopted when she was 15 years old, a time when a teenager is searching for her identity. She was told that when her mother died, her father gave her away because she was dark and ugly. For this she never forgave her father despite his wanting to make amends. Although she received love from her adopted mother, the others who shared the same household were hostile towards her, making her feel not wanted in the family. Due to the hostility and constant arguments with her mother who wanted to marry her off, she left home. She eventually ended up in a welfare home.

So, all these female youths had one thing in common, that is, they had neither a strong family upbringing nor family support and cohesiveness which are essential in times of crisis.

In contrast, Yuma, Marina and Nonie came from reasonably happy family backgrounds. Nonie expressed that her parents loved her and her siblings equally and all her needs were met. Although there was a period of one year when her father's

business failed and they became poor, yet they pulled through it together and now life was again comfortable. Yuma said that she was close to her parents, in particular, her mother. They were always there for her when she needed them, always supportive and encouraging. With such support, she was an active and sociable person, even representing her school in sports. Marina too expressed that while her mother is stern, her father is sweet natured. Both of them are gentle and kind and she has never been abused. Her mother was her adviser and the mediator between her and her father.

However, it was noted that at the time of the crisis, at least Yuma and Marina's relationship with their parents were not as ideal as when they were younger. Yuma, at 16 years old, yearned for independence, left home for the bright lights of Kuala Lumpur. When she became a GRO, her boyfriend further isolated her from her parents. Feeling embarrassed and ashamed to disclose her profession she was unable to turn to her parents for help at her time of crisis.

Marina who has in the past obeyed her parents decided to go against them by choosing her own partner in life rather than accepting her parents' choice. Thus, when her marriage was shaky, she felt humiliated to admit that she had made the wrong choice. Thus, she could not go to them for help in her time of need, as she felt ashamed.

Nonie, however, felt that she did not want to burden her parents with her problems, which she felt, would be alien to them and, thus, not be able to help her.

**Loss or lack of attachment.** Among the eight young women interviewed, except for Nonie, all of them seemed to have either lost or lacked some kind of attachment with their significant others.

Anita, Sima, Lammy and Mala had experienced a loss in their family. Sima her brother of six months old, Anita her sister, Lammy and Mala their mothers. Sima and Mala though never really knew the brother and mother respectively.

However, this was not the case for Lammy and Anita. Anita now the only daughter in a family of ten felt the loss of her sister tremendously, as she was her only sister and her confidante. Very attached to her sister, when she died of cancer it devastated her. Lammy's mother too died of cancer when she was about 16 years old. Attached and dependent on her mother, her death dramatically changed her life for the worse.

While they lost the significant people in their life, there was none to replace the lost ones, as there were no close attachments with other family members. Anita found her brothers strict and controlling and there was no unity in the family. Thus, her only attachment was her boyfriend. So when there was a threat in the relationship it frightened her. Lammy on the other hand, hates her father though loves her brother and sister.

Both Sima and Anise lack attachment with the family members, though both of them longed for it and tried to establish it, especially Anise. She tried hard to please and conform to her parents' needs but it was never appreciated and at times depressed her. Thus, she was constantly living in fear of being reprimanded. She became insecure and lacked confidence. Sima felt helpless, wanting connection, only to be abandoned each time. Thus, both of them turned to boyfriends as a source of attachment. However, being social beings, needing attachment when this form of attachment too was threatened they were heart-broken.

In comparison, Yuma and Marina had always been close with their parents, the primary source of strong attachment. However, when Yuma shifted to Kuala Lumpur, she became less attached to them. Eventually having found a boyfriend, she formed a new attachment. With regard to Marina's marriage, she too started a new attachment. Thus, both of them severed the strong attachment that they had. As such, when the new attachment did not hold, they felt alienated and too embarrassed to turn back, they were helpless and sought escape. According to the Control theory (in Stark, 1994), they had nothing to lose now, for they had nothing to hold them back after losing both attachments.

On the other hand, Mala broke her attachment with her mother when she walked out of the house at the age of 17. All alone now, she had friends who were close too, but none could touch her heart as the man that she fell in love with. However, to her this attachment was wrong as much as she wanted it. Unable to face the reality of breaking up the relationship while at the same time wanting it, Mala too felt she had nothing to lose if she lost this relationship.

**Loss of investment.** Investment here is defined as the stake one builds in life- the cost one has expended in constructing a satisfactory life and the rewards that are expected.

It is clear that six out of the eight young women lost relationships and investments they had tried to build for their lives.

Lammy and Nonie had spent at least 15 years of their life pursuing their education. They were involved and put in time and energy into it. Both had high expectations to do well. Nonie expected to enter university, while Lammy, hoped to complete her degree and start work. However, both stumbled on a hurdle that

insurmountable. Suddenly, the satisfactory life and reward that they expected crumbled when they failed in their studies and thus they saw no hope for themselves.

In contrast to investing in education, Yuma, Sima, Marina and Anita invested their emotions, love and hope for the future by being loyal and faithful to their partners – the cost that they had given in constructing a satisfactory life and the rewards they expected.

Sima, at 13 years old lost her virginity to the man she thought would give her love and care that her family was incapable of giving. She was devoted to him for three years, and despite being frightened of the consequences of her sexual activities, she obliged him. In comparison, Yuma was willing to sacrifice her family, isolating herself from them to please her boyfriend; her happiness was linked to her boyfriend's happiness. She expressed:

‘Saya takut, kalau dia tinggalkan saya. itu saja yang saya takut, sebab itu saya tak kisah dia buat apa saja ‘

and

‘Saya dah terlalu sayang sangat dekat dia’

and

‘Sanggup bagi dia apa yang dia nak’

*(I was afraid that he might leave me, I was fearful of that, because I was afraid to lose him, I didn't care and allowed him to do what ever he wants, I loved him too much, and I am willing to give him what ever he wants)*

When the men in their life abandoned them and broke up the relationship, they were not able to handle the loss.

Marina and Anita though never really lost their partners, perceived that they did. This perceived loss prompted them to chose death as an alternative.

Marina invested six years of her life waiting on her husband before she eventually married him. She was willing to wait despite the number of times the marriage was deferred. She even disobeyed her parents' wishes to marry her to another man. All because she felt that this man could provide her a happy and fulfilling future. Thus, Marina was devastated to find out that the man she loved and trusted had lied to her throughout their courtship and marriage. Anita, on the other hand, felt that most men she met just wanted her body, while her current boyfriend treated her differently. She loved him, for even her family members who are strict and controlling, approved of him. So, when her boyfriend ignored her and treated her like a stranger, she became depressed. She felt she had lost a very meaningful part of her life.

According to the Control Theory (in Stark, 1994), investment helps prevent a person from deviant acts. Thus, if suicide is seen as a deviant act, the loss of their investment could prompt these young women to perceive that they had nothing to lose by taking their life since they had lost their investment.

**A listening ear – support and counseling.** Lammy, and Anise had experience seeing a counselor. However, their experiences with counselors left a negative impression. Anise felt betrayed when the counselor bridged confidentiality, while Lammy felt they were directive and judgmental. Now, they both could not trust the counselor and were doubtful if they could be of any help. Lammy, although had heard of outside organizations that ran counseling centers for those in distress did not consider them for help.

Sima, like Anise, has a school counselor whom she could sought for help. However, she did not do so because she did not trust the counselor. Although she had no direct experience with a counselor, her friends had. The friends became the subjects of conversation among the teachers. Due to this experience she never considered seeking the school counselor in her time of need.

Similarly, Marina too is aware of counseling services. Nevertheless, she did not believe anyone could help her. She thought that they may be biased and might just confuse her with all their suggestions, so she rather sorted it out herself. A private person, she was not able to disclose her troubles to her friends. She was also afraid that her husband might not like her for telling on him. To her, it was out of the question informing her parents, as they were partly the reason for her anxiety, feeling ashamed to tell them that her husband was in fact, had been a married man.

While, all of them except Anise who did not have anyone that she could confide in and Sima who was ostracized by her friends, the other six respondents actually had friends or family members who could help out. Nonetheless, only Nonie tried to get her friends' help, only because they were in the same predicament. However, despite being able to ventilate her frustrations and anger, she did not find relief. She than resorted to taking drugs to calm her tension and gain some sleep.

Mala, though, did eventually tell her friends of her predicament when she could not contain her desperation any longer. However, the help proved to be a disaster as her friends who forced her to end the relation worsened the situation for her.

Yuma, although had supportive parents who had been her strength in her times of troubles, were not approachable because she was too ashamed to explain to them



that she was a GRO. Like Marina, shame stopped her from communicating with her parents. While she could confide in her sister, she felt it was inappropriate to get advice from a younger sister. She had too much of a pride to ask for her sister's help. Lammy too had too much pride. While the Church elders were willing to help and supportive, she could not express herself for she had always shown a strong and spiritual façade. So, despite constantly feeling scared and alone, fearful of making the wrong decision, she could not disclose her predicament, and ended up overdosing herself.

Perhaps Anita reflected on the feelings of these female youths when she said:

Anita: Anita dah banyak kumpul Anita punya problem, Anita bangsa jenis tak suka cerita dekat orang sebab Anita tak nak orang tanggung bebab Anita. Lebih baik Anita tanggung sendiri, biar sakit kepala Anita macam mana pun, Anita sanggup mati pun tak kisah. Asal jangan ganggu orang.

Researcher: Anita malu?

Anita: Mungkin.. ada jugalah sikap malu tu... Anita tak nak bebaskan masalah Anita dengan orang.

*(Anita: " I have accumulated lots of problems. I am the sort who does not like to tell others because I do not want to burden them with my problems. It is better I bear it alone. It is ok if I get a headache or anything. I would rather die as long as I don't burden others. " Researcher: "Are you ashamed?" Anita: Maybe .... there is such a feeling... I just do not want to burden others with my problems. )*

Among these youth, while some of them were aware of counseling services, they were however hesitant to sought for help, either because of mistrust or uncertain of its effectiveness, while those who had friends and family whom they could talk too, were either too ashamed, embarrassed or had too much pride to get their help. In addition, they also felt that they did not want to burden others with their problems and did not feel confident that outsiders could really understand their predicament thus could not be helpful. When they did get help, it did not seem to bring relief but instead worsened the situation. Nothing seemed to be going right for these youths.

**Easy access to the means – method of injury.** Except for Nonie who took multiple drugs, Mala rat poison and Marina some painkillers, the rest of them took “paracetamol” as the means to escape. Anise took both “paracetamol” and “antibiotic”, while Lammy took “ponstan” along with “paracetamol.”

It appears that all these items used are easily available and assessable both at home or could be purchased without much trouble.

Anise explaining how she got her paracetamol and antibiotic:

“ Saya beli dekat kedai runcit. Lepas tu hari tu bapak saya pergi klinik. Dia bagi antibiotik. Satu antibiotik baru, yang lagi satu lama dah satu tahun. Lepas tu ubat abang saya. “

*(I bought it from the grocery shop. The antibiotic were my father's, he got them from the clinic. There were two types, one have expired about a year. I also took my brother's medicine)*

Anita, having had a misunderstanding with her boyfriend at work, on her way home, feeling sad and miserable said.

“ Anita balik kerja 8:30 pagi, Anita terus pi kedai, Anita beli *paracetamol* dengan coke. Anita balik rumah masuk bilik dan terus makan.”

*(I finished work at 8:30. I went straight to the shop. I bought paracetamol and coke. When I reached home I entered my room and took the paracetamol)*

Yuma may indirectly explained not only the convenience of taking *paracetamol*, while this act also reflected the fear and the finality of the suicide attempt among these youths when she hesitated on the thought of jumping from a high rise building. Yuma 's statement expressed how ideal *paracetamol* was among these female youths as the choice:

“ Saya pergi kedai, yang saya fikir saya nak bunuh diri. Saya nak terjun dari tingkat tinggi saya takut. Saya ingat saya nak terjun saja, tapi saya fikir mana bangunan tinggi. Nanti kalau saya terjun nanti, takut tengok bawah... ok baik saya ambil panadol. Saya ingat saya boleh terus matilah masa tu, makan *paracetamol* boleh terus mati.”

*(I went to the shop, all I could think of was to kill myself. I thought of jumping from a high rise building but I was too scared. Also I could not think of any high rise building. What if at the time I want to jump, I am afraid to look down....so I thought it would be better to take panadol. I thought with panadol, I can die instantly)*

Marina took painkillers that belonged to her husband which were kept in the refrigerator, while Nonie got her supply from the refrigerator that was full of various types of medicines belonging to her nine flat-mates. Mala, on an impulse saw the rat poison that was lying on the floor of the restaurant at her work place.

Thus, the easy access to the means prompted these young women to contemplate their final act without having to put much thought about how they can or ought to do it. It thus, facilitated their cause.

**Lack of faith and belief.** In this research the religious strength of the individual would be measured by the frequency of praying and visiting the place of worship. Religion, provides a sense of group belonging and a sense of integration, which is said to be a deterrent too suicidal acts (Durkheim, 1966). Among these young women, while five of them seemed god-fearing and practise their religious faith, the other three (Yuma, Anita and Sima) expressed that they believed in God but did not practice the teachings. Among the five Muslims, two practised the obligatory prayers; the other three did not. It appeared that all these youths while have a religion that they follow, however, their faith seems weak especially at the moment of contemplating suicide.

Yuma expressed that since moving to KL, with no supervision from her parents she stopped praying and wearing the scarf over her head (tudung). Anita forced to study in a religious school never enjoyed the times she was there. She was forced to wear the “tudung”, after she left school she dropped it, only wearing it when she felt appropriate. Her parents do not force religion on her. Moreover, her mother does not pray, neither does she. Sima was brought up in a non-religious environment.

However, Sima just before her suicide attempt, started going for religious classes, which created some awareness and became more religious. She started feeling guilty about her sexual encounters and for carrying on a relationship with a non-Muslim who showed no interest in her religion. She was torn between her growing

faith and her waning relationship with the man. This brought some tension in their shaky relationship, which eventually led to the break-up and her overdosing.

Both Mala and Lammy asked for God's guidance during their desperate moments. However, both felt disappointed when no peace was forthcoming. Their faith was shaken when what they asked for in their prayers was not answered. Mala doubted the results of the "archanai", while Lammy, who is a convert, was vocal enough to express anger towards God.

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Researcher | You didn't ask him for help?   |
| Lammy      | Yes, at first I asked, I just gave up. I just gave up, just gave up  |
| Researcher | Were you disappointed with him?  |
| Lammy      | Sometimes.....   |
| Researcher | Are you angry with him for not helping you through?  |
| Lammy      | Yes...because before Jesus I didn't pretend. Before Jesus I didn't pretend. I just tell him I cannot go through but why still have so many problems...so sometimes I refuse to talk to him (crying) ... but I know he is always there. So after this, the first person I talk to is him. |

Anise, when she speaks to God, questioned him for making her life miserable in comparison to others. Despite knowing that suicide is wrong in the eyes of God, she thought that since being alive seemed wrong for her, and suicide is wrong, it made no difference either way. In fact, after the attempt she felt that even God did not want

her, as she thought in her mind, if God did love her she would have died and been with him.

Mala, the most pious among them did however, gain some peace and tranquility after visiting the temple, but reality hit her on returning home. It was the same with Marina, as only at times of prayer she felt calm, otherwise, the thoughts and memories of her husband's betrayal loomed in her mind.

It was noted that both Marina and Nonie had since childhood practiced their religious beliefs and never abandoned the teachings. In fact, Marina, in her act of overdosing, indirectly left it to God to sort out her problems, for she said "Mati tak mati saya rasa terpulang kepada takdir" (*If I die or not it all rests on my destiny*).

Both Marina and Nonie explained the reason why they could have abandoned God and resorted to overdosing, when asked, "Since you do pray, did you not think of God then?" They either blamed in on Satan for having a greater influence on them especially during their menses as this deprived them of being able to be close to God. (It is noted that Muslim women are not allowed to pray during their menses)

Perhaps Nonie express the faith of these young women aptly when she said:

"Walaupun kita sembahyang sekali pun, sembahyang tu adalah sebagai satu kewajipan, kalau nak buat perkara ni, dia orang memang tak boleh nak ingat Tuhan, dia cuma masa tu ingat diri dia orang saja dan perasaan dia orang. Masa tu Tuhan dah lupa, perasaan take over. Kita dah tak teringat. Bila dah lepas makan, bila dah sakit tu baru Ya Allah, apa yang aku buat ni, baru teringat dia balik."

*(Even though we pray, it is only an obligation, if they do this kind of thing, it is natural that they can't think of God at that moment, they can only think of themselves and their feelings. At that time God is forgotten, feelings take over. We can't think of him anymore. Only after the event, feeling the pain, only then we realize Oh Allah what have I done, only then do we think of him again)*

As she disclosed, these female youth saw prayers as something that is obligatory, and God is a place to which one asked for help. They do not seem to have a spiritual connection or in-depth understanding of the religion, but saw it as something that needed to be performed. Thus, without the spiritual faith to hold them back, when their prayers were not heard, despite believing in God, their faith was shaken. At that moment, as Nonie and Marina said, one forgets God as one's emotions took over, only to remember God again after the event.

**Isolation.** What all these young women had in common, was a sense of isolation. Yuma had distanced herself from both family and friends. When she lost her boyfriend, she had no one to turn too. Marina like Yuma was too embarrassed to communicate with her parents at her time of need. Not believing in talking about personal issues to her friends, she was left alone to handle the painful discovery that her husband was actually a married man. Sima, off course, had always been alone. Never close to her family, friends ostracizing her, a school counselor whom she could not trust, she was isolated. So too was Anita who did not have any friends other than her boyfriend. Mala though had friends at the home, felt isolated for she did not think they would accept the issue of her marrying a married man. Lammy, with the façade to maintain, her strong and capable self, was actually alone at her moment of weakness for she could not drop the image that she had created. Nonie, despite

sharing her troubles with her friends, was alone in her worries that she may not make it to university.

**Coping mechanism.** Looking at Table: 12, it appears that at the time before the suicide attempt these youths were undergoing a whole gamut of negative emotions. Though it would be difficult to quantify the emotional level of each individual, since each of them is unique, it is obvious that within each of them they had at least 15 and maximum of 29 types of negative emotions that were brooding within. At the end as an after effect of the attempt, these negative emotions had subsided while some positive feelings seemed to have emerged except for Anise who still had many negative emotions.

One can deduce here that the suicide act had indirectly resulted in a positive effect in negating the negative emotions. Lacking a listening ear, self-harm seemed to be the way to “ventilate” the pent-up feelings. Thus, the suicide attempt could be considered as a coping mechanism for these young women to release their tension.

To quote three of them:

Marina: Terasa banyak sangat penderitaan yang saya tanggungkan. Sampai saya rasa hidup saya ni macam.... Lebih baik saya mati. (*I felt that I am carrying too much burden. I feel that my life is... it is better that I die*)

Sima: Cuma nak tenangkan fikiran (*I just wanted to calm my mind*)

Nonie: Saya makan sebenarnya nak lepaskan tension. (*I took it because I wanted to release my tension*)



All these factors are intertwined and seemed to play a role and influenced the make up of these young women affecting the way they think and behave leading them to the ultimate act of self-harm. While certain factors are prominent to some, others are not. But on the whole these are the factors that had caused these young women to consider attempting suicide or at least escape from their pain and misery. I would like to quote Nonie who said that her emotions had taken over, making her helpless, having no choice but to overdose. This led to the next research question.

What are the Thoughts and Feelings of Attempters that prompt them to Contemplate the Idea of Suicide?

These female youths were prompted to contemplate the idea of suicide based on the following feelings and thoughts that they were experiencing. These feelings and thoughts have been categorized as Affective, Impulsive, and Communication of Intent and Intention. They also saw suicide as an escape and a solution to their problems and their suicidal acts had the objective of having an expected effect on others. Most of them had previously attempted suicide and that those problems that triggered the first attempt had not been resolved resulting in a second attempt.

### **Affective**

Looking at Appendix 8 and 9, it is apparent that all these young women were going through a gamut of emotions. While it is not possible to measure the level of emotions or the magnitude of the emotional turmoil that they were going through, suffice to say that each of them was experiencing various types of negative feelings that enveloped them individually. On the average each of them was burdened with at least twenty varying feelings that are negative in nature, some examples being feeling

of rejection, anger, fear, feeling depressed and humiliation. Out of the total seventy-four types of feelings experienced by these young women those that appeared consistently to all of them were feelings of having fear. A sense of shame and embarrassment too seemed to be a consistent theme. Within them there was a sense of disappointment, hurt, being torn, feeling unloved, being pressured and feeling stressed up. Added to these are the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness resulting in a state of restlessness and eventual suicide. As feelings are reaction to what one perceived to have experienced, these youths seemed unable to deal with what was happening to their world. Thus, overwhelmed by the emotions they could not see any other options but suicide.

### **Impulsive**

Except for Anise who had premeditated her suicide at least a day before, and Yuma within half a day before the attempt, the remaining youths attempted suicide on an impulse. That is, they only thought of the act less than an hour before their attempt without any prior planning. Although Mala had thoughts about wanting to kill herself, she had never really considered how she would do it, unlike Anise who actually had an idea of when she considered would be the best time to carry it out.

While Yuma had thoughts about her plan for more than an hour debating what would be the best method, the remaining youths did it almost at the spur of the moment, without putting much thought to the act. Perhaps this explains why the overdose did not appear to be serious, as can be seen from the medical risk score where except for Anise with a full total of four points, the rest of them were at a low medical risk of zero to two points.

### **Communication of intent**

Yuma short of telling her boyfriend she overdosed, phoned him to expressed the terrible physical pain she was experiencing, hoping he would come to see her. Instead he rebuked her, asking her to handle it herself. This drove her further to wanting to die. Sima, on the other hand, after her overdose seek her boyfriend to inform him of her action. He too ignored her. It is seen that these young women, in their own ways were communicating their intention to someone.

Anise who felt that her live was not worth living had suicidal thoughts for quite some time. She tried to communicate her thoughts to her boyfriend. On one of their earlier meetings she hinted that he should take her away soonest, otherwise, she might do something that he may regret. Off course, he did not understand nor probe what she meant.

Anise after the overdose called her ex-boyfriend to ask a hypothetical question. The question was what would his reaction be if she were to tell him that she had overdosed (in reality she did). Was she hoping that he would probe further what she meant? Was it her way of telling him that she already did it and wanted his help? Anita indirectly expressed her suicidal thoughts to her ex- boyfriend whom she felt understood her. She told him that in the eventuality she did not appear at work, then he was to go to her house and collect some documents to be given to her current boyfriend. Was Anita too hoping that he might explore further the meaning to her statement? Mala was more direct; as she asked her friends for medicine that could kill her as she expressed that she could not take the struggle anymore and would rather die. Instead of addressing her plea and pain, allowing her to ventilate, they denied her the outlet to express but instead reprimanded her choice of suicide as a cause of

action. Instead of addressing the issue of her potential suicide, they burdened her with more guilt by making her promise to do the right thing. Lammy tried to communicate with her friends at those moments when suicide was looming in her mind only to discover that they were not around to be contacted.

It seemed that despite trying to communicate significant feelings and thoughts and their desperation, no one were aware of their communication and purpose, disillusion they carried on with their intention.

### **Intention**

As reflected in the Pierce Suicide Intent Scale Score (Appendix: 6), the following intention were expressed by the youths:

- |                             |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Anise, Mala, Yuma and Anita | : | Expressed that they “ Did want to die”                                    |
| Lammy and Marina            | : | Expressed that they were “ Uncertain or did not care if she lived or die” |
| Nonie and Sima              | : | Expressed that they “ Did not want to die”                                |

With regard to the question did they really want to die at the time of the attempt, it was found that while four said they wanted to die, two were uncertain and the other two did not want to die. The last two had only the intention of wanting to release tension.

Out of the four who wanted to die three of them believed that the method used was sure to kill, while Anita felt uncertain if it would. Anise, Mala and Yuma’s seriousness of wanting to die can be seen in the various actions that they took. Yuma

and Mala left a suicide note. Mala had also bequeathed RM500.00 to her auntie, while Anise had planned her action more than a day. Moreover the method that she choose was the most lethal for under the Risk category (Q 11 & 12) of the Suicide Intent Scale she scored the most points at four out of four. Among Anise, Yuma and Mala, Anise scored the highest in the Suicide Intent Score at 17 points, followed by Mala at 14 and Yuma at 13 points. All three of them scored within the high range mark. With regard to her intention of wanting to die, Anise said:

“Masa saya makan ubat tu untuk mati.”

and

“Sebab dia nasihat macam tulah saya dah lama saya nak bunuh diri, sebab dia (referring to her boyfriend)nasihatkan saya diam aja. Tapi lama ni saya pun dah fed-up. “

*(When I took the medicine, it was so that I will die; It is only because he advice me that I held back, if not I would have killed myself long ago. But now I am so fed-up)*

Mala’s expression of her intention and desire to die:

“Ya, sebab itu saya pilih mati dari dia, sebab itu saya ingat macam tu. Lebih baik saya mati.”

and

“Perasaannya macam nak mati, bila saya tengok muka dia, rasa macam nak mati, aku buat kesilapan rasa nak mati, tak boleh buat kerja apa.”

*(Yes, I chose to die rather than him dying, that is why I think like that. It is better that I die; When I see him I felt like I want to die, I have done a grave error, I felt like dying, I couldn't function).*

Yuma expressed those moments when she felt pleasure because she thought she was going to die:

“Saya pergi kedai yang saya fikir saya nak bunuh diri. Saya ingat saya boleh terus matilah masa tu, makan panadol boleh terus mati.”

and

“Saya ingat saya dah nak mati dah tu, sukanya hati saya.”

and

“Tapi yang saya hairan sangat tu kenapa saya tak mati.”

*(I went to the shop, and all I thought of was I want to kill myself; I thought I will immediately die when I take the panadol; For a moment I thought I was going to die, and I felt so much joy; But I am surprised why I was still not dead)*

Despite reflecting on their determination of wanting to die, it was seen earlier that all three of them did communicate their intention indirectly/ directly to others. So it seems that despite expressing the desire to die, there was still some hope in them being rescued? Perhaps they are all in an ambivalent state.

Anita, on the other hand, despite saying that she wanted to die did also express:

- Researcher            Tujuan Anita beli panadol untuk apa?
- Anita                    Entah...mungkin... bagi Anita kalau buat tu mungkin dia boleh hilang.
- Researcher            Adakah tujuan nak mati?
- Anita                    Ada juga...tapi kalau betulah Allah nak ambil hari khamis tu Anita terima aja.

*(R: Why did you buy the panadol for? Anita: I am not sure, maybe if I take it can all disappear. Was your intention to die? Possible, but if Allah really want to take me that Thursday, I am ready)*

Thus for Anita, who was uncertain if the amount of *paracetamol* she took would really kill, felt that she did not need to take them all and would only take more later if she found it necessary. It seemed to reflect that she was uncertain whether to die or not despite saying she wanted to die. Based on the above conversation, it looked like she left it to God, for either way she accepted her fate. These were the same feelings reflected by Lammy and Marina. Both of them were uncertain if the method chosen would be lethal and they did not care if they lived or die.

Lammy said, "I just felt very...so many voices in me, so many voices...telling me "No" Then telling me "Yes". I don't know which words I have to turn to. " Lammy was expressing the uncertainty within her - whether to die or not to die. Burden with unbearable stress Lammy felt ambivalent about the whole situation.

Marina expressed:

- Researcher :    Masa you makan tu, you ingat boleh mati tak makan benda tu?
- Marina        :    Tak tahu pula...tak pastilah...ikut orang kata ajal maut di tangan Tuhan. Itu aja yang saya fikir, tapi saya fikir boleh biarlah mati, biarlah mati.

Itu yang saya fikir, tapi kalau saya fikir..mati tak mati saya rasa terpulang kepada takdir. Tak pastilah jadinyakan. ... hati kata mati... sebab ubat tu kata makanlah saya untuk...matilah... Tak adalah habis habis untuk mungkin saya boleh lupakan semua dulu.

*(R: When you took it, you thought the medicine would kill you? Marina: I am not sure ... it is all up to God, That is all I thought, if possible I would want to die. But if I die or not it all depends on my fate. So I think I am not certain. My heart wants to die ... because the medicine said swallow me and you will die. But ... maybe the most is I perhaps want to forget it all for a while).*

In contrast to the six girls who had toyed with the idea of death, Nonie and Sima were quite clear with their intention. They wanted to release tension that was bottled up inside. As an example, Sima when asked if she took it because she wanted to die responded in the negative. She said:

“Tak, cuma nak tenangkan fikiran. . Saya sakit hati, tak ada niat langsung nak bunuh diri.”

*(No, only to have a peace of mind. I was hurt; I had no intention of killing myself)*

Thus, driven by strong negative emotions that had gained an upper hand and nobody being there for them, these young women who were not able to cope with their situations considered suicide as the alternative. What would they have hoped to achieve by such an act? This leads to the next possible set of feelings and thoughts that were working in their mind that prompted them to consider suicide.



**As an escape and a solution due to a sense of constriction**

When asked reasons for their suicide attempt the following answers were given:

Anise, Mala, Yuma, Lammy, Marina, Nonie and Sima	To escape for a while from an impossible situation
Anise, Mala, Yuma, Lammy, Anita, Marina, Nonie and Sima	To get relief from a terrible state of mind
Anita, Nonie and Sima	To try to influence some particular person or get them to change their mind.

While only Anita, Nonie and Sima had all the above three reasons for the attempt; six of them gave “wanting to escape from an impossible situation” as what they desired to achieve by their actions. However, all of them agreed that what they wanted was to get relief from a terrible state of mind.

Some examples of what these young women said about wanting an escape and a state of relief:

Sima: “Sebab saya tak boleh nak fikir apa apa lagi... dah buntu fikiran. Saya makan untuk tenangkan fikiran saya.”

*(Because I could not think anymore .... My mind was jammed. I took it to have peace of mind)*

Anita: "Anita menangis. ...semua timbul.. masalah kerja, masalah famili, semua timbul, dia dah berkumpul semua dah... tu yang buat Anita beli panadol."

and

"Untuk hilangkan tension dan menenangkan perasaan."

*(I kept crying, everything seemed to emerge, my problems at work, at home...all of it, it all appeared menacing, that is why I bought the panadol. And to release tension and have some peace of mind)*

Anise: "Malam itu saya menangis aja, saya tak dapat tidur... saya ingat kalau dia orang tahu dia orang kata saya membinasakan keluarga dia orang, keluarga semua mesti bergaduh... Jadi saya fikirkan kalau saya dah tak ada, ini semua saya tak akan tengok. Kalau mengaku pun saya tak akan tengok, mereka tak akan marah saya. "

*(That night I could not sleep, I was crying.... I was afraid if they found out, they will blame me for destroying the family, and for sure there will be fights between the two family members. So I thought if I am not around, I will not see all this. Even if discovered, I will not know about it, they will not be able to scold me)*

So, feeling constricted, stuck in the "quicksand" which is their problem, they could not see any other options available. The fact that they chose the above two reasons, reflects their distressed state of mind and the tremendous stress that they had been going through due to the events that had occurred in their lives which prompted them to choose suicide as the escape route. Being focused on the emotional pain they are experiencing they could not see other possibilities in resolving the severe

perturbation they were experiencing. Feeling immobilized, thus death became the solution and an escape to their predicament so as to gain peace of mind.

### **The expected effect of suicidal action on others**

While both Lammy and Mala expressed that they did not do it with the wish to create any effect on others, Anita, Yuma, Nonie Marina and Sima hoped that by their action those who have hurt them would feel sorry for the way they have treated them. Yuma, in fact, believed that with her death, she would be able to see her boyfriend's remorse. She said

“ Macam emak saya selalu cakaplah kalau kita mati pun kita akan taulah apa orang yang hidup tu buat pada kitakan... menyesal ke. Saya nak dia tu rasa menyesal dan dia tau yang bukan salah sayalah. ”

*(Like my mother used to say, even when we die we will know what the living are doing to us, whether he feels regret. I want him to feel remorse and realize that I am not in the wrong).*

Yuma and Anita reflected another reason given for overdosing when they expressed that they did it to show how much they loved someone. For Yuma she wanted to show her boyfriend that she loved him. Anita too wanted to prove her love towards her boyfriend who had treated her like a stranger. Nonie not only wanted her lecturer to feel sorry for his behavior but she also hoped to pay him back for the wrong that he did to her. Anise who had always felt that she was no good and a problem to the family did it to make things easy for others. So did Marina who felt that her husband may be better off with his first wife and she did not have to feel anymore pain and hurt.

### **Previous attempt**

Among the eight subjects, five of them had attempted suicide before, although the attempt did not require hospitalization except for Anise who was hospitalized. Nonie, a couple of months earlier due to exam pressure and anxiety and frustration over her lecturer's attitude, took 10 panadol with coke, hoping to release tension. Lammy, haunted by the inconclusive result of her project paper, plus having both family and personal problems, overdosed six months earlier. Both of them never did resolve their problems after the first attempt, in fact it became worse. Anise had always had problems with her parents; her first attempt was because her parents abused her physically and mentally when they suspected her of having an affair. Now fearful that she would again be abused if her relationship was discovered, she felt that she would be better off dead than live through the anxiety that it could happen.

Mala chose to cut her wrist when she felt desperate in her fight against her uncle and auntie who wanted to marry her off to their son. While this time the issue was not that she did not want to marry, for she wanted to marry the man, she was still caught in a helpless situation. Torn by her conscience, for despite believing what she was about to do was morally wrong, she had the desire to marry the married man, she felt trapped and could not see any other option but to die.

Anita is the only one among them who had a totally different reason for her second attempt. While her first attempt was due to examination pressure, this time around it was because of work, family and relationship.

From here it may be concluded, that these young women were drawn to a second suicide attempt because their earlier problems were never resolved, in fact, to

some they got worse. In addition, it appeared that suicide attempt became a pattern of coping known to them.

What are the effects of the attempt and how do they feel after the attempt?

With regard to the above, the effect of the attempt and the feelings experienced after the attempt can be divided into three categories, that is, physical, mental and affective. In addition, the outcome and insight found by these youth will also be explored.

### **Physical status**

After a couple of days at the hospital, they all recovered with no obvious side effects at the time of discharge. The maximum stay was for a total of seven days.

### **Mental status**

Based on the psychiatric assessment by the doctors from the Psychiatric Unit, they were found to be stable with no immediate suicidal treat. Thus, they were also discharged from psychiatric care, although appointments were given for a follow-up treatment within two weeks or a month from date of discharge.

### **Affective status**

What was clear in terms of the affective state of these young women was that after the attempt, the negative emotions that were within them had apparently diminished. In fact, there were positive feelings like a sense of hope and glad to be alive was present in most of them, especially Yuma. (Appendix: 10)

Anise who scored the highest in terms of the Suicide Intent Scale at 17 points (Appendix: 6), however, did not share the same feelings as her other counterparts. She had no positive feelings, but instead had negative ones. She hated and was fed-up with

herself and her life, while fearful and uncertain of what was going to happen to her on returning home. Basically she was still unhappy. She expressed that she wished she could stay longer at the hospital for she dreaded going home. This could be explained by the fact that her parents were not supportive of her during her stay at the hospital reprimanding her for doing such a “useless thing”. On the other hand, Yuma who never really told her family members the actual reason she was hospitalized received lots of love and care from her family and friends. She was touched by her parents’ visit to the hospital despite not informing them. The emotional support she received helped her recuperate and felt better about herself, while that was not the case for Anise.

Anise, though, despite her low mood expressed that she would not attempt again, for she felt that even God did not want her, as this had been her second failed attempt. Thus, she felt that it was a wasted effort. On the contrary, Anita, who also had some negative feelings was still fearful that she may just resort to self-harm again if things do not improve in her life, despite knowing it is not the right thing to do in Islam. She was worried that she may not have the restraining forces to hold her back from doing it. The remaining six was confident that they would never repeat the act.

While four of them, Anise, Mala, Anita and Marina felt uncertain whether to be glad or regretful of their recovery, Yuma, Lammy, Nonie, Marina and Sima were glad that they have recovered. Looking at it positively, not even Anise said that she was sorry to have recovered.

Five of them felt remorseful and regretted to have done as they termed it a foolish act. Marina expressed relief that she had the opportunities to open up and tell about her problems to someone. It seemed that all eight subjects benefited from the

attention given by the doctors, nurses, psychiatric doctor and the counseling sessions provided.

### **Outcome and insight**

While suicide attempts should not be a solution to solve a problem, it seems that for most of them it did. After the attempts, recuperating at the hospital these youths seemed to have found the answers to their predicament, which was previously so insurmountable beyond their capacity to solve, bringing them to despair. It seemed that after the suicide attempt, their tense emotions were lifted, their minds were clearer, for almost all of them had certain insights of what their next course of action should be. The actual act of the suicide attempt had actually brought a peace of mind and insight for them.

### **Summary**

The key findings of this research showed that suicide attempts were highest among young women within the age range of 16 to 24. They are mostly Indians followed by the Malays.

As adolescence, the young go through a period of life in which the influence of several different factors is apparent in their lives; it also seems to be true that there is no single predictor of suicide attempts among them. Although the triggering factors seemed to indicate circumstances and life events as the possible factors for their attempts. The reasons given by these young women for their attempt are mostly because of interpersonal conflicts. While there seemed to be no ultimate cause of suicide attempts, it is noticed that among the eight young women interviewed,

childhood experiences, lack of attachment, loss of investment and isolation seemed to play some role in their eventual suicide attempts. Moreover, the fact that they did not have anyone that they could confide in, lacking in faith to hold them back, while they have easy access to the means facilitated the act as a coping mechanism.

What was obvious was that all these female youths were experiencing an emotional turmoil that overwhelmed them, making it almost impossible for them to think straight. They were in a fix, whereby their emotions had taken over, making them powerless, resorting to suicide attempts.