

Suicides in India - Issues and challenges

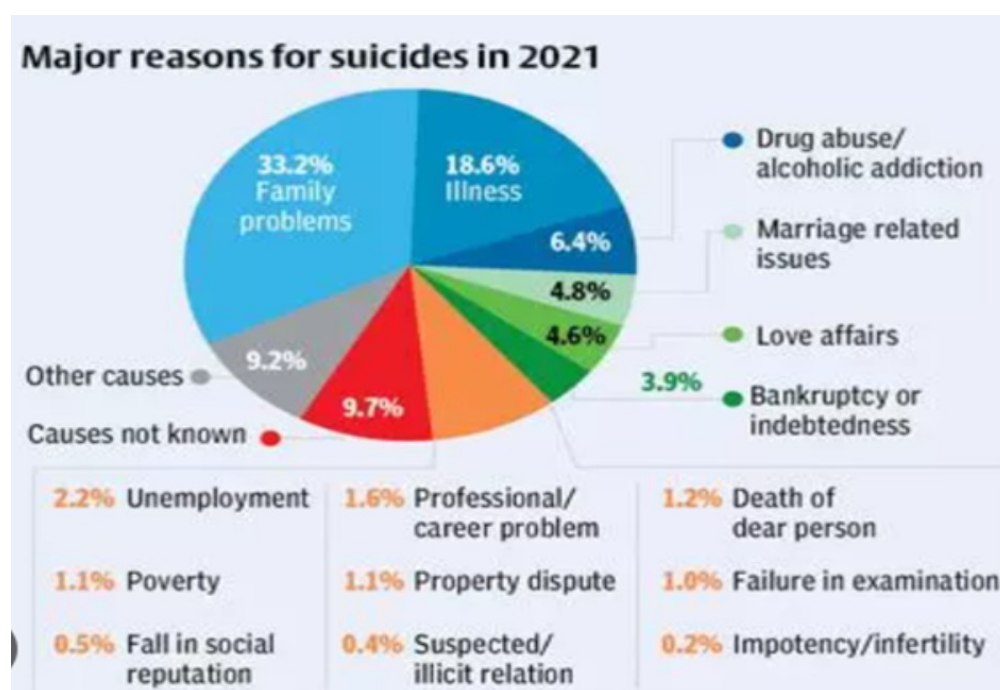
Mains: GS I - Population and Associated Issues

Why in news?

Recently, a 25-year-old an MBBS graduate from Hyderabad was saved from her attempt to suicide by reaching to the Tele-MANAS helpline.

What is suicide?

- **Suicide** - The act or an instance of ending one's own life voluntarily and intentionally.



- **Reasons** - The reasons for suicide are multi-faceted, influenced by social, cultural, biological, psychological, and environmental factors present across the life-course.
- **Complex issue** - Suicide is not only a mental health issue but is also deeply rooted in social determinants such as poverty, discrimination, gender inequity, and isolation.

What are the challenges in the system?

- **Shortage of trained mental health professionals** - Estimates indicate that *India has 0.75 psychiatrists per 1,00,000 population*.
- It is dismally lower than *the World Health Organization's recommended 3 per 1,00,000 population*.
- **Shortage of clinical psychologists and psychiatric nurses** - there is a *lack of*

more clinical psychologists who can be trained to offer therapy, help people manage their thoughts better and improve their general sense of well-being.

- **For instance**, in Kerala, this shortage is a huge problem in the mental health sector.
- **Inadequate resources** - Most helplines today struggle with inadequate resources, limited operating hours, and insufficiently trained counsellors.
- **Inaccessible and expensive** - The stigma around mental health has reduced in India, but only superficially while Help is still inaccessible and expensive.
 - **For instance**, in Kolkata many working professionals with depression are not being able to reach a professional at a moment of crisis.

What are the measures taken by the States?

- **Community efforts** - Broader community participation have been trialled in some States, often linking existing or new services to the Tele MANAS helpline, to stem suicide numbers.
 - **For instance**, in Karnataka, where the suicide rate stands at 20.2 per lakh population as of 2022, significantly higher than the national average of 12.4, several initiatives have been tried.
- **Karnataka** - SURAKSHA project under N-SPRITE a comprehensive community-based suicide prevention model in partnership between NIMHANS, the government of Karnataka, and a corporate.
- **Kerala** - Jeevanraksha, a district-level service has community gatekeepers stepping in to prevent suicides.
- Trained people are given periodic refresher training to recognise warning signs of suicide, give psychological first aid and refer people to mental health professionals.
- Kerala also has two other community-level mental health programmes, one of which specifically tackles post-partum depression.
- **Tamil Nadu** - TeleMANAS also collaborates with the helplines of the School Education and Social Welfare Departments.
- District Mental Health Programme and it has improved accessibility and helped reduce stigma around accessing mental health care.

What lies ahead?

- **Understanding the issue** - We must acknowledge that suicide is not only a mental health issue but also deeply rooted in social determinants such as poverty, discrimination, gender inequity, and isolation.
- **Decoding the cause** - Addressing systemic drivers of distress must be undertaken.
- **Timely interventions** - Suicide prevention must include building an ecosystem of empathy, inclusion, and timely care.
 - **For instance**, with over 1.7 lakh lives lost to suicide in 2022 and 1.8 million calls to the Tele-MANAS helpline as of February 2025, thousands of Indians need mental health help.
- **Increasing funding** - Increased government funding for awareness and trained human resources.
- **Social and community participation** - Building strong school and college-level

mental health programmes, addressing social determinants.

- Combating stigma are some steps that need to be urgently undertaken.

Those in distress could seek help and counselling by clicking [here](#).

Reference

[The Hindu| Looking Beyond Helplines](#)

