Youth Suicide in India

Why in news?

India's suicide rate reached a record high in 2022, with a significant portion of these tragedies involving the youth, indicating a critical public health issue.

Status of suicide in India
• National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports that 1.71 lakh people died by suicide in 2022. • The suicide rate has increased to 12.4 per 1,00,000 — the highest rate ever recorded in India since 1967. • The report reveals that *41% of all suicides are by young people* below the age of 30. • As per NCRB 2021 data the highest number of student suicides is reported in Maharashtra followed by Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. • Suicide is the leading cause of mortality for *young women* in India. • A Lancet study stated that suicide death rates in India are among the highest in the world and a large proportion of adult suicide deaths occur between the ages 15 and 29. • A young Indian dies by suicide *every 8 minutes*, which is a loss to family, society, the economy and future of the country.

What are the causes of suicide in young people of India?

- **Mental health issues-** Depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders are significant contributors to suicidal behavior among young people.
- **Family issues**- N*egative or traumatic family dynamics,* including domestic violence, parental pressure and intergenerational conflicts, can exacerbate stress and contribute to suicidal ideation among youth.
- **Academic stress**- The intense pressure to perform well academically, driven by societal expectations and a c*ompetitive education system*, can lead to feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness among students.
- **Social factors-** Peer pressure, social isolation and unhealthy lifestyle habits can increase vulnerability to suicidal behaviour among young people.
- **Exposure to violence**- It can be in the form of *physical or sexual abuse* which can have long lasting psychological effects and increase the risk of suicide among youth.
- **Gender specific factors**- Early marriage, gender based violence, and rigid gender roles contribute to highest rate of suicide among young girls and women.
- **Addiction-** Substance abuse, alcohol and excessive internet use particularly among college students are associated with increased suicidal behaviour.

One-third of young people are cyber-bullied. And of this sub-set, one third are suicidal. Teens who used social media for more than 2 hours a day are more suicidal.

- **Media influence-** Sensationalized media coverage of suicide especially when involving celebrities, can contribute to suicidal ideation among vulnerable individuals.

How to address the issue of suicide among young people in India?

- **Mental health awareness-** Schools, colleges, and community organizations can play a crucial role in providing support services and promoting mental well-being among students.
- **Early intervention**- Identifying and addressing mental health problems at an early stage is essential in preventing suicidal behavior. Schools should have *counsellors or mental health professionals* who can provide support to students facing academic stress, family issues etc.,
- **Family support**- Providing parents with education and resources on parenting skills and communication can help prevent conflicts and enhance family relationships.
- **Educational reforms**- The education system should focus on holistic development rather than solely academic achievements.Alternative assessment methods, career guidance, and opportunities for exploring diverse interests can reduce the pressure on students and alleviate the fear of failure.
- **Regulate media reporting**- Implementing guidelines for responsible reporting of suicide and promoting positive narratives of resilience and hope can mitigate this risk.
- **Prevent substance abuse**- Addressing substance abuse issues through awareness campaigns, access to treatment services, and regulation of alcohol and drug sales can help reduce the risk of suicide among young people.
- **Community engagement-** Building strong support networks within communities and empowering local organisations to provide mental health services and interventions can enhance resilience and prevent social isolation among youth.
- **Implementation of National Suicide Prevention Strategy**- It was launched by the *Ministry of Health* should be effectively disseminated and implemented across all states.
- **Research**- Continual research and data collection are essential for understanding the evolving trends and risk factors associated with youth suicide.
- **Crisis intervention services**- Establishing helplines, crisis intervention centers, and online support platforms can provide immediate assistance to individuals in distress and prevent suicidal acts.

Quick facts

Steps taken by India to tackle mental health related issues

• **National Mental Health Program, 1982**- It focuses on ensuring the availability and accessibility of minimum mental healthcare for all.
• **National Mental Health Policy, 2014**- A policy designed to promote mental health, prevent mental illness, and ensure socio-economic inclusion of those affected by mental illness.
• **Mental Health Act, 2017**- It provides for mental healthcare and services for persons with mental illness and to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of such persons during the delivery of mental healthcare and services.
• **NIMHANS:** The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences in Bengaluru, a premier institution for mental health and neuroscience education and research.
• **Training** - Online capacity building of health workers by NIMHANS in providing psychosocial support and training through (iGOT)-Diksha platform
• **KIRAN-** A toll-free, 24/7 helpline providing support for individuals facing mental health issues.
• **MANAS Mitra**: A mobile application aimed at promoting mental well-being.
• **Tele-MANAS helpline, 2022**- A telecommunication service that offers mental health support to those in need.

References

1. The Hindu- Youth suicide in India
2. PIB-Steps taken to tackle mental health

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