Mental Health and Men

Why in News

As per the data of the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 70% of callers** to the **'Kiran Helpline'**, launched in September 2020, were **men. Most of the calls** have been from **young adults.**

- The 24/7 toll-free helpline **'Kiran'** provides **support to people** facing **anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts** and other **mental health** concerns.

Key Points

- **Data Analysis:**
    - **Gender & Mental Health:** Out of the 13,550 new calls received, **70.5% were from males** and **29.5% from females.**
    - **Vulnerable Age Group:** The majority of callers (75.5%) were in the age group of **15 to 40 years,** while 18.1% in the **41 to 60 age group.**
    - **Major Issues:** Majorly the challenges faced by the callers were related to **anxiety** and **depression;** while few others included **pandemic-related challenges, suicidal tendency, substance abuse** and others miscellaneous.
- **Issues Related to Male Mental Health:**
    - **Traditional Gender Roles:** Societal **expectations** and **traditional gender roles** play an important role in why men are less likely to discuss or seek help for their mental health problems.
    - **Ignoring Warning Signs:** For men, the warning signs of mental disorders include irritability, trouble focusing, tiredness or listlessness, aches and pains, alcohol or drug abuse and more.
    - **Lack of Proper Attention:** Research on men's health issues has been given relatively **low priority.** Due to lack of funding and proper attention, the situation becomes more serious.
    - **Increase in Number of Suicides:** In 2018, around **250 Indian men** took their own lives per day - more than twice the number of **women.**

Mental Health

- **About:**
    - According to the WHO, **mental health is 'a state of well-being** in which the individual realizes his or her own **abilities,** can cope with the **normal stresses** of life, can work **productively and fruitfully,** and is able to make a **contribution to his or her community.'**
    - Like **Physical health, Mental health** is also important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.
- **Challenges:**
    - **High Public Health Burden:** An estimated **150 million people** across India are in need

of mental health care interventions, according to India's latest National Mental Health Survey 2015-16.
    - **Lack of Resources:** Low proportion of the mental health workforce in India (per 100,000 population) include psychiatrists (0.3), nurses (0.12), psychologists (0.07) and social workers (0.07).
        - **Low financial resource allocation** of just over a percent of GDP on healthcare has created impediments in public access to affordable mental healthcare.
    - **Other Challenges:** Poor awareness about the symptoms of mental illness, social stigma and abandonment of mentally ill, especially old and destitute, leads to social isolation and reluctance on part of family members to seek treatment for the patient.
        - This has resulted in a **massive treatment gap,** which further worsens the present mental illness of a person.
- **Steps Taken by the Government:**
    - **National Mental Health Program (NMHP):**
        - To address the huge burden of mental disorders and shortage of qualified professionals in the field of mental health, the government has been implementing the National Mental Health Program (NMHP) since **1982.**
        - The Program was **re-strategized in 2003** to include two schemes, viz. Modernization of State Mental Hospitals and Up-gradation of Psychiatric Wings of Medical Colleges/General Hospitals.
    - **Mental HealthCare Act 2017:**
        - It guarantees every affected person access to mental healthcare and treatment from services run or funded by the government.
        - It has **significantly reduced the scope for the use of Section 309 IPC** and made the attempt to commit suicide punishable only as an exception.
            - Section 115(1) of the MHCA states: "Notwithstanding anything contained in section 309 of the Indian Penal Code any person who attempts to commit suicide shall be presumed, unless proved otherwise, to have severe stress and shall not be tried and punished under the said Code."

Way Forward

- Many researches have emphasized the importance of 'disrupting how men traditionally think about depression and suicide by breaking down the stigma that surrounds these topics' through nationwide campaigns.
- Originating a dialogue, sustaining that dialogue, challenging outdated social mores, and giving a voice to the voiceless without fear of exclusion and mockery is what needs to be undertaken to ensure that all people's mental health is taken seriously and addressed in a manner that is dignified and respectful.
- Modern techniques, such as web-based interventions and electronic health (e-health) tools, can also be developed and utilized to reach out to people who might not otherwise seek help.

Source: TH

PDF Refernece URL: https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/mental-health-and-men