



Indian Army's Proactive Measures for Mental Health

For Prelims: [National Mental Health Programme \(NMHP\)](#), [World Mental Health Day](#)

For Mains: Challenges faced by Indian Army personnel, Initiatives Related to Mental Health

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

The Indian Army, acknowledging the critical **issue of suicides and fratricides** within its ranks, has taken significant steps to address the **mental well-being** of its personnel.

- In a comprehensive study initiated in August 2023, in collaboration with the **Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR)**, the Army is focusing on understanding and mitigating stress factors affecting troops and their families.
- The DIPR is an institution under the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** of India, engaged in research and development in the field of psychology and human behaviour to support the defence and security sector.

Note:

- Fratricide in the military refers to a **soldier or security personnel killing their colleagues**.
- Suicides and fratricides are extreme acts undertaken by an individual due to high levels of stress, that are mainly caused due to domestic problems, family disputes, a sense of isolation and/ or dejection besides professional hazards.
- As per information given in **Parliament**, there were 2 fratricide cases annually from 2019 to 2021, with one case reported in 2021.
 - The suspected suicide cases in the Army numbered 104, 75, and 80 during the years 2016, 2017, and 2018, respectively.

What are the Stressors Faced by the Army Personnel?

- In a study, by the **United Service Institution of India (USI)**, a service think tank, found that there has been a significant increase in **stress levels among Army personnel** in the last two decades, due to **operational and non-operational stressors**.
- **Operational stressors:** Related to the **nature and conditions of the military service**, such as
 - Prolonged exposure to **counter-insurgency** and [counter-terrorism](#) (CI/CT) environment, which involves high risk, uncertainty, and violence.
 - Frequent transfers and separations from family, which affect the personal and social life of the soldiers.
 - **Lack of adequate facilities** and infrastructure, especially in remote and difficult areas.

- **Non-operational stressors:** Related to the **organizational and personal aspects of the military service**, such as
 - Poor leadership, callous attitude of seniors, and lack of trust and confidence in the chain of command.
 - Denial of leave, even in emergencies, and **lack of grievance redressal** mechanisms.
 - **Family-related disputes**, financial problems, marital issues, or health concerns.
 - **Low job satisfaction, career progression**, and recognition, especially among the officers.

What Initiatives are Implemented for Mental Well-being within the Army?

- **Advisory and Guidelines:**
 - The Army issued an advisory in August 2023, emphasizing the posting of officers, religious teachers, and selected other ranks in each unit to address stress and psychological issues.
 - The advisory provides guidelines to address factors leading to **increased stress levels, warning signs, and intervention measures**.
- **Psychometric Assessments:**
 - Pilot projects, including collaboration with a civil agency (Disha Kiran), are being undertaken at three nodal military stations to gauge the mental well-being of military personnel and their families.
- **Training Programs:**
 - Various training programs are implemented, such as the annual training of 30 officers at the **Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR)** and the conduct of "**Religious Teachers Counsellor Courses**" for four weeks at Command Hospitals, Base Hospitals, and Military Hospitals.
- **Unit Psychological Counsellor Course:**
 - A 12-week Unit Psychological Counsellor Course is conducted for Junior Commissioned Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers to equip them with **skills for addressing psychological concerns within their units**.
 - The Indian Army has employed civilian counsellors in all major military stations to enhance mental well-being support for all ranks.
- **Helplines:**
 - Helplines offering immediate counseling services have been established across all Command Headquarters.
- **Psychiatry Centres:**
 - These have been set up at major military stations under the Directorate General of Medical Service.
- **Holistic Approaches:**
 - Measures include **yoga, meditation, sports, and recreation activities, liberalized leave policies**, improvement of amenities in military stations, mutual buddy system for soldiers, and a prompt grievance handling mechanism.
 - Regular seminars on mental well-being, financial management, and domestic issues are conducted.
- **Continuous Evaluation and Improvement:**
 - The ongoing study, training programs, and collaborative projects reflect the Army's commitment to continuous evaluation and improvement in addressing mental health challenges.

Government Initiatives Related to Mental Health

- [National Mental Health Programme \(NMHP\)](#)
- [Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres \(AB-HWC\)](#)
- [National Tele Mental Health Programme](#)
- [Kiran Helpline](#)
- [Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram](#)
- [World Mental Health Day](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Mains

Q. Why suicide among young women is increasing in Indian society? **(2023)**

Q. What does the following quotation mean to you?

“We can never obtain peace in the outer world until and unless we obtain peace within ourselves.” – Dalai Lama. **(2021)**

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