WHO's World Mental Health Report

Why in News?

The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** has released two key reports *World Mental Health Today* and *Mental Health Atlas 2024*, the reports reveal that over a **billion people globally live with mental health conditions** and that **suicide accounts for 1 in 100 deaths**.

- For India, where stigma and mental health access gaps remain huge, this data raises**not just a health policy** concern but an **ethical responsibility**.

What are the Key Findings of WHO's Reports on World Mental Health?

- **Global Burden: 13.6% of the world's population currently has a mental disorder (age-standardized prevalence). Prevalence has risen faster than global population growth between 2011–2021.**
- **Most Common Disorders:** Anxiety and depressive disorders together account for over two-thirds of all cases.
  - Anxiety disorders usually start earlier (childhood/adolescence), while depression becomes more common after 40 years and peaks between 50–69 years.
- **Demographic Trends:** Young adults (20–29 years) have seen the highest rise (1.8%) in the prevalence of mental disorders since 2011.
  - Globally, males have higher rates of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders, and intellectual disabilities.
  - Females have higher rates of anxiety, depressive, and eating disorders.
- **Suicide:** 1 in every 100 deaths globally is due to suicide. Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people worldwide.
- **SDG Concern:** At the current pace, suicide mortality is projected to decline by only 12% by 2030, which falls far short of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of a one-third reduction.

Mental Health in India

- **Prevalence: National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) 2015-16** found that about 10.6% of Indian adults suffer from mental disorders, with urban **prevalence (13.5%) higher than rural (6.9%).**
- **Treatment Gap:** 70–92% do not receive proper treatment due to stigma, lack of awareness, and shortage of professionals.
  - India has 0.75 psychiatrists per 100,000 people (WHO recommends 3 per 100,000).

Mental Health Infrastructure

- **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP, 1982):** Integrates mental healthcare into general

healthcare.

- **Ayushman Bharat:** Sub Health Centres and Primary Health Centres upgraded to provide mental health services.
- **NIMHANS Act, 2012:** N**ational Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences** declared an Institute of National Importance; expanded training and research.
- **RPwD Act, 2016:** Recognizes mental illness as a disability; strengthens legal protection and aligns with **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006**
- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** Guarantees right to mental healthcare, decriminalizes suicide, and protects dignity.
- **National Health Policy, 2017:** Integrates mental health into primary care and strengthens human resources.
- **National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS, 2022):** Aims to reduce suicide **mortality by 10% by 2030.** Focuses on early intervention, crisis management, and mental health promotion. Targets high-risk populations like students, farmers, and young adults.
- **Digital Initiatives:**
  - **iGOT-Diksha (2020):** Trains healthcare professionals and community workers in mental health.
  - **National Tele Mental Health Programme (Tele MANAS), 2022:** Provides free 24/7 mental health support via a toll-free helpline in 20 languages.

Why is Mental Health an Ethical Issue?

- **Equitable Mental Health Access:** Mental health is an essential part of the **right to life under Article 21**. Neglecting it undermines human dignity and the ability to live a meaningful life.
  - Access to mental health **care is often uneven, with rural areas receiving the least support.** Ethical responsibility demands **equitable distribution of resources to protect the well-being of all**, especially the most vulnerable.
- **Autonomy and Freedom of Choice:** Stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion prevent individuals from **seeking care or making informed decisions**.
  - An ethical approach ensures people can exercise autonomy and access support without fear or prejudice.
- **Duty to Prevent Harm:** Workplaces, schools, and governments have a **moral obligation to reduce harmful stressors an**d prevent avoidable suffering, such as suicides or work-related mental distress. Ignoring these responsibilities is ethically wrong.
- **Compassion and Empathy:** Everyday acts of **respect, inclusion, and kindness are moral duties** that directly impact mental well-being.
  - Recognizing and responding to the suffering of others is central to an ethical society.
- **Collective Good: Untreated mental health issues affect productivity, social cohesion, and public safety. Addressing them is not just charity but a social obligation.**

Related Keywords for Mains

- **"Silence is the Real Stigma"**: Breaking barriers to treatment
- **"Tele Care, Anywhere"**: Digital solutions like Tele MANAS for rural and urban India.
- **"Community Heals"**: Local, inclusive, and collective mental health care.
- **"Save Minds, Save Lives"**: Suicide prevention as a national mission.
- **"Train, Treat, Transform"**: Capacity-building for mental health professionals.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q. We can never obtain peace in the outer world until and unless we obtain peace within ourselves. (2021)

Q. In order to enhance the prospects of social development, sound and adequate health care policies are needed particularly in the fields of geriatric and maternal health care.Discuss. (2020)

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