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Higher Prevalence of Mental Disorders in South India

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Why in News

Recently, a study by the **India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative** was published in the **Lancet Psychiatry**.

This is the **first comprehensive estimate** of **disease burden** due to **mental disorders** and their trends in every state of India from 1990.

India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative

- It is a public private initiative launched in **October 2015**.
- It is a collaboration between the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, the **Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)**, **Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME)** and other experts and stakeholders.

PHFI is a response to redress the limited institutional capacity in India for strengthening training, research and policy development in the area of Public Health.

Key Points

Method

- The study **divided States into three categories** on the **basis of their Socio-Demographic Index (SDI)**, i.e **low, medium and high SDI States**.
The **SDI** is a **composite measure** of per-capita income, mean education and fertility rate in women younger than 25 years and is calculated on a scale of one.
- The study utilised all accessible relevant data from India over the past three decades and reports that mental disorders are the **leading cause of non-fatal disease burden** in India and their contribution to the total disease burden is increasing.

Most Common Mental Disorder

- **Depression and anxiety** disorders are the **commonest mental disorders** in India. Their prevalence is increasing and is **relatively higher** in the **southern states** (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh) and **in females**.
- **Depression accounted for 33.8%** of all mental disorder DALYs in India in 2017, followed by **anxiety disorders (19%)**, **idiopathic developmental intellectual disability (10.8%)** and **schizophrenia (9.8%)**.
- The **contribution of mental disorders to the total disease burden** in India in terms of **disability adjusted life years** (DALYs) **increased** from 2.5% in 1990 to 4.7% in 2017.
DALY is the sum of total years of life lost and years lived with disability. One DALY is at least one lost year of 'healthy' life.

Prevalence

- **Roughly one in seven Indians or 197 million** people suffered from mental disorders of varying severity in 2017.
These include **depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, idiopathic developmental intellectual disability, conduct disorders, and autism**.
- **High SDI Group:** Prevalence of **depressive disorders** was highest in **Tamil Nadu**. **Anxiety disorders** were found to be more common in Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana and Maharashtra in the high SDI State group
- **Middle SDI Group:** Prevalence of depressive disorders was highest in **Andhra Pradesh**. **Anxiety disorders** were found to be more common in Andhra Pradesh, Manipur and West Bengal in the middle SDI State group.

Suggestions

- There is an urgent need to **strengthen mental health services**, integrate these with general healthcare and remove barriers such as stigma and access to treatment.
- The high rate of depression among older adults needs **attention through wider efforts** in the community and health system.
- Community-level mental health care and **integration of mental health services with other aspects** of healthcare should receive high priority from state governments.
- Health officials should have an **accurate accounting** of how depression, anxiety and other mental disorders are distributed across the country.

Source: TH/IE