

3. **Bring out the reasons behind growing mental health related issues in India. Also, suggest some steps which can be further taken by India in this regard. (150 words) 10**

Approach:

- List a few facts around mental health related issues in India.
- Mention the causes of growing mental health related issues in India.
- Suggest ways to deal with them.
- Conclude appropriately.

Answer:

In 2017, one among every seven people in India had a mental disorder, ranging from mild to severe. This figure has arguably shot up due to COVID-19 and related lockdown and isolation. According to a survey conducted by the Indian Psychiatry Society, within a week of the start of the lockdown, the number of reported cases of mental illness in India had risen by 20%.

The reasons behind growing mental health related issues in India include:

- **Ignorance and social stigma:** Due to lack of awareness and social stigma attached to mental health issues, people generally ignore them and do not seek counsel.
- **Modernisation and urbanisation:** The prevalence of mental morbidity is due to fast paced lifestyles, experiencing stress, complexities of living, a breakdown of support systems and challenges of economic stability.
- **Lack of health infrastructure:** Ranging from primary health care to tertiary, there is lack of personnel and their sensitization towards mental health issues. Further, the government spends only 33 paisa per mental health patient, which is very low.
- **Gender discrimination:** The observed higher prevalence of depressive and anxiety disorders in females could be related to gender discrimination, violence, sexual abuse, antenatal and postnatal stress, and adverse socio-cultural norms.
- **Old age issues:** The high prevalence of depressive disorders in older adults could be due to various factors, including chronic illness, social isolation and inadequate social support, and abuses faced by the elderly.
- **Socio-economic background:** Apart from these factors, other things like poverty, unemployment, social discrimination, drug abuse online abuse etc. are complicating the situation.

Steps, which can be taken in this regard include:

- Mental health situation in India demands **active policy interventions and resource allocation** by the government. Further, measures to **train and sensitize communities and families** should be undertaken to reduce the stigma and promote inclusion.
- Mental illness must mandatorily be put under the ambit of **life insurance**, which will help people see mental illness with the same lens as physical diseases.
- **Robust model of mental health care intervention** through health care professionals and community based intervention needs to be developed. Few examples are Atmiyata's community-based volunteers in Maharashtra and Gujarat.
- **Building resilience amongst adolescents and young children** through school-based mental health programmes.
- **Scaling up digitally-mediated therapy and telepsychiatry** to provide mental health services in remote and inaccessible areas. For e.g. NIMHANS runs a successful telepsychiatry intervention in Karnataka.
- **Promotion of physical activity** like Yoga and mindfulness techniques to supplement mental health.

In view of the COVID-19 related challenges, the government recently launched Manodarpan, as part of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, to provide psychological support and counselling to students, teachers and families for mental health and emotional well-being. Apart from this, the government has enacted a National Mental Healthcare Act.