



General Studies-1; Topic: Population and associated issues,

Suicidal Deaths in India

Introduction

- Every year, when the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) releases statistics on deaths by suicide in India, the demand to address the issue grows louder.
- **Deaths by suicide remain a major source of social distress and public policy concern in India.**

Role of Digital Technologies

- One of the causes of suicide is the expanding role of digital technologies.
- Aggravation of depression and other mental health issues leading to suicide is being repeatedly attributed to technology.
- Factors such as **cyberbullying**, loss of self-esteem due to social media, extreme binge-watching of online content are all said to be contributing to the issue.
- **However, technology is neither at the core of the problem nor the perfect solution for it.**

Cyber Bullying

- No one can deny the link between cyberbullying and suicidal thoughts and attempts.
- According to a study, those who experienced cyberbullying were more than four times as likely to report thoughts of suicide and attempts as those who did not.
- Similar results are true even for those who are bullied in person.

Other Factors

- Family problems, illness, substance abuse, and marriage/love-related issues alone contribute to more than two-thirds of the deaths by suicide in India.

Concerns/ Challenges

- **Suicidal tendencies among teenagers** have become a major concern for society.
- Many youngsters are taking their lives for **trivial reasons** including failure in exams, insults meted out to them by classmates, and delay from parents in purchasing a new mobile phone for them.

Use of a Technology

- The Central government is embracing the potential role of technology in improving mental health outcomes for citizens.
- **National Tele-Mental Health Programme** provide access to free, round-the-clock mental health interventions in remote and underserved areas.
- While technology is certainly an agent of this complex matrix, it can neither be seen as a root cause nor as a panacea.

Way Forward

- Suicide is a reality which society must respond to in the most sensitive and holistic manner possible.
- The act of bullying needs to be addressed.
- **Awareness campaigns, sensitisation programmes, community support and counselling services** are good solutions against bullying.
- The government must **address the root causes** and evolve a holistic policy response to minimise future cases.
- An **inclusive community-based mental health and suicide-prevention approach** may prove to be more effective in saving lives.
- Acknowledgement of suicidal thoughts and attempts to address a host of inter-related causes and effects are necessary to design effective and proportionate policy prescriptions.