GS-II: For a happy childhood.

News

India requires multiple interventions to prevent mental health disorders among adolescents.

With over 18% of India’s population aged 10-17 the future of the country will be driven by this segment.

The government has introduced many initiatives for their health, nutrition, education, and employment.

Suicide among adolescents:

- Happy childhood becoming a challenge for many. Recent data suggest that mental health disorders are on the rise among 13-17 years olds with one out of five children’s in schools suffering from depression.
- According to the National Mental Health Survey of 2016 the prevention of mental disorders was 7.3% among 13-17 years old.
- Half of all mental health disorders in adulthood starts by 14 years of age with many cases being undetected. Those who suffer from depression and anxiety in adulthood may often be experiencing this from childhood and it may peak during adolescents and their early 20s.
- Depression and suicidal thoughts are two of the most frightening things a person can face in their lifetime. Unfortunately, acting on those suicidal thoughts is a far too common scenario for many across the world, including students.
- These cases force us to recognise that youth suicides are ubiquitous, and the educational ecosystem must take the blame for this.

Harsh Facts that need Immediate Attention:

- According to the National Crime Records Bureau, between 2014 and 2016, 26,476 students committed suicide in India. Of them, 7,462 committed suicide due to failure in various examinations.
- The rising number of these cases provokes a serious discussion on the way in which outcomes of education are perceived in India.
- The instrumental value of education in India is its potential in generating socio-economic and cultural capital through a promise of decent job opportunities in the future. But the education system has not been successful in generating enough job options.
- For instance, the International Labour Organisation’s World Employment and Social Outlook Trends Report of 2018 says that in 2019, the job status of nearly 77% of Indian workers would be vulnerable and that 18.9 million people would be unemployed.
- With their job future being so bleak, students are put under constant pressure to perform. They have failed to learn to enjoy the process of education. Instead, the constant pressure and stress has generated social antipathy and detachment among them.

Resiliency Factors:

The presence of resiliency factors can lessen the potential of risk factors to lead to suicidal
Ideation and behaviours. Once a child or adolescent is considered at risk, schools, families, and friends should work to build these factors in and around the youth. These include:

- Family support and cohesion, including good communication.
- Peer support and close social networks.
- School and community connectedness.
- Cultural or religious beliefs that discourage suicide and promote healthy living.
- Adaptive coping and problem-solving skills, including conflict-resolution.
- General life satisfaction, good self-esteem, sense of purpose.
- Easy access to effective medical and mental health resources.

Conclusion:

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among school age youth. However, suicide is preventable. Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs of their distress. Parents, teachers, and friends are in a key position to pick up on these signs and get help. Most important is to never take these warning signs lightly or promise to keep them secret. Parents are crucial members of a suicide risk assessment as they often have information critical to making an appropriate assessment of risk, including mental health history, family dynamics, recent traumatic events, and previous suicidal behaviours.