

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 156
TO BE ANSWERED ON 02.02.2024

IMPACT OF INTERNET ON MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN

156. DR. SHASHI THAROOR:

Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the findings of a survey conducted by NGO Kanal and various other organisations, showing that most children who use the internet are fighting mental health issues like anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has taken steps to address the impact of the internet on child's mental health;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether the Government come up with interventions specific to the State of Kerala in view of the revelation in survey that the said adverse impact is highest in the State; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI)

(a) to (e): No sir. Government has not received any such survey. However, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), has conducted a study on 'Effects of use of mobile phones & Other devices with Internet" on School Children in 2021. The research study was exploratory in nature and quantitative techniques like the survey method, and qualitative techniques like Focused Group Discussion (FGD) were used. Three different questionnaires for survey of all major stakeholders i.e., school children, parents and teachers were used. The study report is available on NCPCR's website at the following Link – https://ncpcr.gov.in/uploads/165650458362bc410794e02_EFFECT~1.PDF

Further, as per the information received from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, with a view to address the burden of mental health disorders, the Government of India is implementing the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in the country. The District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) component of the NMHP has been sanctioned for implementation in 738 districts for which support is provided to States/UTs through the National Health Mission for targeted interventions with the following objectives:

- i. To provide facilitative skill to class teachers to promote life skill among their students.
- ii. To provide the knowledge and skills to class teachers to identify emotional conduct, scholastic and substance use problems in their students
- iii. To provide a system of referral for students with psychological problems in schools to the District Mental Health Team for inputs and treatment.
- iv. To involve other stakeholders like parents, community leaders to enhance development of adolescents etc.

In order to ensure holistic development of the adolescent population, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has been implementing the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) since 2014. RKSK covers both school going and non-school going adolescents. It is a paradigm shift from the clinic-based services to promotion and prevention and reaching adolescents in their own environment, such as in schools, families and communities. Mental Health is one of the key thematic areas of RKSK apart from Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), nutrition, injuries and violence (including gender-based violence), non-communicable diseases and substance misuse.

RKSK through its interventions namely Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHC), Peer Education Programme and Adolescent Health and Wellness Days (AH&WD) focus on creating awareness on mental health issues and providing counselling services, involving the parents, village elders, teachers, healthcare providers and the adolescents themselves as the critical stakeholders.

Ayushman Bharat School Health & Wellness Programme incorporates “Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health” as a dedicated module. Health and Wellness Ambassadors (Teachers) are trained on mental health along with other thematic areas of the programme to support and provide awareness to school children on mental health and well-being. The training focuses on identifying self-emotions signs of distress in self and others and recognizing that ‘mental health and well-being’ exists along a continuum. Health and Wellness Ambassadors take interactive sessions with the students and percolate the messages through weekly sessions promoting joyful learning.

Besides the above, the Government has launched a “National Tele Mental Health Programme” on 10th October, 2022, to further improve access to quality mental health counselling and care services in the country. As on 30.01.2024, 34 States/ UTs have set up 47 Tele MANAS Cells and have started tele mental health services. More than 6,28,000 calls have been handled on the helpline number.
