

A Comprehensive Review on Men's Mental Health and Social Reasons Behind it

Mugdha Chinmaya Patwardhan^{1*}

ABSTRACT

This article provides a general review of literature and summary of deteriorating conditions of men's mental health and addresses the social reasons behind it like types of masculinity, gender roles etc. It also aims to spread awareness and elicit sensitivity towards the alarming issue of men's mental health crisis by exploring topics like masculinity and its types. Men's mental health is named as a silent crisis widely because of the inability of most men to express their insecurities. This topic has a lack of social awareness and sensitivity which is the main cause of the problem. We live in a world with a population of 8.2 billion, with a male population of 4,153,800,966 that is, 50.5% and female population of 4,078,798,820 which is 49.5% (Worldometer, 2024). On a world level, suicide rate among males in 2022 was approximately four times higher than the rate among females. Males make up 50% of the population but nearly 80% of suicides (Center for Disease control and Prevention, 2024). Numbers clearly project the acute need to focus on this less recognised topic.

Keywords: *Men's Mental health, social reasons, types of masculinity stigma, gender roles, silent crisis, social awareness*

The term Men's Mental Health is considered to be a vogue term, fluently used in the modern world through media like newspapers, social networking sites etc. In today's world we observe a silent crisis in Men's Mental Health. The term silent crisis here, describes the general tendency of men to not seek help due to societal norms, expectations and pressures. Men's Mental health is a concept that is not recognised as it should be, especially in countries like India, where population is 141.72 crores (2022), problems like mental health are way behind in the queue when compared to issues like poverty, lack of basic resources but that does not mean the problem does not exist. Men's mental health is an issue less addressed even in the field of mental health itself. It's prime time to work in this field as stereotypes like men should not cry, emote still exist in society. The rate of suicide among Indian men is 2.5 times of that among women, shows in an analysis by the International Institute for Population Sciences IIPS Deonar (Times of India, 2023). Cases of death by suicide among Indian men have grown over one-third in the past seven years, claimed a report by The Lancet Regional Health. In 2014, 89,129 men died by suicide as against 42,521 women. The ratio rose to 2.64 times in 2021. 1,18,979 males died by suicide

¹Student, Shri Vile Parle Kelvani Mandal's Mithibai College of Arts, Chauhan Institute of Science and Amrutben Jivanlal College of Commerce and Economics (Empowered Autonomous) Affiliated to University of Mumbai, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: November 13, 2024; Revision Received: July 26, 2025; Accepted: July 31, 2025

A Comprehensive Review on Men's Mental Health and Social Reasons Behind it

against 45,026 females (NDTV, 2023). All these numbers coming from trustable and big names are alarming. Many might say that its oblivious that the male to female ratio of the world justifies the rise of number of suicides within men against women but it's not true. India's sex ratio in 2023 is 1,020 females per 1,000 males. The sex ratio in rural areas is 985 females to 1,000 males, and in urban areas, it's 985 females to 1,000 males. The sex ratio at birth has improved by 15 points from 918 in 2014-15 to 933 in 2022-23. These numbers show that the ratio is almost equal in today's time and age. Other than past traumas, men could face mental health issues due to their relationship with masculinity. Masculinity is a subjective term. In biological perspective, there is a high epidemiology of mental health disorders like SUD, ADHD and suicide in men, making them more vulnerable to complexes and bad mental health. Another, social issue is that of the concept of real men in society. It has always been exclusive in nature, earlier it used to be real men don't cry and in the woke culture real men are considered to be the ones who express themselves. These stereotypes and expectations alter both men's and other people perspective about identity of men and how they should socially behave. There is a utter need to understand that men can be both expressive and non-expressive. Even though these factors are of significance, the paramount factor is lack of awareness. It is the primary factor that affects all the other factors we have discussed about.

Hegemonic Masculinities

In simple terms, hegemonic masculinity is a social construct that involves the ideal societal qualities and behavioural expectations from men which involve aggression, power, emotional strength etc. It basically promotes the macho man idea. It is the traditional social expectations kept from the males. This term was coined by R.W Connell in 1995. This concept heavily influences the field of gender studies. Hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1995) play a negative role in men's health. Briefly, hegemonic masculinities work to oppress women and other men through a range of ideals and practices such as competition, aggressiveness and heterosexuality. While many men will not actually attain or maintain culturally valued modes of masculinity, they nonetheless benefit through complicity with dominant ideals (Gough, 2006). This is a complex concept that promotes emotional stoicism which eventually leads to silence or non-expression about the sufferings a male might be going through. It creates a domino effect, where the fear of not meeting the societal expectations of emotional stoicism that originates from hegemonic masculinities eventually makes it difficult to express their vulnerable side for males.

Subordinate Masculinities

It refers to the traits men show which do not match with traditional masculinity. For example, men crying or showing their emotions. These traits among men are not widely accepted by society. They are considered to be lower in status or less respected. Instead, they are labelled to be feminine and get trolled if they show such traits. Men who tend to depict such traits might not tick the boxes of being rough and strong which makes them feel out of the box. They feel that their uniqueness might exclude them from the society. This factor creates a fear in men of not being accepted by the society for depicting subordinate masculinity. Therefore, even if they want to cry and depict emotions, they restrict themselves from doing so due to fear of being devalued.

Adolescents and Young Males

The phase of puberty in adolescents and young males is a transforming period not only physically but psychologically as well. Most insecurities and social responsibilities, social consciousness and formation of opinions happens in this age. Attraction to the opposite

A Comprehensive Review on Men's Mental Health and Social Reasons Behind it

gender also brings a sense of consciousness. Peer pressure leads to indulgence of behaviour like substance use. It is a very vulnerable age.

Adolescent and young adult men do poorly on indicators of mental health evidenced by elevated rates of suicide, conduct disorder, substance use, and interpersonal violence relative to their female peers (Rice S., Purcell R., McGorry P., 2017). Online Gaming is one of the reasons violence is projected in male young adults. Among the gaming population, compared to females, adolescent and adult males demonstrate far more addictive internet gaming use in terms of screen hours, craving, and negative impacts on health, which have, in isolated incidents, also caused death (Chen, Kelly, Ollife, 2018).

Gender Roles

There has been increasing awareness of an association between masculine gender roles and various physical and mental health disorders in men (Esler, Blalock, 2002). In most societies men are expected to be the breadwinners of the family. They are expected to be fearless and perform well in competitive environments as their whole unit depends on them for financial prosperity. This sort of expectation with standards of being emotionally stoic might eventually lead to many mental health issues that are complex in nature. In one of the studies, conducted by Sharpe and Heppner (1991) about gender role, gender role conflict and psychological well-being of men the results depicted that gender role conflict in men is negatively related to psychological well-being. It also confirmed that masculinity is strongly related to traditional measures of psychological well-being. Gender roles today, are relevant in the field of corporate industry, IT sector and other growing nine to five fields. In examining masculinity and femininity throughout the world, anthropologists have found that different cultures universally construct a model of appropriate manhood that is usually difficult for men to achieve and, once achieved, can be precarious. Thus, men are regularly under a much greater burden to “prove” their masculinity than women are to similarly prove their femininity (Brescoll, V.L., Uhlmann, 2012).

Vulnerability to Substance Use

Men are considered more vulnerable to substances as compared to women. One of the major reasons behind this could be escapism as due to heavy external pressures substance use is an easy way out from reality. Even though there are biological reasons like genetic predisposition but researches also support this as a psychological issue as psychologically men may be more prone to traits like impulsivity and higher rates of comorbid mental health issues like depression and anxiety, which are strongly linked with substance abuse (Belfiore, Galofaro, Cotroneo et al, 2024). Socially, traditional masculinity norms often encourage risk taking behaviours and also suppress emotional expressions which can eventually lead men to use substances as coping mechanisms (Minero, Brown, Best et al, 2022).

Struggles with Socialising

It is observed that men generally struggle with socialising which is often seen as a result of the years of conditioning to not emotionally express themselves. It is difficult for men to form deep emotional social connections easily due to the insecurity of being vulnerable that most men struggle with. One major factor is the need to conform to the traditional masculinity of emotional stoicism as social bonding require a huge amount of emotional expressions. Another could be the trait of competitiveness as men are burdened with financial responsibilities, competitiveness comes in the way of socialising. It also hampers power and strength as the more people are aware about vulnerabilities they tend to also be aware of the weakness of the person.

CONCLUSION

This article tries to highlight the current scenario of men's mental health and a few societal factors that affect the same. The amalgamation of the factors discussed above and personal experiences of individuals leads to psychological issues for men, which might sound quite normal as aid can be provided to this problem but the main issue is the silence of men regarding their mental health even after awareness of the existence of psychological distress. It is a result of decades of conditioning, hegemonic masculinities expectations, stereotypes and stigma. One of the major solutions for this issue is that of education and spread of awareness. Educating men about their own mental health, processing emotions and promoting them to express their emotions in a healthy manner is a long-term panacea for this problem we face today. Other than men, everyone should work towards undoing the macho man expectations the society has from men to provide them a safe and judgement free environment to express themselves. This can be done with the help of movies where men showing emotions can be shown as a symbol of power rather than weakness and being scared of certain situations is also a quality that a hero holds. Alterations in therapeutic practices are also required, where males are attended to with more empathy and patience as it is very difficult for them to express their emotional problems. A mosaic of issues discussed in this article eventually lead men to become more violent and isolated, increasing psychotic crimes like domestic violence, murders etc. The adverse condition of men's mental health is an alarming issue because resolving and spreading awareness about this topic will lead to the ultimate betterment of society as most crimes are committed by men with bad past experiences, PTSD, anxiety. Traumas, addictions etc. Aid to this problem will end up saving many lives. Such issues faced by men are generally considered underrated due to the lack of expression of emotional vulnerabilities and responsibilities. There has been lack of awareness and sensitivity on this topic as men are assumed to be stoic, not allowed to cry, not considered cool if not strong, treated harshly as they are considered to be strong and assumed to have no major issues meanwhile, in reality they do have problems but they were never really allowed to complain out loud.

REFERENCES

- Belfiore, C. I., Galofaro, V., Cotroneo, D., Lopis, A., Tringali, I., Denaro, V., & Casu, M. (2024). A Multi-Level Analysis of Biological, Social, and Psychological Determinants of Substance Use Disorder and Co-Occurring Mental Health Outcomes. *Psychoactives*, 3(2), 194-214.
- Brescoll, V. L., Uhlmann, E. L., Moss-Racusin, C., & Sarnell, L. (2012). Masculinity, status, and subordination: Why working for a gender stereotype violator causes men to lose status. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(1), 354-357.
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Suicide Data and Statistics, October 29, 2024, Retrieved from, <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/data.html#:~:text=Suicide%20rate%20disparities&text=The%20suicide%20rate%20among%20males,but%20nearly%2080%25%20of%20suicides>.
- Chen KH, Oliffe JL, Kelly MT. Internet Gaming Disorder: An Emergent Health Issue for Men. *American Journal of Men's Health*. 2018;12(4):1151-1159. doi:10.1177/1557988318766950
- Eisler, Janice A. Blalock (1991), Masculine gender role stress: Implications for the assessment of men, *Clinical Psychology Review*, Volume 11, Issue 1, Pages 45-60, ISSN 0272-7358Media
- Gough B. (2006) Try to be healthy, but don't forget your masculinity: Deconstructing men's mental health discourse in media, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 63, Issue 9, pages 2476-2488

A Comprehensive Review on Men's Mental Health and Social Reasons Behind it

- Minero V., Best D., Brown L. et al (2022), Differences in addition and recovery gains according to gender barriers and specific differences in overall strengths growth, *Subst Abuse Treat Prev Policy* 17, 21
- NDTV, Suiciderate2.6<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/alarming-rise-in-suicides-by-indian-men-between-2014-and-2021-lancet-study-4338759>
- Rice S., Purcell R., McGorry P (2017), Adolescent and Young Adult Male Mental Health: Transforming System Failures into Proactive Models of Engagement, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Volume 62, Issue 3, Supplement, Pages S9-S17
- Sharpe, Heppner, Mark J., Paul (1991), Gender role, gender-role conflict and psychological well being in men, *APA Psynet*, Volume 38(3), 323-330
- Times of India, M. Iyer, 2023, Retrieved from, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/suicide-rate-among-indian-men-2-5-times-higher-than-in-women/articleshow/103000480.cms>
- Worldometer Current world population clock, 2024, Retrieved from, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Patwardhan, M.C. (2025). A Comprehensive Review on Men's Mental Health and Social Reasons Behind it. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), 1211-1215. DIP:18.01.111.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.111