

#MENTAL HEALTH

Cyberbullying: A punishable crime

Many of us may have experienced bullying while growing up, but as we learned to tackle the demonic behaviour with age and experience, another new term emerged to bother our existence, namely cyberbullying. With the advent of technology and the proliferation of social media, tentacles of the menace became limitless. With the advantage of anonymity made possible by the Internet, the cyberbullies became terrifying, often far worse than the 'bullying' that once had a face.



On googling the term 'cyberbullying,' we usually end up with a narrative that majorly speaks of online offenses on children, mostly teenagers. While that may be alarming, it is not only our children that are at risk, but also every single person of the society, including celebrities and even random adult males and females. Public figures are even more prone to harassment since their social media pages are open to the general audience.

With more people enlisting on the social media every day and the world becoming connected over the web as one united world, the problem has almost become life threatening. With the rapid increase in anxiety cases and depressive illness, especially after the COVID-19 trauma, an additional malice such as cyberbullying seems to be excessively taxing on the psychological health of an individual.

To tackle the social malice and form a



unifying bond to its eradication, a global Stop Cyberbullying Day is observed all over the world, every third Friday of June, since 2012. This day had been initiated by the Cybersmile Foundation to encourage people from all around the world to show their commitment towards a 'safe' online environment without the existence of any sort of threat, harassment or abuse.

Similarly, this year the day has been observed in Bangladesh on June 18, along with the entire world to show solidarity against the cyberbullies, in every corner of the world.

Tanzir Dilshad Ditan, and her social story telling platform KrayonMag has been especially vocal on this particular issue, taking interviews of countless celebrities and asking their experiences on tackling cyberbullying.

"The menace has to stop, it's like everybody becomes an evil king behind their screens. We need to be educated regarding the use of social media and we need to know that cyberbullying is a criminal

offence. Any person's self-esteem can be shattered because of cyberbullying, and some may even become suicidal, we MUST be able to realise the associated harm and refrain from doing anything to jeopardise the mental health of others," said Ditan.

In one of the video messages with KrayonMag, against cyberbullying, singer and journalist Elita Karim mentioned that she avoided sharing any sort of negative news on social media, to prevent instigating any form of cyberbullying.

"I mostly share positive thoughts and messages and this encourages people to think good thoughts and remain positive in their lives," said Elita.

Actor and lawyer Peya Jannatul actively protested against cyberbullying through her video message, she was vocal about pointing out the disheartening fact that most of the women our country remained silent on this issue, when they should have been vocal to ward-off perpetrators.

Peya Jannatul requested all victims of cyberbullying to stop accepting negativity



from any person on or off the screen and report the cyberbullies, as and when they are assaulted.

Meher Afroz Shaon, actress and singer, also voiced concern against cyberbullying, terming the activity as a psychological deviation. She urged people to think twice before commenting and advised them to avoid any issue that they found to their unliking.

"If people don't like something they should avoid the post rather than make any sort of demeaning comment. It is natural for someone to not like something but that does not give them the right to demean others."

Rafiah Rashid Mithila, another celebrity spokesperson admitted how she had been bullied numerous times over the Internet. She mentioned, "I am against this heinous crime and request everyone to avoid doing anything on the Internet to harm others."

Barrister Omar Khan Joy, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh mentioned few ways to tackle cyberbullying to this newspaper, on an earlier print issue.

According to the lawyer, Cyberbullying is not just an act to be scorned upon, but an offense punishable under the Information



and Communication Technology (ICT) Act 2006. He also mentioned that victims of cybercrimes including cyberbullying could lodge complaints to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) on enlisted numbers given on the internet or mail them directly at btrc@btrc.gov.bd.

According to the Khan, the above steps must be adhered to, only if the form of cyberbullying is extreme, if not, then other steps such as reporting to the social media harassment team of the concerned social media outlet, could be a start, other measures may include blocking and reporting the criminal to friends and family. In every case the reporting process must be adhered to before complaining to the BTRC.

Cyberbullying is an offensive crime, even though the delinquency occurs behind a screen, it doesn't mean it is any less of a crime. With more people getting onboard the social media it has almost becoming mandatory to teach everyone the etiquettes of using the new-age meet and greet platforms. Just like we were taught in our formative years on how to be kind to people we met 'face to face' on a daily basis, we must also be re-taught that it is NEVER OK, to be rude to people we meet online. Behind the screen or not, we are all human beings with feelings that can be seriously wounded, if abused unwisely.

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo Courtesy: KrayonMag