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READER SUBMISSION

The implications of overlooking BPD

BPD is a complex and often misunderstood mental health condition, characterised by chronic emotional instability, intense and stormy relationships, a fragile sense of self, impulsivity, and a pervasive fear of abandonment. It affects approximately 1.4 percent of the global population, though the true figure may be higher due to frequent misdiagnoses and cultural underreporting.

MAHAPARA SANJANA
In Bangladesh and across South Asia, where mental illness remains cloaked in shame, stigma, and silence, the plight of borderline personality disorder (BPD) largely unnoticed. But for countless young people grappling with the struggles of BPD, the silence can be deafening, and the consequences, deadly.

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Notably, BPD disproportionately affects young women – around 75 percent of those diagnosed are women, with symptoms typically appearing in late adolescence or early adulthood, precisely the period when societal pressures are tightening around young women, especially in a conservative society like ours.

In Bangladesh, a young woman showing signs and symptoms of BPD is unlikely to be met with understanding, kindness, or support. Instead, she may be dismissed as "moody," "too sensitive," or "emotionally unstable" – labels that stick fast in a culture that often equates femininity with restraint and mental illness with weakness.

This double stigma of mental illness and gender means that young women with BPD suffer

not only the symptoms of their condition but also the crushing weight of social judgment. Their pain is trivialised, their trauma doubted, and their needs dismissed. Their self-harm may be misinterpreted as attention-seeking; their need for connection viewed as clinginess, desperation, or manipulation.

The emotional wounds of BPD are deep enough, but societal misunderstanding drives them even deeper. In a society where a woman's value is often still measured by her obedience, ability to get and sustain a marriage, and docility, BPD becomes more than a diagnosis, it becomes a source of shame. Families fear social fallout. Friends fade. Employers hesitate. And most tragically, the woman herself internalises the idea that she is broken beyond repair. These fears and stigma force many women into silence, robbing them of early diagnosis and treatment that could potentially alter their lives.

These misunderstandings aren't just painful, they're dangerous. According to the National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder, UK, up to 10 percent of individuals diagnosed with BPD take their own lives, one of the highest rates among psychiatric conditions.

When combined with the alarming rise in self-harm rates among young people in low and middle income countries like Bangladesh, the situation becomes critical. Yet, our conversations about mental health barely scratch the surface, let alone acknowledge conditions as complex as BPD. However, the cost of this silence is high.

Even in clinical settings, BPD is often treated with hesitation or avoidance. The disorder has historically been labelled "difficult to treat," and some professionals continue to shy away from working with those affected. This bias can leave individuals with BPD feeling hopeless, reinforcing the belief that they are "too broken" to deserve help.

But BPD is treatable. Over the last few decades, evidence-based therapies have changed the landscape of care. Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) – developed by Dr Marsha Linehan, (a survivor of BPD herself) – has been shown to significantly reduce self-harming behaviours, improve emotional regulation, and foster more stable relationships. Other treatments such as Mentalisation-Based Therapy (MBT) and Schema Therapy are also providing new hope to those previously deemed "untreatable."

However, access to these therapies in Bangladesh remains scarce. Mental health services are concentrated in urban areas, often prohibitively expensive, and culturally misaligned with the lived experiences of many patients. Personality disorders are still largely omitted from public health campaigns and school-based mental health programmes. Even within professional circles, awareness of BPD is limited.

This is why it's imperative to centre the voices of people, especially young women who live with this disorder and are fighting for dignity in systems not built for them. It's a call to action for policymakers, educators, health

professionals, and communities to recognise that ignoring BPD won't make it go away. But awareness, compassion, and investment just might make it easier on those living with this diagnosis.

To move forward, we must begin by changing the narrative. We must begin with education, both public and professional. Schools, universities, and workplaces, should incorporate mental health literacy into their programmes, ensuring that young people learn about emotional well-being long before a crisis point. Medical institutions must prioritise training in personality disorders, so future clinicians are equipped not just with skills for diagnosis, but with empathy and tools for care.

At a societal level, we need to reimagine support systems. Families must be given tools to understand BPD, not through the lens of shame, but with compassion and context. Community-based resources, including peer-led support groups and culturally sensitive therapy models, can help reduce the burden on clinical systems while offering people a space to feel understood.

Finally, we must be willing to sit with the discomfort of emotional pain, not to fix it immediately, but to treat it with care. Because behind every person with BPD is not a problem to be solved, but a person longing for connection, safety, and dignity. Behind every "difficult" person is often an inner child longing to be understood.

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Helping parents navigate misinformation on the internet

HASIB UR RASHIDIFTI

One of the key aspects of growing up involves taking responsibilities for one's parents. However, in the digital age, caring for them is not just about ensuring their well-being. It also involves protecting them from one of the greatest threats that is prevalent today: misinformation.

With most parents now active on social media, they are exposed to the same barrage of misleading content as the rest of us. But unlike younger generations who have developed a degree of scepticism, many parents come from an era when the printed word was synonymous with credibility. If something appeared in a newspaper, it was, more often than not, true. The internet, however, operates by an entirely different set of rules. Content can be created by anyone, and social media algorithms prioritise engagement over accuracy. Misinformation thrives on emotion – fear, anger, nostalgia – making it dangerously easy to spread.

The challenge is such that even for those of who have spent a considerable amount of time online, distinguishing fact from fiction is becoming increasingly difficult. However, the difficulty is



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compounded for older generations, many of whom are resistant to the idea that they might be misled. Simply telling them that something is false often provokes defensiveness rather than reflection.

Instead of outright dismissing their beliefs, a more effective approach is to guide them through the fact-checking process. While we may assume that parents struggle with technology, the truth is that they have adapted to social media surprisingly well. Teaching them to verify information using credible news sources is a strong first step.

If something is true, it is likely to be covered by major news media within 24 hours. So, it is crucial that they learn to wait a while before blindly believing the information and share it with the rest of the world. Many older individuals are also prone to accepting information that aligns with their existing political views. Introducing them to neutral, fact-based sources – both on social media and traditional media platforms – can help counterbalance biased narratives.

However, chances are that the frequency of misinformation appearing on your parents' social media feed is much higher than your feed simply because of the algorithm. If your parents are avid consumers of unreliable conspiracy theory videos on Facebook or YouTube, their feed is likely to be filled with such content.

One of the most effective ways to intervene is to help them take charge of the kind of pages they interact with. Unsubscribing from unreliable pages and explaining how recommendation systems work can make a significant difference. Parents should understand that their feeds are curated based on past interactions and that consuming a variety of sources leads to a more balanced perspective. They are, after all, navigating a new landscape. The goal should be to make them self-sufficient in filtering misinformation rather than micromanaging their internet use.

Instead of positioning ourselves as fact-checkers scrutinising every move, we should empower them to verify information independently. In Bangladesh's current political landscape, misinformation has become a powerful tool for manipulation. False narratives are deliberately spread to influence public opinion, stir unrest, or serve hidden agendas. Ensuring that our parents can navigate this digital minefield with vigilance is not just a personal responsibility; it is a necessity for a more informed society.

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Why we should keep our hobbies alive



IRINA JAHAN

Drawing came to me before I learnt my first alphabet. My earliest memories are of sketching and painting circles and flowers on the pages of books, walls, and any surface on which crayons would sit well. Once, to my sister's absolute horror, I coloured an entire page of her homework completely blue. My teachers would often note how I traced letters along the lines of my notebook in various colours. Throughout my school years, I was deeply immersed in many activities both creative and athletic, but drawing and painting were the only ones I stuck with throughout the years.

This particular hobby nurtured something essential within me, something that extended beyond the simple act of creating. It became a way for me to express myself, to find

joy in experimentation, and to develop patience.

Then came adulthood and I found myself tasked to take on more responsibilities. Career and academic aspirations filled my schedule, and the vibrancy of my many hobbies began to fade into insignificance.

When I return to drawing, perhaps once every six months, I am reminded of my self-imposed exile from my creative mind space into the relentless rat race. But sacrificing the joy of hobbies in exchange for productivity has never felt like an emotionally fulfilling trade-off.

There was also a part of me that carried an unspoken shame for practising something for years without achieving mastery. But perhaps this expectation is flawed. I doubt it even existed before the internet had romanticised the idea of a monetised hobby.

We must free ourselves from the belief that every activity we pursue must lead to perfection. Some things can be done purely for the joy they bring, offering an escape from rigid expectations. Not every skill we cultivate needs to be showcased to an audience, and not every endeavour must serve a purpose beyond personal fulfilment.

Hobbies are not just sources of amusement; they can also be challenging – a stark contrast to the ease of doomscrolling. However, they may, in fact, be the key to overall well-being. Since most of our pursuits are for the sake of a better life, integrating small doses of activities that bring us gradual satisfaction can leave us feeling happier and more fulfilled in the present.

I will admit that part of my neglect of these pursuits stems from indulging

in social media's short-form content. After a busy day, it's easier to spend hours scrolling through my phone than to take out the painting supplies tucked away at the back of my room. It often feels more sensible to do nothing, knowing that by morning, another financially promising goal will demand my attention. Why would I spend hours creating something that, quite frankly, never ends up looking the way I want it to?

Yet, nothing compares to the satisfaction of watching something take form over time. Perhaps the key to maintaining hobbies is to carve out small, intentional moments for them. Hopefully, over time, these small efforts will accumulate into something meaningful, ensuring that our creative selves are not buried under the weight of responsibilities but thrive alongside them.

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