Behind the Screens: Unseen Struggles of Teens in a World of Cyberbullying

The hidden impact of online harassment on mental health and daily life

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It's 3 am. Parents are in deep sleep, yet the teenager is smiling, staring at his phone screen. The blue light from the screen is suppressing melatonin production, which is harmful to his sleep rhythm, and the mess of his sleeping schedule is affecting his brain. He does not realize the damage this habit is causing to his health and well-being. He is chatting with a new online friend. It has been only a few days, and he trusts that person more than anyone. One day, after sharing the passwords of his accounts with this so-called friend, his account was hacked. The friend then blocked him on other social media platforms and used the account to bully, scam, and trick others. Eventually, one of the victims reported the account, the police went to the boy's house, and he explained that his account had been hacked by an online friend who had only been in his life temporarily. Stories like this are heard more and more in the news and media, sometimes making the front page with bold headlines to warn readers. This kind of bullying, done online by people with bad intentions, is called cyberbullying.

Today, both teenagers and adults are becoming victims of cyberbullying. Many teens are unsure how to react and sometimes make harmful choices. Some even take the extreme step of ending their lives. Cyberbullying affects mental health deeply. Victims often feel depressed, isolated, and afraid to share their problems with adults. Occasionally, they speak to friends of the same age, but those friends are also young and may not know how to help. Teen students often see a drop in academic performance. Their grades suffer, and parents may blame them for not studying, unaware that their child is dealing with online harassment. Their lifestyle changes, with late nights, disrupted schedules, and poor sleep, and these patterns have long term effects on their lives. Meanwhile, we often forget that mental health is as important as physical health. Most of our time is now spent behind screens—computers, phones, tablets. From teenagers to adults, mobile phones are in almost everyone's hands. The long term impact of cyberbullying is significant. Victims often struggle with stress, depression, and trust issues, even with close friends, and many do not share their experiences or seek help.

Recent data shows the scale of the problem. In Bangladesh, about 32% of children aged 10 to 17 are vulnerable to online violence, cyberbullying, and digital harassment. Another study shows that 85% of Bangladeshi youths consider online bullying a serious problem, and 8% experience it at least once a week. Globally, around one third of young people have been victims of online bullying, with 28 to 37 percent of teenagers worldwide experiencing cybervictimization. Ignoring the issue only makes it worse. Persistent online harassment can lead to anxiety, depression, and in some cases, suicide. We must break free from these cyber problems and reclaim life. When bullied online, we should save evidence, block the bully, report the behavior on the platform, and then talk to a trusted adult. Parents need to be responsible because youth lack the life experience that parents have. Schools and society must step in to stop cyberbullying. Ultimately, we must remember that life is precious and we live only once. No one should allow someone else's bullying to decide whether they end their own life.