

Mass uprising leaves 55pc children traumatised: study

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Ever since the July-August student-led mass uprising, 55 per cent primary schoolchildren have been living in a state of fear struggling with serious mental health consequences, according to a study revealed on Monday in the capital.

The Campaign for Popular Education and BRAC Institute of Educational Development conducted the study between September and November across the country to observe children's mental health state.

The perception study was conducted collecting opinion from 203 organisations working on education, 12 focus group discussions among 260 people, two divisional and two national-level conferences attended by nearly 600 people and opinions from 30 resource persons.

Street protests, rallies, violence, arson, vandalism, gunfire, curfew, and fellows being killed and wounded brought deep impact on their mental health, according to the study.

Among other findings, 36.5 per cent children struggle to put attention to their studies, 37 per cent observed not willing to attend school, and 8 per cent observed struggling to control their temper.

Primary and mass education ministry adviser and psychiatrist Professor Bidhan Ranjan Roy Podder said that students' mental health issue remained largely ignored.

Speakers urged the adviser to take initiatives to provide playgrounds and boost cultural and sports activities programmes, and happy learning environment to overcome the mental trauma and create an atmosphere for mental health to thrive.

Bidhan Ranjan said that it was not possible to build new playgrounds in schools in the capital but the government would reclaim all the playgrounds and parks illegally grabbed and would take steps to prevent further grabbing.

The government would appoint fine arts teachers in schools and would reconstruct school buildings based on aesthetic designs.

Saying that prevailing exam system put excessive pressure on students, the speakers also pointed out that measures should be taken to provide mid-day meals for student and make education materials entertaining.

CAMPE executive director Rasheda K Choudhury said that an initiative for flexible academic calendar was taken in 2008 to enable the schools to take more inclusive decisions based on the situation in a specific area.

As an example, she said that students from the national minorities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts did not need Ramadan leave as they were mostly non-Muslims, but they needed leave during the cultivation season to give their families a hand with their farming activities.

She urged the government to bring all kinds of education under a regulation.

Education Watch convener Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury, BRAC Education Development Institute senior adviser Muhammad Musa, CAMPE deputy director Tapan Kumar Das, among others, spoke at the event.