



A hawker sits with an array of newspapers for sale on the footpath of the deserted Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. Despite the entire country going into a virtual shutdown over the novel coronavirus pandemic, the print news media continues to soldier on to produce their daily editions, with a steadfast commitment to bring authentic information to the public.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Caught up in uncertainty

Urban poor in high stress, finds Brac univ study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The coronavirus pandemic has created high level of psychological stress on people living in informal settlements in Dhaka city, said Brac University, citing a new study report.

In a release sent to The Daily Star yesterday, the university said the study found narratives from the respondents had a common theme and most families were "extremely anxious about the continued uncertainty in their lives".

The study was part of Brac University's James P Grant School of Public Health's (JPGSPH) series of rapid research assessments including surveys throughout the country in informal settlements to understand the brunt of the pandemic on the lives of diverse communities.

In Dhaka city, about 80 case studies were conducted to explore daily experiences as

well as emotional and mental well-being of inhabitants of six slums located in both city corporations.

Residents who participated in the interviews were mostly informal sector workers who once relied on daily incomes. They were generally the most vulnerable to the impending pandemic.

The respondents shared they were grappling with daily emotions of "panic, restlessness, hopelessness, fear, and were occasionally breaking down", as uncertainty over the current situation increases.

Living in congested spaces with inadequate access to clean water and improved sanitation creates another level of anxiety, as several respondents shared they were unable to maintain the recommended precautions.

Some respondents reported physical manifestation of continued stress, saying

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