Child Poverty and Child Well-being:
Hong Kong SAR's Progress and Challenges in Comparative Perspective

Alleviation of Child Poverty and Promotion of Child Well-being in Hong Kong SAR

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Research team

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Research foci

- The study is a multi-institution, inter-disciplinary longitudinal study consisting of <u>three main research streams</u> which aim to measure and gauge the current trends and implications of poverty and social disadvantages in Hong Kong.

  - **Poverty, Social Disadvantages and Social Exclusion (PDSE):** To measure the extent and nature of poverty, deprivation and exclusion in Hong Kong and the effectiveness of current policy initiatives in tackling poverty

  - **Poverty, Disadvantages and Health Inequality (PDHI):** To examine the interaction between poverty and health inequalities

  - **Poverty, Disadvantages and children's well-being (PDCW):** To investigate the impacts of poverty, inequality and social disadvantages on young people's health and well-being
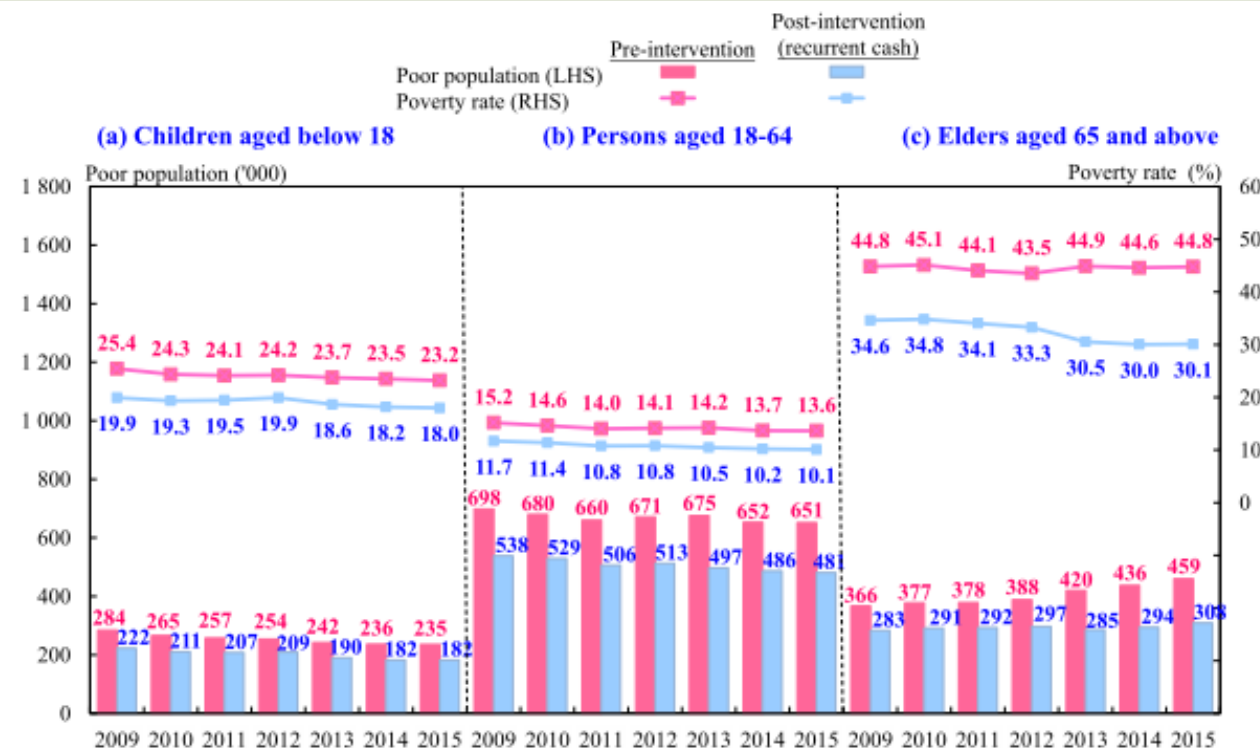
Hong Kong Poverty Situation

Poor population and poverty rate, 2009-2015
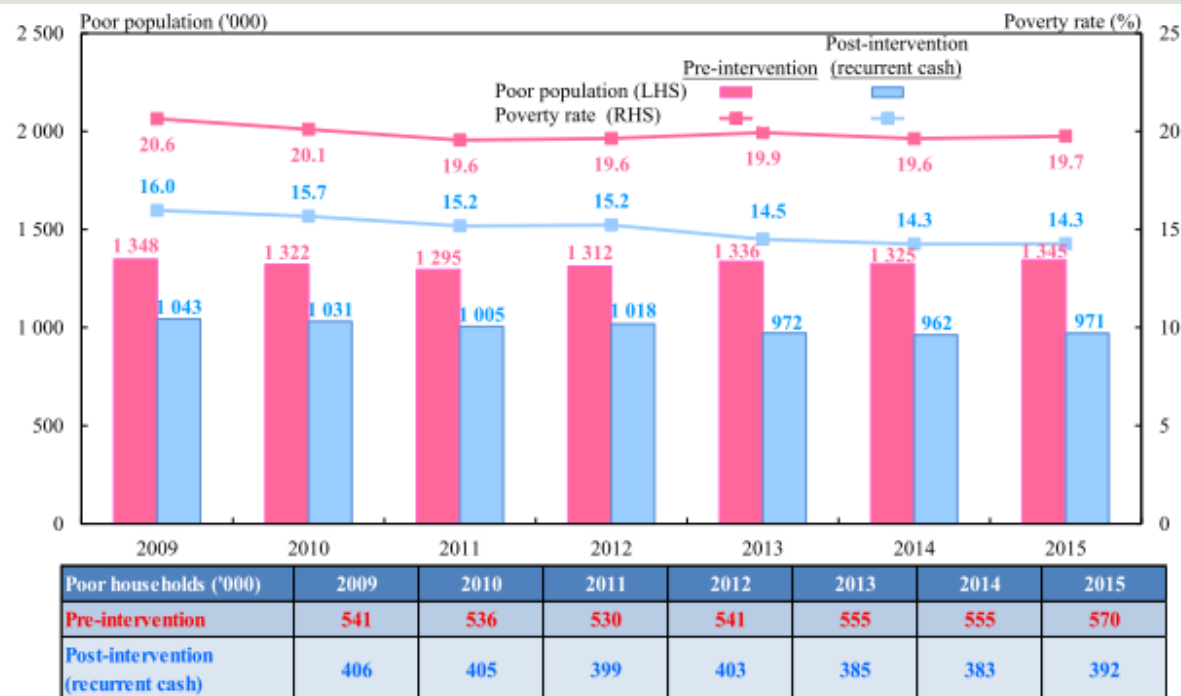
Commission on Poverty, 2016: HK Poverty Situation Report 2015, Figure 2.9.

Poor population and poverty rate by age, 2009-2015

Commission on Poverty, 2016: HK Poverty Situation Report 2015, Figure 2.16.

Examples: Child poverty alleviation policies in Hong Kong

- CSSA scheme

- Low-income Working Family Allowance (a basic / higher allowance and a child allowance) LC
  (Paper No. CB(2)1597/13-14(01); http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201609/19/P2016091900752.htm)

	Eligible low-income households	Eligible persons	Eligible children
Estimated number	204,000	710,000	180,000
Granted application (at mid Sept 2016)	**20,600**	**70,000**	**35,000**

- Assistance programmes under the Community Care Fund (e.g. Provision of a One-off Grant for School-related Expenses to Kindergarten Students)

- Government's regular assistance programmes (e.g. Subsidy to Meet Lunch Expenses at Schools)

PDCW - Our key concerns

…….. **Child poverty and child well-being in Hong Kong <u>from children's perspectives</u>**

- What are the impacts of poverty, inequality and social disadvantages on young people's health and well-being?

- What are **children's perspectives** on key issues related to their well-being?
    a) What are the conditions for a good life?
    b) Which life dimensions (e.g. material situation*, time use, and social relationships, etc.) do children think are important in their lives?

Background

- Explore how **child-context interactions** (e.g. family, peers, schools, neighbourhood) shaping children's development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998)

- **A multi-dimensional construct of child well-being** (Ben-Arieh et al 2014)
  - From survival to well-being – moving beyond basic need of development
  - Combined negative and positive aspects of children's lives
  - From well-becoming (i.e. children's future) to well-being (i.e. children's current status)
  - UNICEF Innocenti Report Cards

- Incorporating **children's perspectives** into studies of child poverty and child well-being

- Overlaps in dimensions of poverty
  - Income poverty, **deprivation** and subjective poverty (Bradshaw and Finch, 2003; Bradshaw and Holmes, 2010)

- Incorporating "objective" indicators of well-being and "subjective" measures of the quality of life (Pople et al 2015; Stigilitz et al 2010)
  - Children's perceptions, evaluations, and aspirations regarding their own lives
  - Good Childhood Reports (e.g. Main and Pople, 2012: A child-centered analysis of material deprivation and subjective well-being)
  - The Children's Worlds

PDCW: Mixed methods research

(I) Focus group interviews – Address key questions

(II) Survey data - Contents of questionnaire
- Material well-being - Indirect vs. direct poverty measures
  - Income poverty and child-derived deprivation (Bradshaw and Finch 2003)
- Home and family (e.g. Perceived social support from family)
- Friends
- School and teachers (e.g. like being at school, felt pressure by school work; experience of being bullied)
- Time use
- Physical and mental health (e.g. Dietary, physical exercises)
  - Health Behaviour in School-aged children (HBSC)
  - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Overall life satisfaction, and domain specific satisfaction

Table 1: Heat maps of attitudes to items and activities considered as 'necessities' by groups (%)

Items	All Children (N=793)	Gender		Age		Equivalised household income	
		Boys	Girls	10-14 years	15-17 years	Bottom 2 quintiles	Top 2 quintiles
School uniform	91	88	94	92	90	89	93
Enough warm clothes	88	85	90	88	87	86	89
Access to public transport	86	82	92	86	87	84	88
Properly fitted shoes	85	82	88	86	82	83	86
A suitable place to study	85	81	89	86	83	83	85
A home computer	81	79	84	78	84	78	83
Pocket money	77	72	82	73	82	72	80
Books for suitable ages	71	66	77	74	68	71	71
A safe place with friends	69	65	74	69	70	67	70
Mobile phone	68	66	70	62	75	65	68
Saving money	67	65	70	65	70	63	71
Extra-curricular activities	63	62	64	66	58	60	63
A meal out with friends	59	56	62	54	64	58	56
Leisure activities with friends/family	58	56	61	57	59	60	56
Educational games	52	52	51	57	44	51	52
Tutorial lessons	46	47	44	52	37	42	44
Some new clothes	45	47	44	48	42	41	51
Leisure equipment	45	47	42	47	42	44	43
Presents	43	42	45	46	40	41	46
Brand name trainers	32	34	30	31	33	26	37
A family day trip	29	28	31	31	26	27	31

**Items and activities attracting 50% or more children were considered consensually agreed and thus categorized as socially perceived 'necessities'.

Table 2: Heat maps of attitudes to necessities and whether children have or don't have (%)

	Attitudes to necessities	Whether children 'have', 'don't have but would like' or 'don't have and don't want		
	Necessary	Have	*Don't have but would like*	Don't have and don't want
School uniform	91.2	97.6	1.7	0.8
Enough warm clothes	87.5	95.5	3.2	1.3
A home computer	**80.8**	93.5	**4.3**	2.2
Access to public transport	86.4	91.7	5.7	2.6
Books for your ages	**71.1**	84.9	**8.0**	7.1
A safe place with your friends	69.0	83.2	10.5	6.3
Educational games	51.5	73.2	12.0	14.8
Mobile phone	68.1	85.6	12.2	2.2
Extra-curricular activities	**62.7**	79.5	**12.9**	7.6
Pocket money	76.6	83.5	13.1	3.5
A suitable place to study	**84.7**	83.7	**13.9**	2.3
A meal out with friends	58.5	73.9	17.6	8.5
Saving money	67.1	75.0	21.0	4.0
Leisure activities with friends/family	58.1	68.1	23.4	8.5

Table 3: Percentage of deprived children in each quintile of family income

	Deprived items					N
	0	1	2	3-4	5+	
1st quintile (lowest)	**30.7% (39)**	18.1% (23)	15.7% (20)	17.3% (22)	18.1% (23)	127
2nd quintile	39.4% (56)	24.6% (35)	11.3% (16)	14.1% (20)	10.6% (15)	142
3rd quintile	42.9% (67)	26.3% (41)	15.4% (24)	9.0% (14)	6.4% (10)	156
4th quintile	49.1% (57)	19.8% (23)	10.3% (12)	12.9% (15)	7.8% (9)	116
5th quintile (highest)	58.0% (80)	13.0% (18)	13.8% (19)	10.1% (14)	5.1% (7)	138
Total	44.0% (299)	20.6% (140)	13.4% (91)	12.5% (85)	9.4% (64)	679

Notes:[a] Number of cases are shown in bracket.

[b] All percentages are row percentages.

Table 4: Ordinal regression: Children's overall life satisfaction, socio-demographics and social relationships

	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Exp B	95% Confidence Interval		Sig
						Lower	Upper	
Threshold – Overall life satisfaction								
1 = dissatisfied / very dissatisfied	-1.015	.955	1.128	1	.36	.06	2.36	.288
2 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1.854	.942	3.875	1	6.39	1.01	40.46	**.049**
Factors								
Gender								
1 = Male	-.015	.212	.005	1	.98	.65	1.49	.942
2 = Female	0	.	.	0	1.00	.	.	.
Equivalised household income								
1 = 1st quintile (lowest)	-.188	.350	.291	1	.83	.42	1.64	.590
2 = 2nd quintile	-.581	.335	3.004	1	.56	.29	1.08	.083
3 = 3rd quintile	-.265	.333	.634	1	.77	.40	1.47	.426
4 = 4th quintile	-.226	.359	.396	1	.80	.39	1.61	.529
5 = 5th quintile (highest)	0	.	.	0	1.00	.	.	.
Enforced lack of child items								
0 = 0	.929	.341	7.430	1	2.53	1.30	4.94	**.006**
1 = 1	.971	.373	6.779	1	2.64	1.27	5.49	**.009**
2 = 2	1.146	.410	7.819	1	3.15	1.41	7.02	**.005**
3 = 3-4	1.076	.398	7.300	1	2.93	1.34	6.41	**.007**
4 = 5+	0	.	.	0	1.00	.	.	.
Experience of being bullied								
1 = Yes	-.693	.284	5.936	1	.50	.29	.87	**.015**
2 = No	0	.	.	0	1.00	.	.	.
Covariates								
Age	-.198	.048	16.837	1	.82	.75	.90	**.000**
Perception of parent-child relationships	.904	.174	26.844	1	2.47	1.75	3.47	**.000**
Perceived social support from family	.823	.207	15.804	1	2.28	1.52	3.41	**.000**
Perception of connectedness to teachers	.588	.165	12.726	1	1.80	1.30	2.49	**.000**

Dependent Variable: Children's overall life satisfaction (OLS).

Results

- Children's age, material deprivation, perceived positive relationships with family and teachers, perceived strong social support from family, and experience of being bullied all contributed statistically significant in explaining variations in life satisfaction.

  - **Older children** had a <u>lower</u> level of life satisfaction than the younger ones.

  - Unlike the traditional adult reported income poverty measures, **child deprivation** played a significant role in explaining variation in children's overall life satisfaction.

  - **Children who had experience of being bullied** had a <u>lower</u> level of life satisfaction.

  - Children who **perceived a positive relationships with family, perceived a high level of social support from family**, and **perceived a close connection to teachers** had a <u>higher</u> level of life satisfaction.

Discussion and policy implications

- Financial and social support should be prioritized to children who are in disadvantaged socioeconomic positions.
  - Some parents who were experiencing income poverty might **sacrifice** their own needs to provide for children (Main and Bradshaw 2016; Middleton et al. 1997; Ridge 2009)
  - The **value of child derived deprivation measures** to differentiate poor children from poor families
  - **Perceived positive relationships** with family and teachers (e.g. being respected and treated fairly at home and school) (Goswami 2012; McAuley and Rose 2014; Rees and Main 2015), and **supportive environments** (e.g. experience of being bullied) (Currie et al. 2012; Dufur et al. 2015; Huebner et al. 2014; Klocke et al. 2014) appeared to have significant effects on children's life satisfaction

- A downward trend in children's life satisfaction with age …… **The extent to which its relevance to the pressure to fulfil expectations when children grow up**

Key messages from RC13 addressing the gaps in four key domains of child well-being

(i.e. income, education, health and life satisfaction)

- "Protect the incomes of households with the poorest children" ……. Social transfer systems

- "Focus on improving the educational achievements of disadvantaged learners ….. Basis of equal opportunity

- "Promote and support healthy lifestyles for all children" …… e.g. income poverty and low participation in extra-curricular activities

- "Take subjective well-being seriously" …….. e.g. children's life satisfaction