

1 NO POVERTY



Research & Innovation

Social Policies and Theories on Quality of Life under COVID-19

Impaired psychological well-being of parents and children and compromised family processes such as parenting were amongst the many negative impacts of COVID-19. While generic social policies such as those related to employment protection to support individuals and families were introduced during the pandemic, this one-size-fits-all approach, albeit helpful, may not have taken into account pre-existing family vulnerabilities, including poverty and caregiving burdens, and other inequalities. In view of this, PolyU scholars proposed several research and practice directions for promoting quality of life in the COVID-19 era.

It was recognised that “family-friendly” inclusiveness and flexibility should be incorporated into policies. For example, universal paid sick leave and financial assistance for parents of frontline employees who face greater risk of becoming infected should be implemented. As such, policies incorporating progressive, anti-oppressive, critical and social justice elements should be seriously considered. Through the lens of a “fractured society” with “class-generated fissures and tensions”, PolyU researchers have therefore developed responsive COVID-19 social policies with a “human face”.

Lower-Income Individuals at Higher Risk of Abrupt Weather Exposure

In a warming world, the emergence of abrupt shift from drought to downpour, which has particularly disastrous consequences in low-income regions, has attracted widespread attention. However, the spatiotemporal evolution and poverty exposure to such drought-to-deluge events remain poorly understood.

To bridge this knowledge gap, PolyU researchers carried out a study to investigate the connection between poverty and drought-to-deluge events based on three global data products and climate models.

It was found that, from 1980 to 2010, such events increased by 24%-48% in areas with the poorest 20% of the world’s population. In addition, they do not appear to be occurring as frequently in most regions globally as in those with higher poverty rates, especially those in African countries.

Such inequality is expected to remain, with a nearly fivefold increase in exposure for the poorer populations. Greater climate adaptation support is thus needed for low-income countries to help combat poverty and inequality.

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Teaching & Learning

Subject: Serving the Community through Teaching English

With a focus on educating students as to how a wealth gap impacts learning opportunities, this service-learning subject hosted by the English Language Centre provided a platform for PolyU students to facilitate English language workshops for school children at three community centres in Hong Kong, three schools in Taiwan and a school in Cambodia. In total, **around 200 children at local after-school day care centres and over 500 children in Cambodia and Taiwan were served.**

During the week-long programmes, not only were the students able to practise their communication skills in various service and educational settings, but they also discovered how class enrolment and English language learning opportunities are dependent on an urban-rural divide and the socio-economical background of a region. Through the experience they gained, they were encouraged to develop a sense of empathy and civic responsibility towards people in need of language support.

Subject: Promotion of Children and Adolescent Development

The Department of Applied Social Sciences offers this service-learning subject to introduce students to theories and perspectives related to child and adolescent development, and to provide them with opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to real-world contexts through serving underprivileged children and adolescents in Hong Kong and Mainland China.

This academic year, students taking the subject **served more than 250 migrant primary school children in Hangzhou and some 800 secondary school students in Hong Kong** over a seven-month period. By promoting aspiration, resilience and competence among these disadvantaged service recipients, PolyU students were prompted to cultivate in themselves a strong sense of social responsibility and foster their all-round development.



Service trip to Chiang Dao, Thailand



Service trip to Almaty, Kazakhstan

Subject: Social Poverty in Developing Countries (Thailand / Kazakhstan)

Hosted by the Department of Applied Social Sciences, this service-learning subject allows students to learn about poverty and its complexities through lectures and community service. During a ten-day service trip to Chiang Dao, Thailand, PolyU students joined hands with 13 local volunteers to **educate 114 underprivileged children and teenagers** on topics such as well-being, nutrition, sexual health, food safety and first aid, while, at the same time, exercising their analytical skills, civic responsibility and global citizenship to seek solutions that address the needs of such disadvantaged service targets with compassion.

A 12-day service trip to Almaty, Kazakhstan was also arranged, where students worked with ten interpreters from local universities and **served 76 individuals from impoverished families.** They built a close relationship with the local people by showcasing considerable adaptability and learning language, games and manners rooted in Kazakh culture. Furthermore, they educated both the parents and their children about home safety, water sanitation, first aid, personal hygiene and mental health issues. Through such meaningful exchange, students also honed their communication skills and gained fresh perspectives on wealth and traditions, which in turn fostered personal growth.

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Outreach & Engagement

Providing Succour to Children Living in Inadequate Housing

Supported by the Hongkong Land HOME FUND, the Jockey Club Design Institute for Social Innovation launched the “Furniture for Our Future” project, aiming to improve the health and well-being, as well as study environment and upward social mobility of children living in subdivided units or other forms of inadequate housing. Partnering with the Department of Biomedical Engineering, the School of Optometry and more than 20 NGOs, the project offered over 20 community sessions to families with children aged between four and 16, where they learned about child eye and spine health and were introduced to a child-friendly ergonomic set of furniture. This academic year, some 2,400 sets were donated to these families to improve their children’s study environment and motivation.



In addition, with a view to creating positive impacts and inspiring children to envision their study and career paths, more than 200 beneficiaries were invited to PolyU to experience campus life and visit specialised laboratories and research centres housed at the Department of Biomedical Engineering, Industrial Centre, School of Design, School of Nursing and School of Optometry.

The project was awarded the **Merit Award of the DFA Design for Asia Awards 2023 by the Hong Kong Design Centre** and the **Children-Friendly Design Entry Award in the Product Design category at the Shenzhen Child-Friendly Expo 2023**. It was also showcased at the DFA Awards Exhibition at Central Market in Hong Kong and the Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Governance & Operations

Financial Assistance and Scholarships

To make education accessible to all students, the Student Affairs Office offers various tuition fee payment plans and financial assistance schemes, administered by PolyU and the Government, to students who require financial assistance. **Nearly 4,500 students have benefited** from the wide range of financial aid available.

In addition, thanks to generous support from alumni and the wider community, the PolyU WeCare Fund and PolyU Art were established. These provide students with financial aids options which help enable them to participate in extracurricular activities that are crucial to their all-round development.

Additionally, a range of scholarships are offered to recognise the outstanding academic and non-academic achievements and contributions of prospective and current students from Hong Kong and overseas. These scholarships include University scholarships such as for entrance and global exchange, and others that are donated by individuals, professional bodies and private organisations. Some scholarship programmes provide extra support to champion exceptional students in their pursuit of studies in a specific field, particularly those who are facing financial challenges.



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