

## **Extracurricular Activities and Early Childhood Development in Hong Kong**

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Organised extracurricular activities (EAs) have attracted growing scholarly attention as an important developmental context through which inequalities in children's learning opportunities beyond formal schooling and the home environment may emerge and persist. However, existing evidence—primarily from Western societies—has shown mixed findings on the benefits of EA participation across developmental domains. To date, research in Chinese contexts remains limited and has largely relied on non-representative small samples with restricted generalizability. Using the first city-representative data on preschool children from the Hong Kong Child Development Longitudinal Study (HK-CHILD), this study explores patterns of EA participation among K1 children and examines its association with children's holistic development in Hong Kong. Results showed substantial socioeconomic disparities in EA participation, with children from high-income and highly educated families significantly more likely to participate in a wider range of activities. Compared to non-participants, children engaged in three or more EA contexts demonstrated significantly higher levels of overall development, particularly in numeracy and literacy outcomes, with participation in both academic and non-academic EAs yielding the strongest associations. Findings from both OLS and models with the Augmented Inverse Probability Weighting (AIPW) estimator suggest that these associations are not driven by selection effects. Furthermore, verbal communication, socioemotional skills, and perseverance partially mediated the association between EA participation and developmental outcomes, while economically disadvantaged children benefited the most from broader EA participation.