

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

University: Lingnan University

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 24 - Psychology

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 6

(1) Context

The unit of Applied Psychology (AP) has developed a niche in occupational health psychology (OHP) with a key strategic position to focus on the application of OHP theories and practices to the workplace, structured around two main areas: work stress and psychology of safety. Research impact during the assessment period was achieved by over 50 publications by 6 faculty staff. Staff members delivered public seminars to more than 800 people, and our ability to attract research and consultancy funding from public and private sectors totalling close to HK\$18m.

1. Work Stress

Work stress is significantly affecting employees' health in Hong Kong. On average, about 38% of employees from various occupational groups reported "strongly agree" or "agree" to the statement "I feel the level of stress is high" (e.g., OSHC, 2006). Led by Prof. Siu Oi-ling, the AP received research grants and consultancy projects: from Occupational Safety & Health Council (OSHC) (4 projects totalling HK\$1.9 m from 1999 to 2019), Education Bureau, (EDB) (7 training classes totalling about HK\$5.5 m from 2009-2014) and Mass Transit Railways Corporation (MTR) (7 projects totalling HK\$1.8 m from 2004 to 2019). From these research projects and consultancy projects, the AP reached far beyond the academia to benefit over 40,000 employees of these organisations and related thousands of teachers and passengers. Moreover, AP's recommendations to the OSHC have generated impact to employees in Hong Kong.

Tackling Work-family Conflict, a Source of Work Stress

Prof. Siu was awarded the research project by the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and Women's Commission to conduct a large-scale study on Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices (FEPP) in 2006 to reduce work-family conflict in Hong Kong. Research findings have made great impact in the workplace in public and private sectors and the report has been published in the [EOC's website](#). For instance, the HKSAR and many large corporations have started to operate the 5-day work week since 2007, and recently HKSAR has enforced a 3-day, now a 5-day paternity leave, and an extended maternity leave from 10 to 14 weeks. Prof. Siu was awarded the "Top 50" Overall Contributor to Work and Family Research in June 2018 from Work and Family Research.

2. Psychology of Safety

The AP has been working closely with local bureau, such as Occupational Safety and Health Council, to promote employees' health and well-being for the past two decades. In 2000 AP received a grant from OSHC to investigate safety attitudes among construction workers. Findings have raised many construction companies' senior management's awareness of facets of safety attitudes related to safety behaviours. Key results were disseminated to the public in a Road Show across which all buses in all districts in HK. Moreover, research outcomes led to two academic publications [see 4 & 5]. The AP Unit has also actively worked with public organizations to promote the importance of occupational safety and health. For example, Prof. Siu's conducted studies on safety culture for the Airport Authority (AA) and MTR in 2016, 2014 and 2018 has had significant impact on enhancing No Blame Culture and Safety Culture in different departments at these organisations benefitting staff and service users.

(2) Approach to impact

The AP unit generates impact through public education and consultancy work with leading organizations in Hong Kong. In these cases, AP's research endeavours to reduce work stress, support employees' occupational well-being and improve workplace safety.

Education: AP engages in training programmes with teachers in Hong Kong (commissioned by the EDB), providing content and material based on the research output generated by Prof. Siu and faculty members of AP. One example is the training class in 2015 which has reached 38 teachers been distributed to 45 schools [S4]. The education programme showcased research results by AP faculty members. Evidence of the effectiveness of these intervention studies have been demonstrated by the comparison of overall psychological functioning before and after the training. 87.9% of participants recommended this training programme to their colleagues [see S4]. Research findings were disseminated by consultancy reports to EDB and international, peer-reviewed journals [e.g., 3 & S4].

Consultancy: The AP unit conducted five workplace safety projects for the MTR during this assessment period, including two safety of Light Rail passengers, accident prevention for the MTR's Infrastructure Maintenance Department (IMD), fatigue management for the Operations Division [S9], and the Safety Culture Survey in Operations Division in 2014 [S8]. Impact from these consultancies is evidenced by changes in practices to enhance safety culture in the Operations Division upon Prof. Siu's recommendations in 2014-15 [S9]. These included a more prominent reporting programme which has resulted in an increase in reporting and follow-up; stronger safety training, and updated safety information. These changes benefit not only the 20,000 employees of the MTR, but indirectly to the 5 million passengers who use the service daily. Recently (December 2018), Prof. Siu has been commissioned by the MTR to conduct the Safety Culture Survey again to see if there is any improvement in safety culture (particularly Safety Reporting) since 2014-15 [see S9 & S10].

(3) Strategy and plans

The AP unit aims to maximise its research impact through encouraging faculty to engage in a wider range of consultancy, community events, and training workshops. Through the "train-the-trainer" effect, wider audience can benefit from the research impact generated from the AP unit. Going forward, AP aims to build on its consultancy roles in education and workplace safety; to utilize grants and funds to support and develop this work; and to increase public visibility for research findings. With the recruitment of new faculty members with diverse background and the establishment of the Wofoo Joseph Lee Consulting and Counselling Psychology Research Centre (with a donation of HK\$10 millions) in 2018, the AP will continue to conduct academic longitudinal research and training workshops and create impact to the Hong Kong society.

(4) Relationship to case studies

Applying research through consultancy to prominent organisations (MTR). Raising HK\$1.24 million from 2004 to 2012 for enhancing employees' well-being and passengers' safety, the Unit has secured an additional fund from consultancy projects with the MTR to support research and enable its implementation to the benefit of the public in the assessment period. The Unit has also established strong collaborative relationship with the EDB by providing training programmes and workshops to reinforce teachers' ability to handle work stress & confidence in classroom management (total HK\$1.9 million, 2014-16). In both cases, we were able to demonstrate the evidences that teachers and MTR staff reported reduction in work stress and burnout and more improvement in awareness and displaying safety attitudes and culture.