

**THE EFFECT OF MINDFULNESS SKILL,
INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP, SELF-COMPASSION
AND WORK ENGAGEMENT ON TEACHERS
JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN HONG KONG**

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SCHOOLS IN HONG KONG**

by

LIANG HONG

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**KESAN KEMAHIRAN KESEDARAN DIRI, KEPIMPINAN INKLUSIF,
BELAS KASIHAN KENDIRI DAN PENGLIBATAN KERJA DALAM
KALANGAN GURU DI SEKOLAH MENENGAH AWAM DI HONG KONG**

ABSTRAK

Peningkatan niat berhenti kerja di kalangan guru sekolah menengah telah meningkat sejak beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini. Kajian menyatakan bahawa ini adalah kerana ketiadaan interaksi pengajaran dan peluang terhad untuk memberikan maklum balas secara bersemuka yang menyebabkan penurunan penglibatan pelajar yang mempengaruhi prestasi pengajaran. Walaupun kajian terdahulu menganalisis tekanan individu, niat berhenti kerja, terdapat sedikit penyelidikan mengenai prestasi kerja guru sekolah menengah dan pembangunan penyelesaian yang berkesan. Oleh itu, kajian ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman proses pengantaraan dan penyesuaian melalui kemahiran kesedaran diri dan kepemimpinan inklusif berkaitan dengan hasil prestasi. Berdasarkan SET dan JD-R, model tersebut mengandaikan bahawa kesan kemahiran kesedaran diri dan kepemimpinan inklusif terhadap prestasi kerja menjadi perantara oleh penglibatan kerja, manakala hubungan antara kemahiran kesedaran diri, kepemimpinan inklusif dan penglibatan kerja menjadi perantara oleh belas kasihan sendiri. Sampel terdiri daripada 263 guru yang bekerja dari tiga buah sekolah menengah kerajaan dengan soal selidik yang dijalankan di Sha Tin, Hong Kong. Data kemudian dianalisis menggunakan IBM SPSS 27 dan Smart PLS versi 4.0.9. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa penglibatan kerja menjadi perantara antara kemahiran kesedaran diri, kepemimpinan inklusif, dan prestasi kerja, namun, belas kasihan sendiri tidak menjadi perantara perkaitan antara kemahiran kesedaran diri, kepemimpinan inklusif, dan penglibatan kerja. Kerangka kajian yang dicadangkan juga boleh membantu industri pendidikan Hong Kong dalam menjalankan penilaian prestasi kerja dengan menyediakan elemen dan boleh berfungsi sebagai panduan untuk memilih amalan yang sesuai yang perlu diperbaiki untuk meningkatkan prestasi kerja guru. Penemuan ini memajukan literatur prestasi kerja dengan menekankan peranan penting kesedaran diri, kepemimpinan inklusif, dan penglibatan kerja dalam mempengaruhi prestasi kerja guru di Hong Kong.

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PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN HONG KONG**

ABSTRACT

The number of turnover intentions among teachers working in secondary schools has soared in recent years as the absence of teaching interaction and limited opportunities for real-time feedback led to decreased student engagement, ultimately affecting teaching performance. Although previous studies analysed individual stressors, turnover intention and job performance, there is little research on secondary teachers' job performance and developing effective solutions. Thus, this study contributes to the understanding of the mediating and moderating process through which mindfulness skill and inclusive leadership are linked with performance outcomes. Drawing on SET and JD-R theory, the model posits that the effect of mindfulness skill and inclusive leadership on job performance is mediated by work engagement, while the relationship between mindfulness skill, inclusive leadership and work engagement is moderated by self-compassion. This quantitative study uses a deductive approach. The sample comprised 263 teachers working from three government secondary schools with a self-administrated questionnaire in Sha Tin, Hong Kong. The data was then analysed using IBM SPSS 27 and Smart PLS version 4.0.9. The results indicated that work engagement mediated the relationship between mindfulness skill, inclusive leadership and job performance, however, self-compassion did not moderate the relationship between mindfulness skill, inclusive leadership and work engagement. The framework proposed can also assist education industries in conducting job performance assessments by providing elements and can serve as a guideline to select appropriate practices that need to be improved to leverage teachers' job performance. The findings advance job performance literature by highlighting the important roles of mindfulness, inclusive leadership and work engagement in influencing teachers' job performance in Hong Kong.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This section discusses the background of the study by dividing the discussion into eight sections comprising a comprehensive overview of Hong Kong, its economy, the importance of mindfulness skill, inclusive leadership, and job performance for the advancement of the Hong Kong education sector, the challenges facing the Hong Kong secondary school sector, the importance of private Hong Kong secondary schools, the most important challenges facing Hong Kong secondary school teachers related to job performance, and the reasons for choosing secondary schools as the target sample.

1.2 The context of Hong Kong

Hong Kong, special administrative region of China, located to the east of the Pearl River (Zhu Jiang) estuary on the south coast of China. The region is bordered by Guangdong province to the north and the South China Sea to the east, south, and west. Hong Kong covers an area of 1104 square kilometres (426 square miles) and currently has a population of 7677313, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the world based on Worldometer (2023). Hong Kong in administration consists of 18 districts in 3 different regions. The 3 regions are: Hong Kong Island (HK), Kowloon (KLN), and the New Territories (NT). Hong Kong is still in self-governance under the Chinese political concept of 'one country, two systems'. Due to the expansion of its territory, Hong Kong has provided necessary labour and other resources for sustained

commercial growth, making it one of the world's major trade and financial centres. The space and natural resources of the community are still limited, facing continuous overcrowding, trade fluctuations, and social and political turmoil. Nevertheless, as a manufacturing and financial centre, as well as an important driver of China's trade and modernization, Hong Kong has become strong and prosperous.

1.3 Education Sector in Hong Kong

The education sector in Hong Kong plays a vital role in shaping the workforce and preparing students for future careers. As a small city with limited natural resources and land area, talent is one of Hong Kong's most important assets, and education is the backbone propping up the development of this key resource. Estimated government expenditure on education in the 2022/23 school year is HK\$111.9 billion (US\$14.3 billion), which amounts to 13.8 percent of the government's estimated expenditure over that period, according to statistics from Hong Kong's Education Bureau (2022). While specific data on the GDP contribution of the education sector in Hong Kong is not readily available, it is worth noting that education is a significant investment for the government and contributes to the overall human capital development of the Hong Kong. As a result, it is crucial to ensure that teachers have sufficient relevant teaching knowledge and skills to improve job performance, in order to achieve high teaching standards throughout their entire teaching career (Bautista et al., 2017).

It is well-documented that teaching is a high-risk profession worldwide (Capone & Petrillo, 2018) and such events inevitably undermine their effectiveness.

The secondary school sector in Hong Kong faces several challenges that leading to reduce the overall job performance among teachers. This is because work–life imbalance is a severe problem amongst most secondary school teachers in Hong Kong due to heavy workloads and long working hours (Wong et al., 2021). The education industry is well known as one with a high level of work demands and job related stresses. The busy and committed teachers have to face the common traditional challenges such as time and teaching quality, and also the political issues (Day & Gu, 2013). Teacher's job performance is commonly experienced which can adversely affect the overall effectiveness of school and academic performance among student. Thus, recognizing and addressing issues related to teacher job performance is essential for fostering a positive and effective educational experience, ensuring that students receive the best possible support and instruction for their academic development.

In addition, a meta-analysis of 116 studies conducted in Hong Kong (Yang et al., 2019) showed that secondary teachers continue to experience high levels of negative emotions (such as stress and anxiety). The COVID-19 has seriously disrupted school education around the world (OECD, 2020). Due to this unprecedented crisis, educators have been working hard to transform school education into a distance learning model and/or reopen schools. As frontline teachers, as agents of change, need to quickly respond to this "undeniable chaos", which is believed to make teachers more vulnerable. High levels of stress and burnout among teachers in Hong Kong have a profound impact on both task and contextual performance. In terms of task performance, stress and burnout can lead to reduced focus and concentration, impairing teachers' ability to effectively plan lessons, grade assignments accurately, and deliver instruction with attention to detail. The cognitive effects of stress can also

hinder decision-making, making it difficult for teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to individual student needs or handle unexpected situations in the classroom.

Furthermore, Hong Kong has experienced a period of social unrest, especially the protests from 2019 to 2020, which lasted for over six months and involved millions of people (Shek, 2020). During this turbulent period, different educational stakeholders have debated how teachers should handle controversial issues and whether and how they should maintain political neutrality in teaching. Within the education sector, there was a lively debate about how teachers should address the protests and related political issues in the classroom (Sharon, 2023). Some believed that teachers should provide a balanced and unbiased perspective, while others argued that they should openly discuss the political developments and their implications for Hong Kong's future, according to the Education Bureau (EDB) (Pao, 2019). Thus, these discussions highlighted the challenges of balancing academic freedom, freedom of expression, and the responsibilities of educators in a politically charged environment. The situation underscored the broader tensions and questions surrounding governance, education, and political expression in Hong Kong during that period. Also, the ongoing protests have polarized and torn the Hong Kong society apart (Ho, 2019), compounding the stress and anxiety of an already traumatized population (Purbrick, 2019).

Similarly, teachers also experienced some negative impacts brought by online learning during the pandemic. However, the short adaptation time teachers had to prepare for online learning remained one of the major challenges to them (Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021). They deemed themselves ill-equipped for the pedagogical and

technical challenges ahead of them (Damşa et al., 2021). Even though most of the teachers managed to learn on the job, it was not a sufficient and optimal means of training (Kundu & Bej, 2021). Such lack of adequate preparation subsequently led to frustration and demotivation among teachers. Concerning the technical challenges, teachers also faced internet connection problems, especially with the e-platform server availability issues (Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021). Since students had the same internet problem and not all of them had an electronic device for online learning, teachers struggled to deploy appropriate instructional activities that could fit the class (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Concerning the pedagogical challenges, lack of student engagement was a major concern to teachers. Maintaining student enthusiasm and attention online was not easy. It became particularly challenging when teachers could not closely monitor students' understanding due to the lack of visual contact and nonverbal communication such as facial expressions (Kundu & Bej, 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021). Relevant to this is also the difficulty of monitoring online examinations, which presented impacts on the overall integrity of assessments and measurement of learning outcomes. Therefore, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this emergent form of online learning has brought more than just challenges to teacher, but also influences teaching performance.

In light of these issues, Hong Kong is considered an ideal setting for an insightful quantitative study investigating the capacity of effective work to further teacher's teaching performance development. In this time of social unrest, educators noted the importance of adapting their instruction to cultivate critical thinking skills so students could discern facts from opinions when seeking truth. Informed by a pioneering teaching intervention strategy, the aim of this study in a broader sense is to

shed light on relevant strategy can influence the cultivation of teacher' job performance. While at the same time addressing the corresponding school-based conditions and practical constraints.

Hong Kong is located on the south coast of China; formerly a British colony, it is now a Special Administrative Region within the People's Republic of China (Bray & Koo, 2004). The official language of Hong Kong is Chinese, and most schools use Chinese as the medium of instruction. Both primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong are divided into government, aided, private and direct subsidy schools. Children in Hong Kong between the ages of three and six must enter private kindergartens; these kindergartens are governed by the Education and Manpower Bureau. Mainstream schooling in Hong Kong is organized on a 6+3+2+2 system. Secondary schooling has seven forms, with exit points at Secondary 3 (Grade 9), Secondary 5 (Grade 11) and Secondary 7 (Grade 13). Basically, the education system in Hong Kong applies a pyramid system, in which students who are not up to a certain level are excluded from the formal education system in Hong Kong after Secondary School.

1.4 Background of study

1.4.1 Job performance among teachers in Hong Kong

Organisations are becoming more and more aware of the potential of their workforce as a source of competitive advantage. Thus, as suggested by numerous academics (Lado & Wilson, 1994), understanding the organisational practises or programmes that lead to individual success can improve the overall organisational performance. In previous studies, it concluded that employees are an important asset

of the firm and the ways that they are managed are critical to the success of the firm. The impact of evaluation on employee performance has always been a common concern of researchers, enterprises and decision-makers in various industries. Nevertheless, there is relatively little empirical attention to the potential long-term impact of performance evaluation, including employee skill development. Hong Kong is a city and special administrative region of China on the eastern Pearl River Delta in South China with 7.5 million residents of various nationalities (Hong Kong in brief, 2022). It is counted among the most developed city in the world and has great potential becoming a global financial centre. On the education level, most challenging for the secondary of Hong Kong in enhancing employees job performance, which has resulted in the quality-compromise of the school's performance and prosperity (McInerney et al., 2015). The low performance of the schools ultimately results in the negative impact on students' learning quality who actually are the future leaders of the organizations to aid in the country's economy. Low-performing schools often struggle to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, leading to a decline in the overall quality of instruction (Viano et al., 2021). Thus, examination of the relationships between employee work engagement and job performance is, therefore, especially important for the Hong Kong school system as it strives to provide the strongest teaching force while facing teacher unrest due to perceived heavy workloads, and teaching redundancies through downsizing of schools (Education Bureau, 2013). A lack of experienced and skilled educators negatively impacts students' learning experience, as they may receive inadequate support and guidance.

Teacher resignation is often closely related to their performance, as both are influenced by factors such as job satisfaction, workload, stress levels, and support

within their work environment. Teachers who are dissatisfied with their job due to inadequate resources, administrative challenges, or lack of support may experience a decline in motivation, leading to reduced performance and eventual resignation. Excessive workload and burnout also contribute to this connection, as overwhelmed teachers may struggle to perform effectively and choose to resign to escape the pressures. Additionally, the lack of professional development opportunities can leave teachers feeling stagnant and disengaged, impacting their performance and prompting them to seek more fulfilling roles elsewhere. Poor organizational climate and insufficient support from school leadership can further degrade teacher performance, pushing them to resign if they feel isolated or undervalued. Health and well-being issues resulting from work-related stress can also lead to underperformance, with resignation serving as a way to prioritize self-care. In some cases, excessive performance pressure may cause teachers to feel they cannot meet expectations, leading to frustration and the decision to resign. In summary, resignation is often a consequence of poor performance caused by dissatisfaction, burnout, lack of growth, inadequate support, and health-related stress, making the two closely intertwined.

Additionally, resource limitations in low-performing schools, such as outdated teaching materials or insufficient facilities, further hinder students' access to quality education. In low-performing schools, classroom environments may be characterized by larger class sizes, limited student engagement, and a lack of individualized attention. This was verified by the Hong Kong Institute of Education (2017) found that overcrowded classrooms in low-performing schools hindered effective teacher-student interactions, resulting in reduced opportunities for personalized instruction and feedback. According to a study conducted by the Hong Kong Education Bureau

(2019), students in low-performing schools consistently scored lower on standardized tests, such as the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examinations, which directly affects their chances of pursuing higher education opportunities. A study by the Wang & Zepeda (2013) indicated that in low-performing schools, a lack of supportive programs, extracurricular activities, and counselling services contributed to reduced student motivation, engagement, and overall well-being.

Low-performing schools tend to be concentrated in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, leading to unequal opportunities for students. A report by the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission (2021) highlighted that students from low-income backgrounds who attend low-performing schools face increased barriers to academic success, including limited access to educational resources, tutoring, and enrichment activities. Teachers requires address the fundamental issues that lead to poor school performance in terms of teaching quality, and schools need to implement targeted intervention measures to improve teachers' teaching quality and students' academic performance. Thus, assessing the effectiveness of teachers has become a major theme in the education sector, which has become increasingly prominent for private schools in Hong Kong. The emphasis on evaluation is driven by two empirical conclusions: (I) teachers' ability to promote the growth of students' performance varies greatly; and (II) the quality of teacher-student interaction. Hence, considering the importance of understanding the mechanism of which contribute to people's performance, the researcher hopes to shed some lights in this area by revealing the factors influence employee job performance (Doria & David, 2006).

The success of all organizations directly affects the prosperity of a country and nation because they help to hire people and help the country's economic development. In this regard, education plays a key role in training high-quality and skilled professionals to manage the organization and develop the country. Teaching is generally recognized as one of the most important and challenging occupations in contemporary society (Vesely et al., 2013). Given the heavy demands and expectations in terms of students' development, teachers' job performance, which is tied to students' outcomes (Hwang et al., 2017), is of crucial concern for a variety of stakeholders, including principals, parents, policymakers, and society at large (Alrajhi et al., 2017). Teachers play a basic and dynamic role in the educational system. Job performance of the employees is one of the fundamental issues that organizational managers seek to improve it. In this context, measure the malleable factors and effects that can improve teacher job performance are desirable.

There is evidence that teaching at the secondary level is particularly difficult, highlighting the importance of secondary school teachers studying these social activities (Klassen & Chiu, 2011). In the middle school environment, teachers interact with students at a unique and critical moment. When students enter adolescence, the subculture of their peers becomes stronger, and students' demand for autonomy increases. At this age, students become larger and more mature, and teachers can see young students as a threat to their authority and respond with greater control and discipline (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Stereotypes about teenagers' unruly and out of control strengthen the use of classroom control strategies and may also help teachers strengthen the use of extrinsic motivation practice (Midgley et al., 1988). Interacting with 120-150 students a day requires teachers to invest huge cognitive and

emotional energy, which may prevent them from forming a close social emotional bond with any given number of students (Eccles & Roeser 2011). Taken together, these factors make the school a particularly stressful teaching environment and affect teacher-student interaction in the classroom (Collie & Mansfield, 2022).

It is imperative for the education sector to understand factors that influence job performance. Secondary schools are urged to address issues to do with teaching quality when dealing with matters pertaining to improvement of graduates' performance. Higher level of mindfulness have recently been proposed to be useful in the workplace, and the findings demonstrate that self-reported mindfulness predicts work engagement and general job performance. A study by Malinowski & Lim (2015) found that positive job-related emotion and psychological capital (hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy) modulate indicators impacting job success. Mindfulness improves job engagement through enhancing positive affect, hope, and optimism, all of which improve work engagement on their own and in combination. Because the leader-centric strategy ignores the quality of leader-follower relationships, it is not conducive to achieving the intended results (Day & Harrison, 2007). Inclusive leadership outperforms these leadership ideas by fulfilling employees' demand for individuality and belonging, allowing them to perform better in the current setting (Randel et al., 2018). According to Triswanto & Yunita (2021), when employees perceive that their intrinsic needs are met, they are more likely to influence high-level work engagement.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, a mediating role of self-compassion between mindfulness skill, inclusive leadership and employee work engagement has been documented in research work. A strategy that coping with employees' job

performance decrease is managerial anxiety, and being skilled in mindfulness and self-compassion helps individuals cope with negative job outcomes such as anxiety and stress (Lefebvre et al., 2020). Leadership research has begun to look at the function of intrapersonal psychological conceptions like mindfulness and self-compassion in lowering management anxiety and distress in the workplace and improving leaders' job performance (Christopher et al., 2022). Furthermore, self-compassion may influence work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and engagement. Self-compassion is defined as an awareness of one's own suffering and a desire to alleviate it by self-kindness, accepting mistakes as a normal part of life, and balancing one's experience without over-identification (Hosseini et al., 2019). Leaders who practice mindfulness and self-compassion are more likely to maintain their professional engagement in difficult social situations such as the workplace. In particular, leaders with high levels of self-compassion and mindfulness at work may communicate competently with their subordinates, and this may influence their work engagement.

Teachers' performance in Hong Kong schools is assessed through multiple aspects, including classroom effectiveness, student outcomes, professional development, and their contributions to the school community. They are expected to design engaging lessons, manage diverse classrooms, and ensure that students perform well academically, especially in high-stakes exams like the HKDSE. However, several specific challenges undermine their ability to perform optimally. First, the heavy workload is a major issue, as teachers are burdened with extensive administrative tasks, paperwork, lesson planning, and extracurricular responsibilities. Many teachers work long hours outside the classroom, which leads to stress and burnout, leaving little time for rest or personal development. Second, the exam-oriented education system

creates immense pressure to focus on test preparation and results, which often sidelines creativity, critical thinking, and holistic student development. Teachers may feel constrained to "teach to the test" rather than implementing innovative teaching methods. Another specific challenge is the constant curriculum changes imposed by the Education Bureau (Ongoing Renewal of the School Curriculum - Education Bureau, 2024). While these reforms aim to improve education, teachers often struggle to keep up with frequent updates, and many feel that they lack the necessary support or resources to implement these changes effectively. This adds to the sense of confusion and inconsistency in teaching practices. Additionally, the growing diversity in classrooms presents a significant hurdle. Teachers are increasingly expected to accommodate special educational needs (SEN) students and other diverse learners, but many report feeling unprepared and lacking adequate training or support to handle this inclusivity. This is exacerbated by limited resources in some schools, such as the absence of specialized staff to support students with special needs. In terms of technology integration, while the pandemic accelerated the use of online learning platforms, many teachers face difficulties in effectively incorporating technology into their lessons due to gaps in their own digital literacy and the inconsistent availability of technological resources in schools. Parental pressure is another significant challenge, as teachers are frequently expected to meet high academic expectations from demanding parents, which can lead to conflicts and further stress. Balancing these expectations while maintaining students' well-being can be difficult. Finally, teachers' own mental health is often overlooked. The combination of high workload, pressure to produce excellent exam results, and lack of mental health support services for teachers leads to anxiety, burnout, and diminished job satisfaction. Addressing these issues—such as reducing administrative burdens, offering better professional

development, improving mental health support, and providing more resources for diverse learning needs—would significantly improve teachers’ performance and overall well-being in Hong Kong schools.

Hence, this research focuses on the low teaching performance among teachers in Hong Kong to investigate the impact of implementing intervention strategies, including mindfulness skills and inclusive leadership on improving teacher’s job performance. Employee work engagement as a mediating variable that mindfulness skills and inclusive leadership improving teacher’s job performance through enhanced employee work engagement; self-compassion as a moderating variable that self-compassion enhanced the relationship between mindfulness skills, inclusive leadership and teacher’s job performance will be investigated. This research increase understanding of the mindfulness skill, inclusive leadership and job performance of teachers and could inform the development of individual and organisational support mechanisms for teachers.

1.5 Problem statement

Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region of China since 1997, stands as a global financial hub known for its autonomy under the "one country, two systems" principle. The relationship between the economic and education sectors in Hong Kong is deeply interconnected, with each influencing and supporting the other. The demands of the economic sector, particularly in industries like finance, trade, logistics, and technology, often shape the direction of the education system. Educational institutions tailor their curricula to align with labor market needs, offering programs in areas such

as business, finance, engineering, and information technology. This alignment ensures that the workforce is equipped with the skills required to sustain the growth of these key economic sectors. Additionally, the strength of Hong Kong's economy plays a significant role in the level of investment in education. A robust economy enables greater public and private funding for educational infrastructure, research, and scholarships. In essence, the education and economic sectors in Hong Kong are mutually reinforcing, with education playing a crucial role in supporting the city's economic success and adapting to its evolving needs. Education sector plays a major role to produce the qualified and skilled professionals to run various organizations, which adds to the economy of a country. Quality of education not only fundamentally depends on the proficient knowledge of the teachers but also on mental health and job performance (Hennekam et al., 2020). It is believed that “satisfied engagement provides a great source of strength and enjoyment to a teacher” (Choi & Tang, 2011, p.97). Therefore, it is important to enhance teachers' engagement level and job performance and reduce their negative emotions. Otherwise, there is a wastage of well-qualified and trained teachers. However, there are 58 secondary schools (government, aided, private and direct subsidy schools) operating in Hong Kong. ---- Secondary School – numbers turnover is higher; the government is concerned about this data.

One study reported that 70% of teachers mentioned that their teaching quality was affected because of their levels of occupational stress (Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong, 2002). According to Klusmann et al (2008), teacher success depends on both the quality of instruction and the well-being of the teacher him/herself. While continuous effort has been taken to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers' classroom teaching, teacher well-being has not attracted

enough attention from international scholars until the last decade (Liu et al., 2018). However, teachers in Hong Kong experienced several frequent changes to their work environments during the pandemic. School lockdowns were first implemented in January 2020 for approximately 4 months (Duckworth et al., 2020). During the third and fourth waves of the pandemic, a hybrid mode of teaching was followed, with schools offering half-day learning at school sites and additional online classes at home (Peng et al., 2019). Schools were fully closed again during the fifth wave. Clearly, these frequent changes in response to the perceived severity of the pandemic caused confusion and considerable uncertainty among teachers and school staff. Uncertainties can cause stress that can in turn affect the well-being of individuals by challenging their capacity to predict, plan and act efficaciously (Wu et al., 2019). Teacher well-being is a critical factor in determining teaching effectiveness and students' academic performance and well-being (Benevene et al., 2020). Well-being refers to the healthy and successful functioning of teachers at work. Regarding the well-being and mental health status of teachers in Hong Kong, a survey in 2020 revealed that more than 80% of teachers had had their physical and psychological health negatively impacted by the pandemic or the government's health preventive responses to the pandemic and 85% of them considered their work pressure to be high (Glazzard et al., 2019). The connection between teacher's wellbeing and teaching quality has also been established. For example, the teachers wellbeing has been found to be related to a good classroom emotional atmosphere, good teacher-student relationships, and ideal student motivation and achievement levels (Becker et al., 2014). In short, the teachers wellbeing and their work performance have a mutual influence, and teacher's wellbeing can be reflected through their work performance, which in turn, teachers

wellbeing affects the smooth progress and quality of classroom teaching performance (Hascher et al., 2021).

At least 5,720 teachers have left Hong Kong's local school system during the current 2021 to 2022 academic year so far, according to a Legislative Council Document (2022). Each school lost an average of 7.1 teachers in 2020-21, with the figure standing at 3.9 in 2019-20 and 4.2 in 2018-19. The shift signifies a changing trend in the factors influencing educators' decisions to exit the profession, suggesting potential shifts in job satisfaction, commitment levels, or external pressures. The data underscores the importance of a deeper exploration into the specific reasons behind teacher resignations, urging education authorities to address concerns and enhance retention strategies to promote a more stable teaching environment in Hong Kong. As a consequence, it is considered that more innovation and new strategic HRM practices are required to improve employee performance, satisfaction, and motivation (Infante & Darmawan, 2022).

One of the major challenges that modern-day education organisations are confronted with is the proper teaching performance to achieve high productivity. Teachers are the most important stakeholders in all educational settings, as they are specialists in a range of teaching approaches, strategies and course design (Kunter et al., 2013). Instructional clarity and classroom management guarantee instructional engagement and they appear to be the two most influential teaching characteristics. Borman & Motowidlo (1993) proposed that job performance was bifurcated into task performance and contextual performance. In the perspective of task performance, inadequate classroom management is a specific aspect of low-task performance that

can contribute to teachers leaving schools in Hong Kong (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). Hue (2001) showed that in some schools, many teachers expressed the concern that half of all classroom time was taken up with managing students' behaviour other than instruction, and that discipline problems were responsible for a significant portion of this lost instructional time. Teachers tend to move towards traditional teacher-centred teaching methods instead of using innovative teaching methods and are relatively rigid in their classroom behaviour because of their inexperience in the profession (Ng et al., 2010). The previous research examined that mindfulness skill is associated with lower levels of emotional burnout, cynicism, turnover intention and missed work days, and to higher levels of professional efficacy, job satisfaction and job performance (Abenavoli et al., 2013; Hülsheger et al., 2012; Taylor & Millea, 2016). In perspective of contextual performance, lack of collaboration and teamwork among teachers in Hong Kong is a specific aspect of low contextual performance that can contribute to low teaching performance (Flores, 2005). The research revealed that teachers who reported lower levels of participation in decision-making processes and limited opportunities for involvement in school improvement initiatives experienced lower job satisfaction (Toropova et al., 2020). Previous studies in public management and human resource management (HRM) show that, inclusive leadership (IL) are focused on facilitating group members feeling part of the group (belongingness) and retaining their sense of individuality (uniqueness) while contributing to group processes and outcomes (Dane & Brummel, 2014). In addition, the abrupt transition to online teaching left many secondary school teachers in Hong Kong unprepared to effectively use digital technology for instructional purposes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hong Kong Annual Reports (2021–2022) indicated that the absence of face-to-face interaction and limited opportunities for real-time feedback led to decreased student

engagement, ultimately affecting teaching performance. Research illustrates that individuals high in self-compassion report greater emotional wellbeing that may improve the job performance because it protects individuals from social stressors through engaging in self-kindness and learning to accept that having imperfections is part of human nature (Crego et al., 2022). In this context, research on malleable factors that can improve teacher job performance is desirable. Thus, job performance has emerged as the key focus that needs to be addressed to maintain a competitive workforce in the education industry.

Throughout the years, many studies have addressed employees' job performance. Yet, the literature specific to job performance managerial practices among secondary teachers in the context of the education industry of Hong Kong is overlooked in the education literature. This is because most of the literature is about university teachers, primary school and special education research in the field of education research in Hong Kong, while there is relatively little research on the teaching performance of high school educators. Therefore, the relationship between mindfulness skill and IL and job performance remains unexplored in the education literature. In addressing the above knowledge gaps, the present study unfolds the mindfulness skill and IL among teachers and how they are linked to the job performance.

1.6 Research objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between mindfulness skill, inclusive leadership, employee work engagement, self-compassion and job performance among teachers in public secondary schools of Hong Kong. In this

regard, the mediating role of employee work engagement and the moderating role of self-compassion will be investigated. Thus, the objectives of current study are as below:

1. To investigate the relationship between mindfulness skill and job performance among teachers
2. To investigate the relationship between mindfulness skill and work engagement among teachers
3. To investigate the relationship between inclusive leadership and job performance among teachers
4. To investigate the relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement among teachers
5. To investigate the relationship between work engagement and job performance among teachers
6. To examine the moderating role of self-compassion in the relationship between mindfulness skill and work engagement among teachers
7. To examine the moderating role of self-compassion in the relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement among teachers
8. To examine the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between mindfulness skill and job performance among teachers
9. To examine the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between inclusive leadership and job performance among teachers

1.7 Research questions

The research aims to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between mindfulness skill and job performance among teachers?
2. What is the relationship between mindfulness skill and work engagement among teachers?
3. What is the relationship between inclusive leadership and job performance among teachers?
4. What is the relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement among teachers?
5. What is the relationship between work engagement and job performance among teachers?
6. Does self-compassion moderate the relationship between mindfulness skill and work engagement among teachers?
7. Does self-compassion moderate the relationship between inclusive leadership and work engagement among teachers?
8. Does work engagement mediate the relationship between mindfulness skill and job performance among teachers?
9. Does work engagement mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and job performance among teachers?

1.8 Significance of the research

The significance of the research can be viewed from both theoretical contribution and practical contribution.

1.8.1 Theoretical contribution

Teachers' job performance is a complex issue and it varies across contexts. There are many studies on job performance, and yet there is relatively little research in secondary schools of Hong Kong to answer for employee job performance. Although the study of the variable job performance appears to have already reached a stage of maturity at a theoretical level, as it is one of the most analysed (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). However, there are relatively few systematic attempts to comprehensively define the nature of job performance, and there are also few studies that have managed to specify the processes through which individual behaviours can generate organizational value (Carpini et al., 2017). In this sense, previous research has recognized that job performance heavily depends on how employees perceive their jobs (Grant, 2008); therefore, education sector leaders should try to increase job performance by focusing more on people and not so much on tasks and create a supportive and collaborative work environment. To test the influence of people-oriented management on job performance, this study aims to analyse how the combined effects of three different antecedents related to the individual factor (mindfulness skill, self-compassion and engagement) and leadership behaviours (inclusive leadership) lead to employee job performance. Previous research has demonstrated the positive relationship between some of the variables considered in this study and job performance, for example, mindfulness skill (e.g., Wihler et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2022), inclusive leadership (e.g., Ke et al., 2022), work engagement (e.g., Yao et al., 2022). However, limited research has analysed the combined effect of all these variables on job performance, which is crucial since all the conditions considered in this study, and it is precisely their combination that can

lead to higher or lower levels of job performance. The results contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field by providing a more complete vision of the individual job performance in the education sector by considering antecedents related, not only to the task itself as might be expected in this sector, but to the creation of an optimal interpersonal climate in which the work acquires an important meaning for the workers and where the leadership style enhances their capacities and abilities.

The findings contribute to the literature on the JD–R model, and help to reduce the ambiguity of the job demands–work engagement relationship. They support the existence of a direct negative relationship. Previous studies have mainly considered the relationship between job demands and burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). This study have also expanded the literature by exploring the theory in a non-Western context, and in the field of education, which has not previously been much investigated. The mediating role of work engagement is also new, and supports the modified version of the JD–R model that emphasizes the importance of studying positive psychological aspects to create a more holistic model (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This study also enriches the literature on psychological factors, especially self-compassion. This was a surprising and striking result, with a stronger influence between job resources and work engagement among teachers with lower self-compassion.

In this study, researchers have investigated the effects of factors influencing employees' work engagement and job performance for improving teaching quality in Hong Kong. This study used social exchange theory aims to conceptualize the relationships between these factors and employees' job performance. By specifically focusing on the social exchange aspect, which posits that workplace interactions

involve an exchange of resources and benefits, the researchers aim to provide insights that can contribute to the improvement of teaching quality. Social exchange theory is grounded in the principle of reciprocity, suggesting that individuals are motivated to reciprocate positive actions and avoid negative ones. Social exchange theory can help identify the perceived costs and benefits associated with job performance. Costs may include stress, workload, and job demands, while benefits may include financial rewards, recognition, and career advancement. Social exchange theory highlights the importance of perceived fairness and equity in exchanges. When employees perceive that their contributions are fairly rewarded, they are more likely to engage in positive work behaviours, contributing to enhanced job performance. In the perspective of organizations, organizations can develop strategies to enhance employee engagement by focusing on factors identified through the lens of social exchange theory. Social exchange theory can inform the design of performance management systems that recognize and reward employees in ways that resonate with their social exchange motivations. Thus, understanding the social exchange dynamics can guide leaders in fostering positive relationships, building trust, and creating a supportive work environment.

Studying teachers' job performance through the lenses of Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory and Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a comprehensive understanding of how various factors influence their effectiveness. JD-R theory examines the balance between job demands, such as heavy workloads, emotional strain, and administrative tasks, and job resources, like professional development, support from administration, and peer collaboration. It highlights how excessive demands without sufficient resources lead to burnout, while ample resources