

Postgraduate Seminar Series

MIB Topic Defence Seminar–To Love or to Let Go? The Rose-Tint of Hope Fuels Sunk-Cost Staying in Relationships

- **Date:** 22 April 2026
- **Time:** 16:45 PM - 18:00 PM
- **Venue:** SEK108
- **Presenter:** Ms. WU
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Abstract:

When romantic relationships begin to struggle, people face a difficult choice: stay or leave. This decision is often shaped by the sunk cost fallacy, which refers to people's suboptimal tendency to continue pursuing previously invested options. The current research examines this bias in the context of romantic relationships and identifies hope as a key factor that amplifies it. We propose that hope functions as a dispositional "possibility lens" that shapes how individuals interpret past relational investments. When sunk costs are high, individuals high in hope construe the extensive relational history (e.g., shared experiences, emotional bonds, social integration) as evidence that relationship improvement remains possible, thereby inflating the subjective probability of improvement and sustaining commitment. Four studies support this account. These findings reveal a previously undocumented factor that intensifies sunk cost bias in romantic relationships and contribute to the literatures on sunk costs, hope, and relationship decision-making.

All are welcome

Contact:

- For any inquiries, please contact us at hkibs@ln.edu.hk or call us at 2616-8374.