# Integrated Theoretical Model for Employees' Intention to Participate in Non-Mandatory Trainings

Jayaranjani Sutha[1], Pavithra Kailasapathy[2] & J. A. S. K. Jayakody[2]

[1] Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

[2] Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Correspondence: Jayaranjani Sutha, Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka, Passara Road, Badulla, Sri Lanka. Tel: 94-077-348-8993. E-mail: jayaranjani@uwu.ac.lk

## Abstract

The significance of non-mandatory training is presently being acknowledged across the globe and currently its importance has been raised to a level near to that of compulsory training. However, research evidence indicates that if the training is non-mandatory, employees are generally reluctant to participate in training programs. Yet, a study of the current literature suggests there is no appropriate theoretical framework to predict and explain the motivational and inhibitory factors underlying employee participation in non-mandatory training. This paper addresses this lacuna, drawing from the Adult Learning theory, the Expectancy theory and the Perceived Organizational Support (POS) theory; it argues that the perception of a supportive environment in the organization, the fostering of employees' dispositional characteristics, job involvement and career motivation, working together enhance employees' intention to participate in the non-mandatory training programs. Building on this argument further, it is proposed that when the perceived benefit of training is stronger, its effect on employee dispositional characteristics, job involvement and career motivation pertaining to participation in non-mandatory training becomes stronger. Being one of the early attempts at theorizing on employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training, this paper hopes to provide an appropriate theoretical foundation for the empirical work in this field, while providing an insight for managers involved in non-mandatory training of employees.

**Keywords:** intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings, perceived organizational support, career motivation, perceived benefit of training

## 1. Introduction

Training is an organization's most important human resource development strategy to facilitate, provide, and enhance the employees' capabilities to perform their respective jobs (Noe & Schmitt, 1986). Furthermore, Barney (2002) states that organizational training activities are recognized as being very effective in providing a competitive advantage through their impact on employees' productivity, achieved by improving employees' skills and performance and through inducing positive behavioral changes. Therefore, if the purpose of the training is to enhance the individual's competencies so as to raise the organizational performance, then employees must be motivated by some means to pursue continuous skills development activities. As to exactly how this could be achieved can prove to be a key aspect in influencing effectiveness of training programs within an organization (Noe & Schmitt, 1986).

The competencies of the organizations can be developed through both mandatory and non-mandatory training activities (Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Noe, 2005; Wexley & Latham, 2002). The significance of non-mandatory training is being fast realized across the globe, and so organizations are transferring the learning responsibilities to the employees themselves (Renaud et al., 2006). Thus, employees are now beginning to search for the training that would be relevant to their personal development, and with the intention of participating in it. Further, Renaud et al. state that because of the new derestricted environment, many banks in Canada have chosen a collective training method. They have organized their in-house training programs and simultaneously assisted access to non-mandatory training programs by establishing partnerships with other training institutions and universities. This has been facilitated further by the increasing prevalence of distance and online learning, rendering non-mandatory training more cost effective (Sweeney & Martindale, 2012).

With the growing importance of non-mandatory training, many researchers' attention has turned to non-mandatory training programs and learner participation aspects over the past two decades. However, most of the researchers have confirmed that there is a negative relationship between non-mandatory training programs and employees' voluntary decision for participation (Kulik, Pepper, Roberson, & Parker, 2004; Sutha, 2014; Tsai & Tai, 2003; Valeo, 1998). Scholars state that employees' resistance to the voluntary training programs has been a perennial problem (Burke & Black, 1997; Flynn, 1999; Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004).

Previous studies highlighted some factors that influence employee participation in non-mandatory training, but there is quite a requirement for further research in this area. In the international context, only the demographic (Aryee, 1992; Leuven & Oosterbeek, 1999; Puchner, 1995; Renaud & Cloutier, 2006; Sweeney et al., 2012), and limited individual factors (Maurer, Pierce, & Shore, 2002; Noe, Wilk, Mullen, & Wanek, 1997; Puchner, 1995; Sweeney et al., 2012) were considered to be the main causes of the non-mandatory participation problem, while organizational factors and job/career related variables that also contributed to the employees' training participation decisions were surprisingly, rarely mentioned (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000).

Apart from that, according to Maurer and Tarulli (1994), organizations can encourage the employees to engage in voluntary learning and development activities by providing a favorable learning climate within the organizations to facilitate the employees' continuous learning. Thus, the employees' positive perception of the organization's policies and a supportive environment would contribute to more effective learning, especially in view of the value the company attaches to employee learning. Even though organizational support plays a critical role in the non-mandatory training participation context, scholars state that some studies have shown that characteristics of the work environment and job-related variables may also influence an individual's motivation to learn or participate (e.g. Baldwin, Magjuka, & Loher, 1991; Hicks & Klimoski, 1987). At the same time, Maurer (2006) states that both support at work, and a supportive non-work (domestic) situation might also be a key to employees' personal development behavior.

At the same time, training attributes are considered as being influential factors on training motivation in the training literature. Past scholarly works found that training attributes influence different aspects of training motivation differently, such as pre-training motivation, motivation to learn, motivation to transfer, and post-training motivation (Axtell, Maitlis, & Yearta, 1997; Clark, Dobbins & Ladd, 1993; Nikandrou, Brinia, & Bereri, 2009; Noe & Schmitt, 1986; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Though the training attributes are considered to be critical factors in training motivation and participation in the context of mandatory training, they have not received much attention in the context of non-mandatory training programs.

Therefore, drawing from these gaps, this paper raises three questions:

1. Does perceived organizational support influence the employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training programs?

2. Does perceived organizational support enhance the employees' positive dispositional traits, positive job involvement and career motivation towards their intention to participate in non-mandatory training programs?

3. Do training attributes have a moderating effect on the relationship between dispositional traits, job involvement and career motivation, and employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings?

In order to address these questions, this paper, primarily based on the Perceived Organizational Support theory (Baldwin, Magjuka, & Loher, 1991; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986, Hicks & Klimoski, 1987; Zumrah, Boyle, & Fein, 2011), further strives to develop the argument on the basis of the Adult learning theory (Houle, 1961; Knowles, 1968, 1984), and the Expectancy theory of motivation (Vroom, 1964). Based on these theories, this paper argues that the perception of a supportive environment in the organization encourages and enhances employees' intention to participate in the non-mandatory trainings by fostering employees' dispositional characteristics, job involvement and career motivation. Building on this argument further, it is proposed that when the perceived benefit of training is stronger, the effect on employee dispositional characteristics, job involvement and career motivation toward intention to participate in non-mandatory training becomes stronger.

This paper is viewed through three theoretical lenses, namely Adult Learning theory, Perceived Organizational Support (POS) theory, and Expectancy theory of motivation. The use of these three theories is justified by the fact that they draw their basic roots from humanistic psychology, social exchange theory and motivation theory and thus provide insights into the different aspects of employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings. Employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training is basically rooted in the Adult Learning

theory, which generally assumes that adults possess qualities such as self-directedness, motivation to learn, intention to learn, orientation to learn, need to know, and seek richness of experiences. By using the POS theory with Adult learning theory, POS theory addresses the psychological processes related to assessing the consequences of POS. These psychological consequences of POS appear to support the basic assumptions of Adult Learning theory. Apart from that, the assumptions of Expectancy theory can be useful to explain the employees' behavior, when the behavior is controlled by the individual employee (Mitchell, 1982). In the context of intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings, it is not forced by the organization, and the choice regarding participation is totally dependent on the employees' rational decision. Therefore, once the employees' expectancy regarding the value and performance of the activities and the outcome is instrumentally valued, it will promote employees' further participation intention. Based on that, the congregation of Adult Learning theory, POS theory and Expectancy theory of motivation will lay down the foundation for the model of the present paper.

Meanwhile, Eisenberger (2002) discussed the two critical consequences of POS, one implicit and the other explicit. Implicit or psychological or dispositional consequences comprise organizational commitment (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Eisenberger et al., 1986), withdrawal behavior (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 1999; Aquino & Griffeth, 1999; Gizzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994; Wayne et al., 1997), job related interest, cognitive interest (George & Brief, 1992), and job involvement (Eisenberger, 1992). Explicit consequences mostly relate to performance of the employees (George & Brief, 1992). Apart from that, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) spotlight the concept of 'social exchange' in terms of unspecified exchanges between one party and another party, with mutual trust. At the same time Blau (1964) focuses on social exchange in terms of the individual's voluntary behavior, such as in the case of those who are inspired by the possible returns such interactions are anticipated to bring. However, the current paper only focused on the implicit consequences of POS and on unspecified exchange, a voluntary behavior which is open ended, but with long-term returns that are directly connected to the employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings.

This paper is structured in the following manner: After the introduction, the next section of the paper focuses on the theoretical foundation of the proposed conceptual framework. It includes a brief review of Adult Learning theory, POS theory and Expectancy theory and elaborates how these theories have been used to explain employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training. The section that follows delineates the proposed theory along with its propositions. It is followed by a brief discussion of the theoretical, practical and research implications of this theory.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation and Proposition Development

This paper is viewed through three theoretical lenses, namely Adult Learning theory, Perceived Organizational Support (POS) theory, and Expectancy theory of motivation. The use of these three theories is justified by the fact that they draw their basic roots from humanistic psychology, social exchange theory and motivation theory and thus provide insights into the different aspects of employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings.

### 2.1 Perceived Organizational Support and Employees' Intention to Participate in Non-Mandatory Training

Firstly, the focus of the Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is the employees' "global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their wellbeing" (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 501). POS theory is rooted in the Social Exchange Theory (SET) on which are based the significant conceptual paradigms for understanding behavior in the workplace. Although many different opinions of social exchange have emerged, scholars seem to have reached an agreement that social exchange encompasses sequences of interfaces that produce obligations (Emerson, 1976). In SET, these interfaces are usually considered as inter-reliant and contingent on the actions of another person (Blau, 1964).

According to SET certain workplace practices lead to interactive relations, generally known as social exchange relationships (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). When organizations "take care of their employees" (Cropanzano et al., 2001) these social exchange relationships are strengthened, which can produce positive consequences for both parties. As a result, the social exchange relationship is considered as a mediating variable: beneficial and equitable transactions between the two parties create strong relationships resulting in effective work performance and cooperative employee attitudes. This line of reasoning has received much attention and it mainly uses Blau's (1964) framework to define social exchange relationships.

Further, Blau compared the economic and social exchanges, which are considered as the most significant components of the SET theory. He argued that "the most basic and crucial distinction is that social exchange entails unspecified obligations" (1964, p. 93). He claimed that only social exchange "involves receiving favors

that create indefinite future obligations...and the exact manner of returning the favor cannot be bargained" (p. 93) and "only social exchange tends to engender feelings of personal obligation, gratitude, and trust, which is not the case with purely economic exchange" (p. 94). He also argued that "the benefits involved in social exchange do not have an exact monetary value," (p. 94), suggesting that social exchanges create enduring social patterns.

The expression 'unspecified exchange' is considered in detail in this paper, in the context of constituting a means of exchange. In this framework, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) noted that the concept of 'social exchange' refers to a general understanding which requires one to trust the other and anticipate that the benefits bestowed will be returned in some form and also that this act typically occurs without any formal contract. In short, employees express their gratitude to their company for providing a favorable work atmosphere and conditions by performing better and by showing other favorable attitudes and behaviors; conversely, they are also likely to adjust their attitudes and behaviors negatively as a reaction to treatment they perceive as unfavorable (Robinson, 2008). Further, Blau (1964) explains that social exchange covers voluntary actions of individuals who are motivated by the returns they expect such actions to bring from others; luckily for those concerned, these are typically realized in fact. In comparing social and economic exchange he emphasizes that it is more likely in social exchange for the nature of the obligations involved in the exchange to remain unspecified, at least initially. Further, researchers noted that social exchange is usually involved in a relationship oriented interaction between employer and employee, which is characterized by the mutual sharing of trust and commitment, socio-emotional benefits, open-ended commitments, a long-term focus, and other unspecified returns (Blau, 1964; Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994). Although traditionally applied to the nature of exchanges (Blau, 1964), more contemporary formulations of social exchange theory express more clearly the nature of relationships (e.g. Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Mills & Clark, 1982; Moorman, 1991; Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993; Organ, 1988, 1990; Organ & Konovsky, 1989). In this regard, "relative to those in economic exchange relationships, individuals in social exchange relationships are inclined to more strongly connect with the person or entity with which they are engaged" (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002, p. 926). Thus, excellent social exchange relationships are possible to encourage employees to engage in behaviors that have favorable consequences for the organization over time; in part because employees tend to identify the organization's wellbeing with their own and because they may feel a personal obligation to support the organization (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 1994).

Further, Eisenberger et al. (2002) noted that organizational support theory addresses the psychological processes related to assessing the consequences of POS. He further elaborates on the implicit and explicit consequences of POS. In the context of implicit consequences, he discussed organizational commitment; POS increase affective commitment by satisfying employees' socio-emotional needs such as affiliation and emotional support (Armeli & Eisenberger, 1998; Eisenberger et al., 1986), and job related affect. POS may contribute to employees' emotional beliefs regarding their competence and worth, consequently improving positive mood (Eisenberger et al., 2001; George & Brief, 1992), and job involvement. By enhancing employees' perceptions of their own competence, POS might increase employees' interest in their work. On the other hand, in the context of explicit consequences, Eisenberger (2002) discussed performance/output of employees. He noted that the standard and quality of job performance and actions that were favourable to the organization was enhanced by POS and further, that this could induce employees to take on more than their assigned responsibilities. According to George and Brief (1992), such extra-role activities include aiding fellow employees, taking actions that protect the organization from risk, offering constructive suggestions, and gaining knowledge and skills that would be beneficial to the organization. Further, they also argued that the explicit consequences of POS are created by the implicit consequences of POS. Both the implicit and explicit consequences of POS cause one person to interact with many actors and contingent on the action of the other person, to make an exchange relationship. This can be on a specific or short term or economic basis (concreteness), or on a long term or unspecific basis (broad/open-ended), or socio-emotional basis (particularism).

Therefore, the considerate and positive treatment received from the company creates feelings of gratitude in the employees' minds; this is likely to instill in them an attitude of loyalty and a sense of obligation leading to positive behavior that will encourage them to put in greater effort into gaining new knowledge from both mandatory as well as non-mandatory training programs. This will subsequently enhance their participation in any non-mandatory training program to acquire new knowledge and skills in order to achieve their own goals as well as the organization's goals. Hurtz (2009) suggests that the perceived supportiveness of the organizational work climate also has a tendency to enhance an employee's belief that vital people would like him to participate, which in turn, affects the employee's own attitude towards participation in the learning activity. Further, various researches demonstrate that a positive organizational climate would significantly influence the continuous

participation of employees in learning activities (Kozlowski & Hults, 1987; Potosky & Ramakrishna, 2002). Meanwhile, according to Tracey et al. (2001), inadequate job support in keeping with the nature of the work assignments and the poor design of jobs can impose substantial stress and create pressures on employees; this could influence significantly the degree to which employees can adequately prepare for training. With this scenario the proposition is stated as follows:

*Proposition 1: Perceived Organizational Support positively influences employee's intention to participate in non-mandatory training programs.*

*2.2 Perceived Organizational Support, Dispositional Variables and Employees' Intention to Participate in Non-Mandatory Trainings*

The scholarly work of Beheshtifar (2012) states that the organizational support aspect is studied in depth to gain an understanding of exactly what employees perceived as organizational support. It is grounded on an estimate of how much support an employee feels or thinks his organization has provided to him or her. The main clarification of organizational support theory is focused on their output with the consideration of dispositional variables. For example, Eisenberger et al. (1986) and Shore and Shore (1995) state that the influence of organizational activities on POS cannot be explained without considering dispositional variables. Dispositional tendencies might influence POS positively or negatively (Watson & Clark, 1984) depending on whether employees interpret organizational treatment as caring or indifferent (Aquino & Griffeth, 1999; Witt & Hellman, 1992).

Consequently, as a result of good treatment by the organization, POS might influence employee behaviors positively (Aquino & Griffeth, 1999). A supportive work environment is more likely to lead to positive tendencies in dispositional behavior that might result in extensive and friendly behavior that could well induce the employee to create a favorable impression on others that will most likely result in more effective working relationships with co-workers and supervisors. On the other hand, a less caring or supportive work environment could lead to negative tendencies in dispositional behavior, such as an indifferent or sullen attitude, which might constrain the development of favorable working relationships. Therefore, forms of organizational support that help and encourage employees to be self-directed and self-managed, and which would boost their self-concept, self-esteem and goal orientation should be established in the workplace.

According to empirical evidence, Korman (1970) and others (e.g. Baumeister, 1999; Brookover, Thomas, & Paterson, 1964) have observed that self-esteem can be built up by messages of value conveyed by the organization to the employee via interpersonal relationships and through the culture of the organization. Pierce, Gardner, Cummings & Dunham (1989) and Lee observed a positive relationship between perceived managerial support and employees' self-esteem. Further, Phillips and Hall (2001) and McAllister and Bigley (2002) observed a positive relationship between organizational support and employees' self-esteem. Meanwhile, Jansen and Van Yperen (2004) argue that supervisors are regarded by learning-oriented individuals as a fount of job-related information and know-how. Thus, these employees try to interact regularly with their supervisors in order to learn how to deal more effectively with rising problems and opportunities within their job domain. Meanwhile, Pusey (1987) and Mezirow (1981) found that a supportive work setting, task identification, and task fulfilment in the work environment tend to enhance employees' technical interest cognition, which stimulates them to participate in learning activities within the work setting and even outside.

Therefore, all these positive concequences of POS are expected to inspire employees to invest greater energy into acquisition of new knowledge from both mandatory as well as non-mandatory training programs. And it will subsequently enhance their participation in the non-mandatory training programs to acquire new knowledge and skills in order to achieve their own goals as well as the organization's goals. Hurtz (2009) suggests perceived supportiveness of the organizational work climate also has a propensity to enhance an employee's belief that vital people would like him to participate, which in turn, would affect the employee's own attitude towards participation. Further, researches demonstrate the importance of a positive social and organizational climate with respect to on-going participation in learning activities (Kozlowski & Hults, 1987; Potosky & Ramakrishna, 2002). At the same time, Hurtz further demonstrated that learning goal orientation was the chief dispositional variable that had a direct positive impact on attitudes and that it incrementaly impacted on employees' learning activities. Therefore, it is expected that when employees perceive a high level of organizational support, it positively acts on the dispositional variables and influences them to participate in voluntary training programs. Thus, the following proposition is put forward:

*Proposition 2a: Perceived Organizational Support has positive influence on dispositional variables.*

*Proposition 2b: Dispositional variables will have positive influence on employees' intention to participate in*

*non-mandatory training.*

*Proposition 2c: Dispositional variables mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training.*

### 2.3 Perceived Organizational Support, Job Involvement and Employees' Intention to Participate in Non-Mandatory Trainings

The job involvement literature identifies it as an individual's level of emotional identification with the specific job in which he or she is engaged or absorbed in (Wickramasinghe, 2010). Job involvement is referred to as the extent to which an employee is immersed in his or her job (Saleh & Hosek, 1976) and the extent to which one identifies psychologically with one's work (Kanungo, 1982). Theoretically, employees who are more involved in their jobs tend to apply more effort (Brown & Leigh, 1996).

Previous studies indicate a significant direct positive relationship between POS and job involvement, suggesting POS as an antecedent to job involvement (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis LaMastro, 1990; Shore, 1995). In the Sri Lankan context, Wickramasinghe (2008) measured 284 front line employees from six export-apparel manufacturing firms and that study conveyed a significant positive correlation between POS and job involvement.

Further, Brown and Leigh (1996) studied the influence of organizational support and employee effort on the relationship between job involvement and job performance. They established their model based on the argument that the organization's positive treatment would persuade employees to identify themselves as an integral part of the organization and to repay the organization for this positive treatment through their accomplishments. They considered psychological climate as an employees' perception of the organizational environment. Further, they hypothesized that when employees perceive that the organization is providing positive support, they will be more involved in their jobs and will exercise more effort, which would lead to higher job performance. In addition to that they, used a modeling approach, examining the relationships between psychological climate, job involvement, effort, and job performance. Further, they found support for their model by finding that positive psychological climate had a direct impact on job involvement.

In the context of training, highly involved trainees anticipate higher future returns from their job performance as a result of doing well in training (Mathieu, Tannenbaum, & Salas, 1992). Therefore, if trainees have high involvement in their jobs, then that should induce and motivate them to improve their job-related skills (Noe, 1986). In other words, trainees having high level of job involvement are more likely to be inspired as to cause them to learn something new in order to improve their job related skills. This is because participation in training is perceived by individuals as a way to increase their skill levels, in respect of their personal, job and career related activities. That they feel will improve their job performance and uplift feelings of self-worth (Noe, 1986). Therefore, consistent with the past research, the proposition is:

*Proposition 3a: Perceived Organizational Support exerts a positive influence on Job involvement.*

*Proposition 3b: Job involvement has a positive influence on employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training programs.*

*Proposition 3c: Job involvement mediates the relationship between perceived orgnizational support and employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training.*

### 2.4 Perceived Organizational Support, Career Motivation and Employees' Intention to Participate in Non-Mandatory Trainings

Apart from the dispositional variables and job involvement, Career motivation plays a major part in training participation. London (1983) defined Career motivation and the associated career decisions and behaviors as a set of individual characteristics that reflected the person's career identity, provided insight into factors affecting his or her career, and his/her resilience in the face of unfavorable career conditions. Further, he states that career motivation can be understood by considering the relationships among individual characteristics, career decisions and behaviors, and situational conditions.

In addition to that London (1993) found there was a positive relationship between management support for career development, and managerial empowerment of the employee. The factor analysis on the items led him to conclude that "the more highly supervisors viewed themselves as empowering subordinates, the more highly the employees rated themselves on career identity…and career insight" (p. 59). Meanwhile, London and colleagues (London, 1990; London & Bray, 1984; London & Mone, 1987) have made numerous recommendations as to how to enhance career motivation. To promote career motivation, employees should be provided with positive

reinforcement for good performance, given opportunities for achievement and input, and receive support for skills development (London & Bray, 1984). Career motivation can also be enhanced through career development support. This can be accomplished by encouraging employees to think about their current work behavior and how it impacts on the long-term and at different career stages; also, by helping them to develop career plans. Information about career options should be provided together with appropriate guidance to ensure that realistic expectations are cultivated. Goal setting should be encouraged and fair and accurate feedback provided. To heighten career motivation, work involvement should require employees to face job challenges, and they should be encouraged to pursue professional activities and make use of opportunities for acquiring leadership qualities and achieve progress generally (London & Mone, 1987). Backing up these suggestions, Noe and Bachhuber (1990) found that if the managers were more supportive, provided clear performance feedback, encouraged subordinates to set career goals, initiated discussions related to career development issues and made the job challenging, then that will act powerfully on employees to raise their level of career motivation.

Thus, people are more motivated to achieve a job role, in goal setting, and building career insight, career identity and career goals, when they find relevant supportive policies in the organizations for their achievement efforts. As Xu (2007) indicated, there will be more likelihood of participation in developmental activities such as taking courses, when employees find relevant supportive policies and a favorable workplace environment for their career development in their organizations. Similarly, organizations have to provide opportunities for employees to perform in different job roles to broaden their skills base and acquire the necessary confidence for better usage of abilities; and provide other developmental opportunities to the employees (Chow, Lo, Sha, & Hong, 2006).

Apart from that, Sanders, Oomens, Blonk, and Hazelzet (2011), investigating a learning intention, found that career orientation was positively correlated with this learning intention and he found, more employees tended to work toward certain career goals in a (more or less) strategic way, the more likely they were to engage in formal learning activities. In addition, Kyndt, Govaerts, Dochy, and Baert (2011) found that self-directedness in career processes, which can exert a strong influence on the course of one's career, is positively related to the intention of an employee to engage in formal learning activities. This relationship can be considered moderately strong. Maurer, Weiss, and Barbeite (2003), who focused on the intention to engage in both formal and informal development activities, investigated the role of career motivation.

Therefore, the supportive supervisors and organizations induce the employees to sharpen their career insight and career identity (career motivation), as that would lead to a desire to participate in learning and development activities. Thus, the propositions are stated as follows:

*Proposition 4a: Perceived Organizational Support exerts a positive influence on career motivation.*

*Proposition 4b: Career motivation has a positive influence on employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings.*

*Proposition 4c: Career motivation mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training.*

*2.5 Interactive Effect of Perceived Benefit of Training on Dispositional Variables, Job Involvement and Career Motivation, and Employees' Intention to Participate in Non-Mandatory Trainings*

Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) is considered as the most useful theoretical approach to explain the process of workplace learning and trainees' motivation to engage in learning activities (Dubin, 1990; Farr & Middlebrooks, 1990; Mathieu & Martineau, 1997; Mathieu, Tannenbaum, & Salas, 1992; Noe, 1986). It is particularly helpful in explaining the individual's perceptions and beliefs regarding his motivation to engage in a particular task and describes how situational factors influence the trainee's work environment. Basically, the expectancy-theoretical model explains the three components of motivation, which are expectancy (E), instrumentality (I), and valence (V) (Mathieu & Martineau, 1997; Tharenou, 2001). In terms of training and participation, expectancy denotes the individual's faith concerning the probability that participating in training and development activities would lead to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and ability (KSAs). In terms of instrumentality, perception of the possibility that those KSAs acquired from participating in training and development would lead to specific outcomes (e.g. salary increase, better job performance and peer respect). Valence is considered the relative attractiveness of those outcomes for each individual. Ahmad and Bakar (2003) suggest that employees who can discern the benefits from training will be more eager and inclined to participate in an organization's training activities.

As its name implies, perceived benefit of training is grounded in Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. This explains the extent to which an employee believes that certain valued outcomes will result as a consequence of

the activities that he or she is expected to and encouraged to follow. In addition to that, Maurer and Tarulli (1994) suggested that to effectively persuade all employees to improve themselves it is necessary for them to understand completely the perceived benefits and the value placed on those benefits. This is due to the fact that all employees do not perceive things the same way.

Perceived benefit of training may depend on which training is most suitable in relation to the job, career, and one's personal needs (Noe, 1986). Previous researchers have noted that perceived benefit of training impacted in different ways on training motivation, such as motivation to learn, pre-training motivation, post-training motivation and motivation to transfer. However, scholars have interpreted it in numerous ways; for example, the perceived benefit of training for job needs was interpreted as job relevance, job utility, training fulfillment, content validity, perceived importance and content relatedness (Axtell, Maitlis, & Yearta, 1997; Bell & Ford, 2007; Clark, Dobbins & Ladd, 1993; Gegenfurtner, Festner, Gallenberger, Lehtinen, & Gruber, 2009; Nikandrou, Brinia, & Bereri, 2009; Seyler, Holton, Bates, Burnett, & Carvalho, 1998; Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1991; Tsai & Tai, 2003). Meanwhile, the perceived benefit of training for personal needs is referred to as 'self-assessed needs' by Myers (1997).

According to Aziz (2011), the most important factor necessary to stimulate the training motivation of the employees is relevance of the training program to the employee's training needs. Only this can act as a significant influence to get him to participate in training. Further, Kang (2007) found that another important factor that influenced employees' motivation to participate in training programs is the perceived benefit of training. Other factors considered essential were job-related needs and relevance of training, followed by personal-related needs and career-related needs. Apart from that, Clark et al. (1993) found that the perceived benefit of training in relation to the job related needs had a significant impact on training motivation. In addition, Myers (1997) found that the perceived benefit of training for personal needs moderated the relationship between pre-training motivation and training participation. It was demonstrated that the perceived benefit of training can significantly impact the training motivation and participation and with a positive and moderate relationship.

In the context of non-mandatory training programs, perceived benefit of training will play a critical role in respect of participation, since the non-mandatory training program is not compulsory and the training opportunity is not considered an essential condition for the employees' continued fruitful employment within the organization (Sweeney et al., 2012). Therefore, in this context the choice of participation is not forced by the organization, but is dependent on the employee's rational decision. According to the Adult learning theory assumptions (Knowles, 1984), adults are independent and self-directed. They have the freedom to direct themselves. Their teachers must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them, as Adults are goal-oriented. When registering for a course, they typically recognize what goal they want to attain, as Adults are relevancy-oriented. They have to clearly determine the purpose for learning something. Learning has to be related to their work or other responsibilities to be of value to them, as adults only want to learn things that can be of practical use to them, and so focus on the aspects of a lesson most suitable to them in their work. Professional advancement: employees registered for this factor want to protect and continue with their higher status job, but will train further for professional advancement, or acquire knowledge that will help in other courses. Finally, they may have a Cognitive interest: employees registered for this factor enjoy learning for its own sake, for the interest. They merely want to "satisfy an enquiring mind" or "seek knowledge for its own sake." These adults' learning characteristics have a direct link with participation in learning activities. However, the expectation that training will confer more relevance in terms of personal-related, job-related and career related (expectancy and instrumentality) matters will enhance the above direct link and make it stronger. Thus, the following proposition was developed:

*Proposition 5: Perceived benefit of training moderates the relationship between dispositional variables and intention to participate in non-mandatory training, such that the dispositional variables will have a stronger positive impact on non-mandatory training participation intention when the employees have a high level of perception of the benefits of training than a low level of perception.*

Apart from that, from the perspective of the training field, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory explains motivation in terms of three variables. These are firstly, Expectancy - this refers to the employee's expectation about participation and investment in training that can help him to gain extra knowledge and skills. Secondly, Instrumentality - this is the perception of the relationship between performance in training and the outcomes that can result such as job improvement, career advancement and personal development. And thirdly, Valence - this is the expectation regarding the value and desirability of the results that can be obtained by the training; that is, the degree to which the improvement of one's skills, job performance, and career advancement are important for the individual.

On the basis of the expectancy theory, Noe (1986) demonstrated that if trainees perceived that the outcome of the training will help them to enhance the existing job performance that will stimulate them to participate further in training activities. They perceived that high effort will result in high performance in training that will lead to high performance on the job and help them to avoid undesirable outcomes. He adds that the instrumentality and the valence will not only enhance the performance, but also indirectly influence their career development opportunities and career advancement.

In the context of career motivation, Mathieu et al. (1992) stated that individuals having a greater self-exploration are more likely to identify their strengths and weaknesses. It enabled these individuals to involve themselves more in career advancement and career planning and made it easier for them to comprehend the potential benefit of trainings, which realization will impact positively on employee participation in learning activities. Further, to the extent that doing well in training may prepare trainees for advancement or other career opportunities, those who anticipate high career advancement need to be highly motivated. That is, individuals who engage in extensive career planning should perceive training to be highly instrumental for obtaining valued career opportunities. Therefore, with the interaction of training relevance (perceived benefit of training), career insight, and participation in training activities, the possibilities for career advancement will be dramatically improved.

At the same time, individuals who are highly involved in their jobs should value work-related participation in training as that would enhance the chances of desired outcomes. Thus, they should anticipate a moderate relationship between job involvement and a valence weighted measure of training participation. This conceptual premise has received some empirical support as well. Noe and Schmitt (1986) identified a significant positive relationship between trainees' job involvement and pre-training motivation. Clark (1990) found that the individuals' job involvement could predict with significant accuracy the level of training motivation even after the perceived utility of a program had been considered. Hence, important outcomes of training programs and the attendant benefits might play a moderating role between job involvement and participation in trainings, as the employees expect that the outcome of the training program will make some critical contribution that would enhance their job performance and career advancement.

Thus, on the basis of theoretical and empirical grounds, these propositions were established:

*Proposition 6: Perceived benefit of training moderates the relationship between Job involvement and intention to participate in non-mandatory training, such that job involvement will have a stronger positive impact on non-mandatory training participation intention when the employees have a high level of perception of the benefits of training than a low level of perception.*

*Proposition 7: Perceived benefit of training moderates the relationship between Career motivation and intention to participate in non-mandatory training, such that career motivation will have a stronger positive impact on non-mandatory training participation intention when the employees have a high level of perception of the benefits of training than a low level of perception.*

Integrated theoretical model of employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training is presented in Figure 1.

## 3. Discussion and Implications

The proposed model of this paper is centered on perceptual and contextual predictors that influence the employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training programs. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the effects of POS, dispositional factors, job involvement, career motivation and training related attributes on employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training programs. This paper proposes a framework for the voluntary participation decision and intention of employees. Employee participation in non-mandatory training programs is an on-going problem (Burke & Black, 1997; Flynn, 1999; Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004; Sutha, 2014). Therefore, for the past two decades, researchers have focused their attention on non-mandatory training programs and employees' participation.

The scholarly works of Sweeney et al. (2012), Renaud et al. (2006), Leuven and Oosterbeek (1999), Aryee (1992) and Puchner (1995) identify some demographic factors that have a negative influence on non-mandatory training participation of employees. Apart from that, Sweeney et al. (2012), Noe et al. (1997), Puchner (1995) and Maurer et al. (2002) found some individual factors that exert influence on non-mandatory training participation. Even these scholars have labeled them as individual variables. However, most of them fall under demographic and some under personality variables in the context of non-mandatory training participation.
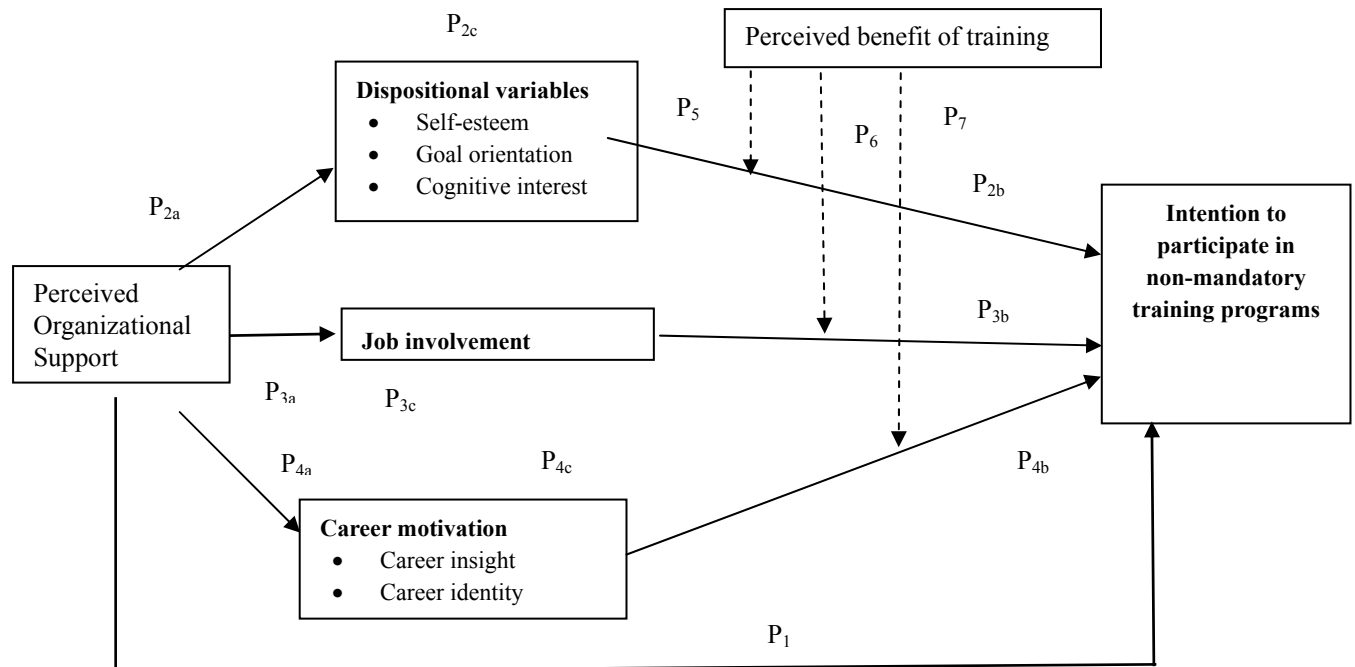
Figure 1. Integrated theoretical model of employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training

Therefore, among the various factors affecting non-mandatory training participation intention, the researchers should not ignore the importance of factors that have not yet been studied in the context of non-mandatory training participation intention. These are: POS, and the individual: dispositional and job involvement, career motivation and training attributes.

Through highlighting POS as a critical component in this model, the researchers argue that the perception of a supportive environment in the organization, fostering employees' dispositional characteristics, job involvement and career motivation, enhance employees' intention to participate in the non-mandatory trainings. Building this argument further, it is proposed that when the perceived benefit of training is stronger, the effect of employee dispositional characteristics, job involvement and career motivation on employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training become stronger. The POS literature shows that according to the employees' dispositional tendency it should be a positive or negative effect (Watson & Clark, 1984) and depends on employees' interpretation of it. Further, Manz and Sims (1987), and Parker et al. (2006) state that forms of organizational support that help and encourage employees to be self-directed and self-managing achieve this by reinforcing their self-concept.

Employees felt inclined to engage in training activities if they perceived organizational training policies as supportive (Maurer & Tarulli, 1994). However, workplace climate, supervisor and peer support and general training policies have either no relationship or weak relationship with participation in development (De Meuse, 1985; Kozlowski & Hults, 1987; Maurer & Tarulli, 1994; Noe, 1996; Noe & Wilk, 1993). Based on the findings of Maurer and Tarulli (1994), and Noe and Wilk (1993), organizational regulations that facilitate attendance at training and the training policy are considered as significant influencing factors of employees' participation in development activities. Further, Tharenou, Latimer and Controy (1994) state that encouragement from supervisors and colleagues for career advancement also act as influences. However, the present paper examines POS relating to employees' participation in non-mandatory training programs. In the context of non-mandatory training participation, the organizational climate, and supervisor and peer support could also be critical contributory factors to employees' participation in such programs.

In this paper, the career and job involvement have played a vital role in employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory training. As based on the findings of Noe (1986), and Noe and Schmitt (1986), employees who are habitually involved in intellectual and environmental research activities will have a better idea of their strengths and weaknesses and their fields of interest. Actually, they can recognize the importance of enhancing existing skills and gaining new skills (Facteau et al., 1995) as those skills could conceivably be required by the

new job environment. Further, Mathieu et al. (1992) and Williams, Morgan & Best (1991) noted that career motivation and job involvement were found to impact the pre-training motivation. Employees who possessed a high career insight and career identity and were deeply involved in their work were probably motivated to embark on learning activities and this would have encouraged them to participate in non-mandatory training activities.

Employees' general attitudes, self-esteem, goal orientation, and cognitive interest can exert considerable impact on their participation in training activities. Once an individual can identify the relationship between learning and training, and work task and goals, he will be more anxious to learn, more willing to participate in training, and more likely to learn and apply the learning in the workplace. Further, the extent to which the employees appreciate the value of learning as a developmental tool can impact their participation in training activities. These specific attitudinal and dispositional measures have not been formerly studied as factors in employees' participation in non-mandatory training. However, the attitudinal factors have been studied (Noe & Wilk, 1993; Maurer & Tarulli, 1994) from the perspective of compulsory training.

Sometimes employees show a positive attitude towards training but it is not strong enough to encourage them to actually participate in training. An individual can feel that she/he has more important work to do that should take precedence over training, or that the task of gaining new knowledge would prove very stressful and therefore is better avoided. A comprehensive picture of training participation motivation can therefore be used to assess the likelihood of an employee agreeing to participate in training sessions in order to enhance his knowledge and skills. If the individual attributes a high value to the training, then he will be sufficiently motivated to attend the training and be fully committed to it.

## 4. Theoretical Implications

From the literature review of 70 empirical studies conducted on perceived organizational support theory over the past 60 years, Eisenberger and Rhoades (2002) reported that the scholarly works have assessed the mediating role of POS in the relationships among numerous constructs, the antecedents and consequences of POS and the underlying processes behind such associations.These studies are broadly supportive of organizational support theory. However, the association between POS and training participation has not received sufficient attention in the realm of POS literature. Therefore, this paper will make an important contribution by providing new theoretical direction to POS literature.

Traditionally, training researchers have focused on the methods and settings that maximize the training outcomes, such as reaction, learning, result and behavioral changes of trainees (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). But later researchers have turned their attention to training motivation (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992) and analyzed the influence of different variables on it. At the same time, in the training participation context, although the issue of decision making on participation is not new, its application to training is relatively a recent one (Puchner, 1995). Therefore, by drawing on Adult Learning theory, Expectancy theory of motivation and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) theory, this paper establishes the theoretical model for empirical work, which has been ignored and not tested before in the theories of non-mandatory training literature. Indeed, this paper will make an important contribution to non-mandatory training literature by adding new predictors for the non-mandatory training participation decisions of employees in training activities.

Adding to the non-mandatory training literature on the components needed in POS, dispositional, job and career variables and cultural background and motivation effect (Cross, 1981), this paper adds to the literature on POS in the context of non-mandatory training participation. Specifically, this paper provides an initial look into the direct and indirect influence of POS on intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings, which hitherto has not been considered in any voluntary participation theory. At the same time, this paper also examines the manner in which individual, dispositional, job involvement and career variables interact with perceived benefit of training on intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings. This is adding new direction to the training participation theory in the context of intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings.

More specifically, this paper supports the theoretical literature (e.g. Aryee, 1992; Leuven & Oosterbeek, 1999; Puchner, 1995; Renaud et al., 2006; Sutha, 2016; Sweeney et al., 2012) that suggest the importance of demographic factors on intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings. This paper extends the work of Colquitt, LePine and Noe's (2000) and Maurer's (2002) work by demonstrating that intention to participate in non-mandatory training does not depend on demographic factors alone, but also on POS-the main important factor, which influences intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings through individual as well as training related variables. Finally, the developed propositions of this paper reinforce the mediating role of individual: dispositional, job involvement and career related variables and moderating effects of perceived benefit of

training on intention to participate in non-mandatory training.

## 5. Practical Implications

In the context of practical inferences, Sweeney et al. (2012) emphasize that non-mandatory training is typically a part of the companies' strategy to improve employees' knowledge, skills, and job performance. Therefore, non-mandatory training is most important because each year organizations budget and allocate significant amounts of resources to non-mandatory training, and those limited investments must be exploited as effectively as possible. Organizations spending resources on training programs want their employees to learn and enhance their skills by participating in knowledge and skill development opportunities, and it is necessary for them to identify the non-mandatory training design and framing so that employee participation increases. Hence, if the organizations have a better understanding of the factors that affect employees' participation in non-mandatory training, then suitable modifications can be worked in to address non-participation. From this framework, by examining the organizational support, individual capabilities and characteristics, needs and motivations, and other training related attributes of employees in organizations, it may be possible to increase participation in non-mandatory training programs.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper explores the psychological and practical consequences of POS on employees' intention to participate in non-mandatory trainings. In the context of participation in voluntary training programs there has been limited theoretical research and although scholars have found some influence of demographic and personality factors, they rarely focus on job/career variables and organizational variables (Baldwin, Magjuka, & Loher, 1991, Colquitt et al., 2000; Hicks & Klimoski, 1987). Therefore, this paper turns the spotlight on POS, which is a totally ignored variable in the context of participation intention in non-mandatory trainings, and further discusses the effect of dispositional variables, job involvement, career motivation, and perceived benefit of training (training attributes) to propose a new theoretical model for development.

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