

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2018.042.033](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2018.042.033)

**EVANGELIA MYLONA**

University of Macedonia, Greece

**DIMITRIOS MIHAIL**

University of Macedonia, Greece

## **THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR SUPPORT AND PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT ON EMPLOYEES' MOTIVATION TO LEARN AND DEVELOP. THE CASE OF THE GREEK PUBLIC SECTOR.**

### **Abstract:**

In today's global and dynamic environment, the increasing pressure of internal and external change, the intensified competitiveness and the rapid technological advances lead many organisations, both public and private, to use training and development activities to remain competitive. The current study explores how employees' learning and development orientation in the public sector is affected by organisational factors i.e. perceived organisational support (POS) and perceived supervisor support (PSS). The responses received from a sample of 490 employees working for public organisations in Greece indicated that employees' motivation to learn and develop are significantly and positively related both to perceived organisational support and perceived supervisor support. Furthermore, the above relationships are found to be mediated by employees' level of organisational citizenship behavior (OCB).

### **Keywords:**

motivation to learn, employee development, perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, organisational citizenship behavior, public sector.

**JEL Classification:** O15

## 1 Introduction

Nowadays, employee training and development is established in the HRD theory as a one-way pathway to individual and organisational growth. Since organisations are increasingly relying on employee development as a key part of how they function effectively and continuously improve (Pierce and Maurer, 2009), it is not surprising that employee development opportunities have become a topic of utmost importance for both the academics' and the practitioners' world. Employee development refers to the encouragement of the workforce to acquire new skills and abilities, by providing training opportunities as well as opportunities for advancement (Nadler and Nadler, 1970).

Over the last few decades, employees' motivation to learn and develop has captured the attention of researchers in the field of organisational science. According to Noe, (1986) motivation to learn refers to a specific desire of the trainee to learn the content of a training program. In the training setting, the construct of motivation to learn has attracted considerable attention (Colquitt et al., 2000; Klein et al., 2006; Major et al., 2006; Tharenou, 2001). The learning motivation of trainees positively affects their decision regarding the direction, focus, and level of effort that lead to their participation in training (Ho et al., 2011). Motivation to learn and motivation to engage in learning activities are constructs that are both closely related to each other and closely related to work motivation (Tharenou, 2001).

Even though authors have suggested that training programs are vital to organisations, training programs are often the first to go (Young, 2008). This trend to cut training programs during poor economic times seems shortsighted, if in fact, training does affect job proficiency and relieves workplace conflict (Truitt, 2011). Nowadays, within the context of the global financial turmoil, the increasing pressure of sparse financial resources is pushing and forcing managers of both public and private organisations to do more with less. Managers have to address the critical challenge of fostering employees' well-being in order to enhance motivation and job performance. While little research studies have explored employees' attitudes and behaviours in a period of uncertainty and limited financial resources (Chatzopoulou et al. 2015; Markovits, 2014), there are, to our knowledge, no empirical studies examining the antecedents of employees' motivation to learn and develop in financially turbulent times. The current study, by utilising the social exchange theory as a theoretical framework, aims to investigate how employees' motivation to learn and develop, in a period of economic crisis, is affected by two organisational-level factors, i.e. perceived organisational support (hereafter POS) and perceived supervisor support (hereafter PSS).

Moreover, existing studies that indicate the positive effects of organisational support on employees' motivation to learn and develop (Kurtessis et al. 2017; Mayes, et al. 2017), do not elaborate on the mechanisms that mediate these relationships. Since the concepts of POS and PSS reflect the exchanges between employees and the business organisation, when the organisation provides inducements to employees, such as training and employee development practices (Eisenberger et al. 2016; Kim et al. 2016), then it is reasonable to expect positive employee behaviours such as organisational citizenship behavior (hereafter OCB) to act as a mediator in the relationships between organisational support and motivation to learn and develop.

## 2 Theory and hypotheses

### 2.1 Exploring organisational antecedents of motivation to learn and develop

Participation in learning, training, and other developmental activities is a major strategy for employee and organisational growth (Bates, 2001), not only for organisations of the private sector but for the public sector as well (Ho et al. 2011). As organisations strive to compete in the global economy, differentiation on the basis of the skills, knowledge and motivation of their workforce takes on increasing importance (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009). In fact, Pfeffer (1994) asserted that employee development programs are the keys to success in today's global economy and numerous empirical evidence generally supports this contention (Esteban – Lloret et al. 2016; Hurtz & Williams, 2009; Kyndt et al. 2014). According to Mauer (2002) learning is defined as an increase or change in knowledge or skill that occurs as a result of some experience and may lead to perform in more satisfying and effective ways (as cited in Sadler-Smith and Smith 2006). On the other hand, development is an ongoing, longer term, an increase of the capacity that an individual has to live a more effective and fulfilling professional and personal life as a result of the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Sadler-Smith and Smith, 2006) that arises through various learning practices. In other words, employee development initiatives focus on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary to produce peak performance outcomes (Combs et al. 2009). Important to the effective development of employees are two primary components —learning motivation and the transfer of learning to the work setting (Combs et al. 2009).

However, the success of organisational training programs depends heavily on the willingness or learning intention of the employees. A learning intention can be defined as a readiness or willingness to undertake a concrete action in order to reach a desired situation by means of training and education (Kyndt et al., 2011). Besides the presence of learning opportunities within an organisation, the employee must also show a willingness to take up these opportunities (Kyndt et al., 2014). Employees' willingness and interest is the first step to active participation (Tharenou, 2001). Indeed, employees' active participation is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of development programs. Significant research confirms Maier's contention (1973) that even individuals with the requisite ability will perform poorly in training if their motivation is low (Kim et al. 2015; Mielniczuk and Laguna, 2017) and that high motivation to engage in a training program results in more learning (Wiethoff, 2004). Noe and Schmitt (1986) defined motivation to learn as a specific desire on the part of the trainee to learn the content of a training program. In the training setting, the construct of motivation to learn has been thoroughly studied (Colquitt et al., 2000; Klein et al., 2006; Major et al., 2006; Tharenou, 2001).

#### 2.1.1 *Perceived organisational support*

According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employers and employees develop an exchange relationship. In line with this notion, perceived organisational support claims that mutual commitment between employees and employers starts when the organisation provides a supportive and caring atmosphere for employees, and in this way, employees reciprocate by feeling attached to the organisation and by acting to achieve organisational goals (Eisenberger et al. 2002; Foong-ming, 2008; Kim et al. 2016). In general, one will try to pay back those that provided help and benefits.

POS refers to employees' perceptions of the organisation's commitment to them and reflects their beliefs about the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The notion of POS includes the exchanges between

employees and the business organisation as researchers showed that when an organisation provides substantial inducements to employees, then employees are more likely to reciprocate with positive job attitudes and work behaviours (Eisenberger et al. 2016; Giannikis and Nikandrou, 2013). Indeed, previous research on POS has demonstrated that employees interpret organisational actions such as supportive human resource (HR) practices as indicative of the personified organisation's commitment to them. Recent meta-analyses based on the organisational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) found that POS strengthens employees' outcomes via the norm of reciprocity (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). POS is associated with employees' psychological well-being, their favorable orientation toward their work and organisation, and behaviors helpful to the organisation (Kim et al. 2016).

In the training context, Ng and Ahmad, (2018) found that employees who reported having high POS were motivated to learn and apply new knowledge and skills learned. Specifically, Kurtessis et al., (2017) and Mayes, et al., (2017) in their studies found increased levels of POS to be related to enhanced employees' developmental and learning experiences. Hence, we propose that POS can have a positive impact on employees' motivation to learn and develop:

Hypothesis 1: POS will be positively related to employees' motivation to learn and develop.

### *2.1.2 Perceived supervisor support*

PSS refers to employees' beliefs that their supervisors care about them and value their contributions (Kottke and Sharafinski, 1988). In the training setting, the role of supervisors often involves: "encouraging and motivating trainees to attend training programs, helping employees before, during and after training programs in terms of time, budgetary support and resources, getting employees to be actively involved in decision-making, and guiding trainees in applying the new competencies that they have acquired in their workplace" (Ismail et al., 2010).

Kuvaas and Dysvik, (2010) supported the notion that supervisors act as representatives of the organisation since they are frequently charged with evaluating employees and communicating the organisation's goals and values. Moreover, as the immediate line manager serves as the deliverer or implementer of the HR practices that bring HR policies to life (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007), previous research has demonstrated the significant role of supervisors in the implementation of HR practices (Kuvaas et al. 2014). Furthermore, the study of Iversen and Rimol (2015) revealed that among the antecedents of PSS the provision of training, challenging tasks and feedback are included.

In addition, previous scholars proposed that supervisor support positively correlates with motivation to learn (Tracey et al., 1995; Switzer et al., 2005). This finding was also supported by Al-Eisha's et al. (2009) study who demonstrated that trainees who perceived higher degrees of support from their supervisors for training, reported higher motivation to participate in training.

Hypothesis 2: PSS is positively related to employees' motivation to learn and develop.

## **2.2 The mediating role of organisational citizenship behaviour**

OCB is defined as 'individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation' (Organ, 1988). Zhao et al. (2007, p.652) suggest that 'because such behaviours are not explicitly required by the job, there are no formal sanctions for not engaging in them'

and as such OCB can be considered as a measure of workers' responses to their work engagement relationship (Deery et al. 2017).

Eisenberger et al., (1990), in their pioneer work, indicated that POS is the most important antecedent of OCB. Indeed, Kurtessis et al., (2017) recent study has provided support for this notion and established the significant and positive relationship between POS and OCB. In line with the social exchange theory, previous researchers (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Wayne et al., 1997) pinpointed the linkage between OCB and the employee-employer exchange relationship and proposed that POS intrigues employees' obligations to follow the organisational objectives. When employees feel that the organisation attaches great importance to their personal values, they reciprocate via increased OCB.

As previous research has indicated the importance of employees' perceptions with regard to organisational support, and since POS has been proved to positively relate to OCB, similar patterns should be expected for the relationship between OCB and employees' motivation to learn and develop. For instance, previous scholars proposed that skill development activities that are perceived to benefit both the organisation and the employee lead to increased OCB (Benjamin, 2012; Zaitouni, 2016). Specifically, Zaitouni, (2016), reported that employees who perceive those developmental activities as beneficiary for them may reciprocate in performing duties not required formally by their job.

Furthermore, as has been discussed in Kuvaas and Dysvik, (2010), high levels of PSS lead to increased work effort, work quality and OCB. Hence, based on the previous findings, it is anticipated that caring supervisors to act as facilitators of employees' motivation to learn and develop and are likely to enhance employees' OCB. Taking all of the above into consideration, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 3a: OCB will mediate the positive relationship between POS and employees' motivation to learn and develop.

Hypothesis 3b: OCB will mediate the positive relationship between PSS and employees' motivation to learn and develop.

### **3 METHOD**

#### **3.1 Survey setting**

In Greece, which has been severely impacted by the debt crisis, it is timely to examine employees' motivation to learn and develop under the ongoing Memorandum austerity measures imposed since May of 2010. Thousands of people lost their jobs in both public and private organisations, while at the same time major salary reductions occurred (Chatzopoulou et al. 2015). The public sector was chosen as an ideal research setting since it has been severely impacted by the debt crisis. The cost-saving measures were higher in the state than in the private sector.

Although major structural reforms in the public sector were imposed, the public sector in Greece remains the largest organisation complex system, characterised as unique and problematic. Nowadays, Greek public servants face the challenge of managing and tolerating the augmented workload because of the government downsizing. Maintaining or even improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public service to meet new public demands has become a critical

issue (Ho et al., 2011). To maximise employee performance, training and development programs are the primary methods that organisations use to build organisational human capital capabilities (Holton et al., 2006).

### 3.2 Sample

We surveyed 800 public sector employees in nine different public organisations (local government agencies and national agencies) located in Northern Greece. We received 490 useable responses (61.25% response rate). Our sample was comprised of 249 (50.80%) male participants and 241 (49.20%) female participants. Regarding age, 38.80% were aged from 18 to 34 years old. Respondents reported that 49.60% had a high school certificate or technical-professional training and 50.40% had a university or higher bachelor's degree or higher. Employees with more than 6 years of tenure represented the 46.50%, while the majority (94.10%) were employees (5.90% management position).

### 3.3 Measurements, reliability and validity of scales

*Motivation to learn and develop.* Motivation to learn and develop was measured with seven items adapted from Noe and Wilk (1993). Respondents were asked to provide their level of agreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. The internal reliability of the four items was 0.92.

*Perceived organisational support.* POS was measured using four items from the 'Survey of Perceived Organisational Support (SPOS)' (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990). Participants were asked to provide their level of agreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The internal reliability of the four items was 0.92.

*Perceived supervisor support.* PSS was measured with four items adapted from Eisenberger et al. (1986). Respondents were asked to provide their level of agreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. The internal reliability of the four items was 0.83.

*Organisational citizenship behaviour.* Based on the 24 item OCB scale developed by Podsakoff, et al. (1990), we adopted four statements to assess the dimension of civic virtue. Participants were asked to indicate how characteristic each of the four statements are of their own behaviour at work. The coefficient alpha reliability for 'civic virtue' was 0.84.

Moreover, discriminant validity and common method bias was assessed. We followed the recommendation of Fornell and Larcker (1981) to assess discriminant validity, by comparing the AVE with the shared variance between constructs. Discriminant validity is confirmed if the AVE for each construct is greater than its shared variance with any other construct. In this study, for each construct, it was found that the AVE was greater than the shared variance suggesting discriminant validity. In order to assess the presence of common method bias, based on the suggestion of Podsakoff et al. (2003), we loaded all indicators on a single factor. Results indicated that a single factor model is not a good fit to the data:  $\chi^2[152] = 3786.99$ , root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.22, normal fit index (NFI) = 0.80, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.79, goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.55. Moreover, the principal component analysis indicates that four components are extracted and no single factor account for most of

the variance. We can therefore conclude that common method bias does not present a serious issue in this study.

*Control variables.* A number of demographic and work-related variables are considered to control for individual variations. Similarly, to prior studies on employee attitudes and behaviours, we collected information with regard to gender, age, educational level, tenure, employment position status and pay level (e.g., Monsen and Boss, 2009; Qiao et al., 2009). We included a dummy variable for gender (0 = female, 1 = male) and job position (0 = staff / worker, 1 = management). Age, education and tenure were measured by categorical questions with six categories each and pay level with nine categories. For instance, for age, (1) represented 18 to 24-year-old and (6) represented age 65 or older. For education, (1) represented high-school level and (6) represented postgraduate level. For tenure, (1) represented less than 1 year and (6) represented more than 15 years. For pay level (1) represented €580 to €780 per month and (9) represented more than €2,181 per month.

#### 4. Results

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all the variables. It is shown that both POS and PSS are positively associated with motivation to learn and OCB ( $0.25 \leq r \leq 0.51$ ).

We used structural equation modelling to test the proposed hypotheses and adopted the three-step mediated approach proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986). According to the authors, mediation occurs when three conditions are met: (a) the predictor variable (i.e., pos, pss) should be related significantly to the mediator (i.e., ocb), (b) there has to be a significant relation between the predictor (i.e., pos, pss) and the outcome (i.e., motivation to learn and develop), (c) the mediating variable (i.e., ocb) should be related to the outcome (i.e., motivation to learn and develop) with the predictor (i.e., pos, pss) in the equation. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the reduced strength of the predictor-outcome relationship after inclusion of the mediator suggests a mediation effect. For a total mediating relationship to exist, the effect of the predictor on the dependent variable will become non-significant when it includes all the relationships in the model. For partial mediation to exist, the effect of the predictors on the dependent variable will decrease when it includes all the relationships in the model.

**Table. 1** Descriptive statistics and pairwise correlations

	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender (female = 0, male = 1)	0.51	0.50	-									
2. Age (categorical variable)	3.22	1.28	.24 <sup>b</sup>	-								
3. Educational level (categorical variable)	3.55	1.34	.21 <sup>b</sup>	.28 <sup>b</sup>	-							
4. Tenure (categorical variable)	3.31	1.32	.18 <sup>b</sup>	.34 <sup>b</sup>	-.09	-						
5. Job position (0= staff, 1= supervisor)	0.06	0.24	.04	.10 <sup>a</sup>	.10 <sup>a</sup>	.32 <sup>b</sup>	-					
6. Pay level (categorical variable)	2.89	0.98	.00	.01	.61 <sup>b</sup>	.52 <sup>b</sup>	.50 <sup>b</sup>	-				
7. Motivation to learn & develop	4.71	2.15	.09 <sup>a</sup>	.09 <sup>a</sup>	.19 <sup>b</sup>	.00	.20 <sup>b</sup>	.16 <sup>b</sup>	(.92)			
8. POS	4.15	1.67	.01	.00	.09 <sup>a</sup>	-.02	.02	.00	.51 <sup>b</sup>	(.92)		
9. PSS	4.43	1.35	-.02	-.06	.05	.00	.01	-.01	.42 <sup>b</sup>	.44 <sup>b</sup>	(.83)	
10. OCB	4.03	1.45	.00	.00	.03	-.02	-.02	-.02	.25 <sup>b</sup>	.37 <sup>b</sup>	.27 <sup>b</sup>	(.84)

Notes: Reliability coefficients for the scales are in parentheses along the diagonal.

<sup>a</sup>  $p \leq .05$ ; <sup>b</sup>  $p \leq .001$

Consequently, in order to test the proposed hypotheses and to test the mediation criteria we estimated one set of three models for POS as a predictor (Table 2, Models 1a, 2a, 3a) and another set of three models for PSS as a predictor (Table 3, Models 1b, 2b, 3b).

Models 1a and 1b suggests that POS and PSS have a direct effect on OCB ( $\beta = 0.44$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ;  $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) and motivation to learn and develop ( $\beta = 0.55$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ;  $\beta = 0.48$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) (Table 2 and Table 3, accordingly). Therefore, the findings provide support for hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2, as well as they satisfy the first and the second criterion for mediation. To test hypotheses 3 and the third criterion of mediation we estimated two structural models for POS and PSS, accordingly (Models 2a,2b and Models 3a,3b). Models 2a and 2b suggest that the relationship between POS/PSS and motivation to learn and develop is fully mediated by OCB. Specifically, for POS (Model 2a), the model fit was good:  $\chi^2_{[181]}=1037.70$ , RMSEA= 0.74, NFI = 0.89, CFI = 0.90, GFI = 0.85. In Model 2a all paths were significant. Accordingly, for PSS (Model 2b), the model fit was again good:  $\chi^2_{[181]}=960.48$ , RMSEA= 0.70, NFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.90, GFI = 0.85. In Model 2b all paths were significant.

In Models 3a and 3b we included a direct path from both POS and PSS to OCB to suggest partial mediation. For both models structural model fit was again good and all paths were significant. Furthermore, the model comparison indicates that the partial mediation models (Models 3a,3b) have a better fit than the full mediation models (Models 2a,2b). Specifically, for POS:  $\Delta\chi^2$  ( $\Delta df$ ) = 104.49 (1),  $p \leq 0.05$  and for PSS:  $\Delta\chi^2$  ( $\Delta df$ ) = 70.17 (1),  $p \leq 0.05$ . Therefore, the results reported in Tables 2 and 3 provided support for hypotheses 3a and 3b. In particular, it is indicated that both POS and PSS are positively related to employees' motivation to learn and develop, and these relationships are partially mediated by OCB.



**Table 2.** Results for structural equation analyses for POS as a predictor

	Model 1a Direct effects	Model 2a Full mediation	Model 3a Partial mediation
$\chi^2$	934.34	1037.70	933.21
d.f.	181	181	180
RMSEA	0.078	0.074	0.073
NFI	0.89	0.89	0.89
CFI	0.90	0.90	0.90
GFI	0.85	0.85	0.85
<i>Path</i>	<i>Standardised Path Coefficients</i>	<i>Standardised Path Coefficients</i>	<i>Standardised Path Coefficients</i>
POS → OCB	0.44*	0.47*	0.44*
POS → Motivation to learn and develop	0.55*	-	0.53*
OCB → Motivation to learn and develop	-	0.33*	0.16*

Notes: Control variables were included in the analysis but are not shown for the purpose of simplicity.

\*  $p \leq 0.05$

**Table 3.** Results for structural equation analyses for PSS as a predictor

	Model 1b Direct effects	Model 2b Full mediation	Model 3b Partial mediation
$\chi^2$	899.25	960.48	890.31
d.f.	181	181	180
RMSEA	0.074	0.070	0.068
NFI	0.87	0.88	0.89
CFI	0.89	0.90	0.90
GFI	0.85	0.85	0.86
<i>Path</i>	<i>Standardised Path Coefficients</i>	<i>Standardised Path Coefficients</i>	<i>Standardised Path Coefficients</i>
PSS → OCB	0.34*	0.35*	0.33*
PSS → Motivation to learn and develop	0.48*	-	0.43*
OCB → Motivation to learn and develop	-	0.31*	0.15*

Notes: Control variables were included in the analysis but are not shown for the purpose of simplicity.

\*  $p \leq 0.05$

## 5. Conclusion

In turbulent times, when HR budgets are increasingly restricted, non-monetary motivators can be a feasible alternative to high-cost financial rewards. The trend to cut training programs during poor economic times seems shortsighted, if in fact, training does affect job proficiency and relieves workplace conflict (Truitt, 2011). In this study we empirically examined the antecedents of employees' motivation to learn and develop in a context of limited financial resources. Specifically, we explored how employees' motivation to engage in learning activities in the Greek public sector, is affected by two organisational - level factors, i.e. perceived organisational support (hereafter POS) and perceived supervisor support (hereafter PSS).

The findings of the current research contribute to the academic knowledge of employees' intrinsic motivation in several ways. First, this research demonstrates that POS predicts employees' intentions to participate in workplace learning activities. Accordingly, it is found that there is a positive relationship between PSS and employees' motivation to learn and develop (Al-Eisha et al. 2009; Tracey et al., 1995; Switzer et al., 2005).

Moreover, the main contribution is that we explored the mediating role of OCB on the above relationships. Specifically, OCB was found to mediate both POS and PSS positive relationships with motivation to learn and develop. Hence, it is indicated that employees engaged in OCB behaviours become more motivated to take part in learning and development activities offered by the organisation. It is suggested that employees within a supportive work environment in which the organisation provides substantial inducements, such as equipping employees with knowledge and skills, are more likely to feel the organisation's commitment to their development, reciprocate with OCB behaviours and in return report higher motivation to participate in learning activities. In accordance, with regard to PSS, it is suggested that employees who perceive higher degrees of support from their supervisors for training activities, engage in OCB behaviors and report enhanced motivation to participate in development activities.

The results of the current study provide some important practical implications. As POS and PSS enhance OCB behaviours and employees' motivation to learn and develop, organisations should not only provide training and learning opportunities but also should invest in supervisor support for the successful implementation of the HR training and development function. Since supervisors act as representatives of the organisation then the success of investments in employee development is anticipated to be affected by their acts. Hence, caring supervisors are often able to identify employees' need for development and therefore serve as enablers of employees' development (Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2010). On the other hand, less effective supervisors may create obstacles to employees' participation in development programs, and therefore may negatively affect employees' perceptions of organisational overall investments on employees' development. As line managers have the power within their organisations to approve or deny training and development (McDowall, 2010), 'organisations should be more selective when promoting or recruiting to line manager positions and look for candidates with genuine interest in people rather than solely technical expertise' (Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2010 p.150).

As in all studies, there are some limitations that present opportunities for future research. First, this study was based on a sample of public organisations located in Greece. Consequently, one limitation is that the geographical coverage of the sample is restricted; thus, our results might not generalise to other samples. Second, a convenient sample of public organisations in Northern Greece was chosen; thus, in future studies researchers will need to use larger, nationwide samples. Moreover, our sample is comprised only of public sector employees. In order to gain a more complete understanding of employees' motivation to learn and develop, future research preferably longitudinal and/or cross-cultural, is needed to explore private-sector counterparts' perceptions as well.

## References

- Aguinis, H. and Kraiger, K. (2009). Benefits of training and development for individuals and teams, organizations, and society. *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol.60, pp. 451–474.
- Al-Eisa, A. S., Furayyan, M. A., & Alhemoud, A. M. (2009). An empirical examination of the effects of self-efficacy, supervisor support and motivation to learn on transfer intention. *Management decision*, 47(8), pp.1221-1244.
- Baron, R. M., and Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, pp. 1173–1182.
- Bates, R.A. (2001). Public sector training participation: An empirical investigation. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 5(2), pp.136–152.
- Benjamin, A. (2012). Human resource development climate as a predictor of citizenship behavior and voluntary turnover intentions in the banking sector. *International Business Research*, 5 (1), pp. 110.
- Blau, P. (1964). Exchange and power in social life. New York: Wiley.
- Chatzopoulou, M., Vlachvei, A. and Monovasilis, T. (2015). Employee's Motivation and Satisfaction in Light of Economic Recession: Evidence of Grevena Prefecture-Greece. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 24, pp. 136-145.
- Colquitt, J.A., LePine, J.A., & Noe, R.A. (2000). Toward an integrative theory of training motivation: A meta-analytic path analysis of 20 years of research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(5), pp.678.
- Combs, G. M., Luthans, F., & Griffith, J. (2009). Learning motivation and transfer of human capital development (pp. 73-91). Routledge/Taylor & Francis, London & New York.707.
- Deery, S., Rayton, B., Walsh, J. and Kinnie, N. (2017). The costs of exhibiting organizational citizenship behaviour. *Human Resource Management*, 56 (6), pp. 1039-1049.
- Eisenberger, R., & Stinglhamber, F. (2011). *Perceived organizational support: Fostering enthusiastic and productive employees*. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.
- Eisenberger, R., Fasolo, P., and Davis-LaMastro, V. (1990). Perceived organizational support and employee diligence, commitment, and innovation. *Journal of applied psychology*, 75(1), pp.51.
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S. and Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied psychology*, 71(3), pp.500.
- Eisenberger, R., Malone, G. P. and Presson, W. D. (2016). Optimizing perceived organizational support to enhance employee engagement. *Society for Human Resource Management and Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology*.
- Eisenberger, R., Stinglhamber, F., Vandenberghe, C., Sucharski, I. L. and Rhoades, L. (2002). Perceived supervisor support: Contributions to perceived organizational support and employee retention. *Journal of applied psychology*, 87 (3), pp. 565.
- Esteban-Lloret, N. N., Aragón-Sánchez, A., & Carrasco-Hernández, A. (2016). Determinants of employee training: impact on organizational legitimacy and organizational performance. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, pp.1-22.
- Foong-ming, T. (2008). Linking Career development practices to turnover intention: The mediator of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Business and Public Affairs*, 2 (1), pp. 1-16.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of marketing research*, pp.39-50.

- Giannikis, S. and Nikandrou, I. (2013). The impact of corporate entrepreneurship and high-performance work systems on employees' job attitudes: empirical evidence from Greece during the economic downturn. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24 (19), pp. 3644-3666.
- Ho, Y.Y., Tsai, H.T. and Day, J.D., 2011. Using the theory of planned behaviour to predict public sector training participation. *The Service Industries Journal*, 31(5), pp.771-790.
- Holton III, E. F., Coco, M. L., Lowe, J. L., & Dutsch, J. V. (2006). Blended delivery strategies for competency-based training. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 8(2), pp. 210-228.
- Hurtz, G. M., & Williams, K. J. (2009). Attitudinal and motivational antecedents of participation in voluntary employee development activities. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(3), 635.
- Ismail, A., Ching Sieng, L. L., Madi Bin Abdullah, M., & Francis, S. K. (2010). Linking supervisor' s role in training programs to motivation to learn as an antecedent of job performance. *Intangible capital*, 6(1).
- Iversen O. and Rimol R. (2015). The importance of supervisor support for managerial performance. *Presented at the 17th Congress of the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology*, Oslo, 20 – 23 May 2015.
- Kim, K. Y., Eisenberger, R. and Baik, K. (2016). Perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment: Moderating influence of perceived organizational competence. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(4), pp. 558-583.
- Kim, S., Hahn, H. J., & Lee, J. (2015). Organizational attitudes as precursors to training performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 26(4), pp. 409-429.
- Klein, H.J., Noe, R.A., & Wang, C. (2006). Motivation to learn and course outcomes: The impact of delivery mode, learning goal orientation, and perceived barriers and enablers. *Personnel Psychology*, 59(3), pp. 665–702.
- Kottke, J. L. and Sharafinski, C. E. (1988). Measuring perceived supervisory and organizational support. *Educational and psychological Measurement*, 48 (4), pp. 1075-1079.
- Kurtessis, J. N., Eisenberger, R., Ford, M. T., Buffardi, L. C., Stewart, K. A. and Adis, C. S. (2017). Perceived organizational support: A meta-analytic evaluation of organizational support theory. *Journal of Management*, 43 (6), pp. 1854-1884.
- Kuvaas, B. and Dysvik, A. (2010). Exploring alternative relationships between perceived investment in employee development, perceived supervisor support and employee outcomes. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 20 (2), pp. 138-156.
- Kuvaas, B., Dysvik, A. and Buch, R. (2014). Antecedents and employee outcomes of line managers' perceptions of enabling HR practices. *Journal of Management Studies*, 51 (6), pp. 845-868.
- Kyndt, E., Dochy, F., Struyven, K., & Cascallar, E. (2011). The direct and indirect effect of motivation for learning on students' approaches to learning through the perceptions of workload and task complexity. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 30(2), pp.135-150.
- Kyndt, E., Onghena, P., Smet, K., & Dochy, F. (2014). Employees' willingness to participate in work-related learning: a multilevel analysis of employees' learning intentions. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 14(3), pp. 309-327.
- Maier, N.R.F. (1973). *Psychology in industrial organizations*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Major, D.A., Turner, J.E., & Fletcher, T.D. (2006). Linking proactive personality and the big five to motivation to learn and development activity. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(4), pp. 927–935

- Markovits, Y., Boer, D. and van Dick, R. (2014). Economic crisis and the employee: The effects of economic crisis on employee job satisfaction, commitment, and self-regulation. *European Management Journal*, 32(3), pp.413-422.
- Maurer, T.J. (2002). Employee learning and development orientation: toward an integrative model of involvement in continuous learning, *Human Resource Development Review*, 1(1), pp.9-4.
- Mayes, B. T., Finney, T. G., Johnson, T. W., Shen, J. and Yi, L. (2017). The effect of human resource practices on perceived organizational support in the People's Republic of China. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28(9), pp. 1261-1290.
- McDowall, A. and Saunders, M. N. (2010). UK managers' conceptions of employee training and development. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 34 (7), pp.609-630.
- Mielniczuk, E., & Laguna, M. (2017). Motivation and training initiation: evidence from Poland. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 29(1), pp. 24-36.
- Monsen, E. and Wayne Boss, R. (2009). The Impact of Strategic Entrepreneurship Inside the Organization: Examining Job Stress and Employee Retention. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 33, pp.71-104.
- Nadler, L. and Nadler, Z. (1970). *Developing Human Resources*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA
- Ng, K. H. and Ahmad, R. (2018). Personality traits, social support, and training transfer: The mediating mechanism of motivation to improve work through learning. *Personnel Review*, 47(1), pp. 39-59.
- Noe, R. A., & Schmitt, N. (1986). The influence of trainee attitudes on training effectiveness: Test of a model. *Personnel psychology*, 39(3), pp.497-523.
- Noe, R.A. (1986). Trainees' attributes and attitudes: Neglected influences on training effectiveness. *Academy of Management Review*, 11(4), pp. 736-749
- Noe, R.A. and Wilk, S.L., 1993. Investigation of the factors that influence employees' participation in development activities. *Journal of applied psychology*, 78(2), p.291.
- Organ, D. W. (1988). *Organizational Citizenship Behavior, The good soldier syndrome*, Lexington, MA, Lexington Books.
- Pfeffer, J. (1994). Competitive advantage through people. *California management review*, 36(2), pp. 9.
- Pierce, H. R. and Maurer, T. J. (2009). Linking employee development activity, social exchange and organizational citizenship behavior. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 13 (3), pp. 139-147.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y. and Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of applied psychology*, 88 (5), pp. 879.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Moorman, R. H. and Fetter, R. (1990). Transformational leader behaviors and their effects on followers' trust in leader, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors. *The leadership quarterly*, 1 (2), pp.107-142
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Paine, J. B., & Bachrach, D. G. (2000). Organizational citizenship behaviors: A critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of management*, 26(3), pp. 513-563.
- Purcell, J. and Hutchinson, S. (2007). Front-line managers as agents in the HRM-performance causal chain: theory, analysis and evidence. *Human Resource management journal*, 17 (1), pp. 3-20.

- Qiao, K., Khilji, S. and Wang, Z. (2009). High-performance work systems, organizational commitment, and the role of the demographic features in the People's Republic of China. *The International Journal of Human Resources Management*, 20(11), pp. 2311-2330
- Sadler-Smith, E., & Smith, P. J. (2006). *Learning in organizations: Complexities and diversities*. Routledge.
- Switzer, K.C., Nagy, M.S. and Mullins, M.E. (2005). The influence of training reputation, managerial support, and self-efficacy on pre-training motivation and perceived training transfer, *Applied Human Resource Management Research*, 10, pp. 21-34.
- Tharenou, P. (2001). The relationship of training motivation to participation in training and development. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 74(5), pp. 599–621
- Tracey, J.B., Tannenbaum, S.I. and Kavanagh, M.J. (1995). Applying trained skills on the job: the importance of the work environment, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80, pp. 239-52
- Truitt, D. L. (2011). The effect of training and development on employee attitude as it relates to training and work proficiency. *Sage Open*, 1(3), 2158244011433338.
- Wayne, S. J., Shore, L. M. and Liden, R. C. (1997). Perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange: A social exchange perspective. *Academy of Management journal*, 40(1), pp. 82-111.
- Wiethoff, C. (2004). Motivation to learn and diversity training: Application of the theory of planned behavior. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 15(3), pp. 263-278.
- Young, S. L., & Bippus, A. M. (2008). Assessment of graduate teaching assistant (GTA) training: A case study of a training program and its impact on GTAs. *Communication Teacher*, 22(4), pp. 116-129.
- Zaitouni, M. (2016). Creating positive outcomes through perceived investment in employee development: Evidence from Kuwait. *International Journal of Business and Social Research*, 6 (1), pp.10-21.
- Zhao, H. A. O., Wayne, S. J., Glibkowski, B. C. and Bravo, J. (2007). The impact of psychological contract breach on work-related outcomes: a meta-analysis. *Personnel psychology*, 60 (3), pp.647-680.