

**The effect of perceived organization support on continuous learning for academic staff in Mansoura and Kafr Elsheikh University**

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**Abstract:**

This study aims to investigate the direct impact of perceived organization support on continuous learning for Mansoura university and Kafr Elsheikh university academic staff. This study adopts post positivism philosophy and quantitative research method. Data were collected from 357 academic staff in Mansoura and Kafr Elsheikh university using questionnaire (50% response rate). Path analysis is employed to test the research hypotheses using Warp PLS 0.7 .The results have proved that perceived organization support (adjusted POS and financial POS) is positively related to continuous learning.Unexpectaly, career POS has no a significant affect on continuous learning.

**Keywords:** Perceived Organization Support, Continuous Learning.

## **1. Introduction:**

Interestingly, social support is one of the most widely processes used to encourage employees in a workplace (Alcover, 2018). Perceived organization support (POS) is positively related to improving employees performance (Sabir et al.,2021). Also, Côté et al.(2021) stated that POS affect employees satisfaction level. According to Aboramadan and Karatepe (2021), POS enables organizations to retain talented employees and help them to differentiate. So, organization support is essential not only for the individuals specifically, but also for organization as a whole (Alfes et al., 2013). Additionally, a workplace that appreciates its employees becomes more attractive as it gives employees support and benefit (Arnold & Dupré, 2012; Salehzadeh et al., 2014).

The expectation of organizational support is essential in creating employees intent to participate informal duties like organizational modifications ( Coyle-Shapiro,2002). Furthermore, Salehzadeh et al. (2014) discussed that when supervisors support their employees, they are more motivated and eager to learn continuously throughout their job life. CL is critical for any organization (Maurer & Weiss, 2010; Hennekam, 2015).Due to the increasing technological advancement, organizations invest more in developing human resource (Rowold & Kauffeld, 2008). As global competition increase, traditional management strategies are getting less appropriate to survive (Ho, 2008). Consequently, being a competent employee at continuous learning is becoming increasingly significant in organizations (Maurer

& Weiss, 2010) as it enables an organization to cope with environmental changes (Santos-Vijande et al., 2012) and to sustain competitive advantage (Marley, 2010). Therefore, CL is a significant requirement for sustainability (Stanton, 2014).

By reviewing the previous studies, they have investigated the effect of POS on satisfying employees who are involved in career development and share with their efforts (Peña-Calvo et al., 2016; Perry & Pabian, 2010; Tansky & Cohen, 2001; Blau, 1964; Sturges et al., 2005; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Shantz et al., 2016). Also, Griego et al. (2000), Muneer et al. (2014), Bartol et al. (2009), King and Marks (2008) and Hunter-Johnson and Closson (2012) confirmed the positive effect of POS on sharing knowledge or information within the organization. Hawkins (2005) stated that POS promotes learning opportunity.

Furthermore, Shore and Wayne (1993), Moorman et al. (1998), Eisenberger et al. (1990) and Shantz et al. (2014) examined the effect of POS on increasing positive behaviors, while Mutkins et al., (2011), Alcover et al. (2018), Demerouti et al., (2001) and Alfes et al. (2013) concluded its influence on reducing negative behaviors in the workplace.

Based on the above discussion, the research gap is that there is no previous study has tested the direct relationship between POS and CL. To fill this gap, this study has a question is "what is the direct effect of POS on CL?". To answer this question, this study adopts three

objectives "the direct effect of adjusted POS on CL, the direct effect of career POS on CL, the direct effect of financial POS on CL".

## **2. Literature and Hypotheses Development**

### **2.1. Perceived Organization Support (POS)**

POS is stated as meeting socio-economic needs and measuring to what extent the organization is ready to value employees' contributions and care about their welfare. This definition has been adopted by various researchers such as Rhoades et al. (2001), Eisenberger et al. (1986) and Shore and Wayne (1993). This means that an organization does not ignore their effort towards it and rewards their performance by using performance–reward– systems (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The roots of POS concept are taken from organization support theory (Kurtessis et al., 2017). In this way, human resource practices, job conditions recognition, promotions, salary, and job security can be considered effective tools for a vital organization with POS (Hughes, 2019; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Similarly, POS can be defined as the employee's thought about how much the organization fulfills its obligations toward him or her (Kiewitz et al., 2009). It is also viewed as the employee interpretation of the organizational treatment (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p.501; Moorman et al., 1998) that may be favorable or not favorable (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Mayes et al., 2017). Therefore, feeling support comes from the positive treatment of the organization or the organizational appreciation of employees' efforts toward achieving its goals (Boyed, 2019). Depending on the social exchange theory, this concept represents in its

meaning the reciprocation norm (Burns, 2016). Therefore, it creates and promotes exchange loyalty between both employer and employees (Romanoff, 2020).

According to Kraimer and Wayne (2004), POS can be measured by three dimensions, namely adjustment POS, career POS, and financial POS. Adjustment POS can be conceptualized as the degree of comfort, familiarity, and ease that employee feels toward a new environment (Gupta, 2012), or “the degree of perceived psychological comfort with various conditions of a new setting” (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Rodsai, 2017). Career POS is known as how much an organization is interested in employee’s career needs (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004). Financial POS is the way by which the organization provides its employees enough money to continue living (van der Horst, 2017).

## **2.2. Continuous Learning (CL)**

Gumus, Borkowski, Deckard, and Martel (2011) defined CL as the ability to update ones’ knowledge, skills, and competencies. Also, Kohner, (2001) stated that the definition of CL can be the same as learning organization, which means the ability to support constant learning and development, and to share information and innovation, but I disagree with that as CL is considered as a dimension of learning organization (Salehzadeh et al.,2014). Similarly, Tannenbaum and Kavanagh (1995) defined a continuous learning as well as learning organization as having an active work environment in which employees exchange their ideas and experience and are willing to participate in developing their skills focusing on innovation.

Additionally, it is the ability to continuously learn and cope with the rapid change side by side (Torraco, 2008). Moreover, Fleenor (2008) defined CL at three levels: the individual level, the group level, and the organizational level. At the individual level, it is the process of developing and acquiring skills through adapting to change. At the group level, it is the process in which a team responds to change. Finally, at the organizational level, it is the process of fitting with global competition and ongoing economic change.

### **2.3. Hypotheses Formulation**

The relationships between the study variables were clarified as shown in fig. (1).

Peña-Calvo et al. (2016) announced that perceived social support plays a pioneering role in career development. Also, Perry and Pabian (2010) confirmed that career support is significant in fostering the relationship between social support and career development.. Furthermore, the more the organization supports its employees, the more they express satisfaction and development (Tansky & Cohen, 2001).

Essentially, organizational support theory represents a social exchange process in the relationship between the employee and the employer (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). Based on this theory, employees follow the norm of reciprocation meaning that when they get benefits, they feel that they have an obligation to compensate the donor (Gouldner, 1960; Eisenberger et al., 1990). Also, Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2002) declared that a reciprocal influence occurs in the

exchange relationship between the employee and the employer, as the relationship between them is mutually based on exchange (Edwards, 2009). So, organizational support results in making employees behave in a proactive way towards it (Blau, 1964; Sturges et al., 2005).

Confirming that norm with a famous theory called social exchange theory (Alfes et al., 2013) representing the loyalty the employee has as a reaction to material benefits or social reward (Rhoades et al., 2001). Social exchange theory reveals that when the employer supports his/her employees, those employees have a responsibility toward their organization to reciprocate (Eisenberger et al., 1990) by investing a lot of their energy in a workplace (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Shantz et al., 2016) and also by exerting intellectual effort (Alfes et al., 2010, p. 5; Alfes et al., 2013).

Importantly, Suazo and Turnley (2010) focused on POS determinants at the individual level and at the organizational level. Also, Griego et al. (2000) showed that an appropriate rewarding creates a learning organization where knowledge sharing is favorable. Specifically, POS has a pillar effect on organizational trust that enables the employees to share knowledge (Muneer et al., 2014). Additionally, Bartol et al. (2009) proved that there is a positive relationship between POS and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, King and Marks (2008) and Yang et al. (2018) found that POS promotes the behavior of knowledge-sharing.

Interestingly, drawing on conservation resource theory, employees strive for protecting the resources given to them by the organization and not losing them. Based on that, Hobfoll et al. (1990) concluded that

changing the support system enhances the effectiveness of the organization.

Moreover, Hunter-Johnson and Closson (2012) proved that achieving a professional development requires encouraging employees to share experience whether positive or negative to create a learning opportunity. Furthermore, leaders must provide adequate recognition or rewards to support learning opportunity to be good leaders and run their organizations in a better way (Hawkins, 2005). Based on that, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

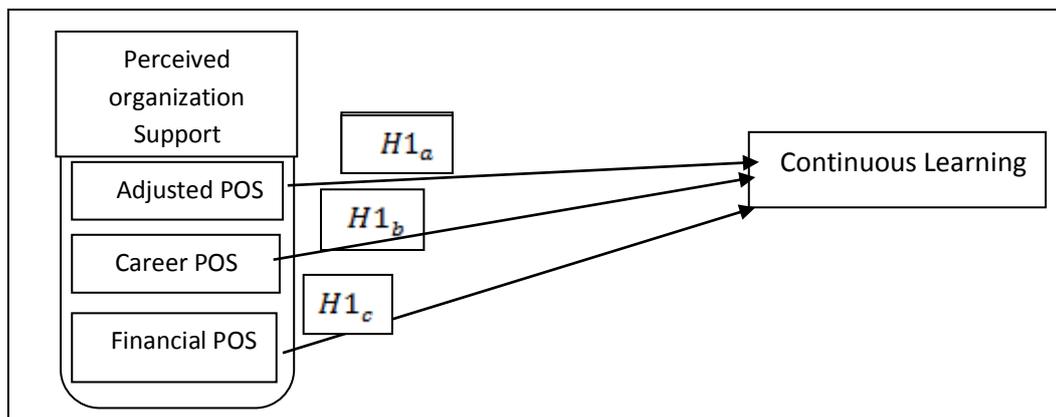
*H1: POS has a significant positive effect on continuous learning.*

This hypothesis is divided into three sub-hypotheses:

*H1<sub>a</sub>*: Adjustment POS has a significant positive effect on continuous learning.

*H1<sub>b</sub>*: Career POS has a significant positive effect on continuous learning.

*H1<sub>c</sub>*: Financial POS has a significant positive effect on continuous learning.



**Figure (1): Conceptual framework**

**Source: Prepared by the researcher based on previous studies**

### **3. Research Methods**

#### **3.1. Samples and Data Collection**

The study adopted positivism philosophy with a quantitative research method to answer the research questions and achieve its objectives. This study utilized stratified sampling. In this study, the primary data were collected from Mansoura university and Kafr Elsheikh university academic staff using a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a suitable tool to collect quantitative primary data.

The appropriate sample size depends on types of statistical analysis the researcher uses, the margin of error, confidence level, and the population size (Saunders et al., 2009). Saunders et al. (2009) stressed that at a 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, and population<sup>1</sup> between 5000 and 10000, the required sample ranges from 357 to 370. Hence, the sample size was 357 academic staff ( 374 academic staff from Mansoura University & 83 staff from Kafr El Sheikh University).

#### **3.2. Measures**

For measuring the variables, a five-point Likert Scale was used ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The independent variable of study was POS was analyzed by a construct which includes 12 items proposed by (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004). Four items are used as indicators for adjustment POS, four items

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<sup>1</sup> [Kafr El Sheikh](#) [Mansoura](#)

are used as indicators for career POS, and four items are used as indicators for financial POS.

The dependent variable was CL which was analyzed based on the scale of (Maurer & Weiss, 2010) that adopts 4 items in order to measure that variable.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Descriptive statistics**

The results indicated the highest respondents of university was related to Mansoura University with a percentage of (76.8%) (274 respondents), followed by Kafr Elsheikh University with a percentage of (23.2%) which are 83 respondents of the total sample 357 . In terms of gender, male represented the highest percentage (56.3%) (201 respondents), when the female represented the lower percentage (43.7%) (156 respondents).

Moreover, the highest percentage in "educational degree" was 47.6% that represented by "Assistant Professor" including 170 respondents, followed by 27.5% which represented by "Full professor" including 98 respondents , and finally 89 respondents represented by "Associate professor" which has a percentage of 24.9% of the total.

Finally, drawing on work experience, the highest respondents was "15 years or more" with a percentage of (51%) (182 respondents) , when the lowest distribution was "Less than 5 years" with a percentage of (0.3%) (1 respondent). Additionally, "10 years to less than 15" represented a percentage of (28.9%) (103 respondents), followed by "5 years to less than 10" represented a percentage of (19.9%)(71)respondents.

### **4.2. Measurement assessment model**

First, combined loadings and cross loadings were used to assess individual items' reliability. Individual factor loading for the research

variables were 0.686, 0.845, 0.877, and 0.807 for adjusted POS items; 0.878, 0.868, 0.774, and 0.869 for career POS items; 0.895, 0.935, 0.906, and -0.110 for financial POS; and 0.828, 0.823, 0.854, and 0.744 for CL items all with p-values > 0.001.

Second, internal consistency of the study constructs is measured through composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (A) coefficients. Cronbach's alpha values were 0.819, 0.869, 0.678, and 0.828 while composite reliability values were 0.881, 0.911, 0.822, and 0.886 for adjusted POS, career POS, financial POS, and continuous learning respectively. Nearly, all the values are higher than 0.7 and less than 0.95 which indicates acceptable and satisfactory levels of reliability.

Third, convergent validity was measured through the value of average variance extracted (AVE) whose values were 0.652, 0.720, 0.627, and 0.661 for adjusted POS, career POS, financial POS, and continuous learning respectively. AVE values for the study constructs indicate that all constructs are convergently valid.

Finally, discriminant validity was measured by the square root of AVE. For a variable to be distinct from other variables, its' square root value should exceed the value of its' correlation with the other variables (Hair et al., 2016). This condition had been met for all the study variables.

**Table (1)**

**Factor Correlation Matrix with Square Roots of AVE**

	Mean	SD	Adjusted perceived organization support	career perceived organization support	Financial perceived organization support	Continuous learning
Adjusted perceived organization support	3.8193	0.86861	(0.807)	0.730*	0.561*	0.299*
career perceived organization	3.3683	0.95427	0.730*	(0.848)	0.596*	0.249*

support						
Financial perceived organization support	2.7213	0.90005	0.561*	0.596*	(0.792)	0.160*
Continuous learning	4.4825	0.58679	0.299*	0.249*	0.160*	(0.813)
Note: Square roots of average variance extracted (AVEs) shown on diagonal. P value < 0.001						

## 4.2. Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

The following step was to test the research hypotheses through path coefficients and significance level to accept or reject the proposed hypotheses. Table (2) shows path coefficients and levels of significance for all research hypotheses and whether each hypothesis is accepted or rejected (Huber et al.(2008) stated that P- value It could be significant when  $P \text{ value} \leq 0.05$  ).

**Table (2)**  
**Path Coefficients**

H	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Path Coefficients	P-Value	Results
H1	Adjusted perceived organization support	Continuous learning	0.109	0.018	Accepted
H2	career perceived organization support	Continuous learning	0.001	0.492	Rejected
H3	Financial perceived organization support	Continuous learning	0.132	0.006	Accepted

Effect size values ( $f^2$ ) where it can be (0.02, 0.15, and 0.35) representing (weak, moderate, strong) respectively. The value of effect size ( $f^2$ ) is calculated. Values are shown in table (3):

**Table (3)**  
**Effect size values**

H	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	$f^2$
H1	Adjusted perceived organization support	Continuous learning	0.258
H2	career perceived organization support	Continuous learning	0.190
H3	Financial perceived organization support	Continuous learning	0.190

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Actually, the research results showed that POS has a significant positive effect on CL. Also, Salehzadeh et al. (2014) highlighted the pioneering role of perceived organization support in fostering and motivating the employees' continuous learning. Additionally, Zumrah et al. (2012); Zumrah and Boyle (2015) concluded that perceived organization support is an important factor in motivating employees to updating their skills and knowledge.

Moreover, Jodlbauer et al. (2012) proved the positive effect that organizational support to motivate employees to continuously develop their skills by training. The current study depends not only on the statistical analyze, but also strengthen the research justifications by depending on theories. This study utilized the reciprocation norm in the academic field when supporting teaching staff who are new in their positions. The staff become more willing to reciprocate exerting more efforts to develop their skills in order to benefit their university. This would be considered an application of the social exchange theory supporting that adjusted POS significantly affects continuous learning positively supporting  $H1_a$  as ( $\beta= 0.11$ ,  $P=0,02$ ), and medium effect size ( $f^2 = 0.258$ ) . Likewise, financially supporting teaching staff increases their attention to develop themselves. Providing them with rewards leads to feel more responsible to make a return to the working place such as improving their skills by taking courses in new areas that benefiting the university. On the other hand, providing staff with more salaries or high level of pay makes them more able to attend more courses . Also, it would be a financial finance for obligatory courses in significant areas in their fields. Consequently, financial POS significantly affects continuous learning positively supporting  $H1_c$  ( $\beta=0.09$ ,  $P=0.05$ ), with a small size effect ( $f^2=0.086$ ) . However, career POS did not significantly affect continuous learning in this study ( $\beta=0.00$ ,  $P=0.49$ ). In this study, career support would be significant if the population is teaching assistant because they need more support from their seniors. As the insignificance would be a result of level of their experience. Furthermore, career support does not have high level

of significance for teaching staff. They have already reached the higher seniority. Additionally, some of the staff sharing in answering the questionnaire confirmed that the more the majority of them reach higher seniority like full professor, the more they become willing to focus more in their personal life than academic career. Also, others said that their intention to learn decreases when becoming seniors as they become professional and reached the highest (full professor) not needing for promotion, and their continuous learning would be attributed to learning enjoyment.

This study elaborated on the continuous learning as a critical requirement in order to sustain in any career specially, in a career like academic career. This career requires to update their knowledge while maintaining competitive advantages to keep up with the accelerating change of the daily life. Also, formal training has become not enough to make alterations to this rapid, continuous change. So, in order to reach the high quality of learning and foster the performance of learning, the universities could support their teaching staff. Supporting teaching staff could be considered a significant key to motivate the staff to develop their skills.

### **5.1. Theoretical and practical implications**

This study contributes to the knowledge body concerning POS, and CL. As this study reveals a significant direct relationship between POS and CL. This contribution determines to what extent the supported teaching staff are satisfied developing their knowledge and skills from time and time continuously. Furthermore, previous studies focus only on

the direct relationship between POS and learning organization in which CL is a dimension of learning organization (Salehzadeh et al.,2014). That is why this study adds a contribution to literature concerning on how POS affects CL.

Also, this study introduces an important practical implication to future CL research. As CL is a critical requirement to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in recent and future organizations. Additionally, this study provides important insights for leaders of both Mansoura and Kafr Elshiekh Universities.

CL is a key indicator in order to have the most efficient leaders who are able to achieve sustainability (Stanton, 2014). Also, London and Sessa (2006) confirmed that continuous learning is critical to maintain the uniqueness of any organization. So, the executive leaders in Mansoura and Kafrelshiekh Universities should pay extra care to increase and develop its means. They also should support scientific research that specifically that which calls for new ideas. They should not only search new ideas, but also support the application. Subsequently, those universities could achieve creativity and innovation, too. Additionally, they should make various orientations in scientific research led by the most professional professors in various fields.

## **5.2. Limitations and Future Research**

The current study includes some limitations which result in new directions in future research. On one level, this study concentrates on doing research on two universities; Mansoura university and Kafr Elshikh university. Future research could change the population and

both the attitudes and perspectives of the human life. On the other level, there were sampling limitations related to the current study. The sample is restricted to teaching staff including assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors. It worth mentioning that, future studies could focus on teaching assistant at both universities or other universities.

Additionally, there was a limitation in choosing research method. This study employed quantitative research. As this study depended on existed theories and aimed to make a generalization for the results depending on numbers and statistics using a questionnaire. Future studies may exploit qualitative research method depending on words and meanings using ex. Interviews, focus groups in order to reach new idea of new theory.

Finally, this research was restricted to use cross-sectional data. As this research depended on a questionnaire that was made from a sample in specific time. This research did not aim to observe change in perceived organization support and continuous learning. So, longitudinal data was not reliable to this study. Future research may use longitudinal data which refers to collecting data from the same sample several times.

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