

Continuous Education and Training of Employees: An Empirical Study in Hong Kong

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Abstract: Based on literature review, we posit that if employers show support to their staff by endorsing their continuous education and training (CET), these employees will be more satisfied and can perform better not only in their studies but also in their jobs as well. With the employer endorsement of continuous education and training (EECET) as the dependent variable, we investigate its relationship with six independent variables, which are employees' CET performance, motivation to learn, learner satisfaction, perceived organizational support, perceived job performance and job satisfaction. By using 276 part-time postgraduate students of two major universities in Hong Kong as our samples, our research results indicate that all these independent variables are positively related to EECET.

Keywords: Employer endorsement of continuous education and training, motivation to learn, learner satisfaction, perceived organizational support, perceived job performance

Introduction

Many low-skilled workers are forced to be tied to stagnant jobs with low pay, poor benefits and limited opportunities for career advancement (OECD, 1998). For these workers, professional knowledge and qualification obtained through continuous education and training can be regarded as a powerful tool for gaining access to the fruit of economic development created by the knowledge economy (OECD, 1998). On the other hand, despite the trend that there is a gradual rise in levels of educational attainment, even highly skilled workers are facing the need for access to continuous education and training to meet the new challenges of the ever-changing economic and technological development.

In this paper, we focus on the issue of continuous education and training (CET), which is defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to be the structured programs of education and training adapted to the occupational and developmental needs of persons aged 15 and older who are not in the regular school or university systems (UNESCO, 1997). This definition will exclude students who are still involved in their first or initial cycle of education.

In general, scholars tend to agree that CET plays a critical role in increasing workers' adaptability and flexibility which employers have found is becoming increasingly important (e.g. Baldwin and Magjuka, 1991; Guest, 1997; Tai, 2006). Employee perception of the importance of CET depends on the degree of emphasis placed by their employers (Ding et al, 1997; Quiñones, 1997). Empirical studies show that the motivation to attend CET programs by employees can be affected by the intentional or unintentional cues or signals of the management actions and as such, employees are more motivated when they are assigned to attend these CET programs by management than they make their choice freely (Baldwin and Magjuka, 1991; Tsai and Tai, 2003). However, studies on CET focus mainly on the relationship between the motivation to

participate in relevant CET and its corresponding employer endorsement. The inter-relationship among employer endorsement, and the performance, motivation and satisfaction of CET has received little attention. The relationship between employer endorsement of CET and the job satisfaction and performance of employees is given even less academic consideration.

Our study attempts to fill this literature gap of the inter-relationship between employer endorsement of CET, and the satisfaction and performance in the work and study lives of employees. To what extent does the endorsement of employers matter in the pursuit of excellence in CET of employees? We posit that if the employers show support to their staff by endorsing their CET, these employees will be more satisfied and can perform better in their jobs as well as their studies. We contribute to the literature by providing a perspective in analyzing the linkage between work and study lives of employees through the effect of employer endorsement of CET. To better understand the significance of the contribution of the endorsement of employers, it is necessary to understand its relationship with the satisfaction and performance in both work and study lives.

We use the employer endorsement of continuous education and training (EECET) as the dependent variable and we investigate its relationship with six independent variables, which are employees' CET performance, motivation to learn, learner satisfaction, perceived organizational support, job performance and job satisfaction. By using 276 part-time post-graduate students as our samples, our research results indicate that all independent variables are positively related to EECET.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Variables and hypotheses

Grounded primarily on psychological contract theory and expectance disconfirmation theory, we analyze the impact of employer endorsement of continuous education and training (EECET) on two sets of independent variables. The first set of variables is related to the pursuit of continuous education and training (CET) by employees, and includes the CET performance, motivation to learn and learner satisfaction when they are in the process of such CET. The second set of variables is related to the work life of the employees and includes their perceived organization support, as well as job satisfaction and perceived job performance. A model of the impact of EECET is shown in Figure 1. Based on these variables, we develop eight hypotheses for testing in our study.

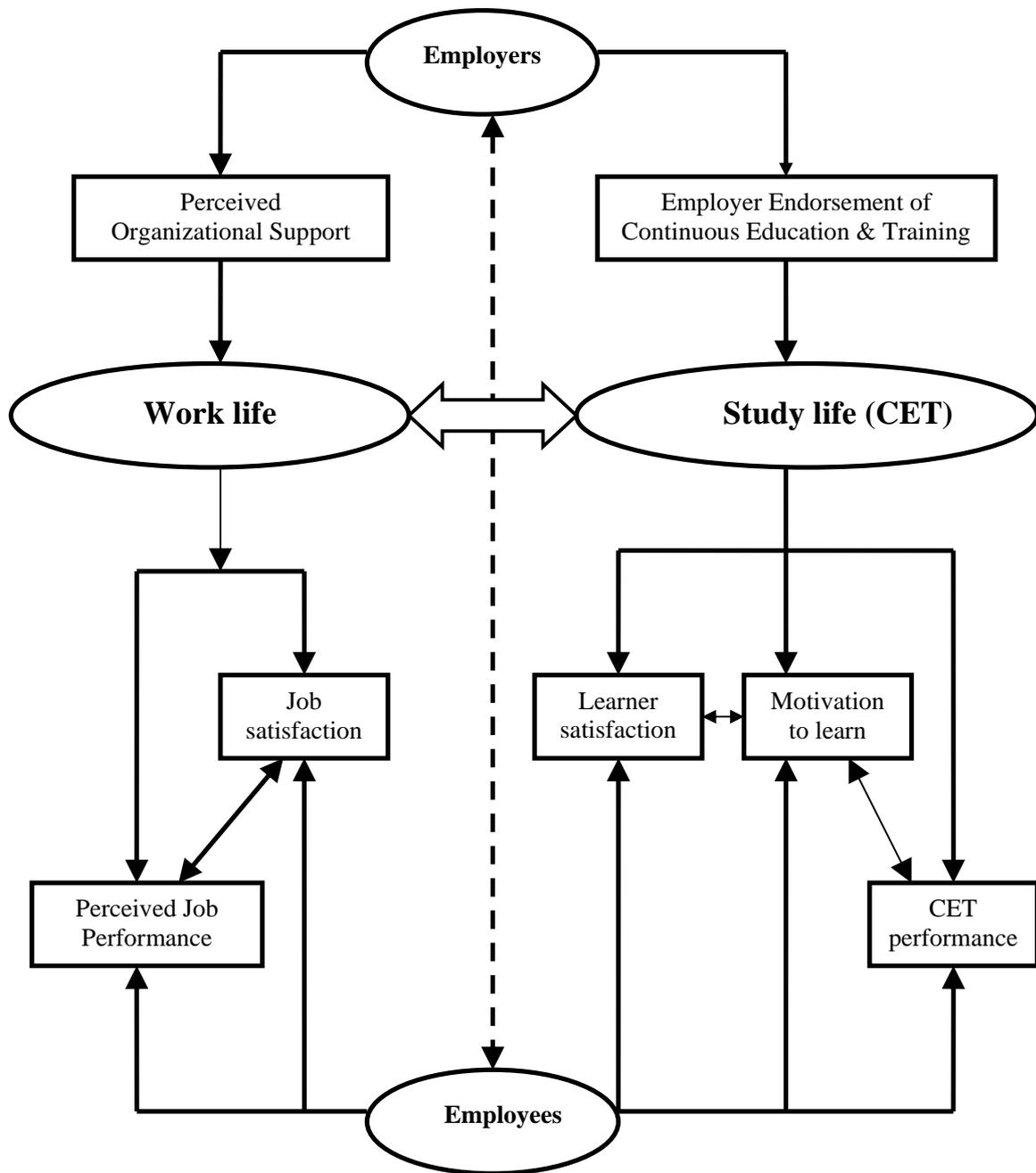


Figure 1: A Model of the Endorsement Effect by Employers in Continuous Education and Training

In this part of the paper, we present our discussion and analysis of the significance of EECET in four stages. First, we present a literature on two theories relevant to our paper. They are psychological contract theory and expectancy disconfirmation theory. Second, we discuss the literature in relation to the dependent variable “employer endorsement of continuous education

and training” (EECET), and six independent variables. We then develop eight hypotheses for testing in our study.

Psychological contract

The psychological contract between employees and their employers has been an important research topic in organization behavior (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). A psychological contract is the set of beliefs and tacit agreements about reciprocal promises and obligations between an employee and his/her employer that are not found in a formal employment contract (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). These contracts involve perceptions about a set of mutual obligations that link employees and employers in a way that the former feel obliged to contribute to the organizations and in return they expect the employers will provide relevant compensation (Robinson et al, 1994). From an employee’s perspective, his/her psychological contract involves an exchange of loyalty and productivity on the employee's part for job security and wage compensation provided by the employer (Cappelli, 1999)

Three distinctive principles of psychological contract theory can be identified. These are (1) interaction at the individual level, (2) mutual obligations, and (3) tacit exchanges (Koh et al, 2004). Psychological contracts involve the interaction of employees primarily at the individual level. Some scholars even argue that psychological contracts, by definition, can only be analyzed at the individual level (e.g. Rousseau, 1989). While the organization is viewed as the party making such promises, psychological contracts are defined by individuals rather than by the organization.

Mutual obligations entail a belief in what one is obliged to provide based on perceived promises of a reciprocal exchange. A psychological contract exists only if both parties believe that an agreement exists, that promises have been made, and that considerations have been offered in exchange (Rousseau 1995). Tacit exchanges are unwritten psychological relationship and connections which exist only in the eye of the contract parties (Rousseau and Parks, 1993). It will be the employee's beliefs and perceptions of these exchanges, based on the psychological contract, that drive the behavior of the employee (Koh et al, 2004).

Current literature has focused primarily on the negative side of psychological contracts, (i.e. breach or violations of these contracts) (e.g. Robinson, 1996; Rust et al, 2004). Psychological contract violation is the perception of a party to the contract, usually an employee, that the other party, usually the employer, has failed to fulfill adequately the promised obligations of the psychological contract (Robinson, 1996). The consequences are reduced employee performance, employees' civic virtue, and their intentions to remain with the organization (Robinson, 1996). A number of organizational activities such as downsizing (Rust et al, 2004), pay cut (Turnley et al, 2003), and outsourcing (Koh et al, 2004) are considered to be common examples of the causes of psychological contract violation, based on the perspective of employees.

Expectancy disconfirmation theory

To some extent, explanation of psychological contracts of employees can be supplemented adequately by expectancy disconfirmation theory. The theory suggests that users would reevaluate their earlier acceptance decision during the usage stage and decide whether to

continue or discontinue using the product (Oliver and Shapiro, 1993). The theory is widely used in the consumer behavior literature to study the relationship among consumer satisfaction, post-purchase behavior and repeated purchase (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Clemons & Woodruff, 1992). From the perspective of consumers, when the perceived performance exceeds expectations, their expectation is positively disconfirmed, and when the perceived performance falls short of expectations, their expectation is negatively disconfirmed. Confirmation of expectation (i.e. perceived performance equals expectations) will give rise to a level of moderate satisfaction, which will be enhanced by the positive disconfirmation and discouraged by negative disconfirmation (Oliver and Shapiro, 1993).

We extend the concepts of expectancy disconfirmation theory to the context of employee satisfaction and integrate with that of the psychological contract. Employee satisfaction can be seen as the outcome of the comparison between their expectation in the psychological contract and the perceived support given by their employers. Confirmed employee expectations, based on the perception of psychological contracts, lead to moderate satisfaction, positively disconfirmed expectations lead to high employee satisfaction, and negatively disconfirmed expectations lead to employee dissatisfaction (Fournier and Mick, 1999).

Employer Endorsement of Continuous Education and Training

Continuous education and training (CET) is needed for continuous updating and upgrading of employees' competence and skills, which includes development of capabilities in present as well as future operations (Ojala, 1994). As such it is considered as a valuable resource and survival tool for the corporation (Mehrabi et al, 2000; Currie & Proctor, 2005). Alongside initial education, CET plays a key role in meeting the skill needs of labor productivity of organizations (Gundogan, 1996; Rouleau, 2005). CET, together with customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, total quality control, and total employee involvement, are considered to be one of the basic concepts of total quality management (Gundogan and Kay, 1995).

EECET can be provided by employers in two forms: (a) a climate provided by employers that fosters learning, and (b) supportive policies of employers that facilitate participation in training and development (Maurer & Tarulli, 1994). The employer's support may be in either tangible forms, such as compensation package, bonus stock options and other incentives, or intangible forms, such as recognition or compliments of his/her employer (Eisenberger, 1997; Frost, 1998). Unfortunately, literature shows mixed and inconclusive results in the impact of employer endorsement on the effectiveness of CET (e.g. Kozlowski & Hults, 1987; Kozlowski & Farr, 1988; Maurer & Tarulli, 1994; Noe & Wilk, 1993).

We analyze the significance of EECET in two aspects. First, we consider its direct impact on employees' study life, including the CET performance of their CET, their motivation to study and their satisfaction in study. Then we analyze the impact of EECET on employees' work life, including their perceived organizational support, job satisfaction and perceived job performance. Figure 2 shows the inter-relationship among variables and hypotheses that we intend to develop in the subsequent paragraphs.

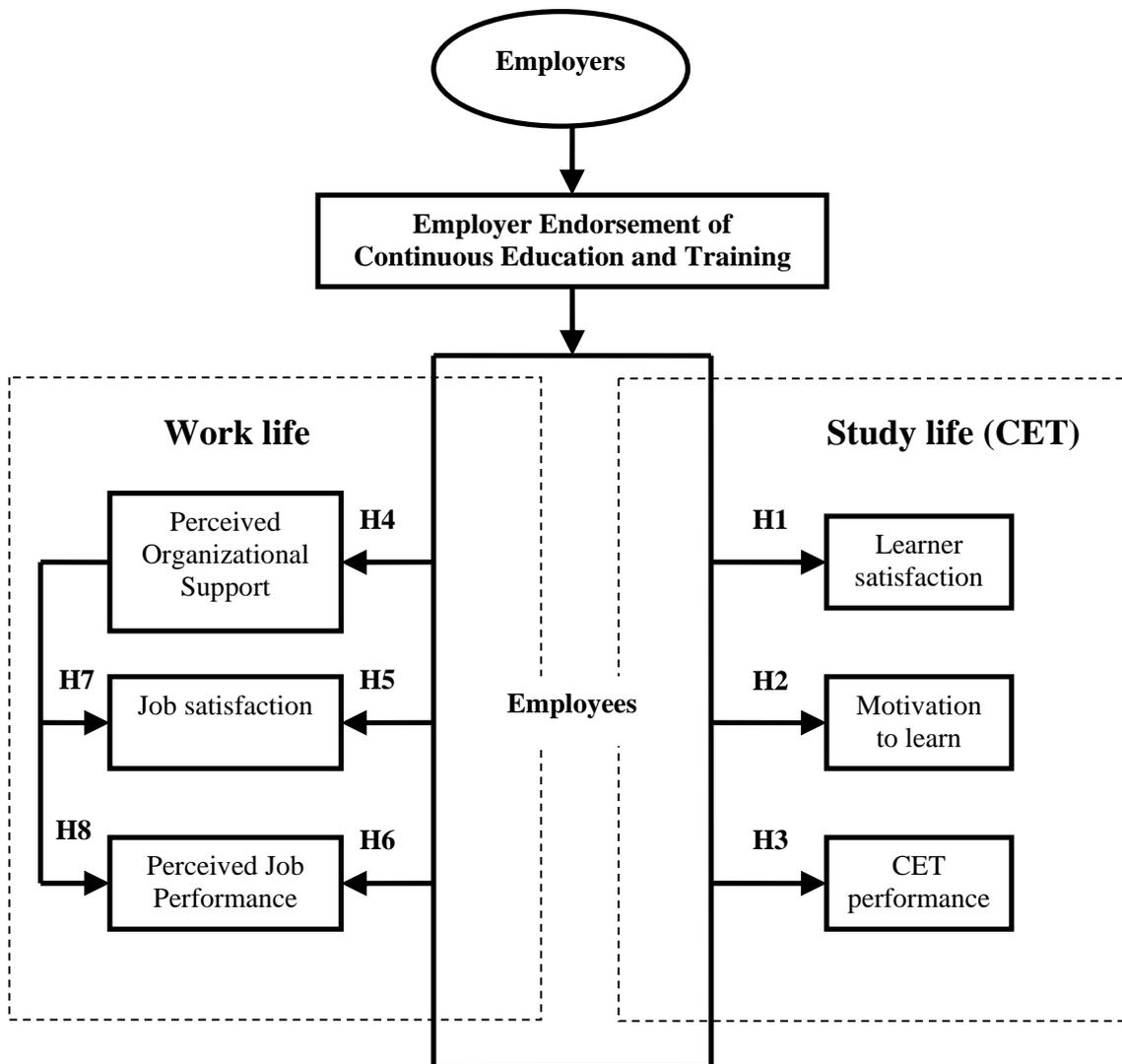


Figure 2: *The Inter-relationship among Variables and Hypotheses*

Learner satisfaction

In general, learner satisfaction is related to the positive feelings about the success of achieved outcomes of CET (Keller, 1983). A number of studies have been done on learner satisfaction and the results showed that learners were satisfied with CET if it could provide flexibility and responsiveness to their learning expectations (e.g. Debourgh, 1998; McCabe, 1997). Other factors, such as technology, specificity, instructors’ help and assistance (Johanson, 1996), as well as quality and effectiveness of the instructors (Debourgh, 1998; Antonacopoulou, 2001) are also relevant to learner satisfaction.

Learner satisfaction is primarily based on an assessment of cognitive satisfaction as well as economic efficiency (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). Satisfaction with learning has been empirically tested as one of the major factors in affecting the learners' decision to use again these CET services (Fornell, 1992). CET is directly related to the competence of employees. With the support of employers, employees are more comfortable in adapting as well as continuing their CET. We thus propose our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Employees are more likely to be satisfied in their continuous education and training if it is endorsed by their employers.

Motivation to Learn

Motivation to learn is defined to be a specific desire on the part of the trainee to learn the content of a training programme (Noe and Schmitt, 1986). Although motivation to learn is most relevant to learning effectiveness, it is also useful for explaining the extent of participation of employees in their career development (Birdi, Allan, & Warr, 1997; Noe & Wilk, 1993). Motivation to learn is a direct and straight-forward way of representing how trainees view their participation in CET (Mathieu and Martineau, 1997; Barry et al, 2001). A supportive work environment is considered to be important for employees' motivation to learn (Dubin, 1990). Since employees perceive that through CET, they can be more skillful in their work and thus can contribute more to their productivity and efficiency at work, they will expect their employer will support their CET (Dubin, 1990; Antonacopoulou, 2001). Based on this argument, we develop the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Employees are more likely to be motivated in their continuous education and training if it is endorsed by their employers.

CET Performance

A number of studies reveal that CET performance is very important for career development (e.g. Barkume, 1998; Barr and McNeilly, 2002; Jaramillo and Spector, 2004). Employers' support can bring positive signals, and thus influence the moods of employees, whereas lack of reward or support may produce a negative mood (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Employees are likely to look for and attend to information that is directly related to their personal goals (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). In the study by Noe and Wilk (1993), they observed that the organizational support on participation in CET was closely related to the training effectiveness. The supportive attitude of their employers can assist in the development process of CET and can enhance the employee's perception that the employee's initiative and motivation to learn is treasured (Gillian, 1989; Kember, 1999). As such we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Employees are more likely to achieve better results in the CET performance of their continuous education and training if it is endorsed by their employers.

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support represent the exchanges between an employee and the employer about the beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values the contributions of their employees (Wayne et al, 1997). Developing and retaining productive

human resources through supporting employee development is regarded as an effective means of sustaining the organization's competitive advantage (Lado and Wilson, 1994; Wright et al, 1995). Employees consider their organizations to be an important entity where they have some forms of important exchange relationships (Rousseau, 1990; Wayne et al, 1997; Andersen, 2004). Studies revealed that perceived organizational support was positively related to employee's commitment and innovation at work, and might reflect employees' attitude and commitment to their organizations (Eisenberger, 1997; Debrah and Ofori, 2001; Deery et al, 2002). EECET, therefore, can be regarded as a kind of signs of perceived organizational support. Thus we have the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Employees are more likely to perceive that their employer will provide more organizational support if their continuous education and training is endorsed by their employers.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is regarded as the internal state of an employee that is expressed by affectively and sometimes also cognitively evaluation of a job with a certain degree of favor or disfavor (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Brief, 1998). Studies of job satisfaction have based primarily on the individual and workplace-specific characteristics. Individual attributes, such as age (Clark & Oswald, 1996), level of education (Clark, 1996), are important factors contributing to employee satisfaction. Workplace-specific characteristics such as union membership (Borjas, 1979; Miller, 1990), size of workplaces (Idson, 1990), and impact of permanent and part-time jobs (Wooden and Warren, 2003), are considered to be relevant to the job satisfaction of employees.

Job satisfaction is influenced by the compatibility of the work requirements with other roles, such as family roles (Mortimer, Lorence, & Kumka, 1986). Where there are conflicts among these roles, a negative appraisal of the source of the conflict may cause job dissatisfaction (Lazarus, 1991). To some extent, employees' job satisfaction is also influenced by the required education and training of their jobs and research shows that jobs that require higher skill levels would generally be more interesting and engaging (Brown and McIntosh, 1998). Where the employers support the employees' CET, the conflict among roles in different lives (e.g. work life and study life) will be less. We thus have the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Employees are more likely to have a higher level of job satisfaction if their continuous education and training is endorsed by their employers.

Job Performance

In general, job performance is considered to be linked to the organizational support in the encouragement of risk taking (Suh, 2002), supportive evaluation of new ideas (Kanter, 1983; Grey, 1999; Currie and Proctor, 2005), reward and recognition of creativity (Abbey and Dickson, 1983), and free flow of ideas within the organization (Kanter, 1983). Studies have shown that there is likely to be a direct effect of organizational encouragement on job performance of individual employees (Dyer and Reeves, 1995; Masterson et al, 2000). A match between individual preferences and organizational preferences was proved to be most satisfying for employees (Randi and Keon, 1997) reported that. If an organisation treats an employee well and

values his or her efforts, the employee can be expected to devote greater effort toward helping the organisation achieve its goals (Settoon et al, 1996; Debrah and Ofori, 2001). Numerous studies have demonstrated that when performers are given positive feedback about their performance, job performance is more likely to improve (Becker, 1978; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Harry and Schroeder, 2000). Some studies show that perceived organizational support has an association with work performance (e.g. Armeli et al, 1998; Lynch et al, 1999). It is observed that people tend to believe that motivation to work is related to the level of organizational support as perceived by employees (Woods, 1993; Frost, 1998). The following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 6: Employees are more likely to achieve a higher level of perceived job performance if their continuous education and training is endorsed by their employers.

Moderating Effects of Perceived Organizational Support

Based on expectancy disconfirmation theory, we expect that learners will only be moderately satisfied when their expectations are confirmed (Oliver, 1980). The level of satisfaction is high when the perceived learning outcome is better than what they expect (positive disconfirmation) but very low when the perceived learning performance outcome is worse than what they expect (negative disconfirmation) (Oliver and Swan, 1989). We posit that EECET can provide positive disconfirmation of employees' perceived organizational support. We relate employers' support for employees' personal development to the level of satisfaction of work life as perceived by employees. . An individual's perception of his/her work life depends a lot on how he/she perceives the support of the employer (Shamir & Salomon, 1985). We consider that if employees perceive that they are not supported by their employers in one way or another, while they may feel that they are entitled to have such support, they feel somewhat disappointed. This will have an adverse effect on the level of their satisfaction of work life:

Hypothesis 7: With a higher level of perceived organizational support, employees are more likely to have a higher level of job satisfaction if their continuous education and training is endorsed by their employers..

In accordance with psychological contract theory, employees contribute to their organisation through their work, and in return they expect some form of return or support from their organisations (Nelsen & Barley, 1997). When employees' values can match those of the organizations', they performed better (Nelsen and Barley, 1997). A match between individual preferences and organizational preferences will be satisfying for employees (Sims & Keon, 1997). If an organisation treats an employee well and values his or her efforts, the employee can be expected to devote greater effort toward helping the organisation achieve its goals (Settoon et al, 1996; Masterson et al, 2000). A high level of perceived organizational support, therefore, will likely enhance the impact of EECET on the job performance of employees.

Hypothesis 8: With a higher level of perceived organizational support, employees are more likely to achieve a higher level of perceived job performance if their continuous education and training is endorsed by their employers.

Research Methodology

The study was done through sending survey questionnaires to about 300 part-time postgraduate students in two major universities in Hong Kong in December 2004. After screening and validating, 26 incomplete questionnaires were discarded. In total, 274 completed and usable questionnaires were collected and used for analysis.

Measures

We use a seven-point Likert type scale, described by “Strongly Agree” (=7) and “Strongly disagree” (=1) to measure the constructs. There were five constructs to be measured.

Employer endorsement of continuous education and training. Three items are identified for the dependent variable “My supervisor supports my current CET”, “The senior management supports my current CET” and “My organization supports my current CET”. They are related to whether the respondents consider that employers, in particular, their supervisors, are supportive of their CET activities.

Learner satisfaction. We use three items, “I am very happy about my current CET”, “I have no regret about enrolling in my current CET”, and “I feel that my current CET can offer what I have expected” to measure the level of learner satisfaction of the respondents in their pursuit of CET.

Motivation to learn. We use two items, “I am motivated to learn in my current CET” and “I feel the need to learn in my current CET” to measure the level of motivation to learn of the respondents in their pursuit of CET.

CET performance. We use two items, “The CET performance for my current CET has been very good” and “I have good grades in most of the subjects in my current CET” to measure the CET performance of the respondents in their pursuit of CET.

Perceived organizational support. We use three items, “My supervisor supports my work”, “The supervisor of my supervisor supports my work”, and “My organization supports my work” to measure the perceived organizational support of the respondents in respect of their organizations.

Job satisfaction. We use three items, “I am very happy about my current job”, “I have no regret in choosing my current job”, and “I am no intention to leave my current job for the next 6 months” to measure the level of job satisfaction of the respondents in respect of their current jobs.

Perceived job performance. We use two items, “I feel that I am performing very effectively in my current job” and “My supervisor will agree that I am performing very effectively in my current job” to measure the level of perceived job performance of the respondents in respect of their current jobs.

Control variables We identify three control variables, age, sex and occupation of the respondents.

Reliability and Validity

We conduct a factor analysis on all items to ensure that the items are closely linked to each other and they are inclined to measuring the same construct. Table 1 summarizes the result of the factor analysis of items.

Table 1 : *Factor Analysis of Variables*

Variables	Factor
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	Loadings
Employer endorsement of Continuous Education and Training	
($\alpha = 0.824$, variance = 11.53%)	
My supervisor supports my current CET	.794
The senior management supports my current CET	.821
My organization supports my current CET	.769
Learner satisfaction	
($\alpha = 0.709$, variance = 11.35%)	
I am very happy about my current CET	.861
I have no regret about enrolling in my current CET	.804
I feel that my current CET can offer what I have expected	.782
Motivation to learn	
($\alpha = 0.737$, variance = 10.68%)	
I am motivated to learn in my current CET	.734
I feel the need to learn in my current CET	.819
	.833
CET performance	
($\alpha = 0.796$, variance = 12.07%)	
The CET performance for my current CET has been very good	.765
I have good grades in most of the subjects in my current CET	.783
Perceived organizational support	
($\alpha = 0.866$, variance = 12.13%)	
My supervisor supports my work	.842
The supervisor of my supervisor supports my work	.772
My organization supports my work	.817
Job satisfaction	
($\alpha = 0.791$, variance = 13.22%)	
I am very happy about my current job	.883
I have no regret in choosing my current job	.747
I am no intention to leave my current job for the next 6 months	.817
Perceived job performance	
($\alpha = 0.843$, variance = 12.36%)	
I feel that I am performing very effectively in my current job	.822
My supervisor will agree that I am performing very effectively in my current job	.798

With 0.7 as the threshold value, all items of the seven constructs pass the reliability test. This implies that the responses to the questions are reliable instrument for the measurement of the corresponding constructs

Research Findings

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and the linear correlations between the scores of all variables.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables*

	Mean	Std Dev.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Employer Endorsement of continuous education and training	4.341	2.421	(.92)					
(2) Learner satisfaction	4.029	1.524	.071 (**)	(.91)				
(3) Motivation to learn	5.131	2.475	.092 (**)	.107 (**)	(.92)			
(4) CET performance	5.271	2.011	.123 (**)	.077 (**)	.073 (**)	(.94)		
(5) Perceived organizational support	4.233	1.720	.081 (**)	.125 (**)	.120 (**)	.105 (**)	(.91)	
(6) Job satisfaction	4.121	1.980	.127 (**)	.101 (**)	.073 (**)	.068 (**)	.079 (**)	(.90)
(7) Perceived performance job	4.967	1.720	.110 (**)	.115 (**)	.067 (**)	.052 (**)	.064 (**)	.117 (**)

Two-tailed tests of significance were used.

The diagonal entries in parentheses reflect Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability estimates.

N = 276

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From Table 2, we observe there are significant correlations between EECET and all independent variables in our study. Therefore, we have support for Hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6. Table 3 shows the multiple regression analysis with employers' endorsement of continuous education and training (EECET) as the dependent variable. The results as shown in Table 3 further validate our findings as revealed in Table 2. The analysis also shows that all three control factors, age, sex and occupations, have no significant impact on the relationship between dependent and independent variables in our study.

Table 3: *Multiple Regression Analysis Using 'Employer Endorsement of Continuous Education' as the Dependent Variable*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2
Constant	3.075 (.561)	2.746 (.862)	2.936 (.752)
Age	.004 (.192)	.008 (.120)	.005 (.141)
Sex	.006 (.164)	.004 (.072)	.007 (.126)
Occupation	.004 (.124)	.015 (.075)	.006 (.148)
Learner satisfaction	.067** (.028)	.054** (.024)	.043** (.025)
Motivation to learn	.042** (.107)	.102** (.107)	.045** (.124)
CET performance	.097** (.107)	.035** (.147)	.024** (.172)
Perceived organizational support		.052** (.107)	.042** (.089)
Job satisfaction			.076** (.122)

Perceived job performance	.043** (.089)
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Logistic regression coefficient betas shown, standard errors are in parentheses

N = 276

** = p < 0.01

* = p < 0.05

Interactive Effects

To test our hypotheses about the interaction actions between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction and perceived job performance, we use hierarchical regression analysis. The result is shown at Table 4. The analysis suggests that the interaction effect of perceived organizational support is positive for the relationship between EECET and job satisfaction, as well as for the relationship between EECET and perceived job performance. These results provide support for Hypotheses H7 and H8.

Table 4: *Results of Interaction Actions of Variables*

Variable	<i>Information Transparency B</i>
Step 1	
Age	.022
Sex	.038
Occupation	.076
ΔR^2	.092
Step 2	
Employer endorsement of continuous education	.045* (.090)
Perceived organizational support	.069** (.125)
Job satisfaction	.056** (.158)
Perceived job performance	.040** (.109)
ΔR^2	.325***

Step 3	
Perceived organizational support x Job satisfaction	.058*
Perceived organizational support x Perceived job performance	.049***
ΔR^2	.035***
Adjusted R^2 model	.296
Overall model F	8.913***

Note:

N = 276.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Limitations

There are some limitations to our research results. First, since all the samples are part-time postgraduate students in Hong Kong, it is possible that, to some extent, the response could be culturally biased. Yet, the general pattern of the interaction between employers and employees in terms of human resource management (such as EECET) are still universal (Kamoche, 2002). Second, it may not be possible at this junction to infer any causality in the relationships that were found because we have used correlation analysis to establish the inter-relationship between these variables. Third, since our measure of the job performance was based primarily on the subjective views of employees, their actual on-the-job effectiveness might not be reflected in such measures. In spite of these possible limitations, we believe that our study can portray a relatively clear picture of the importance and significance of the relationship between EECET and the work and study lives of employees.

Conclusion and Implications for Research

The results of our study indicate that endorsement of education and training by employers has some statistically significant impact on the study life of employees including CET performance, motivation to study and satisfaction in study, as well as on the work life of employees including perceived organizational support, job satisfaction and perceived job performance. Employees will tend to seek a balance in their exchange relationships with organizations by having 'attitudes and behaviors commensurate with the degree of employer commitment to them as individuals' (Wayne et al, 1997: 83). Our study supports this view that the endorsement effect on job satisfaction and perceived job performance will be even more significant if there is a higher level of perceived organizational support. In other words, prior perception about employer support will add further value to the pursuit of CET of employees.

Additionally, our study found that the work life and study life affect each other. EECET can affect not only the performance, motivation and satisfaction of CET, but also can affect the work life of employees. This is important because not only will CET improve the skills required for the work place, the EECET will also foster a better relationship between employers and employees so that employees are more motivated to work and can in fact work more effectively.

The contributions of our paper have four major aspects. First, we explore the effects of EECET by considering its impact on both work and study lives. Second, from a practical standpoint, our study suggests that EECET can have a positive impact on the job satisfaction and perceived job performance of employees. Third, our propositions have important implications for organizations to consider motivating their employees through endorsing appropriate types of CET. Last but not least, our analysis has value for scholars with interests in the study of balancing work life and private life because it points to a specific area of the possibility of the role employers can play in motivating their employees.

In conclusion, we believe that the survey results in our study provide a useful framework for analyzing the employees' motivation and response in relation to the process of pursuing CET. Further research is recommended to examine the various possible consequences of the different types of employer support for a more thorough understanding of the implication of employer endorsement.

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