Chapter 9
Non-Mandatory Training: A Concept Analysis in the Work, Environmental Context

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ABSTRACT

Non-mandatory training is seen as an important facilitator in developing individual employees’ competencies and the organization’s performance. However, previous studies of non-mandatory training in the context of the work environment show a lack of conceptual clarity. A universal definition in work environment settings is missing from published literature. Therefore, this chapter analyzes the concept called non-mandatory training in the work environment setting. To attain this objective, the researcher applied the concept analysis proposed by Walker and Avant. Based on the analysis, a definition of non-mandatory training was established. That definition was used in this study to reconcile the discrepancies between the understanding of the concept by academics and practitioners, and by allied HR professionals, who tended to view it from different perspectives. Proper understanding of basic assumptions can facilitate communication between different educational and work environment settings and enhance the concept clarity and validity for future research.

INTRODUCTION

In a highly competitive era, organizations try to make the best use of their competitive advantages by harnessing their various resources and competencies. In that context, human resource is considered as one of the most important organizational resources, which is also a unique, rare, valuable and non-substitutable resource (Barney, 2002). Therefore, organizations apply various strategies to improve their employees’ competencies and capabilities. In that context, training is considered as an important human resource development strategy that will markedly enhance employees’ capabilities to perform their duties more effectively (Noe & Schmitt, 1986). Training is defined as a learning process that involves the acquisition
of knowledge, sharpening of skills, understanding of concepts and rules, as well as changing of attitudes and behaviors positively to enhance the performance of employees (Shah, 2012). A fundamental aspect in the implementation of a training program relates to the nature of trainee attendance, specifically, whether such attendance is mandatory (compulsory) or non-mandatory (voluntary) (Sutha, 2016).

During the past decade, the concept of non-mandatory training has drawn the interest of many researchers. According to Sutha’s (2016) review article, earlier researchers had identified several factors that influenced non-mandatory training participation. Specifically age, gender, educational qualification, family responsibility, self-efficacy, and position held in the company exerted influence on the voluntary participation of employees in training. However, some of the findings of these researches have been contradictory. For example, previous research studies have empirically shown that the participation rate in training was not the same for female and male employees, and this significantly influenced the employees’ learning and development process gender-wise (Arulampalam et al., 2004; Booth, 1991; Green, 1993; Renaud et al., 2004). However, Renaud et al. (2004) found that whether male or female, those who were in the first and middle ranks of the organization sought benefits through participation in training, either mandatory or non-mandatory, in order to improve their performance and career development.

Further, in the context of family responsibility, Aryee (1992) had noted that due to the traditional roles they followed, the women played the a major role in domestic responsibilities compared to the men, and therefore they had very limited time to invest in continuous education and job progression. However, Sutha, Kailasapathy and Jayakody (2015) found that family responsibility did not significantly influence the employees’ decision on enrolling for training programs that were not mandated by the company.

Although some researchers have suggested that numerous factors have a significant effect on employees’ participation in non-mandatory training, only age, gender, educational qualification, family responsibility, and employees’ status have proved to exert a significant influence on their participation in such training programs. According to Sutha, Kailasapathy and Jayakody (2016), the incongruity in this finding arose because of the lack of lucidity about what this concept epitomizes. This was further supported by Sutha (2016), who argues that although there have been some developments in research, the definition of non-mandatory training is still not established properly. This emphasizes the important need to develop a clear and common understanding of the concept to enhance the validity of future research.

To accomplish this, it is necessary to clarify the concept and improve the methodological approach. The paper attempts to do just that by presenting a review of the past literature within a framework of concept analysis. This will enable a more robust, theoretically correct measurement for future research on non-mandatory training. The current paper formulates methodological approaches and applications from a wide range of disciplinary standpoints to address the question, “How can non-mandatory training be best defined in order to inform research, policy and practice?”

**METHOD**

**Concept Analysis**

Sometimes it proves necessary to explore, clarify, define and validate an abstract concept to distinguish it from other concepts that it may resemble in order to explain the underlying theory behind it more precisely to facilitate better understanding. This formal and rigorous process is known as concept analysis (Morse et al., 1996; McKenna, 1997; McEwen & Wills, 2002; Walker & Avant, 2005). Although numer-

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