

Lack of Participation in Tuition Reimbursement Programs: A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

This grounded theory study explored the reasons for the low participation rates in employer-funded tuition reimbursement programs. With the understanding that tuition reimbursement programs are highly valued by employees, it is important to be cognizant of the reasons for the low participation rate among these employer-funded programs. This study focused specifically on the employees of Louisville, KY manufacturing companies and was explored from the perspective of employees in this segment. The researcher used Corbin and Strauss' (2015) data analysis processes which allowed for the development of a substantive theory that provides insight into factors that led to decisions to continue or not continue education. The results of this study showed that employees developed feelings of exclusion, low self-worth, and disinterest in continuing their education and utilizing the reimbursement programs in relation to program design, organizational environments, and social influences and perceptions. By addressing the underlying causes that employees choose not to further their educations, organizations can improve their tuition reimbursement program participation rates. The findings of this study provide practitioners with information that can assist manufacturing companies in reevaluating tuition reimbursement programs by addressing underlying causes that lead to choices to continue education and participate in tuition reimbursement programs.

Keywords: Tuition, reimbursement, manufacturing, grounded theory