

# Socialization Tactics and New Entrants' Adjustments in the Information Technology Context

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## Abstract

Socialization plays a critical role in organizations as it is one of the most essential components of building and maintaining organizational culture. Research suggests that socialization influences individual role outcomes and team performances in organizations."Tactics of organizational socialization" refers to the ways in which the experiences of an individual in transition from one role to another are structured for him in the organization. (Van Maanen, 1978). The present investigation focuses on the socialization tactics and new entrants' adjustments in the information technology context. Role orientation, role conflict, role ambiguity, commitment to organization, intention to quit and job satisfaction was related to socialization tactics. 287 new entrants' having not more than 18 months of experience were surveyed from 10 IT companies in Bangalore. The six socialization tactics were operationally defined in terms of Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) discussion. The tools were standardized and found to be reliable and valid. The study found that sequential socialisation was the most common form of socialisation tactic experienced by most of the new entrants. Respondents reported a higher amount of role conflict in spite of being taken through institutionalised socialisation . The detailed findings and suggestions for further research have been discussed.

*Keywords: Socialization Tactics, Role Orientation, Job Satisfaction*

## Introduction

Organizational socialization has been defined as "The process by which organizational members become a part of, or absorbed into, the culture of an organization" (Jablin, 1982, p. 256), "The process by which a person learns the values, norms, and required behaviours which permit him or her to participate as a member of the organization" (Van Maanen, 1978, p. 67), and "The process of 'learning the ropes,' being indoctrinated and trained, and being taught what is important in the organization" (Schein, 1968, p. 2). Other constructs associated with socialization include "assimilation" (Jablin, 1984), "fitting in" (Black & Ashford, 1995),

"sense-making" (Louis, 1980), and "adaptation and accommodation" (Hall & Schneider, 1972).

### *The Process of Socialisation*

The process of socialization has three phases:

***Anticipatory/Pre-arrival(Getting in)*** - Socialization actually begins before people accept a job. People acquire information regarding the job, about the organization and the organization culture from their acquaintances.

***Encounter*** - When the employment contract is signed. A) Potential for entry shock: negative reaction that occurs when new employees encounter an unpleasant experience when entering the organization B) Breaking in: begins

when individual assumes his/her responsibilities. This is when the individual learns the organisation's culture. C) Orientation programs help new entrants to get acquainted with the organizational hierarchy and job environment.

***Change and Acquisition/Metamorphosis (Settling in)*** - is when the individual attains full membership. It may be marked by a formal event. This is the most significant stage and is the most permanent.

### ***Benefits of Socialisation***

Successful organizational socialization has substantial benefits. Organizational socialization has a long lasting impact on the employees' behaviours, commitment and engagement. Socialization process enhances the emotional attachment towards the organization and it also influences the turnover intentions. The majority of organizational socialization studies have focused on the role of the new entrants in the socialization process(e.g., Feldman, 1981; Jones, 1986; Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Reichers, 1987; Saks and Ashforth, 1997), and the outcome of the process(e.g., Allen and Meyer, 1990; Morrison, 1993; Nelson and Quick, 1991; Louis, Posner, and Powell, 1983; Saks and Ashforth, 1997). Among the outcomes of successful socialization are new entrants' (a) job satisfaction (Jablin, 1982; Morrison, 1993), (b) perceptions of success and commitment to the organization (N. J. Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Baker, 1995; Buchanan, 1974; Jones, 1986; Laker & Steffy, 1995), (c) longevity in the organization (Katz, 1985; Morrison, 1993), (d) performance proficiency (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Jablin, 1984; Morrison, 1993; Reichers, 1987; Schein, 1968), and (e) affect for one's department or work unit (George, 1990). In

these ways, effective socialization is mutually advantageous for organizations and for individuals.

The study by McClaren, Adam & Vocino (2010) suggest that managers should give consideration to the formal and informal organizational socialization and professional socialization. Although formal aspects of socialization, such as training and codes of ethics, have received a great deal of attention in the literature, managers should give attention to the informal socialization processes that affect work norm and ethical decision making. By also focusing on the organizational and professional socialization as part of the ethical culture and climate of an organization, there should be a commensurate increase in ethical perceptions and actions by company employees. Recruitment and selection experiences are part of a process of pre-entry organizational socialization, also known as anticipatory socialisation. Graduates are susceptible to such effects as their socialisation through exposure to professional employers begins during training. Employers' practices are thought to contribute to the formation of realistic career expectations and the initial psychological contract between graduates and employers. (Scholarios, Lockyer & Johnson (2003)). Conner(2006) examined human-resource professionals' occupation-related and general work experience, socialization from participation in professional activities, organizational size, and perceived independence as predictors of perceptions of organizational politics (POPS). It was most notable that work experience appeared to have an inverse relationship with Predictors of perceptions of organizational politics (POPS) among human-resource professionals in the area of pay and promotions.

### *Newentrants' Adjustments*

Cooper & Anderson (2002) suggest an intensive socialization process, as experienced by military recruits, facilitates recruit learning and is associated with positive attitudes. Related to this, military socialization involves dedicated training staff whose performance is measured against the success of recruit learning. This is rarely the case in other organizational settings, where the responsibility for socialization is placed more heavily on the newcomer. Socialization processes might be improved if newentrants' colleagues were given training to understand how best to help newentrants and, perhaps more radically, that the rate and success of newentrants' adjustment contributed to colleagues' performance evaluations. Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker(2007) tested a model of antecedents and outcomes of newcomer adjustment using 70 unique samples of newentrants with meta-analytic and path modelling techniques. Specifically, they proposed and tested a model in which adjustment (role clarity, self-efficacy, and social acceptance) mediated the effects of organizational socialization tactics and information seeking on socialization outcomes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, intentions to remain, and turnover). Specifically, organizations use socialization tactics to enable new entrants to master their new roles. Thus in using different combinations of socialization tactics, organizations are attempting primarily to influence new entrant learning. Here in this study Role and Personal adjustments are studied through six different outcome variables namely Role orientation, Role conflict and Role ambiguity; Commitment to organisation, Intention to quit and Job satisfaction.

### *Socialisation Tactics*

Van Maanen & Schein (1979) argued that organizations use six tactics to socialize new entrants. Each tactic exists on a bipolar continuum. First, fixed tactics provide the new member with precise knowledge of the time it will take to complete a given step of socialization or the entire socialization process. Conversely, variable tactics do not provide newentrants with any advance notice of their expected transition timetable. Second, sequential tactics provide a fixed sequence of steps that leads to role competence, compared to random tactics that keep the sequence ambiguous or frequently changing. Third, serial tactics are utilized when experienced members, either individually or in groups, mentor new entrants on role clarity and role expectations in the organization and disjunctive tactics on the other hand, do not employ explicit role clarity to new entrants. Fourth, socialization strategies may be either formal or informal. Formal socialization experiences are segregated from the ongoing work context in settings such as corporate universities or classroom training sessions. Less formal programs may involve the new entrant shadowing an experienced member for a period of time. Fifth, individual socialization encompasses one-on-one new entrant-senior partnering, and self- or organization-imposed new entrant isolation. Conversely, collective tactics involve placing an individual new entrant in a cohort of those who are provided with an identical set of experiences, resulting in relatively similar outcomes for each member. Finally, investiture tactics validate the "viability and usefulness" of the professional identity a new entrant already possesses (Van Maanen, 1978, p. 34), as opposed to divestiture strategies that "deny and strip away certain entering

characteristics of a recruit". One end of the continuum of socialization tactics which comprises of collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial and investiture are termed as institutionalized socialization tactics. The other end of the continuum of socialization tactics which comprises of individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive and divestiture are termed as individualized tactics. Organizational new entrants typically have high uncertainty regarding the execution of the job, how their performance will be evaluated, what types of social behaviours are normative, and what personal relationships within the organization might be beneficial to them (Miller, 1996; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Effective socialization reduces these uncertainties, helps new entrants cultivate productive relationships at work, and ensures that individuals and organizations benefit from their working relationship (N. J. Allen & Meyer, 1990; Fedor, Buckley, & Davis, 1997; Jablin, 1987, 2001; Lee, Ashford, Walsh, & Mowday, 1992; Meyer & Allen, 1988). Consequently, new entrants and experienced organizational members typically engage in formal and informal organizational socialization activities before, during, and after their entry into the organization.

### **Need and Rationale of the Study**

Although there is evidence to suggest that socialisation experiences affect personal and role outcomes, few empirical studies of socialisation processes have explicitly addressed the question of how specific socialisation tactics affect new entrants' adjustments to organisations. Rather, the focus has been on how new entrants' experiences of organizational reality at different stages in socialization processes result in such outcomes as satisfaction and feelings of personal worth (Feldman, 1976), commitment

(Buchanan, 1974), or longevity in organizations (Katz, 1978). Only untested theories have explicitly addressed the way in which socialization tactics affect new entrants' responses.

A second and related issue is the possibility that individual differences may also affect new entrants' adjustments to organizations and may furthermore moderate the effects of socialization tactics on individuals' orientations to roles (Jones, 1983a). From such an interaction perspective, it is necessary to investigate how both individual and organizational factors combine to influence (1) new entrants' subsequent adjustments to organizations and (2) their role behaviours.

The study intends to address these issues in the Information Technology Organizations realise the effectiveness of different socialisation tactics and the associated benefits.

### **Objectives**

1. To investigate the relationships between different socialisation tactics adopted by organisations in different sectors.
2. To find out the relationships between socialisation tactics and new entrants' personal and role outcomes.

The research was carried out on a sample of 287 respondents from 10 IT Companies. Employees with not more than 18 months of experience were surveyed. A partial judgemental and convenient random sampling was done. Alamogordo-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality were conducted on the sample and since most of the p values were found to be less than 0.05 => the Distribution of data was not normal and hence the researcher used Non-parametric measures for most of the analysis.

## Measures

The questionnaire had three parts:

PART (I): Information regarding the respondents profile was sought.

SECTION (A): 30 Statements measuring six socialisation tactics (Collective Vs Individual through statements 1-5; Formal Vs Informal through statements 6-10; Investiture Vs Divestiture through statements 11-15; Sequential Vs Random through statements 16-20; Serial Vs Disjunctive through statements 21-25; and Fixed Vs Variable through statements 26-30) were operationally constructed in terms of Van Maanen and Schein's definitions. Questionnaire was a seven point Likert scale from 1=Strongly Disagree to 7= Strongly Agree.

SECTION (B): 46 Statements measuring 3 role outcomes (Role orientation; Role conflict and Role ambiguity) and 3 personal outcomes (Commitment to Organisation; Intention to Quit and Job Satisfaction) were derived from standard tools. Role orientation responses were measured on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1=Very False to 7=Very True .Role conflict and ambiguity were measured with scales developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). Commitment was measured using a shortened version of the scale by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974). Intention to quit was measured by a two item scale through statements 74-75. Job Satisfaction was measured on the 7-point Faces Scale (Dunham & Herman, 1975; Kunin 1955) through statement 76. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  – reliability test on the instrument for this sample revealed that the reliability was  $\alpha=0.772$ .

### *Respondent Profile*

The distribution of respondents along

demographic variables were as follows: 73% of the respondents were male and 27% were female. 70% of the incumbents were in the age group of less than 25 years, 25% in the age group 26-30 years and 5% were in the 31 – 40 years. 55% of the respondents were graduates, 35% were post-graduates and about 10% held professional and other qualifications. 85% of the incumbents were single while 10% of them were married and 5% of the sample was single. 42% of the respondents had work-experience of 7-12 months followed by the next majority of 58% with 13-18 months. 68.3% respondents were working for the first time, 20.8% had worked with one employer previously, 8.3% respondents had worked for 2 companies in the past and 2.6% had more than 3 previous job experiences. 58.4% of the respondents were entry-level executives, 31.6% worked at middle level while the rest 10% held senior level positions.

## Results and Discussion

### *Relationship between socialisation tactics and newentrants' adjustment to organizations*

**Hypothesis 1:** Institutionalised socialisation tactics will produce custodial role orientations and individualised tactics will produce innovative role orientations.

**Table 1: Indicating the percentile quartile for the role orientation**

Role Orientation		
Percentiles	25	3.6000
	50	4.2000
	75	4.6000

A high score on orientation indicates an innovative role orientation in which a new entrant attempts to alter procedures for performing a role, the purpose of role itself, or

both. A low score indicates custodial role orientation, in which a new entrant accepts the prescribed limits of a role in an organisation.

The high role orientation was categorised as innovative and low role orientation was

categorised as custodial based on the scores of the quartiles. Scores less than 3.6 was categorised as custodial and greater than 4.6 was categorised as innovative role orientation as shown by the quartile score.

**Table 2:** Indicating inter-correlations using Spearman's rho correlation coefficient among socialization tactics and new entrants' adjustment to organizations. organizations.

S1. No.	Variables	X	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.	Collective Vs individual	22.8	5.0	1												
2.	Formal Vs. informal	22.008	5.08	.14	1											
3.	Investiture Vs Divestiture	22.54	8.05	.25**	.15	1										
4.	Sequential Vs Random	23.57	5.18	.25**	.13	.35**	1									
5.	Serial Vs Disjunctive	19.96	5.00	.004	.18*	.28**	.18**	1								
6.	Fixed Vs variable	21.38	4.86	.29**	.06	.11	.20*	.17	1							
7.	Custodial Role orientation	3.43	.352	.09	-.04	-.01	.13	-.12	.13	1						
8.	Innovative	4.83	.289	-.01	-.09	.12	.21**	.28**	.31**		1					
9.	Role Conflict	58.09	10.75	-.02	.08	.16	.01	.24**	.10	.32**	.32**	1				
10.	Role Ambiguity	58.07	8.09	.05	.18*	.41**	.32**	.38**	.15	.19*	.19*	.293*	1			
11.	Commitment	39.625	5.79	-.14*	.04	.06	.01	.11*	.24**	.00	.003	.17	.14	1		
12.	Intention to quit	7.43	3.77	-.14	.12	.06	-.27**	.04	-.01	.15	.159	.22*	.15	.07	1	
13.	Job Satisfaction	5.44	1.44	.04	-.02	-.08	.26**	-.04	.078	-.05	-.054	-.07	.15	.02	-.40	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Examining the inter-correlations between the scales measuring socialization tactics reveals the inter-correlation between the six scales. Theory suggests that these tactics will be correlated. For example, investiture correlates most highly with sequential socialization tactics; fixed tactics correlate most highly with collective tactics and serial correlates most highly with investiture tactics.

Given the nature of the scaling procedure, a positive correlation between a socialisation tactic and any other variable is to be interpreted as the relationship between the institutional end of the continuum and the variable. A negative correlation indicates a relationship with the individualized end.

The Table 2 indicates that three of the six institutionalised socialisation tactics i.e. Sequential, ( $r=.217^{**}$ ), Serial( $r=.283^{**}$ ), and Fixed ( $r=.315^{**}$ ) has a significantly positive correlation with Innovative Role orientation. Therefore we reject Hypothesis 1 and conclude that Institutionalised socialisation tactics will produce innovative role orientations. Also none of the socialisation tactic produces custodial role orientation. This is an interesting observation in the Indian context which indicates that Indian IT organisations need to be more institutionalised (collective, formal, investiture, sequential, serial and fixed) in their approach towards socialising new employees if they want them to be innovatively oriented towards their work.

**Hypothesis 2:** Institutionalised socialisation tactics will be negatively related to Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Job satisfaction, and Commitment whereas positively related to Intention to quit (Refer Table 2). Out of the five institutionalised socialisation tactics only Serial tactics is significantly correlated with Role Conflict ( $r=0.242^{**}$ ). This indicates that the serial tactics which involves the involvement of new entrants observing the experienced organizational members causes a role conflict for the new entrants in performing roles in innovative ways. All the socialisation approaches on the institutionalised end of the continuum show positive correlations with Role Ambiguity with 4 of them having significant correlation values: Investiture ( $r=0.415^{**}$ ),

Serial ( $r=0.383^{**}$ ), Sequential ( $r=0.326^{**}$ ) and Formal ( $r=.198^*$ ). This implies that high levels of role conflict and role ambiguity are associated with performing roles in innovative ways.

The relationship between socialisation tactics and personal outcomes show a non-uniform pattern of results. In regard to the issue of the relationship between socialisation tactics and job satisfaction, it appears that only sequential approach out of other five institutionalized socialisation tactics has a considerable positive impact on job satisfaction. While other tactics on both ends of the continuum give mixed results though in an insignificant way. So it is difficult to make a definite generalisation in this regard as to whether increasing the form of any institutionalised socialisation will always increase the expressed job satisfaction. Similarly, sequential socialization tactics has a negative correlation with intention to quit. In other words random socialization tactics is associated with intention to quit.

The study reveals that the serial disjuncture and fixed variable are related to commitment. When organizations follow a fixed schedule of events, when employers are open and clear in communication, the employees will tend to be committed.

Sequential socialisation is the most common form of socialisation tactic experienced by most of the newcomers. Most of the respondents indicated an equal inclination towards custodial and innovative role orientations. In spite of being taken through institutionalised socialisation as opposed to individualised approach, respondents report a higher amount of role conflict and ambiguity. Respondents show a lower level of commitment to organisation. Formal-Informal has the smallest degree of inter-correlation with the other socialisation tactics. Inter-correlations

among the socialisation tactics suggest that investiture correlates most highly with sequential socialisation tactics; fixed tactics correlate most highly with collective tactics and serial correlates most highly with investiture tactics. Institutionalised socialisation tactics will produce innovative role orientations and individualised tactics will produce custodial role orientations.

Thus taken together, these results support Hypothesis 1 and 2 suggest that institutional and individualised socialisation tactics have different effects on role orientation and personal adjustment.

On a broader perspective the above stated discussion lead us to reject hypothesis 2 and accept the alternate hypothesis that institutionalised socialisation tactics will be positively related to role conflict, role ambiguity, job satisfaction, and commitment whereas negatively related to intention to quit.

Empirical investigation of the way in which socialization tactics affect personal and role outcomes has lagged behind the theoretical conceptualization of these issues (Feldman, 1976). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) and Louis (1980) suggested that reducing uncertainty is the major goal of new entrants in organizations and that the methods of socialization that organizations use can influence the way new entrants respond to their organizations. The findings of this study support this hypotheses, and the results reported here reveal a pattern of relationships between tactics and outcomes supporting the proposition that different socialization tactics lead to different socialisation outcomes.

## **Implications of the Study**

The study has found that Institutionalised socialisation tactics will produce innovative role orientations and none of the socialization tactic has a significant relation with the custodial role orientation. This is an interesting observation in the Indian context which indicates that Indian IT organisations need to be more institutionalised (collective, formal, investiture, sequential, serial and fixed) in their approach towards socialising new employees if they want them to be innovatively oriented towards their work. This implies that high levels of role conflict and role ambiguity are associated with performing roles in innovative ways.

An underlying cause for this contradiction can be the ineffectiveness of Indian IT organizations to orient new entrants in an innovative manner. The support structures in the organizations are such that the desired behaviours are not adequately reinforced which results in self-generated dissonance in new entrants on how they should perform their roles or their actions.

The findings of this study reveal a pattern of relationships between tactics and outcomes supporting the proposition that different socialization tactics lead to different socialization outcomes. So IT organizations need to understand the fact that socialization tactics definitely need to be incorporated for innovation and creativity without the interference of role conflict and role ambiguity.

The study also reveals that the when there is a fixed schedule of events with a serial socialization tactics, employees tend to be committed.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The primary limitation of the study is that the



responses are a self report by the employees. This reliance raises questions about common method bias and the accuracy of respondents' perceptions and their willingness to respond openly. Sample is homogeneous in certain respects. These attributes may have influenced their aspirations and perceptions, as well as how their employers opted to socialize them. Thus, the generalization of findings should be assessed by including more diverse samples of new entrants.

Sampling suffers sampling frame error as there was no adequate frame available to maintain randomness of the sample. There is a possibility that employees in the current study were not sufficiently "new" to fully observe the predicted effects. The inclusion criteria did not account those employees who had more than 18 months work-experience in a particular organisation but had recently changed roles or designations. Since the factor construct obtained from actual data was not suited for further analysis, the same factor construct from the original research (from where the present study is adapted) has been used. This has increased the chances of deviations in results.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

It is suggested that future research be conducted across different sectors that hire similar candidates but treat them differently. These settings should produce different results that will allow further investigation of the effects of socialisation tactics on new entrants' adjustments. It would be interesting to study organisations' socialisation practices in conjunction with newentrants' task demands. This would provide us an insight on whether socialization tactics have to be customized based on skills, requirements and job roles.

Finally, it would be interesting to study if individuals choose to join an organization because of their awareness of socialization tactics used in the organization. The factor construct obtained by the primary data can be pursued further in detail to gain revealing insights into the socialisation tactics adopted by Indian IT organisations. Perhaps a new classificatory scheme giving a more accurate description of Indian socialisation practices can be developed from the results. It will serve to be a significant Indian contribution to this field of study.

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that Institutionalized socialization tactics are related to innovative role orientation in the Indian IT sector. Institutionalized socialization tactics is positively correlated with role conflict and ambiguity, results in increasing uncertainty or anxiety for new entrants while performing roles in innovative ways. It is found that effectively, socialization is mutually advantageous for organizations and for individuals. Successful organizational socialization relies on individuals becoming initiated to their task, understanding their roles, and comprehending the criteria by which they will be evaluated. It brings about high levels of realism to the job and alignment between differing expectations. The process can bring about a positive experience and meaningfulness for employees with reference to job, organization and others.

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