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The Mediating Role of Social Integration on the Effect of Proactive Socialization Tactics Applied by Newcomers on Their Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of proactive socialization tactics applied by newcomers and social integration on organizational commitment, additionally, to analyze whether social integration has a mediating role between proactive socialization tactics and organizational commitment relationship. For this aim, in the theoretical part, proactive socialization tactics, social integration, and organizational commitment are explained. In the application part, a questionnaire including the measures of the proactive socialization tactics, social integration and organizational commitment is distributed to newcomers working in different sectors in Istanbul, Turkey. It is found that proactive socialization tactics applied by newcomers and social integration have a positive impact on organizational commitment, and social integration has a mediating role between the relation proactive socialization tactics and organizational commitment.

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Keywords: Proactive socialization tactics; social integration; organizational commitment.

1. Introduction

In today's knowledge-based economy, because of the change in nature and forms of modern business life, and decentralization, proactive behavior and initiative become even more critical determinants of organizational success (Crant, 2000). New management forms point out a new system that companies minimize the surveillance function and rely on employees' personal initiative to identify and solve problems (Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag,

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1997). In this system, newcomer socialization is an important research topic from individual employee and organizational perspectives (Reichers, 1987). More particularly for organizations, newcomer socialisation have an potential effect on organizational effectiveness depending the resource-based view of strategic management (Saks & Gruman 2014; Lehtonen, 2015) Accordingly, human capital (including newcomers) which involves the knowledge, skills and abilities and other qualities that are relevant adding value to the organization and achieving economic objectives is a sources that provide a competitive advantage, are unique, inimitable and cannot substituted (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Given that organizational socialization is one or the primary means of ensuring that new employees have the knowledge and skills that add value to the organization, it can be source of competitive advantage Thus OS should result in positive organizational outcomes to the extent that it provides employees with knowledge and skills that provide the organization with valuable human capital that drives firm performance (Saks & Gruman, 2014)

This results in higher levels of job satisfaction and productivity and lower turnover which will improve organizational performance The organizational outcomes are generally considered to be multidimensional and to consists of three types: HR outcomes (employee skills and abilities, turnover), operational outcomes (productivity, quality) , and financial outcomes (sales growth, return on assets) (Jiang et al., 2012).

In this way an organization can ensure that its socialization programs are strategic and tailored to the needs of newcomers and the organization. Thus making organizations more effective through OS begins with the identification of the socialization resources that are most important given an organization's strategy and objectives (Saks & Gruman 2012).

Staff induction and socialization are central to the reproduction of an organization because they enable new individuals to become functional members of a collectively. They also support organizational recreation by sustaining, as well as, renewing aspects of the organization's character (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010).

Consequently, staff induction and socialization are important mechanisms for both organizations and newcomers. On the one hand, organizations continuously need newcomer for their sustainability and for organizational growth in particular. On the other hand newcomers need to reduce complexity when they enter into a new organization in order to be able to contribute to organizational activities (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010).

In contrast to the control HRM strategy, the commitment strategy represent a bundle of HRM practices that "aim at getting more from workers by giving more to them". They facilitate the employee's commitment by using long-term employment guarantees, team based production systems, job rotation or quality cycles and are characterized by a high degree of "self- organization" and a looser, less strictly formalized, and decent rally regulated system. Their strategic processes are output oriented, governed and controlled regarding the central goals of the organization; actors have an individual sphere of influence. Furthermore, the self- organization and social learning processes of a commitment strategy encourage the flexibility and creativity of actors and therefore, enhance the innovation potentials of newcomers. Owing the basic logic of the commitment strategy, the general socialization process is more individualized and less governs by the organization than in the institutionalized (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010).

Increasing competition and employee mobility, boundless career opportunities, frequent job transitions obligate both individuals and organizations to an achievement of successful socialization process.

From organizations' perspective, high-quality socialization means a process that newcomers develop better perception of fit to the organization, devote themselves to their work role, and rapidly achieve the expected level of a satisfactory job performance (Wanberg & Mueller, 2014). For newcomers on the other hand, socialization can be defined a mechanism to remain competitive in their careers (Parker, 2000), to better align themselves to their surroundings (Crant, 2000), and be self-starting (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). As can be seen in the both definitions, socialization process refers basically to the change in the individual not the change in the organization and makes individual a source of power in their socialization (Weatherly, 1999). Since the 1990s an approach stated that newcomer plays an active role in facilitating and in shaping their own socialization located in organizational socialization literature as "proactive approach (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998). This approach focuses on self-initiated or proactive behaviors on the part of newcomers in order to navigate the ambiguity inherent in occupying a new organizational role (Gruman, Saks & Zweig, 2006).

When considering international socialization literature, it is observed that previous studies mostly focused on socialization tactics applied by the institutions for the newcomers (Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979;

Griffin, Colella & Goparaju, 2000; Saks, Uggerslev & Fassina, 2007; Kim, Cable & Kim, 2005; Filstad, 2011; Saks & Gruman 2011; Simosi, 2010). On the other hand, studies on newcomers' proactive socialization process are more limited in number and quality (Ashford& Black, 1996; Gruman, Saks & Sluss, 2006; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000; Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007). Moreover, as a result of the literature review in Turkey, it hasn't been encountered any quantitative/qualitative studies regarding to newcomers' proactive socialization. Therefore within the scope of our study, it is predicted that contribution of the proactive socialization tactics help newcomers to satisfy the needs (e.g. information acquisition, build good relationships, personal control) to the effective socialization process.

The theoretical framework of the study was created on the basis of Ashford & Black (1996)'s study that they described proactive socialization tactics and Saks & Ashforth (1997)'s "multi-level process model".

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Proactive socialization tactics

Organizational entry marks a period of "reality shock", uncertainty and anxiety for newcomers. Under these difficult circumstances, a successful organizational socialization process could be completed only when "the person secures relevant job skills, acquires a functional level of organizational understanding, attains supportive social interactions with coworkers and generally accepts the established ways of a particular organization" (Taormina, 1997: 29). A rapid completion of this process can be possible with the newcomers' proactive effort and taking control over the organizational environment. Because organization cannot possibly provide all of the information that newcomers need, newcomers must make some proactive efforts to learn how things are done and to become fully adjusted insider (Wanberg & Kammeyer- Mueller, 2000).

In one of the most popular studies on proactive socialization, Ashford & Black (1996) identified several tactics that newcomer may engage in as part of their self- socializing to reduce uncertainty and gain feelings of personal control over the environment. These tactics are discussed in seven dimensions including information-seeking behavior, feedback-seeking behavior, positive framing, general socialization, supervisor relationships, networking and job change negotiations (Ashford & Black, 1996; Gruman et al., 2006):

(1) Information seeking refers to newcomer's acquisition of information that is related to the job, organization, and social context from coworkers, supervisors, and mentors and written materials to reduce uncertainty and make sense of their new environment (Miller& Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993b, Saks& Ashforth 1997a).

(2) Feedback seeking refers to a newcomer's solicitation of information about how he or she is performing (Wanberg& Kammeyer- Mueller, 2000).

(3) Positive framing can be defined as newcomer's effort to see things in an optimistic way (Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007).

(4) General socialization refers to newcomers' voluntary participation in gatherings a social activities held in the organization (Burke, 2009).

(5) Supervisor relationship management express to newcomers' effort to build a good relationship and get to know their supervisor.

(6) Networking refers to newcomers' seeking out interaction opportunities and building friendship with people also from different departments and segments of organization.

(7) Job change negotiation involves newcomers attempting to change their job duties or the manner and mean by which they carry out their jobs (Griffin, Colella& Goparaju, 2000).

In the previous studies of the proactive socialization literature, proactive tactics applied by newcomers have been associated with beneficial outcomes for both newcomers and organizations, such as highly job performance, job satisfaction, role clarity, person- organization fit, social acceptance, organizational commitment, and intent to remain. (Ashford& Saks 1996, Gruman et al., 2006, Ashford et al., 2007, Kim &Cable, 2005, Bauer, Bodner, Erdoğan, Truxillo &Tucker, 2007, Wanberg& Kammeyer- Mueller, 2000). Moreover, in their multi-level process model, Saks and Ashforth (1997) discussed two dimensions as proximal and distal outcomes. According to this model, the process of information acquisition, uncertainty reduction and learning results in proximal outcomes such

as role clarity, role orientation, social integration, person-job fit, person-organization fit, and motivation. In the long term, proximal outcomes lead to distal outcomes ranging from low levels of stress and absenteeism to high level of performance, satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Our research model was developed on the basis of Saks & Ashforth (1997)'s the above-mentioned model. Accordingly, it is expected that proactive socialization tactics enable social integration (proximal outcomes) and organizational commitment (distal outcome).

2.2. Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment consist of a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, the willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979:226). Mowday et al. (1982) suggest three stages in the development of organizational commitment: pre-entry (anticipation), early employment (initiation), and middle to late career (entrenchment). The first stage corresponds to anticipatory socialization phase in the process of socialization. This stage refers to purposive behavior and cognitions that afford access to information about career, jobs, and organizations (Stumpf & Hartman, 1984). Realistic and congruous expectations that form the basis of organizational commitment occur at this stage (Feldman, 1976). The second stage corresponds to encounter phase in the socialization process. This stage is the one that newcomers test the organizational reality and their individual expectations try to make sense of requirements of the organizational rules, values and roles in order to reduce the uncertainty (Ards, Jansen & Velde, 2001; Simosi, 2010). The third and final stage that also called change and acquisition is the one that occur socialization. At this stage the newcomer satisfactorily and long term adjusts the norms and values of the organization, the roles and duties he/she would take his/her responsibility. One of the major hallmarks of successful adjustment is a high level of commitment to the organization (Feldman, 1981; Garavan & Morley, 1997; Simosi, 2010).

In socialization literature, great numbers of empirical studies suggest the impact of organizational socialization tactics on organizational commitment (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Jones, 1986; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Bauer & Erdoğan, 2011; Filstad, 2011; Simosi, 2010). On the contrary, studies addressing the direct relationship between proactive socialization tactics applied by newcomers to facilitate their own socialization process, and organizational commitment are quite limited in numbers and quality. According to this relationship constitutes the main problem of our research, organizational commitment refers to a "psychological contract" defining mutual organization-employee expectations (Blau, 1999). Newcomers start to work with a number of expectations and predictions about what sort of facilities and opportunities provided by their organizations. In other words, they are not a "blank slate" and thereby their potential of commitment to the organization is high (Argün, 2007). Taken all together, we propose that proactive socialization tactics (e.g. information seeking, feedback seeking, relationship building) applied by newcomers to achieve their personal goals and make sense of the organizational environment increase their commitment to the organization.

2.3. Social integration

Social integration refers to the extent to which newcomers experience cooperative social interaction with their group members, satisfaction with other group members, and attraction to the group (Wang & Kim, 2013:392). Social integration which is also described as the newcomers' developing a social sense of the organizational environment and to be liked and accepted by peers is considered as one of the most critical indicator of newcomers' adjustment (Morrison, 1993; Bauer & Gren, 1998). As a result of access to people and network, social integration gives a sense of control, makes the organizational environment predictable, and thereby allows newcomers have social-capital resources whenever they need information and support (Ashford & Black, 1996).

By actively seeking information and feedback and knowing what other expect them to do, newcomers understand more clearly the difference between being or not being a member of the organization and thereby increase their perceived insider status (Masterson & Stamper, 2003). Furthermore proactively building relationships enable newcomer to interact frequently with their coworker and help them acquire interpersonal skills needed for cooperation (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). The interaction closely with group members enables to be

formed a positive impression in organizational environment towards newcomers (Wang& Kim, 2013). Theorists posit that integration into a social group involves the establishment of a situational identity and that those who successfully establish an identity through social interactions more strongly identify with the organization as a whole, which in turn, enhances their commitment (Reichers, 1987; Kammeyer-Mueller& Wanberg 2003, Mengüç et al., 2007) Taking into account the past literature, we propose that social integration mediate the effects of proactive socialization tactics on newcomers’ commitment to the organization.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research goal

The aim of this research is to examine the impact of proactive socialization tactics and social integration on organizational commitment, additionally, to analyze whether social integration has a mediating role between proactive socialization tactics and organizational commitment relationship.

3.2. Sample

This study was conducted in Istanbul by using convenient sampling method on participants working various sectors. A total of 500 questionnaires were provided for distribution, of which 397 (79.4 %) were returned. After deleting the semi-filled ones 378 (75.6 %) questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS statistical program and tested through hierarchical regression analyses. Since the focus is on “newcomer socialization”, participants were identified as working for a maximum of 1 year in the current job.

3.3. Measures

Proactive socialization behavior (five dimension of proactivity: positive framing, general socializing, networking, relationship building with boss, and job change negotiation) was measured by the scale developed by Asford & Black (1996).

Information-seeking was measured using the 8-item scale developed by Major and Kozlowski (1997).

Feedback-seeking was measured using the 7-item scale developed by Ashford (1986).

As a mediating variable, *social integration* was assessed by using 4-item scale developed by Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller (2000).

Finally as a distal outcome of socialization, *organizational commitment* was measured by 9-item scale developed by Mowday, Steers& Porter (1979).

By all scales participants were asked to rate each of the items using a 5-point Likert scale so that they can select a numerical score ranging from 1 to 5 for each statement to indicate the degree of agreement or otherwise, where 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 denote “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral)”, “Agree”, and “Strongly Agree”, respectively.

3.4. Proposed model and hypotheses

The proposed model of the study is given below:

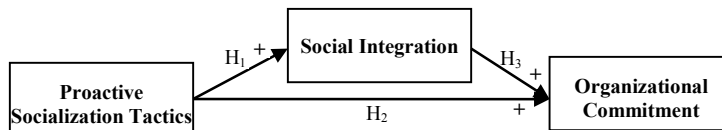


Fig.1. Research Model

Hypotheses:

H₁: Proactive socialization tactics has a positive effect on organizational commitment.

H₂: Proactive socialization tactics has a positive effect on employees’ social integration.

H₃: Social integration has a positive effect on organizational commitment.

H₄: Social integration has a mediating role between the proactive socialization tactics and organizational commitment relationship.

3.5. Results

The demographic characteristics of participants were subjected to frequency analysis. Of the 378 participants, 215 (56.9 %) were female. The mean age of participants was 27.4 (SD= 4.87). Education varied at six levels, ranging from elementary level to master degree (58.2 % have university degree). The average tenure of respondents is 5.97 (SD = 4.98).

In order to determine the validity of the scales the exploratory factor analysis was applied, reliability was determined by using Cronbach's alpha values. The factor analysis placed social integration and organizational commitment under one factor while it placed proactive socialization tactics under seven separate factors: feedback seeking, information seeking, general socialization, job change negotiations, positive framing, networking and supervisor relationship management (Table 1). All of the scales of the factor analysis of obtained by the factor distribution of the original scales were acceptable.

Table.1. Factors obtained and factor loads scale

Scale	Factors	Factor Loads	Cronbach’s alpha
Proactive socialization tactics (PST)	Information seeking (IS)	.860 - .695	.86
	Feedback seeking (FS)	.766 - .623	.80
	General satisfaction (GS)	.844 - .775	.85
	Job change negotiation (JC)	.844 - .775	.85
	Positive framing (PF)	.821 - .641	.82
	Networking (NET)	.774 - .697	.80
	Supervisor relationship management (SRM)	.736 - .686	.70
Social integration (SI)	SI	.904 - .791	.89
Organizational commitment (OC)	OC	.822 - .795	.91

As seen in Table 2, the findings from regression analyses conducted to test the first three hypotheses.

Table.2. Summary of regression analysis

Ind. Var.	Dep. Var.	Std. β	T	Adj. R ²	F	p	Hyp.	Result
PST	OC	.396**	8.36	.157	69.92	.000	H ₁	√
PST	SI	.501**	11.23	.251	126.11	.000	H ₂	√
SI	OC	.297**	6.04	.088	36.42	.000	H ₃	√

** p<0.01

A three-step regression analysis suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) [34] was used to test the mediating effect SI between PST and OC relationship. According to this method, to be able mention an intermediary effect, the following conditions are expected to be seen:

- (1) Independent variable (PST) must have an effect on dependent variable (OC),
- (2) Independent variable (PST) must have an effect on intermediary variable (SI),
- (3) Intermediary variable (SI) must have an effect on dependent variable (OC),
- (4) When intermediary variable (SI) is involved in a regression analysis with independent variable (PST),

intermediary variable (SI) must have an effect on dependent variable (OC) as the regression coefficient of independent variable (PST) upon dependent variable (OC) drops.

The independent variable coefficient of decline was part of the mediation, this relationship completely, the disappearance of an expression with a statistically significant avoid the situation is exactly the mediating relationship is expressed.

Table.3. Summary of hierarchical regression analysis

Ind. Var.	Dep. Var.	Std. β	t	Adj. R ²	F	p	Hyp.	Result
PST	OC	.330**	6.07	.170	38.35	.000	H ₄	√
SI		.132*	2.43					

** p<0.01, * p<0.05

The mediating effect of regarding the Baron and Kenny (1986) by the requirements set out in the first three H₁, H₂ and H₃ hypothesis with the adoption has occurred in the last row of the regression model SI be included along with the PST regression coefficient of the decline shown by the SI and, together with the in the model, the effect of significant observed. This conclusion is based on the mediation for the effect of the sought-after in the last circumstance is also occurred; the partially mediating effect of SI was seen between PST and OC. And H₄ hypothesis has been accepted.

4. Conclusion

Today the increase of knowledge-intensive enterprises also increases the need for employment of change, innovation and initiative-oriented human resources. Considering human resources as a significant value in achieving sustainable competitive advantage and in improving institutional performance requires attracting, retaining and managing ideally of this resource in modern organizations. Accordingly one of the important issues that need to be addressed is “newcomer socialization”. In the literature, socialization process is divided into two parts: organizational socialization based on organization-initiated and proactive socialization based on individual-initiated. Most of the prior socialization research has focused on organizational initiatives (e.g. organizational socialization tactics, mentoring, and training) to socialize newcomers. There are numerous studies on socialization (Griffin et al. 2000; Saks et al. 2007; Kim et al. 2005; Filstad, 2011; Saks & Gruman 2011; Simosi, 2010). However, there are fairly limited studies on proactive socialization approach that look on newcomers as center of their socialization (Ashford& Black, 1996; Gruman, Saks & Zweig, 2006; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000; Ashforth et al., 2007; Mengüç et al., 2007). In order to complete this shortcoming, we focused on newcomers’ self-initiated socialization processes. Accordingly we examined the impact of proactive socialization tactics of newcomers on organizational commitment and the mediating role of social integration on this impact. Some of the findings are congruous with the researches of Gruman et al. (2006) and Mengüç et al. (2007).

Although the focus of our research is newcomer and newcomers’ proactive efforts and initiatives, socialization represent a process that including mutual influence and collaboration. Therefore, all organization members especially managers have some responsibilities regarding the newcomer socialization. Newcomers need at first the guidance of managers in learning of job specifications and responsibilities and providing role clarity. At this point, managers must be clear, reliable and supportive in relations with newcomers. In addition, managers have some other critical tasks relating to respond the information acquisition and learning needs of newcomers, in creating a steady organizational communication network and adopting organizational culture. After the selection process, a number of applications such as onboarding, training allows newcomers to make sense their new duties and social environment. These applications can be present in formal training planned by human resources department or provided by the mentor would be assigned from managers and experienced coworkers.

5. Limitations

The main limitation of this research was in the data collection. In total, 378 respondents completed the survey.

Bearing in mind this response rate, it could be stated that, the data obtained in this research could not represent all newcomers in Turkish companies. And the sample is chosen by adopting a non-probabilistic method; which is purposive and convenience sampling is another limitation of the research.

6. Future research

When newcomers actively engage in proactive socialization behavior to facilitate their own adjustment to the new environment, they more likely feel like insider fully integrated. The sense of being insider increases the likelihood that newcomers can contribute to the organization and further mingle with others. Newcomers who can achieve social integration are more likely to accept their responsibilities as employees of an organization and as members of social network at work. In the last stage, the motivation of responsibility and support from organizational environment increase newcomers' commitment to the organization.

The importance of this study on the socialization literature is to examine what tactics identified as proactive socialization behaviors among Turkish employees. As a result of the literature review in Turkey, it hasn't been encountered any quantitative/qualitative studies regarding to newcomers' proactive socialization. Therefore, it's expected to this study makes significant contribution to the organizational behavior literature in Turkey. In the terms of international literature, because they reflect the behavior of different culture (of Turkish population), this study findings are considered to be important.

Implications of future researches are possible to be summed up in three dimensions. Firstly, predictors of proactive behaviors such as self-efficacy, proactive personality, take charge, personal goals, big five factor should be included in researches in order to understand the impact of individual differences on newcomers' socialization process (Crant, 2000; Wanberg& Kammeyer- Mueller, 2000; Gruman et al., 2006; Tang et al., 2014). Secondly, it must be studied on different critical outcomes of proactive socialization process in terms of individuals and organizations. In this context, it is observed that new empirical studies focus on more recent outcome variables such as affective commitment, organizational citizenship, perceived similarity, absenteeism, burnout (Araza et al., 2013; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011;). Finally we also recommend looking at the impact of organizational initiatives (e.g. organizational socialization tactics, supervisor support, coworker support) on proactive socialization tactics and processes.

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