

NEWCOMERS' SOCIALIZATION TACTICS AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT: INTERPLAY OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND PRIOR RELATIONSHIPS

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article History:</i> Received: 13 Aug 2019 Revised: 19 Nov 2019 Accepted: 12 Feb 2020 Available Online: 05 Jun 2020</p> <hr/> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Socialization Tactics, Perceived Organizational Support, Affective Commitment and Relational Cohesion Theory</p> <hr/> <p><i>JEL Classification:</i> D23, D73, O15</p>	<p>Socialization is a necessary process that helps to manage new talent in the organization in order to survive and thrive in the global market. Numerous studies show that organizational socialization tactics affect workers' affective commitment. However, the processes through which affective commitment is established during socialization is still unclear. We propose the socialization tactics generate newcomers perceived organizational support (POS) and develop affective commitment. Furthermore, pre-establish links within the organization play a contingency role in the socialization process. Surprisingly, there is no study which theoretically and empirically investigates these referral's effects on newcomers' socialization process and its workplace outcomes. We conducted a quantitative sectional survey from 228 newcomers of different organizations. The findings reveal that socialization tactics positively relate to the affective commitment through the mediation of POS and the POS-affective commitment is stronger when prior relationships are high. However, this contingent effect does not empirically support the socialization tactics-POS relationship. The implications are discussed, and future directions are provided.</p>

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1. INTRODUCTION

New hires' socialization is an important process that helps organizations to keep up the competitive level, thrive in the market (Nasr, El Akremi, & Coyle-Shapiro, (2019) and increase the profit margin (Strack, Caye, Von, der Linden, Quiros, & Haen, 2012). *Socialization* is the process by which newcomers "learn the ropes" and "acquire the attitudes", "behaviours", and "knowledge" needed and required to participate as an effective insider of an organization (Allen, Eby, Chao, & Bauer, 2017). The previous literature suggests that effective socialization can increase the social integration (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012), person-job fit (Gruman & Saks, 2011), job satisfaction (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007) and lower turnover (Allen & Shanock, 2013). In contrast, ineffective socialization may increase newcomer turnover (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Numerous studies recommend that socialization positively impact the employee affective commitment, which is the strong and consistent predictors job satisfaction, in-role and extra-role performance, absenteeism, turnover (Meyer et al. 2002). However, the processes through which organization establish affective commitment during socialization are still unclear (Lapointe et al., 2014; Tang et al., 2014). We believe that relational concerns are exclusively important for understanding phenomenon building on this notion.

Relational cohesion theory (Yoon & Lawler, 2006) explain the effect of early socialization experiences on newcomers' affective commitment. Through socialization, the organization helps new hires to learn about their work roles and fit into a workplace (Ellis et al., 2017). This paper argues that socialization can help to build the employees' perception that they feel supported by their organization i.e., perceived organizational support (POS). When employees perceive being cared for and supported by the organization, in turn, they become committed to their organization through their work behaviours (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Research highlights that pre-establish social connections of newcomers in the organization may affect a socialization process, particularly when they are being recruited through employee referral (a popular recruiting source) (Breaugh, 2017). Therefore, we further propose that prior relationships (an extension of the concept of employee referral) are likely to help new hires gather

supplementary information about the real work environment of the organization. Going with this argument, we can anticipate that socialization-POS-commitment path is expected to change in the presence of prior relationships. In short, the study aims to investigate the relationship between socialization tactics and affective commitment empirically; test POS as a potential mediator between socialization tactics and affective commitment and find out the moderating role of prior relationships on socialization tactics-POS, and on POS-affective commitment relations.

Building on the previous socialization literature, our study is one of the very few studies that connect POS to the socialization process. Through this, we provide a unique way of thinking and attempt to explore how organizational socialization process influence newcomers' affective commitment. By concentrating socialization tactics to the development of POS in newcomers is significant in initial phases of socialization. This may help us to explain the black box between socialization tactics and affective commitment that seems to be vague in the current literature. Given that, exploring the implications of socialization tactics in connection to the overall level of support to newcomers, it provides a complete picture of the socialization process. This study develops a pathway model to demonstrate how new employees' socialization process help to understand the organizational commitment and individual perception about organizational support. In addition, this is the first study that conceptualizes prior relationships construct and measured it empirically to investigate its contingent role on socialization tactics-POS and POS-affective commitment relationship.

2. LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Socialization tactics and organizational behavior

Socialization is “the process of moving from being an organizational outsider who is unfamiliar with the norms, procedures and culture of the organization to become an organizational insider who has been working mastery of the internal working norms, procedures and culture of the organization” (Allen et al., 2017). Socialization tactics are mostly studied as an important player in the socialization process (Bauer & Erdogan 2012). Socialization tactics are “different ways structured by the organization to help newcomers adapt to early entry experiences and perform a transition from one role to another” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). These tactics are based on the organization's needs, values and managerial policies that are primarily under the organizational control (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014). There are three dimensions of socialization tactics given by Jones (1986), ranging from institutionalized to individualized tactics. First, content tactics (sequential and fixed): “clear stage's exit for training and there is a clear timetable for role adjustment.” Second, social tactics (serial and investiture): “receiving positive feedback and identity affirmation from organizational insider and having a trusted insider to guide them within the organization.” Third, context tactics (collective and formal): “learning task requirements as part of a group and having formal training before starting the actual job” (Bauer et al., 2007).

2.2 Socialization tactics and POS

POS is defined as “the degree to which employees believe that organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The connection of socialization tactics with POS may be best understood through relational cohesion theory. This theory emphasizes on individual to group attachment and suggests that organizations and companies provide three types of capital to their employees during the ongoing social exchange's relationship. Human capital is based on “knowledge sharing process”; social capital is based on “relationships building process with colleagues and supervisor”, and cultural capital is based on “common understanding of culture, history and norms” (Yoon & Lawler, 2006). Three dimensions of socialization tactics are related to three types of capital that are mentioned above. In content tactics, newcomers recognize that the company has established a strategy for their adaptation and development and is willing to invest in a worker's future (Kim et al., 2005). In social tactics, experienced members (agents, mentors or supervisors) of the organization provide social learning through positive interaction and support and adjust new employees in the organization. In response, newcomers perceived that organizational agents care about them (Shore et al., 2009) and try to become an effective member of an organization. Context tactics deliver common learning experiences and cultural capital through training classes (Saks & Gruman, 2011). These tactics should lead to the perception of a positive social exchange relationship within the organization and are an indicator of the company that cares about new employee's adjustment and tends to reduce uncertainty, anxiety and helping newcomers to socially integrate into the work environment fabric (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Nasr et al., 2019).

Moreover, facilitating new employees with training and development opportunities, gives positive signals to newcomers and deserving members for the organization, because training is considered as an optional treatment in many organizations. Further newcomers' positive experiences can foster learning, confidence and credibility to perform a job in the right way (Ashforth et al., 2007). Allen and Shanock (2013) find a positive relationship between

them. However, they called for undertaking more studies to clarify this relationship further. Based on the above literature, we expect our first hypothesis,

H₁: *Socialization tactics (i.e. the combination of content, social and context dimensions) are positively related to POS.*

2.3 POS and affective commitment

Affective commitment refers to “the emotional attachment, identification and involvement that an employee has with its organization and goals” (Meyer et al., 1993). POS is the important predictor of the affective commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1993). POS would increase affective commitment by developing a felt obligation of care about the organization’s well-being (Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart, & Adis, 2017). Relational cohesion theory argues that relationship building with coworkers and supervisor will lead to newcomers’ retention through affective commitment (Yoon & Lawler, 2006). Affective commitment has been considered an important indicator of worker’s integration at the job. Since Meyer et al. (2002) reported its positive effects on beneficial organizational outcomes such as social integration, job satisfaction and negative effects on absenteeism and turnover. Affective commitment and POS are empirically distinguishable and yet strongly correlated (Bishop, Scott, Goldsby, & Cropanzano, 2005). A research study provides evidence that workers’ emotional tie with their companies has been considered a key determinant of loyalty and dedication over time, but the reverse relationship has not been true (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, (2001), i.e., supporting the antecedence of POS on affective commitment. In (2012), Simosi suggested the strong and direct effects of POS on the affective commitment of newcomers. Many studies determine that workers will have a better rate of attendance, in-role and extra-role performances, job satisfaction and affective commitment and negative effects on work withdrawal, absenteeism and turnover when they have higher POS and feel that organization cares about them (Kim, Eisenberger, & Baik, 2016; Kurtessis et al., 2017). But this relationship is not fully elaborated in the newcomer’s socialization context (Allen & Shanock, 2013) and especially in non-Western cultures and contexts (Ellis et al., 2015). Based on the above literature, we expect our study second hypothesis

H₂: *POS is positively related to affective commitment.*

2.4 The dual role of POS between socialization tactics and affective commitment

Affective commitment has been considered an important outcome for understanding and managing employee behaviour at the early phases of socialization (Lapointe et al., 2014 Tang et al., 2014). Since organizational supportive behaviour and employee, positive experiences contribute to the strong affective commitment of employees (Cranmer et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2002). Socialization tactics have an impact on affective commitment, mostly in a structural and organized process which signals a desire of willingness to invest in employee’s development. It develops positive social exchange relationships in an organization among newcomers (Allen & Shanock, 2013). Newcomers’ relationships with co-workers help them to embed in a new work environment and lower their intention to leave (Allen, 2006). Successive socialization occurs when new hires establish organizational commitment and have strong co-worker relationships (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). Such positive social exchange is established through POS. POS is conceived as a key component in the social exchange relationship (Kurtessis et al., 2017). It has been found that POS mediates on human-resource practices (i.e. participation in decision making, the fairness of rewards and growth opportunity) and organizational commitment relationship (Allen et al., 2003). POS is positively associated with relational mechanisms that tie newcomers with the organization because of socialization tactics (Allen & Shanock, 2013). Interestingly, when POS is high, organizational newcomers get further benefit from the support provided by the organization because it reduces the uncertainty and stress among newcomers (Perrot et al., 2014). Based on the above literature, we expect that:

H₃: *The POS will (a) mediate and (b) moderate the relationship between socialization tactics and affective commitment.*

2.5 Moderation of prior relationships

Employee referral is widely evidenced as being an effective recruitment source as new hire through it have more real-world expectations, are more job performers, have lower intention to leave and more emotional attachments with the organization as compared to other recruitment sources (Breaugh & Mann, 1984; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). HR researchers argue that referral employees tend to be more accomplished applicants, better workers and ready to help and support each other’s to achieve organizational goals. However, in connection to this, Breaugh (2017) argues that the employee referral mechanism to understand the complete picture of organizational outcomes needs more empirical research. The current study focuses on determining real effects and consequences of employee referral on the organizational outcomes in a prudent way and to what extent the employee referral dimension embedded in the recruitment process.

Employee's social networks facilitate newcomer's social integration in the organization through social support (Fang et al., 2011; Hatmaker & Park, 2013). Further, Barrick & Zimmerman (2005) investigate pre-hire embeddedness of employees and find that greater the numbers of links in the organization, the lesser probability that employees want to quit; feel more supportive and are more likely to understand the organizational culture. In contrast, newcomers who fail to adjust themselves in the new work environment might show the extreme behaviour of leaving the organization, mostly during the early phases of a socialization process (Allen, 2006; Allen & Shanock, 2013). In a similar lane of arguments, we argue that those workers, who have pre-established social ties within the organization, received social support from colleagues at early phases of the socialization. So in nutshell socialization tactics are the techniques that develop social, human and cultural capitals in the setting of newcomers' retention and adjustment. Further, the positive social exchange relationship encourages employees to respond to the organization in a loyal way. However, felt obligation acts as a partial moderator in the POS and affective commitment relationship (Allen et al., 2003). Based on the above, we expect that:

H4: *The prior relationships will moderate the relationship between (a) socialization tactics and POS; and (b) between POS and affective commitment, such that these relationships will be stronger with high prior relationships than low.*

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Procedure and sample

The study targeted the new permanent hire of organizations who have joined the organization not longer than three months to one year. One-year usually serves as the key time frame to investigate newcomers' socialization (Bauer & Green, 1994). We approached the alumni members (Perrot et al., 2012) through M.Phil / PhD scholars of a chartered university to find out newcomers' employees. Several other studies of this field also used a similar method to approach new hire to study socialization (Ashforth et al., 1997; Ashforth & Saks 1996, Jones, 1986). A pilot study is conducted to inspect the understanding of the instrument. The questionnaire was distributed to some newcomers and from the feedback received we make some changes in the format of a questionnaire. Further, a training session was conducted for the research scholars to explain the study purpose. Total 300 questionnaires are sent to newcomers of different organizations (services or manufacturing and public or private), located in different cities of Pakistan through email or by delivery and received 240 questionnaires back. Twelve questionnaires were removed due to non-response and not-fitness into the sample selection criteria. Total of 228 questionnaires is useable for statistical analysis. Of the 228 participants, 62.7% are male; 42.1% are below the 25-year age, 41.2% falls between 26 to 30 years age category and 16.2% are above 30 years. Regarding marital status, 74.6% are single. Overall, 59.6% of newcomers are working in private firms in service sectors. Regarding educational background, 55% had a master's degree, 40% had a bachelor's degree and 5% had a PhD degree.

3.2 Measurements

In this research, items are used to operationalize the constructs that were mostly adapted from prior studies. In order to capture, prior relationships of newcomers, we developed items for the purpose of the survey. To measure socialization tactics, we used modified (Ashforth & Saks, 1996) version of Jones' (1986). and assessed it with 11-items scale ($\alpha = .771$). We measured it with five-point Likert-type responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The sample item is "I am gaining a clear understanding of my role in this organization from observing my senior colleagues". We measured affective commitment using the revised 5-items ($\alpha = .875$) scale of Meyer et al. (1993). We used five-point Likert-type ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (to a great Extant). A sample item is "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization." POS was assessed with 5-items ($\alpha = .832$) provided by Eisenberger et al., 1990; Wayne et al., 1997) measured through a five-point Likert-type ranging from 0 (Not true at all) to 4 (True all the time) and the sample item is "The organization values my contribution to its well-being."

We developed a new measure to capture prior relationships based on extensive literature reviews of socialization and recruitment sources. The scale consists of 4-items ($\alpha = .868$), three of the items, "An existing employee provided me with the information about the job", "The existing employee (s) motivated me to apply for the job", and "The existing employee (s) significantly helped me to get this job." were assessed through a four-point Likert-type ranging from 0 (Definitely No) to 3 (Definitely Yes). The final items, how many close contacts (family/relatives/friends) were working in the organization at the time of your joining as a permanent employee was asses through a four-point scale none=0 to Above 4=3). Scholar recognized potentially relevant control variables, for example, age, gender, marital status and formal education as demographic characteristics that correlate to socialization process (Bauer et al., 1998). For instance, education might be associated with skills at the time of appointment, while age might be associated with

career phases (Feldman, 1989). Organization size, age and status have the potential to influence the formalization of socialization tactics process. Therefore, we controlled these variables.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed with IBM SPSS 25 and AMOS 24 software. Initially, the data were screened and checked for missing values in rows and columns, unengaged responses, multivariate outliers. We have 20 variables with missing values all less than 5 % which we replaced with a median of an ordinal scale. We observed normal distributions for our indicators of latent factors and for all other variables (e.g., organization age, sector and size) in terms of skewness. One item for prior relationship was removed because its skewness values are higher than the normal range.

4.1 Model fitness

The measurement relationships were analyzed and the reliability and validity of all the study constructs were evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with maximum likelihood estimation. The evaluation of the measurement model was conducted in two stages. First, CFA was conducted for other reflective variables (prior relationships, perceived organizational support and affective commitment). We used Gaskin & Lim (2016) model fit plugin to calculate the model fit. The model fit is excellent according to the threshold as we see in Table 1 (Model 1). $DF = 1.852$, $CFI = 0.954$, $SRMR = 0.058$ $RMSEA = 0.061$ and $PClose = 0.104$; Second, CFA was conducted for a second-order variable socialization tactics (formative variable), wherein the three dimensions of socialization tactics were treated as first-order factors and the items of the dimensions were the observed indicators. The model fit is excellent according to Threshold results $DF = 2.063$, $CFI = 0.908$, $SRMR = 0.077$ $RMSEA = 0.068$ and $PClose = 0.069$ in Table 1 (Model 2).

Table 1. Model fitness (measurement model)

Measure	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	PClose
Threshold	--	--	b/t 1 & 3	>0.95	<0.08	<0.06	>0.05
Model 1 (Reflective variables)	161.093	87	1.852	0.954	0.058	0.061	0.104
Model 2 (Formative variable)	86.665	42	2.063	0.908	0.077	0.068	0.069
Model 3 (Including Both)	469.568	290	1.619	0.918	0.07	0.052	0.328
<i>Model Fitness (Structural model)</i>							
Model 4 (latent model)	8.296	7	1.185	0.996	0.026	0.029	0.644
Model 5 (Path Mediation)	6.53	6	1.088	0.998	0.032	0.02	0.675
Model 6 (ST X PR → POS)	8.46	6	1.41	0.992	0.023	0.043	0.508
Model 7 (POSX PR → AC)	7.589	5	1.518	0.992	0.031	0.048	0.447
Model 8 (ST X POS → AC)	4.98	1	4.98	0.987	0.025	0.132	0.071

Then, final CFA was conducted for the overall measurement model in which all the major latent constructs, including the second-order variable of the study (socialization tactics), was correlated with other variables of the study (perceived organizational support, prior relationships and affective commitment). The model fit is excellent according to Threshold results $DF = 1.619$, $CFI = 0.918$, $SRMR = 0.07$ $RMSEA = 0.052$ and $PClose = 0.328$ are shown in Table 1 and Model 3.

4.2 Reliability and validity check

The Cronbach's Alpha is used to estimate the reliability of the scales. The reliability of the scores on the adapted questionnaire was the range from 0.771 to 0.875 and for the new variable (prior relationships) reliability is 0.868.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Latent Variables	M	SD	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	1	2	3	4
Prior Relationships	0.97	0.79	0.86	0.57	0.03	0.93	<i>0.75</i>			
Affective Commitment	3.14	1.01	0.88	0.59	0.24	0.88	0.15†	<i>0.77</i>		
POS	2.20	0.75	0.83	0.50	0.24	0.83	0.16*	0.49***	<i>0.71</i>	
Socialization Tactics	4.64	0.86	0.90	0.74	0.24	0.91	0.11	0.34***	0.49***	<i>0.86</i>

† $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.010$, *** $p < 0.00,1$; POS=Perceived organizational support; The diagonal numbers in italics and bold are the square root of the AVE values, M=mean; SD=standard deviation; MSV, maximum shared variance

Convergent validity was evaluated using Gaskin and Lim, (2016) plugin and factor loadings from CFA computed in AMOS 24. The AVE values for the four latent variables ranged from 0.498 to 0.74. The CR values ranged from 0.863 to 0.895 (Table 2). Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the square root of the AVE with the correlation of latent factors should be greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2016). The maximum shared variance (MSV) was also compared with the AVE values. The AVE values should be greater than the MSV values for each latent factor (Rebelo-Pinto et al., 2014). As is evident in Table 2, the square root of the AVE (in italics) was greater than 0.50 and greater than inter-latent factor correlations within the model. All latent factors support these requirements and the discriminant validity of all latent factors is confirmed.

4.3 Path analysis

To test our study model which has both mediating and interaction effects, we ran SEM using AMOS 24. Model fit indices for structural model are given in Table 1 (Model 4) the excellent model fit is achieved, $DF = 1.185$, the $CFI = 0.996$, the $SRMR = 0.026$, the $RMSEA = 0.029$ and $PClose = 0.644$. Table 4 presents the regression weights of SEM results. These results indicate the standardized structural path estimates which that there is a significant positive relationship between socialization tactics and perceived organizational support ($\beta = 0.564$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, we can say that socialization tactics positively related to POS i.e. there is strong support for Hypothesis 1. Further, it shows that POS has a positive relationship with affective commitment ($\beta = 0.474$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, there is strong support for Hypothesis 2.

Table 3. Merged regression weights of SEM results

Path Names	Standardized Beta				
	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Socialization Tactics → Prior Relationships	.138 *	.138 *			
Socialization Tactics → POS (H_1)	.564 ***	.564 ***	.562 ***	.578 ***	
Prior Relationships → POS	.111 *	.111 *	.113 *		
Socialization Tactics → AC	.131 *	.127 \square	.134 *	.126 \square	.128 \square
POS → Affective Commitment (H_2)	.474 ***	.487 ***	.481 ***	.492 ***	.494 ***
Prior Relationships → AC				0.031	
ST X PR → POS (H_{4a})			0.042		
POS X PR → AC (H_{4b})				.094 \square	
ST X POS → AC (H_{3b})					.098 \square

$\dagger p < 0.10$, $* p < 0.05$, $** p < 0.010$, $*** p < 0.001$; POS = Perceived Organizational Support; AC = Affective Commitment; Model 5 (latent model); Model 6 (Path Mediation); Model 7 (PR interaction b/t ST & POS path); Model 8 (PR interaction b/t POS & AC path); Model 9 (POS interaction b/t ST & AC path)

The moderating effect of prior relationships on socialization-POS relation is tested by using orthogonal interaction method. The interaction term (ST X PR) is non-significant related to POS ($\beta = .094$, $p < 0.10$). Thus, our data do not confirm the existence of the moderating effect of prior relationships; consequently, Hypothesis 4a is not supported. The interaction term (POS X PR) is significantly related ($\beta = .094$, $p < 0.10$) to affective commitment. Therefore, Hypothesis 4b is supported. Fig. 1 shows that prior relationships play an important role as a moderator in the relationship between POS and affective commitment. The POS is related significantly and positively with affective commitment when prior relationships are high. However, when the prior relationships are low, the POS less relates to affective commitment.

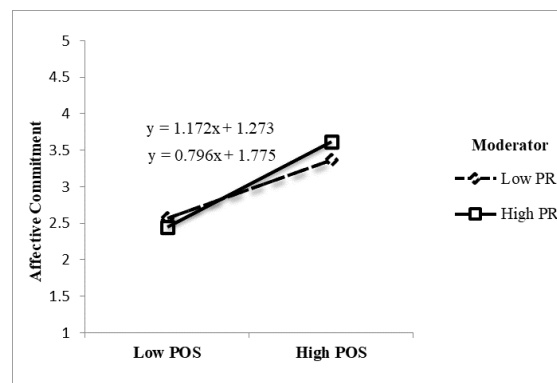


Fig. 1. Moderation of prior relationships between POS and AC

Further, the interaction term (ST X POS) was significant related ($\beta = .098$, $p < 0.10$) to affective commitment. Thus, our data confirm the existence of the moderating effect of POS on socialization tactics-affective commitment relation; consequently, Hypothesis 3b is supported in. Fig. 2 shows that POS play an important role as a moderator in the relationship between socialization tactics and affective commitment. The socialization tactics are related significantly and positively with affective commitment when POS of newcomers is high. However, when the POS is low, the socialization tactics less relate to affective commitment.

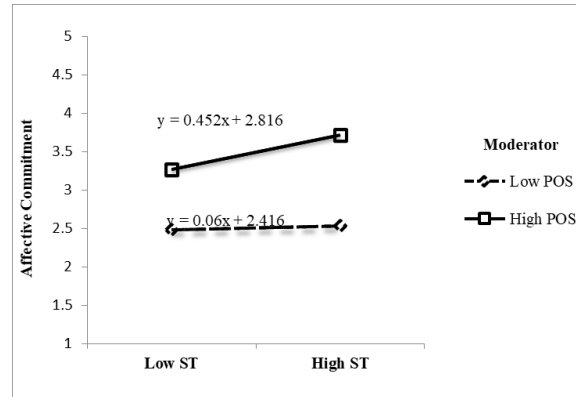


Fig. 2. Moderation of POS between socialization tactics and AC

4.4 Mediation path

The Hypothesis 3a states that POS will mediate the relationship between socialization tactics and affective commitment is estimated by AMOS Plugin specific indirect effect developed Gaskin & Lim (2018). The results of mediation in Table 4 is confirmed the indirect effects from socialization tactics to affective commitment via POS (effect = .275, $p < 0.001$; lower-upper [0.24-0.438]) is significant. Thus, our data confirm the existence of the mediating effect of POS on socialization tactics-affective commitment relation; consequently, Hypothesis 3a is fully supported.

Table 4. Path mediation results

Indirect Path	Unstandardized Estimate	Lower	Upper	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
ST --> POS --> AC	0.323	0.24	0.438	0	0.275***

† $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.010$, *** $p < 0.001$

5. DISCUSSION

This paper examined the underlying process between socialization tactics and affective commitment by suggesting the mediating role of POS and moderation of prior relationships on socialization tactics-POS; and POS-affective commitment relation. Study finds that socialization tactics positively relate to POS. This finding is aligned with the previous studies (Perrot et al., 2014; Tang et al., 2017) which suggested that training and development of employees have a positive relationship with POS. Further, study finds the POS is positively related to affective commitment as evidence for a positive relationship between them has been found in numerous previous studies (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Beyond these previous studies, this study emphasizes the social exchanges of newcomers in terms of POS and prior relationships in an organization rather than their task mastery or role clarity at a workplace. Further study indicates that POS fully mediate the relationship between socialization tactics and affective commitment. POS meditation seems to be a key path for the newcomers' work context and provide support to them during uncertainty, stress or constraining circumstances in the socialization process.

Although prior relationships do not play a moderating role on the socialization tactics and POS relationship, while in contrast pre-hire embeddedness is associated in a positive way with organizational outcomes in previous studies (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005; 2009). Therefore, it is plausible that prior relationships do not always helpful for the organization to achieve its objective. For example, organizational old-timers might actively undermine new employees by belittling, suppression support and do not acknowledge them for their successes (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Moreover, they discourage new employees for several reasons like fear of change, low trust, jealousy and norm's differences (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014). Anyhow, prior relationships play an important role as moderator in the relationship of POS and affective commitment.

The POS is related significantly and positively with affective commitment when prior relationships are high. However, when the prior relationships are low, the POS less relates to affective commitment. All these findings explain some aspects of black box that lay between POS and affective commitment (Allen et al., 2003; Rhoades et al., 2001). The research outcomes further support our argument that POS relates more strongly to affective commitment when prior relationships are high. Newcomers show additional importance and attention for the development of a superior relationship with senior members of the organization. This study underpins the relational cohesion theory context and claims that POS plays a superior role in developing stronger new hires emotional ties with organization members through the effective socialization process. Therefore, we provide a new pathway for organizations that how to adjust and retain newcomers in a new work environment. For all results, see Fig. 3.

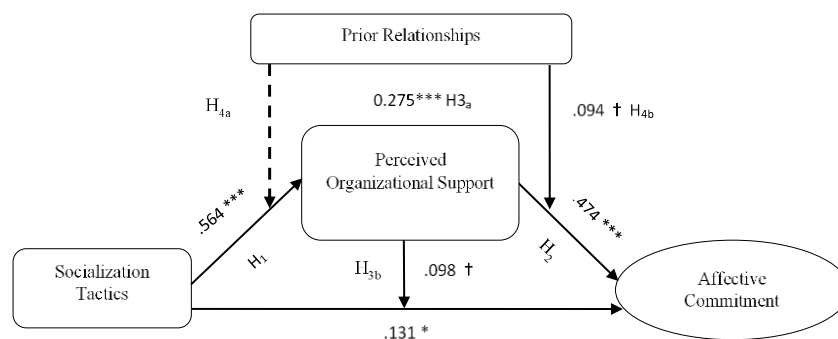


Fig. 3. Research results

5.1 Implications and contributions

Our study outcomes suggest socialization tactics lead POS that reduce uncertainty, anxiety, stress and helping newcomers to integrate into the work environment fabric socially. POS is connected to an affective commitment with respect to the socialization process. Further, the study investigates its contingent role on socialization tactics-POS and POS-affective commitment relationship. So, theoretically, employee referral is not one indicator that helps newcomers in the socialization process as previous studies indicate the real effects and consequences of employee referral on the organizational outcomes in shape of job performance and affective commitment (Breaugh, 2017). Our study results enhance the empirical body of research on socialization tactics and affective commitment debate. We contribute to the POS literature by investigating the role of POS within a socialization context. To date, researchers have examined the effects of POS in contexts where employees were firmly established within their organizations (Chen & Eldridge, 2011). Prior relationships are a key instrument for the relationship between POS and affective organizational commitment. In addition, this is the first study that conceptualizes prior relationships construct and measured it empirically.

This research proposes a supplementary consequence of socialization, for example, prior relationships that help organizations to find out more accomplished applicants, better workers (Breaugh, 2017). In addition, organizations must be conscious of events and activities that can support new employee's socialization, for example, introducing them to peers, allocating a mentor or buddy, etc. Study outcomes provide a solution for companies that how can they establish POS and affective commitment in newcomers and explain the critical process of socialization for the development of newcomers' affective commitment. The research outcome of this study advises that even in comparatively unstructured circumstances, companies are capable of substitute supplementary affective commitment, i.e. to what degree that they are capable of providing a predominant blueprint to new employees for their socialization.

5.2 Limitations and directions

There are some limitations of this study; first, our dependence on self-reports data responses increases the problems of the correctness of respondents' perceptions and common method variance. However, future research might also be helpful by using numerous sources of data collection, for example, peers, managers, supervisors and company documents (Bauer et al., 1998). Second, our study focused on socialization tactics that usually occurred during the accommodation phase and did not incorporate the multiphase process of socialization (Morrison, 1993). Therefore, future research should investigate multiphase socialization process in new employees' relationship-building activities, so they would give a more inclusive image of a socialization process. Third, two recent meta-analyses provide evidence that relationships among socialization process variables, in a cross-sectional design, have

stronger correlations, but it declines in longitudinal design (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). Thus, it is important to explore this phenomenon with a longitudinal design. Finally, this study examined POS and prior relationships as a socialization process without including other important indicators of socialization (e.g., role properties, i.e. conflict, clarity and ambiguity; self-efficacy and task mastery). Therefore, there is space to include these variables in future studies in this context. Furthermore, for upcoming research studies the relative importance of various mechanisms for understanding how new employees adjustment impact other outcomes of socialization (i.e. performance) would also be a more valuable aspect to be explored. In addition, the socialization process presently reflects a black box in terms of the precise activities they entail. Thus, upcoming research should inspect how socialization tactics translate into new employees' adjustment and learning.

6. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, this research implies that organizations can influence newcomers' affective commitment by actively embedding new employees in the organization through the process of socialization tactics. Moreover, they maximize the effectiveness of the recruitment process by incorporating the socialization process. We found that POS positively relates to socialization tactics and affective commitment. Our study findings suggested that POS is an important pathway that connects socialization tactics to affective commitment, which also play the role of catalyst in the socialization process. The current study enhances our knowledge socialization process and examines the role of prior relationships in this context theoretically and empirically. It's also through the light in the socialization and commitment literature by being to find out the black box between these relationships. Furthermore, newcomers POS relationship process is a valuable approach for understanding newcomers' socialization evolution process from a stranger to contributing insider and develops tied to the new organization.

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