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EMPLOYEES ASSIMILATION AND SOCIALIZATION TACTICS IN ORGANIZATION – AN OVERVIEW

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Employees' assimilation or also widely mentioned in literature as organizational assimilation, is a dynamic process that occurs between newcomers and members of an organization that includes the organization's attempt to orient and train newcomers, along with the recruits' effort to negotiate their roles in the organization (Gailliard, Myers & Seibold, 2010). Organizations usually design the cut-off for newcomer-member transition (assimilation) period between three to six months after recruitment of the newcomer. However, Bauer (2010) mentioned that "a study of the onboarding process at Texas Instruments found that employees who went through an improved onboarding program were fully productive two months faster than employees in a traditional program" (Bauer, 2010). Gailliard, et al, (2010) noted that the term organizational socialization and organizational assimilation can be considered as equivalent. The term organizational socialization has also been widely used by researchers who studied on employees' onboarding to explain the matter (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Bauer, 2010). In this study, the term employees' assimilation is applied in reference to those terms. Nonetheless, Bauer (2010) mentioned that "no matter what the terminology, the bottom line is that the faster new hires feel welcome and prepared for their jobs,

the faster they will be able to successfully contribute to the firm's mission". On that account, in this particular study, the term assimilation, socialization and onboarding will be treated similarly.

Past researches on employees' assimilation are found to be limited. Many organizational socialization research have made Van Maanen & Schein (1979) as main reference to begin their socialization theory. Therefore it can be said that Van Maanen & Schein (1979) is the pioneer study in the area of organizationaal assimilation. Van Maanen & Schein (1979) mentioned that "at heart, organizational socialization is a jejune phase used by social scientist to refer to the process by which one is taught and learns 'the rope' of a perticular organizational role". Van Maanen & Schein (1979) then added "In its most general sense, organizational socialization is the process by which individuals acquires knowledge and skills necessary to assume organizational role". As studies on socialization continues over the years, patterns shows that organizational assimilation requires in becoming a contributing member, which acts as a result of interactions among members (Gailliard et al., 2010). Taormina (1997) explains organizational socialization as the process by which a person obtains related job skills, acquires supportive social interactions with members

of the organization, attains a functional level of organizational understanding, and generally accepts the established ways of an organization. However, the definition of this term has been mention in so many ways in the previous studies. Saks and Gruman (2014) depicts organizational socialization as "a learning process in which newcomers are expected to acquire new knowledge and skills and be motivated to behave in accordance with an organization's goals and objectives". Meanwhile, Scott and Myers (2010) described organizational assimilation as a negotiation of membership, the multiple processes enabled and constrained by members' appropriation of rules and resources that position and reposition them along multiple dimensions within organizational, social, and work systems. Other than that, Myers and Oetzel (2003) mentioned that "organizational assimilation describes the interactive mutual acceptance of newcomers into organizational settings".

Furthermore, Gailliard et al. (2010) states that organizational assimilation is a dynamic process that occurs between newcomers and members of an organization that includes the organization's attempt to orient and train newcomers, along with the recruits' effort to negotiate their roles in the organization. Even though past researchers

gave various definitions individually, from the literature reviews made, most of them in this area believe that organizational socialization is a long term process which impacts the attitudes and behavior (Saks & Gruman, 2014) of employees. This means that there is room for continuous improvement of organizational socialization. In addition, this aligned with the statement made by Taormina (2004) which states that organization socialization is measurable not only to rate newcomers, but also to evaluate the socialization of members at any given period during their employment in an organization. "In a `process,' several types of activities can be continuously on-going for long periods of time, different types of activities can be concurrent and activities which were prevalent at an earlier time can be diminished and then increased at a subsequent time " (Taormina, 1997). The early researchers of organizational socialization viewed the matter to as a multistage process consisting of three distinct stages by which newcomer begin transitioning from being an outsider to a fully functioning insider of an organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Those stages of organizational socialization are: (1) pre-encounter stage or also known as "anticipatory" phase that occurs upon organizational entry when expectations are usually formed; (2) encounter stage

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or "accommodation" phase when a newcomer enters, obeserve and experience what the organization really is and reality and expectations are tested; and (3) lastly, the "adaptation" phase which newcomer settles in, adjust and a long-lasting change takes place (Ardts et al., 2001; Feldman, 1976). A general agreement among past researchers and also evidence that shows pre-encounter and encounter phases are essential in determining newcomer assimilation and learning, creating the long lasting employee-employer relationship, as newcomers adjust to their new surroundings (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

The transition phase upon to and soon after the entry into an organization or "outsider-to-insider" interval which happens during pre-encounter and encounter phase are crucial in organizational assimilation as newcomer adaptability is difficult and most intense during this period (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Moreover, newcomer socialization occurs before organizational entry and soon after organizational entrance (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). The adjustment and learning that occurs during these two early phases have a long lasting impact on the relationship between the newcomer and the organization and also the organization's retention rate (Chao et al., 1994). Pre-encounter phase allows newcomer to get

initial contact with members of the organization and receiving various informal and formal information from a variety of independent sources about their new job, the organization, and work groups that can influent their later adjustment (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

Next, upon entrance into the organization (encounter phase), newcomers are exposed to different sources and new types of information and they had to face the reality of what their actual new environment is really like and at the same time additional loads are placed on them as they are expected to get up to speed as fast as possible (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Newcomers also experience high level of uncertainty, surprise and reality shock and will try to cope to reduce such uncertainty by making sense of their new work surroundings and understanding where they fit in it (Simosi, 2010). Normally, in confronting and assimilating into the organization, newcomers ask themselves the key question "how do I fit in here?" (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). The encounter phase is marked as crucial because most socialization theorist such as Morrison (1993) had found that the attitudes and behaviors portrayed by newcomers during this early period correlated with attitudes and behaviors for many months later and have significantly influence

their adjustment during the assimilation process.

After the encounter phase come the adaptation phase. This takes place when most learning has been done and substantial notable progress in transitioning newcomers from being an outsider to becoming a fully functioning member of the organization (Feldman, 1976). This phase depicts that newcomers had clarified their roles, becoming familiarized with their new tasks, learnt "the way things are done" within the organization and have integrated into their work group (Feldman, 1976). The success of new comers adaptation can be identified by the degree which they have mastered socialization content and it can be assessed against measures that are related to the organization, the job and their work group (Chao et al., 1994). The dimension or measure of organizational assimilation applied in this study is based on models of past research. Based on studies that have been gathered, the dimension used in configuring the employees' assimilation or organizational assimilation (dependent variable) for this study is adopted from the model made by Gailliard et al. (2010) which is a research done to revalidate the Organizational Assimilation Index (OAI) created by Myers and Oetzel (2003). Both studies had similar purpose which is to investigate the ways assimilation happens and to provide proper measures of the

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organizational assimilation. Through a qualitative study, Myers and Oetzel (2003) revealed six dimensions in defining the dimensions of organizational assimilation, which are familiarity with others, acculturation, recognition, involvement, job competency and role negotiation.

The complete definition of all the six dimension formulated by Myers and Oetzel (2003) can be found in both the original study and also in the revised study made by Gailliard et al. (2010). Familiarity with others includes making friends, getting to know coworkers, fondness, and feeling and communicating general friendliness (Gailliard et al., 2010). Myers and Oetzel (2003) define acculturation can defined as learning and accepting the culture. Recognition means being recognized as valuable and feeling one's work is important to the organization (Gailliard et al., 2010). According to the participants of Myers and Oetzel's (2003) study, being recognized as worthy by superiors or other members of the organization, and feeling that their work is valuable to the organization made them feel accepted into the organization. Gailliard et al. (2010) mentioned that involvement as "evidenced in seeking ways to contribute to the organization, such as taking on added responsibility for the sake of the organization". Myers and Oetzel (2003) illustrates that "when members are involved

with the organization, they seek ways to contribute to the organization, often by volunteering to perform extra work or take on added responsibility for the sake of the organization and its members". Next, job competency implicates underthaning how to do one's job and performing it well (Gailliard et al. 2010). Lastly, compromising between one's own expectations and those of the organization is the meaning of role negotiation (Gailliard et al. 2010).

A more recent study conducted by Gailliard et al. (2010) provides an updated and more accurate version of such research. Gailliard et al. (2010) had further improved the theory created by Myers and Oetzel (2003) by deleting some of the items out of the questionnaire constructed by Myers and Oetzel and had also added the seventh dimension organizational assimilation into the measurement. Therefore, the seven dimension suggested by Gailliard et al. (2010) are Familiarity with Coworkers (new), Familiarity with Supervisors (formerly Familiarity with Others), Acculturation, Recognition, Involvement, Job Competency, and Role Negotiation. Gailliard et al. (2010) mentioned that Myers and Oetzel (2003) has provided the most complete investigation in the communication discipline of the multidimensional perspective and members' assimilation but it could

be improved by clarifying the processes within these dimensions. For example, the familiarity dimension explained by Myers and Oetzel (2003) mainly give attention to a member's interactions with supervisors, while ignoring the process of becoming familiar with coworkers and other colleagues (Gailliard et al., 2010). Furthermore, Gailliard et al. (2010) added "the measure assesses the positive aspects of assimilation without much attention to negative experiences that would be telling of one's ability to integrate into an organization".

The term socialization tactics, on the other hand, were found to be popularly defined by its dimensions. Batistic (2018) found that organization invest in relationship with individual through group incentives and cross functional teams as socialization tactics to improve the organizational overall performance. This study proposed two socialization tactics as Bauer et al. (2007) specified that there are two key socialization factors in their meta-analytic model which is known as organizational tactics and newcomer proactivity (Saks et al., 2007; Simosi, 2010; Fang et al., 2011; Perrot et al., 2014; Benzinger, 2016). These researchers approach is based on Jones (1986) which has categorized the six dimension model created Van Maanen and Schein (1979) into two

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summarized theory known as individualized and institutionalized approaches.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) is the pioneer and most widely known approach in understanding organizational socialization. The model developed by them shows that there are variety of tactics used by organizations in socializing newcomers that are classified into six dimension. Van Maanen and Schein suggested that organizational socialization process is a combination of both formalized socialization activities and informal behaviors of organizational members. Their theory proposed a taxonomy consisting of six bipolar tactics which organizations use for socializing newcomers. Nonetheless, even one the most recent socialization study found today like Benzinger (2016) had also mentioned Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) six socialization tactics which are: formal versus informal (implementation of specified socialization programs or socializing exclusively 'on the job'); collective versus individual (socializing newcomers in groups or individually); sequential versus random (whether or not newcomers are informed precisely about the arrangement of the planned socialization); fixed versus variable (whether or not new hires are told exactly about a fixed timetable for the completion of various socialization stages); serial versus disjunctive

(whether or not newcomers have access to previous job incumbents as role models); investiture versus divestiture (whether or not the organization comfirms the entering identity of the recruit). However, these factors developed by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) are viewed as broad characteristics of the actual approaches and actions taken by organizations to aid new hires assimilatioon (Ardts et al., 2001; Bauer et al., 2007).

Jones (1986) build on Van Maanen (1979) theoetical model of organizational socialization and designed a scales for every one of the six tactics and developed the first empirical study on the relationship between socialization tactics and newcomers' adjustment. Based on the results, Jones (1986) classifies the six socialization tactics into two: instituitionalized (formal, fixed, collective, investiture, sequential and serial) and/or individualized tactics (informal, variable, individual, divestiture, random, and disjunctive). Jones (1986) also mentioned that institutionalized tactics can reduce newcomers' uncertainty during the early entry into an organization and he also mentioned that organization can reinforce and keep organizational status quo. However, instituitionalized tactics forces newcomeers to become a passive member in the organizational socialization process

(Benzinger, 2016).

Instituitionalized socialization approach, also known as organizational socialization tactics in certain studies refers to the structured and formal socialization procedure used by organizations where as individualized socialization approaches or individual's proactive effort refers to the newcomers' responsibility of their own socialization as they undergo unstructured and informal socialization experiences (Jones, 1986). Meanwhile, individualized tactics, which are informal, individual, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture tactics (Jones, 1986), represents a more 'laissez-faire' acculturation of newcomers, initiate role innovation, but at the same time can correlate with a more deficient initial work behaviors and attitudes (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks and Gruman, 2011; Saks et al., 2007. Van Maanen & Schein (1979) proposed that as newcomers attempt to lessen stress and uncertainty, they have the tendency to conform with the organization's expectations instead of to "rock the boat". Many studies showed that institutional approaches are positively associated to role clarity (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). Furthermore, several Meta-analyses conducted by researchers showed that organization socialization tactics are prone to result in better role clarity and increases positive job attitudes (Bauer,

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Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Saks et al., 2007), while intentions regarding the treatment of newcomers holding different work contracts is more apparent (Benzinger, 2016). This type of socialization tactics involves a specific time period, scheduled learning events, and cohort approaches which results in greater learning ability and role clarity, hence reduces the newcomers uncertainty (Perrot et al. 2014). At the same time, it has been thought that institutionalized approaches discourages innovative role orientation as newcomers need follow the custodial role orientation where they fulfill only the tasks explicitly given to them by the organization (Saks et al., 2007; Perrot et al., 2014).

During the existence of a structured and standardized set of experience, newcomers learn faster and the organization expect a predictable, routined set of actions and responses from the new hires (Saks et al., 2007). Therefore, institutionalized approaches leads to a passive orientation on behalf of the newcomers, which is also mentioned as a custodial orientation in the literature, while individualized approaches are corresponding with a attempt of new hires to adopt a more change-oriented technique to their role (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). When new hires engage in role innovation, they tend to modify their roles in the effort to fit organizational realities (Perrot et al. 2014).

"Exploring factors within the control of the organization helps identify ways in which organizations can create environments that maximize the possibility of successful newcomer adjustment" (Perrot et al., 2014).

It could be concluded that employees' assimilation is indeed a very interesting topic to study. There are various factors influencing employees' assimilation, but this study only focusses on socialization tactics as it covers both the individuals and institution tactics. It is hope that this study could contribute to the body of knowledge by giving a clear understanding of the theories between employees' assimilation and socialization tactics. In addition, this study can indirectly help the employers towards having a vast understanding of employees' assimilation in accordance to different type of organizational settings.

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