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## Newcomer Adjustment and Affective Commitment: A Two-Wave Moderated Mediation Model

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NEWCOMER ADJUSTMENT AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT: A TWO-WAVE  
MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

BY  
SHAY NORRIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science

Major in Industrial and Organizational Psychology

South Dakota State University

2022

## THESIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE

Shay Norris

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the master's degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree.

Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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## ABSTRACT

NEWCOMER ADJUSTMENT AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT: A TWO-WAVE  
MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

SHAY NORRIS

2022

As job and career changes continue to increase in the post-pandemic work environment, new employees are not staying in their roles long enough to identify with their organization, causing high turnover in the first few months of employment. To address these problems, there is increasing evidence that providing resources and support during the socialization process will increase employee commitment, retention, and organizational performance. I propose that an integrated theoretical framework combining Socialization Resources Theory (SRT) and Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R) is best suited to explain the relationship between newcomer adjustment and affective commitment. A moderated-mediation model is developed and tested at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> month of employment, to examine whether the relationship between newcomer adjustment and affective commitment is mediated by job satisfaction over time, and whether this indirect effect is moderated by supervisor support. A large sample ( $N=364$ ) of survey responses from a healthcare organization in the Midwest were analyzed. The results indicated that there is a direct, positive relationship between newcomer adjustment and affective commitment and that job satisfaction did mediate this relationship, although there was no support for the moderated-mediation hypothesis. These findings provide further evidence that ensuring positive newcomer adjustment will increase job satisfaction and subsequently increase affective commitment.

## **Newcomer Adjustment and Affective Commitment: A Two-Wave Moderated Mediation Model**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As job-hopping becomes more popular, especially among young professionals, a lack of commitment proves to be a costly issue for organizations. While commitment and loyalty prove to be crucial aspects of employment and success, it takes some time to develop a strong sense of identity with an organization (e.g., Albert & Whetten, 1985; Gonzalez & Diego, 2020). A pressing issue is that many workers are not staying in organizations long enough to develop this attachment after being hired.

A recent employment survey found that one-third of workers quit their jobs within 90 days of employment, many of which were young professionals (Psychology Today, 2019). The study also indicated that 43% of employees reported that their daily role was different than what they understood it would be during the hiring process. This suggests that the first few months of employment are vital in achieving job satisfaction and commitment to the organization as well as preventing turnover and the costs that accompany it. However, why is this period so important, and what can organizations do to achieve these desired outcomes? These issues have continued to be a prominent concern for organizations. The recent global pandemic has affected the economy, job market, and culture of work in many ways as well. A 2021 American worker survey reported that as many as one in four workers is planning to look for new job opportunities in the post-pandemic economy due to foreseen issues with career advancement, skill development, and flexibility of remote work options (CNBC, 2021). As we enter a time

of recovery, restoring the workforce will highlight the hiring, training, and onboarding processes for both new and returning employees everywhere, highlighting the salience of these questions.

The process by which employees become familiar and comfortable with aspects of their job and the organization's culture is known as organizational socialization (e.g., Feldman, 1981; Fischer, 1986; Kowtha, 2018; Schein, 1971). While it can occur at every stage of employment, the socialization of newcomers or new hires in particular is considered crucial. It is at the initial point of entry into the organization where learning and adjustment issues are most important and problematic (e.g., Ellis, Nifadkar, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2017; Gregersen, 1993). A positive socialization process has been shown to predict high levels of job satisfaction, reduced turnover intention, and many other work attitudes as well as organizational outcomes (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007; Kowtha, 2018; Saks et al., 2007). As many organizations suffer from high turnover and continue to invest heavily in hiring and training costs, it is crucial to understand how the socialization process affects the desired outcomes of this investment.

The literature has yet to follow a consistent explanation of the impact the socialization process and a strong organizational identity can have on employee attitudes and various organizational outcomes (e.g., Kowtha, 2018; Wittman, 2019). Furthermore, theory tied to socialization can explain the components and successful execution of the process, but it has not yet effectively elucidated its influence on certain future outcomes, nor highlighted its role in forming an organizational identity (e.g., Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2020; Wittman, 2019; Wittman, 2019).

Furthermore, newcomer socialization has been conceptualized various ways, causing its measurements and outcomes to vary across the literature (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2020).

By building on SRT and JDR, this study will attempt to fill in the gaps left by theory and literature mentioned above by investigating the relationships between newcomer adjustment, job satisfaction, supervisor support, and commitment, offering new insights into the importance of the first few months of employment and the formation of an organizational identity. Furthermore, the current study will be conducted longitudinally to demonstrate how various work attitudes and organizational outcomes develop and change as employee tenure increases. Organizational socialization and supervisor support will be measured at the 1<sup>st</sup> month of employment, and job satisfaction as well as affective commitment will be measured at the 4<sup>th</sup> month of employment. Thus, the current study will highlight the importance of newcomer adjustment over time and contribute to a better understanding of how and when organizational socialization practices and supervisor support can influence critical outcomes (Figure 1).

## **Theoretical Background and Hypotheses**

### **Newcomer Adjustment**

Organizational socialization has been defined as the process by which employees recently introduced into an organization become familiar and comfortable with aspects of their job and the culture of the organization; consequently, the outcome of this process is largely referred to as *newcomer adjustment* (e.g., Feldman, 1981; Fischer, 1986; Schein, 1971). Historically, literature has examined newcomer adjustment as a goal (e.g., Bauer & Green, 1998; Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Song, 2013; Morrison,



1993) while more recent research has found that newcomer adjustment is an important predictor of factors such as job satisfaction, commitment, job performance, turnover intent, and objective turnover (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007; Ellis, Nifadkar, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2017).

Newcomer adjustment has been categorized in various measures throughout its development in literature (Ashforth et al., 2007). Four scales are considered central to the operationalization and measurement of newcomer socialization. These include the Content Areas of Socialization (CAS; Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994), Organizational Socialization Inventory (OSI; Taormina, 1994), Newcomer Socialization Questionnaire (NSQ; Hauteur et al., 2003), and Employee Adjustment Survey (EAS; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002).

While research has noted that these scales are not perfect and can lack precision (Schwab, 2011; Klein & Heuser, 2008), the consensus of socialization literature deems that these scales effectively capture an accurate conceptualization of newcomer adjustment with three core domains: the role, relationships, and the organization (Bauer et al., 2007). These domains demonstrate the understanding of tasks in the role, developing effective working relationships, and understanding organizational culture and context (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Haueter et al., 2003; Taormina, 1994). The current study will use this consensus as a basis for accurately operationalizing newcomer adjustment in accordance with the literature and will conceptualize newcomer adjustment with two sub-components: task socialization and co-worker support (e.g., Frögli, Rudman, Lövgren, & Gustavsson, 2019; James, 2020; Kowtha, 2018).

The sub-component of task socialization is defined as the level of confidence you possess in understanding your job duties (Haueter, Macan, & Winter, 2003). It has been found to be relevant in predicting important organizational constructs, correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Haueter, Macan, & Winter, 2003), and predicts organizational commitment longitudinally (Bauer et al., 2007).

The other component, co-worker support, is defined as the strength of the relationship between an employee and their co-workers, determined by aspects such as social acceptance and willingness to help (Taorminay, 2004). Co-worker trust is a significant predictor of decreased turnover intention, perceived organizational support, and increased affective commitment (Ferres, Connell, & Travaglione, 2004).

The relationship between newcomer adjustment and organizational commitment is defined as affective attachment/commitment to the organization (Cohen, 2003), a relationship that has been examined in a number of previous studies (e.g., Gruman et al., 2006; Heimann & Pittenger, 1996; Klein et al., 2006). Affective commitment reflects feelings such as attachment, identification, or loyalty to the object of the commitment, being the organization itself in many cases. (Morrow, 1983, 1993). While the literature has proven that socialization tactics predict newcomer adjustment and outcomes such as commitment, further examination is needed to understand why and how (Saks et al., 2007). The current study's longitudinal design will respond to the call of past studies and meta-analyses to make more specific recommendations regarding what matters most at different points in the adjustment process (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007; Cohen, 2017; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Finally, with the adaptation of new work arrangements (e.g., remote and hybrid work) in recent years, understanding the development of one's

organizational identity may help in understanding the possible need for new socialization tactics and adaptive performance that literature has not yet examined (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2020).

Socialization Resources Theory (SRT) can be used as a foundation to explain the nature of the relationship between these sub-components and affective commitment. The premise of this theory is that the transition to a new job or role is inherently challenging and stressful, and presenting newcomers with resources (e.g., effective training, relevant tasks, adequate support, etc.) needed to cope is the most effective way for successful adjustment. SRT is grounded in Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R) as the resources provided to newcomers will balance the job demands of a new work environment. Job demands such as role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and unmet expectations can be balanced by resources such as interpersonal and social relations (supervisor and coworker support, team climate), and the task itself (skill variety, task identity, autonomy, feedback) (Nelson, Quick, & Eakin, 1988; Saks & Ashforth, 2000).

The motivational aspect of job resources can be extrinsic in their instrumental role for achieving work goals, or intrinsic because they facilitate growth, learning, and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and satisfy basic human needs such as relatedness, autonomy, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Thus, I posit that *task socialization* can be viewed as an essential intrinsic resource, while *co-worker support* is provided extrinsically. The current study speculates that approaching the socialization process through task socialization and co-work support and providing the resources they produce to newcomers will help them create a strong organizational identity that

increases their affective commitment to their role and the organization. Therefore, H1 and H2 are as follows:

*Hypothesis 1: Task Socialization (1<sup>st</sup> month) will predict affective commitment (4<sup>th</sup> month)*

*Hypothesis 2: Co-worker support (1<sup>st</sup> month) will predict affective commitment (4<sup>th</sup> month)*

### **The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is one of the most highly examined constructs in organizational literature, explaining many work attitudes and consistently predicting positive organizational outcomes, including affective commitment (e.g., Aziri, 2011; Judge, Parker, Colbert, & Heller, & Ilies, 2002; Nyberg, 2010). Socialization, and the resulting newcomer adjustment, is vital to developing employees' level of job satisfaction (e.g., Bauer et. al, 2007; Morrison, 1993; Wang, Hom, & Allen, 2017). According to JD-R theory and SRT, resources provided through task socialization and co-worker support to counteract the demands of a new work environment and the resulting positive view of the organization might be related to positive job attitudes, especially satisfaction with one's job. Furthermore, research has shown that job satisfaction can be significantly influenced by characteristics of the work environment, such as the nature of the work (task socialization), social support (co-worker support), and organizational elements (e.g., Gaertner, 2000; Lambert et al, 2001; James, 2020).

Previous studies have found that direct, positive impact from peer support and a direct, negative impact from role ambiguity on job satisfaction. Furthermore, these variables do not directly impact organizational commitment, but rather through job

satisfaction which subsequently increases commitment (Gaertner, 2000; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2013). While the literature affirms the nature of the relationship between these constructs, it has not explained how the newcomer adjustment process impacts the development of an employee's organizational identity through job satisfaction, especially over time. The current study will shed light on how these relationships may change over time and contribute a better understanding of where an employee's organizational identity fits in this exchange.

According to SRT and JD-R theory, the support provided by co-workers and a high level of self-efficacy towards one's ability to complete their job tasks are important resources that directly impact their ability to deal with job demands from a new work environment. While these initiatives are very influential on many work attitudes, they would not necessarily cause a direct increase in affective commitment, as perceptions of the organization take time to develop. These resources do, however, might impact job satisfaction directly (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2013), and job satisfaction directly might affect affective commitment (Rifai, 2005). Moreover, an increase in an employee's perceived organizational support might directly increases their satisfaction with their job, as enjoyment in their role is an outcome of their positive perceptions. This, in turn, might affect their attachment to the organization.

According to the literature and this theoretical framework, the current study suggests that the subcomponents of newcomer adjustment might impact affective commitment through job satisfaction. Specifically, it could be the case that an employee that experiences high levels of task socialization and/or co-work support could still have no emotional connection to their organization. Since they are newcomers, not much time

has passed to effectively form an identity with their team or organization. The socialization process, however, will impact their level of job satisfaction which will, in turn, affect affective commitment. Therefore, H3 and H4 are as follows:

*Hypothesis 3: Job satisfaction will mediate the relationship between task socialization and affective commitment.*

*Hypothesis 4: Job satisfaction will mediate the relationship between co-worker support and affective commitment.*

### **The Moderating Role of Supervisor Support**

Following SRT and JD-R theory, of the resources available during the socialization process, one of the most influential on newcomer adjustment is supervisor support (e.g., Gok, Karatuna, & Karaca, 2015; Nienaber, Romeike, Searle, & Schewe, 2015). The newcomer's supervisor is often involved in hiring the employee, overseeing their training, bringing them onto their team, and communicating the expectations of the role, making them relevant at every stage of the socialization process. Moreover, research has shown that supervisor support directly impacts many work attitudes, especially job satisfaction (e.g., Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001; Gok, Karatuna, & Karaca, 2015).

Some notable studies have found that supervisor support is directly related to organizational commitment above and beyond its impact on job satisfaction (Nienaber, Romeike, Searle, & Schewe, 2015). In other words, supervisor support directly influenced both job satisfaction and commitment (Gaertner, 2000) supporting the current study's assumption that supervisor support can strengthen the effects of job satisfaction on affective commitment, without needing job satisfaction as a mediator.

An employee's perceived organizational support will increase their felt obligation to help the organization reach its objectives as well as their affective commitment to the organization (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Since supervisors are often viewed as organizational agents, they are often directly tied to perceived organizational support. Employees develop "general views concerning the degree to which supervisors value their contributions and care about their well-being" (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Consequently, employees recognize interactions with their supervisor (either positive or negative) as symbolic of their organization's support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger, 2002). Literature has also demonstrated that supervisors influence employee well-being (e.g., job satisfaction) through their impact on the work environment (e.g., Breevert & Bakker, 2018; Moyle, 1998; Sellegren, Ekvall, & Tomson, 2008).

Based on the aforementioned research and theory, the current study postulates that supervisor support will moderate the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between newcomer adjustment and affective commitment. Even if the effects of task socialization and co-worker support increase a new employee's job satisfaction, the level of supervisor support they feel during their socialization process will influence the strength of their subsequent organizational identity and affective commitment. As such, a high level of supervisor support will create a positive work environment in which positive newcomer adjustment practices will increase employees' level of job satisfaction, which subsequently increases affective commitment. When supervisor support is low, employees will need additional resources to compensate for their lack of supervisor support, expending the resources before they lead to positive outcomes. This

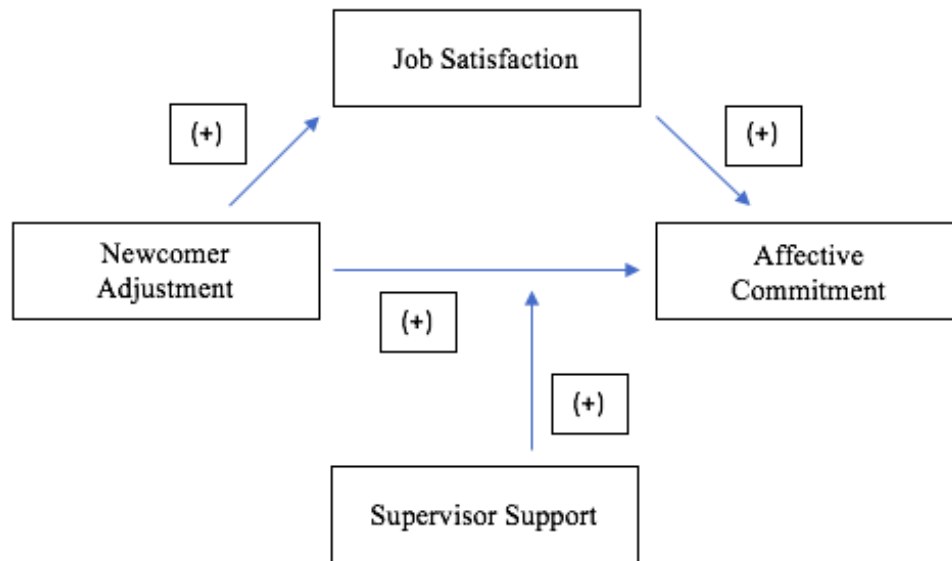
will decrease job satisfaction and subsequently decrease affective commitment.

Therefore, H5 and H6 are as follows:

*Hypothesis 5: Supervisor support will moderate the indirect effect of task socialization on affective commitment through job satisfaction.*

*Hypothesis 6: Supervisor support will moderate the indirect effect of co-worker support on affective commitment through job satisfaction.*

**Figure 1.** Indirect effect of newcomer adjustment on affective commitment (through job satisfaction) as a function of supervisor support.



## METHOD

### Participants

This study was conducted as part of a larger project investigating the experience of new employees in a large, non-profit, Midwestern healthcare organization that operates an



extensive network of various medical facilities. The fast-growing organization had undergone a steady influx of new employees in all areas of operation, taking a strong interest in the beginning processes of employment and the impact it has on their operations, image, productivity, and retention. Thus, in order to include individuals experiencing the transitional socialization process, employees in administrative roles new to the organization were surveyed.

The study included two waves of measurement, taken at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> months of employment, following the consensus of socialization literature that a thorough socialization process as well as the development of affect-based trust relationships take place within the first year of new employment (e.g., Baker & Feldman, 1990; Bauer et al., 2007). The employees' level of task socialization, co-worker support, and supervisor support were measured at the 1<sup>st</sup> month of employment, and their level of job satisfaction and affective commitment were measured at the 4<sup>th</sup> month of employment.

An e-mail from the human resources division invited the employees to participate by clicking on a link to an online survey. All recipients were informed that the survey would assess employee perceptions and that all data would be anonymous. The self-report questionnaire was completed at work in approximately 10-15 minutes. The initial sample consisted of 382 employees, but after excluding several participants' data because of missing responses, the final sample size included for analysis was 364. Participants' average age was 37.28 years ( $SD = 12.46$ ), and they had all been employed with the organization for 4 months. The final sample was approximately 79.4% female and 17.03% male and predominantly white (90.4% white, 2.2% black, 2.2% Hispanic, 2.2% Asian, .3% Native-American and 1.6% multi-racial).

## Measures

The measures were derived from existing scales. Unless otherwise indicated, a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) was used. The complete measures can be found in Appendix A.

**Task Socialization.** Task socialization was measured via a modified, 5-item version of Haueter, Macan, & Winter's (2003) 11-item scale. Example items include "I know the responsibilities, tasks and projects for which I was hired." An overall score was computed by averaging across the items; a higher number indicates a higher level of task socialization. Reliability for this score was .88.

**Co-worker Support.** Co-worker support was measured via a modified, 4-item version of Taormina's (2004) 5-item scale. Example items include "Most of my co-workers have accepted me as a member of this company." An overall score was computed by averaging across the items; a higher number indicates a higher level of co-worker support. Reliability for this score was .94.

**Job Satisfaction.** Job satisfaction was measured via a single item: "Taking everything into consideration, how do you feel about your job as a whole?".

**Supervisor Support.** Supervisor support was measured via Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley's (1990) 6-item scale. Example items include "My supervisor takes the time to learn about my career goals and aspirations." An overall score was computed by averaging across the items; a higher number indicates a higher level of supervisor support. Reliability for this score was .94.

**Affective Commitment.** Affective commitment was measured via a modified version of Meyer and Allen's (1997) scale. Example items include "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own." An overall score was computed by averaging across the items; a higher number indicates a higher level of affective commitment. Reliability for this score was .75.

**Controls.** Age, gender, and ethnicity have been identified as significant predictors of newcomer adjustment, job satisfaction, and affective commitment (e.g., Lambert et al., 2001; Windeler & Riemenschneider, 2016). Thus, they were examined as potential controls in the current study to minimize their potential confounding effects. Additionally, employees' location was included as a control variable as the organization is geographically dispersed, and socialization processes may differ between locations. Finally, since longitudinal studies have shown that constructs can influence themselves in certain cases (Bauer et al., 2007) job satisfaction and affective commitment at one month of employment were controlled for to prevent any confounding effects on the influence of newcomer adjustment.

## **RESULTS**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics including correlations, means, standard deviations and coefficient alpha values are presented in Table 1.

Before testing the hypotheses, we conducted Harman's single factor test (Harman, 1976; Podsakoff et al., 2003) to analyze potential confounding effects due to common-method variance. The results suggested that a common-method factor accounted for 43%

of variance (less than the recommended threshold of 50%). On this basis, we infer that our results are not seriously biased by high common-method variance. Factor and item loadings all exceeded .59, confirming the convergent validity of our measures (Chi-Square ( $\chi^2=175.1$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .959, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = .947, RMSEA = .082, 90% CI = [.069,.096], SRMR = .05).

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Age	37.29	12.46	1							
2 Task Socialization	4.48	0.66	-0.16**	1						
3 Co-Worker Support	4.67	0.69	-0.1**	0.62**	1					
4 Supervisor Support	4.29	0.77	-0.21**	0.45**	0.35**	1				
5 Job Satisfaction (1 <sup>st</sup> Month)	4.6	0.62	0.05**	0.41**	0.24**	0.38**	1			
6 Job Satisfaction (4 <sup>th</sup> Month)	4.46	0.7	0.08**	0.24**	0.19**	0.31**	0.49**	1		
7 Affective Commitment (1 <sup>st</sup> Month)	3.97	0.67	-0.03**	0.22**	0.29**	0.31**	0.39**	0.36**	1	
8 Affective Commitment (4 <sup>th</sup> Month)	3.95	0.92	0.04**	0.25**	0.23**	0.28**	0.37**	0.55**	0.45**	1

Notes.  $N = 364$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

## Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested with hierarchical linear regression, and the results are shown in Table 2. As expected, task socialization (1<sup>st</sup> month) was shown to be a significant predictor of *affective commitment* (4<sup>th</sup> month) ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported. Hypothesis 2, that co-worker support (1<sup>st</sup> month) will predict affective commitment (4<sup>th</sup> month), was also supported ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 2.** Regression Results for Affective Commitment

Predictor	Affective Commitment $\beta$ (SE)
Task Socialization	0.35 (.07)**
Co-Worker Support	0.31 (.07)**

*Notes: Standardized regression coefficients are reported; standard errors in parentheses. \*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .001$*

Hypotheses 3-6 were tested with Model 5 of the Hayes PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013), and results are shown in Tables 3 and 4. According to Hayes (2013), these analyses reveal direct effects, indirect effects, and bootstrap confidence intervals (CI's) for indirect effects. An effect is significant when the 95% CI does not include 0. All indirect effects can be found in Table 2.

Hypothesis 3, that job satisfaction will mediate the relationship between task socialization and affective commitment, was supported ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI[.06, .26]) as the difference between the lower and upper bound of the 95% CI did not include 0. Hypothesis 4, that job satisfaction will mediate the relationship between co-worker support and affective commitment, was also supported ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI[.02, .22]).

**Table 3:** Mediation Results

Mediation	B	SE	Lower CI	Upper CI
TS x JS	0.17**	0.05	0.06	0.26
CS x JS	0.12**	0.05	0.02	0.22

*Notes: TS = Task Socialization. CS = Co-Worker Support. JS = Job Satisfaction. Bootstrap CI (Confidence Intervals) of 95% were based on a sample size of 5,000; \*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .001$*

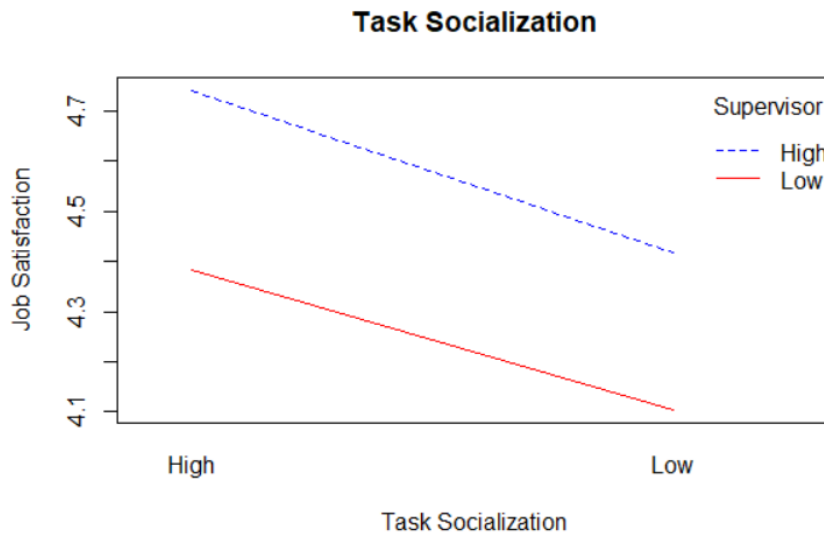
Hypothesis 5, that supervisor support will moderate the indirect effect of task socialization on affective commitment through job satisfaction, was not supported ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI[-.01, .08]) as the difference between the lower and upper bound of the 95% CI crossed 0. Hypothesis 6, that supervisor support will moderate the indirect effect of co-worker support on affective commitment through job satisfaction, was also not supported ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI[-.02, .07]). Although not statistically significant, the overall trend of the data showed that supervisor support did enhance the mediated effect of job satisfaction on newcomer adjustment and affective commitment ( $\mu = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .77$ ), suggesting that supervisor support is still a valuable resource during the socialization process.

**Table 4:** Moderated Mediation Results

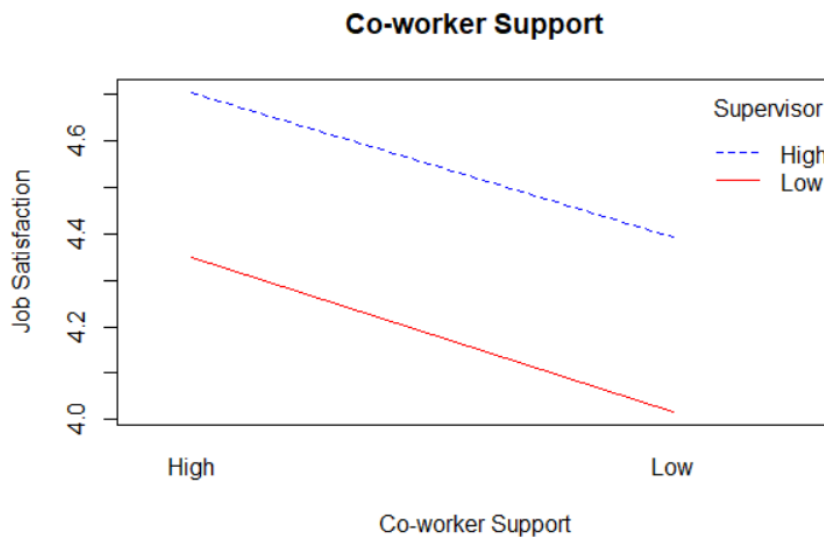
Mediation	B	SE	Lower CI	Upper CI
TS x JS	0.17**	0.05	0.06	0.26
CS x JS	0.12**	0.05	0.02	0.22
TS x JS x SS	0.03	0.02	-0.01	0.08
CS x JS x SS	0.03	0.02	-0.02	0.07

*Notes: TS = Task Socialization. CS = Co-Worker Support. JS = Job Satisfaction. SS = Supervisor Support. Bootstrap CI (Confidence Intervals) of 95% were based on a sample size of 5,000; \*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .001$*

**Figure 2.** Level of task socialization and supervisor support reported at 1 month of employment, with job satisfaction reported at 4 months of employment.



**Figure 3.** Level of co-worker support and supervisor support reported at 1 month of employment, with job satisfaction reported at 4 months of employment.



## DISCUSSION

With present work conditions ever-changing in the post-pandemic environment and the nature of work developing, businesses continue to search for ways to stay competitive and retain employees. Organizational commitment is a primary focus of this goal as low levels of commitment lead to low productivity, negative work attitudes, hiring and training costs, and decreased performance (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007; Cohen, 2017). Employee retention, job satisfaction, and commitment are important in ensuring an organization's success (Aziri, 2011), and investing in the organizational socialization process is key in achieving these outcomes (Saks, 2012). Contributing to the ever-present need for longitudinal data in all areas of organizational research, understanding how to retain employees in their first few months of employment is an area of especially great interest (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007; Kowtha, 2018). Thus, we examined this process with potential intervening variables (job satisfaction and supervisor support) while integrating Socialization Resources Theory (SRT) and Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R) to explain their complex relationships.

A major contribution of this study to the literature is our finding that newcomer adjustment was directly related to increased affective commitment. Thus, investing in socialization resources is an effective way to develop an organizational identity and increase job satisfaction, higher commitment and employee retention. The organization surveyed recently went through a large merger process, replaced their CEO and much of its executive leadership, and is constantly restructuring and trying to grow, causing consistent large change initiatives. Thus, they place a great deal of importance on training and development resources for employee retention, work attitudes, and performance.



Following literature's operationalization and measurement of organizational socialization, the present study operationalized newcomer adjustment as understanding one's role, developing effective working relationships, and understanding organizational culture and context (Bauer et al., 2007), which put our focus on the sub-dimensions of task socialization and co-worker support (e.g., James, 2020; Kowtha, 2018). Thus, resources provided during the socialization process should contribute to both of these constructs as they are especially important in achieving a high level of newcomer adjustment. Our findings indicate that an organization's commitment to the socialization process creates an environment that allows new employees to utilize resources both intrinsically and extrinsically to gain confidence in their role, develop positive working relationships, and understand their organization's culture. This leads to the development of an organizational identity as well as increased job satisfaction and affective commitment, improving retention and performance.

Integrating SRT and JD-R provides a clear framework for examining these relationships. This is supported by our finding that job satisfaction mediated the relationship between newcomer adjustment and affective commitment, confirming that a high level of newcomer adjustment leads to increased job satisfaction which subsequently increased employees' affective commitment. Furthermore, we proposed that task socialization and co-worker support are considered intrinsic and extrinsic job resources within the context of SRT and JD-R; moreover, literature suggests that job satisfaction is largely influenced by characteristics of the work environment (Lambert et al., 2001). This finding supports this framework and affirms that providing employees with these resources during the socialization process will mitigate the negative effects of job

demands. This might be because providing resources during the socialization process that increase employees' task socialization and co-worker support give them confidence in their role and make them feel connected with their peers and team. Feeling in control of your job duties and connecting with others in the organization will likely erase doubts and feelings of solitude, giving employees a sense of belonging and assurance that their role and organization are a good fit for them. This will increase satisfaction with their job which, in turn, will help them identify with the organization, increase their commitment, stay in the organization, and perform better. This finding also confirms that employees' increase in affective commitment is due to a high level of job satisfaction, so increasing an employee's job satisfaction is needed to increase their commitment to their organization.

Our hypotheses that supervisor support would moderate the indirect effect of newcomer adjustment on affective commitment through job satisfaction were not supported. This suggests that the resulting increases in job satisfaction and affective commitment from newcomer adjustment are not significantly impacted by supervisor support. One possible explanation for this finding is that the recruiting and hiring process was not closely examined in the current study. Although not statistically significant, the overall trend of the data showed that supervisor support did enhance the mediated effect of job satisfaction on newcomer adjustment and affective commitment, suggesting that supervisor support is still positively related to both job satisfaction and affective commitment. While supervisor support may be helpful in the socialization process, a large determining factor of turnover in the first few months of employment is due to the job role being different than what the employee was led to believe (Psychology Today,

2019). Taking on job duties that one isn't prepared for or expecting can be stressful and overwhelming, significantly decreasing their confidence and understanding of their job role (task socialization). Furthermore, while supervisors are quite helpful in integrating new employees into their teams, co-worker support is mainly influenced by the one's peers, making them a larger influence in determining a new employees' fit with their group and organization. Thus, while supervisor support is still an important and effective resource, other resources may be more prominent in determining job satisfaction and affective commitment. Future research should examine the differences between specific resources more closely for a better understanding of their impact.

Another possible explanation for this finding is the lack of variance for reported levels of supervisor support in the current sample. Supervisor support was measured on a five-point scale and the mean reported score was 4.29 ( $SD = .77$ ). One standard deviation below the mean score for supervisor support would still suggest that employees view their immediate supervisor as somewhat supportive. The results may have differed with a greater variance as one standard deviation below the mean would have indicated that employees view their supervisor as unsupportive, therefore detracting from current job resources.

While the present research adds valuable information to existing literature, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, all variables were gathered from a single source through self-reported measures; therefore, common method bias may be a concern. When variables are all measured with the same source, there is a potential for inflated or deflated correlations (i.e. common method bias). Next, because the data analyzed in the study was extracted from an existing data set, additional control

variables were not able to be accounted for. Future studies should measure and control for other job resources to isolate the effects of newcomer adjustment on job satisfaction and subsequent affective commitment. Because job satisfaction is largely influenced by the work environment (Lamber et al., 2001), it is probable that other characteristics of the work environment, besides task socialization and co-worker support, influenced job satisfaction in the current study. Another limitation of the existing data set is that other personal data of participants would have been useful in accurately examining how they respond to the socialization process. Though potentially difficult to obtain, personality data, previous work history, specific age groups, and other demographic data may provide insight about how behavioral trends or frequency of job changes may affect work attitudes. Finally, while the longitudinal nature of this study is valuable, data was only collected at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> month of employment. Future research should collect data at different time periods, if possible, to examine how employee attitudes change, perhaps after six months or one year of employment. Moreover, those in control of collecting longitudinal data might consider measuring outcome variables at all time points to examine their change over time more closely. Future studies should also bring more attention to the selection process, as a main cause of early turnover is entering a job role that is different than what new employees believe it to be (Psychology Today, 2019).

The results of this study produced several practical implications for organizations. First, organizations should consider investing in the job analysis and selection processes to ensure job descriptions are accurate and make their culture clear, to hire employees that are the best fit with their culture and goals. When the job that new employees start truly reflects the job description that they applied for, they will be mentally prepared for

its challenges, and adapting to their new work environment will be much less stressful, allowing them to gain the confidence and sense of belonging needed for a high level of newcomer adjustment. Furthermore, investing in onboarding and training (socialization) resources will create an even more smooth transition process for new employees.

Resources to help them understand their new job role, build positive relationships, and adapt to the organizational culture, will help them develop an organizational identity and feel like a part of their new organization. Finally, providing organizational support in all forms during the socialization process will demonstrate care and concern for new employees, making them feel valued and appreciated. Checking in with them, providing helpful information, and presenting them with professional development opportunities, will allow them to see a future at the organization and set goals to work towards. All of these investments will lead to positive outcomes and work attitudes as well as increased retention and performance.

The current study contributed to existing literature by providing additional evidence for the positive effects of newcomer adjustment on job satisfaction and affective commitment over time by examining a large sample in an organizational setting. Though no single study can offer conclusive evidence on the issues mentioned here, the results should be considered as a stimulus for further research. Investing in socialization resources and providing support to new employees will help them in forming an organizational identity, increase their job satisfaction and affective commitment, and in turn, increase retention and organizational performance. Additionally, examining task socialization and co-worker support as job resources through the framework of the JD-R, as opposed to solely through the lens of SRT, provides a more robust theoretical view of

its outcomes by understanding both their intrinsic and extrinsic effects as well as the feelings of confidence and inclusion they provide. This will offer a more thorough understanding of how the socialization process can potentially lead to positive outcomes. As such, organizations should continue to invest in providing employees with socialization resources and help them develop an organizational identity to increase their competitive advantage.

## APPENDIX A: List of Measures

**Task Socialization**

1. I know the responsibilities, tasks and projects for which I was hired.
2. I understand how to perform the tasks that make up my job.
3. I understand which job tasks and responsibilities have priority.
4. I understand how to operate the tools I use in my job.
5. I know who to ask for support when my job requires it.

**Co-Worker Support**

1. My co-workers are usually willing to offer their assistance or advice.
2. Most of my co-workers have accepted me as a member of this company.
3. My co-workers have done a great deal to help me adjust to this organization.
4. My relationships with other workers in this company are very good.

**Job Satisfaction**

1. Taking everything into consideration, how do you feel about your job as a whole?

**Supervisor Support**

1. My supervisor takes the time to learn about my career goals and aspirations.
2. My supervisor keeps me informed about different career opportunities for me in the organization.
3. My supervisor makes sure I get the credit when I accomplish something substantial on the job.
4. My supervisor gives me helpful feedback about my performance.
5. My supervisor supports my attempts to acquire additional training or education to further my career.
6. My supervisor provides assignments that give me the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills.

**Affective Commitment**

1. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
2. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization.
3. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
4. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.

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