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# **Organizational socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment in the Chinese context: Perceived organizational support as mediator**

**Jie Chen and Derek Eldridge \***

## **Abstract**

Although organizational socialization tactics have been found to play an essential role in newcomer adjustment, the intervening mechanism by which organizational socialization tactics have manifested their impacts on newcomer socialization outcomes is still not clear. It is also worth noting that most research findings in the literature are based on western contexts and few studies have been conducted in a non-western context. Therefore, this research is expected to advance knowledge by illustrating: (1) whether organizational socialization tactics are important in shaping newcomers' behaviours and attitudes in an Asian context; (2) the mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationships between organizational socialization tactics and socialization outcomes. Data were collected from two different samples. One was 177 newly hired insurance agents in a leading insurance organization in south China, and the other was 245 new doctors/nurses in southeast China. The results confirmed the influences of organizational socialization tactics in the Chinese context and went further to indicate that three aspects of socialization tactics (i.e. context, content and social aspect) were differentially related with organizational socialization outcomes. Additionally, the results in general supported the hypotheses that POS serves as a mediator underlying the relationships between organizational socialization tactics and newcomer socialization outcomes. These results signal a message that under collective, formal, fixed, sequential, serial and investiture organizational socialization tactics, newcomers are more likely to develop the perception of organizational support which may in turn lead to effective socialization outcomes.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

With the advent of globalization, employees have become more mobile than ever before, and as a result, high rates of voluntary turnover become a substantial problem for many multinational corporations. In particular, the highest voluntary turnover rate has been reported to occur during the first few years after newcomers enter the organization (Hom, Roberson & Ellis, 2008). Given the fact that a high turnover rate may often influence organizational performance (Kacmar et al. 2006), employers can no longer afford the luxury of waiting for many months until newcomers settle down at new workplaces. Therefore, substantial sums of money have been invested in newcomer training and orientation (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). The assumption behind this heavy investment is that a sound start can help new incumbents adapt to the new environment, improve job satisfaction, reduce the voluntary turnover rate and achieve long-term effectiveness, while a poor start may have a long lasting negative effect for newcomers and organizational development (Holton 2001).

However, do these programs bring desired outcomes? This question is hanging over the heads of both practitioners and academics because despite a vast amount of investment a high turnover rate for newcomers has still loomed over job markets across the world (Kenexa Research Insitute, 2007). Against such a background, Weller et al. (2009: 1146) stated that, “researchers are rightly concerned with better understanding why people stay with or leave organizations – especially during the first 2 years of their tenure when turnover rates are generally highest”. Other researchers share this concern and suggest that such scrutiny is warranted particularly on newcomer organizational socialization (e.g. Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks. 2007; Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007).

Due to the increasing concern on newcomer adjustment, a lot of efforts have been devoted to discussing the proximal and distal factors of newcomer socialization outcomes (Morrison, 1993; Wanous, 1992). Among these factors, Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) theory of organizational socialization tactics is quoted as ‘one of the most theoretically developed models of socialization’ (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). It has been widely applied and investigated across a variety of contexts (see Ashforth et al. 2007 for review). However, while

studies of organizational socialization tactics have advanced our understanding on the role of the organization in the process of newcomer adjustment, such discussions are not without limitations. First of all, although it has been shown that organizational socialization tactics play a key role influencing newcomer adjustment (Gruman, Saks & Zweig, 2006; Kim, Cable & Kim, 2005), a key question proposed by Jones (1986) on how specific socialization tactics affect newcomer adjustment remains unaddressed. Second, it has been argued that the research on organizational socialization tactics should be more process-oriented, exploring 'how' the organizational socialization tactics influence newcomer adjustment (Gruman et al. 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Wanous & Colella, 1989). Therefore, the exploration of the intervening mechanism that underlines the effects of socialization tactics on socialization outcomes appears important and necessary.

Echoing this research call, a number of recent studies have been made to explore the mechanism behind the linkage of organizational socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment. For instance, Ashforth et al. (2007) pointed out that newcomer learning served as a significant proximal outcome to link organizational socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment. Takeuchi and Takeuchi (2009) found that the influence of organizational socialization tactics on socialization outcomes was via newcomers' socialization perceptions. However, in spite of these effects, organizational contexts such as social support have not received much attention, although the importance of understanding the role of social support has been addressed by a number of scholars. For example, Wanous and Collela (1989) suggested that social support could be one mechanism through which socialization tactics associate newcomer socialization outcomes. Additionally, Saks and Ashforth (1997: 58) also indicated that, "other mechanisms such as social support, social ties and opportunities to develop relationships might also help explain how socialization tactics influence newcomers' adjustment".

Accordingly, this research examines the underlying process by which organizational socialization tactics manifest their functions on newcomer socialization outcomes through the discussion of a novel mechanism, namely the role of perceived organizational support

(POS). There are two major reasons for the adoption of POS in this research. First, it is considered that organizational support, as an essential form of social support, is important in influencing employees' job attitudes and behaviors (Chow, 2002), as evidenced in the research fields of work communication (Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003) and human resource management (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003). Second, POS is claimed to satisfy employees' needs for self-esteem, affiliation, emotional support and approval (Eisenberger, Armeli & Pretz, 1998) which are particularly important in describing the needs of newcomers who are eager to be accepted and to build their identities in the new workplace.

Besides, it is noticed that Van Maanen and Schein's typology of organizational socialization tactics was developed in the western context. In order to broaden our understanding of how these socialization tactics operate across cultural boundaries, and provide insights for employers working in multinational corporations, it is thus necessary to discuss whether these tactics influence employees in a non-western context. Recently, there is an increasing research interest aimed at improving the understanding of newcomers' work-related behaviours in a non-western context (Kim et al. 2005; Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2009), but such studies are still very few.

In brief, this research assesses the intervening mechanism by which organizational socialization tactics influence newcomer socialization outcomes, and also examines the effects of organizational socialization tactics on newcomer socialization outcomes in an Asian context. To achieve these ends, the article begins with a discussion of Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) typology of organizational socialization tactics and Jones' (1986) conceptualization. Next, the relationships between organizational socialization tactics and socialization outcomes are discussed. Then, the nature and characteristics of POS are reviewed based on the existing literature, followed by an explanation of the mediating role of POS in the relationships between organizational socialization tactics and newcomer socialization outcomes. The proposed hypotheses are then examined through analyzing two different samples in the Chinese context. The implications of those findings and research limitations are discussed in the end.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Organizational Socialization Tactics**

In Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) typology, six tactical dimension exists on a bipolar continuum including collective (vs. individual), formal (vs. informal), sequential (vs. random), fixed (vs. variable), serial (vs. disjunctive) and investiture (vs. divestiture). To be more specific, under collective socialization tactics, newcomers are required to get together to attend learning or training, usually segregated from other experienced colleagues; while with individual tactics newcomers experience learning individually. Formal socialization tactics, closely related with collective socialization tactics, indicate that newcomers learn their jobs and roles in the structured settings, such as training classes or orientation programs; whereas informal tactics suggest that newcomers learn from the real work experience, without involving clearly defined socialization activities. With sequential socialization tactics, newcomers are provided with the specific information on the sequence of learning activities and training experiences leading to the fulfillment of a specific task; while with random tactics, newcomers are not exposed to such information. Fixed socialization tactics provide a set of determined timetables for individuals to develop careers; while variable socialization tactics do not give such timetable. In serial socialization tactics, individuals are guided by an experienced member as a role model. In contrast, disjunctive tactics refer to an individual having to rely on him- or herself to develop identity. Investiture tactics affirm the newcomers' incoming identity and personal attributes by providing social support and feedback. In other words, investiture socialization processes tend to accept newcomers as what they are; while divestiture processes deny these personal attributes and make newcomers accept prescribed standards of organizational memberships.

Heavily based on Van Maanen and Schein's topology, Jones (1986) argued that six socialization tactics dimensions can represent three broad factors: *context tactics* refer to the way in which organizations provide information to newcomers, including collective (vs. individual) and formal (vs. informal); *content tactics* indicate the content of the information

organizations provide to newcomers including sequential (vs. random) and fixed (vs. variable); and finally *social aspect of tactics* (serial vs. disjunctive and investiture vs. divestiture) reflect the social ties and support during the learning process of newcomer. In a similar way, Cable and Parsons (2001) confirmed the three-dimensional grouping of organizational socialization tactics in their empirical study. However, although Cable and Parsons have suggested that different socialization dimensions may be differentially related with socialization outcomes, most scholars have discussed these organizational socialization tactics as a whole, named as 'institutionalized tactics' vs. 'individualized tactics'. In fact there are very few studies focusing on this higher order classification in the extant socialization literature (Bauer et al. 2007). As a result, this study adopts the validated three-dimensional grouping, and discusses the impacts of the context, content and social aspect of organizational socialization tactics on socialization outcomes respectively.

### **Organizational Socialization Tactics and Socialization Outcomes**

In terms of socialization outcomes, both conceptual and empirical studies have suggested that the socialization outcomes may differ across newcomers, organizations, and cultures (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998). However, along with the discussion of organizational socialization process and stages, the understanding of socialization outcomes has been improved (Feldman, 1981). For example, Bauer et al. (2007) developed an integrated model and summarized 'the most commonly studied constructs' within the existing socialization literature. Based on their analysis, Bauer et al. (2007) pointed out that researchers have now frequently used role clarity, task mastery, and social integration as indicators of newcomer adjustment. Role clarity suggests that the newcomer is clear or certain about his or her own role, including job duties, priorities, responsibilities, expectations and time allocation for tasks (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). Task mastery indicates the level to what extent newcomers are confident about how to perform their jobs. Social integration reflects the status of being accepted by other group members (Morrison, 1993; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).



Closely related with those three newcomer adjustment variables, traditional attitude and individual behavior outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention, are also considered as the significant indicators of effective socialization (Bauer et al. 2007). Among them, job satisfaction refers to what extent an employee feels satisfied with the job; organizational commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to the organization; and turnover intention refers to an employee's intention to quit and leave the organization. In order to provide a comprehensive picture, both newcomer adjustment outcomes and traditional work outcomes are included in the current research. The relationships between organizational socialization tactics and organizational socialization outcomes are discussed in the following sections.

First of all, given the fact that there are tremendous pressures after organizational entry, it is predicted that under the collective and formal socialization tactics, newcomers are more likely to enhance job satisfaction and role clarity and less likely to leave the organization because a shared and formal learning experience can help newcomers reduce feelings of stress and frustration (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Moreover, in the formal orientation, organizations often provide resources and knowledge for newcomers to understand organizational history, culture and their basic job roles. By doing this, newcomers are expected to formulate a shared view of the existing organizational values and norms (Allen, 2006; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), to reduce stress, and to enhance job satisfaction and intention to remain (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer et al. 2007). On the contrary, individual and informal tactics that leave newcomers alone may aggravate the feeling of uncertainty (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Hence, putting these findings together, the predictive effects of collective and formal socialization tactics on newcomer socialization outcomes seems to be convincing. Therefore, the forgoing arguments suggest that:

**Hypothesis 1a:** The collective and formal (vs. individual and informal) socialization tactics are positively related to newcomer job satisfaction and role clarity, and negatively related to turnover intention.

Next, several empirical studies have also provided evidence to indicate the influences of sequential and fixed tactics on newcomers' behaviors and attitudes. For example, Cable and Parsons (2001) suggested that under the sequential and fixed tactics, newcomers were more likely to understand the prescribed behaviors and promotion criteria, and thus made efforts to internalize organization's values; while under the random and variable socialization tactics, newcomers were encouraged to respond in 'innovative and individualized ways'. Allen and Meyer (1990) pointed out that when organizations provide newcomers with explicit steps and timetables about the sequence of learning activities, newcomers are likely to experience a reduced sense of ambiguity, and enhance role clarity and organizational commitment. Moreover, it is suggested that to what extent the organization uses sequential and fixed socialization tactics is positively related with newcomers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment and role clarity, and negatively related with their intentions to quit (Bauer et al. 2007). Therefore, in line with aforementioned argument, a hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 1b:** The sequential and fixed (vs. random and variable) socialization tactics are positively related to newcomers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, role clarity and negatively related to turnover intention.

Finally, it is indicated that serial and investiture (vs. disjunctive and divestiture) socialization tactics are also related to newcomer adjustment. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) suggested that in serial and investiture socialization tactics newcomers were guided and supported by experienced organizational members who act as role models, and newcomers' personal values were respected by the organization. Conversely, in disjunctive and divestiture socialization tactics, newcomers are not able to get access to the experienced members and if their personal values do not match with those of the organization, newcomers are required to change because the organization may not accept an individual's views and the previous identity.

The effects of social aspect tactics on socialization outcomes have been discussed in a number of studies. For example, Louis (1980) suggested that the interactions with experienced members in the new environment helped newcomers to reduce stress and improve task mastery. Meanwhile, it is assumed that interactions with the experienced members can not only help newcomers remove uncertainty and enhance confidence in doing the job, but also benefit their adjustment into the group because encouraging communications with experience members could increase newcomers' social comfort within the new work setting (Kim et al. 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Moreover, since newcomers' individual identities are accepted and their personal values are respected under the investiture tactics (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), they are thus expected to have general satisfaction and commitment towards the organization, and are less likely to quit (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Following these arguments, the authors thus propose that:

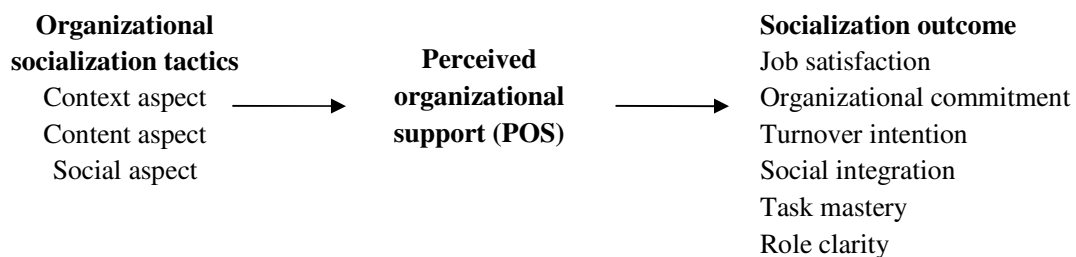
**Hypothesis 1c:** The serial and investiture (vs. disjunctive and divestiture) socialization tactics are positively related to newcomers' social integration, task mastery, role clarity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and negatively related to turnover intention.

As is seen, the relationships between each aspect of socialization tactics and socialization outcomes were not all included in the hypotheses because there is a lack of explicit discussion of some relationships. For example, under the collective and formal socialization tactics, newcomers usually only get to know the general picture about the job, the impact of the collective and formal tactics on newcomer task mastery is thus not clear. Also, since newcomers are commonly separated from other team members when attend the formal orientation programme, whether the collective and formal socialization tactics are associated with newcomer social integration is uncertain either. Therefore, based on the guidance of extant empirical results, only the most likely relationships were developed in this research.

### **The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support (POS)**

Besides the direct relationships between organizational socialization tactics and socialization outcomes, it is suggested that POS may serve as the mediator behind such relationships. In other words, the influences of organizational socialization tactics on socialization outcomes are transmitted through POS (Figure 1). To illustrate, the authors first discuss the nature and characteristics of POS, and then turn to discuss the hypothesized relationships presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 The mediational effect of perceived organizational support (POS)



Eisenberger et al. (1986: 501) proposed that, “employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being”, and pointed out that employees often use perceived organizational support as an indicator of the organization’s benevolent or malevolent intent. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002: 698) explicitly suggested that, “on the basis of the organization’s personification, employees view their favorable or unfavorable treatment as an indication that the organization favors or disfavors them”. In line with those arguments, it indicates that POS is highly subjective, reflecting a mental assessment of what employees have received from the organization.

To develop POS, Eisenberger et al. (1997) stated that when individuals’ socio-emotional needs for approval, esteem and social identity are satisfied, and when individuals believe that their performance will be recognized and rewarded, individuals are likely to develop POS. However, it is worth noting that if rewards or supportive practices are required by a labor law, it is less likely that employees will develop POS (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-

LaMastro, 1990), which suggests that such organizational support needs to be viewed as 'discretionary' (Shore & Shore, 1995). Additionally, Hochwarter et al. (2006: 483) indicated that "POS provides resources that enable workers to accomplish work objectives...an employee reporting high levels of organizational support may perceive that managers are positioning workers to be successful by providing sufficient resources and facilitating cooperation through recognition and rewards". Kraimer, Wayne and Jaworski (2001) further pointed out without necessary aids and information, employees were likely to feel frustrated and dissatisfied about working conditions, which might further influence their feelings of obligation towards the organization.

As discussed above, the development of POS relies on organizational care, support and resources, but why it is important to develop employees' POS. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) suggested that employees with POS may feel obligated by demonstrating commitment and loyalty as a return. Rhoades and Eisenberger's argument implies that POS goes far beyond the mere belief concerning the extent to which the organization cares about employees, and it appears reasonable to take it as a part of an implicit reciprocal exchange relationship between employee and organization. Their argument has been supported by robust theoretical discussions and empirical studies. For example, Eisenberger et al. (2002) found that POS was related to employees' job satisfaction, positive mood, affective commitment, performance, and lessened withdrawal behavior. Wayne et al. (1997) suggested that POS had a significant impact on employees' affective commitment, intentions to quit and their organizational citizenship behavior.

Having illustrated the concept of POS, we now turn to discuss why it is assumed that POS serves as a mediator in the relationships between organizational socialization tactics and socialization outcomes. First of all, it is suggested that newcomers who have experienced collective and formal socialization tactics would be more likely to develop POS. There are two reasons for this expectation. In the first place, under a collective and formal setting, newcomers can grasp an overview of the organization, and thus reduce the distance between them and the organization, which may be helpful to make newcomers feel more

comfortable in the new workplace (Cable & Parsons, 2001). In the second place, the message from collective and formal socialization tactics indicates that the organization is willing to invest in newcomers by showing concern and support to ease their uncomfortable feelings and stress. Since it is not compulsory for the organization to provide newcomers with a community learning context, these investments and support are likely to be considered as an extra effort from the organization. Newcomers thus tend to take it as a discretionary treatment, which is likely to contribute to the development of POS (Eisenberger et al. 1997; Shore & Shore, 1995). Therefore, the following hypothesis is put forward:

**Hypothesis 2a:** Context socialization tactics that are collective and formal (vs. individual and informal) are positively related to newcomers' perceived organizational support.

As discussed before, under the sequential and fixed socialization tactics, newcomers are clearly informed about the career path they will experience in the future, which could to some extent reduce their uncertainty and stress. Meanwhile, since newcomers under such tactics share opportunities to succeed by undergoing the standardized process, it can to some extent increase newcomers' perception of fairness towards the organization. On the contrary, under the random and variable socialization tactics, there is no fixed pathway of career development, and newcomers are encouraged to individually manage uncertainty and find the ways to succeed by themselves. Although it is not our purpose to argue whether these tactics are good or not for newcomer adjustment, it is assumed that random and variable socialization tactics may not easily generate the linkage between newcomers and the organization, and thus it is harder to create communicational channels for newcomers to feel organizational care and support (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Hence, in view of the discussion above, we propose:

**Hypothesis 2b:** Content socialization tactics that are sequential and fixed (vs. random and variable) are positively related to newcomers' perceived organizational support.

The last one of Jones' (1986) three dimensions is social aspect (serial and investiture vs. disjunctive and divestiture) tactics. Under the serial and investiture socialization tactics, newcomers gain opportunities to learn from experienced insiders and obtain social support to become familiar with other colleagues in the workplace (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Since newcomers are eager to reduce uncertainty and integrate into the group, insiders' support and experience appears to be essential to speed up their socialization process (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that if an organization provides access or assign experienced members to facilitate newcomers' adjustment and help them get familiar with the work environment, newcomers are more likely to perceive care and support and thus develop POS, which leads to the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2c:** Social aspect of socialization tactics that are serial and investiture (vs. disjunctive and divestiture) is positively related to newcomers' perceived organizational support.

Furthermore, it is suggested that if employees have positive feelings towards the organization and consider that the organization is willing to care about their development and well-being, they tend to establish a stronger psychological link with the organization, which can further generate the feelings of obligation and commitment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Therefore, by following this argument, the authors go further and discuss the effect of POS on newcomers' socialization outcomes in the following section.

First of all, it is claimed that newcomers' POS will lead to job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to remain. In fact, it is not new in organizational studies to investigate the impacts of employees' POS on their attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. For example, Allen et al. (2003) suggested that organizational care and support were particularly essential for employees to gain confidence and feel comfortable, and they found a significant positive relationship between POS and employee job satisfaction. Their findings were consistent with the results of Shore and Terick's (1991) and Eisenberger et al.'s (1997) studies. Besides, it is proposed that if employees consider that the organization is willing to

care about their development and well-being, they tend to establish a stronger psychological link with the organization, which can further generate the feeling of obligation and organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al. 2001; Wayne et al. 1997). A more recent study of Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003) also suggested that POS could satisfy employees' needs to be respected, recognized and accepted, which would generate a strong feeling of belonging, and lead to organizational commitment. In addition, POS may generate a positive mood, which may reduce negative feelings and intention of withdrawal (Allen et al. 2003; Chun, Wong & Tjosvold, 2007; Loi, Ngo & Foley, 2006).

Moreover, organizational care and support also represents a kind of resource which can help employees integrate in the group and develop their perceptions of organizational membership (Stamper & Masterson, 2002). In particular, when newcomers arrive at a new workplace, they are eager to gain access to obtain information and resources. At this moment, organizational support can encourage individuals to interact with each other, just as Erdogan, Kraimer and Liden (2004: 312) suggested that, "POS may help facilitate communication and cooperation among organizational members". Additionally, Hochwarter et al. (2006) suggested that under a supportive organizational environment, newcomers are likely to gain access to information and resources, and thus improve task mastery and role clarity.

Following with the aforementioned discussions, it has shown that organizational socialization tactics may affect newcomers' POS (Hypothesis 2a-2c) which can further lead to effective socialization outcomes. Therefore, the proceeding discussions suggested a mediating role for POS in the linkage of organizational socialization tactics and socialization outcomes. Three hypotheses are thereby proposed as follows:

**Hypothesis 3a:** Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between collective and formal (vs. individual and informal) socialization tactics and socialization outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction, turnover intention and role clarity).

**Hypothesis 3b:** Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between sequential and fixed (vs. random and variable) socialization tactics and socialization



outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention and role clarity).

**Hypothesis 3c:** Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between serial and investiture (vs. disjunctive and divestiture) socialization tactics and socialization outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, social integration, task mastery and role clarity).

## **METHODS**

### **Research Procedures and Sample**

Two samples were collected to investigate the hypotheses. Research procedures were similar in both samples. To promote participation and to speed up data collection, questionnaire administration in both samples was conducted by local contacts. We first explained to those contacts that all the responses of participants would be used for academic research only, with no personal information revealed. Next, those contacts were instructed to administer the questionnaire to participants. When participants received the questionnaire, they also received a covering letter to reassure them that all responses would be anonymous and confidential.

For sample 1, the individual data were collected from a leading insurance organization in south China. Preliminary interviews were conducted with one senior HR manager and one training manager in that organization to obtain general information about the newcomer orientation scheme. Then, newcomers in seven local branches were asked to complete the questionnaire. However, since the author was not able to have access to demographic data from the organization's HR information system, it was uncertain about how many newcomers actually received notification of this research. Therefore, it was impossible to calculate the exact response rate.

Based on the feedback of the local contacts, 320 questionnaires were administered to newcomers, and a total of 186 data were sent back, with a response rate of 58.1%, and after deleting those with missing data, data from 177 participants were submitted for analysis.

Among those participants, 123 (69.5%) were women and 54 (30.5%) were men. The average age was 26.7 ( $SD=4.0$ ), with 85.9% participants were below 30. The average organizational tenure was 13.1 months ( $SD=7.2$ ). Among them, 50.3% participants had been with the organization less than 12 months and all the others had been with the organization less than or around 24 months. Overall, the education level was moderate with 48.6% participants having a college degree or above.

For sample 2, the data were collected in a medical university located in southeast China. A total of 510 questionnaires were distributed to participants coming from 10 classes when they registered for an evening course in that university. Altogether, 357 questionnaires were returned (70.0% response rate). After deleting those whose organizational tenure was more than two years and responses with missing data, data from 245 participants were submitted for the subsequent data analysis. Among those participants, 173 (70.6%) were women and 72 (29.4%) were men, with an average age of 25 ( $SD=3.2$ ) and the average organizational tenure of 17.7 months ( $SD=5.5$ ).

## **Measures**

The measurement scales used in this research had been initially written in English and then translated into Chinese. The back-translated method suggested by Brislin (1986) was thus applied. Meanwhile, although all the measurement scales were validated in the western contexts, a set of factor analyses were applied to data from sample 1 to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement scales in a Chinese population. Then, the validated measures were applied in sample 2. For all measuring items, participants were required to report from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

*Organizational Socialization Tactics.* Following the method of Cable and Parsons (2001), 12 high-loading items were selected from Jones' (1986) original 30-item socialization scale – two items from each of the six socialization tactics. This scale has been widely used in the socialization studies (e.g. Gruman et al. 2006). Given the fact that this measurement has not

been validated in the Chinese context, a principal component analysis with oblique rotation was applied to test the reliability and construct validity. The results showed that one item (I can predict my future career path in this organization by observing other people's experiences) cross-loaded on other factor and thus was deleted. The remaining 11 items were resubmitted to factor analysis again, and the results clearly supported Jones' (1986) 3-dimensional conceptualization of the organizational socialization tactics in the context of China, explaining a total of 61.1 percent variance.

*Perceived Organizational Support.* POS was measured with six high-loading items of the scale of perceived organizational support (SPOS) developed by Eisenberger and his colleagues (1986), reflecting various aspects of the extent to which employees develop the perception about support and care provided by the organization. Example items are “The organization really cares about my well-being” and “The organization values my contributions to its well-being.” Evidence of the reliability and validity of this shortened scale was provided by Eisenberger et al. (2001). The measurement was validated in the Chinese context by Chun et al. (2007).

*Job Satisfaction.* Job satisfaction was measured by applying Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) original 5 items. One item (i.e. “I would not consider taking another job”) was conceptually similar with the items to measure turnover intention, and thus five items were used for the following analysis.

*Organizational Commitment.* Organizational commitment was assessed with an 8-item Likert scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Example items are “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization”; “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me”, and “I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization” (reverse coded).

*Turnover Intention.* Turnover intention was measured by adopting the measurement scale of Wayne et al. (1997), and four items were used in this research. Example items are “I am actively looking for a job outside”; “As soon as I can find a better job, I will leave my current organization”, and “I am seriously thinking of quitting my job”.

Altogether, there were 17 items used to test three traditional socialization outcome variables. The first round factor analysis with oblique rotation produced four factors that explained 66.9 percent of the variation in the data. There were two items measuring organizational commitment (i.e. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it; I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization) loaded on an uninterpretable factor, which were thus deleted. Moreover, there were three items measuring organizational commitment loaded on the factor of job satisfaction. Having contrasted the contents of the items measuring job satisfaction and those three items loaded on the factor of job satisfaction, the author found that those three items were not actually job-oriented. Instead, they were assessing the perceptions towards the organization. Following Pett, Lackey and Sullivan’s (2003) suggestion of only selecting items conceptually consistent, those three items were deleted, and remaining 12 items were resubmitted to the factor analysis, again with oblique rotation. The result present that the three factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, explaining a total of 69.8 percent of the variance, without any weak-loading items.

*Social Integration.* Social integration was measured via a 4-item Likert scale proposed by Morrison (1993). Example items include “I feel comfortable around my co-workers” and “The atmosphere in my immediate work group is friendly”.

*Task Mastery.* Employees’ task mastery was captured via Morrison’s (1993) four items. Example samples included “I am confident about the adequacy of my job skills and abilities” and “I feel competent conducting my job assignments”.

*Role Clarity.* Role clarity was assessed by using the widely used Rizzo, House and Lirtzman's (1970) original six items. Example items include "I know what my responsibilities are" and "I feel certain about how much authority I have."

As it can be seen, there were 14 items to measure three typical newcomer adjustment outcomes. The first round result of factor analysis with oblique rotation suggested that there were four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, explaining up to 74.1 percent variance of the data. However, it was found that one item assessing role clarity (i.e. I know that I have divided my time properly) cross-loaded with the factor of task mastery. Meanwhile, the item 'It seems to take me longer than planned to complete my job assignments' was also problematic since only this item had a significant factor loading in an uninterpretable factor. Therefore, the remaining 12 items were resubmitted to factor analysis. The results suggest that 12 items were loaded significantly on the appropriate factor without cross-loading or weak factor loading. The three factors had eigenvalues greater than 1.0, explaining a total 71.9 percent of the variance of the data.

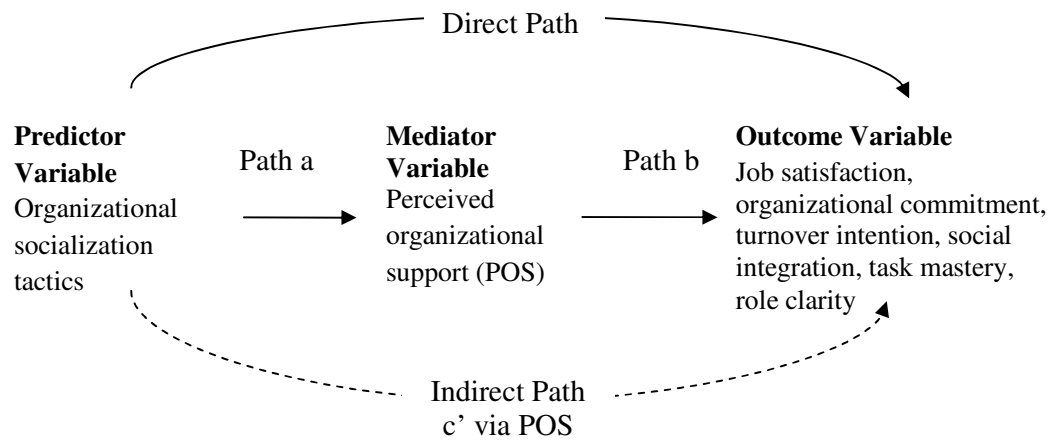
*Control Variables.* Previous socialization studies have discussed a number of predictors that need to be controlled for to rule out alternative explanations. In the present study, the variables of gender, age and organizational tenure were controlled for in the subsequent analysis because they have been found to be consistently related with employee attitude or behavioral outcomes (e.g. Kim et al. 2005; Loscocco & Bose, 1998). Age and organizational tenure were measured in months, and gender was measured as a dummy variable (0 = male; 1= female).

### **Analytical Methods**

When the influence of a predictor on an outcome is transmitted through a mediator, it is considered that a meditational effect exists (Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2008). To be more specific, Baron and Kenny (1986) described four steps used to examine the meditational

effect: (1) The predictor is significantly associated with the outcome (direct Path c); (2) The predictor is significantly associated with the mediator (Path a); (3) The mediator is significantly associated with the outcome when controlled for the predictor (Path b); (4) There is complete mediation if there is no significant association between the predictor and the outcome when controlled for the mediator (indirect Path c'); otherwise there is partial mediation. The meditational effect of POS examined in the present research is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 The meditational effect of perceived organizational support



## RESULTS

### Sample 1: Newcomers in Insurance Organization

Means, standard deviations, measurement reliabilities and correlations among variables are displayed in Table 1. As expected, context, content and social aspects of socialization tactics were all significantly associated with POS, but the correlations were moderate (correlations between  $r=.28$  and  $r=.54$ , median  $r=.45$ ). Also, POS was significantly associated with all socialization outcome variables (correlations ranging from  $r=.22$  to  $r=.63$ ). Cronbach's alphas for all the scales in the questionnaire were above 0.7, which indicates an acceptable internal consistency within each scale.

**Table 1 Means, standard deviations, internal correlations and measurement reliabilities (Sample 1: Newcomers in insurance organization)**

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Context socialization tactics	5.23	1.20	(0.72)									
2 Content socialization tactics	4.78	1.32	.62**	(0.75)								
3 Social socialization tactics	5.63	.92	.47**	.55**	(0.75)							
4 Perceived organizational support	5.14	.96	.28**	.54**	.45**	(0.88)						
5 Job satisfaction	5.54	1.03	.26**	.47**	.36**	.63**	(0.88)					
6 Organizational commitment	5.68	1.13	.13	.22**	.20**	.36**	.36**	(0.76)				
7 Turnover intention	2.31	1.12	-.21**	-.53**	-.26**	-.52**	-.59**	-.47**	(0.84)			
8 Social integration	6.11	.80	.39**	.43**	.55**	.41**	.38**	.21**	-.30**	(0.86)		
9 Task mastery	5.92	.80	.13	.11	.26**	.22**	.45**	.26**	-.15*	.45**	(0.81)	
10 Role clarity	6.11	.81	.16*	.26**	.30**	.47**	.61**	.34**	-.33**	.45**	.58**	(0.88)

N= 177, \* p<.05, \*\*p<.01. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alphas) for the scales are presented on the diagonal.

For the mediating effect of POS in the relationships between the context socialization tactics and socialization outcomes, the results were presented in Table 2. As indicated when controlling for gender, age and organizational tenure, context socialization tactics were significantly associated with newcomers' job satisfaction ( $\beta=.27$ ,  $p<.001$ ) turnover intention ( $\beta=-.19$ ,  $p=.01$ ), and role clarity ( $\beta=.16$ ,  $p=.03$ ). This suggested that if organizational socialization tactics were more collective and formal, newcomers were more likely to develop job satisfaction and role clarity, and less likely to want to quit. This finding provides support to Hypothesis 1a. Context socialization tactics were also significantly associated with POS ( $\beta=.28$ ,  $p<.001$ ), which suggested that newcomers who experienced collective and formal socialization tactics were likely to report greater POS than those who experienced individual and informal socialization tactics, and thereby Hypothesis 2a is supported.

Controlled for context socialization tactics, POS was significantly associated with job satisfaction ( $\beta=.60$ ,  $p<.001$ ), turnover intention ( $\beta=-.50$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and role clarity ( $\beta=.45$ ,  $p<.001$ ). When controlled for the mediator POS, context socialization tactics were not significantly associated with newcomers' job satisfaction, turnover intention and role clarity, which suggested that POS completely mediated the relationships between context socialization tactics and newcomer job satisfaction, turnover intention and role clarity. Therefore, Hypothesis 3a is supported.



Table 2 Mediating effect of perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between the context socialization tactics and socialization outcomes (Sample 1: Newcomers in insurance organization)

Testing steps in mediation model	Socialization outcomes								
	<i>Job Satisfaction</i>			<i>Turnover Intention</i>			<i>Role Clarity</i>		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
<b>Step 1</b>									
<b>(Hypothesis 1a)</b>									
Context socialization tactics- Socialization outcomes (Path c)	.24	.07	.27***	-.18	.07	-.19*	.11	.05	.16*
R <sup>2</sup>	.08			.08			.06		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.05			.06			.04		
F	3.51**			3.88**			2.62*		
<b>Step 2</b>									
<b>(Hypothesis 2a)</b>									
Context socialization tactics - POS (Path a)	.23	.06	.28***	.23	.06	.28***	.23	.06	.28***
R <sup>2</sup>	.09			.09			.09		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.07			.07			.07		
F	4.45**			4.45**			4.45**		
<b>Step 3</b>									
<b>(Hypothesis 3a)</b>									
POS- Socialization outcomes (Path b)	.64	.07	.60***	-.59	.08	-.50***	.39	.06	.45***
Context socialization tactics- Socialization outcomes (Path c')	.09	.06	.10	-.04	.07	-.05	.03	.05	.04
R <sup>2</sup>	.40			.31			.24		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.38			.29			.22		
F	22.85***			15.27***			11.03***		

N= 177. \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

All regressions controlled for gender, age and organizational tenure.

As presented in Table 3, content socialization tactics were significantly associated with job satisfaction ( $\beta=.50$ ,  $p<.001$ ), organizational commitment ( $\beta=.22$ ,  $p<.001$ ), turnover intention ( $\beta=-.52$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and role clarity ( $\beta=.29$ ,  $p<.001$ ). This suggested that if organizational socialization tactics became more fixed and sequential, newcomers were more likely to develop job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to retain and role clarity than those newcomers who experienced variable and random socialization tactics. Therefore, Hypothesis 1b is supported. Also, there was a significant relationship between content socialization tactics and POS ( $\beta=.58$ ,  $p<.001$ ), which provides support to Hypothesis 2b.

Controlled for content socialization tactics, POS was significantly associated with job satisfaction ( $\beta=.52$ ,  $p<.001$ ), organizational commitment ( $\beta=.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ), turnover intention ( $\beta=-.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and role clarity ( $\beta=.45$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The association between content socialization tactics and job satisfaction (controlling for POS) was significant ( $\beta=.20$ ,  $p<.01$ ) but significantly dropped from 0.50 ( $Z=2.54$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Similarly, content socialization tactics was significantly associated with turnover intention ( $\beta=-.33$ ,  $p<.001$ ), but significantly reduced from -0.52 ( $Z= 3.09$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This suggested that POS partially mediated the relationships between content of socialization tactics and both job satisfaction and turnover intention. Moreover, after controlling for the mediator POS, content socialization tactics were not significantly associated with organizational commitment ( $\beta=.03$ ,  $p=.78$ ) or role clarity ( $\beta=.03$ ,  $p=.72$ ), which suggested that POS fully mediated the relationships between content socialization tactics and each of newcomers' organizational commitment and role clarity. Therefore, Hypothesis 3b is supported in sample 1.

Table 3 Mediating effect of perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between content socialization tactics and socialization outcomes (Sample 1: Newcomers in insurance organization)

Testing steps in mediation model	Socialization Outcomes											
	<i>Job Satisfaction</i>			<i>Organizational Commitment</i>			<i>Turnover Intention</i>			<i>Role Clarity</i>		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
<b>Step 1 (Hypothesis 1b)</b>												
Content socialization tactics- Socialization outcome (Path c)	.45	.06	.50***	.22	.08	.22**	-.52	.07	-.52***	.21	.05	.29***
R <sup>2</sup>	.23			.05			.30			.11		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.22			.03			.28			.09		
F	13.13***			2.29			18.07***			5.16**		
<b>Step 2 (Hypothesis 2b)</b>												
Content socialization tactics - POS (Path a)	.48	.06	.58***	.48	.06	.58***	.48	.06	.58***	.48	.06	.58***
R <sup>2</sup>	.32			.32			.32			.32		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.31			.31			.31			.31		
F	20.37***			20.37***			20.37***			20.37***		
<b>Step 3 (Hypothesis 3b)</b>												
POS- Socialization outcome (Path b)	.56	.08	.52***	.40	.10	.34***	-.40	.09	-.34***	.38	.07	.45***
Content socialization tactics – Socialization outcome (Path c')	.18	.07	.20**	.03	.09	.03	-.32	.08	-.33***	.02	.06	.03
R <sup>2</sup>	.42			.13			.37			.24		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.40			.10			.36			.22		
F	24.45***			5.10***			20.37***			10.99***		

N= 177. \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001. All regressions controlled for gender, age and organizational tenure.

Also, as presented in Table 4, there were significant relationships between social socialization tactics and newcomer job satisfaction, ( $\beta=.37$ ,  $p<.001$ ), organizational commitment ( $\beta=.20$ ,  $p=.01$ ), turnover intention ( $\beta=-.23$ ,  $p<.01$ ) social integration ( $\beta=.52$ ,  $p<.001$ ), task mastery ( $\beta=.28$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and role clarity ( $\beta=.32$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The results indicated that newcomers who were engaged in serial and investiture socialization tactics were more likely to develop job satisfaction, organizational commitment, social integration, task mastery, role clarity, and less like to turnover, compared with those who experience disjunctive and divestiture socialization tactics. Therefore, Hypothesis 1c was supported.

In addition, the association between social socialization tactics and POS was significant ( $\beta=.46$ ,  $p<.001$ ). This provides support to Hypothesis 2c, suggesting that newcomers who experienced serial and investiture socialization tactics were likely to report greater POS than those who experienced disjunctive and divestiture socialization tactics.

Controlled for social socialization tactics, POS was significantly associated with job satisfaction ( $\beta=.58$ ,  $p<.001$ ), organizational commitment ( $\beta=.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ), turnover intention ( $\beta=-.51$ ,  $p<.001$ ), social integration ( $\beta=.21$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and role clarity ( $\beta=.41$ ,  $p<.001$ ), but not with task mastery ( $\beta=.10$ ,  $p=.22$ ). When controlling for the mediator POS, the social aspects of tactics were not significantly associated with job satisfaction ( $\beta=.10$ ,  $p=.13$ ), organizational commitment ( $\beta=.04$ ,  $p=.60$ ), turnover intention ( $\beta=.00$ ,  $p=.96$ ) or role clarity ( $\beta=.13$ ,  $p=.08$ ), which indicated complete mediation by POS in these relationships. For the relationship between social aspect of socialization tactics and social integration, the coefficient was significant ( $\beta=.43$ ,  $p<.001$ ) but had significantly dropped from 0.52 ( $Z=2.70$ ,  $p<.05$ ), which suggested that POS partially mediated this relationship. These results suggested that POS mediated the relationship between social socialization tactics and all socialization outcomes except for task mastery in sample 1, which provides partial support to Hypothesis 3c.

Table 4 Mediating effect of perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between social aspect of socialization tactics and socialization outcomes (Sample 1: Newcomers in insurance organization)

Testing steps in mediation model	Socialization Outcomes																	
	<u>Job Satisfaction</u>			<u>Org. Commitment</u>			<u>Turnover Intention</u>			<u>Social Integration</u>			<u>Task Mastery</u>			<u>Role Clarity</u>		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
<b>Step 1 (Hypothesis 1c)</b>																		
Social aspect of socialization tactics – Socialization outcome (Path c)	.41	.08	.37***	.24	.09	.20*	-.29	.09	-.23**	.45	.06	.52***	.24	.06	.28***	.28	.06	.32***
R <sup>2</sup>	.14			.04			.10			.32			.12			.13		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.12			.02			.08			.30			.09			.11		
F	6.82***			1.91			4.85**			19.97***			5.58***			6.33***		
<b>Step 2 (Hypothesis 2c)</b>																		
Social aspect of socialization tactics - POS (Path a)	.48	.07	.46***	.48	.07	.46***	.48	.07	.46***	.47	.06	.55***	.48	.07	.46***	.48	.07	.46***
R <sup>2</sup>	.22			.22			.22			.22			.22			.22		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.20			.20			.20			.20			.20			.20		
F	12.13***			12.13***			12.13***			12.13***			12.13***			12.13***		
<b>Step 3 (Hypothesis 3c)</b>																		
POS- Socialization outcome (Path b)	.62	.07	.58***	.40	.10	.34***	-.61	.09	-.51***	.18	.06	.21**	.08	.07	.10	.34	.06	.41***
Social aspect of socialization tactics – Socialization outcome (Path c')	.11	.08	.10	.05	.10	.04	-.01	.09	-.00	.37	.06	.43***	.20	.07	.23**	.12	.07	.13
R <sup>2</sup>	.40			.13			.31			.35			.12			.26		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.38			.11			.29			.33			.10			.23		
F	22.77***			5.15***			15.15***			18.55***			4.78***			11.76***		

N= 177. \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001. All regressions controlled for gender, age and organizational tenure.

## Sample 2: Newcomers in the Medical Sector

Means, standard deviations, measurement reliabilities and correlations are demonstrated in Table 5. Similar to the results in sample 1, context, content and social aspects of socialization tactics were all significantly associated with POS, and POS was significantly associated with all the socialization outcomes except for turnover intention ( $r=.09$ ,  $p=.15$ ). Cronbach's alphas for all scales were above 0.7, further indicating the sound reliability of the measurement scales in the Chinese context.

Moreover, identical methods were also used to analyze the mediating role of POS in sample 2. The results presented in Table 6 suggested that if organizational socialization tactics are more collective and formal, newcomers are more likely to develop job satisfaction ( $\beta=.37$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and role clarity ( $\beta=.38$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and less likely to leave ( $\beta=.17$ ,  $p<.01$ ), which also provides support to Hypothesis 1a. However, since the coefficient of Path c' was still significant when controlling for POS ( $\beta=.21$ ,  $p<.01$ ), POS did not completely mediate the relationship between context socialization tactics and job satisfaction, but results revealed that the total reduction in the effect was statistically significant ( $Z= 2.91$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Hence, the relationship between context socialization tactics and newcomer job satisfaction was partially mediated by POS.

What is more, the results revealed that when controlling for context socialization tactics, POS was not significantly related with turnover intention ( $\beta=.02$ ,  $p=.80$ ). Thus, POS did not mediate the relationship between context socialization tactics and turnover intention. Regarding the mediating effects of POS in the linkage of context socialization tactics and role clarity, it was found that only partial mediating effect of POS ( $Z= 2.96$ ,  $p<.05$ ) was supported in sample 2.

**Table 5 Means, standard deviations, internal correlations and measurement reliabilities (Sample 2: Newcomers in the medical sector)**

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Context socialization tactics	5.14	1.35	(.74)									
2 Content socialization tactics	5.27	1.22	.48**	(.70)								
3 Social socialization tactics	5.39	1.13	.56**	.66**	(.75)							
4 Perceived organizational support	4.84	1.12	.42**	.42**	.54**	(.81)						
5 Job satisfaction	5.18	1.13	.37**	.41**	.43**	.45**	(.84)					
6 Organizational commitment	5.37	1.12	.11	.13*	.13*	.28**	.19**	(0.79)				
7 Turnover intention	4.42	1.60	.16*	.06	.07	.09	.10	-.06	(0.86)			
8 Social integration	5.30	1.15	.31**	.45**	.53**	.55**	.50**	.25*	.05	(0.88)		
9 Task mastery	5.40	1.17	.38**	.41**	.47**	.43**	.45**	.11	-.01	.51**	(0.81)	
10 Role clarity	5.60	.94	.38**	.40**	.47**	.48**	.52**	.23*	.11	.59**	.52**	(0.83)

N= 245, \* p<.05, \*\*p<.01. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alphas) for the scales are presented on the diagonal.

Table 6 Mediating effect of perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between the context socialization tactics and socialization outcomes (Sample 2: Newcomers in the medical sector)

Testing steps in mediation model	Socialization outcomes									
	<u>Job Satisfaction</u>			<u>Turnover Intention</u>			<u>Role Clarity</u>			
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	
<b>Step 1</b>										
<b>(Hypothesis 1a)</b>										
Context socialization tactics- Socialization outcomes (Path c)	.31	.05	.37***	.20	.08	.17**	.26	.04	.38***	
R <sup>2</sup>	.14			.05			.15			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.13			.03			.14			
F	10.02***			2.97*			10.58***			
<b>Step 2</b>										
<b>(Hypothesis 2a)</b>										
Context socialization tactics - POS (Path a)	.35	.05	.42***	.35	.05	.42***	.35	.05	.42***	
R <sup>2</sup>	.19			.19			.19			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.17			.17			.17			
F	13.61***			13.61***			13.61***			
<b>Step 3</b>										
<b>(Hypothesis 3a)</b>										
POS- Socialization outcomes (Path b)	.37	.06	.37***	.03	.10	.02	.34	.05	.41***	
Context socialization tactics- Socialization outcomes (Path c')	.18	.05	.21**	.19	.08	.16*	.14	.04	.21**	
R <sup>2</sup>	.25			.05			.28			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.24			.03			.27			
F	16.16***			2.38*			18.93***			

N= 245. \*p<.05. \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

All regressions controlled for gender, age and organizational tenure.



Moreover, as illustrated in Table 7, content socialization tactics were also significantly associated with job satisfaction ( $\beta=.41$ ,  $p<.001$ ), organizational commitment ( $\beta=.13$ ,  $p=.04$ ), and role clarity ( $\beta=.39$ ,  $p<.001$ ), which was identical to the findings in sample 1. However, the results did not support the significant relationship between content socialization tactics and turnover intention ( $\beta=.09$ ,  $p=.19$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1b is partially supported in sample 2.

In terms of the mediating role of POS in those relationships, the results revealed that POS partially mediated the relationship between the content socialization tactics and job satisfaction, because when controlling for the mediator POS, the coefficient of Path c' was still significant ( $\beta=.27$ ,  $p<.001$ ) but significantly dropped from .41 ( $Z=3.35$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In addition, since the relationship between content socialization tactics and organizational commitment was not significant when controlling for POS ( $\beta=.01$ ,  $p=.87$ ), the full mediating effect was supported. The partial mediating effect of POS had also been found in the relationships between content socialization tactics and newcomer role clarity because when controlling for the mediator POS, the coefficients for Path c' were significant ( $\beta=.22$ ,  $p<.001$ ) but significantly smaller than .39 for Path c ( $Z=3.09$ ,  $p<.05$ ). However, the result did not support the mediating effect of POS in the relationship between content socialization tactics and turnover intention as we failed to find a significant direct relationship between them ( $\beta=.09$ ,  $p=.19$ ), and Hypothesis 3b was partially supported in sample 2.

Table 7 Mediating effects of perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between content socialization tactics and socialization outcomes (Sample 2: Newcomers in the medical sector)

Testing steps in mediation model	Socialization Outcomes											
	<i>Job Satisfaction</i>			<i>Organizational Commitment</i>			<i>Turnover Intention</i>			<i>Role Clarity</i>		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
<b>Step 1 (Hypothesis 1b)</b>												
Content socialization tactics- Socialization outcomes (Path c)	.39	.06	.41***	.12	.06	.13*	.11	.09	.09	.31	.05	.39***
R <sup>2</sup>	.18			.02			.03			.16		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.17			.01			.01			.15		
F	13.24***			1.50			1.66			11.60**		
<b>Step 2 (Hypothesis 2b)</b>												
Content socialization tactics- POS (Path a)	.40	.05	.43***	.40	.05	.43***	.40	.05	.43***	.40	.05	.43***
R <sup>2</sup>	.20			.20			.20			.20		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.19			.19			.19			.19		
F	14.83***			14.83***			14.83***			14.83***		
<b>Step 3 (Hypothesis 3b)</b>												
POS- Socialization outcomes (Path b)	.34	.06	.34***	.28	.07	.28***	.08	.10	.06	.34	.05	.40***
Content socialization tactics- Socialization outcomes (Path c')	.25	.06	.27***	.01	.06	.01	.08	.09	.06	.17	.05	.22***
R <sup>2</sup>	.27			.09			.03			.29		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.26			.07			.01			.27		
F	17.96***			4.49**			1.46			19.31***		

N= 245. \*p<.05. \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001. All regressions controlled for gender, age and organizational tenure.

Furthermore, as presented in Table 8, there were significant direct relationships between the social aspect of socialization tactics and newcomer job satisfaction, ( $\beta=.43$ ,  $p<.001$ ), organizational commitment ( $\beta=.13$ ,  $p=.048$ ), social integration ( $\beta=.53$ ,  $p<.001$ ), task mastery ( $\beta=.47$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and role clarity ( $\beta=.47$ ,  $p<.001$ ), but not with turnover intention ( $\beta=.08$ ,  $p=.20$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1c was partially supported.

Besides, the partial mediating effects of POS were found in the relationships between social aspect of socialization tactics and job satisfaction ( $\beta=.26$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $Z=2.95$ ,  $p<.05$ ), social integration ( $\beta=.32$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $Z=3.99$ ,  $p<.05$ ), task mastery ( $\beta=.32$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $Z=2.98$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and role clarity ( $\beta=.29$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $Z=3.29$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The results were supported as all those coefficients of Path c' were significantly lower than those in Path c. Meanwhile, it was found that POS fully mediated the relationship between social aspect of tactics and organizational commitment ( $\beta=-.04$ ,  $p=.60$ ), but the mediating effect of POS did not exist in the relationship between social aspect of tactics and turnover intention as there was no direct relationship between them ( $\beta=.08$ ,  $p=.20$ ), contrary to the first requirement of evaluating the mediating effect (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Therefore, Hypothesis 3c was partially supported in sample 2.

Table 8 Mediating effects of perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between social socialization tactics and socialization outcomes (Sample 2: Newcomers in the medical sector)

Testing steps in mediation model	Socialization Outcomes																	
	<i>Job Satisfaction</i>			<i>Org. Commitment</i>			<i>Turnover Intention</i>			<i>Social Integration</i>			<i>Task Mastery</i>			<i>Role Clarity</i>		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
<b>Step 1 (Hypothesis 1c)</b>																		
Social aspect of socialization tactics – Socialization outcome (Path c)	.43	.06	.43***	.13	.06	.13*	.12	.09	.08	.54	.06	.53***	.48	.06	.47***	.40	.05	.47***
R <sup>2</sup>	.20			.02			.03			.29			.23			.23		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.18			.01			.01			.27			.22			.22		
F	14.79***			1.45			1.63			23.98***			17.68***			17.90***		
<b>Step 2 (Hypothesis 2c)</b>																		
Social aspect of socialization tactics -POS (Path a)	.55	.05	.55***	.55	.05	.55***	.55	.05	.55***	.55	.05	.55***	.55	.05	.55***	.55	.05	.55***
R <sup>2</sup>	.31			.31			.31			.31			.31			.31		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.30			.30			.30			.30			.30			.30		
F	27.40***			27.40***			27.40***			27.40***			27.40***			27.40***		
<b>Step 3 (Hypothesis 3c)</b>																		
POS- Socialization outcome (Path b)	.31	.07	.31***	.30	.07	.30***	.079	.11	.06	.39	.06	.38***	.27	.07	.26***	.28	.06	.33***
Social aspect of socialization tactics – Socialization outcome (Path c')	.26	.07	.26***	.04	.07	-.04	.074	.11	.05	.33	.06	.32***	.34	.07	.32***	.24	.06	.29***
R <sup>2</sup>	.26			.09			.03			.39			.27			.31		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.25			.07			.01			.37			.26			.29		
F	17.11***			4.55**			1.41			30.14***			17.99***			21.05		

N= 245. \*p<.05. \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001. All regressions controlled for gender, age and organizational tenure.

## **DISCUSSION**

The present study extends socialization research by providing empirical evidence through assessing the influence of organizational socialization tactics on newcomer socialization in an Asian context. The findings have some important theoretical implications. First of all, this research provides evidence to indicate that Jones' (1986) three-dimensional socialization tactics can be generalized to cultures outside western countries. This finding was consistent with those in the studies of Cable and Parson (2001) and Takeuchi and Takeuchi (2009), both of which suggested that the three-factor solution can clearly demonstrate the construct of organizational socialization tactics.

Second, consistent with the finding of Saks et al. (2007), the results of the current research indicated that collective, formal, fixed, sequential, serial and investiture socialization tactics were positively linked with a number of desirable socialization outcomes in the context of China. These findings fill important theoretical gaps in the literature by suggesting that within a collectivist culture like China (Hofstede, 1980) a collective and structured socialization program is more likely to be welcomed by newcomers.

Third, in contrast to studies that assumed each aspect of socialization tactics would have impacts on the same socialization outcomes (Saks et al. 2007), we suggested that those three aspects of organizational socialization tactics may have different impacts on different socialization outcomes. We took the analyses of each aspect of socialization outcomes in isolation, with the hope of building up the understanding of a complex underlying process gradually. Furthermore, the results implicitly suggested that social aspect tactics may be particularly important for newcomer adjustment in the context of China because serial and investiture tactics were positively associated with most of socialization outcomes in both samples. This result provided extra evidence to support Takeuchi and Takeuchi (2009) and Cable

and Parsons (2001) who suggested that a social aspect factor of socialization tactics played a very important role influencing newcomer adjustment. Nevertheless, in spite of these positive findings regarding the direct relationships between organizational socialization tactics and socialization outcomes in the present research, it is important to note that the content and social aspect socialization tactics were not significantly related with newcomer turnover intention in sample 2, which suggested that organizational socialization tactics may be different in different industries and regions, and further research is thus needed to explore such relationships by using a larger sample.

Fourth, the present research is considered important as it is one of the first to discuss the mediating role of POS in the relationships between organizational socialization tactics and socialization outcomes. The results in general suggest that when newcomers receive collective, formal, fixed, sequential, serial and investiture organizational socialization tactics, they are more likely to develop POS than those who experience individual, informal, variable, random, disjunctive and divestiture socialization tactics, and POS can further lead to greater job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to remain, social integration, task mastery and role clarity. This finding supports and extends the study of Ashforth and Saks (1996) by addressing the fundamental question on how and why the organizational socialization tactics are important in shaping newcomers' behaviours and attitudes during the socialization process.

However, in spite of those contributions, it should be noticed that we failed to find a significant link between POS and newcomer task mastery when controlling for social aspect of socialization tactics in sample 1. On reflection, the non-mediating effect of POS in such a link could be explained by the possibility that the perceived task mastery for insurance agents may hinge on specific support from experienced colleagues for the tasks at hand rather than on an overall perception of

organizational support (Lapalme, Tremblay & Simard, 2009). Therefore, in these circumstances, employees' task mastery may be more likely to be increased by doing the job itself.

Also, the mediating effect of POS was not supported in the relationships between all three aspects of socialization tactics and turnover intention in sample 2, which suggests that for new doctors and nurses working in the medical sector, there may be other factors or mechanisms underlying such relationships, which needs further investigation. Additionally, although mediation of POS in the relationships between organizational tactics and socialization outcomes was found in both samples, the results showed that POS served as a partial mediator in most cases. A possible explanation for these findings is that socialization tactics may be strong enough to have an impact on newcomers' socialization outcomes when bringing in the mechanism of POS. For example, POS was found to partially mediate the relationship between social aspect of socialization tactics and social integration in both samples. It can be possibly explained by the fact that newcomers with the opportunity to be guided by an experienced colleague and to establish their own identities without stripping away their own characteristics are more likely to develop POS, and thus extend the benefits of serial and investiture socialization tactics to newcomers' social integration, but those socialization tactics were probably still powerful enough to influence newcomer social integration. In brief, although these results did not demonstrate a complete mediating effect, POS was found to be an important variable linking organizational socialization tactics and socialization outcomes.

Furthermore, these findings not only extend the socialization literature by providing evidence to support the mediating effect of POS in the relationships between socialization tactics and socialization outcomes, but also offer employers with important insight that under collective, formal, fixed, sequential, serial and

investiture organizational socialization tactics, newcomers are more likely to develop the perception of organizational support which may in turn lead to effective socialization. Additionally, considering that it has been found that serial and investiture (vs. disjunctive and divestiture) socialization tactics were related to most of the socialization outcomes, practitioners are in particular encouraged to respect newcomers' personalities, and to motivate experienced employees to support newcomer adjustment. A well-designed mentoring program is thus considered useful in providing newcomers with an opportunity to learn about the organization and to potentially enhance job satisfaction.

Additionally, considering that the results demonstrated significant relationships between POS and newcomer socialization outcomes, it becomes essential for organizations to provide supportive programs to develop newcomers' POS. More developmental opportunities can be one potential approach to show that organizations are willing to invest in employees and value their efforts, which may lead to the development of POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Moreover, Kraimer and Wayne (2004) found that when organizations showed care and concern in providing necessary support, such as learning resources and career growth opportunities, employees tended to increase their emotional attachment towards the organization.

However, in spite of those theoretical and practical implications, since data were collected using a cross-sectional research design with a self-report survey, this will affect the ability to demonstrate cause and effect relationships, and also likely to inflate inter-item correlations due to common method variance. In spite of this pitfall, previous socialization studies did provide support for this research approach. For example, Bauer and Green (1994: 220) suggested that "when individual perceptions and attitudes are determining employees' responses to work, self-reports should be a valid and useful source of data". However, it may be still useful to involve responses



from other stakeholders through a longitudinal research design. It would be interesting to assess organizational socialization tactics from the perspective of employers, and to measure POS and socialization outcomes from a sample of newcomers at different time points.

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