

**Volunteer Entry into Hospital Culture:
Organization socialization, P-O Fit, commitment, and job satisfaction**

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Abstract

Volunteers fulfill vital roles within organizations helping volunteer program administrators stretch resources and extend services. The study presented explored the relationships among the organization socialization tactics used by hospitals and volunteer perceptions of value congruence or person-organization fit (P-O fit), commitment, and job satisfaction. Research findings reveal organization socialization tactics that provided common learning experiences separated from the seasoned organization members positively related to volunteer perceptions of organization commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Socialization tactics that provided new volunteers identifiable stages of learning also positively related to perceptions of volunteer commitment, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Additionally, tactics that allowed new volunteers to work with seasoned volunteers who modeled the volunteer role also positively related to volunteer commitment, satisfaction with empowerment and organization support. Finally, socialization tactics utilized by hospitals in this investigation that validated new volunteer values and characteristics positively related to commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Understanding the implications of the relationships that exist among these variables will assist volunteer program administrators in their volunteer recruitment, training, and retention efforts.

Key Words: Hospital volunteers, organization socialization, P-O fit, affective commitment, job satisfaction.

Introduction

Volunteers fulfill vital organizational roles within organizations contributing 8.1 billion hours of service in 2009 (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2010). An organization's investment of time and resources to socialize new members into their culture benefits both the volunteer and

organization. For instance, Kim, Cable and Kim (2005) found institutionalized socialization tactics positively associated with Person Organization (P-O) fit, job satisfaction, commitment, and decreased intention to leave directly. Interestingly, many of the investigations examining organization socialization (Allen & Meyer, 1990a;

Ashford & Saks, 1996; Cooper-Thomas, van Vianen & Anderson, 2004; Jones, 1986) have predominately utilized samples composed of college graduates, students, or paid organizational newcomers. Few investigations have sought insight into the socialization of volunteers. This investigation examined the socialization of volunteers into the cultures of hospitals by investigating the relationship among socialization tactics employed and volunteer perceptions of P-O fit, organization commitment and job satisfaction.

Organization Socialization

Van Maanen (1978) suggested organizational socialization refers to the experiences associated with learning how things work when entering a new organization or accepting a new position or role. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) propose socialization tactics employed by organizations fall within these six dichotomous categories, including

- *formal* and *informal*
- *individual* and *collective*
- *sequential* and *random*
- *fixed* and *variable*
- *serial* and *disjunctive*
- *investiture* and *divestiture*.

When defining these tactics *formal* socialization tactics separate newcomers from other organization members while they learn their new role while *informal* socialization tactics allow interaction with experienced organization members during the learning process. *Individual* socialization tactics provide unique learning experiences while *collective* tactics provide similar learning experiences for all newcomers. *Sequential* socialization tactics move newcomers through identifiable phases while *random* tactics provide a more elusive learning process. *Fixed* socialization tactics provide newcomers with specific organizational advancement information

while *variable* tactics provide little specific information about organizational advancement. *Serial* tactics use experienced members to train newcomers while *disjunctive* tactics do not. *Investiture* tactics confirm the newcomer's individual values and character while *divestiture* tactics attempt to change the newcomer's values and character (Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The researchers suggest different socialization tactics produce different role orientations. Continuing the work of Van Maanen and Schein, Jones (1986) suggested the six tactics fall within a framework representing an institutionalized or individualized approach taken by the organization. Within Jones' model content, context and the social experiences associated with socialization differentiate tactics as institutionalized or individualized tactics. Again, different approaches produce different outcome for the organization and its members. For instance, institutionalized socialization tactics relate to greater commitment, job satisfaction and decreased intention to leave (Jones, 1986). In this instance, the benefit to the organization lies in developing a program to help new members understand the organization's culture while enhancing their commitment, potentially increasing their satisfaction with the role they fulfill, and decreasing their intention to leave.

P-O Fit

Chatman (1989) defines P-O fit as a congruence of the values held by the organization and the values held by the person. For the volunteer program administrator important relationships exist between organization member P-O fit perceptions and other organization outcomes. For instance, O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) found when P-O fit increased so did perceptions of job satisfaction. While increased P-O fit

decreased intention to leave the organization. Cable and Judge (1996) found positive associations between P-O fit and willingness to recommend the organization to peers. As organization's continue to do more with less the development of a pool of volunteers that are satisfied with the work they do and willing to continue with the organization helps save training resources. Likewise, developing a group of volunteers who recommend their organization to peers will assist the volunteer program administrator with recruitment efforts. As more organizations move toward enhancing their services through the use of volunteers word-of-mouth becomes an important recruitment tool.

Commitment

This investigation examined affective commitment or of feelings of attachment, identification with the organization and involvement with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Understanding how a volunteer's commitment relates with job satisfaction, intention to leave and work effort becomes increasingly important as volunteer program administrators try to stretch resources. For instance, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) found that affective commitment positively associated with organization member job satisfaction. Affective commitment also negatively related with organizational turnover. Simply stated when affective commitment increased organization turnover decreased.

Job Satisfaction

While Jones (1986) found that institutionalized socialization tactics positively related to organization member job satisfaction. This satisfaction resulted in more than a happy organization member. Increased job satisfaction produces a benefit for the organization too. For example, Testa

(2001) concluded when food service employees perceived greater job satisfaction this facilitated greater organizational commitment resulting in greater work effort. The dual benefit connected with job satisfaction makes understanding socialization tactics that enhance job satisfaction increasing important for volunteer program administrators.

The three research hypotheses proposed for the investigation include:
Hypothesis 1: When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of P-O fit.
Hypothesis 2: When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 3: When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of job satisfaction.

Methodology

This quantitative study used a correlation design collecting data from hospital volunteers from August 2008 through January 2009. Participants were recruited from a convenience sample of hospitals within a 200-mile radius of Western Kentucky University. Each hospital reported a bed count between 140-450 total beds to the Kentucky Hospital Association, had an active volunteer program, and conducted a training activity for new volunteers. Upon gaining permission from each hospital's volunteer program administrator the researcher attended a volunteer meeting seeking study participants. Respondents voluntarily completed a pen and paper survey

distributed and collected during the meeting. No follow-up meetings took place. Data collection occurred at six Western Kentucky hospitals. Of 230 surveys distributed, 180 completed surveys were returned achieving a return rate of 78%.

The survey included items from four scales measuring organizational socialization tactics (Jones, 1986), commitment (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993), volunteer satisfaction (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001), and perceived P-O fit (Cable & De Rue, 2002). These scales used a 5 or 7-point Likert-scale. From Jones' (1986) organization socialization tactics scale the survey included three items from the *collective and individual, formal and informal, investiture and divestiture, sequential and-random, and serial and disjunctive scales* to measure socialization tactics experienced by hospital volunteers. These scales measured the organizational member's perception of (a) socialization occurring in a group versus individual settings, (b) organization use of formal versus individual learning experiences, (c) actions that build up or attempted to change values/characteristics of each individual, (d) learning experiences that build upon each other, and (e) opportunities to be in contact with seasoned organization members while learning their new organizational roles. When used in correlation study designs, a positive correlation between the socialization tactic and a second variable are interpreted as a relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and the second variable (Jones, 1986). Re-wording of scale item reflected the participant's volunteer position within the organization.

The survey contained three items from Meyer et al. (1993) revised version of the affective commitment scale (ACS). This scale measured organizational commitment based on identification with, involvement in,

and attachment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990b). Volunteer satisfaction with organizational support and empowerment were measured using Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley's volunteer satisfaction index (VSI). Modeling the works of Cable and DeRue (2002) and Cable and Judge (1996) three items measured the perceived P-O fit of hospital volunteers. They included: "I find there is a good fit between my personal values and the values and culture of the hospital where I volunteer," "The values and culture of the hospital match my personal values," and "I see similarities between the things I value in my life and the things the hospital where I volunteer values." Respondents also provided information related to their age, gender, and length of volunteer service.

Results

Respondent's gender distribution make-up included 74.4% female and 25.6% male. Respondents were predominately 65 years of age or older with 18.5% reporting their age as 65-69, 21.3% reporting their age as 70-74 and 48.3% reporting their age as 75 years or older. Only 1.7 % of participants reported recent volunteer recruitment while 2.9% of respondents reported volunteer involvement of less than three (3) months. Twenty-two percent of respondents reported volunteering for their hospital for 4-6 years, 15% reported volunteering for 7-10 years and 33.5% report volunteering for 10 or more years. Cronbach's alphas for the scales ranged from .58 to .90. The lowest alpha scores occurred in the Formal-Informal, and Collective-Individual Socialization Scales of .58 and .65 respectively. Final correlation analysis occurred after dropping one item from the Collective-Individual, Formal- Informal and Investiture-Divestiture Socialization Scales. Table 1 summarizes the results of correlation analysis.

Table 1
Pearson Correlations among Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Serial	1								
Sequential	.511*	1							
Collective	.400*	.562*	1						
Formal	.427*	.389*	.440*	1					
Investiture	.586*	.541*	.346*	.290*	1				
Commitment	.522*	.549*	.595*	.323*	.514*	1			
P-O Fit	.445*	.533*	.371*	.363*	.418*	.451*	1		
Empowerment	.628*	.601*	.461*	.405*	.609*	.638*	.669*	1	
Organization Support	.548*	.669*	.456*	.427*	.626*	.582*	.671*	.791*	1

^a N = 180; *Correlation is significant at $p < .01$

^b A positive correlation between socialization tactic and any other variable is to be interpreted as the relationships between the institutional end of the continuum and the variable. A negative correlation indicates a relationship with the individualized end (Jones, 1986).

Hypothesis 1: When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of P-O fit. All institutional socialization tactics positively related to volunteer perceptions of P-O fit with *sequential socialization tactics* having the strongest relationships ($r = .533, p < .01$) and *serial socialization tactics* having the second strongest relationship ($r = .445, p < .01$). *Investiture socialization tactics* also positively related to P-O fit ($r = .418, p < .01$). *Collective socialization tactics* positively related to volunteer perceptions of P-O fit ($r = .371, p < .01$). While *formal socialization tactics* showed the weakest relationship to volunteer perceptions of P-O fit ($r = .363, p < .010$).

Hypothesis 2: When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of organizational commitment. The strongest positive relationships between institutional socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of affective commitment occurred between *collective* and *sequential socialization tactics* $r = .595, p < .01$ and $r = .549, p < .01$ respectively. The next strongest relationship occurred between *serial socialization tactics* and commitment ($r = .522, p < .01$). *Investiture socialization tactics* also positively related to commitment ($r = .514, p < .01$). The weakest positive relationship occurred between *formal socialization tactics* and volunteer

perceptions of commitment ($r = .323, p < .01$).

Hypothesis 3: When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of job satisfaction. In this instance, all five institutionalized socialization tactics related positively with volunteer perceptions of job satisfaction as measured by their perceptions of empowerment and organization support.

Serial, investiture and *sequential socialization tactics* showed the strongest relationship to perceptions of empowerment $r = .628, p < .01, r = .609, p < .01$ and $r = .601, p < .01$ respectively. *Collective* and *formal socialization tactics* also positively related to perceptions of empowerment $r = .461, p < .01$ and $r = .405, p < .01$ respectively. *Sequential* and *investiture socialization tactics* showed the strongest relationship to volunteer perceptions of organization support ($r = .669, p < .01$ and $r = .626, p < .01$ respectively). While *serial, collective* and *formal socialization tactics* also related to volunteer perceptions of organization support ($r = .548, p < .01, r = .456, p < .01$ and $r = .427, p < .01$ respectively).

Discussion

The research findings reveal organization socialization tactics that provided common learning experiences (i.e., *collective socialization tactics*) positively related to volunteer perceptions of organization commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Similarly, socialization tactics that separated new organization volunteers from others while they learned new organization roles positively (i.e. *formal socialization tactics*) related to commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment, and satisfaction with

organization support. Socialization tactics that provided new volunteers identifiable stages of learning (i.e., *sequential socialization tactics*) also positively related to perceptions of volunteer commitment, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. While organization socialization tactics that allowed new volunteers to work with seasoned volunteers who model organization roles (i.e., *serial socialization tactics*) positively related to commitment, satisfaction with empowerment, and satisfaction with organization support. Finally, socialization tactics utilized by hospitals in this investigation that validated new volunteer values and characteristics (i.e., *investiture socialization tactics*) positively related to commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support.

This investigation has important implications for volunteer program administrators. Socialization of new volunteers can positively impact their perceptions of value congruence (P-O fit), organization commitment and satisfaction. By enhancing the volunteer's perceptions of P-O fit, organization commitment and satisfaction the administrator can potentially increase the volunteer's intention to stay, the work effort the volunteer provides, and the volunteer's willingness to recommend the organization to their peers.

Therefore, by merely enhancing P-O fit through socialization activities the volunteer program administrator has the opportunity to develop a pool of volunteers who will potentially recommend the organization to others (Cable & Judge, 1996). This is an important fact, as Becker and Dhingra (2001) found social ties of church members influenced decisions to volunteer. A willingness by volunteers to recommend the organization to their friends assists the volunteer director in *word-of-*

mouth recruitment. Additionally, Huang, Cheng, and Chou (2005) found a positive association between P-O fit and extra effort to work. This extra effort work may result in increased productivity as volunteers fulfill their roles within the organization. Finally, Cable and Judge (1996) found a positive relationship between P-O fit and decreased intention to leave. Considering the expenses associated with constantly retraining volunteers to fill positions others vacated retaining volunteers is economically beneficial. Enhancing organization commitment has a similar impact on intention to stay with your organization (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) and extra work effort (Preston & Brown, 2004).

Examining the works of others reveals increased organization member perceptions of job satisfaction may be very beneficial to the organization. For instance, Testa (2001) found that increased job satisfaction may also facilitate additional organization commitment and extra effort to work. Additionally, increasing perceptions of volunteer job satisfaction can contribute to feelings that the volunteer's work fulfilled expectations. When the volunteer is fulfilled their willingness to continue their service is enhanced provided there are activities to help integrate them into the organization (Yui, Tung, & So-kum, 2001). In this instance, activities that socialize the volunteer into the culture of the organization increase satisfaction which in turn contributes to the volunteer's sense of fulfillment.

Study Limitations

The investigation has several limits including:

1. The participants in this investigation were selected from a convenience sample of hospital volunteers that met specific criteria and elected to participate.

2. Study participants relied on their ability to recall their socialization experiences when completing the questionnaire.
3. The generalizability of the results is limited by the nature of the roles fulfilled by the volunteers participating in the study. The range of roles filled by these individuals did not include high stress positions within the organization.
4. The generalizability of the results is limited by the age range and length of service of the volunteers. The majority of the volunteers were 65 years of age or older and/or reported involvement with the organization for 7 or more years.
5. Social desirability or the tendency for individuals to avoid looking bad (Bickman & Rog, 1998) may present another limitation of the investigation. Volunteers participating in this investigation may have answered questions in a manner that made their volunteer director look good regardless of their true feelings.

Conclusion

This study offers volunteer program administrators with opportunities to build stronger ties between the volunteer and the organization. Through socialization tactics that provide (a) common learning experiences, (b) enhance the volunteer's current values, (c) provide opportunities in which experienced members share in the training, and (d) provide formal training periods to learn new roles the administrator has the opportunity to build organization commitment, P-O fit, and job satisfaction. Benefits derived from the volunteer's positive perception include increased interest in remaining with the organization, increased willingness to recommend the organization to peers, and extra work effort. The findings of the study suggest the right combination of socialization tactics pays dividends for the organization during tough

economic times. In the end the volunteer and organization become stronger through efforts spent to help volunteers enter the organization.

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