The relationship between organizational socialization and commitment in the workplace among employees in long-term nursing care facilities

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper seeks to examine the relationship between organizational socialization and commitment in the workplace (affective organizational commitment, occupational commitment, workgroup commitment, work involvement and job involvement). It also examines whether this relationship holds when organizational justice is included in the equation.

Design/methodology/approach – A total of 109 employees employed no longer than 3.5 years in long-term nursing care facilities in Israel completed the questionnaire (a 70 per cent response rate).

Findings – The results showed that organizational socialization was related to all forms of commitment, particularly to occupational commitment, workgroup commitment and job involvement. The relationship held when organizational justice was added to the equations, particularly for the previously mentioned three commitment forms. The models explained a relatively large amount of the variance in commitment forms. The implications of the findings for future research on commitment and organizational socialization are discussed.

Originality/value – While a number of studies have explored the relationship between socialization and commitment, very few studies have examined how socialization is related to more than one focus of commitment simultaneously. This paper aims to fill this gap.

Keywords Nursing, Israel, Long-term care

Research into organizational commitment boomed in the 1980s and 1990s (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) prompted by national anxiety in the USA about what seemed to be a
highly motivated and successful Japanese work force (Cohen, 2003). Researchers believed organizational commitment to be a key factor accounting for the hard work and low turnover of Japanese workers. Today it is quite clear that neither of these phenomena has been explained in the way researchers anticipated. The Japanese and US workforces have been shown to be less different than appeared at first and where differences do exist, variations in organizational commitment appear to play only a minor role (Cohen and Gattiker, 1992). For instance, organizational commitment seems to be only a modest predictor of turnover, certainly not of the magnitude expected (Cohen, 2003). The upshot of this was a reaction against organizational commitment as a single, all-explanatory focus. There was an air of disappointment that after so many years of research, many aspects of the process, determinants, and outcomes of organizational commitment remained cloudy (Cohen, 2003; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). Indeed, some researchers even questioned the need for future research on this concept (Baruch, 1998; Randall, 1990).

Researchers naturally sought alternative ways to understand commitment and to pinpoint its contribution in both theory and practice. One important alternative approach was to characterize commitment as a multidimensional concept. Suggestions to this effect had been made in earlier research. Rotondi (1975), for example, argued that it was essential to differentiate between targets of identification in organizations, such as occupational activities, task groups, or reference groups. Later, such an approach was advanced by Morrow (1983, 1993) and in the works of Reichers (1985, 1986), Becker (1992), Cohen (1993a, 1998, 2000, 2003), Blau et al. (1993), and others. These authors delineated a number of specific objects of commitment, including the organization, the work group, the occupation, the union, one’s job, and even work itself (Blau et al., 1993; Cohen, 1993b, 1999a, 2003; Randall and Cote, 1991). Together, they formed what can be termed the multiple commitments approach.

Like any explanatory theory, the multiple-commitment approach must be judged by the extent to which it offers “added value”. That is, if the recognition that we live in a multiple-commitment world is to have either theoretical or practical importance, we must show that examining commitments to different constituencies and domains refines our understanding of work-related behavior (Cohen, 2003; Meyer and Allen, 1997; Morrow, 1993). Indeed, the multiple commitments approach has been shown to predict important work outcomes such as withdrawal, performance, absenteeism, and tardiness (e.g. Blau, 1986; Cohen, 1993a, 1999b, 2000; Wiener and Vardi, 1980). How and why this is so, however, are still open questions, with researchers taking different, sometimes contradictory views.

Wiener and Vardi (1980), for example, argued that because individuals in a work setting simultaneously experience varying degrees of commitment to several aspects of working life (e.g. the employing organization, the job or task, their personal career), work outcomes may be best understood as a function of all such commitments, rather than one or another separately. Steers and Rhodes (1978), in contrast, contended that outcomes such as absenteeism could be understood as a result of conflict among commitments, on the grounds that when employees are committed to objects other than the organization, whether inside or outside the work environment, they will experience less internal pressure to go to work. Randall and Cote (1991) emphasized the importance of continued research on the subject, noting that “a multivariate approach to work commitment research will advance the understanding of how various pieces of
the commitment puzzle fit together and how constellations of work commitment constructs influence outcome variables” (p. 209).

Thus, though the past few decades have added a great deal to our understanding, there is still a need for more research on the correlates of commitment – and in particular, the relationship of different commitment forms to different determinants (Cohen, 2003). This is an important research question, because resolving it will provide important evidence about the discriminant validity of commitment forms, particularly in light of the potential concept redundancy problem in the study of multiple commitments. Research on this topic is as yet very scarce, and except for a qualitative analysis of the determinants of commitment forms (Cohen, 2003), almost no studies have looked into how determinants are related simultaneously to different commitment foci.

One determinant in particular, organizational-socialization, has rarely been examined in the context of commitment at all, let alone in relation to different commitment foci. Indeed, such studies are so thin on the ground that several meta-analyses (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002), which examined correlates of organizational commitment, did not even consider socialization as a determinant, probably because of lack of data. Two recent meta-analyses that focused on socialization (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007) showed that a few studies have examined the relationship between socialization and organizational commitment (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990; Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Ashforth et al., 1998; Baker and Feldman, 1990; Mitus, 2006). Most studies that have looked at this relationship have focused on organizational commitment as one of the dependent variables of socialization or as a mediator in the relationship between socialization and outcomes (Gruman et al., 2006; Heimann and Pittenger, 1996; Klein et al., 2006; Riordan et al., 2001). Because organizational commitment is the most researched form of commitment, very few studies have looked at organizational socialization in relation to other forms of commitment such as occupational commitment or job involvement.

The lack of research on the relationship between organizational socialization and commitment forms is surprising, and points to a gap in our understanding of commitment. We know that commitment influences significant outcomes such as in-role and extra-role performance and turnover (Cohen, 2003). Likewise, we know that socialization is a mechanism that can affect the commitment levels of employees, particularly newcomers (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Saks et al., 2007). Organizations, scholars, and practitioners should therefore be very interested in understanding this relationship.

This study is aimed at addressing this important research issue. It will examine the relationship between organizational socialization and various commitment foci among relatively new employees – that is, those in the first few years of employment – in three long-term nursing care facilities in Israel. This study will make two significant contributions. First, it will further the multiple-commitments approach by exploring the relationship between socialization and multiple foci of commitment in the workplace, not just organizational commitment. Second, it will examine how organizational socialization relates to commitment when controlling for demographic variables (age, education, gender) commonly examined in the commitment literature, and justice variables (distributive and procedural), which represent an important exchange concept. This examination will provide a broader perspective on the effects
of socialization. Once an employee begins to accumulate experience in the organization, do the effects of socialization still hold? The findings of the study will offer guidance for managers and human resource personnel as well as researchers and academics.

Conceptual framework and research hypotheses

Socialization and multiple commitments

Organizational socialization refers to the process by which newcomers make the transition from being organizational outsiders to being insiders (Bauer et al., 2007). Through this process, employees acquire knowledge about and adjust to new jobs, roles, work groups, and the culture of the organization in order to participate better as an organizational member (Haueter et al., 2003; Saks et al., 2007). While socialization can occur at every stage, the socialization of newcomers or new hires in particular is considered crucial. It is at the initial point of entry into the organization where learning and adjustment issues are most important and problematic (Gregersen, 1993).

Effective socialization can have lasting and positive effects, enhancing person-organization fit and person-job fit as well as organizational commitment. Socialization can affect a variety of constructs that reflect newcomer adjustment because broadening the knowledge of new hires about the work setting reduces the uncertainty and anxiety inherent in the early work experience (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002).

The first hypothesis, presented in the following, is already well accepted, based on previous research. It focuses on the relationship between organizational socialization and organizational commitment, defined as affective attachment to the organization (Cohen, 2003), a relationship that has been examined in a number of previous studies (e.g. Gruman et al., 2006; Heimann and Pittenger, 1996; Klein et al., 2006; Riordan et al., 2001). Based on this body of work, newcomers who are more socialized should be more committed than their less-socialized peers. This is because socialization involves giving employees information through structured experiences, which can help them overcome their anxiety, confusion and concern about their roles – which in turn can increase their attachment to and identification with the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Jones, 1988).

While socialization should increase commitment, looking at socialization from a content perspective (Chao et al., 1994; Haueter et al., 2003) suggests that the process is not identical for everyone. New employees may vary in how much they learn about the organization as a whole, and about its norms, goals, values, history, politics, language, and other features. Employees may also differ in how well they develop the interpersonal relationships necessary to function successfully in the organization. These variations can mean that employees develop different levels of commitment, with those who are more knowledgeable and better adjusted becoming more active and loyal participants in the organization. Employees who are more knowledgeable may also feel their employer has a greater vested interest in them. Consequently, they reciprocate by showing greater loyalty to the organization (Mitus, 2006).

**H1.** Organizational socialization will be positively related to organizational commitment.

The unique contribution of this study is its exploration of the relationship between organizational socialization and multiple forms of commitment in the workplace. The
literature offers a good understanding of how socialization is related to organizational commitment, as suggested in the previous discussion. The next question is how socialization might be related to other forms of commitment. Two explanations will be advanced here.

One approach argues that different commitment forms will be affected differently by organizational socialization based on whether they are oriented within or outside the specific work setting – that is, the employing organization (Cohen, 2003). Organizational socialization is the employer’s way of helping employees fit in so they can work more effectively (Mowday et al., 1982). Organizational socialization is thus likeliest to be related to commitment to the employing organization, through the framework discussed previously, and other commitments that develop as a result of work experiences in the organization, including the job, defined as a belief about the present job and tends to be a function of how much the job can satisfy one’s present needs (Kanungo, 1982), and the work group, defined as an individual’s identification and sense of cohesiveness with other members of the organization (Randall and Cote, 1991). In contrast, commitments to foci outside the organization, such as the occupation, defined as one’s attitude to one’s profession or vocation (Blau, 1988), and the work itself, defined as a normative belief about the value of work in one’s life (Kanungo, 1982), are less likely to be affected by organizational socialization. Indeed, work is the most stable commitment focus because a general work-value orientation is learned early in the socialization process (Shamir, 1986), and is less affected by characteristics of the specific work setting.

Another approach is based on the logic of proximity as presented by Cohen (2003). This approach relies on Lawler’s (1992) theory of attachment, a principle of proximal rules that explains why “actors develop stronger affective ties to subgroups within a social system rather than to the social system, to local communities rather than to states, to work organization, and so forth” (Lawler, 1992, p. 334). Interpersonal attachment produces a stronger commitment to subgroups than to the larger group, because the credit for positive results is likely to be attributed to the proximal subgroups, while the blame for negative effects is likely to be attributed to the larger group (Lawler, 1992). This logic can explain why one will develop a stronger personal attachment to one’s job than to one’s career. The job is a proximal target, the center of the immediate work setting, while the career is a much more distant target.

Gregersen (1993) and Mueller and Lawler (1999) argued that proximal variables exert the most significant influence on employees’ actions because proximity provides more opportunities for exchange relationships. Mueller and Lawler (1999) focused on the nested nature of organizational units. The general principle they proposed is that, given the nesting of one unit within another, employees’ commitment to a particular organizational unit in the structure will be affected primarily by the work conditions that are created and controlled by that particular unit. Commitment to the most proximate unit will be influenced especially by work conditions because day-to-day experiences in the local unit exert the strongest effects on positive emotions, and positive emotions produce commitment primarily to this more proximate unit.

According to Gregersen (1993), individuals can come to identify strongly with proximal and potentially influential foci. Gregersen’s argument can easily be applied to the relationship between socialization and commitment forms. The organization, the job, and the work group provide more proximal foci in terms of their relationship to the
immediate work setting. The basic argument here is that in the workplace context, organizational socialization will be more strongly related to commitment foci that provide more opportunities for exchange relationships. Organizational socialization helps early-stage employees establish more intensive exchange relationships with these foci by giving them important information about the organization’s expectations, how they can meet these expectations, and the rewards for doing so. Work involvement and occupational commitment are less proximal in terms of their relationships to the work setting. They provide fewer opportunities for exchange relationships, and so their relationship with organizational socialization is expected to be weaker (Gregersen, 1993).

H2. Organizational socialization will be positively related to organizational commitment, job involvement and group commitment. It will have a weak relationship or no relationship at all with work involvement and occupational commitment.

Justice, organizational socialization and commitment

Organizational justice is concerned with how employees determine if they have been treated fairly in their jobs (Moorman, 1991). Three sources of organizational justice are routinely cited. The first, distributive-justice, is based on equity theory, which states that perceptions of an unfair distribution of work rewards relative to work input create tension within the individual, a tension the individual seeks to resolve (Niehoff and Moorman, 1993). Prior research and theory on social exchange and distributive justice suggest that when employees receive inducements that are commensurate with their knowledge, skills and abilities, they are more likely to think that outcomes such as pay, benefits and terms of work are fair and just (Ang et al., 2003; Greenberg, 1990). These employees will reciprocate with higher levels of commitment.

The second source, procedural justice, has two components. The first, formal procedures, refers to the presence or absence of procedures believed to be fundamental to the fair distribution of rewards. Employees will not be committed to an organization they perceive to not be procedurally fair (Martin and Bennett, 1996). The second component, interactional-justice, refers to perceptions of fairness in the enactment of formal procedures or in explanations of those procedures (Niehoff and Moorman, 1993). Prior research and theory on social exchange and procedural justice suggest that when organizational decision-making is consistent and meets the bias suppression rule (uniform treatment of all), employees have positive assessments of procedural justice (Ang et al., 2003; Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1990). As a result, employees will reciprocate with higher levels of commitment.

Following the proximity argument presented in the discussion to H2, we expect different relationships between the two organizational justice variables and the different commitment forms. As argued previously, the organization, the job, and the work group provide more proximal foci in terms of their relationship to the immediate work setting. Therefore, they are expected to have stronger relationships with organizational justice. Work involvement and occupational commitment are less proximal in terms of their relationships to the work setting. Because the foci of these commitments are less proximal to the work setting, their relationship with organizational justice is expected to be weaker.
Higher levels of distributive justice and procedural justice will be positively related to organizational commitment, job involvement and group commitment. It will have a weak relationship or no relationship at all with work involvement and occupational commitment.

Justice, organizational socialization and commitment
The final hypothesis will examine whether the relationships between organizational socialization and the various commitment forms hold when justice variables are included in the equations. This examination is important because it will show whether socialization continues to shape employees’ attitudes regardless of their daily exchanges and experiences in the organization. Following the logic of proximity presented earlier, the expectation is that this relationship will hold for organizational commitment, job involvement, and group commitment.

As discussed previously, the basic argument is that in the workplace context, organizational socialization will be more strongly related to commitment foci that provide more opportunities for exchange relationships – that is, the organization, the job, and the work group. In the early stages of employment, organizational socialization helps employees establish exchange relationships with these foci by giving them information about the organization’s expectations and the likely outcomes of meeting or failing to meet those expectation (Gregersen, 1993). In fact, organizational socialization can act much as described in the expectancy or path-goal theory of motivation (Evans, 1970) by clarifying the paths between effort and performance and between performance and outcomes. As the employee becomes comfortable in the organization and familiar with its workings, perceptions of organizational justice feed into the set of exchange relationships formed during the socialization process.

Work involvement and occupational commitment are less proximal in terms of their relationships to the work setting, so their relationship with organizational socialization is expected to be weaker. This relationship, which was not strong initially, may disappear when we consider the effects of organizational justice on commitment.

The relationship between organizational socialization and organizational commitment, job involvement, and group commitment will hold when perceptions of justice are included in the equation.

Method
Subjects and procedure
Participants. The sample for this study was employees of three long-term nursing care facilities in the north of Israel. Employees were included in the study if they had worked no more than three and a half years in their organization. We chose the 3.5-year cutoff to ensure that we would be able to measure the effects of socialization. Both the career and the socialization literature suggest that the first and second years in an organization are a time of transition, when individuals focus on becoming effective in their work role, understanding its formal demands, and getting to know potential commitment targets within the workplace (Gregersen, 1993). Employees need this time to establish themselves in their roles and become familiar with the values and goals of various stakeholders within the organization. By the third year, employees generally feel secure in their roles and have had the opportunity to develop attitudes regarding
commitment (including commitment toward particular foci) and exchange (organizational justice).

Questionnaires were distributed to 155 employees who had worked in any of the three institutions studied for 3.5 years or less (the three organizations employed 356 people in total). One hundred and nine usable questionnaires were returned – a response rate of 70 per cent. The mean age of the respondents was 48.3 years. Almost two-thirds (62 per cent) of the employees were female, 60 per cent were married, 56 per cent had an academic education, 55 per cent worked full time, and 33 per cent were in managerial positions.

Measures

Control variables. Three demographic variables were examined in this study as control variables: age, gender, and marital status. These three variables have been frequently considered as determinants of commitment, in accordance with the side-bet theory (Becker, 1960; Meyer and Allen, 1984). The rationale is that these variables represent hidden investments that bind the individual to the organization or the occupation – or put differently, hidden costs of leaving. The higher these perceived costs, the higher the level of commitment. Age is known to be one of the strongest representatives of such costs, as older employees may lose their benefits if they leave their current organization, and may face more difficulties in finding a new job or changing careers. Gender is another, as women are generally the family members expected to deal with additional, sometimes conflicting, demands from home. This situation is particularly true in Israel (Cohen and Kirchmeyer, 2005; Yishai and Cohen, 1997). Marital status is another constraint that limits employment alternatives, as married employees may need a steady income to support their families. Age was measured in years. Gender and marital status were measured as dichotomous variables (gender: male = 0; female = 1; marital status: married = 0; not married = 1).

Organizational justice. This variable was measured using Niehoff and Moorman’s (1993) scales, which include one dimension measuring perceptions of distributive justice and two dimensions measuring perceptions of procedural justice. Distributive justice was measured using five items assessing the fairness of different work outcomes. Procedural justice was measured with items designed to tap both formal procedures and interactional justice. Formal procedures (six items) measured the degree to which job decisions included mechanisms to ensure that information gathered would be accurate and unbiased and that employees’ voices would be heard, along with an appeals process. Interactional justice (nine items) measured the degree to which employees felt their needs were considered in, and adequate explanations made for, job decisions. Given the strong correlation found here between formal procedures and interactional justice ($r = 0.793$), we decided to combine these items to form one procedural justice scale.

Organizational socialization: This variable was measured by applying the 10-item scale developed by Haueter et al. (2003). This scale follows the content approach to socialization, meaning that socialization is viewed as a learning process (Saks and Ashforth, 1997), and the scale measures the content that was actually learned and internalized (Chao et al., 1994). The scale measures not only the factual information the employees have gathered about the organization, but also their adjustment to and understanding of how to behave in the organization. A socialized employee should
know the basic responsibilities of employees and the expectations of organizational members. Note that the scale focuses on the organization, rather than other possible foci of socialization such as the job or workgroup.

The items in the scale are:

- I know the specific names of the products/services produced/provided by this organization.
- I know the history of this organization (e.g. who founded the company and when, original products/services, how the organization survived tough times).
- I know the structure of the organization (e.g. how the departments fit together).
- I understand the operations of this organization (e.g. who does what, how sites, subsidiaries and/or branches contribute to the organization).
- I understand this organization’s objectives and goals.
- I understand how various departments, subsidiaries, and/or sites contribute to this organization’s goals.
- I understand how my job contributes to the larger organization.
- I understand how to act to fit in with what the organization values and believes.
- I know this organization’s overall policies and/or rules (e.g. compensation, dress code, attitudes about smoking, travel expense limitations).
- I understand the internal politics within this organization (e.g. chain of command, which is influential, what needs to be done to advance or maintain good standing).

Commitment foci. For the sake of simplicity, research that looks at multiple commitments in the workplace tends to measure only one dimension of commitment for each commitment focus (job, occupation, union, etc.) (Cohen, 2003, 2007). Affective commitment is recognized as a stronger, more reliable and more valid representative of organizational commitment than normative or continuance commitment, and therefore is typically the form chosen in studies that look at multiple commitment foci (Cohen, 2003; Meyer et al., 2002). Indeed, recent criticism of continuance and normative commitment suggests that these should perhaps not be considered forms of commitment at all: “...continuance and normative commitment should be seen not as commitments but rather as antecedents of attitudes toward a specific behavior, more precisely as different classes of imagined consequences of (dis)continuing employment” (Solinger et al., 2008, p. 76; see also Cohen, 2007; Ko et al., 1997). For these reasons we focused on the affective dimension of commitment for all the commitment forms examined here.

We used the eight-item scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1984) to measure affective organizational commitment. Occupational commitment was calculated using the seven-item measure developed by Blau (1988). Job involvement was measured by a ten-item scale and work involvement by a six-item scale, both developed by Kanungo (1979, 1982). Group commitment was calculated using the seven-item measure developed by Ellemers et al. (1998). Except for the group commitment scale, all the scales applied in this research have been noted in the literature (Cohen, 2003; Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005; Morrow, 1993) as the most commonly used and
the most reliable and valid work commitment scales. All the items were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Data analysis
Correlation analysis was applied first to present the interrelationships among the research variables and to examine the possibility of multicollinearity. Regression analysis was used to test the other hypotheses. This regression was performed in three steps. In the first step, commitment foci were regressed on the three demographic variables. In the second step, the organizational socialization variable was added to the equation, and in the third step the two justice variables were added.

Results
Table I shows the descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and intercorrelations among the research variables, demonstrating acceptable psychometric properties of the variables. The only high correlation between the predictor variables is 0.62, between distributive justice and procedural justice. However, this correlation does not exceed r = 0.70, which is the criterion for multicollinearity. In addition, it should be emphasized that multicollinearity could not have spuriously produced the pattern of results obtained in the correlations. Moreover, since simultaneous regression tests only the unique contribution of each predictor (Cohen and Cohen, 1983), multicollinearity could not have produced the results found in the regression analyses.

To establish further the discriminant validity of the scales applied here, several procedures recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) were applied. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed for the commitment scales using the AMOS structural equation-modeling program. This analysis was performed following the procedure outlined by Brooke et al. (1988), Mathieu and Farr (1991), and Cohen (1999a). Three indicators were established for each multi-item measure by first fitting a single-factor solution to each set of items and then averaging the items with highest and lowest loadings to form the first indicator, averaging the items with the next highest and lowest loadings to form the second indicator, and so forth until all items were assigned to one of the three indicators for each variable. This procedure was necessary to reduce the number of parameters estimated in the measurement models. In effect, this strategy reduced the scale items to three parallel indicators of each construct, in much the same manner that parallel test forms are developed (see Nunnally, 1978). The extent to which, the three indicators adequately tapped the more general underlying constructs, was then assessed by fitting the confirmatory factor analysis models.

For the commitment scales we compared the fit of a five-factor model for the five commitment scales to the alternative fit of a single, one-factor model. The results for the five-factor model (the model incorporating organizational, occupational, and group commitment, and work and job involvement) revealed the following fit indices: $X^2 = 155.83$ (df = 80); $X^2$/df = 1.96; CFI = 0.91; IFI = 0.91; NFI = 0.84; and RMSEA = 0.09. In the second model tested, all commitment form items were loaded onto a single factor, producing $X^2 = 288.36$ (df = 90); $X^2$/df = 3.20; CFI = 0.76; IFI = 0.77; NFI = 70; and RMSEA = 0.14. We then conducted a chi-square difference test, which indicated that the five-factor model fit significantly better than the
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<td>1. Gender&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>3. Age</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>23.64</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
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<td>5. Procedural justice</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<td>6. Distributive justice</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.08</td>
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<td>7. Organizational commitment</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>1.14</td>
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<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.44***</td>
<td>0.48***</td>
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<td>8. Group commitment</td>
<td>5.72</td>
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<td>9. Job involvement</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>1.16</td>
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<td>0.12</td>
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<td>0.46***</td>
<td>0.58***</td>
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<td>0.69***</td>
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<td>10. Occupational commitment</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>1.38</td>
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<td>0.15</td>
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<td>0.28**</td>
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**Notes:**<sup>a</sup> Male = 0; female = 1. <sup>b</sup> Married = 0; not married = 1. n = 109. *p ≤ 0.05  **p ≤ 0.01  ***p ≤ 0.001; reliabilities in parentheses

**Table I.** Psychometric properties and intercorrelations among research variables

Commitment in the workplace
one-factor model (chi-square difference = 132.53; df = 10; \( p \leq 0.001 \)). The findings support the superiority of the five-factor model over the one-factor model.

In addition, we performed CFA for the predictor variables. We first compared the fit of a two-factor model for the two organizational justice scales to the alternative fit of a single, one-factor model. The results for the two-factor model (incorporating distributive and procedural justice) revealed the following fit indices: \( X^2 = 14.39 \) (df = 8); \( X^2/df = 1.80 \); CFI = 0.98; IFI = 0.99; NFI = 0.97; and RMSEA = 0.09. In the second model tested, all organizational justice items were loaded onto a single factor, producing \( X^2 = 40.93 \) (df = 9); \( X^2/df = 4.55 \); CFI = 0.93; IFI = 0.93; NFI = 91; and RMSEA = 0.18. The chi-square difference test showed that the two-factor model fit significantly better than the one-factor model (chi-square difference = 26.54; df = 1; \( p \leq 0.001 \)). The findings support the superiority of the two-factor model over the one-factor model.

To further establish the discriminant validity of the predictor variables we compared the fit of a three-factor model for the two organizational justice and the organizational socialization scales to the alternative fit of a single, one-factor model. The results for the three-factor model (incorporating distributive justice, procedural justice, and organizational socialization) revealed the following fit indices: \( X^2 = 57.10 \) (df = 24); \( X^2/df = 2.38 \); CFI = 0.95; IFI = 0.96; NFI = 0.93; and RMSEA = 0.11. In the second model tested, all the items were loaded onto a single factor, producing \( X^2 = 324.93 \) (df = 27); \( X^2/df = 12.03 \); CFI = 0.59; IFI = 0.60; NFI = 58; and RMSEA = 0.32. The chi-square difference test showed that the three-factor model fit significantly better than the one-factor model (chi-square difference = 267.83; df = 3; \( p \leq 0.001 \)). The findings support the superiority of the three-factor model over the one-factor model.

To test for common method variance, a Harman’s one-factor test was performed (Harman, 1967; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). All the commitment items, the organizational justice items, and the socialization items were entered into a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. According to this technique, if a single factor emerges from the factor analysis or one “general” factor accounts for most of the variance, common method variance is deemed present. However, the results of the analysis revealed 14 factors (explaining 80.19 per cent of the variance) with eigenvalues greater than one with only two factors accounting for more than 15 per cent of the variance each (16.91 and 15.59 per cent). These results are consistent with the absence of common method variance.

In short, several tests were performed for a deeper examination of the scales applied here. The findings showed that the respondents were able to differentiate among the different dimensions of commitment as well as between the predictor variables, and that the data are not inflated with common method errors.

Table II presents the results of the regression analyses. Hypothesis 1 expected that socialization would be positively related to organizational commitment. This hypothesis was supported. Step 2 in the regression for organizational commitment showed that organizational socialization added 21 per cent to the explained variance for organizational commitment. The direction of the relationship was as expected. This is a considerable amount of variance explained by one variable.

H2 expected that organizational socialization would be related to organizational commitment, job involvement and group commitment. It also expected a weak
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Socialization
Organizational socialization

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Organizational justice
Procedural justice
Distributive justice

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R²
R² adjusted
F

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Notes: n = 109; *male = 0; female = 1; married = 0, not married = 1; p ≤ 0.05; **p ≤ 0.01; ***p ≤ 0.001
relationship or no relationship at all with work involvement and occupational commitment. This hypothesis was partly supported. A large amount of variance for the three commitment forms was explained by organizational socialization – 21 per cent for organizational commitment, 24 per cent for job involvement, and 25 per cent for group commitment (see Table II step 2). In comparison, organizational socialization was a less satisfactory explanation of the variance in the two other commitment forms, accounting for 8 per cent of the variance in occupational commitment and 11 per cent of the variance in work involvement. These findings support $H_2$, demonstrating that organizational socialization was more strongly related to the three proximal commitment forms (organization, job, and work group) than to the less proximal ones (work and occupation).

$H_3$, which predicted that higher levels of distributive justice and procedural justice would be related positively only to the three proximal commitment forms, was partly supported. In the equations presented in Table II (see step 3) procedural justice was related only to organizational commitment, one of the three proximal foci. However, distributive justice was related to four commitment forms – all except organizational commitment. This does not provide empirical support for $H_3$. It should be noted that in all the equations, organizational justice added a considerable amount of variance to that already explained by the control variables and by organizational socialization. This variance ranged from 9 per cent for work involvement to 18 per cent for job involvement.

$H_4$ expected that the relationship between organizational socialization and organizational commitment, job involvement, and group commitment would hold when perceptions of justice were included in the equation. This hypothesis was partly supported. As can be seen in Table II (step 3), the effect of organizational socialization on these three commitments remained significant after inclusion of the justice variables, though there was some reduction in the size of the coefficient. As for the other two commitment forms, the results were mixed. As expected, in the case of occupational commitment, the effect of organizational socialization did not hold when the justice variables were added to the equation. However, in the case of work involvement the effect of socialization remained significant after the addition of organizational justice, an unanticipated finding.

Discussion
The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between organizational socialization and various commitment forms. A review of the literature (Cohen, 2003) shows that relatively few studies have examined determinants of multiple commitment forms simultaneously. Naturally, even fewer have explored the role of organizational socialization while applying a multiple commitment approach. Most studies that have examined the socialization-commitment relationship have limited their focus to organizational commitment (Gruman et al., 2006; Klein et al., 2006; Riordan et al., 2001). Yet looking at how socialization may be related to other commitment foci can offer valuable insights into employees’ attitudes and behavior in the real, multiple-commitment world.

The examination of organizational socialization as a determinant is important both conceptually and practically. Most established determinants of commitment, particularly organizational commitment, are variables that represent work
experiences, such as met expectations, perceptions of organizational justice, and relationship with the supervisor (Meyer et al., 2002). Socialization is different in that it takes place primarily during the very early stages of employment. This raises the interesting question, how early in employment can organizations affect commitment? Bearing in mind that commitment is considered a fairly stable concept, and that organizations have a great deal of control over the socialization process for new employees, organizational socialization can be an important tool for shaping employees’ commitment in its early stages. In other words, given evidence of a strong relationship between socialization and commitment, managers can use this knowledge to help boost employees’ organizational commitment not only by offering fair treatment and good conditions at work, but also by a well-planned organizational program designed to socialize new employees.

Some of the specific findings of this study deserve specific attention. First, organizational socialization as defined and measured here was related to all the commitment foci studied, indicating that a strong socialization – one that imparts both broad knowledge about the organization and comfort with the interpersonal relationships needed for success – can affect not only organizational commitment per se but also other commitment forms equally vital to the organization, such as job involvement and commitment to the work group. This means, in turn, that different commitment forms in the workplace can also be affected at very early stages of employment. No less noteworthy is that in our analyses, the effect of socialization held even when organizational justice variables were added to the equations, demonstrating the powerful effect of socialization even in the face of later experiences. Only in the case of occupational commitment did the effect of socialization become non-significant when organizational justice was included. In other words, the attitudes of employees toward various aspects of the organization and the work setting can be shaped at the early stages of employment, and the outcomes of socialization are likely to remain regardless of the later experiences of employees in the organization.

The findings here have other important conceptual and practical implications. First, organizational socialization has, on the whole, not been considered in commitment research as an important determinant of commitment. Our findings suggest that more attention should be given to organizational socialization in studies that examine the antecedents of commitment forms. The finding that organizational socialization was related to other commitment foci besides the organization strengthens this argument. There is strong evidence that different commitment forms together have a stronger effect on important outcomes in the workplace (e.g. performance, turnover, and OCB) than any one form alone, even organizational commitment (Cohen, 1999b, 2003). Our findings thus point to the importance of organizational socialization as a way to indirectly improve work outcomes. Future research should examine a mediated model of organizational socialization, commitment forms, and work outcomes. From a practical point of view, managers interested in boosting performance and reducing turnover should rely more techniques of organizational socialization as a way to develop higher commitment levels in the early stages of employment.

The findings of this study are all the more remarkable given the very weak effect of the control variables on the results. The three control variables used here, particularly age, are considered consistent correlates of commitment (Cohen, 1993, 2003) based on the established side-bet theory. Yet they had no effect on the findings here, with or
without the inclusion of the conceptual variables. One of the explanations for this finding is the specific target population. Employees in long-term nursing care facilities probably have few opportunities in other jobs and are less affected by side-bets. Perhaps, too, the dire need for such employees means that their length of employment in this industry depends more on the employees than on the organization. These two forces reduce the effect of side-bets.

Finally, several limitations of this study must be considered. First, because this research examined employees in long-term nursing care facilities, there may be limits to the generalizability of the findings to other occupations and organizations. Second, the study relied on self-report data, allowing for the possibility of same-source bias, a common problem with cross-sectional, non-behavioral measurements. However, because the multivariate analysis considered the simultaneous effects of all variables, the extent of this problem was reduced. Third, the paper examined employees in Israel, and the findings should be generalized to other cultures with some caution. Fourth, the paper focuses on organizational socialization and does not examine group or task socialization. Results might differ for the other forms of socialization despite the high correlations found between them (Haueter et al., 2003).

Despite its limitations, this study makes some important contributions. Its findings demonstrate the importance of organizational socialization as a construct that can increase our understanding of the sources of commitment in the workplace. More research on this issue seems warranted in light of the findings and before solid conclusions can be drawn.

References


**About the authors**

Aaron Cohen is an Associate Professor in the Division of Public Administration, School of Political Sciences, University of Haifa, Israel. He received his PhD in Management at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, and taught three years at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. His current research interests include commitment in the workplace, in particular organizational commitment and occupational commitment; organizational citizenship behavior (OCB); cross-cultural research; and work/nonwork relationships. His work has been published in the *Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Vocational Behavior, Journal of Management, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management, Human Relations, Cross-Cultural Psychology, Cross-Cultural Research*, and *Applied Psychology: An International Review*. He is the author of *Multiple Commitments in the Workplace: An Integrative Approach* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003). Aaron Cohen is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: acohen@poli.haifa.ac.il

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