INDIVIDUALIZED VERSUS INSTITUTIONALIZED SOCIALISATION TACTICS

Birgit Burböck*
FH-JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences, Austria
birgit.burboeck@fh-joanneum.at

Sandra Schnepf
FH-JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences, Austria
sandra.schnepf@fh-joanneum.at

Stephan Pessl
FH-JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences, Austria
stephan.pessl@edu.fh-joanneum.at

Abstract

The demographic shifts, the increased workforce mobility, and the shortage of skilled workers have led to a new thinking within the human resource management. To address this issue, organizations adapt their methods towards a higher focus on their employees. The purpose of this paper is therefore the identification of organizational socialization tactics which are classified into the individualized socialization strategy and the institutionalized socialization strategy. The institutionalized socialization strategy causes better results in terms of newcomer adjustment than the individualized socialization strategy. The results of this paper support this argument line and revealed that students in the DACH region differ in their organizational socialization preferences. A well-structured organizational socialization process, which considers newcomers' personality and demographic characteristics, can lead to a competitive advantage for organizations.

Key Words

Organizational socialization; socialization tactics; institutionalized socialization; socialization preferences.

*Corresponding Author

INTRODUCTION

For new employees the first days and weeks of their employment are often related to high levels of stress and anxiety (Van Maanen, 1978), as they are entering an unfamiliar environment (Louis, 1980). Literature often refers to this initial time as organisational socialisation. Organisational socialisation is characterised by newcomers' learning about the organisation, their work group, and the necessary skills and knowledge for their work tasks (Fisher, 1986).

This initial period of time is very crucial, both for the organisation and new employees, as newcomers are very receptive for new information during the organisational socialisation (Berthel and Becker, 2013). Moreover, newcomers realize during their starting time, if they fit to the organisation. This fact strongly influences their decision to stay within the company in the long run (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg, 2003). Many new employees decide against their company, which leads to a high fluctuation especially in the first year of employment (Allen, 2006). A high fluctuation in the first year results in further consequence to a negative outcome for organisations, as the expenses for the recruiting and selection process will be higher than the actual value, which the new employee contributed to the organisation (Bauer et al., 1998).

Organisations have to be aware that the way how they treat their new employees has wide-ranging consequences. In fact, organisations have the possibility to influence newcomers' learning processes by the use of different organisational socialisation tactics (Van Maanen, 1978). Various organisational socialisation tactics not only have an influence on the organisational socialisation process itself, but also on newcomer's adjustment to the organisation (Gruman et al., 2006; Jones, 1986; Saks et al., 2007). Organisations can improve these organisational socialisation processes by the choice of appropriate organisational socialisation tactics and also by considering new employees' personality (Gruman and Saks, 2011). If organisations make investments in organisational socialisation practices that focus on newcomers' personality traits, there might be valuable changes in new employees' work quality and retention in the longer term (Cable et al., 2013).

Beside newcomers' personality traits, also newcomers' demographic backgrounds are important factors for the organisational socialisation process. Inexperienced respectively younger newcomers have to be treated in a different way, as they might require more information, structure, and guidance than older newcomers with more experience (Saks et al., 2007). Other differences might be seen between males and females, as it is likely that their reactions on different socialisation tactics vary (Lefkowitz, 1994). Bauer et al. (1998, p. 164) stated that "newcomers' preferences for different types of socialisation tactics is an issue that deserves future research attention". On the basis of this statement and the important personality traits of new employees, Gruman and Saks (2011) conducted a study, which shows socialisation preferences of Canadian students according to their

personality traits. However, it is not advisable to generalize the outcomes to other newcomers (Gruman and Saks, 2011), as cultural diversity might have an influence on socialisation preferences (Bauer et al., 1998). As there is no actual data about the DACH region in terms of students' socialisation preferences, our study analyses the organisational socialisation preferences of students in the DACH region and reveals preference differences according to their diverse personality traits and additionally their demographic characteristics.

ORGANISATIONAL SOCIALISATION TACTICS

New employees are in a so called anxiety-producing situation when they start in a new company. Newcomers are motivated to reduce the grade of anxiety and want to learn their new tasks quickly and carefully. In this context, organisational socialisation tactics are a crucial part for organisations and the whole socialisation process (Van Maanen, 1978). According to figure 1, Jones (1986) classifies the organisational socialisation tactics into the context, content, and social area, and differs between the institutionalised and the individualised strategy, which are considered as organisational socialisation strategies. The difference between the two strategies is that for the new employee the individualised socialisation strategy leads to a more innovative role interpretation, while the institutionalised socialisation strategy leads to a more custodial role interpretation (Ashforth et al., 2007; Jones, 1986; Saks et al. 2007).

  The context area of the socialisation describes the way in which organisations provide the necessary information to new employees (Jones, 1986). The second area is about the actual content, which the given information to newcomers has, and provides newcomers' with specific information concerning their future organisational process like the timeframe of organisational socialisation. The third and last area is called social area and is focusing on social and interpersonal relationships between the new employee and responsible persons for the organisational socialisation process. Related tasks to the social area include the dealing with feedback, the identity recognition of the new employee and the new employee's support by a trusted organisational insider (Bauer et al., 2007).

Figure 1: Classification of Socialisation Tactics (illustration based on Jones, 1986, p. 263)

	Institutionalised	Individualised
Context Area	Institutionalised Context Tactics	Individualized Context Tactics
Content Area	Institutionalised Content Tactics	Individualized Content Tactics
Social Area	Institutionalised Social Tactics	Individualized Social Tactics

The institutionalised socialisation strategy provides new employees with information in a structured way and reduces thereby their grade of anxiety (Saks et al., 2007). By the use of the institutionalised socialisation strategy the values and norms of the organisation can be passed to the new employee more sophisticatedly (Cable et al., 2013). The institutionalised socialisation strategy has a positive influence on custodial role orientation, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and the proactive socialisation behaviour of new employees. Furthermore, the institutionalised socialisation strategy has a negative influence to newcomers' role ambiguity, role conflict, and intensions to quit (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Ashforth et al., 2007; Changhong Lu and Tjosvold, 2013; Gruman et al., 2006; Jones, 1986; Saks et al., 2007).

By using the individualised socialisation strategy, the organisational socialisation process is characterised by a certain absence of structure (Saks et al., 2007) and an approach towards sink-or-swim (Berthel and Becker, 2013). In a company, which applies the individualised socialisation strategy, new employees are often starting to work immediately at their workplace. Employees are expected to figure out the necessary skills and working procedures, as well as information about the organisation, on their own, without much help of a structured socialisation program. As the environment is defined by a very informal approach, new employees have to have a more proactive behaviour to understand the company's expectations and circumstances (Bauer and Erdogan, 2010). However, the individualised socialisation strategy provides the new employee with the possibility to develop his or her own point of view, which can lead to an innovative interpretation of his or her role within the organisation (Jones, 1986).

## PERSONALITY AND DEMOGRAPHY IN THE ORGANISATIONAL SOCIALIZATION

In the socialisation process, not only the choice of a socialisation tactic or strategy is important, but also the personality of new employees has to be considered. In fact, newcomer adjustment can be improved by socialisation practices, which focus on newcomers' personal identities (Cable et al., 2013). During the socialisation process newcomers not only seek to reduce their uncertainty and anxiety (Van Maanen, 1978), but also desire for certain grades of authenticity and self-expression. Socialisation tactics, which pay attention to new employees' personality traits, are more likely to be effective in terms of employment relationship between newcomers and organisations (Cable et al., 2013). Paying attention to the importance of personality for organisational socialisation, the socialisation should be adapted to newcomers' personality traits to a certain extent (Cable et al., 2013). This raises the question, which personality traits do have an actual influence on the preferences for the different organisational socialisation tactics. Some studies discussed this question (Bauer et al., 1998; Feldman, 1990; Gruman and Saks, 2011), and by using the approach of Gruman and Saks (2011), the following empirical study will examine the influence of six defined

personality traits to preferences for the different socialisation tactics. Also newcomers' demographic characteristics might have an influence on their preferences for socialisation tactics (Bauer et al., 1998). Therefore, the three defined demographic characteristics age, working experience, and gender will be examined regarding their influence to preferences for the different socialisation tactics.

Hypotheses

As stated by Gruman and Saks (2011), newcomers' personality traits do have an influence on socialisation preferences. Additionally, Bauer et al. (1998) outlined that newcomers' demographic characteristics might have an influence on their preferences for socialisation tactics. Based on these two statements, figure 2 shows the expected influence according to six personality traits and three demographic characteristics for newcomers' socialisation preferences, by the use of the illustrated hypotheses.

Figure 2: Influence of Personality and Demography to Socialisation Preferences
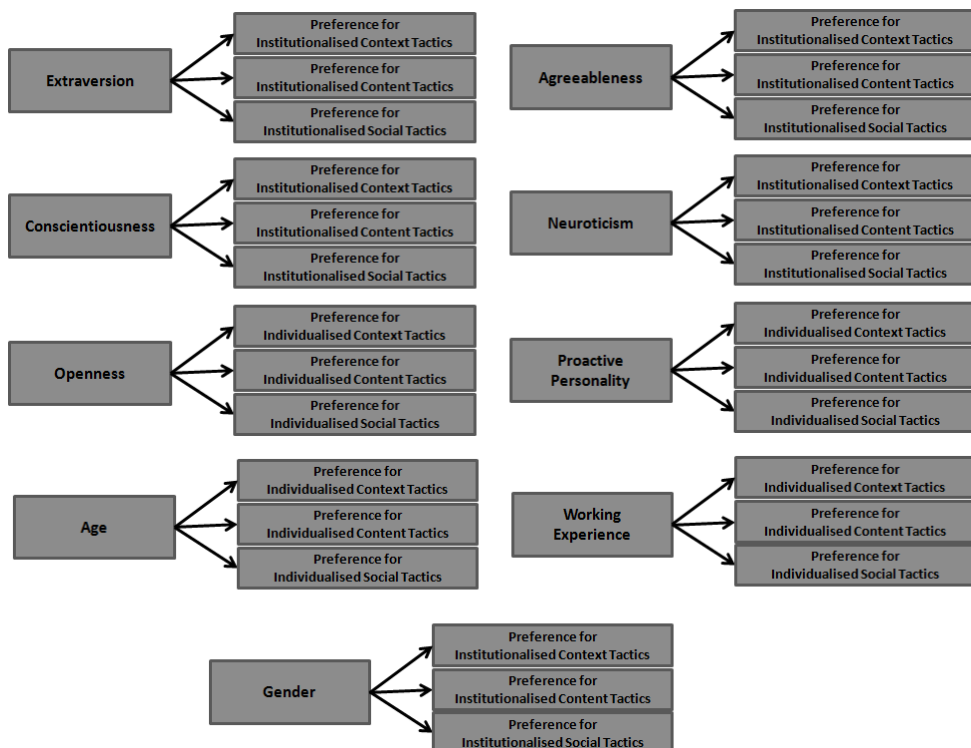
The first hypothesis questions the influence of students' extraversion to their preference for the institutionalised socialisation tactics. Extraverted persons are in this context described as persons, who are sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active (Barrick and Mount, 1991).

Therefore, we assume that students high on extraversion prefer the institutionalised socialisation tactics, as they like being around with other people and socialize with them (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

H1: The grade of students' extraversion has a positive influence to their preference for the institutionalised a) context, b) content, and c) social socialisation tactics.

The second hypothesis is about the influence of students' agreeableness to their preference for the institutionalised socialisation tactics. Persons, who have a high degree of agreeableness, are courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft-hearted, and tolerant (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Furthermore, agreeable individuals try to avoid controversies and are more likely to interact with other persons (Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Additionally to these facts, agreeable persons are accepting existing procedures in the organisation to a higher extent, whereby it is more likely that students high on agreeableness prefer the institutionalised socialisation tactics (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

H2: The grade of students' agreeableness has a positive influence to their preference for the institutionalised a) context, b) content, and c) social socialisation tactics.

The third hypothesis describes the influence of students' conscientiousness to their preference for the institutionalised socialisation tactics. A conscientious person is more likely to be careful, thorough, responsible, organized, hardworking, achievement-orientated, and persevering (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Based on the mentioned attributes, students high on conscientiousness prefer probably a socialisation that facilitates organisation and careful planning, which characterises the institutionalised socialisation tactics (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

H3: The grade of students' conscientiousness has a positive influence to their preference for the institutionalised a) context, b) content, and c) social socialisation tactics.

The fourth hypothesis illustrates the influence of students' neuroticism to their preference for the institutionalised socialisation tactics. Some attributes, which are describing a neurotic personality, are anxiousness, depression, angriness, embarrassment, emotionality, and insecureness (Barrick and Mount, 1991). As neurotic persons tend to interpret new situations often very negatively (Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000), they are more likely to prefer socialisation, which gives them structure and social support (Gruman and Saks, 2011). Therefore, we assume that students high on neuroticism prefer more likely the institutionalised socialisation tactics (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

H4: The grade of students' neuroticism has a positive influence to their preference for the institutionalised a) context, b) content, and c) social socialisation tactics.

The fifth hypothesis deals with the influence of students' openness to their preference for the individualised socialisation tactics. Persons with a high grade of openness are characterised as imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad-minded, and intelligent (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Considering the mentioned attributes, open individuals are acting basically more actively regarding the information and feedback seeking (Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). In contrast to neurotic individuals, open individuals are more curious and tolerant about new situations, whereby it is more likely that students high on openness prefer the individualised socialisation tactics, as these tactics are less structured and offer a higher chance for creativity and innovation (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

H5: The grade of students' openness has a positive influence to their preference for the individualised a) context, b) content, and c) social socialisation tactics.

The sixth hypothesis describes the influence of the proactive personality of students to their preference for the individualised socialisation tactics. People with a proactive personality have a desire to influence their environment by their own actions (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011). Therefore, it is more likely that students with a high grade of proactive personality prefer the individualised socialisation tactics, as these tactics give them a better opportunity to follow an innovative approach and change the status-quo (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

H6: The grade of students' proactive personality has a positive influence to their preference for the individualised a) context, b) content, and c) social socialisation tactics.

The seventh hypothesis in this paper is about the influence of students' age to their preference for the institutionalised socialisation tactics. A person's age influences his or her values and attitudes about work, ability for physical and mental functioning, and thoughts about everyday topics and concerns (Jackson et al., 1993). It is likely that older students react differently on socialisation tactics, as they have another kind of thinking than younger students (Saks et al., 2007). As older students are often more experienced than younger students and have a different self-evaluation, it is more likely that older students prefer the individualised socialisation tactics (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

H7: Students' age has a positive influence to their preference for the individualised a) context, b) content, and c) social socialisation tactics.

The eighth hypothesis is about the influence of students' working experience to their preferences for the institutionalised socialisation tactics. There might be a difference between inexperienced students and students with already some work experience, as inexperienced students have a greater need for information, structure, and guidance during the socialisation process (Saks, et al., 2007). Moreover, it is possible that more experienced students have different preferences, as they have already gone through some kind of socialisation before (Gruman and Saks, 2011). Therefore, it is assumed that students with a higher grade of working experience prefer the individualised socialisation tactics.

H8: The grade of students' working experience has a positive influence to their preference for the individualised a) context, b) content, and c) social socialisation tactics.

The ninth hypothesis is about the differences in preferences for the institutionalised socialisation tactics between male and female students. Men's and women's reactions on socialisation tactics are indeed different (Lefkowitz, 1994). Men are describing themselves as more mature, while important characteristics for women are their expressiveness and their concern for others (Lefkowitz, 1994). Generally said, it can be stated that men and women have a different social background (Alvesson and Biling, 1992), which leads to the assumption that there are gender differences in the preferences for the institutionalised socialisation tactics.

H9: There is a significant difference in preferences for the institutionalised a) context, b) content, and c) social socialisation tactics between male and female students.

METHODS

The target group for this study is defined with current students, who have their present main residence in Germany, Austria, or Switzerland. These three countries are defined in this paper as DACH region. During the survey period 322 participants have started the online-questionnaire. However, 60 participants did not finish the whole questionnaire, which implies a dropout rate of 18.63 percent. In consequence 262 fully completed and therefore valid questionnaires were received in total.
  Subtracting eight questionnaires from non-student participants, in total 254 questionnaires were used for the data analysis process. The average age of the participants was 23.88 years with a range from 19 to 47 years and forty one percent indicated their gender as male. The average working experience was 29.88 months with a range from zero to 350 months. Regarding the current residence of the students 67 percent stated Austria, 23 percent Germany and 10 percent Switzerland.

To collect the necessary data, a questionnaire-link was distributed via available e-mail addresses of students and personal messages to other students via social media platforms. The link was valid and online from May 1st, 2014 until May 14th, 2014, which implies a survey period of exactly two weeks. As Malhotra (2012) stated, the distribution via e-mail and social media is a well-working way to generate a large number of responses. This data collection method has also the advantage that it keeps the costs on a very low level, as there are for instance no printing costs emerging for the surveys. As the data collection via e-mail and social media allows the researcher to customize the addressed persons (Malhotra, 2012), a random sampling was applied.

The random sampling is defined by the characteristic that every person in the target group has basically the same possibility to be part of the sample size (Oberzauchner, 2012). To fulfil this criterion of the random sampling, the so called snowball principle was approached. By the use of the snowball principle, the researcher can be supported by the help of other persons and institutions, which are distributing the questionnaire among their network. This way of collecting data is especially beneficial, if in a random sampling not all persons of a target group are specifically reachable, but reachable through the connection to other persons of the target group (Häder, 2010). As this situation is given for the target group of students in the DACH region, the snowball principle was applied in the data collection procedure.

After the completion of the data collection period, following statistics can be stated:

- 3,426 students were contacted via e-mail and 123 students were contacted via a personal message via social media platforms, which implies a total of 3,549 directly contacted students.
- 322 participants could be generated during the survey period, which results in a response rate of 9.07 percent.

By reviewing this statistic, it has to be mentioned that the used snowball principle is not included. As the 123 students, who were contacted via social media platforms, were asked to distribute and share the questionnaire-link to students in their own network, the actual response rate is probably lower than the presented 9.07 percent.

Five-Factor Model of Personality

For the first section, where data about students' personality characteristics were collected, five personality factors were used. The five-factor model with the factors extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness, is very robust and provides an adequate framework for the defining and testing of hypotheses in terms of individual differences in personality (Barrick and Mount, 1991). As scales, which are short in length, reduce some forms of bias caused by participants' overtiredness and carelessness (Podsakoff et al., 2003), the 10-item short version of the five-factor model by Rammstedt and John (2007) was used. Although there are some slight reliability and validity losses in comparison to the original 44-item

version of the five-factor model (John et al., 1991), it is argued that for research, where time is limited, the 10-item short version is an adequate assessment of personality (Rammstedt and John, 2007). For the five-factor model, the participants provided responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The higher the scores on each scale, the higher was the participant's personality characteristic for the queried personality trait. The negatively polarized items were recoded before the analysis tests started. The coefficient alphas for the five factors were: Extraversion ($\alpha = 0.815$), agreeableness ($\alpha = 0.687$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = 0.739$), neuroticism ($\alpha = 0.756$), and openness ($\alpha = 0.743$).

To collect data about the proactive personality of the participants, a modified 10-item scale by Seibert et al. (1999) was used. In comparison to the original 17-item scale by Bateman and Crant (1993), the losses in terms of reliability and validity are minimal, whereby the shortened version "appears to be comparable to the full 17-item version" (Seibert et al., 1999, p. 419). As already mentioned, a short questionnaire length prevents some bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), which supports the use of the modified 10-item scale. For the modified 10-item proactive personality scale, the participants provided responses on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). The higher the scores on each scale, the higher was the participant's grade of proactive personality. For the proactive personality factor the coefficient alpha was ($\alpha = 0.812$).

The third section of the questionnaire asked participants about demographical characteristics. This section includes questions about participant's current student status and current main residence, which are both criteria for exclusion, if participants stated no respectively if they stated other countries than Germany, Austria, or Switzerland. The next demographic variable is the question about the participants' work experience in months, which was collected to examine the eighth hypothesis. The final two questions about participants' age and gender were used to examine hypotheses seven and nine.

Students' preferences for the organisational socialisation were ascertained by using the 30-item measure developed by Jones (1986). As our study is about students' preferences for the different tactics, the original items were slightly transformed to give students the possibility to express their preferences. In this context, students were asked to imagine a situation, where they start to work in a new organisation and could decide how they would like to run through the first 90 days of employment. The participants provided responses on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). The higher the scores on each scale, the higher was the participant's preference for the institutionalised socialisation tactics. To ensure that this statement is also valid for the negatively polarized items, these negative items were recoded before the execution of the analytic tests. The adjusted coefficient alpha for the three scales was: context ($\alpha = 0.732$), content ($\alpha = 0.748$), and social ($\alpha = 0.618$).

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the three socialisation preference scales. In the first place it is important to mention that the results of all three areas indicate a general preference for the institutionalised socialisation, as they were all above the midpoint. Secondly, it can be seen that for the institutionalised context tactics the preference is higher than the preference for the institutionalised content and social tactics.

Table 1: Means of Socialisation Areas

Descriptive Statistics for the Socialisation Preferences			
	Context Tactics	**Content Tactics**	**Social Tactics**
Mean	5.122	4.865	4.995
Standard Deviation	1.435	1.515	1.414

To test the first six hypotheses of our study, three multiple linear regressions were conducted. For each of these regressions one area of socialisation tactics was regressed on the six personality variables. Table 2 summarizes the outcomes of these analyses.

Table 2: Multiple Linear Regressions for Personality Variables and Socialisation Tactics Preferences

Multiple Linear Regressions			
	Context Tactics	**Content Tactics**	**Social Tactics**
Extraversion	-0.144*	-0.091	0.010
Agreeableness	0.123	-0.020	0.028
Conscientiousness	0.147*	0.190**	0.108
Neuroticism	0.062	0.132*	0.147*
Openness	0.047	0.048	-0.009
Proactive Personality	0.072	0.201**	0.124
R^2	0.051*	0.090**	0.041
Adjusted R^2	0.028*	0.068**	0.018

N = 254 / * p < 0.05 / ** p < 0.01 / The values in the table are standardized beta weights (β)

As indicated in Table 2, the personality variables show a significant amount of variance in the context socialisation tactics ($R^2 = 0.051$, $p < 0.05$) and the content socialisation tactics ($R^2 = 0.090$, $p < 0.01$), but no significance in the social socialisation tactics ($R^2 = 0.041$, $p > 0.05$). Among the six personality variables, extraversion was negatively and significantly related to the institutionalised context socialisation tactics ($β = -0.144$, $p < 0.05$). Conscientiousness was positively and significantly related to both the institutionalised context ($β = 0.147$, $p < 0.05$) and institutionalised content ($β = 0.190$, $p < 0.01$) socialisation tactics. These results support the hypotheses 3a and 3b. Neuroticism was positively and significantly related to both the institutionalised content ($β = 0.132$, $p < 0.05$) and institutionalised social ($β = 0.147$, $p < 0.05$) socialisation tactics. These results support the hypotheses 4b and 4c. The proactivity personality of students was positively and significantly related to the institutionalised content socialisation tactics ($β = 0.201$, $p < 0.01$). For the personality variables agreeableness and openness no significant relation to at least one of the three socialisation tactics could be identified.

Table 3: Simple Linear Regressions for Age and Socialisation Tactics Preferences

Simple Linear Regressions			
	Context Tactics	**Content Tactics**	**Social Tactics**
Age	-0.130*	0.037	-0.047
R²	0.017*	0.001	0.002
Adjusted R²	0.013*	-0.003	-0.002
N = 254 / * p < 0.05 / ** p < 0.01 / The values in the table are standardized beta weights (β)			

To test hypotheses seven and eight, simple linear regressions were conducted. For each regression one area of socialisation tactic was regressed on the single independent variable, which results in three simple linear regressions for both hypotheses seven and eight. In Table 3 the outcomes of the age-related regression can be seen.

The outcomes of the simple linear regression conducted to test hypothesis seven show clearly that students' age is negatively and significantly related to the institutionalised context socialisation tactics ($β = -0.130$, $p < 0.05$), while there can no significant relation be seen between the age and the content or social tactics. These results support hypothesis 7a. Table 4 shows the outcomes of the simple linear regression to test hypothesis eight.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression for Working Experience and Socialisation Tactics Preferences

Simple Linear Regression			
	Context Tactics	**Content Tactics**	**Social Tactics**
Working Experience	-0.188**	0.053	-0.049
R²	0.035**	0.003	0.002
Adjusted R²	0.032**	-0.001	-0.002
N = 254 / * p < 0.05 / ** p < 0.01 / The values in the table are standardized beta weights (β)			

The results given in Table 4 are revealing very similar results to the previous age-related investigation. It can be seen that students' working experience is negatively and significantly related to the institutionalised context socialisation tactics (β = -0.188, p < 0.01), while there is no significant relation between working experience and content or social socialisation tactics. These results support hypothesis 8a. To test the ninth hypothesis of our study, Student's t-test was conducted. However, before conducting the actual t-test, the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was done to identify, if the requirement in terms of normal distribution was fulfilled. As both groups (males and females) are normally distributed in the context of each of the three socialisation tactics, the requirement is fulfilled and Student's t-test can be applied. For Student's T-test both Table 5 and Table 6 are important to interpret the results. Table 5shows a descriptive statistic about the two comparable groups including differences in terms of mean, standard deviation and standard error mean. Table 6 shows the actual significance of the illustrated differences from the Table 5 and provides information about the applicability for the basic population.

Table 6: Gender-Related Descriptive Statistics

Descriptives

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Context Tactics	**Male**	104	6.603	1.145	.112
	Female	150	6.958	0.909	.074
Content Tactics	**Male**	104	6.274	1.257	.123
	Female	150	6.410	1.007	.082
Social Tactics	**Male**	104	6.305	0.987	.097

Female	150	6.413	0.845		.069

  According to Table 5 the two groups of the independent variable (male and female) differ especially among the mean of context socialisation tactics (male = 6.603 / female = 6.958). Table 6 shows the investigation about the significance of the differences from Table 5. Firstly, Levene's test for the equality of variances was conducted. While the context and the social tactics have no equal variances ($p > 0.05$), the content tactics have equal variances ($p < 0.05$). This indicates a significance level for the context tactics $p = 0.009$, for the content tactics $p = 0.341$, and for the social tactics $p = 0.364$. These results support hypothesis 7a, as for the context socialisation tactics it can be stated $p < 0.05$.

Table 6: Student's T-Test for Two Independent Samples (Males and Females)

Independent Samples Test						
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-Test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Context Tactics	Equal variances assumed	1.574	.211	-2.75	252	.006
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.64	187.99	.009
Content Tactics	Equal variances assumed	5.361	.021	-.95	252	.341
	Equal variances not assumed			-.92	189.07	.361
Social Tactics	Equal variances assumed	.877	.350	-.94	252	.350
	Equal variances not assumed			-.91	199.61	.364

DISCUSSION

Similar to the results of Gruman and Saks (2011), our findings confirm that personality traits have an influence on the socialisation preferences. Gruman and Saks (2011) detected that especially students' agreeableness significantly influences students' preferences for all three areas of institutionalised socialisation tactics. Moreover, they stated that students'

personality traits influence above all students' preferences for the institutionalised social socialisation tactics. In fact, students' grade of agreeableness did not significantly influence students' preferences for any of the three areas of socialisation in this study. The results indicated rather that students' grades of conscientiousness and neuroticism are the most important personality traits in predicting students' preferences for the institutionalised socialisation tactics. Also the second main statement by Gruman and Saks (2011) could not be approved, as our study indicated that students' personality traits influence above all students' preferences for the institutionalised content socialisation tactics. However, Gruman and Saks (2011) stated that students' personality traits significantly influence students' preferences for the institutionalised content tactics, which underpins our results.

Beside the two mentioned comparisons, the investigations in terms of proactive personality revealed a quite unexpected result. Although it was assumed that students with a high grade of proactive personality prefer more likely the individualised socialisation tactics than students with a lower grade of proactive personality, the results show the exact opposite, especially for the content socialisation area. These results are partly the same like the results by Gruman and Saks (2011), with the difference that in our study a much higher significance can be seen. A possible reason for this result might be that newcomers need a structured socialisation process before they are able to act out their proactive personality by seeking for feedback and building relationships (Griffin et al., 2000). The results of the three demographic related hypotheses indicate a clear trend that students' demographic characteristics influence above all students' preferences for the context socialisation tactics. A main statement in this regard is that the higher students' age respectively working experience, the more likely are their preferences for the individualised socialisation tactics. Reversing this statement, it can be concluded that especially young and inexperienced students are more likely to prefer the institutionalised context tactics. This fact is underpinned by the argument that especially young and inexperienced newcomers' have a greater need for information and structure in the socialisation process (Saks et al., 2007). Young newcomers prefer a formal and more collective socialisation, which represents the two main characteristics of the institutionalised context socialisation tactics (Feldmann, 1990).

In regard to potential gender differences in the preferences for the institutionalised socialisation tactics, the context area showed significant differences between male and female students. In fact, the results indicate that female students prefer the institutionalised context socialisation tactics significantly more than male students. This supports the view by Lefkowitz (1994), who stated that men might see themselves as more mature, while for women it is more important to be in contact with others. As the institutionalised context socialisation includes formal and collective socialisation tactics, women might prefer this tactics, as it enables them to be around with people. On the other hand, as men might feel more mature, a highly formalised and accurate socialisation process is perhaps not

compatible with their self-evaluation of being mature (Alvesson and Biling, 1992). To sum up the study results, three main findings can be stated. Firstly, and apart from the hypotheses, the study showed that students have a general preference for the institutionalised socialisation tactics. Secondly, in terms of personality especially students' grades of conscientiousness and neuroticism have the most significant influences for students' socialisation preferences. Thirdly, students' personality influences above all students' preferences for the institutionalised content socialisation tactics, while students' demographic characteristics influence above all students' preferences for the institutionalised context tactics.

LIMITATIONS

The target group for our study is strictly limited to current students from the DACH region. Associated to this target group, it is generally not advisable to generalise the results to other types of potential new employees, who have for instance no university education (Gruman and Saks, 2011). In terms of the study design, some further limitations have to be made. By the use of a cross-sectional design through different topics in the survey and self-reported data, a common-method bias might influence the results. The risk of such a common-method bias can be reduced through methods like the use of existing scales with multiple items, different scale anchors and values, and negatively worded items, which were applied in the questionnaire of our study. The use of self-report data is to a certain extent influenced by the respondent's mood and condition and therefore a risk in terms of common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

CONCLUSION

Our study evaluated the topic organisational socialisation and focused in the first place on the different socialisation tactics and the classification of these tactics. The empirical part dealt with the socialisation preferences and potential differences regarding newcomers' personality and demographic characteristics. By using the available academic literature and the results of the conducted empirical study, the following can be concluded:
Organisational socialisation is an important topic for organisations, as the first days and weeks of a new employee are a crucial time for the further collaboration. In fact, organisations have the opportunity to influence the outcomes of the organisational socialisation by the use of different socialisation tactics and strategies. The tactics can be classified both in areas and strategies. The identifiable areas are the context area, which describes the way how organisations are providing the organisational socialisation process to new employees, the content area, which is about time regulations and the framework for organisational socialisation, and the

social area, which contains the interpersonal factor in the organisational socialisation of newcomers.

In terms of strategies two general strategies are identified in our study, the institutionalised and the individualised socialisation strategy. The main difference between them is that the institutionalised socialisation is characterised by a more formal approach, which leads to a more custodial role orientation for newcomers. In contrast to that, the individualised socialisation strategy is characterised by a more informal and flexible approach, which leads to a more innovative role orientation for newcomers. The institutionalised socialisation strategy generates beyond that positive outcomes for new employees' organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and proactive socialisation behaviour and negatively influences new employees' role ambiguity, role conflict, and intensions to quit. Our findings reveal that students' from the DACH region have a general preference for the institutionalised socialisation strategy. Considering the identified positive outcomes of the institutionalised socialisation tactics, this general preference is not very surprising, as the institutionalised socialisation strategy provides structure, guidance, and information that can decrease students' uncertainty and anxiety in the initial time of their employment.

Through the investigation of the nine stated hypotheses, it was revealed that students' personality and demographic characteristics do matter for their socialisation preferences. In terms of personality, students' grades of conscientiousness and neuroticism have the highest influence on their socialisation preferences towards institutionalised socialisation tactics, while students' grades of extraversion and proactive personality have only slighter influences. For the personality traits agreeableness and openness our study showed that both are actually not significantly related to students' socialisation preferences. With regard to students' demographic characteristics, it can be stated that students' age and working experience negatively influence students' preferences for the institutionalised context socialisation tactics. Furthermore, some significant differences could be detected between male and female students. To sum up, it can be concluded that students in the DACH region have a general preference for the institutionalised socialisation strategy. The degree, however, varies across students' personality traits and demographic characteristics.

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