

PART TWO. CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS

7. SOCIALISATION TACTICS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE ESTONIAN DEFENSIVE FORCE

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Abstract

Newcomers' internalisation of values, attitudes and beliefs by the process of socialisation are the core elements of this study. The research goal consisted in finding, describing and modelling the relationships between values, organisational socialisation tactics, collectivist attitudes and such socialisation outcomes as commitment to the organisation and satisfaction. For that purpose an empirical study was carried out in the Estonian Defense force to explore organisational socialisation. How the newcomers perceive the activities of other members of the organisation and how their perception influences their values, attitudes and commitment to the organisation are the questions to be answered.

An important outcome of the analysis was the finding that the duration of military service influenced the average value and attitude rates in groups. It appeared that family-level collectivism and patriotism decreased gradually, while differences in companion-level collectivism did not emerge.

Such institutionalised socialisation tactics as formal, sequential, fixed, and investiture were accompanied by higher commitment. Collective and serial socialisation tactics had no relationship with the level of commitment or satisfaction.

Theory and hypothesis

Organisational socialisation is the process by which an individual acquires the attitudes, behaviour, and knowledge needed to participate as an organisational member (Bauer, Morrison, Callister, 1998; Van Maanen, Schein, 1979). Socialisation is not merely a communication act, a simple transfer of information – it also contains internalisation of norms and practices compatible with organisational routine. Socialisation ensures the continuity of central organisational values and norms, providing new employees with a framework for responding to events in their work environment (Cable, Parsons, 2000; Bauer *et al*, 1998). Thus socialisation is the self-retaining mechanism of organisational culture that ensures the permanence of its core elements.

Socialisation in organisations

Stress and anxiety are likely to be high when newcomers find themselves in a new organisation, because they do not possess comfortable routines for handling interactions and predicting the responses of others (Cable *et al*, 2000; Van Maanen *et al*, 1979). Baffling environment demands solutions, which may be intricate to find out alone – organisations' direct and implied socialisation practices influence the way in which newcomers perceive and adjust to organisations (Jones, 1986).

Organisations' activities, perceived by newcomers as socialisation tactics, may result in change in newcomers' values (Cable *et al*, 2000). To the extent that newcomers learn during the socialisation process that their values do not match their organisations' values, they experience a dissonance, because the norms for success run counter to their personal assumptions (Cable *et al*, 2000).

Changing their self-perceptions may reduce the existing dissonance (Cable *et al.*, 2000).

To test the suspected change in recruits' self-perceptions' during their military service, it is sensible to hypothesise:

Hypothesis 1: Duration of military service affects values.

Hypothesis 2: Duration of military service affects collectivistic attitudes.

The organisation's active attempt to control adjustment and passive self-exhibition gives the newcomers' perceptions about their expected role behaviour. These perceptions may be classified into a typology of socialisation tactics.

Socialisation tactics

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) developed a socialisation model which predicts the role orientations adopted by newcomers. This model posits that the type of tactics employed by organisations will influence whether newcomers adopt a custodial, status quo, or innovative role response. Institutionalised tactics reflect a structured programme of socialisation that reduces ambiguity, encouraging newcomers to accept preset organisational norms and thus maintain the status quo, whereas individualised tactics reflect a relative absence of structure that creates ambiguity and encourages newcomers to question the status quo and develop their own approach to situations (Cable *et al.*, 2000; Ashforth, Saks, 1996).

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) proposed six tactics that organisations can use to structure the socialisation experience of employees. Each of the six socialisation tactics consists of a bipolar continuum where one end represents institutionalised socialisation and the other represents individual socialisation (Griffin, Colella, Goparaju, 2000; Jones, 1986).

Jones' (1986) grouped these six tactics into three categories: context, content, and social aspects.

Context socialisation tactics. Socialisation tactics may vary in terms of the contexts in which organisations provide information to newcomers, ranging from collective and formal on the one end

of the continuum to individualised and informal on the other end of the continuum (Jones, 1986). The tactic of collective (vs. individual) socialisation refers to the grouping of organisational newcomers and putting them through a common set of experiences, rather than providing each newcomer with a set of unique experiences; formal (vs. informal) socialisation focuses on segregating organisational newcomers from other organisational members during a defined socialisation period, as opposed to integrating newcomers with more experienced organisational members (Griffin *et al.*, 2000). Formal and collective practices are designed by organisations to ensure that newcomers receive a common message about the organisation's values and how they should interpret and respond to situations (Van Maanen *et al.*, 1979).

When organisations' socialisation tactics reduce uncertainty and provide a standardised set of responses for newcomers, the expected result is an increase in shared norms and values (Van Maanen *et al.*, 1979).

Content socialisation tactics. Sequential versus random and fixed versus variable socialisation tactics deal with the content of the information given to newcomers via socialisation (Jones, 1986). Sequential (vs. random) socialisation provides a fixed sequence of socialisation steps that leads to the assumption of the new organisational/job role, as opposed to random socialisation, which is characterised by ambiguous and changing sequences of events; fixed (vs. variable) socialisation provides an established timetable for the initial socialisation and integration process, whereas a variable socialisation tactic provides no set timetable for the unfolding of the process (Griffin *et al.*, 2000).

Newcomers' personal values will be more likely to change toward their perceptions of their organisations' values when they experience sequential and fixed socialisation tactics – if newcomers know how they must behave in order to receive rewards (e.g., full membership, promotions), they are likely to be motivated to behave in the prescribed ways (Cable *et al.*, 2000).

Social aspects of socialisation tactics. The last socialisation tactics, serial and investiture versus disjunctive and divestiture,

reflect the social aspects of socialisation (Cable *et al.*, 2000). Serial (vs. disjunctive) socialisation processes are characterised by newcomers being socialised by an experienced member of the organisation (i.e., a mentor), whereas disjunctive processes do not utilise specific role models; investiture (vs. divestiture) socialisation focuses on validation of the incoming identity and personal characteristics of the newcomer, rather than focusing on stripping these characteristics away (Griffin *et al.*, 2000).

Serial and investiture tactics change newcomers' personal values towards their organisations' values (Cable *et al.*, 2000). Interactions with experienced organisational members encourage acceptance of the existing norms and values (Van Maanen *et al.*, 1979). Although organisations may actually intend divestiture tactics to mold newcomers (Van Maanen *et al.*, 1979), empirical research shows that positive reinforcement induces learning more than does negative reinforcement (e.g., Kostandov, Azurmanov, 1991).

Hypothesis 3: Perception of socialisation tactics as institutionalised is accompanied with higher commitment and satisfaction.

Method

Empirical research in the Estonian Defense Force was designed and carried out to test the hypotheses. The target population consisted of infantry units (2305 soldiers), 13% of them (301 soldiers) were included in the sample. The sample was generated in two steps: firstly, the requirement of regional representation was met by selecting four units (battalions) from different districts (Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, Võru); thereafter a random selection of subunits (platoons) was made inside each of them. The final sample consisted of all recruits from eight subunits. The newcomers of the voluntary military organisation (51 members) were included as a control group. The data were collected between 3.–19. April 2002. Written questionnaires (7 pgs) were used, two questionnaires from 352 were invalid.

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of six parts; each scale began with written instructions.

Collectivist attitudes. The ESTCOL scale, worked out by Realo, Allik and Vadi (1997), was used to measure the respondents' attitude towards collectivism. ESTCOL contains 39 statements measured on a five-item Likert type scale. The scale is hierarchical and it is possible to separate three different dimensions of collectivism:

- Family and close relatives;
- Friends, colleagues and neighbours;
- State, nation, public opinion and social institutions.

Values inventory. The Goal and Mode Values Inventory (Braithwaite, Law, 1985) is based on Rokeach's (1973) conceptualisation of values. The inventory comprises an expanded set of goals and modes of conduct, and measures absolute rather than relative importance (Braithwaite, Scott, 1991). The original scale was rendered into Estonian by Jansen (2001) and was divided into two blocks (32 goals and 38 modes of conduct). To measure the importance of values, a seven-item Likert scale was employed.

Satisfaction. The overall satisfaction was measured by means of the Faces scale (Kunin, 1955). The respondents chose the drawing of a face that best expressed how they felt about the organisation in general. The faces scale is interculturally understandable, so no adaptation was needed.

Commitment. This scale indicates one's commitment to organisation. It consists of 9 statements and agreement with them was measured by seven-item Likert scale. The used scale is a shortened version of the commitment scale worked out in 1974 by Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian (Jones, 1986).

Socialisation experiences. The individuals reported the socialisation tactics that they experienced at their army units by responding to questions from the socialisation scale developed by Jones (1986). The scale consisted of 45 statements and agreement with

them was self-reported on a seven-item Likert scale. The commitment and socialisation scale were translated from English into Estonian by the author of this paper. Each statement was translated into Estonian using multiple versions in different wording; the selection was based on expert choice by which the most adequate versions (criteria for four experts were simplicity of understanding and similarity with the original) were separated for further use. Graduate students fluent in English and Estonian and also used to adoption of psychological tests were used as experts.

Demographic data. Data describing respondents' sex, gender, educational level, nationality, marital status, presence and number of children, type and size of settlement, place of service (unit), military grade, beginning and duration of service was collected.

Results

Collectivist attitudes. The first hypothesis (duration of military service affects collectivist attitudes) is tested by analysing the variance of collectivist attitudes in subgroups.

A special key was used to compute the values of collectivism scale and subscales (Realo, Allik, Vadi, 1997). The respondents were divided into groups depending on the length of their service (two weeks, three months and six months). Table 7.1 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 7.1. Analysis of variance in collectivist subscales

	F	Sign.
Nation-level collectivism	5.59	0.004
Family-level collectivism	14.46	0.000
Overall level of collectivism	10.41	0.000

It appears that overall collectivism and collectivism measured on two subscales – family and nation level – differed significantly

between the groups (probability of mistake under 1%). There seems to be a certain trend in variance (Figure 7.1).

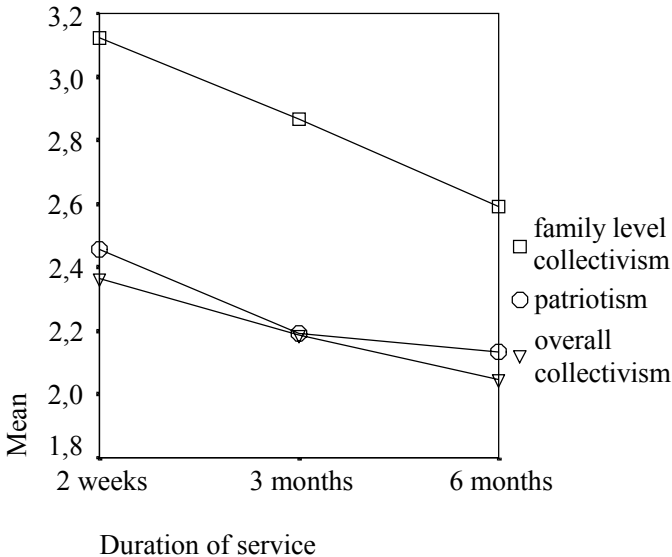


Figure 7.1. Means of measured collectivism in groups.

Accepting the first hypothesis is reasonable; in case of overall, nation and family-level collectivism the mean values of sub-groups decreased gradually.

Values. The second hypothesis (length of military service affects values) may be verified by analysing the variance of values in subgroups formed according to length of military service.

Aggregation of separate values gives them more explanatory power; such components of similar values may be treated at the theoretical level as value orientations (Saarniit, 1998: 155). An analysis of the principal components was used to aggregate separate values into components.

Factor structure of goals was composed of eight components describing 58.7% of overall variability. An analysis of variance showed that the mean values of two components (component of social welfare and component of self-esteem) differed significantly (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2. Analysis of variance in goals components

	F	Sign.
Comp. of social welfare	9.34	0.000
Comp. of self-respect	4.02	0.019

The means of components in subgroups are presented in Figure 7.2.

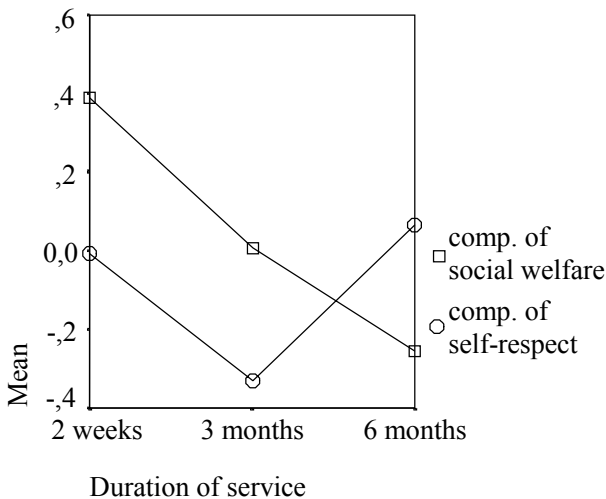


Figure 7.2. Means of measured values (goals) in groups.

Eight components describing modes of conduct were extracted. The components describe 63.1% of overall variability. The

analysis of variance showed that the mean values of three components (those of sociability and friendship, of discipline and reliability, of tolerance) differed significantly (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3. Analysis of variance in the modes of conduct components

	F	Sign.
Comp. of sociability and friendship	9.33	0.000
Comp. of discipline and reliability	4.38	0.013
Comp. of tolerance	11.08	0.000

The means of components in subgroups are presented in Figure 7.3.

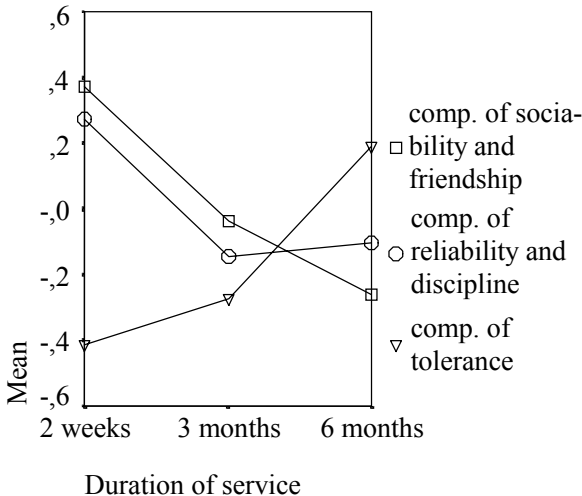


Figure 7.3. Means of values (modes of conduct) in groups.

It is reasonable to accept the second hypothesis the length of military service affects values.

Socialisation tactics. The third hypothesis (perception of socialisation tactics as institutionalised is accompanied with higher commitment and satisfaction) may be tested using analysis of multiple regressions. For testing, the method of linear regression was used, new variables were entered into a model following forward stepwise rule, and the criterion of addition was the significance level 0.05.

The first step before the analysis of regression was the extraction of six components of socialisation tactics (describing 67.4% of overall variance) and one component of commitment (describing 69.3% of overall variance), using the analysis of principal components.

Satisfaction was entered into the model as a dependent variable, the selection of independent variables was an automatic process carried out by SPSS. The selection included the following socialisation components: sequential (vs. random) ($\beta = 0.225$) investiture (vs divestiture) ($\beta = 0.174$) and fixed (vs. variable) ($\beta = 0.124$). The dependent variables described 9.6% of variability in satisfaction at the 0.000 level of significance (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4. Regression analysis of satisfaction

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square
Regression	38.8	3	12.92	9.31	0.000	0.096
Residual	363.7	262	1.39			
Total	402.51	265				

Inclusion of commitment as a dependent variable resulted in the selection of sequential (vs. random) ($\beta = 0.289$) fixed (vs. variable) ($\beta = 0.176$) investiture (vs divestiture) ($\beta = 0.176$) and formal (vs. informal) ($\beta = 0.119$) component of socialisation. Dependent variables described 16.3% of variability in satisfaction at the 0.000 level of significance (Table 7.5).

Table 7.5. Regression analysis of commitment

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square
Regression	33.8	4	8.44	12.73	0.000	0.163
Residual	173.7	262	0.66			
Total	207.5	266				

It is legitimate to accept the third hypothesis: perception of socialisation tactics as institutionalised is accompanied with higher commitment and satisfaction. The degree of variability described is not enormous but very reliable (the level of significance in both cases is above 0.1%).

Discussion

The results of our analysis (verification of hypothesis 1) surprisingly refer to a possible gradual group-level change in collectivist attitudes. The opposite tendency, increase in attitudes, would be more expectable – during the military service, a huge amount of the recruits' time is spent side by side with their comrades. There are many possibilities to speculate about the cause of decrease.

It is possible that the respondents' level of collectivism increased heavily at the outset of military service and started to decrease smoothly afterwards. The data collected during the army service may indicate a decrease in collectivist attitudes while comparison of moments before and after the army service may indicate the opposite. The reason for a sudden increase may lie in the newcomers' expectations shaped by unconscious efforts to reduce anxiety after the entrance. Recruits want to believe that the organisation is supportive and collectivist in nature and so will themselves become more supportive and collectivist.

It is possible that after the recruits' entrance the organisational pressure causes that change – the Estonian Defense force cools down its member's collectivist attitudes and conforms newcomers

to behave more individualistically. Such pressure need not be planned and conscious – some results of the incumbent's action in maintaining discipline may cause unwanted consequences. It is possible that the decline of collectivist attitudes is caused by a leadership style. The price of order may be individualism.

It is important to note that there was no significant difference between the groups' companion-level collectivism. It is possible that increasing independence during the time spent away from home causes differences in family-level collectivism while companion-level collectivism remains unchanged.

Verification of the second hypothesis emphasises the relative nature of value stability – it is possible that under strong pressure a shift group-level value orientations may occur. The basic values take shape during the early childhood and are quite stable later (Saarniit, 1998: 153). A medium change is still possible if a strong influence occurs. At group-level, membership of the Defense Force inverts such value orientations as social welfare, self-respect, sociability, discipline and tolerance.

Verification of the third hypothesis demonstrated that such institutionalised socialisation tactics as formal, sequential, fixed and investiture were accompanied by higher commitment. In the current study, it is difficult to examine the direction of influence – socialisation tactics may change the level of the newcomers' commitment, but the level of commitment may also influence how the newcomers perceive the nature of socialisation. Verification of the third hypothesis emphasises the tie between the perception of socialisation and commitment to organisation – it may be speculated that through the purposeful selection of socialisation tactics, it is possible to manipulate the commitment of organisational members.

Our analysis indicated that the measures of some socialisation tactics – sequential vs. random, investiture vs. divestiture and fixed vs. variable – explained 9.6% of variance in satisfaction. The degree of variability explained by these variables is not very large, but it has to be considered that other important factors like personality traits, attraction of companions, current mood and

previous experience also shape the respondents level of general satisfaction with their organisation. Commitment, less emotional and affective in nature, appeared to be more widely and strongly connected with socialisation tactics. Sequential vs. random, fixed vs. variable, investiture vs. divestiture and formal vs. informal component of socialisation explained the 16.3% of variability in the component of commitment.

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KOKKUVÕTE

Sotsialiseerumistaktikad: empiiriline uurimus Eesti Kaitsejõududes

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Uurimaks organisatsioonis toimuvat sotsialiseerumist viidi artikli autori poolt 2002. aastal Eesti Kaitsejõududes läbi empiiriline uurimus. Uurimus aitas valgust heita noorsõdurite väärtuste ja hoiakute algse kohanemise käigus toimunud muutustesse grupi tasandil, leida seoseid sotsialiseerumistaktikate tajumise ja rahulolu ning pühendumuse vahel.

Uurimuse oluliseks väljundiks on ajateenijate väärtustes ja kollektivistlikes hoiakutes trendide ilmnemine grupi tasandil. Ilmnes, et ajateenistuse jooksul muutuvad värvatute riigi- ja peretasandi kollektivismi määrad, samuti mitmed väärtusorientatsioonid.

Uurimuse tulemusel leidis kinnitust varasem tähelepanek rahulolu ja pühendumuse seostest sotsialiseerumistaktikate tajumisel. Antud uurimuse baasil mõju põhjuslikku suunda välja tuua ei saa, taktikate tajumine võib mõjutada nii rahulolu kui pühendumust,

kuid samas võivad viimased mõjutada ka sotsialiseerumistaktikate tajumist organisatsiooni noorliikmete poolt.

Küsitluse läbiviimiseks kohandas autor sotsialiseerumistaktikate küsimustiku sobilikuks Eesti oludele, mille agregeeritud versiooni on edukalt rakendatud ka hilisemate andmekogumiste käigus.

Edasiseks sügavamaks sotsialiseerumise uurimiseks on mõttekas läbi viia longituuduurimus, mis võimaldaks lisaks grupi tasandi muutustele välja tuua ka indiviidi tasandi muutused.