

## Contribution to the Research of Organizational Socialization: The Importance of Interviews in Anticipatory Stage\*

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This paper discusses the importance and effects of employees' organizational socialization as a theoretical scientific discipline and practice-oriented activity. Briefly, this paper provides an overview of distinguished authors' ideas on the content, methods and different viewpoints regarding the criteria in evaluating the success of organizational socialization. The research was directed towards the anticipatory phase of organizational socialization. It was focused on the attitude towards a job interview, the individual preparation of research participants for interviews and their behaviour during the interview. The results of correlation analysis have shown that irrespective of the outcome to which it leads, the interview-related behaviour is unaffected because the individual invests the same effort, regardless of whether it will result in a job or not.

**Keywords:** organizational socialization, anticipatory socialization, job interviews, Serbia

Dieser Beitrag diskutiert über die Wichtigkeit und die Wirkungen der organisatorischen Sozialisation des Mitarbeiters als theoretische wissenschaftliche Disziplin und praxisorientierte Aktivität. Kurz gesagt, bietet dieser Beitrag einen Überblick über die herausragenden Ideen des Autors zum Inhalt, den Methoden und den unterschiedlichen Sichtweisen in Bezug auf die Kriterien in der Bewertung des Erfolgs der Organisations Sozialisation. Die Forschung wurde auf die antizipatorische Phase der organisatorischen Sozialisation gerichtet. Sie wurde auf die Einstellung zu einem Vorstellungsgespräch konzentriert, sowie auf die individuelle Vorbereitung von Forschungsteilnehmer für Interviews, und auf ihr Verhalten während des Interviews. Die Ergebnisse der Korrelationsanalyse haben gezeigt, dass unabhängig vom Ausgang, zu welchem es führt, ist das Interview-Verhalten nicht beeinflusst, da die Individue den gleichen Aufwand investiert, egal ob sie in einem Job resultiert oder nicht.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Organisations Sozialisation, antizipatorische Sozialisation, Job-Interviews, Serbien

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, as a scientific discipline and practice-oriented activity of adjusting employees to the work environment and internalizing norms and standards of behaviour as their own personal attitudes, organizational socialization has gained a clearer subject-related and methodological explanation. The various theoretical perspectives in defining the key indicators of success in organizing the process of socialization only confirm this opinion.

Organizational socialization as a dynamic process of acquiring organizational knowledge and skills, i.e. a process by which people learn the norms and roles that are necessary to function in a group or organization, is not a sort of enlightenment obsession. It is the imperative of the era determined by knowledge, creative human resources, and employee skills, with the aim to overcome outdated human relationships and obsolete technologies, to anticipate the future and build a vision for one's company, considering their own future and the prospects of their families. This is all more important as the fate and prospects of each company will increasingly concern all the employees and not only the owners. Therefore, the participation of employees in stating company goals and bringing creative energy into daily activities and work aimed at accomplishing these goals, along with their owners, is the *sine qua non* for company success. The knowledge, skills and abilities of employees and their competence and competition, can be described by the following four elements that explain the success of the company:

- first, higher levels of knowledge, skills and human capabilities (instead of natural and financial resources) built into any product, lead to higher market competitiveness;
- second, for any organization, integrated creative human potentials are the only development resource that cannot be depleted;
- third, it is necessary for each company to form a critical mass of intensive knowledge;
- fourth, essential to the development of the company is that the behaviour of each individual and all the employees should be directed towards the alignment and achievement of common objectives of the company, enabling thereby individual employee objectives to be also achieved.

Thus, in its broader definition, organizational socialization can be interpreted as the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills to assume an organizational role (Filstad 2004) and become a part of an organization's activities (Ashforth/ Sluss/Harrison 2007).

## 2. Theoretical background

Since the time Petigrew (1979) introduced the sociological-anthropological approach in his studies on organizational culture, Martin, Feldman, Hatch and

Sitkin (1983), Turner (1986), and Smircich (1983) emphasized the importance of subjective experience of life in the organization. Furthermore, organizations were seen as profit-oriented social systems, with their continuing past and future, or as subsequently defined by Etebarian and Khalili (2008), as social institutional, which make for goals with their methods, values and beliefs. Based on these, softer, settings on the employee-organization relations compared to the previous understanding of corporation-wise collectivization and collective identity (Caplow 1964), described critically by Whyte (1956) using the term *organization man*, the organization is no longer considered only as an inert system of established rules and procedures, but rather a dynamic process in which structures and relationships are transformed over time (Fisher 1986).

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) have completed this conceptual framework in a thesis on organizational socialization as the process of transferring organizational culture, or the *esprit de corps* (Fayol 1949). They defined a process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role; this process unfolds through the stages of pre-entry, confrontation and transformation. These authors start from the premise that tactics of organizational socialization largely influence the efficiency in achieving individual and organizational results, i.e. that what people learn about their work roles in organizations is often a direct result of how they learn it. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) introduced six bipolar dimensions of institutional organizational socialization as opposed to non-institutional organizational socialization. These are the collective – individual, formal – informal, sequential – random, fixed – variable, serial – disjunctive and investiture – divestiture dimensions.

The aspect of perspective of the organization and its employees which results from organizational socialization is introduced by Jablin (1984) stating that socialization is characterized as a process by which new and continuing organizational members learn and adapt to norms, expectations, and perspectives of their organization and its members. Other authors see the process of socialization as an opportunity for reducing uncertainty in tasks and environments (Fogarty/Dirsmith 2001; Moreland/Levine 2001; Kraimer 1997; Wanous/Reichers/Malik 1984; Jones 1983), while Tierney and Rhoads (1993) stress the importance of unity between the organization and its individuals in the process of integration.

The process of fitting into the organization is extremely complex and involves accepting, but also rejecting the norms of behaviour, which are unacceptable from the perspective of individuals or groups. Personality understands and accepts the environment-me, others-me and enterprise-me relationship in a more complex manner. Here, it is necessary to note the fact that creators of new values in the organization and society sometimes fail to choose the appropriate or best values and norms of behaviour. Therefore, organizational socialization cannot be viewed merely as a process of learning about and for the organization in which

the new employee got himself a job, about organizational values, goals, and norms, and knowledge and skills necessary to master organizational roles; it also includes elements of assimilation, transition, orientation, levelling, induction, but also progressive personalization (Perron 1985). In this sense, Feldman (1981) developed a three-stage model of organizational socialization that consists of anticipatory socialization, encounter socialization, change and acquisition socialization.

In other studies, in which dedicated authors have carefully searched for mechanisms of development and human resources, this concept has been widened with the intention to convince employers of the fact that the organization's success depends on the willingness of employees to engage beyond expectations, i.e. beyond of what is required or usual. Thus, the research regarding the success of organizational socialization has involved the dimensions of the process and content of socialization and was performed according to various criteria. Some authors (Klein/Weaver 2000; Ashforth/Saks 1996; Adkins 1995; Rice/Gentile/McFarlin 1991; Allen/Meyer 1990; Feldman 1981) have related the content and effects of organizational socialization with job satisfaction, job performance, and organizational commitment, while others (Grodzki 2011; Schein/Van Maanen 1979; Manning 1970; Hughes 1958) have related this issue with the acceptance of organizational role as a 'bundle of tasks'.

Researchers have also investigated the effectiveness of organizational socialization in terms of building loyalty to the organization (Grazulis 2011; Allen/Meyer 1990), organizational identification (Ashforth/Harrison/Corley 2008; Cheney/Tompkins 1987), as well as employees' commitment to the organization in the future (Kammeyer-Mueller/Wanberg 2003; Gibson/Ivancevich/Donnelly 1997; Cherrington 1994; Steers 1991; Moorhead/Griffin 1989). Researchers have also studied and evaluated the first encounter with the organization (Steers 1991), the importance of mentoring in the process of socialization (Chao 1997; Ostroff/Kozlowski 1993; Burke/McKeen/McKenna 1994; Odiorne 1985; Phillips-Jones 1983), as well as the methods of providing formal training during this process (Feldman 1989). Taormina (1994) has also proposed a model of quantitative measurement of organizational socialization through four socio-psychological factors (training, understanding, colleague support and prospects for the future) affecting the perception of success of socialization, and this model can be used in a variety of organizational settings. Authors of recent studies have been interested in the effects of organizational socialization and organizational citizenship behaviour (Salavati/Ahmadi/Sheikhesmaeili/Mirzaei 2011) in terms of proactive organizational behaviour that goes beyond the prescribed role and can contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency in the organization.

Aguilera, Dencker and Yalabik (2006) suggest that organizational socialization is the process of internalization of the different types of institutions – both, for-

mal and informal, external and internal, – and contributes to the formation of organizational structure and maintains the continuity of the organization. This is actually about the interaction of socialization and individualization, which are the requirements for the organization to be a functional and reproductive institution. From this perspective, organizational socialization allows continuous isomorphism (Aguilera et al. 2006) and correspondence in the institutional, i.e. organizational environment. Thus, whether the organization management will choose to apply methods of authoritative, institutionalized or progressive individualization, mainly depends on the form of management and organizational culture of the company as a whole (Ratković Njegovan/Vukadinović 2011).

Recent studies (Fang/Duffy/Shaw 2011) have imposed the question of relation between social capital and successful organizational socialization of new employees in the context of defining social capital as resources embedded in one's social networks, resources that can be accessed or mobilized through ties in the networks (Lin 2001). Effective mobilization of social capital for successful transition and adaptation of new members of the organization facilitates their organizational and social adaptation. Social capital ensures the existence of social and communication networks in the organization (Bauer/Morrison/Callister 1998; Fang/Duffy/Shaw 2011; Morrison 2002), which in turn enables new employees to acquire different types of information from insiders. Although adaptation of new employees largely depends on their personal efforts to reduce uncertainties in the acceptance of their work roles and social changes, it is not only an individual issue. In fact, learning and assimilation (Morrison 2002), as well as successful organizational socialization, does not occur only through formal forms (models, tactics) of socialization and the individual's efforts to accept the organizational culture, but also through support provided by the social capital through two forms of social capital stemming from newcomers' communication network – network status and tie strength – which positively affect their adjustment (Fang/Duffy/Shaw 2011). Through communication networks and tie strength, new employees receive information on formal and informal work relations and the power structure within the organization, which probably he will not be able to get through formal forms of organizational socialization.

In general, the following questions proved to be the most important research questions for the theory and practice of organizational socialization: what information is being transferred in the process of organizational socialization (socialization content); how this information is being transferred (socialization tactics); how to assess whether the information is successfully accepted (socialization efficiency); and what are the effects of socialization on the attitudes and behaviour of newly employed?

Abstracting the research directions in these issues of organizational socialization, Saks and Ashforth (1997) have summarized the theoretical perspective of

four corps, namely: a) the model of socialization tactics (Van Maanen/Schein 1979); b) the uncertainty reduction theory (Berger/Calabrese 1975), as a variant of the communication theory (Falcione/Wilson 1988; Lester 1987), where the employees try to predict the behaviour of others in interaction through various forms of active and passive communication strategies in order to reduce uncertainty in the new workplace; c) the social cognitive theory based on the optimistic concept of self-efficacy, which depends on the competence of personality, problem solving skills, coping with the requirements of the environment, and the standards of behaviour (Bandura 1986; 1997); and d) the cognitive and sense making theory (Louis 1980; Weick 1995), which explains the cognitive mechanisms of the rationalization of specific situations in the organization, the search for meaning in unclear circumstances and acting in accordance with one's personal judgment and their own identity.

Of course, this is by no means a complete list of research subjects regarding the organization – employees – socialization. The literature is supplemented by surveys conducted in transition and post-transition countries, i.e. countries which are still in the process of mastering the rules of operating in market conditions. Thus, Grazulis (2011) for example, studies the relation between organizational socialization and the level of employee's loyalty in organizations of the Lithuanian public sector. This interesting study has shown that these organizations lack a systematic approach to the process of organizational socialization, which has resulted in low levels of employee's loyalty. Another study (Claes/Hiel/Smets/Luca 2006) conducted in Romania was focused on the influence of organizational socialization on job satisfaction. This study also included the characteristics of ethnic identity of Hungarians and Romanians employed in companies in Transylvania. Eisenschmidt (2008) has studied the importance of mentoring in the process of organizational socialization of both teachers and school management in Estonian schools. As indicated in her study, the level of success of professional and social socialization is higher if the individual is quick to adjust to the organization, as early as the induction year, and become familiar both with the culture and goals of the school, and colleagues they work with. Several different perspectives on studying organisational socialisation can be found in Serbian sources. Pržulj (2002), for example, analysed the question of organisational socialisation in the general context of human resources development, while Lojić (2011), highlights the important role of human resources management in the process of keeping track of, analysing and adapting the process of organisational socialisation. Janićijević (1997) discusses this question in the context of accepting organisational culture, while Zimanji (2001 a) looks at it as a contributor to company transformation. Zimanji (2001 b), also studies the importance of mentoring in the process of organisational socialisation, using a four-phased model which consists of the initiation phase, upbringing phase, the separation phase and finally of redefining relationships. Djordjević-Boljanović and Pavić



(2011) divided the process of socialisation of newly employed individuals into learning organisational standards, ways of behaving, values and opinions, as well as factors which influence employee performance and the way in which others in the organisation experience them. According to these authors, creating a good socialisation program is key to successful socialisation and it should generally be based on the following premises: a fair employment process, supplying necessary information, and evaluating the system through interviews at the end of the organisational socialisation process. Jovanović-Božinović/Kuljić/Cvetkovski (2004) researched the goals of organisational socialisation, stating as their main goals the creation of a positive first impression, interpersonal acceptance, as well as the lowering of employee fluctuations, while Mašić et al. (2010) add to these goals the effectiveness and efficiency of doing the job.

### **3. Conceptual challenges and affirmations of organizational socialization**

It can be concluded that there is an increasing scientific interest for developing the concept of employees' organizational socialization, but at the same time, this domain of human resources has been exposed to conceptual criticism. Namely, despite the different perspectives on the effectiveness of organizational socialization developed in a relatively short period of time, the concept itself is challenged for being descriptive and lacking deeper theoretical analyses (Sacks/Ashforth 1997), partiality in research (Fisher 1986; Ostroff/Kozlowski 1992; Wanous/Colella 1989), which result in fragmented literature (Fisher 1986). The immanent multi-disciplinarity in the approach to this phenomenon should be added, which, along with management theory, includes sociology, social and industrial psychology, ethics, economics, medicine etc. All this prevents the field of organizational socialization from becoming structured as a discipline by defining its subjects and methods; thus, organizational socialization is seen either as a professional or scientific discipline.

The criteria based on which the success of socialization would be evaluated are also unclear, as well as the possible level of contingency to be relied on in evaluating the implementation of socialization procedure. Some cases are dominated by behavioural criteria like learning behaviour, others by criteria of authoritarianism and fear which can be used for advancing organizational socialization only in reasonable manner. Also note the fact that most managers believe that by individuals' socialization their personality can be significantly altered by changing the already formed opinions, adopted habits, ways of thinking and values, and establishing new modes of behaviour in favour of and for the needs of both company and its employees.

However, the complementary nature of research areas and the epistemological settings of organizational socialization, where confrontation of various theoretic-

cal alternatives is possible, but not their elimination (intratheoretical interdependence) suggests that organizational socialization is a mature scientific discipline and it is continuously strengthening its paradigmatic status in terms of its basic constituents, i.e. subject specificity, theoretical foundations, research methods and numerous examples of their verification, and above all in terms of its functionality. However, some authors (Sachs/Ashforth 1997; Ostroff/Kozlowski 1992; Wanous 1992; Wanous/Colella 1989; Fisher 1986) suggest that, despite the existing normative framework, organizational socialization is still fragmented and studied from various perspectives, and that there is a lack of so-called "stage models" (Wanous 1992), which would provide a reliable methodological base. In this sense, Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2005) state the critical question, for which they believe it is neglected: is there any common basic pattern of organizational socialization, and is it possible to set a uniform model for organizational socialization?

Establishing some scientific discipline with all its constituents is clearly a long and complex process, determined by gnoseological-epistemological frameworks, societal conditions and demands of the time. However, despite the various methodological doubts, we can say that in the theoretical field of organizational socialization we are already working on defining its subject which established its contents and the basic set of attributes, so that it has often been stated that it is a process through which individuals acquire knowledge about and adjust to their work context (Fisher 1986; Feldman 1981; Van Maanen/Schein 1979; Schein 1968), in one word "people processing" (Van Maanen 1978). Caplow (1964) explains that this is an organizationally directed process that prepares and qualifies individuals to occupy organizational positions, while Brim (1966) viewed socialization as the manner in which an individual learns that behaviour appropriate to his position in the group through interaction with others who hold normative beliefs about what his role should be and who reward or punish him for correct or incorrect actions. The interactive perspective takes more collaborative approach to developing a productive relationship between the individual and the organization beginning at the time of entry (Jones 1983; Ostroff/Kozlowski 1992). This context also defines the attributes or characteristics of the process of organizational socialization as continuity of socialization over time, changes of attitudes, values and behaviours and as a multiple socialization process (Feldman 1976, 1980, 1988).

Regarding the theoretical foundations of organizational socialization, although basically relying on the field of psychology, we have clear basic theoretical perspectives, summarized by Sax and Ashforth (1997) as follows: (1) Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model of socialization tactics; (2) uncertainty reduction theory; (3) social cognitive theory; and (4) cognitive and sense making theory. Similarly, Chao (2012) suggests uncertainty reduction theory (Falcione/Wilson 1988; Lester 1987), social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986, 1997) and cognitive



and sense making theory (Louis 1980). As studies (Bauer/Green 1994; Chao/O'Leary-Kelly/Wolf/Klein/Gardner 1994; Holton 1996; Miller/Jablin 1991; Ostroff/Kozlowski 1992) have shown, the key component of organizational socialization is learning, either formal or informal. Given that any learning, including organizational, involves cognitive, emotional and social factors, the theoretical corpus of organizational socialization must also encompass the corresponding learning theories, and as suggested by Korte (2007), the focus should be on integrated or holistic learning theories.

When it comes to the specific properties of approaches to organizational socialization, there are several models developed as a result of a number of research studies on the ways of adapting newcomers to the new work environment. A typical stage model proposed by Feldman (1980, 1976) includes three stages, variously described as "anticipatory", "encounter", and "metamorphosis". These models reflect a passage through the organization that begins prior to entry into the organization and continues throughout the relationship. Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) tactics model proposed that "what people learn about their work roles in organizations is often a direct result of how they learn it" (Van Maanen/Schein 1979: 209), and outlined six tactics that organizations use to influence newcomers. These six bipolar tactics are: (1) collective vs. individual (whether newcomers are socialized in groups or individually); (2) formal vs. informal (whether or not newcomers are segregated from insiders during socialization); (3) sequential vs. random (whether or not newcomers are told explicitly about the sequencing of planned socialization events); (4) fixed vs. variable (whether or not there is an explicit, fixed timetable for completing various socialization stages); (5) serial vs. disjunctive (whether or not previous job incumbents are available as role models for newcomers); (6) investiture vs. divestiture (whether or not newcomers receive positive social support from insiders).

Given that learning and adapting of newcomers in the organizational context includes learning the role, learning the job, and learning about the group, Bauer et al. (2007) propose an adaptation model which is based on role clarity, self-efficacy, and social acceptance, while Chao et al. (1994) take performance proficiency, politics, language, people, organizational goals / values, and history as the criteria. Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006) propose a multi-level learning-focused model of organizational socialization on post-entry successful outcomes, which includes organizational, insider and newcomer actions. The model is based on five domains of learning and five sources of learning. Domains of learning consist of task, role and performance, co-worker, social and group, history, goals and values organization, politics and future prospect. Sources of learning consist of colleagues (immediate work peers), supervisor (or manager), and mentor (or senior co-worker, reflecting that this may be a formally-sanctioned or an informal relationship), formal socialization programs and organizational literature. Indicators of success consist of the newcomer's role perfor-

mance and extra-role performance, social cohesion at the team and departmental levels, organizational stability, and external representation.

Although the above constituents of organizational socialization will undergo different stages of reconsiderations and critical valuations, we believe that there are already enough arguments for organizational socialization to be considered a scientific discipline, which does not mean that it is all regarding its potentials. What follows is defining its conceptual and categorical framework (judgments and attitudes specified in concepts and categories, postulates and principles), and indicators, i.e. the observed and registered external indicators as material for further research.

For now, we support this short elaboration of the initial thesis on the consolidation of organizational socialization as a scientific discipline with Louis's (1980) four topics covered in the organizational socialization literature: (a) characteristics of the process, (b) stages of socialization, (c) content of socialization, and (d) effects of socialization practices. In addition, establishing methodological continuity and correctly explaining their observations in this area, researchers agree on one thing: the level of socialization and re-socialization of employees can facilitate the evaluation of an organization's functional success, the employees' sense of belonging to the organization, their adaptability and connectivity, as well as the prediction of personal and organizational future and long-term commitment. It is due to the fact that during the working process the individual is being developed as an autonomous, creative personality instead of being modelled, indoctrinated and conformed only as a worker engaged on a particular task within the framework of his assigned role and the 'totality' of the organization, he is willing to actively cope with the functional imperatives of transition of roles during his working life, as foreseen by Parsons (1951).

The general concept of organizational socialization implies a growing concern for the development of human resources in an organized work process. However, under conditions of high unemployment rates, or even planning the long-term social growth with a further decline in employment by the model of jobless recovery, where the reserve army of the unemployed allows employers to reduce the quality of working conditions, there is a realistic possibility for this area of human resource management to be underestimated or marginalized for some time. However, investments in human resource development in the organizational environment, which is preceded by successful organizational integration, always results in the creation of additional, and either tangible or intangible value, both for the organization and each individual engaged in work.

## 4. Research

### 4.1. Research problems

Generally, the research was directed towards the anticipatory phase of organizational socialization which takes place before the employee joins an organization. The research followed the Feldman model (1981) of the three phases of organizational socialization which are: the anticipatory, the encounter and change, and the acquisition phase. The anticipatory phase is the phase of preparation for presenting professional and social competencies as best as possible, where an individual creates his own notion about the organization, its values, and mutual expectations, and anticipates the direction of his professional future. This process occurs before organizational entry and includes activities through which individuals develop expectations regarding the organization in preparation for entry (Ashforth et al. 2007). The potential employee gathers information about the job conditions in a particular organization, prepares to work in that organization and foresees the directions for his, imaginary, career.

In a smaller scale, the research was focused on the relationship that the research participants had towards the interview, as well as towards the concretization of the anticipatory phase of organizational socialization. The job interview has been considered firstly, initial step of organizational socialization, or its anticipatory stage before the individual joins an organization Jablin (1987), based on the categorisation made by Feldman (1981), and the stage of self-selection, as seen by Ashforth et al. (2007).

The interview represents the first necessary step towards a possibility of employment and it includes a selection procedure designed to predict future job performance on the basis of the applicants' oral responses to oral inquiries (McDaniel/Whetzel/Schmidt/Maurer 1994). As indicated by several studies (Huffcutt 2010, 2011; Maurer/Solamon/Lippstreu 2008; McDaniel et al. 1994; Tuller 1989; Arvey/Campion 1982), the interview is very important for initiating the process of socialization of potential members of the organization. On one hand, the applicant becomes informed and learns about the organization, while the organization gets immediate information about the applicant in terms of his knowledge about the job and organization, about his personal traits, as well as actual or perceived correspondence (Judge/Cable 1997) between the applicant and organization's attributes. On the other hand, the interview is a means not only of getting insight into the candidate's formal qualifications, but also of determining his suitability for a particular position in the organization on the basis of his social skills to combine the ability of self-advocacy and self-promotion, which is a crucial process of the anticipatory stage of organizational socialization. This is also connected to the biographical approach to organizational socialization as through the interview the candidate provides a personal reflection on his biography, individual agency about his biographical identity and pro-

motes his work biography (Preisser 2003; Schmitt/Cortina/Ingerick/Wiechmann 2003; Preisser/Wirkner 2002; Heinz 2002, 2000; Giddens 1991).

Despite its many weaknesses regarding validity, reliability, subjectivity, negative or positive bias, favouritism, discrimination, misunderstandings, and different reactions of applicants to the same interview, it is still the most common tool and an important element of the assessment procedure in the entire process of recruitment and selection (Judge/Higgins/Cable 2000).

#### 4.2. Research context

In this research the focus is on the interview as an important part of the anticipatory phase of organizational socialization which takes place before the employee joins an organization. The aim of this study which has its focus on the interview related behaviours is motivated by the reasons which can be narrowed down to the following data (Working Group on Reindustrialization of the Serbian government's 2013; Conjunctive Trends in Serbia 2013): a) the high unemployment rates in Serbia, which made up 28% of working-age population in 2013 with the tendency of the growth of unemployment; b) the majority of those unemployed searched for a job intensively and attended several job interviews (for example, the highest percentage of unemployed individuals – 29% had attended job interviews 11–30 times, while 11% had attended job interviews almost 100 times).

Thus, the purpose of this research was to investigate behaviour of the participants before and during the interviews, focusing both on participants who were employed as well as unemployed.

#### 4.3. Research hypothesis

Based on what has previously been said, it is expected that the participants have a respectable relationship towards the job interview, both during the preparatory phase as well as the interview itself, regardless of the outcome. That would be an indicator of their behaviour in the anticipative phase of organizational socialization, which is described in references as an imaginative thought process in which people are emotionally and cognitively engaged before their attitude toward a potential future event has crystalized (Kremer/Harpaz 1984). Also, it can be supposed that the participants engage both in the preparatory phase as well as during the interview and that participants found their behaviour during the interview more important than the preparations they did before the interview. In addition, six hypotheses of this research are formulated.

*Hypotheses 1: Scores on scales rating both indicators of interview related behaviour will be more near to the lower theoretical values which would indicate that participants put in more effort from what is*

*theoretically expected both in preparatory phase as well as during the interview.*

*Hypotheses 2: Scores on scale rating the indicators of behaviour during preparation for interview will be significantly lower than the scores on scale rating the indicators of behaviour during the interview. That would indicate that the participants are significantly more engaged during the interview than in preparation.*

*Hypotheses 3: Scores on scale rating the indicators of behaviour during preparation for interview will be positively correlated with the scores on scale rating the indicators of behaviour during the interview. It would suggest that higher level of engagement of participants in preparation for interview lead to the higher attentiveness to the behaviour during the interview.*

*Hypotheses 4: Participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on sociodemographic variables such are A) gender, B) age, C) education and D) current employment status.*

*Hypotheses 5: Participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on number of interviews previously attended.*

*Hypotheses 6: Participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on outcome of the interview.*

## 5. Methodology

The aim of this study was to examine the behaviour of participants during the preparation for the interview and during the interview itself.

### 5.1. Participants

The study included 110 participants (N = 110) from Vojvodina, Serbia. According to their employment status the participants were divided into two groups.

The first group included the employed participants. The group of employed participants consisted of individuals coming from four small private manufacturing companies which were the prevailing types of companies in the region where the research was conducted. It is important to bear in mind that according to the European Commission Recommendation 361/EC from 2003, small companies employ 10 to 49 workers, while medium sized companies employ up to 250. The selected companies have been operating in the past 10 years, employing up

to 49 workers and their production activities belong to the wood-processing industry. The questionnaire was sent by email to 160 employees. The response rate was 123 employed participants from four companies.

The study involved workers as well as lower and higher level managers who have met the following requirements: a) attended at least one job interview; b) they were employed previously in other company; and c) have at least secondary education. Participants who did not meet these requirements, but are employed in the selected companies, were not included in the study. Thus, the study included 66 participants from four companies.

The second group included the participants who are unemployed. These participants were selected from the records of the National Employment Service (2014) based on the following criteria: a) they were employed and they are actively seeking a job or try to change their job; b) have already had at least one job interview; c) have at least secondary education d) the length of the "unemployed" status is less than two years (according to the data of the National Employment Service for 2014, the average number of years spent by the unemployed waiting for a job is about 3 years and 10 months); e) had not taken any form of severance payment from its previous company; f) are not beneficiaries of any financial compensation; g) do not belong to the group of people waiting for retirement pension and they are no longer looking for another job because they can receive social compensation for no longer than two years. There were 150 participants in total contacted by email, with a response rate of 44 participants who filled in the questionnaire.

Thus, the research included a total of one hundred and ten participants (N=110). There were 66 employed participants and 44 unemployed participants. There were 58 female (47.3 %) and 52 male participants (52.7 %) aged around 40. Variables related to the education and the number of interviews previously attended by the participant was controlled. Although the earlier studies (Huffcutt 2011, 2010; Maurer et al. 2008; McDaniel et al. 1994; Tuller 1989) showed that there are different types of interviews such as structured or unstructured, screening, one-on-one, panel, group, serial, situational-stress interview, information or organized as a teleconference, in this study, variables connected to the type of interview in the companies in which participants included in this study had previously been employed as well as variables associated with the type of interviews in companies where participants included in this research are currently working were not controlled.

## 5.2. Research instrument

The research was conducted using an anonymous questionnaire (Ružičić 2013), which in addition to questions about the demographic characteristics of participants, contained questions the purpose of which was to examine how they pre-



pare to the interview and how they behave during the interview. The questionnaire consisted of 24 statements (see Appendix). Depending on their level of agreement with the statements, participants were required to evaluate them using the Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 – always, 2 – almost always, 3 – sometimes, 4 – almost never, 5 – never). There were twelve statements examining the way participants prepare for the interview, and twelve examining their behaviour during the interview.

The independent research variables were gender, age (3 age categories: up to 30, from 30 to 50 and over 50), education (3 categories: high school, highly qualified, college education and higher education), the number of interviews previously attended by the participant (4 categories: from 1 to 3, from 4 to 6, from 7 to 9 and more than 9 interviews), current employment status (2 categories: employed and unemployed participants) and outcome of the interview (2 categories: interview resulted in employment and interview not resulted in employment). The dependent variables consist of two indicators of interview-related behaviour operationalised through 24 statements on two scales. Scale rating the indicators of behaviour during the preparation for the interview is operationalized through 12 statements and scale rating the indicator of behaviour during the interview is operationalized through another 12 statements. Depending on their level of agreement with the statements, participants were asked to assess them using the Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 – always, 2 – almost always, 3 – sometimes, 4 – almost never, 5 – never).

### 5.3. Procedure

The questionnaire with instructions was sent to the participants by email. Each subgroup of participants had their task precisely explained. All the participants answered to the 24 questions in the questionnaire that measures their behaviour while preparing for the interview and during the interview depending on their level of agreement with the statements.

The quantitative method and not specific statistical data was used in processing results for the following three reasons: The first is that the quantitative method paints a broader picture when a large sample is used than what can be gotten through in-depth interviews with a small number of people (these interviews can be specific and thus lead to wrong conclusions). Second, quantitative analyses give results which can be directly compared with all other research which use the same questionnaire, while interviews do not. Finally, the quantitative overview is an excellent screening method which can indicate whether further, more precise and in-depth research are necessary, whether this future research is qualitative or quantitative, or, in the best case, a combination of the two, using a questionnaire with a chosen number of participants.

## 6. Results and discussion

The questionnaire measured two aspects of behaviour: the behaviour during the preparation for the interview and the behaviour during the interview. Arithmetic mean based on raw scores of the participants' assessments were calculated and compared to the theoretical arithmetic mean.

The results have shown that the obtained arithmetic mean ( $M = 49.59$ ) based on the calculation of raw scores is lower when it is compared to the theoretical arithmetic mean ( $M = 72.00$ ). Scores obtained are more near to the lower theoretical values and indicate that participants prepare more for the interview, i.e. they invest more efforts both in the preparation for the interview and during the interview itself.

Raw scores of the participants' assessments were calculated for both indicators of the interview-related behaviour. Results regarding the first indicator, i.e. the behaviour related for preparation for the interview, have shown that the obtained arithmetic mean ( $M = 26.03$ ) based on the calculation of raw scores is lower comparing to the theoretical value ( $M = 36.00$ ). This result indicates that the participants are more engaged in preparation for the interview. As for the second indicator, i.e. the behaviour during the interview, the results showed that the obtained arithmetic mean ( $M = 23.55$ ) by calculating the raw scores is lower in comparison with theoretical value ( $M = 36.00$ ). This result indicates that participants are highly attentive to their behaviour during the interview.

Results of the *t* - test [Paired Samples *t* - test] have shown that the participants' assessment of interview-related behavioural indicators are significantly different ( $t(108) = 3.144, p < .002$ ). The indicator of behaviour during the interview is assessed by participants as more important ( $M = 23.55, SD = 5.44$ ) than the behaviour related to the preparation for the interview ( $M = 26.03, SD = 8.09$ ). As indicated by this result, participants were significantly more engaged during the interview than in preparation.

The correlation between interview-related behavioural indicators was examined using correlation analysis. Results have shown that the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = .302$ ) was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). The correlation between indicators is low and has positive direction, indicating that higher levels of engagement in preparation for the interview lead to higher attentiveness to the behaviour during the interview.

An interesting result is related to the difference between men and women when it comes to the interview-related behavioural indicators. Results of the *t* - test [Independent Sample test] have shown that there is a gender-based difference between the participants regarding the indicator of behaviour during the interview ( $t(108) = 2.295, p < .024$ ). Women ( $M = 22.44, SD = 5.30$ ) are more attentive to their behaviour during the interview than men ( $M = 24.78, SD = 5.38$ ).

Taking into account the research context, this finding can be interpreted through several perspectives. First is perspective of the general culture of Serbian society with still strong traditional and patriarchal relations and casual behaviour of men both in family and broader social environment. Second, the perspective of higher rates of unemployment among women which could suggest gender discrimination and gender stereotypes. For example, the employment rate of women in Serbia is lower than the general employment rate in the European Union which was 58.3% in 2007 and rising, seeing that in 2000 it was 53.6% (Kolin/Čičkarić 2010). Also there is a general trend of hiring younger women which suggests inter-gender competition in the level and patterns of employment of women. Third, the perspective of increase of vaguely defined work contracts and atypical forms of employment, which particularly affects women and endangers equality in the labour market, so women are forced to invest more effort in getting a job, especially if having lower levels of education. Fourth, the perspective of the position of women in the labour market, which shows that typical female jobs are losing the race in market competition where there still are gender – specific jobs. Fifth, there is low social mobility of women, requiring them to accept jobs that let them stay close to their families and place of residence. And the last sixth perspective which shows that there are higher levels of self-monitoring and attention to their behaviour (Snyder 1987).

The results of the analysis of variance [ANOVA] have shown that there are no statistically significant differences in the assessment of interview-related behavioural indicators depending on the participants' age, education and number of previous interviews (see Table 1).

**Table 1: The results of analysis of variance**

	Indicators of interview related behaviour					
	Preparation for the interview			Behaviour during the interview		
	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age of participants	4, 202	.933	.493	4, 202	.583	.790 n.s.
Education of participants	4, 202	2.144	n.s.	4, 202	.927	.399 n.s.
Number of previous interviews	6, 202	.573	.123 n.s.	6, 202	.634	.923 n.s.
			160 n.s.			

Also, the results of t-test [Independent Sample test] have shown that there is no significant difference between the employed and unemployed participants regarding the indicator of behaviour during the interview ( $t(108) = -.306, p < .760$ ) as well as the indicator of behaviour during the preparation for interview ( $t(108) = .734, p < .464$ ). Employed and unemployed participants are similar in their behaviour during the interview.

A particularly interesting result has been obtained by the *t* - test. It turned out that with respect to whether the interview resulted in employment or not, there were no statistically significant differences among the respondents when assessing the interview-related behavioural indicators (preparation for the interview  $t(108) = -.657, p < .513$ ; behaviour during the interview  $t(108) = 1.023, p < .308$ ).

The results that are obtained in the research provided support for the first hypothesis which stated that scores on scales rating both indicators of interview related behaviour will be more near to the lower theoretical values which would indicate that participants put in more effort from what is theoretically expected both in preparatory phase as well as during the interview. The results suggest that participants, regardless of whether they are employed or not, are related to the preparation for the interview and the interview itself, which results in higher levels of engagement in both phases examined. When it comes to the behaviour related to the preparation for the interview, the participants of this study found it important to gather information about the organization and the job to which they were applying, to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and analyse their own skills required for the job, to predict the answers to possible questions, and dress in an appropriate manner. When it comes to the behaviour during the interview, participants took care to arrive in time, have a pen and paper to record information or questions, look the interviewer in his eyes, provide forthright and spontaneous answers, and be interested in their future job.

Results have also shown that the participants assessed the indicator of behaviour during the interview as more important than the behaviour during the preparation for the interview. This result provided support for second hypothesis which stated that scores on scale rating the indicators of behaviour during preparation for interview will be significantly lower than the scores on scale rating the indicators of behaviour during the interview. Such result suggests that participants are significantly more engaged during the interview than during the preparation for it.

The result of positive correlation between indicators of interview-related behaviour suggesting that higher levels of engagement in preparation for the interview leads to the higher attentiveness to their own behaviour during the interview was also expected. The third hypothesis stated that scores on scale rating the indicators of behaviour during preparation for interview will be positively correlated with the scores on scale rating the indicators of behaviour during the interview. The result that shows presence of positive correlation between indicators of interview-related behaviour provided support for third hypothesis.

The fourth hypothesis stated that participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on sociodemographic variables such are gender, age, education and current employ-

ment status. The obtained results indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the assessment of interview related behavioural indicators depending on gender but that there are no significant differences in the assessment of interview related behavioural indicators depending on the participants' age, education and current employment status, see Table 2.

**Table 2: The fourth hypothesis results for participant's sociodemographic characteristics affecting assessment of interview related behavioural indicators**

THE FORTH HYPOTHESIS Participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on sociodemographic variables	INDICATORS OF INTERVIEW RELATED BEHAVIOUR		RESULTS
	Preparation for the interview	Behaviour during the interview	
	<i>p</i>	<i>P</i>	
H4A: participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on gender	.323 n.s.	.024*	Supported
H4B: participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on age	.493 n.s.	.790 n.s.	Not supported
H4C: participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on education	.123 n.s.	.399 n.s.	Not supported
H4D: participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on current employment status	.464 n.s.	.760 n.s.	Not supported

\**p* < .05; n.s. = Not Significant

The fourth hypothesis mentioned above indicates differences between participant's assessments of interview related indicators of behaviour depending on sociodemographic variables which are referred by gender, age, education and current employment status. Overall the fourth hypothesis is supported partially on the basis of differences of participant's assessment among the variable of gender (Table 2.). However, results indicate that there are no significant differences in the assessment of interview related behavioural indicators depending on the participants' age, education, and current employment status.

The results of this study indicating that there are no significant differences in the assessment of interview related behavioural indicators depending on number of previous interviews not provided support for the fifth hypothesis which stated that participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on number of interviews previously attended.

These findings that there are no significant differences in the assessment of interview related behavioural indicators depending on the participants' age, education, employment status and number of interviews previously attended suggest that research participants had a certain attitude towards the interview-related behaviour which could be interpreted by the general attitude of employers according to which they are merely an "expense" to the organization rather than "a source of profit". Also the participant's attitude towards the interview-related behaviour can be interpreted by the fact that candidates have recognized that tens or even hundreds of other candidates are competing for the same position. An obvious example for this is the competition announced in 2012 for employing a hundred young professionals of different profiles in the national media service, when as much as by 17.000 people applied for the required interview.

These results can also partly be a representation of the most common context connected with interview related behaviours in Serbia. There is often candidate's intention of being 'close' with the interviewer, who later may become a superior, than frequently there is the lack of higher aspirations of candidates on the interview, a feeling that it is the company that chooses the person, and not vice versa, and that there is no choice, that the HR function itself has become a formality, since getting a job requires, above all, influential external intervention. Therefore very often candidates (among participants there were individuals with nine previous job interviews, without any success) does not even think of acting proactively, by asking questions, for example, of whether the firm invests in CSR and how it cares for its employees, whether it employs people with disabilities, how it treats pregnant women, how much it invests in employee education, possibilities for advancement, while negotiating about salary has been forgotten. Clearly, it is also possible to understand candidates' behaviour as a lack of their interest for basic information about organization and for what employers are really looking for.

This possible interpretation is supported by the one interesting result of this study. It turned out that with respect to whether the interview resulted in employment or not, there were no statistically significant differences among the participants when assessing the interview-related behavioural indicators. Thus, regardless of the outcome, the interview-related behaviour is unaffected, i.e. that the person invests the same efforts. Based on this result the sixth hypothesis which stated that participants will differ significantly in the scores on scales rating indicators of interview-related behaviour depending on outcome of the interview is not supported by results.

Although it is important to understand results of this study concerning the research context, it can be suggested that interview plays an important role in anticipatory phase of organizational socialization because, as results shows, candidate for the job invests the same effort regardless of the outcome.



Nonetheless, even though the high importance that the interview was seen as having by the participants of this research, this aspect of the anticipative phase of organizational socialization in the given context was not researched in depth. This is confirmed by other research in countries which have witnessed similar social changes in the past decades. Aleksić and Rudman (2010), for example, point to the lack of research about how candidates or newly employed organization members gathered information about the organization and prepared for the job interview. Grazulis (2011) expands this question to the aspect of organization and states that during the job interview the organizations are concerned with professional competences of the employee and other job related issues, pushing the individual behind the boundaries of early socialization. In this sense, using the example of an in-depth job interview, Kozak (2012) points to the fact that even with a wide selection of literature about work socialization, little attention has been given to the personal differences among newcomers during the socialization process.

## 7. Conclusion

The study on the importance of interview in the anticipatory stage of organizational socialization presented in this paper, provided only partial answers to specific research questions, given the restrictions regarding participants in the research and research instrument, but above all, given the objective limitations imposed by the field of research. It is necessary to mention that methodological problems faced in this research which includes: difficulties to control the type of interview that our participants attended and their validity (McDaniel et al. 1994), the psychometric properties of the employment interview and other factors that may bias the outcomes associated with interviews (Judge/Higgins/Cable 2000). Also there were methodological problems concerning the control of all the variables and making assessment on the scale.

Following the suggestions of Judge et al. (2000) that in addition to the traditional fields of researching job interviews the preparation, presence and reactions to the interview should also be researched, this research tries to answer some of these questions. The results of the research has shown that the participants assign great importance to the job interview, which requires a lot of emotional and cognitive effort. This could be applied in human resources management, requiring that the candidate's perspective should be respected in addition to the organization's perspective (Grazulis 2011; Aleksić/Rudman 2010), and that the 4 minutes out of the assigned 30, when analytics gain their first impressions of the candidate (Dougherty/Turban/Callender 1994) are not enough to recognize individual differences (Harris 1989).

Despite all difficulties it encountered, this study could help a better insight into the process of organizational socialization, especially into its first phase, the an-

tipicatory phase, which, among other things, includes the preliminary activities that precede the interview. In that sense, the study is a modest contribution because it points out the differences between the interview-related behavioural indicators. It also points to the untapped opportunities offered by a well-guided interview for human resources planning. Namely, in addition to individual's specification (qualifications, knowledge, skill and expertise), the interview can also be a means to obtain wider biographical data from the candidate, such as family background, work experience, leisure interest, in one word, his self-evaluation of various previous experiences. In modern human resource management practice this approach is already implemented as biographical HR management (Heinz 2002; Heinz et al. 1998), it is closely related to the concept of organizational socialization given that it takes into account the future employee's work, experiential and social potentials, i.e. their personal qualities and cross-functional skills (Robertson/Smith 2001), with the aim to recruit the right person for the right job at the right time.

Biographical HR management is closely related also to strategic planning of human resources. However, this topic has been neglected in the Serbian business practice and treated as minor factor, devaluing thereby the human capital and making it subordinated to financial capital. Decisions relating to human resources, primarily those in the selection process, or the anticipatory stage of organizational socialization, are decisions of long-term consequences. In Serbian organizations they are primarily made at the operational level, while at strategic level the orientation that employees are "the greatest wealth of companies and a crucial source of competitive advantage" is only declaratively stated.

Furthermore, it is also important to point out the fact that in the given context, the politics of human resources management is burdened with the fact that in most cases there is not enough instruments and tools for the implementation of certain activities, including those related to the complex process of organizational socialization of new employees, which has as its consequence the lower rate of their competence potentials.

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## Appendix

Twelve statements were aimed at examining the way participants prepare for the interview, and also twelve at examining their behaviour during the interview.

Table 1: List of statements examining the way participants prepare for the interview

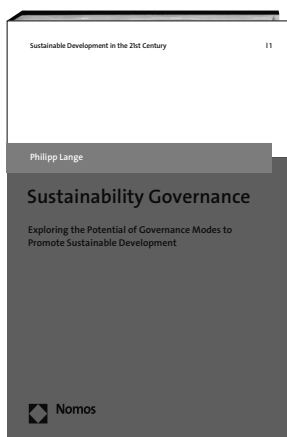
1. Before attending an interview I do a little research about the company and the job I am applying for.
2. I make sure I have all the necessary information and a base for the questions.
3. I find out the name and position of the interviewer.
4. I access my own strengths and weaknesses.
5. I analyse my abilities and skills based on the job requirements.
6. I make myself acquainted with the general types of interviews and approaches to them.
7. I think about answers for the most commonly asked questions and plan on what I will say.
8. I think about examples from my job and education that show my skills and qualities necessary for the job in question.
9. I am prepared to answer many different questions.
10. I practice speaking about myself so it is easier for me to do it at the interview.
11. I dress appropriately.
12. I arrive on time.

Table 2: List of statements examining participants' behaviour during the interview

1. I make sure my body language shows my interest in the job and is in tune with what I am saying.
2. While speaking at the interview, I look the interviewer in the eye.
3. I answer honestly and spontaneously (without memorizing the answers beforehand).
4. I think before I answer a question.
5. I have paper and a pen so I can write down some information or questions.
6. I make sure my answers match what is written in my CV and other documents.
7. I inquire about the job I am going to do, and the possibilities the company is offering me.
8. I use jargon language and abbreviations.
9. I use jokes as answers to questions.
10. I speak badly about my previous boss or company.

11. I talk about my salary in the preliminary interview.
12. I ask about the salary and benefits more than about the job and the opportunities it offers.

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