

UNLOCKING ONBOARDING SUCCESS: ESSENTIAL KEYS TO EMPLOYEE INTEGRATION

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Abstract: *Onboarding, the process of integrating new employees into companies, involves a wide range of techniques and opinions in academic literature. This study explores the complex aspects of onboarding, analysing several terms such as "employee onboarding," "organizational socialization," "orientation," "assimilation," and "hazing." This research tries to clarify the conceptual landscape of employee integration by drawing from a thorough review of the literature. This study provides a structured classification of determinants that lead to successful onboarding, offering valuable insights into key elements that enhance staff integration. Organizations may enhance their onboarding procedures by comprehending these determinants and how they interact, creating a conducive environment for new employees, which can lead to successful onboarding.*

Keywords: *Employee onboarding; Organizational socialization; Successful onboarding; Successful onboarding determinants; Employee integration.*

JEL Classification: O15; M12.

1. Introduction

The process of integrating new employees into organizations has a multitude of names in the academic literature. The term "onboarding" has been referred to by a variety of names throughout the literature. The term "Employee onboarding", is defined in literature as the process of familiarizing newly hired employees with the organization, its principles, and their specific roles and responsibilities (Bauer, 2010; Bauer & Erdogan, 2010; Cable et al., 2013; Caldwell & Peters, 2018; DR Pranita Sonar, 2021; Heimbürger et al., 2020; Klein et al., 2015; Shufutinsky A. Cox R., 2019). The objective is to provide new employees with the necessary information and resources to effectively adjust to their new work environment (Stratone et al., 2022). Other researchers refer to the new employee integration process into a company as "Organizational Socialization" emphasizing the integration of new employees into the social framework of the company as it involves helping new members establish relationships with their colleagues and understand the informal practices and networks within the firm (Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Gupta et al., 2022; Kowtha, 2018; Maanen & Schein, 1977; Perrot et al., 2014; Schein E.H., 1968). "Orientation", another term to describe onboarding, is commonly particularly when it involves familiarizing new employees with the company's organization, rules, perks, and facilities (Bauer et al., 2019; Bauer & Erdogan, 2014). Typically, it includes formal presentations, tours, and introductory meetings with key staff members (Wanous & Reichers, 2000; Zung, 2020). It refers to the formal process of introducing new employees to the firm, its policies, procedures, and work environment. It frequently includes initiatives to help newcomers become familiar with their new jobs and surroundings, such as orientation programs, training sessions, and mentorship opportunities (Wanous & Reichers, 2000). In addition, the term "assimilation" is often used to describe the process of new

personnel integrating into the current organizational structure and social networks. This viewpoint emphasizes the significance of social interactions and relationships in helping the newcomer adapt and feel included within the organization (Saks et al., 2007). Onboarding is also referred to as induction: "We define induction as any arrangement made to familiarize the new employee with the organization, safety rules, general conditions of employment, and the work of the section or department in which they are employed" (Gherardi and Perrotta, 2010; Skeats J., 1991). Another term to describe onboarding is "Hazing". Although not an officially recognized term for onboarding, it refers to the initiation rites or activities that certain groups engage in to integrate new members into the group. While hazing is often associated with negative connotations and is rarely promoted in professional settings, it provides insight into the social dynamics and hierarchies within various organizational cultures (Mawritz et al., 2022; Sweet et al., 2023). As seen, various terms and concepts are used to explain the process of onboarding, but they all have the same objective of helping new employees move and integrate into the business smoothly. Understanding these many viewpoints allows firms to create inclusive onboarding plans that consider the social, cultural, and practical elements of welcoming new employees.

The goal of the study is to provide insights into the various aspects of successful onboarding procedures by systematically categorizing determinants and identifying common patterns. By doing so, the study aims to guide organizations in improving their onboarding processes for new employees. This article highlights the importance of examining how different determinants interact to make onboarding successful. By investigating these determinants, we can better understand how to design onboarding programs that support new employees, leading to smoother transitions and better outcomes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Onboarding, organizational socialization, employee induction, and other similar concepts

Onboarding has gained a high level of attention in both academic literature and organizational practice. Studies have examined various aspects of onboarding, such as its definition, theoretical frameworks, factors, measurements, results, and practical consequences (Bauer & Erdogan, 2010; Cable et al., 2013; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020; Sharma & Stol, 2020). Onboarding includes a range of activities and processes designed to help new workers adapt to their jobs, teams, and corporate culture (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014).

Commonly referred to as organizational socialization or employee induction, onboarding includes a range of activities and processes designed to help new workers adapt to their jobs, teams, and corporate culture (Bauer & Erdogan, 2010). These usually involve orientation programs, mentoring, socialization strategies, and role modelling to assist new employees in comprehending and adjusting to their new work setting (Bauer & Erdogan, 2010). The onboarding process is crucial for new employees to integrate into organizations and establish a basis for their future success. Understanding effective onboarding factors, evaluations, and outcomes can enhance the onboarding process, leading to increased productivity and retention through customized strategies (Bauer & Erdogan, 2010; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Simon et al., 2019). Successful employee orientation not only improves employee happiness and involvement but also adds to the effectiveness and competitiveness of the firm in the market ((Brown L., 2021; Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020). Thus, it is crucial for firms seeking sustainable growth and success to engage in thorough onboarding strategies (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Bauer & Erdogan, 2010; Brown L., 2021; Cable et al., 2013; Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020; Saks et al., 2007).

2.2. The fragmentation of the literature concerning onboarding determinants

Researchers from various fields, including human resources, psychology, and general management, are increasingly exploring the determinants, measurements, and impacts of successful onboarding processes. Human resources professionals contribute by examining organizational practices and policies that facilitate effective onboarding (Saks et al., 2007). Psychologists bring insights into individual behaviours, motivations, and cognitive processes that influence onboarding outcomes (Bauer et al., 2007). Meanwhile, management scholars contribute by investigating leadership strategies, organizational culture, and structural factors that affect the onboarding experience (Allen T. & Tammy D., 2015). This interdisciplinary approach enhances our understanding of onboarding's complexities and offers comprehensive insights for practitioners and scholars alike. Organizations recognize the crucial role that effective onboarding plays in employee retention, engagement, and performance (Bauer, 2010). As a result, there is a growing demand for evidence-based practices and strategies to optimize the onboarding experience. Acknowledging the varied backgrounds and viewpoints from other disciplines in the study of onboarding has promoted cooperation and information sharing among scholars, stimulating future interest and research in this topic (Bauer & Erdogan, 2010). Overall, the combination of these factors has contributed to the increased attention and research activity surrounding the determinants, measurements, and impact of onboarding.

3. Methodology

3.1 The search process

During November 2023, we conducted a comprehensive search using pairs of specific keywords. We executed our search in the Web of Science (WoS) database to retrieve relevant articles related to onboarding and organizational socialization. The word pairs that were used have included "onboarding success" along with "determinant," as well as "onboarding" with "employee." Additionally, we searched for "organizational socialization" paired with "determinant," and "induction success" with the same variations. The results for each pair of words were various. Among the searches, "onboarding" and "employee" yielded 51 results, indicating a substantial body of research on the onboarding process and its impact on employees. Similarly, the pairing of "organizational socialization" and "determinant" resulted in 31 findings, suggesting a certain interest in understanding the determinants of organizational socialization. In contrast, the search for "induction success" and "determinant" returned only 2 results, and the search for "onboarding success" and "determinant" returned zero results indicating a relatively smaller focus on these factors in the literature. These searches are presented in the table below:

Word Pair	Number of Results
"onboarding" and "employee"	51
"organizational socialization" and "determinant"	31
"induction success" and "determinant"	2
"onboarding success" and "determinant"	0

Table 1: Search process

3.2 The selection of the sources

In our selection process, we examined the abstracts of articles retrieved from the initial search to determine their relevance to our study. Specifically, we retained articles if their abstracts mentioned any of the following terms: "determinants for successful onboarding," and considered the article relevant to our research objectives and included it in our analysis.

3.3 The analysis

We adopted a systematic approach similar to the one used by (Crisan et al., 2021) searching for determinant factors contributing to successful onboarding. After reviewing the abstracts, we identified 61 articles from our search. These articles met our inclusion criteria, aligning with our focus on exploring the determinants, associated with successful onboarding processes. We have read and thoroughly analyzed these 66 articles to extract relevant insights and findings for our study. Furthermore, based on references found within these articles, we have delved into an additional 6 articles. By applying this systematic approach to selection and analysis, we ensured that the articles included in our study were directly relevant to our research aims, thereby enhancing the validity and rigor of our findings.

4. Results

The determinants identified in these articles were categorized into eleven distinct categories based on their commonality across the literature. These categories include (1) work relations connection, found in 34 articles, emphasizing the importance of fostering positive relationships in (2) the onboarding process (support, training, feedback & well-being), identified in 29 articles, highlighting the crucial role of comprehensive onboarding processes in facilitating successful transitions (3) formalized/structured onboarding process & feedback, present in 27 articles, underscoring the significance of structured onboarding procedures and effective feedback mechanisms (4) Job Formulation & Clarity / Attributes /Employee Value & Meaningful Work: Featured in 24 articles, stressing the importance of clear job roles and meaningful work experiences. (5) Culture-Related Factors: Present in 24 articles, emphasizing the influence of organizational culture on the onboarding experience (6) Personal Attributes: Found in 24 articles, highlighting the role of individual traits and characteristics in successful onboarding (7) Role of Mentor: Identified in 23 articles, emphasizing the importance of mentorship in supporting new employees (8) HR Policies: Present in 11 articles, indicating the significance of human resources policies in shaping the onboarding process. (9) Technology, Location & Equipment, and Online Work Environment: Found in 7 articles, highlighting the impact of technology and work environment on onboarding (10) Additional/Extended Benefits: Identified in 5 articles, stressing the importance of providing additional benefits such as social support and professional development opportunities. (11) Workers' Representative Structures: Present in 2 articles, indicating the role of representative structures in advocating for the interests of new employees. The table below summarizes the categories:

	Determinant	No. of articles the determinant was found in
1	Work Relations/Connection	34
2	Onboarding Process (support, training, feedback & wellbeing)	29

3	Formalized/Structured Onboarding Process & Feedback	27
4	Job Formulation & Clarity / Attributes /Employee Value & Meaningful Work	24
5	Culture-Related Factors	24
6	Personal Attributes	24
7	Role of Mentor	23
8	HR Policies	11
9	Technology, Location & Equipment, and Online Work Environment	7
10	Additional/Extended Benefits	5
11	Workers' Representative Structures	2

By grouping these determinants into specific categories, we were able to identify common patterns and elements contributing to successful onboarding across diverse organizational contexts. This systematic approach provides valuable insights into the various aspects of successful onboarding procedures and guides ways to improve the onboarding process for new employees.

5. Discussion

In our research, we've gathered key factors from previous studies that determine successful onboarding. The identified determinants include necessary aspects for effective onboarding, ranging from fostering positive work relations to providing structured processes and feedback mechanisms. By focusing on these factors, organizations can find out what they're doing well and where they can improve. For example, they can compare how clear a job is with how well someone understands their role to see where adjustments are needed to make roles clearer during onboarding.

5.1 Synergistic Contributions to Successful Onboarding

By addressing key determinants identified in the literature organizations can achieve desirable outcomes and foster a supportive work environment for new employees. We selected determinants that were referenced in up to 30 percent of the articles, a notable proportion indicating their significance (Work Relations/Connection, Onboarding Process/support, training, feedback & well-being, Formalized/Structured Onboarding Process & Feedback, Job Formulation & Clarity / Attributes / Employee Value & Meaningful Work, Culture-Related Factors, Personal Attributes, Role of Mentor). By integrating these determinants in their organizations, we offer practical implementation strategies for organizations to achieve successful onboarding outcomes.

5.2 Examples of implementations

Below are some examples of implementations based on the determinants identified to achieve successful onboarding: Work Relations/Connection (34 articles): Implement team-building activities, encourage social interactions among new hires and existing employees, and establish mentorship programs to foster connections within the workplace. Onboarding

Process (support, training, feedback & wellbeing) (29 articles): Develop a comprehensive onboarding program that includes support mechanisms for new employees, such as mentorship, training sessions, regular feedback sessions, and initiatives promoting employee wellbeing. Formalized/Structured Onboarding Process & Feedback (27 articles): Establish a structured onboarding process with clear guidelines and milestones. Incorporate mechanisms for gathering feedback from new hires and managers to continuously improve the onboarding experience. Job Formulation & Clarity / Attributes / Employee Value & Meaningful Work (24 articles): Clearly define job roles, responsibilities, and expectations during onboarding. Emphasize the value of each employee's role within the organization and provide opportunities for meaningful work assignments aligned with their skills and interests. Culture-Related Factors (24 articles): Introduce new hires to the company culture through orientation sessions, cultural immersion activities, and communication of organizational values. Encourage cultural integration by promoting inclusivity and diversity initiatives. Personal Attributes (24 articles): Tailor onboarding experiences to accommodate individual differences and preferences. Provide flexibility in training methods and support systems to address the unique needs of each new hire. Role of Mentor (23 articles): Assign experienced employees as mentors to guide new hires through the onboarding process. Encourage regular interactions between mentors and mentees to facilitate knowledge transfer and social integration. HR Policies (11 articles): Ensure alignment between onboarding practices and HR policies. Communicate relevant policies and procedures to new employees during the onboarding process and provide resources for addressing policy-related inquiries. Technology, Location & Equipment, and Online Work Environment (7 articles): Equip new hires with the necessary technology, tools, and resources to perform their job duties effectively, especially in remote or virtual work environments. Provide training on using company-specific software and platforms. Additional/Extended Benefits (5 articles): Offer additional benefits or perks during the onboarding process to enhance employee satisfaction and engagement. This could include wellness programs, flexible work arrangements, or professional development opportunities. Workers' Representative Structures (2 articles): Establish mechanisms for new employees to voice their concerns or suggestions through representative structures, such as employee councils or forums. Encourage participation in decision-making processes to promote employee empowerment and engagement.

6. Conclusions and future research

Studying the different terms related to the onboarding process shows a diverse range of determinants designed to help new employees integrate into firms. Terms like "onboarding," "organizational socialization," "orientation," "assimilation," and "hazing" highlight the significance of thorough onboarding strategies that cover social, cultural, and practical aspects of integrating new employees. This study highlights various factors essential for effective onboarding, including promoting positive work relationships, implementing organized processes, and establishing feedback mechanisms. Organizations can acquire important insights into improving their onboarding processes by categorizing variables and identifying common patterns in the literature. By implementing specific tactics to target these factors, firms can establish conducive environments that promote employee assimilation and set the stage for future achievements. Future studies should delve deeper into the interactions between determinants and their long-term impact on employee outcomes. Longitudinal research across industries can shed light on context-specific factors affecting onboarding success. Collaboration between disciplines can further enrich our understanding of effective onboarding practices in diverse organizational contexts.

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