

RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Fostering the Organisational Socialisation Process to Reduce Self-Objectification: A Social Psychological Perspective for Studying Workplace Well-Being

Mara Marini¹  | Stefano Livi²  | Luca Andrichetto³ | Manuel Teresi⁴  | Stefano Pagliaro⁴

¹Dipartimento di Neuroscienze, Imaging e Scienze Cliniche, Università Degli Studi Gabriele d'Annunzio Chieti-Pescara, Chieti, Italy | ²Dipartimento di Psicologia Dei Processi di Sviluppo e Socializzazione, Università Degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Roma, Italy | ³Dipartimento di Scienze Della Formazione, Università di Genova, Genova, Italy | ⁴Dipartimento di Psicologia, Università Degli Studi Gabriele d'Annunzio Chieti-Pescara, Chieti, Italy

Correspondence: Mara Marini (mara.marini@unich.it)

Received: 12 December 2024 | **Revised:** 4 February 2025 | **Accepted:** 15 February 2025

Funding: The authors received no specific funding for this work.

Keywords: job satisfaction | organisational socialisation | self-objectification | turnover intentions

ABSTRACT

Research on self-objectification at work has increased significantly over the last decade. However, much remains to be done. In particular, we do not know enough about the role of organisational-level factors in reducing self-objectification. For these reasons, the present study aimed to examine the role of organisational socialisation as a predictor of employees' adjustment. Specifically, we examined the relationship between organisational socialisation and self-objectification and whether this relationship spills over to indicators of distal adjustment (job satisfaction and turnover intentions). The results showed that when individuals felt competent, accepted by colleagues, and identified with their organisation, their self-objectification decreased. Additionally, organisational socialisation was associated with positive outcomes (high job satisfaction and low turnover intentions) directly and indirectly through self-objectification. In terms of practical applications, this study suggests that facilitating organisational socialisation can be an effective strategy to promote employee adjustment in terms of personal and professional outcomes.

1 | Introduction

In most European countries, the current economic and labor market situation is a cause for concern. Despite some improvements compared to the past, gender inequalities, low youth employment and low incomes are still present in most of our societies (Eurofound 2024; OECD 2022). Moreover, many people in employment are exposed to stressors, including unsocial working hours, high work intensity and financial worries (Eurofound 2024). These stressors, which potentially affect workers from any occupation and sector, are associated with physical and mental health issues that harm individuals, organisations and society as a whole (Eurofound 2024; Koutsimani et al. 2019). In addition to these sources of concern for workers' well-being, recent research has shown that some work contexts

can be a source of objectification—a form of dehumanisation that refers to perceiving and treating workers as mere tools for organisational ends (Belmi and Schroeder 2021)—which has numerous adverse effects on people's lives (e.g., Belmi and Schroeder 2021; Poon et al. 2020). In particular, objectification damages workers' well-being by altering their self-perception. Objectifying work contexts are associated with workers' tendency to self-objectify (Nussbaum 2022/1995), perceiving themselves as lacking human mental states. The impact of working self-objectification on workers' emotions, attitudes and behaviour is the subject of increasing scientific interest (for a recent review, see Baldissarri et al. 2022). However, little is known about the organisational-level factors that can mitigate the negative consequences of workplace self-objectification perceptions. In this regard, research on organisational socialisation

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offers valuable insights. Organisational socialisation is the process through which new members become 'organisational insiders' (Bauer et al. 2007). Overcoming the limitations of traditional perspectives, recent models describe organisational socialisation as a dynamic and bidirectional process in which a continuous exchange occurs between the individual and the organisation, starting with the person's entry into the work environment and continuing throughout their tenure at the company (Levine and Moreland 1994; Moreland and Levine 2014). The outcomes of this process are not only measured in terms of the quantity and quality of information or skills acquired by the employee—as conceptualised in traditional models of organisational socialisation (see Ashford and Nurmohamed 2012)—but also in terms of the quality of relationships with colleagues and the strength of the bond with the organisation (Livi et al. 2018; Haueter et al. 2003). Therefore, successful organisational socialisation, while enabling the organisation to achieve its goals, allows employees to gain positive personal and professional experiences. An effective organisational socialisation process reduces uncertainty, enhances work motivation and the sense of social acceptance from colleagues, and, through these psychological mechanisms, promotes long-term organisational and personal adaptation, contributing to increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions (Bauer et al. 2025). Therefore, by facilitating the individual's integration into the organisational context, effective socialisation within the workplace could also reduce perceptions of self-objectification. However, to date, no study has comprehensively addressed this issue.

In light of this, the present study aims to fill at least some of the gaps in the literature. With this goal in mind and in line with research on the topic (Auzoult and Personnaz 2016; Teresi et al. 2022; Teresi, Barattucci, et al. 2024; Teresi, Telesca, et al. 2024), we investigated organisational-level predictors of self-objectification starting from organisational socialisation models, which describe successful socialisation processes as a valuable resource to foster employees' well-being and work adaptation.

2 | Theoretical Background

2.1 | Self-Objectification at Work

In organisational contexts, objectification represents "a form of dehumanisation that implies the perception and treatment of others as mere objects" (Baldissarri et al. 2022, 83–84). In her sociological analysis, Nussbaum (2022/1995) outlined that, in modern societies and organisations, workers are seen as mere tools of production (instrumentality) and, consequently, interchangeable with each other (fungibility). They also have little autonomy in their work activities and few opportunities to actively participate in decision-making processes and take initiative (denial of autonomy). As a result, there is little space for their feelings, and no importance is attributed to their personal experiences (denial of subjectivity) and physical and mental health (violability), which is often endangered by heavy workloads and high-risk working conditions.

In psychosocial research, this objectifying treatment of workers is operationalised as consisting of instrumentality (i.e., the target of objectification is perceived as a tool, interchangeable

and violable) and denial of humanity (i.e., the target is perceived as a tool, incapable of acting autonomously and feeling human emotions; Baldissarri et al. 2022). Similar to the concept of organisational dehumanisation (for a synthesis of the literature, see Brison et al. 2022; see also Baldissarri and Fourie 2023; Christoff 2014), working objectification describes the treatment of workers as tools that enable the organisation to achieve its goals (Baldissarri et al. 2022). However, in contrast to organisational dehumanisation—where the organisation–employee relationship and the target perspective have been given considerable space—the literature on work objectification has focused primarily on the sources of objectification, including supervisors' attitudes and behaviours or job characteristics (Baldissarri et al. 2022; Brison et al. 2022). From an interpersonal perspective, the tendency to objectify others seems to be triggered by motivational processes, such as power asymmetry (for the perspective of high-powered people, see Gruenfeld et al. 2008 and Landau et al. 2012; for the perspective on low-power people, see: Schaerer et al. 2018), money salience and calculative mindset (e.g., Belmi and Schroeder 2021; Cheng et al. 2024; Teng et al. 2016; Wang and Krumhuber 2017) and cognitive processes, such as social categorization processes (e.g., Andrighetto, Baldissarri, and Volpato 2017; Baldissarri et al. 2017b). Organisational contexts and work activities can also be a source of objectification. Research has shown that some features of the work activities (such as fragmentation, monotony and repetitiveness; Andrighetto, Baldissarri, and Volpato 2017; Baldissarri et al. 2017b) or labor market characteristics (such as job insecurity or precarious employment contracts; Baldissarri et al. 2023) can also feed workers' perceptions of being objectified. The same is true for specific categories of workers (e.g., low-status workers: Volpato et al. 2017; Sainz et al. 2019; or blue-collar workers: Baldissarri et al. 2017b; Valtorta et al. 2019) who are more likely than others to be exposed to the situations described earlier (i.e., subordinate roles or fragmented, monotonous and repetitive work activities).

In terms of its consequences, the research found numerous adverse effects of objectification on various aspects of a person's life (e.g., Belmi and Schroeder 2021; Poon et al. 2020). The primary and most insidious aspect of work objectification concerns the internalisation of the external gaze, that is, workers' self-objectification: "the process by which workers self-perceive as objects as a consequence of their work experiences" (Baldissarri et al. 2022, 104). In one of the first studies on this topic, Baldissarri et al. (2014) showed that perceiving being treated as an object by supervisors was associated with workers tending to objectify themselves, perceiving themselves as lacking human mental states. This association was confirmed in subsequent studies that considered multiple dimensions of self-objectification (e.g., Auzoult 2020; Auzoult and Personnaz 2016; Baldissarri and Andrighetto 2021; Baldissarri et al. 2019). Notably, recent research has shown that working self-objectification can occur without objectifying treatment. Experimental (e.g., Andrighetto et al. 2018; Baldissarri et al. 2017a; Baldissarri et al. 2020a; Baldissarri et al. 2020b; Loughnan et al. 2017) and correlational (e.g., Baldissarri et al. 2019, 2020a) studies have demonstrated that objectifying work activities induce people to perceive themselves as objects lacking human attributes. These findings are in line with studies on organisational dehumanisation, which

have shown that organisational contexts that do not satisfy (or frustrate) basic psychological needs induce people to perceive themselves as lacking purely human attributes and, therefore, assimilated to machines, tools, objects, or numbers needed only to serve the organisation's purposes (Baldissarri and Fourie 2023).

Self-objectification at work is particularly harmful to the individual: It limits free will (Baldissarri et al. 2019), induces a state of passivity in which the person's autonomy and ability to make conscious decisions are compromised (Baldissarri et al. 2017b; Valtorta et al. 2019), increases conformism (Andrighetto et al. 2018; Baldissarri et al. 2020a), and reduces work engagement and performance (Baldissarri and Andrighetto 2021). Despite the increasing interest in studying work objectification, social and organisational psychology literature still lacks a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. This gap is particularly evident in research on organisational-level predictors and aspects of the employee–organisation relationship that could mitigate this process and shield workers from its negative consequences. To our knowledge, only two studies have described organisational culture (Auzoult and Personnaz 2016) and ethical climate (Teresi et al. 2022) as factors that may reduce perceptions of objectification in organisational contexts. Auzoult and Personnaz (2016) found that an organisation that encourages participation and cooperation, in which the employee has trust (supportive orientation), and encourages openness to change and creativity (innovation orientation) reduces the risk of self-objectification. On the contrary, a high-control organisational culture, which emphasises respect for authority and procedures, promotes employee self-objectification. In the same line of research, Teresi et al. (2022) showed that the ethical organisational climate of friendship—that is, a collective and interdependent way of dealing with ethical issues within the organisation (Barattucci et al. 2021)—reduced self-objectification by increasing the sense of attachment to one's organisation. These findings shed light on the role of organisational contexts in workers' experiences and self-perceptions, suggesting that when workers are actively encouraged to participate in the life of the organisation in a climate of cooperation, positive interdependence and inclusion (see also Teresi, Telesca, et al. 2024), the risk of perceiving oneself as a mere tool or deprived of humanity is reduced, with positive consequences for psychological, social and organisational well-being.

In light of these findings, it is paramount for research and intervention in the psychosocial and organisational fields to adopt a positive perspective in the study of work self-objectification to delineate the factors that promote workers' well-being by reducing feelings of objectification. For this reason, the present study examined Organisational Socialisation (Wanberg 2012) as an organisational and personal resource that reduces workers' objectification and increases their well-being.

2.2 | Organisational Socialisation

Over the years, organisational socialisation has been studied from various theoretical perspectives (Ashford and Nurmohamed 2012). Early individualistic models defined it

as a process of the passive acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the job, as well as organisational norms, values and culture (Schein 1968; Van Maanen and Schein 1979). These models described organisational socialisation as a learning process in which the individual assumes a passive role, shaped by the social and organisational environment, and must successfully adjust to the organisational context. This limitation was addressed by interdependence models (Allen et al. 2017), according to which organisational socialisation is an interactive, bidirectional process involving mutual adaptation between the individual and the organisation (Ashford and Nurmohamed 2012; Moreland and Levine 2014). Among interdependence models, Levine and Moreland's socialisation model (Levine and Moreland 1994; Moreland and Levine 2014) is one of the most well-known and extensively studied. A key strength of this model is that unlike individualistic models—which have overly focused on the experiences of 'newcomers' in the socialisation process (Ashford and Nurmohamed 2012; Moreland and Levine 2014; Theodorou 2019)—it highlights the evolution of socialisation over time, detailing distinct roles that vary according to the individual–organisation relationship (Moreland and Levine 1984). In addition to newcomers, the model presented the full member's role as representing the success of the socialisation process (Levine and Moreland 1994; Moreland and Levine 2014). According to this perspective, this role is achieved when, during the socialisation phase, individuals attain high levels of competence regarding their tasks and roles, develop a sense of similarity with colleagues that leads to a feeling of full acceptance, and identify with the organisation (Ashforth et al. 2007; Bauer et al. 2007; Cepale et al. 2021; Chao et al. 1994; Haueter et al. 2003). Despite its importance, the dynamic structure of Levine and Moreland's model (Levine and Moreland 1994; Moreland and Levine 2014) limits the ability to measure its processes and stages, hindering a deeper understanding of their outcomes.

The dynamic nature of the organisational socialisation process has been prominently highlighted in recent comprehensive literature reviews. In particular, socialisation resources theory (Saks and Gruman 2012) has identified various organisational resources that assist the individual's adaptation during critical moments of the socialisation process, leading to positive outcomes for both the individual and the organisation, such as increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions. Additionally, Bauer and colleagues (Bauer and Erdogan 2012; Bauer et al. 2007, 2025) have explored the role of organisational socialisation antecedents in both proximal and distal outcomes. Proximal outcomes, such as role clarity, task mastery and social acceptance, indicate early signs of a newcomer's adaptation to their role, tasks, group and organisational context. In contrast, distal outcomes, like job satisfaction and turnover intentions, represent traditional socialisation results and reflect individuals fully integrated into the organisation. Overall, this recent research has adopted a positive perspective on newcomers' experiences, viewing distal outcomes as the result of a process in which individuals are actively involved, as noted by Levine and Moreland (Levine and Moreland 1994; Moreland and Levine 2014). However, socialisation processes are still predominantly framed from the newcomer's perspective (Cooper-Thomas et al. 2020), overlooking the experiences

of existing organisational members who may have achieved varying levels of adaptation. Furthermore, the literature has underestimated the importance of social acceptance by colleagues and organisational attachment for employees' adaptation, in addition to traditional skill-based outcomes (Bauer et al. 2025).

Bearing these limitations in mind, this study focuses on the outcomes of the organisational socialisation process rather than solely on the perspective and experience of the newcomer. In line with the views of several authors (Ashforth 2012; Ashforth et al. 2007; Ellis et al. 2014; Levine and Moreland 1994; Moreland and Levine 2014), organisational socialisation has been conceptualised as a process of ongoing negotiation that defines the relationship between the individual and the organisation over time. From this perspective, organisational socialisation should create an environment that allows employees to feel like full members, acting as active agents in the organisational process rather than passive objects, thereby perceiving themselves as having a meaningful impact on both their work experience and the organisation's outcomes.

3 | The Present Study

This study is part of a recent body of research focused on identifying organisational-level factors that mitigate self-objectification, particularly emphasising the role of the relationship between individuals and their organisations in these processes. To this end, organisational socialisation was investigated as a predictor of self-objectification. Additionally, the study aimed to explore whether the hypothesised relationship between organisational socialisation and self-objectification then spills over to work-related attitudes, both positive, such as job satisfaction, and negative, such as turnover intentions.

In light of studies indicating associations between specific characteristics of organisational context (e.g., organisational culture and ethical climate; Auzoult and Personnaz 2016; Teresi et al. 2022) and self-objectification, we hypothesised that the success of organisational socialisation processes would be negatively associated with self-objectification (Hypothesis 1). As suggested by recent models of organisational socialisation (see Allen et al. 2017; Ashford and Nurmohamed 2012; Haueter et al. 2003; Moreland and Levine 2014; Saks and Gruman 2012), when the work context aligns with individuals' needs, they experience a sense of competence, high engagement with their work, and a feeling of belonging within the organisation, facilitating their integration into the organisational structure as full members. It was postulated that such positive perceptions and feelings might reduce self-objectification. Additionally, based on studies indicating adverse outcomes associated with self-objectification in work contexts, we posited that self-objectification would be negatively associated with job satisfaction and positively associated with turnover intentions (Hypothesis 2). Finally, following recent models of organisational socialisation that suggest organisational resources can translate into proximal indicators of personal adjustment and indirectly influence distal socialisation outcomes (Bauer et al. 2007, 2025; Saks and Gruman 2012), we postulated that successful organisational socialisation processes

would be related to job satisfaction (positively) and turnover intentions (negatively), both directly (Hypothesis 3) and indirectly through self-objectification (Hypothesis 4).

4 | Methods

4.1 | Participants and Procedures

Power analysis was conducted using an online, free statistical calculator for structural equation models (SEM; Soper 2024). Based on previous studies examining the constructs considered in our study (Auzoult and Personnaz 2016; Teresi et al. 2022), an anticipated effect size of 0.25 was considered. The findings indicated that a minimum sample size of 213 participants was sufficient to achieve a statistical power greater than 0.80 in a SEM with 4 latent and 22 observed variables at an alpha level of 0.05.

Consequently, through the snowball technique, 258 Italian workers were recruited (50.4% men; 1 participant did not answer this question), with ages ranging from 18 to 66 ($M=43.33$, $SD=9.78$). Regarding the education level, 57.4% had a university degree, 26.7% had a high school degree, 8.1% had a middle school degree and 7.8% had a qualification beyond a university degree (e.g., doctorate). Concerning the characteristics of the job contract, 86.4% of the sample had a full- or part-time employment contract, 8.5% had an employment contract and were also self-employed and 5% were freelancers. Most of the sample (69%) was employed by public companies, while 27.5% was employed by private companies (nine participants did not provide this information). The organisational tenure was 17.4 years ($SD=10.7$; minimum 1 month, maximum 45 years). The average hours worked per week were 35.41 ($SD=9.04$; 15 participants did not provide this information).

The survey was distributed online. All responses to the questionnaire were anonymous, and participation was voluntary. The study was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration and psychological research guidelines. All participants gave informed consent to participate in the study, which was approved by the University Ethics Committee.

4.2 | Measures

4.2.1 | Organisational Socialisation

Organisational socialisation was measured using the Organisational Socialisation Questionnaire (Livi et al. 2018; 18 items). This instrument focuses on the outcomes of the organisational socialisation process in relation to the levels of competence, acceptance by colleagues and identification with the organisation achieved by its members, according to three perspectives: newcomers, full members and marginal members. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) conducted on the entire measure showed unsatisfactory results (see Appendix A). For these reasons, and in line with previous studies (e.g., Alessandri et al. 2020; Cepale et al. 2021), we focused on the full-member dimension (6 items; five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; $\alpha=0.87$) that measures the success of the organisational socialisation process in terms of acquiring

competence (example of item: 'I have learned how to carry out my work-related activities and duties well'), feeling accepted by colleagues (example of item: 'I feel completely accepted by my colleagues') and identifying with the organisation ('I identify completely with my organization'). CFA results indicated the presence of a single factor (full member) with significant residual covariances among the items from each subdimension (competence, acceptance, identification): $\chi^2_{(6)} = 15.121$, $p = 0.019$; CFI = 0.988; TLI = 0.970; RMSEA = 0.077; SRMR = 0.024.

4.2.2 | Self-Objectification

Self-objectification was measured using the Baldissarri et al. (2017b) scale that assesses workers' perceptions of being similar to an instrument (four items: machine, tool, instrument, thing) or a human being (four items: individual, person, human being, subject). Participants responded to each item using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = not at all to 7 = extremely). CFA indicated that a hierarchical model—in which a higher-level factor (self-objectification) explains the link between the two dimensions of instrumentality and denial of humanity—showed adequate fit indices: $\chi^2_{(13)} = 39.600$, $p = 0.000$; CFI = 0.979; TLI = 0.966; RMSEA = 0.089; SRMR = 0.035 (see alternative CFA models in Appendix A). In light of these results, to assess an overall score of self-objectification, three items related to perceptions of being similar to a human being were recoded so that higher scores indicated higher self-objectification. The item 'subject' was not considered in the computed score due to inadequate factor loading. The reliability was adequate ($\alpha = 0.90$).

4.2.3 | Organisational Socialisation Outcomes

Job satisfaction was measured by four items from Judge et al. (2000) (example of item: 'Every day at work seems like it will never end'; Likert response scale from 1 to 5). Turnover

intentions were measured by four items from Sager et al. (1998) (example of item: 'I often think about leaving my job'; Likert response scale from 1 to 5). Reliability was adequate (job satisfaction: $\alpha = 0.87$; turnover intentions: $\alpha = 0.90$).

5 | Data Analysis and Results

Before proceeding with the analysis, preliminary data processing was conducted (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Moreover, given the study's cross-sectional nature, we assessed the presence of common method bias. The results indicated that when all items were considered, a one-factor solution explained less than 50% of the variance (30.48%) and had inadequate fit indices: $\chi^2_{(527)} = 3220.445$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.477; TLI = 0.443; RMSEA = 0.141; SRMR = 0.122. Therefore, common method variance should not be an issue for this study (Podsakoff et al. 2003, 2012).

IBM SPSS Statistics 27 (IBM 2020) was used to conduct the preliminary analysis. The results of the correlations (Table 1) showed that organisational socialisation was negatively associated with self-objectification and turnover intentions and positively associated with job satisfaction. Self-objectification was negatively correlated with job satisfaction and positively correlated with turnover intentions. Job satisfaction was negatively correlated with turnover intentions. Despite the significant correlations between organisational tenure and job satisfaction and turnover intentions, as well as between age and sex with turnover intentions and organisational socialisation, respectively, since we had no hypotheses on the role of these variables in the hypothesised model and to ensure the parsimony of the model (Bernerth and Aguinis 2016), subsequent analyses did not consider organisational tenure, age and sex.

A SEM using maximum likelihood robust estimation was conducted to test our hypotheses using R Software (R Core

TABLE 1 | Descriptive statistics and correlational analyses.

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	OS	3.76 (scale range 1–5)	0.91	—							
2.	SO	2.38 (scale range 1–7)	1.40	−0.406***	—						
3.	JS	3.74 (scale range 1–5)	0.99	0.454***	−0.525***	—					
4.	TI	2.39 (scale range 1–5)	1.28	−0.358***	0.443***	−0.654***	—				
5.	OT	17.40	10.70	0.036	−0.113	0.130*	−0.258***	—			
6.	HW	35.41	9.04	0.109	0.034	−0.034	−0.008	0.042	—		
7.	Sex	—	—	−0.159*	0.096	−0.078	0.090	−0.136*	−0.259***	—	
8.	Age	43.33	9.78	0.005	−0.084	0.109	−0.226***	0.703***	−0.047	0.033	—

Note: *** p value < 0.001; * p value < 0.05; sex (0 = male, 1 = female); the total sample consists of 258 participants, but only 243 of these reported hours worked for the week; one participant did not report sex; significant coefficients are in bold.

Abbreviations: HW, Hours per Week; JS, Job Satisfaction; OS, Organisational Socialisation; OT, Organisational Tenure; SO, Self-Objectification; TI, Turnover Intentions.

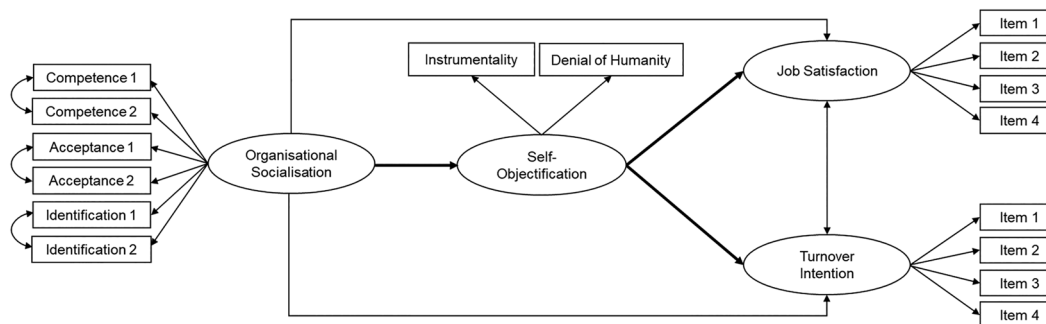


FIGURE 1 | Statistical model (SEM).

Team 2021). In this model (see the statistical model in Figure 1), organisational socialisation, job satisfaction and turnover intentions were treated as latent variables, with items serving as observed variables. For self-objectification, based on the results of the CFA (see Appendix A), we considered the dimensions of instrumentality and denial of humanity as observed indicators of self-objectification (Little et al. 2013).

The following indices were used to evaluate the model: Chi-squared test (χ^2), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardised Root Mean Residual (SRMR). TLI and CFI $\geq 0.90/0.95$ and RMSEA and SRMR $\leq 0.06/0.08$ were considered indicators of model adequacy (Brown 2006; Hu and Bentler 1999). Five thousand bootstrap samples and 95% confidence intervals were used to assess the statistical significance of the indirect effects.

The model results are reported in Table 2, and the overall model is displayed in Figure 2. The model showed adequate fit indices: $\chi^2_{(95)} = 195.355$, $p = 0.000$; CFI = 0.953; TLI = 0.940; RMSEA = 0.072, SRMR = 0.079.

Confirming our hypotheses, organisational socialisation was negatively associated with self-objectification. Significant associations were found between organisational socialisation and both job satisfaction (positive) and turnover intentions (negative). Self-objectification was positively associated with turnover intentions and negatively associated with job satisfaction. An indirect association was found between organisational socialisation and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.185$; 95% CI [0.136, 0.436]) as well as between organisational socialisation and turnover intentions ($\beta = -0.181$; 95% CI [-0.519, -0.131]) via self-objectification. The model explained 27.6% of the variance in self-objectification, 40.6% in job satisfaction and 31.2% in turnover intentions.

6 | Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between proximal outcomes of organisational socialisation processes (i.e., employees' levels of competence, perceived acceptance by colleagues and identification with their organisations) and distal indicators of organisational adaptation, such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions, considering self-objectification as a mediator of this relationship. Specifically, the study aimed to explore whether

organisational socialisation, in addition to being linked to traditional indicators of employees' adaptation at work, also plays a role in shaping individuals' self-perception. In this regard, recent research on self-objectification has highlighted that specific workplace experiences significantly shape workers' tendency to perceive themselves as mere tools serving organisational objectives rather than as individuals capable of making active contributions and engaging in various aspects of organisational life (Baldissarri et al. 2022). The findings of our study suggest that when employees develop a sense of competence in their roles, feel accepted by their colleagues and experience a strong attachment to their organisation, self-objectifying feelings and perceptions are reduced.

A further objective of this study was to investigate whether self-objectification mediated the direct relationship between organisational socialisation and work-related attitudes. Drawing on recent conceptual models of organisational socialisation (Bauer et al. 2007, 2025), we hypothesised that low self-objectification would serve as an indicator of employee adaptation and, in turn, be related to distal adaptation outcomes, such as high job satisfaction and low turnover intentions. The findings supported our hypotheses: Organisational socialisation and employees' work-related attitudes were directly and indirectly associated through self-objectification.

This study makes several important contributions to the literature on self-objectification and organisational socialisation, offering insights from both theoretical and practical perspectives. First, it adopts a positive approach to studying self-objectification, shifting the focus from the common emphasis on factors that exacerbate self-objectification to identifying those that reduce it. While specific characteristics of organisational contexts are identified as risk factors for self-objectification (Baldissarri et al. 2022), this study emphasises how positive aspects of organisational environments can mitigate negative self-perceptions in work settings (Auzoult and Personnaz 2016; Teresi et al. 2022). Notably, this is the first study to explore the role of effective socialisation processes in shaping workers' self-perceptions, specifically self-objectification, and how these perceptions relate to indicators of organisational success and overall individual adaptation. Additionally, it represents the first investigation into the link between self-objectification and work-related attitudes, enhancing our understanding of its consequences for both organisational success and individual well-being. Finally, in line with Levine and Moreland's model (Levine and Moreland

TABLE 2 | SEM results: measurement model and structural paths.

Measurement model					
	Estimate	Standard error	Standardised coefficient	<i>p</i>	
Organisational socialisation (OS)					
Item 1	1.039	0.054	0.805	0.000	
Item 2	0.889	0.071	0.740	0.000	
Item 3	0.870	0.065	0.729	0.000	
Item 4	0.896	0.067	0.723	0.000	
Item 5	0.712	0.067	0.669	0.000	
Item 6	0.497	0.069	0.509	0.000	
Self-objectification (SO)					
Denial of humanity	1.179	0.111	0.907	0.000	
Instrumentality	1.000	0.102	0.797	0.000	
Job satisfaction (JS)					
Item 1	0.849	0.052	0.938	0.000	
Item 2	0.782	0.052	0.896	0.000	
Item 3	0.669	0.051	0.805	0.000	
Item 4	0.567	0.060	0.593	0.000	
Turnover intentions (TI)					
Item 1	1.063	0.062	0.884	0.000	
Item 2	0.926	0.057	0.847	0.000	
Item 3	0.985	0.065	0.820	0.000	
Item 4	1.062	0.064	0.811	0.000	
Structural model					
Predictor	Criterion	Estimate	Standard error	Standardised coefficient	<i>p</i>
OS	SO	−0.617	0.104	−0.525	0.000
OS	JS	0.489	0.107	0.377	0.000
OS	TI	−0.355	0.104	−0.294	0.000
SO	JS	−0.390	0.097	−0.353	0.000
SO	TI	0.354	0.099	0.345	0.000
Covariances: JS-TI		−0.508	0.060	−0.508	0.000

Note: In the measurement model of organisational socialisation, the covariances between the items measuring competence, acceptance and identification were included.

1994; Moreland and Levine 2014), this study conceptualises organisational socialisation in terms of its outcomes, focusing on full membership's adaptive characteristics. The aim was to emphasise how the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the individual and the organisation shapes employees' psychological experiences (Bauer et al. 2025; Moreland and Levine 2014). Research adopting this perspective has shown that adequate socialisation reduces interpersonal distress (Livi et al. 2018), strengthens attachment to the organisation (Alessandri et al. 2020) and decreases turnover intentions (Cepale et al. 2021; Livi et al. 2020). This approach moves beyond traditional models, which typically focus only on

newcomers and the socialisation practices they engage in, by emphasising the psychological processes and outcomes that define the socialisation experience.

At a practical level, we believe that the theoretical perspective adopted in this study provides valuable insights into the organisational and individual factors that should be targeted in interventions aimed at helping individuals thrive at work and achieve high levels of well-being. Among these factors, the success of the organisational socialisation process appears to play a central role. Therefore, it is essential to invest in organisational socialisation processes not only during the initial stages of an

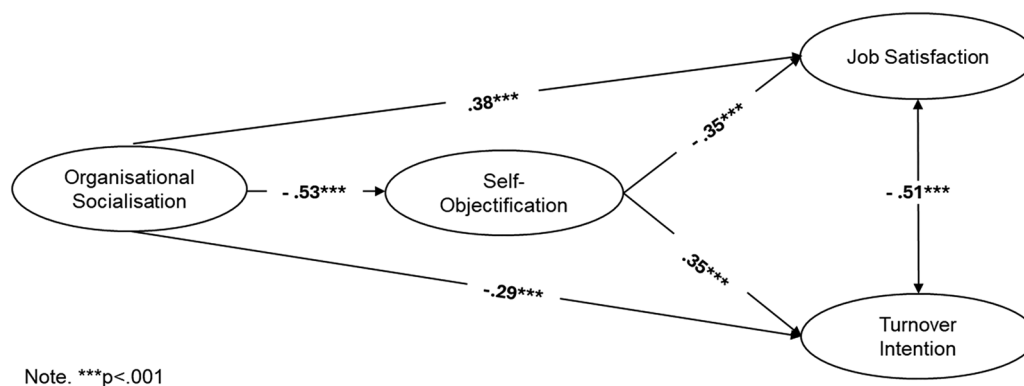


FIGURE 2 | SEM path diagram results.

individual's transition into the workplace but also throughout their entire experience within the organisation. During all stages of the socialisation process, it is important to adopt strategies to assist all employees in becoming full members. This role transition should not only apply to newcomers but also to employees who have been in the organisation for years (Levine and Moreland 1994) and who, for various reasons, may find themselves in a marginal position within the organisation or workgroup. For these employees, re-socialisation could prevent the desire to leave the organisation or high levels of stress, with positive consequences for the company's success as well. Among the resources that organisations can use to facilitate socialisation (Saks and Gruman 2012), interventions aimed at promoting teamwork can be particularly useful. As Levine and Moreland emphasised (Levine and Moreland 1994; Moreland and Levine 2014), positive relationships with colleagues not only help employees perform the tasks required by their job but also foster group cohesion and identification with the organisation. The results of our study suggest that adopting strategies to enhance employees' skills, increase similarity among colleagues, and strengthen the psychological bond with the organisation can help individuals feel integrated on multiple levels rather than merely as a tool that passively carries out their work.

This study has several limitations. From a methodological point of view, as a cross-sectional study, conclusions about the causality of the relationships between the examined variables are not allowed. Therefore, future research should adopt a longitudinal design, which would also facilitate the capture of the temporal evolution of organisational socialisation processes (Levine and Moreland 1994; Moreland and Levine 2014). Additionally, all variables were assessed using self-report measures, meaning that data on individuals' experiences were gathered from a single source. Future studies could benefit from using multi-informant approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Regarding the theoretical aspects considered, the study did not collect information on the characteristics or types of work activities performed by participants nor on other potential sources of objectification, such as superiors or colleagues (Baldissarri et al. 2022). This limitation exposed our study to the risk of over-inflating the results, as the associations between organisational socialisation and self-objectification might be reduced by controlling the structural sources of objectification, such as repetitiveness, monotony and fragmentation of work activities (Andrighetto, Baldissarri, and Volpato 2017; Baldissarri et al. 2017b). Future studies should

consider both the risk and protective factors of self-objectification within a single model, thus allowing for a more accurate evaluation of the associations between these factors and indicators of employee adjustment and well-being.

7 | Conclusions

In the current economic and social landscape, marked by rapid changes and significant uncertainty in the workplace, it is essential for researchers, institutions and organisations to understand how to promote employee well-being. This need arises from the profound impact of work on various aspects of people's lives. Unfortunately, research has shown that objectification is a widespread issue in work environments (e.g., Belmi and Schroeder 2021), and that workers face numerous stressors that negatively affect their well-being (Eurofound 2024; Koutsimani et al. 2019). In this context, it is crucial to recognise that self-objectification can be mitigated by improving the quality of the organisational environment. As this area remains underexplored in socio-psychological research, further investigation is necessary. This line of inquiry may provide insights into how to enhance work environments by mitigating self-objectification at work and, in turn, enhancing the well-being of individuals, organisations and societies.

Author Contributions

M.M.: conceptualization, formal analysis, methodology, visualisation, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing. S.L.: conceptualization, investigation, formal analysis, methodology, writing – review and editing, supervision. L.A.: conceptualization, writing – review and editing, supervision. M.T.: conceptualization, writing – review and editing. S.P.: conceptualization, writing – review and editing, supervision.

Acknowledgments

Open access publishing facilitated by Università degli Studi Gabriele d'Annunzio Chieti Pescara, as part of the Wiley - CRUI-CARE agreement.

Ethics Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration and psychological research guidelines. All participants gave informed consent to participate in the study, which was approved by the University Ethics Committee.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be shared upon reasonable request.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.

Appendix A

Organisational Socialisation Questionnaire (See Livi et al. 2018 for All Items)

The Organisational Socialisation Questionnaire consisted of 18 items on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree), focusing on the outcomes of the organisational socialisation process in relation to the levels of competence, acceptance by colleagues, and identification with the organisation achieved by the organisation’s members. For each dimension, the items are formulated based on three roles described in Levine and Moreland’s model (Levine and Moreland 1994; Moreland and Levine 1984, 2014): full member, marginal member and newcomer. Specifically, for each of these roles, two items measured competence, two measured acceptance and two measured identification. Although the measure was used in previous studies considering a general dimension of organisational socialisation (Livi et al. 2018; 18 items), in the present study, the unidimensional structure of the measure was not confirmed (Model 1 in Table A1). Additionally, three-factor models (Models 2 and 3 in Table A1) or a factorial model in which the items loaded on both the three dimensions of organisational socialisation (competence, acceptance and identification) and the three roles (full member, marginal member and newcomer) (Model 4 in Table A1) did not show adequate fit indices.

TABLE A1 | CFA models for organisational socialisation.

	χ^2 (df)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1: One factor (organisational socialisation)	1117.056 (135)***	0.475	0.405	0.168	0.159
Model 2: Three factors (competence, acceptance, identification)	1036.313 (132)***	0.516	0.439	0.163	0.173
Model 3: Three factors (full-member, marginal member, newcomer)	649.561 (132)***	0.723	0.679	0.123	0.120
Model 4: Cross-loadings model ^a	290.854 (111)***	0.904	0.867	0.079	0.066

*** $p < 0.001$.

^aThe modification indices indicated an adequate fit when covarying residuals of two items from both the competence and newcomer factors: $\chi^2_{(109)} = 239.022$, $p = 0.001$; CFI = 0.930; TLI = 0.902; RMSEA = 0.068; SRMR = 0.057. This slight deviation from the theoretical model may be attributed to the small sample size relative to the construct’s multidimensionality.

Self-Objectification Scale (Baldissarri et al. 2017a)

Self-objectification was measured using the Baldissarri et al. (2017a) scale that assesses workers’ perceptions of being similar to an instrument (four items: machine, tool, instrument, thing) or a human being (four items: individual, person, human being, subject). Participants responded to each item using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = not at all to 7 = extremely). CFA showed that a two-factor correlated model had inadequate fit indices (Model 2 in Table A2). In fact, one item from the factor measuring the perception of being similar to a human (item ‘subject’) had factor loadings below 0.40 (this item was excluded from subsequent analyses), and the two dimensions (instrumentality and humanity) had a covariance of -0.857 ($p < 0.001$). Alternative models were then evaluated. The results indicated that the items did not exhibit a unidimensional structure (Model 1 in Table A2). However, fit indices for the hierarchical factor model (Model 3 in Table A2), where a higher-level factor (self-objectification) explains the relationship between the two dimensions of instrumentality and humanity, were adequate.

TABLE A2 | CFA models for self-objectification.

	χ^2 (df)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1: One factor (self-objectification)	198.724 (20)***	0.869	0.816	0.186	0.077
Model 2: Two factors (instrumentality and denial of humanity)	95.876 (19)***	0.944	0.917	0.125	0.062
Model 3: Hierarchical factor model (specific factors: instrumentality and denial of humanity; global factor: self-objectification)	39.600 (13)***	0.979	0.966	0.089	0.035

*** $p < 0.001$.