

# Are “job hoppers” trapped in hedonic treadmills? Effects of career orientations on newcomers' attitude trajectories

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Are “job hoppers” trapped in hedonic treadmills? Effects of career orientations on newcomers' attitude trajectories

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## Summary

Joining a new organization to change jobs is an influential event in an employee's career. Thus, inter-organizational job changes have sparked growing scholarly interest, especially in the temporal dynamics involved in detaching from organizations and adapting to new ones. While it is widely accepted that employees adapt differently to job changes, the influence of employees' career orientations on changes in job attitudes has not yet been considered. This is surprising given that a key difference between self-centered and organization-centered career orientations is a positive attitude toward job changes. Building on hedonic adaptation, we examined how career orientations influence changes in job satisfaction and turnover intention throughout a job change. We compared self-centered and organization-centered employees using random coefficient modeling on two longitudinal data sets with voluntary job changers. Our results illustrate that self-centered career orientations foster a stronger decline in job satisfaction with the new employer, as well as a larger increase in turnover intention, than organization-centered career orientations. In contrast, employees with organization-centered career orientations experienced an upward trend in job satisfaction toward the end of the first year. Our findings offer important implications for research on the determinants of job attitude trajectories when individuals join a new organization.

## KEYWORDS

career orientation, employer change, job satisfaction, longitudinal research, turnover intention

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Job changes are considered influential events in people's careers (Dokko & Chudzikowski, 2020) that require detachment from one organization and adaptation to a new organization (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007). While changing employers is a common transition in employees' careers, some individuals have a more positive attitude toward job changes than others (Arthur et al., 1999; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). This is particularly evident in employees' career

orientations, which describe individuals' attitudes and values toward career-related issues such as career paths and mobility (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009). Compared with organization-centered career orientations, self-centered career orientations are characterized by a more positive attitude toward job changes (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). This raises the important question of whether individuals' career orientations affect their reactions to job changes. Are employees who view their career development as independent from

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their employers and who take more ownership of their careers better able to detach from and adapt to organizations because of their positive appraisal of their capacity to make such a career transition?

While detachment and adaptation in the context of job changes can be studied in various ways, we focus on the dynamics of job satisfaction and turnover intention because they represent the two most frequently studied reactions to job changes (Rubenstein et al., 2018; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Indeed, changes in satisfaction over time have attracted considerable theoretical and empirical attention regarding *adaptation* to meaningful life events (e.g., a job change; Boswell et al., 2005), whereas the development of turnover intention still represents the strongest indicator of employees' voluntary *detachment* from a current employer (Rubenstein et al., 2018). In their article on hedonic adaptation, Brickman and Campbell (1971) argued that individuals are trapped in a hedonic treadmill as they adapt to positive life changes. Satisfaction typically peaks following a positive life event but subsequently falls back to dispositional baseline levels. While this idea has received empirical support with regard to job changes (Boswell et al., 2005), research on how job satisfaction changes with tenure has yielded conflicting evidence (Bedeian et al., 1992; Dobrow Riza et al., 2018). Thus, some scholars have argued that people may react differently to job changes and that the pattern of adaptation and detachment following a job change may be more nuanced than previously understood (e.g., Zhou et al., 2021).

In the research presented here, we argue that individuals' career orientation may influence detachment from and adaptation to organizations. Career orientations reflect the way individuals view and approach their career and thus constitute an essential driving force behind their career choices and behavior (Briscoe et al., 2006; Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffelbach, 2009). Thus, it is conceivable that the processes of detachment and adaptation involved in job changes may unfold differently depending on the "readiness" with which such career changes are embraced. In line with the key distinction in the literature, we juxtapose *organization-centered* and *self-centered* career orientations (Dodan et al., 2018; Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffelbach, 2009; Grote & Hall, 2013; Hirschi & Koen, 2021). Employees with an organization-centered career orientation consider the organization to be central to their career needs or goals, such as job security and internal promotions (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). In contrast, employees with self-centered career orientations are more independent and manage their career largely by themselves with the readiness to cross organizational boundaries (e.g., Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996). Since these careers are often associated with greater career mobility, they have created the proverbial image of employees turning into "job hoppers" (e.g., Meister, 2012).

Building on research on job satisfaction dynamics (Bedeian et al., 1992; Boswell et al., 2005; Dobrow Riza et al., 2018), we propose that individuals with self-centered career orientations show a pronounced pattern of hedonic adaptation (e.g., Headey & Wearing, 1992; Lykken & Tellegen, 1996). Self-centered employees may be quicker to notice the pleasant aspects of a new job because they are more willing and able to adjust to new work environments

(Gubler et al., 2014; Hall, 2002). However, as normalization sets in, self-centered employees may quickly return to their baseline levels of satisfaction. They may shift away their attention from a new job's benefits and wonder whether the grass is greener elsewhere, fostering also an increase in turnover intention. We further argue that organization-centered employees may escape the hedonic treadmill and benefit from an increase in job satisfaction over time, as they value the long-term benefits of remaining with a single employer, such as organizational career management, job security, and regular pay increases (Bedeian et al., 1992). The anticipation of these benefits may also prevent a substantial increase in turnover intention. To test our hypotheses, we conducted two longitudinal studies of job changers' attitudes as they detach from one organization and adapt to a new one.

An in-depth understanding of individual differences in temporal dynamics of work attitudes in a job change process contributes to the literature in several ways. First, our research responds to recent calls suggesting that longitudinal research is essential to our understanding of careers (Dobrow Riza & Weisman, 2021). In particular, we contribute to the career literature by providing a novel dynamic perspective on how career orientations affect trajectories of work attitudes during an inter-organizational job change. Although job changes are considered important career events, research has largely neglected the role of career orientations in shaping the experience of changing to and entering a new organization over time. This is surprising given the positive attitude toward inter-organizational mobility is typically highlighted as a key distinguishing factor between self-centered and organization-centered career orientations (e.g., Arthur, 1994). This raises the important question of whether self-centered career orientations may facilitate detachment from and adaptation to an organization.

Second, our research also contributes to the *honeymoon-hangover* literature (Boswell et al., 2005, 2009) and to research on hedonic adaptation (Baumeister et al., 2012; Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999). We demonstrate that a job change can result in different job satisfaction trajectories depending on what the job change signifies in the context of an individual's career needs and goals. Although calls for a revision of adaptation theory have urged researchers to incorporate individual differences (Diener et al., 2006), only few studies have examined idiosyncratic job satisfaction trajectories during a job change process (Zhou et al., 2021). We consider career orientations to be a particularly compelling moderator because job transitions are an inextricable part of an individual's career (Dokko & Chudzikowski, 2020). Given that job changes are central to employees' careers, individuals' experiences of such transitions are likely moderated by their career orientations. Similarly, we contribute to the debate on how organizational tenure affects job satisfaction, which has emerged as a fundamental question for organizational behavior (e.g., Dobrow Riza et al., 2018). Scholars have proposed a range of explanations for job satisfaction dynamics as a function of organizational tenure, yielding conflicting evidence about the direction of the relationship between tenure and job satisfaction (Bedeian et al., 1992; Dobrow Riza et al., 2018). Considering these inconsistent

theories and findings, we propose that career orientations moderate the relationship between time and job satisfaction.

Finally, our research sheds light on how career orientations foster the within-person development of turnover intentions. Most previous career research has used a static, between-person approach to investigate the career orientation–turnover relationship (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009; Rodrigues et al., 2015), neglecting the dynamic nature of the turnover process. By studying organizational newcomers, we provide novel insights into how individuals' career orientations affect the development of turnover intention. Such insights are particularly useful because newcomers who leave early in their tenure create significant financial strains for organizations due to the expenses of recruitment, selection, and training (Griffeth & Hom, 2001).

### 1.1 | Job mobility: Job satisfaction and turnover intention dynamics

Job satisfaction and turnover intention are the two most frequently studied triggers of voluntary turnover behavior (Allen et al., 2005; Chen et al., 2011). Job satisfaction is defined as an employee's affective reaction to their job (Locke, 1976; Wanous & Lawler, 1972), whereas turnover intention describes an employee's intention to voluntarily leave their current employer. The general argument is that dissatisfaction with one's job triggers the intention to leave, which, in turn, predicts actual turnover (e.g., Griffeth et al., 2000; Mobley, 1977; Tett & Meyer, 1993). While most turnover research has focused on its antecedents, little is understood about how turnover itself shapes the trajectories of attitudes and behavioral intentions (Hom et al., 2017).

Boswell et al. (2005, 2009) found that turnover is likely to stimulate an initial peak and subsequent decline in job satisfaction, a phenomenon that has been labeled the honeymoon–hangover effect. The novelty of a new employment situation and high employer inducements may lead to an increase in job satisfaction at the beginning of employment (i.e., honeymoon). However, when employees become more settled over time, job satisfaction subsequently declines again (i.e., hangover) as the situation normalizes and employees' appraisals become more realistic (Louis, 1980). This pattern has emerged from previous research on individual's adaptation to changes in life events. The notion that people react positively or negatively to life events (e.g., winning the lottery or losing a loved one) but quickly adapt to dispositional, pre-event baseline levels of satisfaction has been proposed under various labels, including the hedonic treadmill (Brickman & Campbell, 1971), set point (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996), and hedonic adaptation (Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999). In the context of job changes, studies have provided evidence that job satisfaction increases following a job change (Boswell et al., 2005, 2009; Latzke et al., 2016; Rigotti et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2021) and then decreases as an employee's tenure lengthens (Dobrow Riza et al., 2018; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Valero & Hirschi, 2019; Zhou et al., 2017).

While hedonic adaptation suggests a decline in job satisfaction over time, job experience models (e.g., Katz, 1980) propose instead an increase in job satisfaction with organizational tenure (Bedeian et al., 1992). Tenure is assumed to affect how particular job features combine to positively influence job satisfaction (Katz & Van Maanen, 1977). Employees with longer tenure have accrued benefits from their time with an organization and may thus experience greater opportunities regarding security, promotion, salary progression, and status with the employer, all of which are linked to job satisfaction (Hunt & Saul, 1975; Ng & Feldman, 2010). Indeed, early studies in organizational behavior indicate a positive relationship between tenure and job satisfaction (e.g., Hulin & Smith, 1965; Hunt & Saul, 1975). In the research presented here, we integrate job attitude research (Boswell et al., 2005; Katz, 1980) with career theorizing (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009; Hirschi & Koen, 2021) to suggest that career orientations may lead to differential patterns of job satisfaction and turnover intention over time.

### 1.2 | Organization-centered versus self-centered career orientations

By focusing on career orientations, we adopt a subjective approach to careers. Career orientations reflect individuals' attitudes, needs, and values toward career-related issues, such as career paths, mobility, security, and advancement (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009). Career orientations are fairly stable attitudes and develop relatively early in life at the intersection of individual dispositions and contextual factors such as social background and labor market circumstances (Rodrigues et al., 2013, 2019). They consist of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, Conway, & Guest, 2009) that individuals use as a frame of reference to evaluate their work situations (Briscoe et al., 2006; Tschopp et al., 2014). In this regard, career orientations have been found to influence important attitudinal and behavioral outcomes at work (e.g., Li et al., 2021; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019).

The most persistently suggested distinction of career orientations is likely the one between *organization-centered* and *self-centered* career orientations (e.g., Doden et al., 2018; Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009; Grote & Hall, 2013; Hirschi & Koen, 2021; Li et al., 2021). Employees with an organization-centered career orientation prioritize loyalty and security and are characterized by low mobility aspirations and a positive attitude toward organizational career management (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009). Career progress is assumed to be linear (Levinson, 1978; Super, 1957), reflected in progression within the firm's hierarchy and a continuous increase in status and earnings up until retirement (Lazear, 1981). Although organization-centered career paths are expected to include relatively few job changes, organization-centered individuals may also choose to leave their jobs when their career needs are not met (Gerber et al., 2012).

In light of economic and societal changes, scholars have proposed a historical shift from the “traditional” path of organization-centered

careers to more “contemporary” self-centered career paths across multiple organizations (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). However, despite the push for more job mobility in recent decades, there is disagreement as to whether frequent job changes represent a dominant career pattern in contemporary society (e.g., Arthur et al., 1999; Grote, 2009; Ituma & Simpson, 2006) and, instead, empirical evidence suggests that organization-centered careers remain widespread (Biemann et al., 2012; Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009; Guan et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010).

In self-centered careers, individuals focus less on job security and instead take more personal responsibility for their own career development and employability, which may involve high job mobility across organizations (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Individuals with self-centered career orientations are also more proactive (Seibert et al., 2001) and more inclined to favor career self-management (De Vos & Soens, 2008; Hirschi & Koen, 2021), which enables them to flexibly adjust to their environment to meet their personal career goals (e.g., Hall, 1996; Sturges et al., 2005). We acknowledge that self-centered career orientations have emerged in the literature in the form of different constructs, such as protean (Hall, 1996), boundary-less (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), independent (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009), and customized/balanced career orientation (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009; Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). However, given that the focus is on the *self* (vs. the organization) in different conceptualizations of self-centered careers (Grote & Hall, 2013; Hirschi & Koen, 2021) and that there is a lack of consensus on the distinctiveness of these conceptualizations (e.g., Hirschi & Koen, 2021; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019), we focus—in line with previous research—on the most common distinction in the literature between organization-centered and self-centered career orientations (e.g., Doden et al., 2018; Hirschi & Koen, 2021; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019).

### 1.3 | Effects of career orientations on job satisfaction trajectories

Although employees' reactions to a voluntary job change typically follow the honeymoon–hangover pattern (Boswell et al., 2005), research on hedonic adaptation has shown that people react differently to the same circumstances (Lucas, 2007; Lucas et al., 2003) and that organizational tenure exhibits contradictory relationships with job satisfaction (e.g., Bedeian et al., 1992; Dobrow Riza et al., 2018). Given that individuals may evaluate job changes according to their unique career expectations and values, it is plausible to expect that career orientations could explain different trajectories in job satisfaction.

We hypothesize that self-centered employees experience the pattern of hedonic adaptation. Several aspects of the self-centered career orientation are likely to suggest this pattern: Individuals with self-centered career orientations positively appraise their capacity to make such a career transition (DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011), are more inclined to career self-management (De Vos & Soens, 2008), and value negotiable attributes of their new job more (Gerber et al., 2012;

Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). Self-centered employees are often characterized by high psychological mobility (i.e., the capacity to make career transitions), which may help them to adjust more quickly to new environments (Gubler et al., 2014; Hall, 2002). Indeed, self-centered employees are more proactive (Seibert et al., 2001), and proactive behaviors (e.g., feedback and information seeking, and networking) are positively linked to successful newcomer socialization outcomes, including higher initial job satisfaction (e.g., Morrison, 1993b; Saks et al., 2011).

Moreover, self-centered employees may perceive a job change as a successful career self-management behavior in itself (Sturges et al., 2002; Weng & McElroy, 2010) because the new job constitutes an immediate improvement compared to the previous one. Improvements especially in valued aspects such as flexible work arrangements (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014), financial rewards (Segers et al., 2008), and skill development to enhance employability (Gerber et al., 2012) can be achieved immediately with a job change since they are largely negotiated at the hiring stage (e.g., Marks & Harold, 2011). Such improvements are also often the reason for undertaking a job change in the first place, creating a positive contrast to the prior job situation (e.g., Louis, 1980), which may lead to a greater peak in job satisfaction following organizational entry. However, we expect that with increased tenure, self-centered employee's excitement dissipates, facilitating a subsequent decline in satisfaction to baseline levels (e.g., Boswell et al., 2005; Louis, 1980; Zhou et al., 2017). Indeed, gains in satisfaction are inevitably followed by adaptation (Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999) and self-centered newcomers may converge toward their attitudinal set points.

For employees with organization-centered career orientations, we expect trajectories more in line with job experience models, which suggest an increase in job satisfaction with organizational tenure (Bedeian et al., 1992; Katz, 1980). Individuals with organization-centered career orientations value organization-bounded benefits such as job security, loyalty, and organizational career management (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009). However, such job features are not explicitly salient at the beginning of employment, instead accumulating with tenure (Katz, 1980; Theodossiou & Vasileiou, 2007). For example, the probation period implies that there is no job security at the start of employment. With longer tenure, employees are more likely to acquire favorable treatment concerning possible redundancy as described by the first-in-last-out layoff principle (Bender & Sloane, 1999). Similarly, career advancement managed by the organization (i.e., promotions)—as valued by organization-centered employees—has been found to increase job satisfaction with accumulated tenure (Theodossiou & Zangelidis, 2009). The longer organization-centered employees remain with an organization, the more likely they are to anticipate the benefits they value, such as stability, job security, loyalty, and internal promotions (Katz, 1980; Katz & Van Maanen, 1977), which may provoke an increase in job satisfaction over time among organization-centered employees.

In summary, job satisfaction for employees with self-centered career orientation is likely to rise initially after entry, fall as they encounter organizational realities, and then stabilize at baseline levels.

For organization-centered employees, we anticipate flatter fluctuations in the initial honeymoon–hangover pattern and an upward trend of job satisfaction toward the end of the first year. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1.** Career orientations moderate the trend of job satisfaction, such that self-centered career orientations foster a higher peak of job satisfaction at organizational entry, a sharper fall after this period, and stabilization at lower levels of satisfaction compared to an organization-centered career orientations, which evoke fewer fluctuations in the initial honeymoon–hangover pattern and a general upward trend of job satisfaction.

#### 1.4 | Effects of career orientations on turnover intention trajectories

It is received wisdom that job satisfaction and turnover intention are tightly interlinked (e.g., Mobley, 1977; Tett & Meyer, 1993), and studies have also demonstrated links between intraindividual changes in job satisfaction and turnover intention (Chen et al., 2011; Tschopp et al., 2014). However, only a few studies have explicitly examined trajectories of turnover intentions as a function of a job change and found that turnover cognitions tend to increase in the months following organizational entry, mirroring the concurrent decrease in job satisfaction (Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Vandenberghe et al., 2011). Organizational tenure may engender a more realistic evaluation of the new work environment, and disillusioned newcomers may begin to suspect that other organizations could better fulfill their expectations. These dynamics are reflected in a withdrawal trend that emerges over time (Vandenberghe et al., 2011). Following the logic of the honeymoon–hangover pattern regarding job satisfaction (Boswell et al., 2005, 2009), it is conceivable that high turnover intention precedes a voluntary job change, drops after organizational entry, and increases again over time.

The readiness to cross organizational boundaries in the form of greater physical (i.e., transitions across organizations) and psychological mobility (i.e., the subjective appraisal of one's capacity to make career transitions; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) is a key conceptual characteristic of self-centered career orientations as opposed to organization-centered career orientations. Although self-centered career orientations have been linked to greater turnover intentions (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009; Rodrigues et al., 2015), it remains unclear *when* turnover intentions are likely to increase over time. Most prior research reflects a static approach that fails to capture the dynamic nature of the turnover process. Static research cannot reveal when and to what extent individuals with self-centered versus organization-centered career orientations develop turnover intentions.

We argue that individuals with self-centered career orientations will exhibit a stronger increase in turnover intention due to a more positive attitude toward job changes and independence (e.g., Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011). Indeed, self-centered

individuals often view their current organization as a stepping-stone to better employment positions elsewhere (Rousseau, 1990). They are more strongly inclined toward career self-management (De Vos & Soens, 2008; Sturges et al., 2005, 2010) in which changing employers can be viewed as an important career self-management strategy (e.g., Sturges et al., 2002). For example, self-centered employees develop stronger turnover intention compared to their organization-centered counterparts when their job satisfaction declines (Tschopp et al., 2014). In a similar vein, we argue that when the initial high of a new job wears off and self-centered newcomers encounter their job's realities, their turnover intentions may increase. Their independence may reinforce their readiness to act on the typical newcomer “reality shock,” fostering an increase in turnover intention over time (Vandenberghe et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2017).

The strong perception of psychological mobility of self-centered employees may also lead to perpetual career exploration activities (e.g., job search and networking; DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011). By exploring career options and investing in themselves, self-centered individuals tend to experience greater employability (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009), facilitating their movement in the labor market (DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011). Thus, besides potential push factors, extensive employment options may also “psychologically pull employees away from their current organization” (Maertz & Campion, 2004, p. 570), making them more prone to develop turnover intentions over time.

We further propose that individuals with organization-centered career orientations develop weaker turnover intentions than those with self-centered career orientations. As these employees seek job security with a single organization and internal career development, they may evaluate their goal progress within the organization in a more positive light over the first year and may be more likely to remain with their organization (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009; Tschopp et al., 2014). Organizations that potentially reward their employees with promotions and security in the future not only offer an emotional incentive to stay but also impose large opportunity costs on employees who leave (Tschopp et al., 2014; Weng & McElroy, 2012). Although organization-centered individuals may seek to continue their career elsewhere if their “career deal” is not met (Gerber et al., 2012), this is more likely to happen later in the employment relationship. Since they anticipate job security, loyalty, and organizational career management, organization-centered employees may have a positive view of their career with their organization and little desire to change employers in the first year of employment. In fact, organization-centered individuals have been shown to have longer organizational tenures than their self-centered counterparts (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009). Given the anticipation of future career benefits, we expect a slower growth curve in turnover intentions within the first year of employment among organization-centered employees.

In summary, turnover intention for individuals with self-centered career orientations is likely to decrease initially after entry into the new organization and then increase again as they encounter organizational realities and gauge new opportunities. For employees with

organization-centered orientations, we anticipate smaller fluctuations in turnover intention during the job change and a smaller increase in their turnover intention over time in the new job. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2.** Career orientations moderate the trend of turnover intention, such that employees with self-centered career orientations report a stronger decrease of turnover intention shortly after organizational entry and a stronger increase in turnover intention with the new employer than employees with organization-centered career orientations.

## 2 | STUDY 1

### 2.1 | Method

#### 2.1.1 | Procedure and sample

We collected longitudinal data on newcomers at eight medium-to-large organizations in Switzerland as part of a larger research project.<sup>1</sup> The human resource (HR) managers contacted 602 newcomers prior to organizational entry. Online surveys were administered to newcomers at five time points: on the first day (T1), at 6 weeks (T2), 3 months (T3), 6 months (T4), and 1 year after entry (T5). These time intervals were chosen based on previous theorizing in the socialization literature (e.g., Boswell et al., 2005). The timing and frequency of measurement points allowed us to better understand the pattern of job satisfaction and turnover intention consistent with the expected rate of attitudinal change from organizational entry through the first year of employment. Newcomers' attitudes are more likely to vary in the first 6 months of employment when they get to know their organization. Therefore, we set a greater number of measurement points within the first 6 months. Previous research has found that individuals reacted positively toward their new job in the first few months (at 3 months), but by 6 months, satisfaction levels had tapered off (Boswell et al., 2005, 2009).

At T1, 327 newcomers who reported to have changed jobs voluntarily completed the first survey (response rate = 54.3%). We received 262 responses for the second survey (80.1%), 218 for the third survey (83.2%), 186 for the fourth survey (85.3%), and 139 for the final survey (74.7%). Overall, 57.5% of all initial respondents at T1 dropped out of the study over the first year. To detect a potential attrition bias, we tested whether participants who dropped out differed in demographic (i.e., age and gender) or study variables from those in the final sample. The results of unpaired *t*-tests revealed no significant differences except for age: Employees who dropped out were on average 2.7 years younger than in the final sample ( $t(322) = -2.51, p = .013$ ). These results allowed us to confidently perform longitudinal analyses despite the sample attrition (Goodman & Blum, 1996). Among the final 327 participants, we only included those

who had occupational tenure before organizational entry to ensure that they experienced a job change within their occupation. The final sample consisted of 257 employees, of which 63.0% were male and 48.1% had a university degree or equivalent. On average, employees were 36.5 years old ( $SD = 9.4$ ) and had an occupational tenure of 12.9 years ( $SD = 9.4$ ).

### 2.1.2 | Measures

#### *Job satisfaction and prior job satisfaction*

To assess job satisfaction, we used the three-item measure from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1979).<sup>2</sup> A sample item is "All in all, I am satisfied with my job at [company name]." We reworded the reverse-coded item of this measure as "In general, I like my job at [company name]." The items were measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Job satisfaction was measured at organizational entry ( $\alpha_{T1} = .93$ ), 6 weeks ( $\alpha_{T2} = .92$ ), 3 months ( $\alpha_{T3} = .93$ ), 6 months ( $\alpha_{T4} = .94$ ), and 1 year ( $\alpha_{T5} = .96$ ) after organizational entry. Job satisfaction with the prior job was assessed at organizational entry by rewording the items from the same questionnaire and was denoted as T0 in our analysis. An example item is "All in all, I was satisfied with my job at my previous employer" ( $\alpha_{T0} = .89$ ).

#### *Turnover intention*

We measured turnover intention using a three-item measure adapted from Konovsky and Cropanzano (1991). Items were "I intend to look for a job outside of [company name] within the next year," "I intend to remain with [company name] indefinitely" (reverse-coded), and "I often think about quitting my job at [company name]." Items were measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In line with Cole and Bruch (2006), we refrained from using the reverse-coded item of this measure because they reported an attenuated alpha coefficient. We replaced it with the positive connoted item "I think I should leave [company name]." Turnover intention was measured at 6 weeks ( $\alpha_{T2} = .94$ ), 3 months ( $\alpha_{T3} = .93$ ), 6 months ( $\alpha_{T4} = .95$ ), and 1 year ( $\alpha_{T5} = .97$ ) after organizational entry.

#### *Career orientation*

To assess organization-centered and self-centered orientations, we used the career orientation measure developed by Guest and Conway (2004) and validated by Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, and Staffebach (2009). The measure was originally designed by Guest and Conway (2004) to reflect the characteristics of the organization-centered and self-centered career orientations (Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, Conway, & Guest, 2009). Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, and Staffebach (2009) demonstrated that the responses to the items cluster four career orientations along the organization-centered versus self-centered career. More specifically, they found two organization-centered career orientations (loyalty- and promotion-oriented) and

<sup>1</sup>Further information of our data sets can be requested from the first author.

<sup>2</sup>The full list of the items of the measures can be found in Appendix S1.

two self-centered career orientations (independent and disengaged). Indeed, this measure has often been used to contrast the characteristics of the organization-centered versus self-centered career orientations (Doden et al., 2018).

Based on the question, “Looking ahead at your work life, which of the following would you choose?”, participants chose between two opposing statements on a 4-point scale. An example of two statements building one item was “Managing your own career” versus “Having your organization manage your career for you.” Based on previous research, we followed a two-step approach to assign individuals to organization-centered or self-centered career orientations, as initially suggested by Guest and Conway (2004). We first assigned employees to one of the four validated career orientation types by conducting a confirmatory latent class analysis (Finch & Bronk, 2011). Based on this established procedure (Gerber et al., 2012; Tschopp et al., 2014), we clustered the two organization-centered and two self-centered career orientations respectively forming a single binary variable of organization-centered versus self-centered career orientations (e.g., Doden et al., 2018). This clustering allowed us to distinguish the underlying higher-level concept of organization- versus self-centered career orientations. The self-centered career orientation comprised 44.0% of the participants, while 56.0% had an organization-centered career orientation.

#### Control variables

In line with best-practice recommendations, we only included control variables that were justified by strong theoretical considerations in order to maximize statistical power and produce the most interpretable results (e.g., Becker, 2005; Becker et al., 2016; Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). Theoretically, we have strong reasons to believe that including *occupational tenure* eliminates alternative explanations of our findings. Human capital theory (Becker, 1964) suggests that certain individual characteristics, such as organizational tenure and work experience (e.g., occupational tenure), positively affect work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction) because accumulated knowledge grants individuals access to better jobs and more lucrative pay (e.g., Strober, 1990). Thus, individuals with longer occupational tenure could have a stronger peak in their job satisfaction trajectory after joining a new organization, which, in turn, may constitute a greater incentive to remain with a single organization. Consistent with previous research on newcomers' job satisfaction dynamics and this research's theoretical framework, we included occupational tenure (in years and months) as a control (e.g., Boswell et al., 2009; Zhou et al., 2017, 2021). In line with best-practice recommendations for statistical control, we ran analyses with and without the control variable (e.g., Becker et al., 2016). Notably, the significance of the results did not change when excluding the control variable from the analysis.

### 2.1.3 | Statistical analysis

The data had a two-level structure with repeated measures (Level 1) nested within individuals (Level 2), requiring random coefficient modeling for hypothesis testing (Bliese & Ployhart, 2002). The within-

individual repeated measures (i.e., job satisfaction and turnover intention) were analyzed at Level 1. The between-individual control variables and the moderator variable were analyzed at Level 2 and grand mean-centered, except dummy variables. We used the nlme package (Pinheiro et al., 2022) of the statistical software program R Version 3.5.1 (R Development Core Team 3.0.1., 2018) to perform the analyses.

## 2.2 | Results and discussion

The descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations for the variables in Study 1 are presented in Table 1. Prior to testing our hypotheses, we tested the measurement invariance of our dependent variables across time to ensure that any identified changes did not reflect changes in the meaning or measurement of the constructs (Chan, 1998). Following Chan (1998), we compared unconstrained measurement models (i.e., models with no constraints on the factor loadings and intercepts of the items administered over time) with constrained measurement models (i.e., models with equality constraints for factor loadings and intercepts over time). Changes in the comparative fit index between the unconstrained and constrained models did not exceed .01, justifying the assumption of measurement invariance (Hirschfeld & Von Brachel, 2014; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Next, we examined the amount of systematic within- and between-individual variances in the dependent and repeatedly measured variables of job satisfaction and turnover intention with intercept-only models. The intercept-only models supported the use of random coefficient modeling by showing that 83.2% of the total variance in job satisfaction was within individuals (16.8% between individuals), while 42.3% of the total variance in turnover intention was within individuals (57.7% between individuals).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the job satisfaction trend is moderated by employees' career orientations. Employees with self-centered career orientations were expected to experience a higher peak in job satisfaction at organizational entry, a stronger subsequent decrease, and a stabilization at a lower job satisfaction level. In contrast, employees with organization-centered career orientations were expected to experience flatter fluctuations at the beginning of the new job and a recovery of job satisfaction levels later in the employment relationship. To test this hypothesis, we first included the intercept, a linear term, a quadratic term, and a cubic term in our model together with the control variable (Model 1). Table 2 shows a significant intercept ( $\gamma_{intercept} = 4.56, p < .001$ ), linear term ( $\gamma_{linear} = 2.03, p < .001$ ), quadratic term ( $\gamma_{quadratic} = -0.78, p < .001$ ), and cubic term ( $\gamma_{cubic} = 0.08, p < .001$ ) of time for job satisfaction. In Model 2, we entered the interaction terms of career orientation and the linear, quadratic, and cubic terms of time. Whereas the interaction between career orientation and the linear term was not significant ( $\gamma_{linear} = 0.18, p = .118$ ), we found significant interactions between career orientation and the quadratic term ( $\gamma_{quadratic} = -0.12, p = .018$ ) and the cubic term ( $\gamma_{cubic} = 0.02, p = .010$ ). These results indicated diverging trajectories of job satisfaction for self-centered versus



**TABLE 1** Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of study variables (Study 1)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Occupational tenure	12.90	9.43	-										
2. Career orientation <sup>a</sup>	0.14	0.99	.16*	-									
3. Job satisfaction at prior organization	4.49	1.50	.08	-.00	-								
4. Job satisfaction (T1)	6.09	0.90	-.01	.09	.06	-							
5. Job satisfaction (T2)	5.95	1.01	-.01	-.02	.03	.61***	-						
6. Job satisfaction (T3)	6.04	0.97	.04	.06	.05	.58***	.68***	-					
7. Job satisfaction (T4)	5.72	1.27	.01	-.09	.13	.44***	.67***	.74***	-				
8. Job satisfaction (T5)	5.64	1.32	.06	.12	.07	.41***	.48***	.56***	.62***	-			
9. Turnover intention (T2)	1.56	1.12	-.10	-.02	-.02	-.44***	-.66***	-.60***	-.51***	-.32***	-		
10. Turnover intention (T3)	1.72	1.15	-.14	-.11	.02	-.48***	-.63***	-.68***	-.54***	-.38***	.73***	-	
11. Turnover intention (T4)	2.17	1.55	-.13	-.08	-.06	-.36***	-.52***	-.56***	-.71***	-.61***	.58***	.70***	-
12. Turnover intention (T5)	2.50	1.77	-.15	-.25*	-.04	-.34***	-.42***	-.56***	-.50***	-.72***	.43***	.58***	.69***

Note: N = 257, with pairwise deletion. Occupational tenure, career orientation, and job satisfaction at prior employer were measured at T1.

<sup>a</sup>Self-centered career orientation = -1; organization-centered career orientation = 1.

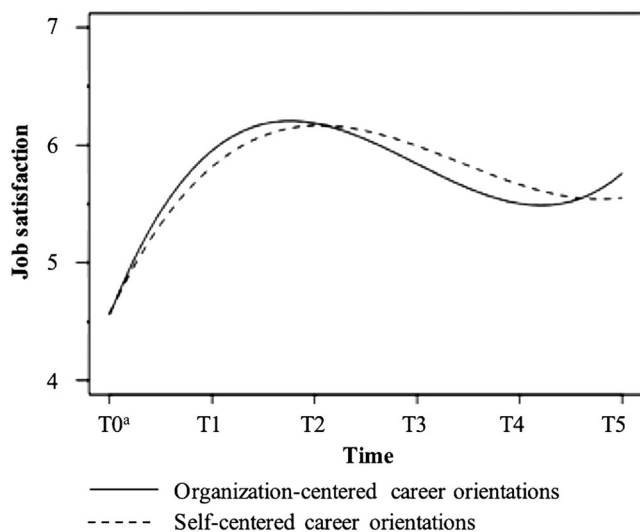
\*p < .05.

\*\*\*p < .001.

**TABLE 2** Random coefficient modeling results for job satisfaction and turnover intention (Study 1)

Variable	Job satisfaction				Turnover intention											
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2									
	γ	SE	t	p	γ	SE	t	p								
Intercept	4.56	0.08	54.44	<.001	4.56	0.08	53.97	<.001	1.54	0.08	19.57	<.001	1.53	0.08	19.53	<.001
Occupational tenure	-0.00	0.00	0.25	.806	0.00	0.00	0.27	.788	-0.00	0.00	-1.68	.095	0.00	0.00	1.68	.094
Career orientation	0.01	0.05	0.25	.800	-0.01	0.08	-0.09	.928	-0.04	0.08	-0.52	.604	-0.00	0.08	-0.09	.978
Linear	2.03	0.11	17.73	<.001	2.00	0.12	17.28	<.001	0.35	0.05	7.78	<.001	0.37	0.05	8.14	<.001
Quadratic	-0.78	0.05	-15.12	<.001	-0.75	0.05	-14.61	<.001								
Cubic	0.08	0.01	11.84	<.001	0.08	0.01	11.33	<.001								
Career orientation × Linear					0.18	0.12	1.57	.118					-0.10	0.05	-2.17	.030
Career orientation × Quadratic					-0.12	0.05	-2.37	.018								
Career orientation × Cubic					0.02	0.01	2.57	.010								
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup> <sub>n</sub>	.19				.19				.08				.10			

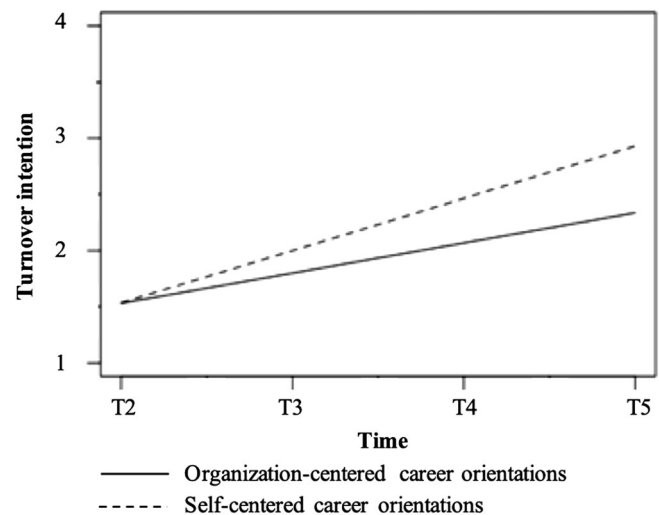
Note: Job satisfaction (N = 257, observations = 1116); turnover intention (N = 208, observations = 607).



**FIGURE 1** Job satisfaction trajectories for newcomers with self-centered versus organization-centered career orientations (Study 1). <sup>a</sup>T0 indicates job satisfaction with the previous employer measured at T1.

organization-centered career orientations. Figure 1 depicts the curvilinear trend, showing that job satisfaction first rose after entry, then dropped, and finally stabilized at a lower level for employees with self-centered career orientations. For employees with organization-centered career orientations, we found a similar initial pattern but with a recovery of job satisfaction toward the end of the first year, indicating a second increase. For a more detailed inspection, we calculated the trend of job satisfaction trajectories (i.e., simple slopes) at the different measurement time points for self-centered and organization-centered career orientations using the emmeans package in R (Lenth et al., 2022). The slopes were different at T2 (self-centered career orientations:  $b = 0.025$ ,  $SE = 0.067$ , 95% confidence interval [CI]  $[-0.107, 0.157]$ ; organization-centered career orientations:  $b = -0.157$ ,  $SE = 0.056$ , 95% CI  $[-0.267, -0.047]$ ;  $difference = 0.182$ ,  $SE = 0.088$ ,  $p = .038$ ) and at T5 (self-centered career orientations:  $b = 0.121$ ,  $SE = 0.210$ , 95% CI  $[-0.292, 0.533]$ ; organization-centered career orientations:  $b = 0.756$ ,  $SE = 0.177$ , 95% CI  $[0.408, 1.104]$ ;  $difference = -0.635$ ,  $SE = 0.275$ ,  $p = .021$ ). A full list of the slopes and slope differences can be found in Appendix S3. Overall, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported in Study 1.

Hypothesis 2 predicted a curvilinear effect of turnover intention, assuming a decline after organizational entry and an increase over the first year. However, as we did not measure turnover intention with the previous employer, we tested a linear effect in Study 1. We examined whether the linear positive trend for turnover intention after organizational entry is stronger for employees with self-centered career orientations than for those with organization-centered career orientations. In Model 1, we included the intercept, a linear term, and our control variable. Table 2 shows a significant intercept ( $\gamma_{intercept} = 1.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and linear term of time ( $\gamma_{linear} = 0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The interaction between career orientation and the linear



**FIGURE 2** Turnover intention trajectories for newcomers with self-centered versus organization-centered career orientations (Study 1)

term of time was entered in Model 2 and was significant ( $\gamma_{linear} = 0.10$ ,  $p = .030$ ). As Figure 2 illustrates, employees with self-centered career orientations demonstrate a stronger increase in turnover intention over the first year of employment compared with organization-centered employees. A more detailed inspection revealed that the turnover intention trend (i.e., slope) for self-centered career orientations was stronger ( $b = 0.465$ ,  $SE = 0.069$ , 95% CI  $[0.329, 0.600]$ ) than for organization-centered career orientations ( $b = 0.269$ ,  $SE = 0.058$ , 95% CI  $[0.155, 0.383]$ ), and the difference between the two slopes was significant ( $difference = 0.196$ ,  $SE = 0.090$ ,  $p = .030$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was partly confirmed in Study 1.

We calculated the effect sizes of the interaction effects with Cohen's  $f^2$  based on the pseudo- $R^2$  values (Cohen, 1988). The effects were small for both job satisfaction ( $f^2 = .001$ ) and turnover intention ( $f^2 = .013$ ), and the increase of total variance explained was 0.14% for job satisfaction and 1.39% for turnover intention. Although the identified effect sizes were small (Cohen, 1988), the moderating effects can be meaningful (Murphy & Russell, 2017). Running the analysis without the inclusion of our control variable did not change the pattern or significance of the effect sizes (job satisfaction:  $f^2 = .001$ ; turnover intention:  $f^2 = .013$ ), demonstrating the robustness of our findings (e.g., Becker et al., 2016).

In summary, we found in Study 1 that employees with self-centered career orientations followed the pattern of hedonic adaptation. Their job satisfaction increased immediately after organizational entry, subsequently decreased, and stabilized at a lower level by the end of the first year. Organization-centered employees exhibit a similar initial pattern of job satisfaction, beginning with the honeymoon-hangover pattern (Boswell et al., 2005), as do self-centered career individuals. However, in line with our propositions, satisfaction levels increased again between the fourth and fifth waves of measurement. This increase in satisfaction may support work experience models (e.g., Katz, 1980), suggesting that job satisfaction

increases as a result of benefits accrued with tenure, such as loyal working relationships, security, and status within the organization.

In line with Hypothesis 2, our findings reveal that turnover intention increases more rapidly for self-centered career individuals than for organization-centered employees. The stronger increase in turnover intention may support the predominant view of self-centered careers: Individuals are expected to change organizations more frequently and are less interested in long-term commitments with a single employer (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Moreover, our findings show that self-centered career orientations facilitate quicker detachment from organizations, suggesting that such orientation may fuel the job-hopping phenomenon.

### 3 | STUDY 2

To complement Study 1, we conducted a second study that captured a complete job change process from one employer to another. More specifically, Study 2 examined adaptation and detachment by tracking changes in job satisfaction and turnover intention before, during, and after the experience of a job change. In this study, we attempted to replicate the different trends in job satisfaction and turnover intention for employees with self-centered versus organization-centered career orientations. We thus aimed to provide a better understanding of how employees detach from their previous employer while accounting for pre-event levels of satisfaction and turnover intention.

#### 3.1 | Method

##### 3.1.1 | Procedure and sample

We collected longitudinal data across three time points from employees of various industries and occupations in Switzerland as part of a larger research project (footnote 1). We recruited participants from an online panel and selected them based on representative criteria (e.g., region, age, and gender). A total of 1479 employees completed the first online survey (T1). The subsequent surveys were distributed to individuals who participated in the previous survey. A total of 887 employees completed the survey 2.5 years later (T2; response rate = 60%), and 602 employees completed the third survey 3.5 years later (T3; response rate = 68%). Out of this sample, we selected those who changed jobs voluntarily between T1 and T2. The interval between T1 and T2 was selected to ensure a sufficient number of job changes among the participants. In total, 66 employees (54.5% women) changed jobs voluntarily between T1 and T2. Although the sample of job changers significantly differed from the overall sample in gender composition ( $\chi^2(1) = 5.360, p = .021$ ), age ( $t(1477) = 2.467, p = .014$ ), prior organizational tenure ( $t(1475) = 2.411, p < .001$ ), initial job satisfaction ( $t(1473) = 5.312, p < .001$ ), and turnover intention ( $t(1473) = -6.024, p < .001$ ), it did not differ in the distribution of self-centered versus organization-centered career orientations ( $\chi^2(1)$

$= 0.548, p = .459$ ). With a mean age of 36.0 years ( $SD = 10.6$ ) and a mean prior organizational tenure of 4.7 years ( $SD = 4.46$ ), job changers were on average younger and had worked fewer years for their previous employer. These demographic tendencies and the lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intention at T1 are typical for job changers (e.g., Griffeth et al., 2000; Rubenstein et al., 2018). Almost one-third (29.3%) of our final sample had a university degree or equivalent.

##### 3.1.2 | Measures

###### *Job satisfaction*

In Study 2, we measured job satisfaction at T1, T2, and T3 with the single item “How satisfied are you with your job?”. We used this short measure because the study was part of a larger data collection effort.<sup>3</sup> The response options ranged from 1 (*not satisfied at all*) to 10 (*extremely satisfied*). Assessing overall job satisfaction using a one-item measure is a common practice in applied psychology (Chen et al., 2011; Judge & Hurst, 2008) and is comparably valid as multi-item scale measures (Wanous et al., 1997; Wanous & Hudy, 2001).

###### *Turnover intention*

Turnover intention was measured at T1, T2, and T3 with two items originally developed by Guest and Conway (2004). The first item (“How likely is it that you will voluntarily leave this organization in the following year?”) was measured with a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 4 (*very likely*). The second item represented four statements expressing increasing levels of turnover intention, from which respondents had to choose the one that fit them best (e.g., “I am currently in the process of trying to leave this job”). Again, we used this measure because the present study was part of a larger research project.

###### *Career orientation*

Employees' career orientations were measured at T1, as in Study 1. The self-centered career orientation was represented by 51.5% of the participants (48.5% had an organization-centered career orientation).

###### *Control variables*

In Study 2, we only controlled for job tenure at the new job (in months). This was because the specific timing of the job change concerning job satisfaction was unclear as we asked participants at T2 whether they had changed organizations between the first and second waves of measurement. The different time lags between organizational entry and T2 among participants could have influenced the pattern of job attitudes (Boswell et al., 2005). Notably, the significance of the results did not change when we excluded the control variable from the analysis.

<sup>3</sup>A data transparency table of Study 2 can be found in Appendix S2.

**TABLE 3** Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of study variables (Study 2)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Tenure with new organization	1.03	0.67	-						
2. Career orientation <sup>a</sup>	-0.03	1.01	-.12	-					
3. Job satisfaction (T1)	6.49	2.43	-.12	.21	-				
4. Job satisfaction (T2)	7.52	1.79	-.03	-.13	.25*	-			
5. Job satisfaction (T3)	7.34	1.99	.02	.01	.36**	.30*	-		
6. Turnover intention (T1)	2.38	0.97	.21	-.26*	-.65***	-.14	-.21	-	
7. Turnover intention (T2)	1.82	0.88	.07	.06	-.04	-.59***	-.23	.10	-
8. Turnover intention (T3)	1.79	0.82	-.02	-.05	-.34**	-.23	-.52***	.34**	.50***

Note:  $N = 66$ . Career orientations were measured at T1. Tenure with new organization was measured at T2.

<sup>a</sup>Self-centered career orientation = -1; organization-centered career orientation = 1.

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### 3.1.3 | Statistical analysis

As the data had a two-level structure with repeated measures (Level 1) nested within individuals (Level 2), we again used random coefficient modeling and followed the same procedure as in Study 1 (e.g., Bliese, 2009).

## 3.2 | Results and discussion

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of the study variables are presented in Table 3. The intercept-only model supported the use of hierarchical linear modeling as 74.1% of the total variance in job satisfaction and 76.7% of the variance in turnover intention were within individuals (Bliese & Ployhart, 2002).

We first tested Hypothesis 1, which predicted that the job satisfaction of employees with self-centered career orientations would rise following a job change but falls to its set points after employees had settled in. In contrast, the trajectory of employees with an organization-centered career orientation was expected to be less cyclic, suggesting that these employees value benefits associated with an increase in tenure. Based on the study design of Study 2 with three measurement points, it was only possible to examine linear and quadratic (but no cubic) relationships, enabling a test of an inverted U-shape trend. We first included the intercept, a linear term, and a quadratic term in our model together with the control variables (Model 1). Table 4 shows a significant intercept ( $\gamma_{intercept} = 6.47, p < .001$ ), linear term ( $\gamma_{linear} = 1.64, p = .005$ ), and quadratic term ( $\gamma_{quadratic} = -0.60, p = .022$ ) of time for job satisfaction. In Model 2, we entered the interaction terms of career orientation and the linear and quadratic terms of time. The interactions between career orientation and the linear and quadratic terms of time were significant and marginally significant, respectively ( $\gamma_{linear} = -1.21, p = .036$ ;  $\gamma_{quadratic} = 0.49, p = .060$ ), indicating different trajectories of job satisfaction over time for employees with self-centered versus organization-centered career orientations. As shown in Figure 3, the job satisfaction trajectory of employees with self-centered career orientations followed an inverted

U-shape with a higher peak in job satisfaction after changing from one employer to another (between T1 and T2) and a decline toward T3, whereas employees with organization-centered career orientations showed a positive and almost linear trend in job satisfaction. A closer inspection of the job satisfaction trends (i.e., slopes) at the different measurement time points identified a significant difference at T1 (self-centered career orientations:  $b = 2.800, SE = 0.790, 95\% CI [1.240, 4.360]$ ; organization-centered career orientations:  $b = 0.384, SE = 0.821, 95\% CI [-1.240, 2.010]$ ;  $difference = 2.42, SE = 1.14, p = .036$ ) but not at T2 and T3 (see Appendix S3 for full results).<sup>4</sup> This further partially supports Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 predicted a positive trend for turnover intention after organizational entry that should be stronger for employees with self-centered career orientations than for those with organization-centered career orientations. In Study 2, we measured turnover intention at both employers. Turnover intention was expected to first decline (i.e., to fall from a high level at the previous employer to a lower level at the new employer) and then rise again, following the pattern of an inverted U-shape. We further hypothesized fewer fluctuations for organization-centered career orientations. In Model 1, we included the intercept, a linear term, and a quadratic term together with our control variable. Table 4 shows a significant intercept ( $\gamma_{intercept} = 2.37, p < .001$ ), linear term ( $\gamma_{linear} = -0.83, p < .001$ ), and quadratic term of time ( $\gamma_{linear} = 0.27, p = .015$ ). In Model 2, we entered the interaction between career orientation and the linear term of time, which was significant ( $\gamma_{linear} = 0.51, p = .035$ ). The interaction with the quadratic term of time was marginally significant ( $\gamma_{quadratic} = -0.21, p = .060$ ).

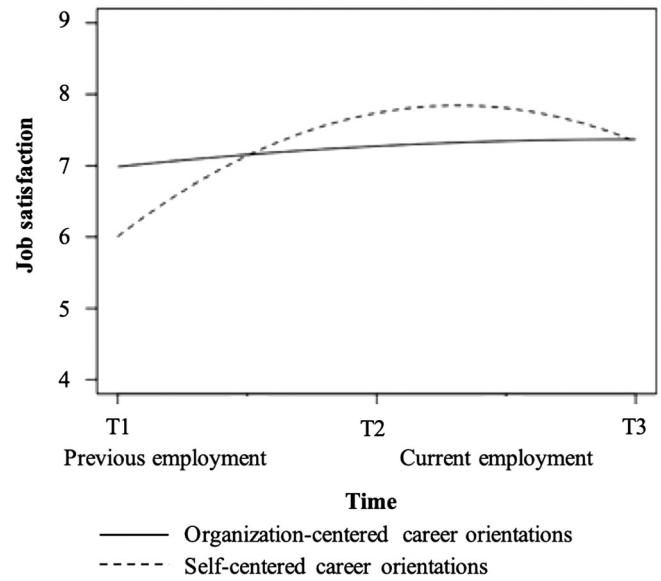
As predicted, employees with self-centered career orientations exhibit a stronger decline in turnover intention shortly after the job change (between T1 and T2). However, their turnover intention began to increase again toward T3, whereas turnover intention almost linearly decreased for employees with organization-centered career orientations (see Figure 4). The trend of turnover intention at T1 was

<sup>4</sup>We thank an anonymous reviewer and our Editor Justin DeSimone for this valuable suggestion.

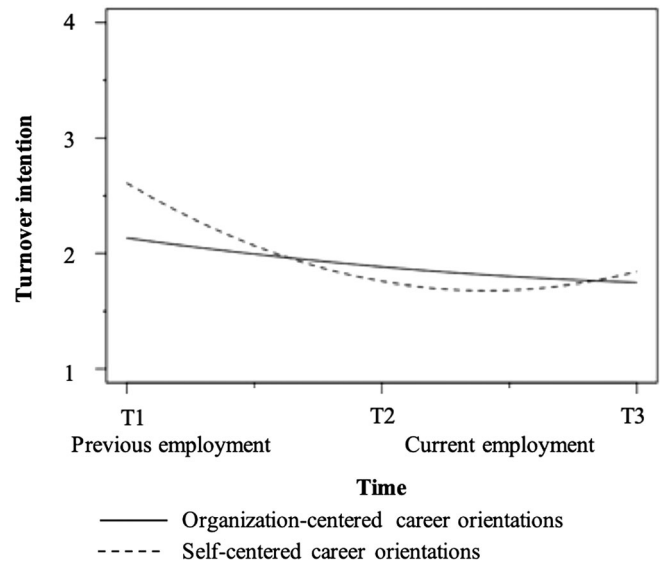
**TABLE 4** Random coefficient modeling results for job satisfaction and turnover intention (Study 2)

Variable	Job satisfaction						Turnover intention					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2		
	$\gamma$	SE	$t$	$p$	$\gamma$	SE	$t$	$p$	$\gamma$	SE	$t$	$p$
Intercept	6.47	0.30	21.26	<.001	6.50	0.30	21.46	<.001	2.38	0.13	18.70	<.001
Tenure with new organization	-0.08	0.29	-0.28	.777	-0.08	0.28	-0.28	.776	0.09	0.13	0.73	.470
Career orientation	0.02	0.19	0.11	.911	0.05	0.30	1.61	.111	-0.05	0.08	-0.63	.533
Linear	1.64	0.58	2.85	.005	1.59	0.57	2.79	.006	-0.83	0.11	2.46	<.001
Quadratic	-0.60	0.26	-2.33	.022	-0.58	0.26	-2.27	.025	0.27	0.11	2.46	.015
Career orientation $\times$ Linear					-1.21	0.57	-2.12	.036				
Career orientation $\times$ Quadratic					0.48	0.26	1.90	.060				
Pseudo- $R_m^2$				.10				.13				.07

Note: Job satisfaction (N = 66, observations = 193); turnover intention (N = 66, observations = 194).



**FIGURE 3** Job satisfaction trajectories for job changers with self-centered versus organization-centered career orientations (Study 2). Participants changed jobs between T1 and T2.



**FIGURE 4** Turnover intention trajectories for job changers with self-centered versus organization-centered career orientations (Study 2). Participants changed jobs between T1 and T2.

significantly different between career orientation types (self-centered career orientations:  $b = -1.320$ ,  $SE = 0.332$ , 95% CI [-1.977, -0.664]; organization-centered career orientations:  $b = -0.307$ ,  $SE = 0.342$ , 95% CI [-0.983, 0.370];  $difference = -1.01$ ,  $SE = 0.476$ ,  $p = .035$ ) but again not at T2 and T3 (see Appendix S3). Thus, the results of Study 2 supported Hypothesis 2.

As in Study 1, we calculated the effect sizes of the moderating effects of career orientation with Cohen's  $f^2$  based on the pseudo- $R^2$  values. The effects of both job satisfaction ( $f^2 = .044$ ) and turnover intention ( $f^2 = .020$ ) were larger than in Study 1. The increase in the total variance explained was 3.84% for job satisfaction and 4.38% for

turnover intention. Running the analysis without the inclusion of our control variable did not change the pattern or significance of the effect sizes (job satisfaction:  $f^2 = .045$ ; turnover intention:  $f^2 = .020$ ), which demonstrates the robustness of our findings (e.g., Becker et al., 2016).

In response to a reviewer's comment about the complexity of the model in relation to the relatively small sample size of Study 2, we additionally ran the model with a Bayesian estimator using the brms package in R (Bürkner, 2017). Bayesian methods offer several advantages for modeling data with small sample sizes (McNeish, 2016; Zyphur & Oswald, 2015). The analysis was based on uninformative priors with four chains. The results further supported the robustness of our findings concerning the moderating effects of career orientations on job satisfaction and turnover intention (see Appendix S4).

Although Study 2 had a modest sample size, this did not preclude us from obtaining significant results. A major strength of this study is that we measured job satisfaction and turnover intention at both the previous and current employers. The few existing studies that have explored job satisfaction trajectories in the context of a job change have mostly investigated samples of organizational newcomers. As a result, they did not account for previous job satisfaction (e.g., Valero & Hirschi, 2019) or applied retrospective measures of job satisfaction (e.g., Boswell et al., 2009). In contrast, we measured real-time job satisfaction with both employers, thus accounting for the possible “baggage” that employees bring with them when they exit one organization and join another (Boswell et al., 2009).

## 4 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

Using longitudinal data from two samples, this paper offers evidence suggesting that individuals' career orientations influence reactions to a job change. Random coefficient modeling demonstrated that employees with self-centered career orientations became increasingly satisfied after a job change. However, their job satisfaction decreased again as time advanced, eventually stabilizing at a lower level. Employees with an organization-centered career orientation also experienced the pattern of hedonic adaptation in Study 1. However, and in line with our assumptions, their satisfaction levels recovered toward the end of the first year. Our analyses further revealed that the turnover intention of individuals with self-centered career orientations decreased after the job change and significantly increased again in the first year of employment; in contrast, a slower growth curve was found for organization-centered employees. These findings offer several contributions to the career literature and to research on the temporal dynamics of work attitudes.

### 4.1 | Theoretical contribution and future research directions

Our research highlights that job changes and their correlates are embedded in a larger career context. Job changes are known to be

important career events (Dokko & Chudzikowski, 2020). Given that job changes are an inextricable part of an individual's career (Arthur et al., 1999), viewing it as a single event without considering its overall career context may only reveal a misleading snapshot. Although psychological and physical mobility are key conceptual characteristics of self-centered career orientations, previous research did not provide any evidence on whether employees with self-centered career orientations detach from and adapt to organizations more quickly than their organization-centered counterparts. The empirical results of our within-person research reveal that self-centered employees adapt to organizations faster and detach more quickly from organizations by developing stronger turnover intentions over the first year of employment.

Our research further contributes to the literature on hedonic adaptation. Theories of hedonic adaptation suggest that individuals return to baseline levels of satisfaction quickly after positive life events. However, scholars have called for a revision of these theories to reflect differences between individuals' reactions to changes in life circumstances (Diener et al., 2006). Indeed, although the honeymoon-hangover effect suggests a general and predictable pattern of an initial peak and subsequent decline in job satisfaction as an individual changes organizations (Boswell et al., 2005, 2009), research on job satisfaction dynamics has yielded more conflicting evidence on how job satisfaction may develop with tenure (Bedeian et al., 1992; Dobrow Riza et al., 2018). Thus, more research is needed to advance our understanding of why people adapt differently to inter-organizational job changes. In our research, we highlight career orientations as an important moderator of how job satisfaction changes over time when people change organizations. We showed that self-centered career orientations are associated with a pattern predicted by hedonic adaptation, because job satisfaction decreased after a short peak at organizational entry and stabilized at this lower level. Although organization-centered employees initially experienced the same job satisfaction pattern, their job satisfaction began to increase again toward the end of the first year rather than stabilizing at lower levels. Indeed, organization-centered employees may benefit from a second increase in job satisfaction when they anticipate opportunities for internal promotion, loyalty, and socio-emotional benefits. Job features that organization-centered employees value as means to attain their career goals may accumulate over time and positively affect their job satisfaction, as suggested by experience models (Katz, 1980; Katz & Van Maanen, 1977).

Based on our findings, career orientations appear to have their greatest impact during the hangover period, which is also supported by our simple slope analysis. In other words, career orientations are most important for understanding why newcomers might differ in their job satisfaction pattern after the first 6 months of employment. However, our research only captures job satisfaction and turnover intention during the socialization process that unfolds over 1 year (Bauer & Erdogan, 2010). While this period allowed us to detect how quickly employees adapt to and detach again from their recently joined organizations, it cannot reveal how attitudes develop beyond the first year of employment. Thus, we do not have sufficient evidence to determine whether job satisfaction would continue to

decrease for self-centered career individuals and rise for organization-centered employees in the long run. Future research should devote more attention to how attitudes evolve as a function of career orientations over longer time frames.

Our within-individual analysis demonstrated that career orientations affect dynamics in turnover intention. This finding goes beyond prior cross-sectional studies that found higher turnover intention among individuals with self-centered career orientations (e.g., Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffebach, 2009). While both groups start at comparable levels of turnover intention at organizational entry, employees with self-centered career orientations develop stronger turnover intentions shortly after entry compared to organization-centered employees. Thus, our temporal analysis supports the idea that self-centered employees tend to be more mobile and emphasize the importance of career self-management (Hirschi & Koen, 2021), according to which detachment can be an important strategy to protect an individual's career needs and goals (De Cuyper et al., 2011). In this regard, inter-organizational mobility may constitute an opportunity to leverage the honeymoon–hangover effect (Boswell et al., 2005; Dobrow Riza et al., 2018) by enabling these employees to move from low satisfaction levels (i.e., hangover) and benefit from a satisfaction increase triggered by joining a new organization (i.e., honeymoon). Since this increase in (job) satisfaction is fleeting, self-centered employees may chase job satisfaction by changing jobs, as if they are on a “hedonic treadmill” (Baumeister et al., 2012).

Our research may further inspire future research in investigating contingencies of why, and under what conditions, newcomers' turnover intention dynamics may change. Indeed, while most of the research has contributed to our understanding of contingencies in the temporal nature of job satisfaction when employees transition into a new job, less is known about moderating factors impacting changes in turnover intentions. However, since early turnover creates significant financial strains for organizations, this topic requires more systematic investigation to better understand why turnover intentions develop and change over time and when to intervene. While job satisfaction and turnover intention are crucial in understanding adaptation and detachment in newcomers, future research is also encouraged to investigate the influence of career orientations on other variables over time, such as job embeddedness, organizational commitment, or job performance.

Considering the overall curves of job satisfaction and turnover intention, our within-person approach demonstrated that job attitudes fluctuate more strongly across jobs than within the first year of employment. This finding is consistent with previous research on within-person job satisfaction dynamics during job transitions (Boswell et al., 2005, 2009). Newcomers generally experience a peak in job satisfaction within the first few months after organizational entry, followed by a slight decline over time. Given the well-established link between job dissatisfaction and turnover, the finding that employees have less positive attitudes toward their previous job than their subsequent job may not come as a surprise (Griffeth et al., 2000; Rubenstein et al., 2018). However, the difference between satisfaction with the prior job and the current job shrinks

over time (Boswell et al., 2009). Interestingly, Study 2 shows that organization-centered employees are generally happier with their previous employer and have lower turnover intention compared with employees with self-centered career orientations. Therefore, the reason why organization- and self-centered career actors initiate job changes provides another interesting avenue for future research.

## 4.2 | Limitations

Our research must be interpreted in light of several limitations. One limitation of our research is that we did not measure the extent to which employees perceive their career orientations as being aligned with their current employer. A related concept that captures the degree to which employers fulfill their obligations and promises is the psychological contract. Psychological contracts have been shown to play a central role in newcomers' job satisfaction (e.g., Boswell et al., 2009; Zhu et al., 2017); job satisfaction is consistently lower over time for employees reporting lower fulfillment of their psychological contracts. While psychological contracts reveal information about the extent to which organizations fulfill their part of the exchange relationship (in the eyes of the employee), career orientations capture the extent to which employees value certain exchange terms in the employment relationship (e.g., career management, job security, loyalty, and flexibility; Baruch & Rousseau, 2019). Future research may take a more integral approach, combining career orientations and psychological contracts to predict job attitude dynamics.

Our research serves to elucidate the role of career orientation in shaping the experience of inter-organizational job changes by bridging theoretical work on careers and work attitude dynamics. However, we acknowledge that many other organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal factors can contribute to the changes in job satisfaction and turnover intention when employees transition to a new organization. While past research has investigated the stand-alone impact of variables such as social support, person–job fit, psychological contracts, socialization tactics, and personality on newcomers' job satisfaction dynamics (Boswell et al., 2009; Valero & Hirschi, 2019; Wang et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2021), we propose career orientations as a new important influence. While our research constitutes a stepping-stone toward a more integrated model, an important step for future research is to take a more comprehensive approach by integrating career orientations with previously studied determinants of job satisfaction and turnover intention dynamics.

Based on differences in our longitudinal study designs, we must acknowledge that our findings may not be directly comparable. Theory and research suggest that optimal time lags should be based on theoretical rationale, past research, and feasibility of data collection (e.g., Dormann & Griffin, 2015; Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). Although the frequency and time lags of our measurement occasions were informed by theory and empirical research (Boswell et al., 2005, 2009), the feasibility of data collection in Study 2 led to differences in our longitudinal study designs, which may impede the direct comparison of our findings. The timing and frequency of measurement periods

in Study 1 allowed us to detect more nuanced changes in job satisfaction and turnover intention, such as the expected temporal pattern of the honeymoon–hangover effect from organizational entry through the first year of employment (Boswell et al., 2005, 2009). The fewer measurement occasions and longer time intervals in Study 2 made it more difficult to detect fine-grained and more complex changes in the honeymoon–hangover period. The first years after starting a new job are often labeled as a time of uncertainty (Ellis et al., 2015), as attitudes typically change in the organizational socialization phase (Boswell et al., 2009; Zhu et al., 2017). It has been suggested that it takes about 2 to 4 years to return to one's baseline equilibrium after a job change (Dunford et al., 2012; Zhou et al., 2017). Thus, the longer time lags and fewer measurement points in Study 2 may have covered the more nuanced changes in job attitudes in the first few months of the new job (Morrison, 1993a). We encourage more comprehensive longitudinal research to understand the effect of time on newcomer's attitude change.

Another concern may arise from how we measured job satisfaction with the previous employer. In Study 1, we assessed job satisfaction toward the prior job at the point of the job change. In Study 2, we included measures of past experiences in real time. Measuring attitudes retrospectively, such as in Study 1, can lead to residual effects due to the lasting impression that individuals have when starting a new job (cf. Boswell et al., 2009; Karney & Frye, 2002). Indeed, evaluations of the prior job at organizational entry are likely colored by expectations for the new job, creating the potential for post hoc rationalization in reporting job satisfaction levels with the previous employer (Boswell et al., 2009). Although Study 2 included real-time measures of job attitudes over time, we cannot assess the exact impact of retrospective bias in evaluating the previous job in Study 1.

In terms of turnover intention, we must acknowledge that we captured turnover intention for both the previous and current employers in Study 2, but only the current employer in Study 1. Thus, the different temporal gaps and frequency of measurement points across the two studies may have implications for the equivalence of attitude trajectories across the two settings, impeding comparisons between the findings. In Study 1, we can only assess the change in turnover intention with the current employer, but not the change in turnover intention from one employer to the other. Notably, despite the differences in lags between measurement points across the two settings, the results still partially supported our hypotheses, which suggest that turnover intention decreases and then increases again for employees with self-centered career orientations. For both job satisfaction and turnover intention, the differences in the design of the two studies do not alter our main conclusions. Thereby, the two multi-wave longitudinal studies also demonstrate the robustness of our findings, mitigating some of the limitations.

Finally, we acknowledge some inconsistency in our measures across the two studies, which makes the comparison of the findings more difficult. Although prior research has revealed only little differences regarding single- versus multi-item scales (Chen et al., 2011; Wanous et al., 1997), measuring job satisfaction with a single item in Study 2 constitutes a further limitation of our research. In Study 1, we

used a multi-item scale instead. While using different measures across studies has certain benefits, such as avoiding scale-specific influence across studies, it can also lead to disadvantages when it comes to disentangling the reasons for discrepancies between study results. Although prior research demonstrates that single-item measures are highly correlated with their corresponding multi-item measures (Nagy, 2002; Wanous et al., 1997) and also the findings across our two studies were similar, we cannot completely rule out whether differences across the findings of our two studies may exist due to the different measures used.

### 4.3 | Managerial implications

Practically, our results may help HR management adapt the employee onboarding process. The way job attitudes change as a function of time in employment might have important implications for how and when HR initiatives need to be designed and implemented. During the first year of adjustment, various risky periods can occur in which employees experience a decline in their positive attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction) and an increase in their negative attitudes (i.e., turnover intention). Our research may help employers to effectively counteract the risk of adverse reactions by considering individuals' career orientations in the employee onboarding process and beyond.

Managers should anticipate a post-honeymoon decline in job satisfaction among individuals with self-centered career orientations by calibrating employees' expectations early. Organizations can also implement strategies to reintroduce novelty and thus reignite a job satisfaction boost for employees remaining in the same organization (Dobrow Riza et al., 2018). For example, they can provide opportunities for training, development, networking events, project work, or job rotation programs to satisfy the needs of individuals with self-centered career orientations. Managers can also retain organization-centered employees by providing career development opportunities within the organization and communicating early to create a sense of security and loyalty, forming the basis for a long-lasting employment relationship.

Our findings may also help employees manage their expectations of within-person changes in job satisfaction. Career orientations influence how job satisfaction and turnover intention change throughout employment. Self-centered career orientations seem to imply that changing organizations will be a way of boosting job satisfaction again. However, an alternative way to overcome the hangover stage and escape the hedonic treadmill may be to reintroduce novelty through job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) or discuss career opportunities that align with self-centered career needs and/or increase external employability (e.g., international assignments).

## 5 | CONCLUSION

Our research contributes to the literature on career and job attitudes by providing a theoretically and empirically rigorous answer to the



question of how career orientations affect adaptation and detachment during the job change process. We collected two longitudinal data sets in diverse organizations and occupations to study the dynamics of job satisfaction and turnover intention in samples of job changers. Our results illuminate on how career orientations impact adaptation and detachment in job transition processes, thereby demonstrating the complexities and nuances of the temporal dynamics of job attitudes when employees cross organizational boundaries.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data are available on request from the authors.

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