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## Differential Mode of Status: Theoretical Perspectives and an Analysis on Its Impact on Employee Engagement

**Abstract** With the gradual deepening of China's economic reform, "differential mode of status," which is created by the dual-track employment system in state-owned enterprises, has become a major hindrance for employees' enthusiasm and initiative in workplaces. Drawing upon the "differential mode of status" theory, this paper firstly explores the internal relationships among "differential mode of status," employees' perception of fairness and sense of belonging, and employee engagement. Then the mechanism of "differential mode of status" influencing employee engagement is discussed. Lastly, coping strategies are brought forward based on the actual situation of low work devotion especially in China's state-owned enterprises.

**Keywords** differential mode of status, organizational justice, organizational belonging, employee engagement

### 1 Introduction

With the deepening of economic reform in China, the negative effects of dual-track employment system in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have gradually surfaced, and become an obstacle to further reform. Specifically, employees in

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SOEs are divided into two types known as “regular staff” (permanent or contract workers) and “irregular staff” (temporary or dispatched workers). By comparison, “regular staff” has higher status and gets better pays, while “irregular staff” does the same amount of work but is paid much poorly, a phenomenon aptly dubbed as “unequal pay for equal work.” Suffering from this unfair treatment, irregular staff’s dissatisfaction is obvious. Ironically, however, though enjoying preferential treatment, a large number of regular staff demonstrates little organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). The inequality of employment status in China’s SOEs has become a bottleneck lowering their employees’ enthusiasm and initiative.

In the context of globalized competition, China’s SOEs should not only emphasize how to identify, recruit and retain the best employees, but also focus on improving the morale and performance of the current employees. As Jack Welch once pointed out, “Any company trying to compete must figure out a way to engage the mind of nearly every employee.” Facing low morale from both “regular staff” and “irregular staff,” the primary mission of China’s SOEs is, in a sense, how to induce professionalism of their staff if they wish to improve operational efficiency and to get the upper hand in global competition.

A survey on employee engagement in China shows that overall employee engagement is rather low, particularly in SOEs. From the end of 2007 till the early 2008, as shown in a Gallup survey of “employee engagement and working environment” on a global scale, employee engagement index<sup>1</sup> in China is much lower than in other countries such as the United States, Britain, and Brazil (the employee engagement index in China is 0.5:1, as compared with 1.5:1 in the United States, 1.2:1 in Australia and Brazil, and 0.7:1 in Britain). At the same time, it is also lower than in Thailand and other neighboring Asian countries (Thailand’s engagement index is 1:1, for example). The 2005 annual survey report of employee engagement index<sup>2</sup> in China revealed the similar results: the degree of employee engagement in China is very low, and staff does not show positively “hard working spirit.” The survey also pointed out that employee engagement index varies with the types of firm ownership. In foreign-funded enterprises and private enterprises, employee engagement is relatively higher

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<sup>1</sup> Employee engagement indexes used above were adopted from a survey conducted by Gallup by comparing the proportion of engaged staff to slack staff.

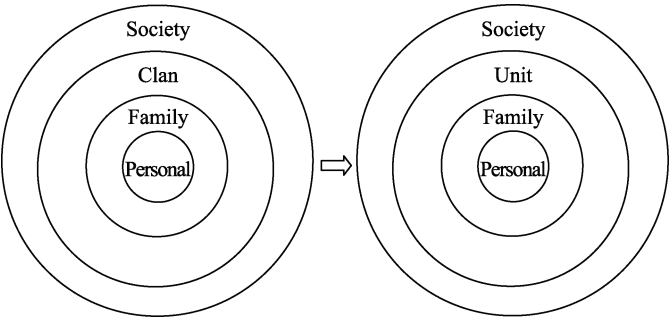
<sup>2</sup> Statistical standards on employee engagement index between domestic and foreign scholars are different. Chinese scholars used a 5-point Likert-type scale, and divided it into 5 levels to measure, ranging from 5 for “Strongly agree” and 1 for “strongly disagree”. There are 12 questions, the engagement index is the sum of the score for each question. So the highest score of engagement index is 60 and the minimum is 12.

(40.33 and 40.23, respectively), while in SOEs the index is only 38.85; Employee engagement in the government organs and state-owned institutions are the lowest with a value of only 37.09.

The question here is: Why is the employee engagement in SOEs so much lower than that of in foreign-funded enterprises and private enterprises? There is evidence showing that the inequality of employee status in SOEs might give rise to the low employee engagement (Tao and Liu, 2009; Wang, 2009). If it is the case, how does the inequality in employment status affect employee engagement? And, above all, how to improve employee engagement in SOEs?

## 2 Evolution of the “Differential Mode of Association” Theory

The concept of “differential mode of association” was first proposed by Fei (1947) in his masterpiece *Earth-bound China*, in which Fei described Chinese traditional social relationship as a “differential mode of association.” In other words, Chinese people establish social connections in a way similar to casting a stone into water. They own selves stand at the center of the ripples, the more external a ripple from the center, the weaker the connection becomes—the connection among people weakens with the distance from the center increases (Fei, 1998). The “differential mode of association” theory assumes that lying in the core of interpersonal connection is the genetic connection among family members. Besides “the blood relationship,” Chinese people proceed to build geopolitical relationships with the outsiders. The blood relationship and geopolitical relationship are interdependent of each other. In other words, the Chinese traditional social relationship has evolved into a “differential mode.”



**Fig. 1** The Evolution of “Differential Mode of Association” Theory

Source: Song, Y. 宋煜. 2009. 基于“差序格局”理论的家庭和社区信息化应用策略 (Application strategies of family and community information based on the “*Chaxu geju*” Theory). *学习与实践 (Study and Practice)*, (9): 117–125.

However, in real life, the scope of application and theoretical connotation of the “differential mode of association” change with time. First of all, as for the application scope, due to industrialization, globalization changes in family size and life style, most people nowadays are connected in some kind of organization (Li and Li, 2000). As organization becomes increasingly important to individuals, it plays a key role in allocation of social resources and application of social regulations, meanwhile the ties of kinship and family relationship continue to weaken. Affiliation to a workplace has become the second most important relationship to an individual, second only to the “blood-based relationship.” In many cases, affiliation to a workplace is even more helpful in solving problems than family relationship, giving rise to the formation of modern Chinese people’s “organization awareness” (Song, 2009). Second, as for theoretical connotation, scholars have gradually expanded the original “water ripple” assumption, by not only emphasizing the social relationship characteristics of “distinguishing the intimate or estranged relationship” that regards oneself as the center, but also on “special or low” level features of social structure dimensions (Yan, 2006). In addition, scholars have come to realize that the “differential mode of association” is a three-dimensional structure, including not only horizontal, flexible, self-centered “difference,” but also a vertical, rigid hierarchical “order.”

Thus, the “water ripple” metaphor can also be applied to the social hierarchical structure (as in China’s SOEs) similar to the structure of social relationship. The only difference between the two structures might be that the former has a powerful central leader, while the latter consists of atomized individuals. Similarly, in the social hierarchical structure, the further the distance one is from the central leader, the weaker the relationship between them (Hu, 2005).

Because the scope and the theoretical connotation of “differential mode of association” have changed, our research perspective should change accordingly. To the best of our knowledge, previous research on “differential mode of association” has mostly focused on the Confucian ethics, which is difficult to explain the individual’s psychology and behavior in the organization context. Therefore, some scholars have suggested that it would be useful to study the problem of “differential mode of association” from the perspective of psychology and sociology. For example, Bourdieu was the first scholar to point out that indeed there exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world, and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to them (Bourdieu, 2004). In order to build the relationship between hierarchical structure and mental structure, and to

combine psychology with sociology, Bourdieu introduced the concepts of field<sup>3</sup> and habitus<sup>4</sup> into the study of “differential mode of association” to explain how social inequality affects individual’s behaviors. In his view, the “differential mode of association” is, by nature, a result of competition among different structures, regardless of the horizontal relationship structure or vertical hierarchical structure. In the horizontal relationship structure, people are more interested in building up and utilizing social connections in order to obtain more social capital. In the vertical hierarchical structure, people compete for other types of capitals (like economic capital, cultural capital, social capital or symbolic capital etc.), to obtain certain social privileges.

The reproduction of “differential mode of association” is guaranteed by the habits of and strategies adopted by social actors, and an actor’s habit development and strategies adoption are, as a matter of fact, determined by his/her particular disposition. Thus, the vertical hierarchical structure and the horizontal relationship structure are interrelated with each other: the former is a structural prerequisite for the latter, and the latter in turns promotes the reproduction of the former. Therefore, the key of competition among people is to gain all kinds of social capitals to enable them to get into the inner circles of a relationship to receive preferential treatments.

The evolution of “differential mode of association” theory has aroused a great amount of interest. Zhen (1995) pointed out that, if the viewpoint of “differential mode of association” is to be introduced into organizational behavior research, a new multi-dimensional, rather than one-dimensional “association mode” must be developed; otherwise it would be difficult to explain management practices in modern Chinese enterprises. As a matter of fact, Fei proposed the concept of “differential mode of association” to explain social phenomenon in his times. Because enterprises have their objectives and missions to fulfill, Fei’s simplification of multi-dimensional relationships cannot help managers cope with “differential types of association” in enterprises. Therefore, in order to explain the management behaviors of Chinese enterprises, some scholars believed that it is necessary to take into consideration of the constructs of loyalty

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<sup>3</sup> Field is the competition area struggling for control of valuable resources, it is a structural space constituted by dominant status and subordinate status based on capital types and quantities.

<sup>4</sup> Habitus is not equal to habit, that is the set of socially learned dispositions, skills and ways of acting that are often taken for granted, and which are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. Perhaps in more basic terms, the habitus could be understood as a structure of the mind characterized by a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions and taste (Budie and Wacquant, 2004).

and ability (e.g., Cheng, 2002). Farh (1996) argued that out of the three standards for “differential associations” proposed by Zhen (1995), only loyalty and ability could be used to study the relationship between Chinese managers and subordinates. He also argued that the nature of Zhen’s “differential mode of association” is the horizontal type of “differential associations”

However, the current “differential mode of status” is not only a Confucian ethic concept, but also a multidimensional concept including ethics, emotions and interests (Chen and Chen, 1998). Behind differential mode of status is the allocation mode of scarce resource including power, property, status and so on (Sun, 1996). So the theoretical study of differential status mode should be more focused on vertical pattern of status, which, we believe, is of great significance for Chinese firms during the economic transition period. China’s transitional period is characteristic of the formation of social hierarchical structure based on administrative power, social system and joint effect of national policy, which in turn, has an immeasurable profound impact on the healthy development of China’s market economy and formation of different social classes (Chen, 2007). If the above-mentioned social hierarchical structure theory could be applied to the actual managerial practices in China’s SOEs, an important aspect of its actual manifestation is a differentiated mode of status due to the inequality of the employment system and division of labor (Du, 2006).

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### **3 The Formation Logic of “Differential Mode of Status”**

In fact, differential mode of status caused by employment system has been studied for a long time. In 1971, Doeringer and Piore proposed a Dual Labor Market Theory, assuming that labor market consists of primary labor market which pays high wages and provides secure employment, good working-conditions, more training opportunities and good promotion mechanisms, and an opposite secondary market. And there is little labor flow between the two markets. Follow-up studies showed that there are significant differences between structure and mechanism determining wages and labor allocation in the two markets (Yao and Xu, 2005). As a rule, primary labor market mainly takes the form of internal labor market, which is a highly organized formal labor market existing within enterprises. Usually, it has detailed rules and procedures guiding employment choices, and can replace the exterior labor market to a large degree. Primary labor market prefers existing internal members. The wage structure of the internal labor market is mainly based on the need of the organization and has little to do with the status quo of demand and supply in external labor market.

The measures internal labor market uses to solve manpower shortage include recruitment, training, job redesign, subcontractors, output adjustment, etc (Osterman, 1984). Secondary labor market is, to a large extent, consistent with the labor market described by the neo-classical economics, in which enterprises will timely adjust the number of their employees according to the marginal contribution and marginal cost of labor, and payment is given in accordance with the marginal contribution of labor or market wage level. However, what causes the status inequality in the labor market? Bulow and Summers (1986) thought that labor could achieve perfect supervision in the secondary market relying on market force, so they could only get marginal productivity wage; while labors in the primary market are difficult to supervise. In order to motivate employees, employers in the primary market must give their employees higher wage than the level of market clearing efficiency wage. Linderbeck and Snower (1986) called workers who are employed in an enterprise “insiders” and the people unemployed in the labor market “outsiders.” Insiders, by comparison, have more bargaining power in negotiation; For example, workers’ unions often act on behalf of insiders in negotiations. Thus, the disadvantageous position of outsiders often makes them have to accept lower wage than insiders.

Though it has been proved to be fruitful to adopt the western dual labor market theory to explain the phenomenon of differential mode of status in labor market, most studies have been conducted in developed countries and mature labor markets, neglecting emerging economies with immature labor market like China. As China’s labor market is still immature, and currently in the process of transition, the causes and manifestations of differential mode of status are extremely complex—not only as the result of existing market segmentation due to industrial structure, technological progress, organizational forms, etc., but as the result of the segmentation owing to institutional barriers and system obstacles (Yao and Li, 2005).

In general, China’s macro recruitment market can be divided into two parts. One is the continuance of former labor system under the previous planned economy, and the other is the rise of the mode of market-oriented employment. Accordingly, the micro-level forms of hired labor system can be divided into in-system employment and out-system employment. The in-system employment basically adopts the practice of the planned economy system in determining employment, payment, labor welfare and social security. Little changes have occurred to the in-system employment ever since China’s adoption of reform and opening-up policy in 1978, while the out-system employment has adopted fully the market-oriented mode since the very beginning of the reform. There is a

barrier between the two different employment systems. Generally speaking, an in-system employee is able to flow out and become an out-system employee at the cost of losing all the benefits and privileges he/she once enjoyed in the system. Yet it would be extremely difficult for an out-system employee to flow in and become an in-system employee (Wu, 2007). Thus, in a sense, differential mode of status in SOEs is a product of a series of discriminatory institutional arrangements which are represented by the household registration system and employment system. Part of these systems still continues to exist in China, for a lot of interest groups are happy to maintain these systems to their own interests (Hudson, 2007).

Dual-track employment system in China has given rise to the formation of differential mode of employee status: even doing the same amount of work, insiders (regular staff) always have higher status and get better paid than outsiders (irregular staff). In addition, SOEs give priority to regular employees when there are promotion and training opportunities while irregular staff is always the first ones to go when the companies need to cut pay or lay off some staff. Differential mode of status exerts a significantly negative impact on irregular employees' fairness perception and sense of belonging to their enterprises. For example, Feldman (1994) found that in his survey, laid-off staff generally felt they suffered unfair treatment. Foote (2004) pointed out that because the dispatching staff usually is not regular employees, employers think there is no need to invest in them. Thus, employers will exclude these irregular employees from enterprise meeting or other activity, which intensifies the irregular staff's sense of unfairness and in turn leads to a high turnover rate of these employees.

In addition, as SOEs only sign short-term contracts with irregular staff. It is impractical to expect a sense of affiliation from these employees to their employing enterprises and demonstrate OCBs (Wang, Wu, and Zhang, 2006).

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## **4 Influencing Mechanism of Differential Mode of Status on Employee's Engagement**

According to the foregoing analysis, differential mode of status may change employees' fairness perception and sense of belongings, and further affect their working attitude and performance (Colquitt et al., 2001). Scholars generally agree that the motivation of employees to work is not only affected by absolute fairness, but also by comparative fairness (Adams, 1965). If employees consider distribution decision in his/her organization is fair, they would be more inspired

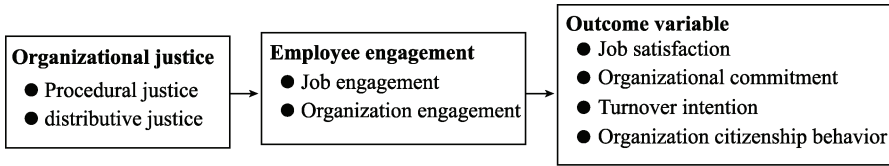


and dedicated to work, developing long-term relationship with their organizations (Tyler and Lind, 1992). Thus, only when top managers adhere to the principle of fairness, will employees demonstrate more OCBs (Isaac, 2001).

Employees usually judge their enterprises based on the HR management practices adopted (Meyer and Smith, 2000). If employees believe that the practices are fair, and the enterprise takes some specific human resource management measures to attract and retain good employees, they would develop a sense of belonging, or otherwise weaken their sense of belongings (Koys, 2001). Therefore, in order to enhance the employees' engagement, and improve their work morale, organizations must adopt fair and supportive human resource management measures (Meyer and Smith, 2000).

#### 4.1 Differential Mode of Status Influences Employee Engagement Degree through Fairness Perception

Numerous studies have confirmed that organizational justice through employee engagement influences employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention and organizational citizenship behavior (Masterson et al., 2000; Saks, 2006). Organizational justice, positive work attitude, in-role performance and extra-role performance are positively correlated. McFarlin and Sweeney (1992) explored that whether procedural fairness and distribution fairness are the predictors of variables of personal satisfaction and organizational outcome based on a data of 675 bank employees. Their results showed that the distribution fairness could predict the personal satisfaction better than procedural fairness, while procedural fairness could better predict organization-level outcomes. Furthermore, Liu and Long (2003) pointed out that the sense of organizational fairness could predict the psychology and behavior of employees related to organizational effectiveness. In management activities, managers could increase the sense of organizational fairness by regulating resources allocation, optimizing the allocation procedure and providing spiritual support to strengthen communication with staff. Moreover, Li and Kan (2003) studied the relationship between organizational justice and job burnout from the point of distributive justice and procedural fairness. Based on 524 questionnaires distributed in six enterprises, they found that organizational justice affected job burnout. That is to say, when employees are treated fairly, the possibility of burnout is more likely to decrease, and employees will be more dedicated to their enterprises, and vice versa.



**Fig. 2** Concept Model of the Influence of Organizational Justice on Employee Engagement

Source: Saks, A. M. 2006. Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21(7): 600–619.

Because of the existence of differential mode of status, irregular staff's position, power, income, and career development opportunities are either inferior to or less than those of regular staff. Even though irregular staff has similar positions, similar levels of education and do the same work as regular staff, they get far less paid and hence have very low morale. Often regarded as outsiders, irregular staff has little access to most of enterprise welfares enjoyed by regular staff. In most cases, irregular staff is excluded from appraisal and evaluation system, so that even if they make very good job performance, they will not get the same rewards or promotion as regular staff. At work, irregular staff often has greater difficulty in obtaining organizational resources, work-related training and guidance than regular staff. As real creative work needs to accumulate experience through learning-by-doing, and learn to solve problems with a trial-and-error approach, so irregular staff's innovation behavior often faces greater risk of failure, as they lack of the support needed from their employers. Moreover, as considered as outsiders, irregular employees often face the risk of getting "fired" even though they do not make mistakes at work, not to mention situations when irregular staff actually fail. In addition, they get less job training and professional learning opportunities. Under such circumstances, it is common for irregular employees to get slack at work. While for regular employees, they are not only participants of the game, but also the rule makers in their enterprises. Even if they do not work hard or make mistakes, they do not need to worry about getting fired. Due to the lack of supervision and punishment, regular staff loses working initiative and get slack easily. It is obvious that differential mode of status exerts a negative impact on employee engagement through organizational fairness.

As for the sense of belongings, whether an employee has a sense of organizational belonging depends on the way he/she judges organizational value systems as well as his/her returns to input during the process of exchanging between the employee and enterprise. The sense of organizational belonging is particularly important for the development of SOEs, whether their employees can develop a sense of organizational belonging is vital for them to win employee

loyalty, and enhance enterprise cohesion and competitiveness.

However, due to the existence of differential mode of status, most SOEs have serious employee motivation problems (such as the unequal pay for equal work as we mentioned above). In general, the sense of organizational belonging takes the forms of feelings of attachment and integration. As any emotional feeling must have its material base, especially the feelings of employees to their enterprises, if there is no realistic, stable material benefit, it is somewhat meaningless to talk about sense of organizational belonging. In SOEs, priority is of course given to regular staff when it comes to pay rise, promotion or opportunities. However when it is time to lay off employees, pay cuts, or other bad things happen, irregular employees are the first ones to go. At times of economic boom or enterprise expansion, when SOEs earn juicy profit, their irregular staff might have a good time too, though in any way incomparable with regular staff. However, when their enterprises face financial difficulties, irregular employees are very likely to be the first ones to suffer or to be laid off. As a result, few irregular employees feel that they are taken care of, trusted, or respected by their enterprises. Even worse, irregular employees rarely have opportunities to communicate with either regular employees or their superiors on an equal footing. Considered as irregular employees, these employees usually have no chance to participate in decision-making activities. Because of the status gap, it is hard for irregular staff to hang out with regular staff after work. Usually, the reason why irregular employees choose to stay and work in SOEs is the pressure of employment or survival. As they have little emotional affiliation to their enterprises, once there are better job opportunities, they will resign without hesitation. So it is very unlikely for irregular employees in SOEs to have strong work motivation and sense of belonging.

As for regular employees of SOEs, it is natural to expect them to have a high level of sense of belongings to their enterprises. However, as mentioned above, whether an employee has sense of organizational belonging basically depends on the exchange relationship between the employee and his/her enterprise. Hence, during good economic times, when regular employees in SOEs have access to high incomes, and good development prospects, they will maintain a high sense of organizational belonging whereas when enterprise performance is poor and their incomes drop, as compared with other similar SOEs, regular employees' sense of organizational belonging will reduce accordingly. To conclude, due to the existence of differential mode of status, it is very difficult for SOEs in China to maintain a high employee sense of belongings, regardless of irregular or regular employees. Thus differential mode of status has a negative impact on

employee engagement via the sense of organizational belonging.

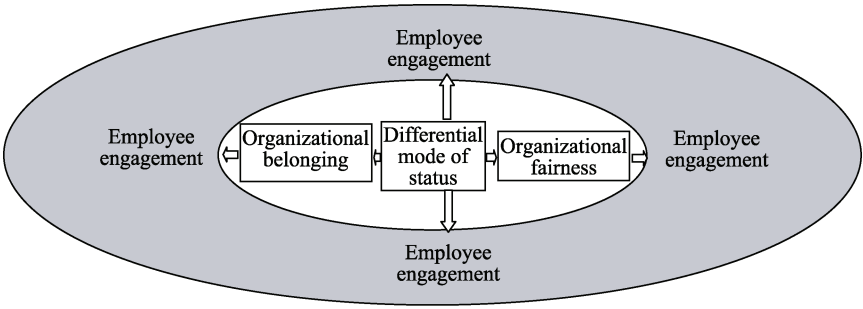
#### 4.2 Negative Influences of Differential Mode of Status via Other Factors

Besides the sense of organizational fairness and belonging, there are other influencing factors of employee engagement. For example, employees' psychological state and their inner needs are believed to be closely related to each other (Bennett and Bell, 2004). At work, there is a contractual relationship between individual employees and their work role. Whether this contractual relationship is good depends on three key psychological states of individual employees, namely psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, psychological availability (Gilson and Harter, 2004). Employees will develop different levels of psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability, and thus adjust their engagement level according to work tasks, work environment and interpersonal factors (Li and Ling, 2007). Work environment has an impact on employee engagement through individual's inner sense of liberty, competence and belonging (Deci, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2004). Differential mode of status as an important part of work situation, will undoubtedly impact employee engagement through the psychological characteristics of employees.

Although each occupation has its characteristic influencing factors of employee engagement, most of these influencing factors can be roughly divided into two categories, namely job requirements and job resources. Job requirements are the mental, spiritual, physical efforts and cost which employees must pay during work. Although the work itself is not an entirely negative factor, employees often have some anxiety, despair, fatigue and other negative emotions when the job requirements are too high. Job resources are the factors that can help reduce job requirements, and achieve organizational goals or promote the individual development at the physical, psychological, organizational and social levels, which can lead to positive work results. Demerouti et al. (2001) put forward a JD-R model according to the relationship between job requirements and job resources. He thought that employee engagement or non-professional status is caused by the imbalance between job demands and job resources (Bakker and Toon, 2003). Van den Broeck et al. (2008) used the JD-R model to explain the mechanism of engagement decision from the perspective of three psychological needs. They believed that the job requirements would reduce employees' satisfaction of intrinsic psychological needs, and job resources help improve it. Employees decide how much they will devote themselves to their work based on the degree of their psychological satisfaction. In this sense,

differential mode of status will affect work engagement through the influence on the pattern of distribution of work tasks and allocation of work resources.

As discussed above, the differential mode of status has an impact on employee engagement through the psychological state of employees, job requirements and job resources. Employee psychological state, job requirements and job resources can ultimately be interpreted as or be attributed to sense of organizational fairness and organizational belonging. Therefore, the mechanism of how differential mode of status affects employee engagement is shown in Fig. 3.



**Fig. 3** Mechanism of the Influence of Differential Mode of Status on Employee Engagement

## 5 Conclusion and Discussion

This research has highlighted that differential mode of status leads to a loss of employees’ perception of organizational fairness and sense of belonging, and the latter two are important antecedent variables of employee engagement. Therefore, exploring the mechanism of how differential mode of status affects employee engagement can help managers in China’s SOEs gain a better understanding of the causes of low employee engagement.

We firstly reviewed the existing literature on differential mode of status theory, and summed up the theory’s underlying philosophy. Secondly, we explored the mechanism of how differential mode of status affects employee engagement, which hopefully, will help China’s business leaders understand better and then find out their solution to the awkward situation of low employee morale and engagement prevailing in China’s SOEs.

This paper has the following limitations: (1) It focuses on the impact of differential mode of status on the sense of organizational fairness and organizational belonging of irregular employees, temporary and supernumerary

staff, and analyzes the negative impact of the mode on these employees' psychological state and behavior. By comparison, less attention has been paid to whether unequal status has an equally important influence on the sense of organizational justice and organizational belonging of regular staff. In addition, when it comes to the impact of differential mode of status on employees, are there any organizational differences among SOEs or all SOEs remain the same in this aspect? The answers to these questions need to be answered in future research. (2) Differential mode of status will affect the sense of employees' organizational fairness and organizational belonging, and organizational fairness and organizational belonging are important antecedent variables of employee engagement. So it is easy to conclude that differential mode of status will influence employee engagement via organizational fairness and organizational belonging. However, the mediating effect of fairness perception and sense of belongs in the relationship between differential mode of status and employee engagement was not empirically tested in this paper, which weakens the applicability of our conclusions.

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