

# The Influence of Perceived Insider Status on New Employee Engagement

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## ABSTRACT

This study from the perspective of new employees' perceived insider status, study on the influence mechanism of perceived insider status on engagement, and introduce psychological capital as intermediary variable. It focuses on the subject of new employees who begin to work within 3 years. Finally, 278 valid questionnaires were collected. Through empirical analysis, the research hypothesis is well verified, and the conclusion is drawn. The conclusions of this study include: (1) perceived insider status can affect new employees' engagement; (2) psychological capital can affect new employees' engagement; (3) perceived insider status can affect new employees' psychological capital; (4) psychological capital plays an intermediary role in the relationship between perceived insider status and new employees' engagement. At last, we propose the suggestion to strengthen new employees' engagement, making the research can be effectively applied to the practice of enterprise management.

**Keywords:** Perceived Insider Status; Engagement; Psychological Capital; Intermediary Role.

## 1. Introduction

Jack Welch who is the former CEO of general electric company said that there are three indicators to measure the stability of an enterprise, namely engagement, cash flow and customer loyalty. Therefore, managers have to pay enough attention to fully exploit employees' ability and engagement. A large number of researches and facts pointed out: (1) highly dedicated employees are more willing to do their best to develop the enterprise; (2) highly dedicated employees are more willing to make progress; (3) highly dedicated employees are more willing to recommend to others their enterprises; (4) lowly dedicated employees have higher separation rate than highly dedicated employees; (5) lowly dedicated managers are more likely to lead employees with low degree of engagement; (6) engagement is closely related to the five important performance indicators of enterprise management, which are productivity, profit rate, customer loyalty, employee retention and security. Employee engagement is critical for the firm's members, as it mirrors the individual's motivation to achieve work-related goals.

Nowadays new employees who are mostly born during 1980 to 1990 have higher educational background and professional status than last generation. They focus on their development and self-worth at work. It is the core-competitiveness for an enterprise, to value and improve the knowledge, skills innovative and independent thinking

of the employees. Thus, it is significant for managers to learn about employees' engagement and their continued driving factors. Therefore, researches on the psychology and behavior of the new employees through studying their working attitude and behavior, and then take appropriate measures to enhance their feelings of dependent, honor and a sense of belonging. That has practical significance for enterprise's stability and development.

## 2. Theories and Hypothesis

### 2.1 New Employees' Perceived Insider Status and Engagement

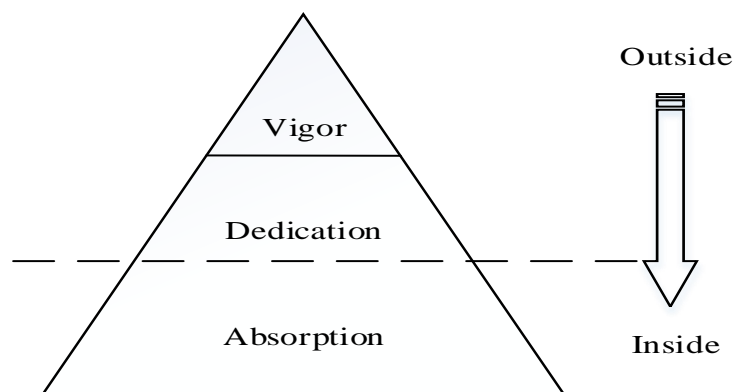
Perceived insider status (PIS) is defined as the extent to which an individual employee perceives him or herself as an insider within a particular organization. It represents that employees have earned a "personal space" and acceptance inside their work organization. Researches show that PIS has a strong effect on employee's job performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), etc. According to self-categorization theory, individuals in social groups will automatically object categories, the most basic social categories is in-group and out-of-group. According to the theory, when the employee is classified as an internal of the organization, he or she will use the characteristics of a member in the organization to define and ask themselves. And engagement is a basic feature.

Kahn<sup>[1]</sup> first proposed the concept of engagement in 1990. He believed that engagement is the process of individual and work roles, including self-employment and self-expression. Since then, many foreign scholars put forward their own ideas. Maslach<sup>[2]</sup> defined engagement from the opposite of job burnout in 1997. Rothbard<sup>[3]</sup> defined engagement from the psychology perspective in 2001. Additionally, many consultation companies of overseas such as Gallup, Hewitt and Towers Watson have great contribution to the research of the engagement. Domestic scholars' research on engagement is later than that of foreign scholars, and it is also a reference to foreign scholars. Scholars also have proposed various opinions towards the structure of engagement.

Based on the research of many scholars, this paper adopts the three-dimensional structure of Schaufeli, which divided engagement into vigor, dedication and absorption. Vigor is the degree of initiative and willingness to work. Dedication is to achieve self-worth, show enthusiasm, encouragement, responsibility and pride of the psychological state and pay action. Absorption is the act of being absorbed in the work and not being easily disturbed by other things.

As we all know, the three dimensions of engagement is related to another. Vigor and dedication is relatively more likely to be observed by managers and absorption is on an employee's inner level. According to Iceberg Mode, vigor and dedication belong to the explicit level, absorption belongs to implicit level, especially for new employees. First of all, new employees are energetic at the behavioral level and then achieve a deeper level of dedication. Finally they are absorbed to their work, which is the highest requirement of engagement. (see Fig. 1.)

**Fig. 1. Iceberg Model of Engagement**



Stamper and Masterson investigated the effect of internal identity to many of the variables. It turns out that PIS has significant positive impact on organizational citizenship behavior and has significant negative impact on workplace deviance. Jiang and Zheng pointed out that if employees take themselves as insiders, they tend to have a more strong sense of loyalty, and would rather ignore the interests of individuals, and will actively contribute to the organization.

Wang believed that PIS and Chinese collectivism culture has a close relationship in 2006. It directly influenced to their behavior if the employees feel they belong to the organization and they are in-group members. High levels of PIS means that employees will relate themselves to organization more closely, dedicate more time and energy to the organization, and make it easier to find the meaning and motivation to work. Also, their job satisfaction increased, which could produce greater responsibility. Meanwhile, employees who take themselves as insiders will have more sense of belonging to the organization, which will enable them to maintain a pleasant mood in the work.

From the social exchange theory based on leader member exchange and employee engagement mechanism, Liao concluded that PIS has positive effect on engagement in 2014. From the impact of human resources management from engagement angle about the new generation of employees, Sun studied that if employees feel they belong to the organization, they will have more initiative, are willing to pay beyond the scope of duties, and give positive feedback to the organization.

Based on the above analysis, this study puts forward the following assumptions about PIS and engagement.

**H1:** PIS has a positive impact on engagement.

**H1a:** PIS has a positive impact on vigor.

**H1b:** PIS has a positive impact on dedication.

**H1c:** PIS has a positive impact on absorption.

## **2.2 New Employees' Perceived Insider Status and Psychological Capital**

At present, studies about psychological capital are mainly divided into the following, trait, state and synthesis. Trait theory holds that psychological capital is existed as the inherent characteristics of an individual. State theory holds that psychological capital is a kind of psychological state. Synthesis holds that psychological capital is a kind of psychological quality, which is both trait and state. The purpose of this research is to develop psychological capital through intervention, so as to enhance new employees' engagement. Therefore, this research agrees with the definition of Luthans. He described psychological capital as an individual's positive psychological state of development that comprises four positive psychological resources: self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism.

Since the scholars have different understanding of psychological capital, and thus the structures have not yet reach a unified view. Scholars also have proposed various opinions towards the structures of psychological capital.

Based on the cognitive theory of social psychology, the information generated by the employees themselves will spontaneously generate some positive or negative psychological reaction. Xie proposed that if PIS is low, employees tend to get away from work psychologically to express their negative feelings in the research of effect of civil servants' PIS on task performance in 2014. Sun proposed that high level of PIS of new generation employees are more willing to contribute to job. Wang proposed that high level of PIS of employees tend to have high ownership feelings to the organization, which is easy to produce positive emotion and responsibility, and thus to get a higher self-identification.

Although no scholars directly to study it, but still can drawn from the research that PIS can affect the employees' psychology, so as to affect self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism.

Based on the above analysis, this study puts forward the following assumption about PIS and psychological capital.

**H2:** PIS has a positive impact on psychological capital.

### **2.3 New Employees' Psychological Capital and Engagement**

As a positive psychological variable, scholars mostly study the influence on the positive behavior of psychological capital. Therefore, it will inevitably have an important influence on new employees' engagement.

Wu took the employees of an enterprise as research sample in 2009, and put forward reasonable assumptions on the relationship between the psychological capital and engagement. The results of the study showed that employees' psychological capital has a significant positive effect on engagement. Zhao studied in psychological capital and engagement in the intermediary role in 2011. Results showed that, psychological capital especially hope and optimism has positive effect on engagement. Qiu took 339 knowledge workers as research sample, studied psychological capital and engagement respectively, and the relationship between the two variables in 2012. Results showed that knowledge workers' psychological capital has a significant effect on engagement. Li took the new generation employees as the research object, studied the relationship between the psychological capital and engagement, and found that the psychological capital has great influence on the employee engagement and its several dimensions.

Based on the above analysis, this study puts forward the following assumptions about psychological capital and engagement.

**H3:** Psychological capital has a positive impact on engagement.

**H3a:** Psychological capital has a positive impact on vigor.

**H3b:** Psychological capital has a positive impact on dedication.

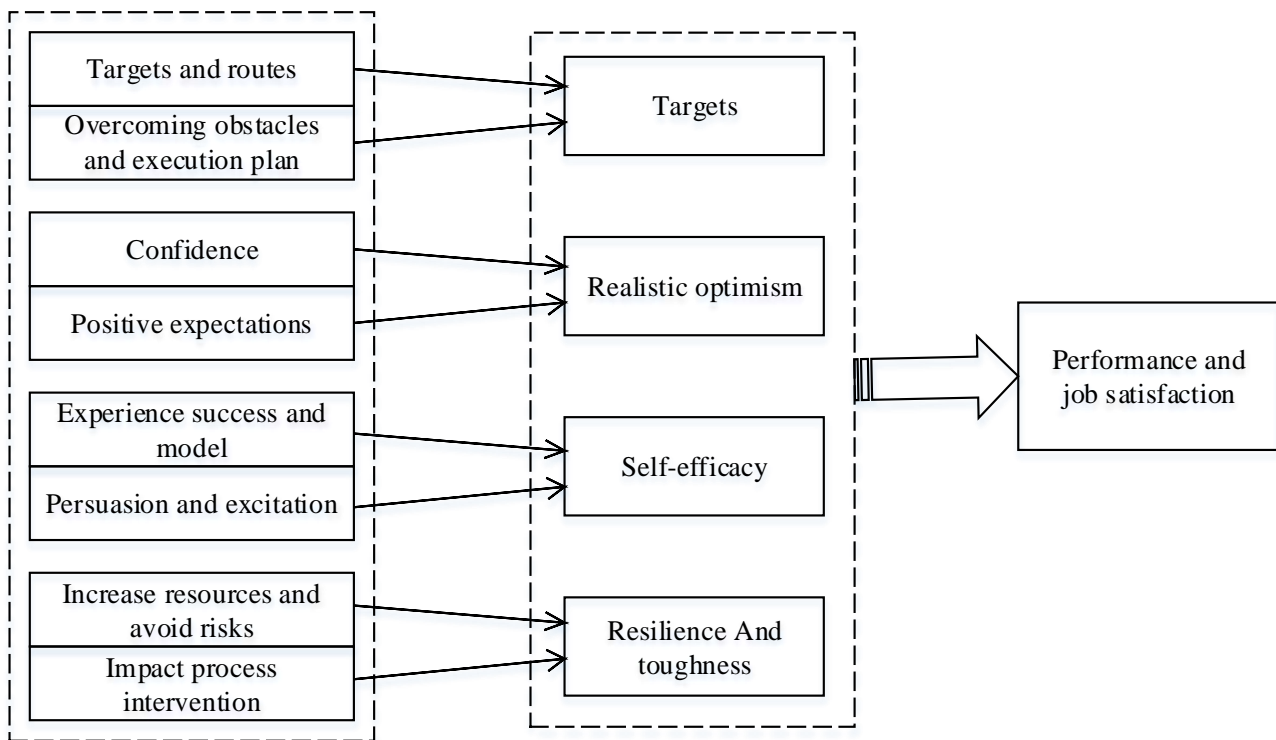
**H3c:** Psychological capital has a positive impact on absorption.

### **2.4 Intermediary Role of Psychological Capital**

Psychological capital is a kind of positive mental state, and it is an effective way to affect the behavior through the influence of psychology. Therefore, a lot of scholars studied that the psychological capital as the intermediary variable to affect the other variables.

Luthans put forward and verified the famous psychological capital intervention model through empirical research in 2005. The model of psychological capital produced a set of workable measures to promote. It pointed out that the psychological capital can play an intermediary role in the management behavior and the behaviors of the employees <sup>[5]</sup>. (see Fig. 2.)

**Fig. 2. Psychological Capital Intervention Model**



Tian took tourism reception as sample, studied the impact of industry's employees work attitude and behavior in 2008. He found that psychological capital has not only direct effect, but also intermediary effect and indirect effect. Tian and Xie took 721 employees as research sample around the nation, they proposed that psychological capital played an intermediary role in perceived organizational support and absenteeism, and played an intermediary role in organization support and organization support. Through empirical study on job characteristics, psychological capital and performance, Jia found psychological capital between job characteristics and job performance has partial mediating effect, job characteristics can affect job performance through the intermediary variables of psychological capital in 2010. Su and Wang studied the relationship among work designing, psychological capital and knowledge sharing behavior in 2011, and through empirical measure, they verified that psychological capital in job design and organizational employees' knowledge sharing behavior plays a partial mediating effect. Work designing has a significant positive effect on organizational knowledge sharing behavior through psychological capital. Zhao proposed in 2011 that psychological capital and engagement in different demographic variables, such as gender, age, education, position, working time and salary, are different. Organizational support, psychological capital and engagement are significantly positive correlation, and organizational support, psychological capital can effectively predict engagement. In addition, the results also showed that psychological capital has a significant intermediary role in the relationship between organizational support and engagement. Through questionnaire investigation in domestic enterprises of 785 employees and their immediate supervisor, Sui proposed that psychological capital mediates the transformational leadership to subordinate the positive relationship between job performance and satisfaction in 2012. By empirical analysis of employees in different industry enterprises, Wang proposed that psychological capital in feedback and complete work has the influence on engagement. That is a significant part of the intermediary role, employees' perceptions of job characteristics affect the employee's psychological capital, thereby affect the engagement in 2013. Zhong found that psychological capital played an intermediary role between transformational leadership and employee's task performance and organizational citizenship

behavior in 2013.

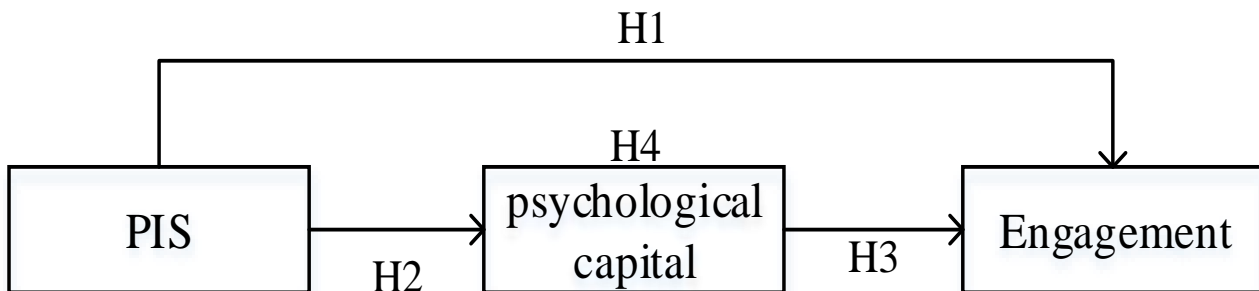
Based on the above analysis, this study puts forward the following assumption about psychological capital.

**H4:** Psychological capital plays an intermediary role in PIS and engagement.

## 2.5 Construction of Relational Model

Take PIS as an independent variable, engagement as an dependent variable, psychological capital as a mediator, and gender, age, relationship status, educational background, unit character and service years as control variables. Analyze the variables of the relationship and influence of process. (see Fig. 3.)

**Fig. 3. Relational Model**



## 3. Study Design

### 3.1. Samples

First, determine the research object of this study. The object of this study is the new employees who are employed less than three years. Second, select the appropriate scale. Refer to the foreign PIS scale, psychological capital scale and engagement scale, and then give sufficient consideration to China's situation. Third, design investigation. It is divided into two parts, pre investigation and formal questionnaire. Pre investigation is to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire by using the small group of people before the formal release of the questionnaire. Formal questionnaire including paper questionnaire, electronic questionnaire and website, a total of 450 questionnaires were issued, 364 copies were recovered. According to if they are employed within three years, online answer time is longer than 260 seconds, excluded the invalid questionnaires, and finally got the 278 valid questionnaires. The sample distributed in Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Shandong, Anhui, Hunan and other 14 provinces, 34 city.

### 3.2 Measurement Tools

#### 3.2.1 Perceived Insider Status Scale

When proposing the theory of the PIS, Stamper and Masterson also developed a scale to measure it <sup>[6]</sup>. The scale has only one dimension, which has six items totally, and alpha coefficient equals 0.88, and the scale score was calculated by summing the individual item scores. After that, Chen and Aryee translated the scale into Chinese. So far, all foreign studies use the scale put forward by Stamper and Masterson, while domestic studies use the Chinese version of Chen.

#### 3.2.2 Engagement Scale

This study adopted the engagement scale developed by Schaufeli and Salanova in 2001, named the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. It is divided into 3 dimensions that are vigor, dedication and absorption with 17 questions. It has been implemented in China and South Africa, the results mostly verified the three factor model proposed by Schaufeli. In addition, the cultural stability of the scale has also been verified.



### 3.2.3 Psychological Capital Scale

This study adopted the psychological capital scale developed by Luthans, which has 24 items, divided into four dimensions, each has six measurement items. It also has good reliability and validity in Chinese culture.

### 3.2.4 Control Variables

This study took six demographic variables as control variables, which are gender, age, relationship status, educational background, unit character and service years. The rest of the responses were given using a 5-point Likert-type response format (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

## 4. Research Results

### 4.1 Scale Tests

#### 4.1.1 Reliability Tests

First, we need to do reliability tests of perceived insider status scale. In order to improve the reliability of the questionnaire, the first, second and fifth questions were positively investigated, and the third, fourth and sixth questions were investigated by reverse survey. Among the first, second and fifth questions, the original Alpha Cronbach's coefficient was 0.871. "I feel I am an 'insider' in my work organization", the individual Alpha Cronbach's value was 0.883, higher than 0.871, so to be removed. Among the third, fourth, sixth questions, the original Alpha Cronbach's coefficient was 0.863. Delete any one Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were not changed greatly. Thus, reverse survey of PIS scale has a good reliability. According to the results of the reliability test, PIS scale removed "In my organization I feel I am an insider".

Second, we need to do reliability tests of psychological capital scale which has four dimensions. Original Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of self-efficiency was 0.873, delete any one Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were not changed greatly. Original Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of hope was 0.863, delete any one Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were not changed greatly. Original Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of resilience was 0.844, delete any one Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were not changed greatly. Original Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of optimism was 0.832, delete any one Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were not changed greatly. As a result, the psychological capital scale has good reliability with no bad items in four dimensions.

Third, we need to do reliability tests of engagement scale which has three dimensions. Original Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of vigor was 0.876, delete any one Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were not changed greatly. Original Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of dedication was 0.891. "My work is full of challenge", the individual Alpha Cronbach's value was 0.900, higher than 0.891, so to be removed. After removing the item, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was increased from 0.888 to 0.900. Additionally, delete any one Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were not changed greatly. Because the item "I distracted easily at work" was in the inverse against others, it must be converted at first. That is, the original "1" turned to "5", "2" turned to "4", "4" turned to "2", "5" turned to "1", and "3" remained unchanged. After conversion, Original Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of absorption was 0.697. "I distracted easily at work" and "It's hard to pull myself out of work", the individual Alpha Cronbach's value was 0.763 and 0.759, higher than 0.697, so to be removed. After removing the item, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was increased from 0.697 to 0.829. Additionally, delete any one Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were not changed greatly. As a result, after revision, the engagement scale has good reliability.

#### 4.1.2 Validity Tests

First, we need to do Baetlet and KMO tests of perceived insider status scale. The KMO value of perceived insider status scale was 0.859 and result of Bartlett spherical test was to reject (Sig=0.000). Then it was analyzed by the common factor

variance analysis, and common degree of all the items in the list was more than 0.5. The total variance explanation of perceived insider status scale which was greater than one was one, and cumulative variance contribution rate was 66.026%. As a result, perceived insider status scale has a good validity.

Second, we need to do Baetlet and KMO tests of psychological capital scale. The KMO value of psychological capital scale was 0.922 and result of Bartlett spherical test was to reject (Sig=0.000). Then it was analyzed by the common factor variance analysis, and common degree of the item “Things have always been what I wanted at work” was 0.478, which was less than 0.5, so to be removed. After revision, the total variance explanation of psychological capital scale which was greater than one was four, and cumulative variance contribution rate was 63.071%. As a result, after revision, psychological capital scale has a good validity.

Third, we need to do Baetlet and KMO tests of engagement scale. The KMO value of engagement scale was 0.912 and result of Bartlett spherical test was to reject (Sig=0.000). Then it was analyzed by the common factor variance analysis, the common degree of the item “I can work for a long time before taking a break”, “I can persist even if the work is not smooth” and “My work is full of challenge” was 0.442, 0.412 and 0.465, which was less than 0.5, so to be removed. After revision, the total variance explanation of engagement scale which was greater than one was three, and cumulative variance contribution rate was 68.359%. As a result, after revision, engagement scale has a good validity.

Therefore, after the reliability and validity test, delete perceived insider status scale of one item, psychological capital scale one item, and engagement scale five items. Finally, formal questionnaire contains four parts: the first part is the introduction and emphasizing the anonymity. The second part is demographic data. The third part is the core questionnaire, by three scales, a total of 40 questions. The fourth part is the conclusion and expressing thanks again.

#### 4.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was used in this study to research the relationship among PIS, psychological capital and engagement of new employees.

After analysis, the correlation among PIS, psychological capital and engagement is significant. The correlation coefficient of PIS and psychological capital is 0.451, which indicates that PIS is moderately related to psychological capital. H2 validated primitively. The correlation coefficient of PIS and three dimensions of engagement and total engagement is 0.437, 0.477, 0.468 and 0.469, which indicates that PIS is moderately related to three dimensions of engagement and total engagement. H1a, H1b, H1c and H1 validated primitively. The correlation coefficient of psychological capital and three dimensions of engagement and total engagement is 0.796, 0.770, 0.680 and 0.819, which indicates that psychological capital is strongly related to three dimensions of engagement and total engagement. H3a, H3b, H3c and H3 validated primitively. (see table 1)

	M	SD	PIS	Psychological capital	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Engagement
PIS	3.7460	.71667	1					
Psychological capital	3.6458	.50056	.451**	1				
Vigor	3.4496	.66919	.437**	.796**	1			
Dedication	3.6259	.71370	.477**	.770**	.824**	1		



Absorption	3.6232	.65741	.468**	.680**	.701**	.736**	1	
Engagement	3.5671	.62257	.469**	.819**	.920**	.937**	.885**	1

### 4.3 Regression Analysis

In model 1, we analyzed the control variables which need to be excluded. Model 2 indicates the results of engagement regression analysis when PIS entered. Model 2 is statistically significant ( $R^2=0.337$ ). The influence of PIS on engagement is positive and significant ( $\beta=0.413$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). H1 validated. Model 3 indicates the results of engagement regression analysis when psychological capital entered. Model 3 is statistically significant ( $R^2=0.717$ ). The influence of PIS on engagement is positive and significant ( $\beta=0.133$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Additionally,  $0.133<0.413$ , which means psychological capital plays an intermediary role in PIS and engagement. H4 validated. Also, Model 3 indicates the influence of psychological capital on engagement is positive and significant ( $\beta=0.740$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). H3 validated. (see Table 2)

Table2. Regression Analysis

		Engagement		
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Control Variables	Gender	-.135*	-.096	.033
	Age	-.017	.068	.134***
	Relationship Status	.130*	.086	-.015
	Educational Background	.247***	.157*	-.023
	Unit character	-.205***	-.168***	-.111***
	Service Years	-.173**	-.166**	-.127***
Indepen-dent Variables	PIS		.413***	.133***
Mediator	Psychological capital			.740***
R <sup>2</sup>		.178	.337	.717
F		9.782	19.636	85.048

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study reviewed and analyzed the theory of perceived insider status, psychological capital, engagement, proposed the relationship model among them, and studied the mechanism of the new employees' engagement. By online and paper questionnaire survey, and through the empirical analysis of data processing, the hypotheses have been verified scientifically.

The conclusions of this study are as follows: (1) PIS has a positive impact on engagement. (2) PIS has a positive impact on psychological capital. (3) Psychological capital has a positive impact on engagement. (4) Psychological capital plays an intermediary role in PIS and engagement.

## 5.2 Managerial Suggestion

According to the empirical results, new employees' PIS can directly influence engagement, and can also through psychological capital influence engagement. Therefore, it can enhance both PIS and psychological capital for enterprises to improve new employees' engagement.

### 5.2.1 Value New Employees' Perceived Insider Status

If employees perceive that they are the insider of an enterprise, which means they can accept the enterprise culture, work flows, rules and regulations. Their value can be consistent with the enterprise's value, their goal can be consistent with the enterprise's goal. They may generate trust, recognition and love to enterprises. So employees will take a proactive approach to the organization, the best way is to improve their engagement.

Therefore, the managers should pay more attention to the new employees and create the atmosphere which makes new employees feel they are the insider of it. Managers could give new employees more career support, so that they will have a stronger sense of belonging, private space and be valued by the enterprise at work. Enterprises can hold more team building, such as, sending blessings on holidays and birthday, posting enterprise culture books and related publications, offering internship in the department, and encouraging them to participate activities. It would make employees feel acceptance and insider of the enterprise.

### 5.2.2 Improve New Employees' Psychological Capital

Employees' psychological capital is a kind of invisible wealth, and it has a positive role in promoting organizational behavior. Through this study, we can see that the new employees' psychological capital has a significant positive effect on their engagement. Therefore, it is very important to enhance the employee's psychological capital.

Psychological capital contains four dimensions, which are self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism. However it is not a simple superposition of these dimensions, it through a collaborative approach to combination, so as to play a positive role. Enterprises should not only pay attention and develop one dimension, but also take it as a whole comprehensive development, and it would produce greater effect than the sum of its parts. Therefore, enterprises should use different strategies or means to enhance the overall level of new employees' psychological capital.

HR personnel can take psychological capital as an important indicator of selection of employees in the recruitment. For example, IKEA pays more attention to employee optimism and energy in the recruitment. AO Smith requires qualified staff to have passion. An increased number of foreign and private enterprises emphasize psychological capital when they are recruiting staffs.

In the process of recruitment, HR personnel can use the foreign psychological capital scale, and for the actual situation of the enterprise to modification. Individual positive psychological character scale developed by Wellsprings and Seligman in 2003 has been widely applied to many organizations or enterprises. All in all, high level of psychological capital can predict the overall quality of staff at some degree. Eventually, it can enhance the overall competitiveness of enterprises.

## 5.3 Limitations

There are many potential areas of future research suggested by the current studies. Therefore, this paper summarizes the shortcomings of existing studies, and gives some advisements for the future research.

Firstly, PIS, psychological capital and engagement are both timely and dynamic. This study used a cross-sectional survey, that is, the object employees to fill in this moment of PIS, psychological capital and engagement without longitudinal follow-up study. For future research, scholars should give full consideration to the dynamic nature of them, and to measure the variables in different times and at different stages.

Finally, all the theory, dimensions, structures of scale are developed by western scholars. Undoubtedly, all scales meet the universal requirement and are suitable for Chinese employees to some degree. However, they are not proposed and developed in China after all. Therefore, the research based on Chinese culture is also a key point in the research field. In the future, we could lay more emphasis on the development of Chinese localization of the PIS, psychological capital and engagement.

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