

# Exploring employee engagement from the employee prospective: An overview on classical and neoclassical approaches of Management

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## **Abstract:**

Persons are different and they act differently in an organization. Person's action signifies the behavior and attitude of the "person" at the workplace. An organization is a combination of purpose, persons and task where persons are able to establish a common purpose, willingness to contribute and persons are communicating to each other. The person's action tends to perform better when they engage personally, emotionally and intellectually in an organization. Organizations are started giving importance to employee engagement for seeking high levels of organizational performance and productivity through various human related activities such as training, self and career development, challenging task and attractive job design, performance appraisal, meaningful working condition, job satisfaction and empowerment. During the Industrial revolution (1820-1840) there was an implementation of new technologies to increase mass production from using animal, muscle power to steam power. It was the time industrial growth happened owners were looking different means for mass production. During this period the concept "employee" and "organized workforce" came in to the picture to increase mass production and efficiency of task through focused on entire organization not just the work, formal Organization, rules & regulation, legal authority and social status for manager during classical era of management. Further researchers took interest to investigate different means to motivate persons to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Neo classical era moved from task oriented approach to people oriented approach and was focused on task to people, informal organization, and interpersonal relation, shifted from job enlargement to enrichment, person's need and motivation in an Organization. Research has consistently shown that employee engagement is connected to high performance factor for an organization. The aim of this paper is to highlight the historical evaluation of employee engagement from employer prospective and to trace the different level of employee engagement during classical and neoclassical era of management.

## **Index Terms:**

Employee engagement, Organization performance, Workforce, job design, performance appraisal, meaningful working condition,

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

Persons are the driving force for any Organizations. It means physical infrastructure and technology will not innovate; it's the persons action which bring great ideas and innovation. We can argue that it is not the persons, but their action, ideas, attitude, influence, motivation and services which should be considered for building sustainable business growth. It is the willingness of individual to contribute within the organization system, what makes a high performing organization and high level of employee performance. Organizations are realizing that one thing help them to survive and sustain business stability is through their human capital. It's an opportunity for HR Professionals to understand what drives employee engagement. It's the "people who occupy the workplace". People are involving themselves differently in the role they perform which can be a strong indicator to understand their level of personal engagement at the work place in an organization. During the Industrial revolution (1820-1840) there was an implementation of new technologies to increase mass production from using animal and muscle power to steam power.

It was the time industrial growth happened owners were looking different means for mass production .During this period the concept “employee” and “organized workforce” came in to the picture to increase mass production and efficiency. Organizations are started giving top priority to employee engagement research has consistently shown that employee engagement is connected to high performance factor for an organization .The aim of this paper is to highlight the historical evaluation of employee engagement from employer prospective and to trace the different level of employee engagement during classical and neoclassical era of management era .

The term employee engagement mention first time in an Academy of Management Journal article, “Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work.” (Kahn, 1990). Kahn defined personal engagement a person’s expression for “preferred self” while performing the task behaviors that lead a connection to work and group, mental and emotional presence and actively perform the role in an organization. From the above definition we can say that engagement is a person’s personal decision, person’s initiative towards ability to actively involved and give their best for organization success.

Every individual needs to feel engaged with task, work they perform, with supervisor and tem members and with the organization .Engaged employees are personally attach to the work they perform in an organization. Before Khan and others, the characteristics of employee engagement was suggested in different way in the literature. The management contribution of classical management theories were focused on scientific management through standardized tools, procedure and skills development training leads to mass production. Then work and legal authority, hierarchical structure and conflict resolutions lead to efficiency and finally integration of informal organization, interpersonal relations leads to productivity and employee motivation.

### **1.5 Objective of the Paper:**

Based on the above discussion the objective paper is to highlight the historical evaluation of employee engagement from employer prospective and to trace the different level of employee engagement during classical and neoclassical era of management.

### **1.6 Literature Review:**

Employee engagement defined differently in different context by many researchers. Employee engagement defined as employee performs different roles in organization and inside the organization they express themselves differently while doing the work. (Kahn, 1990), Later employee engagement defined as how employee involve and take interest to do the work .further engagement defined as the positive attitude of an employee within the organization.

Also employee engagement defined as intellectual, emotional and behavioral actions during performing the role .Also employee engagement defined as the overall movement inside the organization through job satisfaction , motivate towards role and committed the perform the role. We can identify from the above definitions about different types of engagement – task engagement, emotional engagement and behavioral engagement. Employment engagement is about “adoptive behavior” to engage at the work place, with task and with supervisor and team members. In the past the literature on employee engagement were positively related to performance (sakes, 2006; Bakcer and Demerouti, 2008; Xanthopoulou et al; 2009), also related to higher level of commitment towards the work (Shuck, 2011). Engaged employees have connected positively towards performing their work and effective while performing (Burke et al; 2009). Also research exists explaining employee attitudes as engagement which was related productivity and organizational outcomes (Harter, Schmidt and Hayes, 2002). Employee engagement has both “attitudinal and behavioral” components. Such action of employees at the work place leads to engagement and value to organizational

effectiveness (Erickson, 2005). Engagement has been viewed as a psychological state of mind of employees as personal involvement, commitment towards role to perform. Wellins and Concelman (2005, p.1), suggested that engagement as “an amalgamation of commitment, loyal to organization, increase productivity and ownership”. Similarly Dvir, Eden, Avolio and Shamir (2002, p. 737) defined active engagement in terms of involving high level of role according to employees qualifications, skill sets, employee take personal initiative and responsibly to perform the role. Brayfield and Rothe’s (1951) explained employees enthusiasm and passion as engagement and the relevance of satisfied employees invest more time in roles they perform and its enjoyable to them (Rothbard and Edwards, 2003). Engagement can be characterized as an efficacy and energy employee bring at the work place (Maslach et al, 2001). We can say job engagement is purely connected to personal engagement because employee focus is on work not the organization (Brown, 1996). Job engagement is more related to the relationship between individual and the work role. Kahn (1990) also refers to the expression of employee as task behavior. Kahn’s suggested that “people act out momentary attachment and detachments in role performances.” (Kahn, 1990, p.694). It is the expression of a person’s preferred self in the task behavior that leads to work with others, presence of self with the role and effective role performances. Causal observation suggests that much of job and personal engagement was happening during classical management era. It was the rise of Industrial revolution and it gave different dimension to mass production through using scientific methods. Taylor’s scientific method was created to increase productivity through employee engagement (task involvement, personal involvement, cooperation and intellectual work (Grachev and Rakitsky, 2013). Further to time and motion study was focused on how fast a job should be done. Workers develop experience with participating in motion and time study. Workers started taking self-interest and initiative in developing greater skills which was related to job engagement. During this phase employees were interested to attend the motion and time study, because there was scope for higher wages earned and greater number of promotion. Supervisor and workers meeting was happening regularly, which leads to cooperative working environment and workers were actively engaged and interested to be more efficient, economic growth and to be happier. This approach gave a different direction towards employee willingness to perform and improve their skills (Schacter, 2010). Indeed a major component of scientific management was further towards standardized tools and procedures for higher level of production. Workers had their own tool box which was not efficient that leads to work stress and inefficiencies. So, workers were provided standardized tools and procedure for maximize production which motivated them to work hard to earn more wages and was a higher source of income. Supervisor played a very vital role to design a tools and procedure that fit people to perform the respective role. Workers were willing to perform individually the role because of an opportunity to earn more wages and incentives. Workers were given feedback daily on assigned task. It means there was a scope of role improvement for workers. The task and goal setting by the supervisor was to give a challenging and specific task to workers. Worker’s role performing was individualized which leads to “more earning Vs. more production”. Personal rewards and ambition was powerful incentive. Taylor also claimed higher wages can be given in return of own interest to learn to perform the task according to scientific methods. Those who are experienced and having expertise to operate scientific methods are considered as supervisor. They got a self-identity as mentally fit and high aptitude because they were producing more and greater than other workers. These supervisors were giving training to average workers. Scientific selection leads to self-identify. Taylor actually focused a systematic way of training workers with the required skills to perform their duties, but supervisor also should create an experience to engage employee by creating more meaningful task, role and purpose to perform. Further to that Lillian Gilbert highlighted the importance of the human element, she recognized that workers need to feel involve in the decision making, job security and interested in their work. (Wren, 2005). Fayol was the first person to differentiate between technical and managerial skills (Wren, 1994). Employees need to be proficient in multitasking in each level but technical skills are requiring for workers level but in managerial position because high level of management responsibility was required. We can say managers were empowered and owned the responsibility, Implementing new ideas and new ways to increase efficacy at work.

1.7 Conceptual model of employee engagement and Development of Proposition:

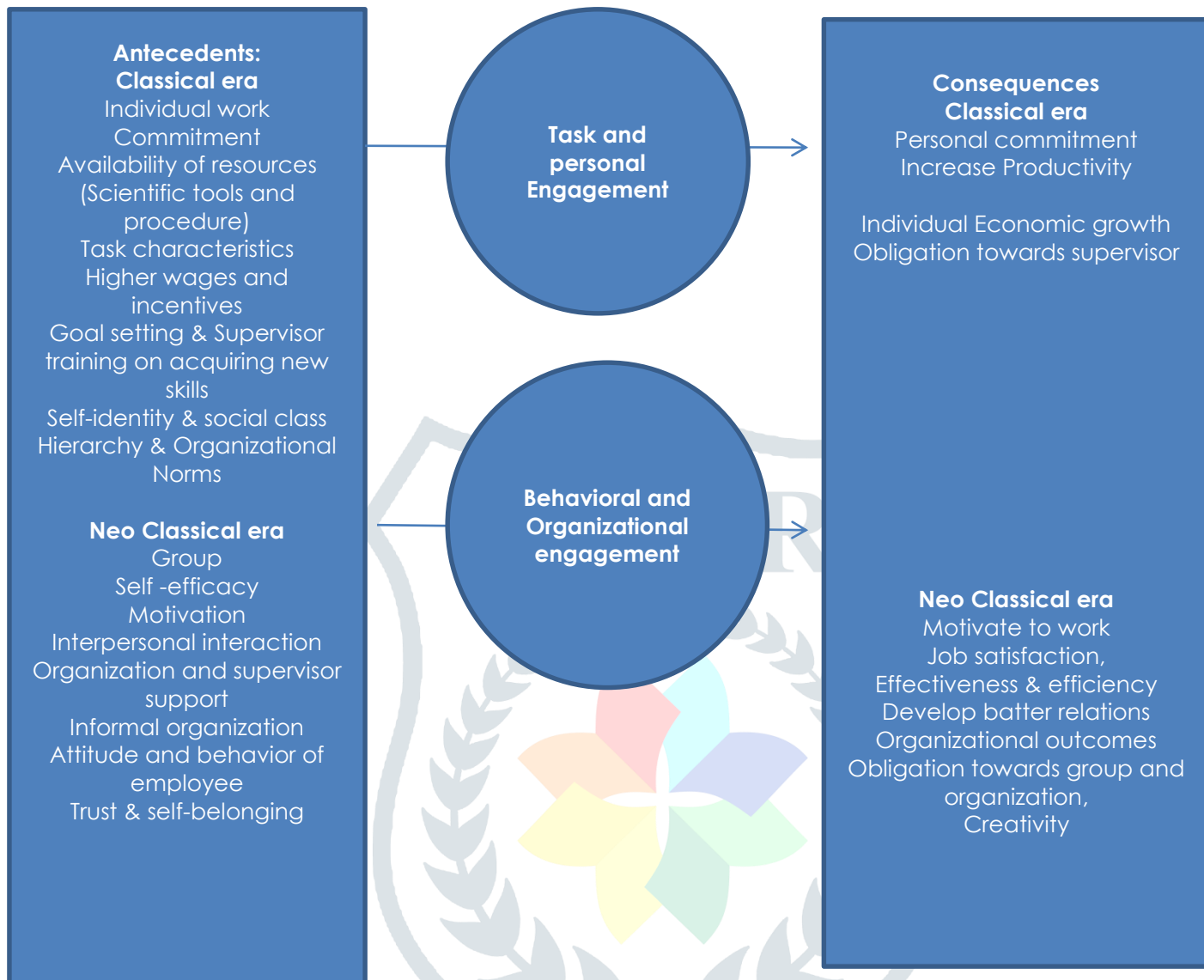


Figure -1

**Proposition 1:** Supervisor, task characteristics and employee interaction plays a critical role in developing personal engagement in the workplace.

We can say from the above proposition some of these conditions seems to develop active personal engagement. The attributes of the work, characteristic of task, supervisor, the availability of resources, for example tools and procedure. It appears that when people do certain kinds of work ( work has an opportunity to grow economically , work verity and challenge ) and when they work under certain kind of manager whose expectations are clear , his involvement in employee`s role ,training making the role interesting and challenging . The employees personally engage to work that leads to productivity and produce greater result. Further emphasis was given from individual work to group work. More focused on managerial performance and organizational efficiency, Formal positions were attractive identities for supervisor.

They were performing as they felt of having social status .It was also observed that positions leads to status and influence when supervisors were able to influence others at the work place. supervisors were experienced a sense of meaningfulness and they were felling valuable in organization`s system. The major motivating factor was self-belief to perform efficiently which influenced them to stay engaged with in the

organizations. Organizations Hierarchy, standard operating manual and Organizational norms helped the organizations for better communication and coordination with in the groups and different levels of hierarchy. Management responsibility of command leads to connect better with management people. Supervisor beliefs, values and their personal commitment towards efficiency lead to self-efficacy. Further classical theories have been criticized by several researchers. During classical era Human elements were missing, workers were considered as components of machinery and economic men rather than social men. Whole environment was influenced by material and mechanical to increased production. Workers became an economic commodity. Workers satisfaction was completely missing.

Neo classical approach was much more focused on worker`s behavior and how do they react in different working environment. Also Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) suggested that good health and positive experience and emotions of the worker`s leads to positive outcomes. Engaged employees have greater amount of attachment and less chance to leave the organization. Infact Kahn (1990) found that supportive and interpersonal relationship among workers inside and outside the organization which leads to engagement where workers try new things with our fear. Also job support among the workers leads to engagement. We can say, employees believe that their organization and supervisor is concerned about them and caring of workers which influenced them to obligations towards organizations through actively engage at the work place (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Main contribution to the human relations movement suggested that workers get job satisfaction through cooperation and relation among coworkers (Gibson et al., 2013). Elton May believed that “that the worker is a person whose attitudes and effectiveness are conditioning by social demands from both inside and outside the work plant” (Hartley, 2006, p.286). It means the behavior and attitude of the workers changes due to interactions among themselves. The workers need to have sense of belonging, informal interaction to engaging the workers. Elton May recognized the importance of human beings in management. He emphasized work place is not about technology which we can relate to economic but a social organization. The norms and value of the group influence on behavior and performance of the workers. But it was observed the attitude of supervisor and interpersonal relations had a greater influence to engage them. No strict control rather than friendly behavior boost their performance at the work place. We can say these behaviors that support social and psychological environment where individual perform their task with high involvement and energy. Some the behavior of workers like, self-initiate, helping coworkers, not wasting time and performing extra duty and active participation with groups directly connect to organizational citizenship behavior. Workers were more committed to contribute for respective group.

**Proposition 2: The drivers of engagement (motivation to work, organizational citizenship behavior and job satisfaction) influence employee engagement.**

Motivation to work, peers interaction , sense of belonging , quality of work are related to the nature of social relations among workers and supervisors .Human relations argued that the workers respond to social context of the workplace and relation among coworkers. Neo classical theory made a significant contribution towards human behavior at work place in an organization. It has created a positive impact of human factor in an organization. This has given an opportunity for better understood the human behavior. Organization is a social system which includes emotions, attitude and behavior of your worker, job environment and motivation. When their task performances included meaningful interpersonal interactions with supervisor and coworkers. Meaningful interaction suggested as self-appreciation, dignity, respect and sense of worthwhileness. These enabled relationships in which workers wanted to give and receive form coworkers and supervisor. Interpersonal relationships promoted psychological safety when workers were sharing, interacting, with own interest helping each other, supportive and trusting. This approach changed the view from men are economic men, tools and machine to men are social men and a valuable resources. Furthermore Herzberg suggested that there some other job factors that result in job satisfaction. Job enrichment and role fit directly connected to meaningfulness which leads to higher level of motivation.

The above integration shows that employee engagement has been present in different context during classical and neo classical management era. Following are the four related concept the we can integrate as employee engagement.

**1.1 Work engagement:** work engagement is coming from organizational psychology. When employee actively engaged during the role they perform that leads to positive work outcomes. It means employee is more committed and very energetic to perform the task through their positive behavior.

**1.2 Job Satisfaction:** sense of accomplishment during his or her job. Also the job characteristic, organizational culture, opportunities, training, work environment and supervisor leads to job satisfaction.

**1.3 Organizational commitment:** willingness to perform and sense of obligation towards an organization psychologically connected to the organization and sense of involvement.

**1.4 Organizational Citizenship Behavior:** it's an individual behavior to take personal initiative to develop the team, helping peers, not wasting time and performing extra duties. Developing social environment with in the work place.

### Discussion:

Having engaged employees may be an essential for business sustainability. From the above explanation we can summarize that the job and organization engagement are related to personal involvement, employees attitude, behavior and intention towards job, coworkers, supervisor and organization. Finally this study suggest that employee engagement were there in different level during classical and neo classical ear of management. engaged employees always have a high degree of commitment, relationship with coworkers, supervisor and organization. From the above discussion we can argue that employee engagement vary from organization to organization and with every employee. Also result highlight the importance of employee engagement which can be develop through goal setting, helping employee to develop self-efficacy. So as managers are expected to strategies to engage employee thought meaningful work environment.

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