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## Female Employee Engagement as a Mediator of the Influence of Leadership, Empowerment, and Organizational Climate on Employee Performance in the Narcotics Enforcement Unit of Customs and Excise

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**Abstract:** This study stems from the growing importance of female employees in the Narcotics Enforcement Unit of the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE), particularly as drug-related offenses involving women continue to rise. In this context, leadership, employee empowerment, and organizational climate are considered key factors that may shape employee engagement and, ultimately, job performance. The purpose of this research is to examine how these organizational factors influence the engagement and performance of female employees working in narcotics enforcement units within DGCE. A quantitative research design was employed using Structural Equation Modeling. The measurement model was validated through Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and hypothesis testing was conducted using PLS-SEM. Data were collected from 211 female employees through a structured questionnaire, and all research instruments were tested for reliability and validity prior to data analysis. The findings reveal that leadership and organizational climate significantly affect employee performance through the mediating role of engagement. In contrast, employee empowerment does not show a significant effect on performance when mediated by engagement. These results are supported by measurement indicators that demonstrated strong validity and reliability. The study highlights the importance of strengthening leadership quality and fostering a supportive organizational climate to enhance engagement and improve the performance of female employees in narcotics enforcement. These insights may guide DGCE management in developing human resource strategies that are more responsive to the unique needs and contributions of women in high-risk enforcement environments.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Employee Empowerment, Organizational Climate, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance

### INTRODUCTION

This study is motivated by the crucial role of employee engagement, particularly among female employees, in achieving organizational performance within customs institutions in a country such as Indonesia. In many countries, customs institutions are also responsible for

protecting society from illegal trade, hazardous goods, and irresponsible business practices (Veenstra, 2022). The challenges faced by customs institutions across various countries are becoming increasingly complex over time. These challenges extend beyond issues of state revenue and increasingly encompass the protection of national security interests. (Bajrami, et al, 2010).

One of the vital enforcement duties related to national security carried out by the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) is addressing the threat of narcotics smuggling. The DGCE has undertaken various supervisory measures, including intelligence operations, inspections of passengers' and crew members' belongings, examinations of postal consignments and express courier shipments, as well as coordinated operations to combat illicit narcotics trafficking in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, such as the National Narcotics Agency and the Indonesian National Police. From 2015 to 2023, based on data from the Directorate of Narcotics Interdiction, a total of 6,553 enforcement actions were conducted, resulting in the seizure of narcotics with a combined weight of 33.31 tons.

The threat posed by narcotics-related enforcement has become increasingly challenging, as empirical data indicate that not only male offenders but also female offenders are involved in narcotics-related criminal activities. Menurut Puspitasari (2020), in 2020 alone, 168 (one hundred and sixty-eight) women were arrested for their involvement in narcotics trafficking cases. Narcotics networks frequently employ women as couriers because they are perceived as more easily manipulated and exploited for smuggling prohibited substances. Several studies have also identified an increase in women's involvement in criminal activities. Harty (2012) has reported that since the 1960s, there has been a significant increase in the incarceration of women in the United States and Western Europe. Meanwhile, Campaniello (2019), in his study, demonstrates that female involvement in criminal activities in advanced industrial countries continues to rise, in line with the strengthening role of women in society.

The external challenge arising from the increasing involvement of women as perpetrators of criminal activities indicates the need for the active participation of female officers, particularly in carrying out effective body inspections to uncover narcotics smuggling cases at international airports, especially those involving female passengers. This is in accordance with the Regulation of the Director General of Customs and Excise Number PER-17/BC/2020 on procedures for supervision in the field of customs and excise, which stipulates that body inspections must be conducted in a private area by at least two customs officers of the same gender as the person being inspected.

Based on data on narcotics enforcement actions conducted by the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) from 2022 to 2024, there has been an increase in the overall number of enforcement actions; however, at the same time, enforcement actions involving female officers have experienced a decline (DJBC, 2025). Across thousands of narcotics enforcement cases handled by the Directorate General of Customs and Excise over the past three years 1,244 cases in 2022, 1,333 cases in 2023, and 1,487 cases in 2024 the involvement of female officers did not exceed 66 individuals, with the lowest level of involvement recorded in 2024, involving only 48 female officers (DJBC, 2025). Thus, it can be observed that amid the increasing number of enforcement actions, including those involving female offenders in narcotics-related crimes, the detection of narcotics cases using modes typically associated with female couriers has, in fact, declined. Accordingly, these data indicate the possibility of a decrease in the performance of female officers in uncovering narcotics cases involving characteristic concealment methods, such as body attachment, swallowing, and insertion (placed in the genital and/or rectal cavities), during the observed period.

This situation constitutes an internal challenge for the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE), namely the need to enhance the engagement and performance of female employees who focus on narcotics enforcement. Factors such as leadership, employee empowerment, and organizational climate are believed to interact in fostering employee

motivation, innovation, and work effectiveness. However, there are indications that several measurement indicators, such as integrity and professionalism within the organizational climate, have not yet demonstrated adequate validity and therefore require improvement. Furthermore, employee empowerment, which includes decision-making autonomy and information transparency, has received relatively lower ratings compared to leadership characteristics and other dimensions of the organizational climate.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of female employee engagement as a mediating variable in the relationship between leadership, empowerment, and organizational climate and employee performance in the narcotics enforcement unit of customs and excise. This study is important for providing insights into how these factors can be optimized to enhance the performance and engagement of female employees within government organizations that play a strategic role in narcotics enforcement. At present, issues related to the active involvement of women in the workplace have become a strategic concern in efforts to promote gender equality.

Several studies indicate that issues concerning the role of women in the workplace still require further improvement. As reported by Pertiwi et al. (2025), there remains a critical gap in the utilization of female human capital in the context of paid employment. Another related issue concerns the persistent weakness of women's empowerment in the workplace, which is reflected in three main dimensions: access to resources, agency (the ability to make decisions within society), and achievements related to increased independence (Wardhani et al., 2025).

Other studies suggest that, in Indonesia, a wide range of efforts is still required to improve achievements in gender equality and gender engagement indices across various sectors (Iswahyudi & Rahmawati, 2025). Accordingly, this study observes that the engagement of female employees in narcotics enforcement duties has rarely become the focus of research and organizational policy, thereby offering a novel contribution to the understanding of the performance dynamics of female officers within law enforcement environments.

## **METHOD**

This study adopts a positivist paradigm, characterized by an objective, measurable, and empirically grounded approach (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Creswell, 2014). The research employs a survey method targeting a group of respondents considered representative of the overall population, namely female employees of the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE). Through the use of a structured questionnaire, the researchers are able to quantitatively measure specific variables such as perceptions, satisfaction, and the level of female employee engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Sugiyono, 2012; Creswell, 2014).

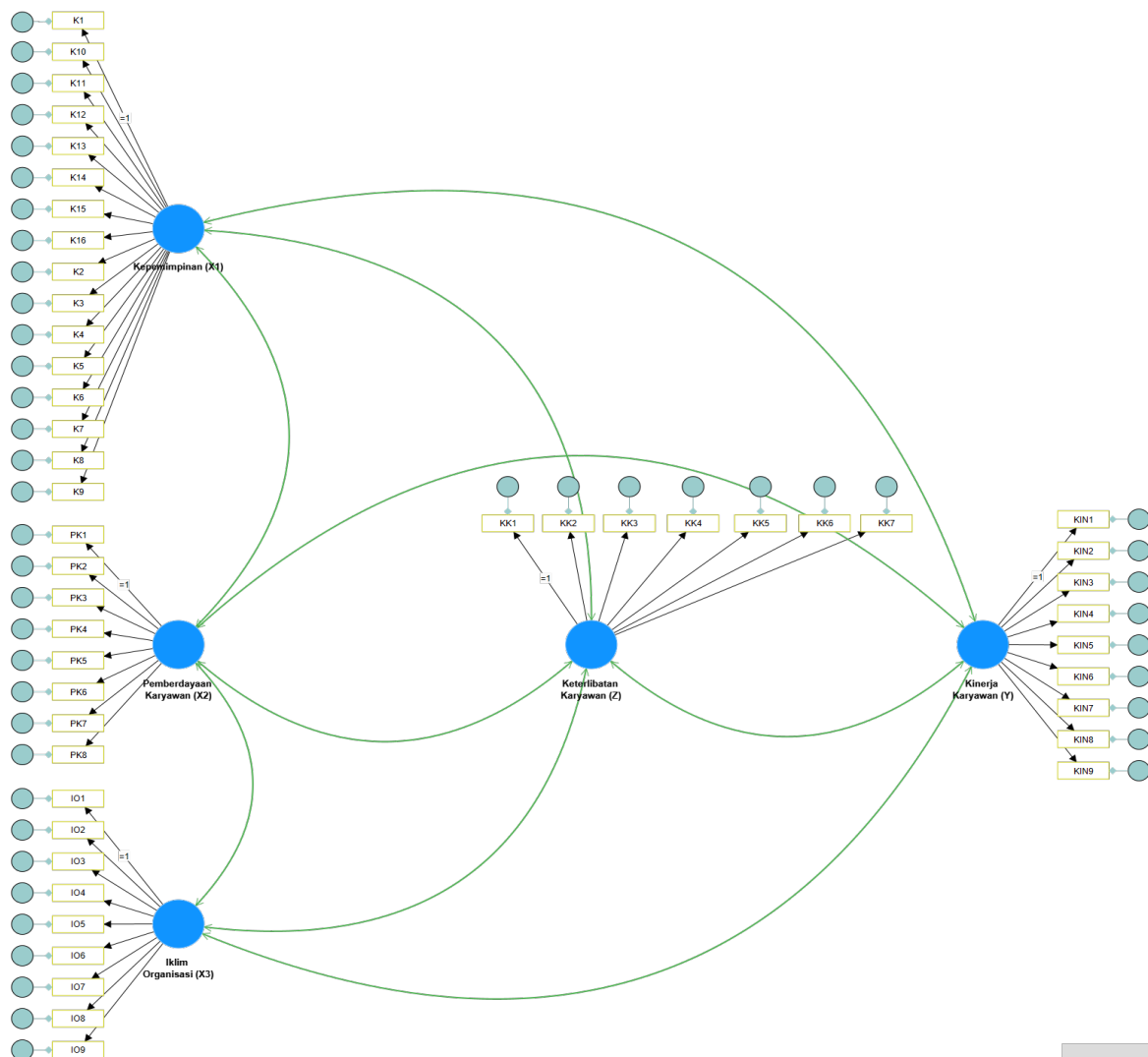
This study constitutes an explanatory research design aimed at elucidating the causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. The central focus of the analysis is the impact of leadership, communication climate, and employee empowerment (independent variables) on female employee engagement (intervening variable) and the performance of female employees (dependent variable).

Given that the focus of this study is limited to female employees, the population of this research comprises female employees of the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE). Based on available data, the number of female employees in the DGCE enforcement sector as of 2024 totals 446 individuals. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula to establish the minimum required sample. With a 95% confidence level, which is standard in social science research, the minimum sample size obtained was 211 respondents drawn from the population of female DGCE employees working in the enforcement sector. The sampling technique employed is probability sampling, which provides equal opportunity for each individual in the population to be selected as a research subject. Specifically, proportional random sampling was applied across regional offices throughout Indonesia.

The data analysis technique employed in this study is quantitative analysis, which includes covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) using SmartPLS version 4. CB-SEM is a multivariate statistical technique used to examine causal relationships among latent variables through the covariance matrix of the data. CB-SEM emphasizes the fit between the theoretical model and the empirical data and applies maximum likelihood estimation to obtain model parameters. After Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validates the measurement model, the causal structural analysis is subsequently conducted. The structural model analysis is performed by evaluating the path coefficient values and their statistical significance (t-values/p-values), the explained variance ( $R^2$ ) for each dependent latent variable, and the effect size ( $f^2$ ).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Analysis of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results for the Measurement Model



Source: Processed Research Data

**Gambar 1.** Measurement Model Based on CFA Results

#### 1. Loading Factor

Based on the factor loading results, the loading values for the Leadership variable range from 0.761 to 0.907, which exceed the critical threshold for indicator loadings and thus indicate that the indicators are valid. Accordingly, all 16 measurement indicators of the Leadership variable are declared valid.

For the Employee Empowerment variable, one indicator exhibits a factor loading below the threshold of 0.70, namely PK1 with a loading value of 0.509. Meanwhile, the remaining indicators range from 0.725 to 0.904, which exceed the critical loading value and are therefore considered valid. Consequently, out of the eight measurement indicators of the Employee Empowerment variable, one indicator is deemed invalid and was excluded from the hypothesis testing.

For the Organizational Climate variable, the factor loading results indicate that three indicators, IO2, IO3, and IO4, have loading values below the 0.70 threshold, namely 0.680, 0.694, and 0.690, respectively. Meanwhile, the remaining indicators range from 0.711 to 0.846, which exceed the critical loading value and are therefore considered valid. Accordingly, out of the nine measurement indicators of the Organizational Climate variable, three indicators are deemed invalid and were excluded from the hypothesis testing.

For the Employee Engagement variable, the factor loading results indicate that two indicators, KK3 and KK7, have loading values below the 0.70 threshold, namely 0.684 and 0.613, respectively. Meanwhile, the remaining indicators range from 0.775 to 0.828, which exceed the critical loading value and are therefore considered valid. Accordingly, out of the seven measurement indicators of the Employee Engagement variable, two indicators are deemed invalid and were excluded from the hypothesis testing.

For the Employee Performance variable, the factor loading results indicate that three indicators—KIN6, KIN7, and KIN9—have loading values below the 0.70 threshold, namely 0.677, 0.648, and 0.597, respectively. Meanwhile, the remaining indicators range from 0.711 to 0.846, which exceed the critical loading value and are therefore considered valid. Accordingly, out of the nine measurement indicators of the Employee Performance variable, three indicators are deemed invalid and were excluded from the hypothesis testing.

## 2. Convergent Validity

**Table 1. Reliability and Convergent Validity**

	<i>Cronbach's alpha (standardized)</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha (unstandardized)</i>	<i>Composite reliability (rho c)</i>	<i>Average variance extracted (AVE)</i>
Organizational Climate (X3)	0,920	0,918	0,922	0,556
Leadership (X1)	0,970	0,969	0,970	0,667
Employee Engagement (Z) (Female Employee Engagement)	0,915	0,908	0,891	0,566
Employee Performance (Y) (Female Employee Performance)	0,930	0,926	0,907	0,540
Employee Empowerment (X2)	0,941	0,941	0,922	0,604

Sumber: Processed Research Data

Based on the table, the Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.891 to 0.970, indicating that the internal consistency of the latent constructs, considering the factor loadings of each indicator, is regarded as good and reliable. A Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.70 signifies adequate reliability. Based on the table above, all variables exhibit Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than 0.90, indicating that the internal consistency or reliability of the measurement model is categorized as excellent or highly reliable. Furthermore, based on the results of the Average Variance Extracted

(AVE) test, all variables have AVE coefficients greater than 0.50, ranging from 0.540 to 0.667, which indicates that the indicators jointly reflect the constructs very well.

3. Discriminant Validity

**Table 2. Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Results**

	<b>Organizational Climate (X3)</b>	<b>Leadership (X1)</b>	<b>Employee Engagement (Z) (Female Employee Engagement)</b>	<b>Employee Performance (Y) (Female Employee Performance)</b>	<b>Employee Empowerment (X2)</b>
Organizational Climate (X3)					
Leadership (X1)	0,815				
Employee Engagement (Z) (Female Employee Engagement)	0,815	0,688			
Employee Performance (Y) (Female Employee Performance)	0,810	0,711	0,803		
Employee Empowerment (X2)	0,809	0,822	0,689	0,680	

An HTMT value below 0.90 indicates that the model demonstrates good or adequate discriminant validity.

**Tabel 3. Hasil Fornell–Larcker**

	<b>Organizational Climate (X3)</b>	<b>Leadership (X1)</b>	<b>Employee Engagement (Z) (Female Employee Engagement)</b>	<b>Employee Performance (Y) (Female Employee Performance)</b>	<b>Employee Empowerment (X2)</b>
Organizational Climate (X3)	0,746				
Leadership (X1)		0,817			
Employee Engagement (Z) (Female Employee Engagement)	0,654	0,234	0,853		
Employee Performance (Y) (Female Employee Performance)	0,566	0,387	0,835	0,735	
Employee Empowerment (X2)	0,738	0,354	0,463	0,448	0,777

The decision criterion is met when the square root of a construct’s AVE exceeds its correlations with other constructs. Based on the table, each construct’s value is greater than its correlations with the constructs below it, indicating that the criterion has been satisfied.

4. Goodness of Fit (GOF)

**Tabel 4. Hasil Goodness of Fit (GOF)**

	<i>Estimated model</i>
RMSEA	0,013
GFI	0,948
SRMR	0,027
NFI	0,971
TLI	0,922
CFI	0,936

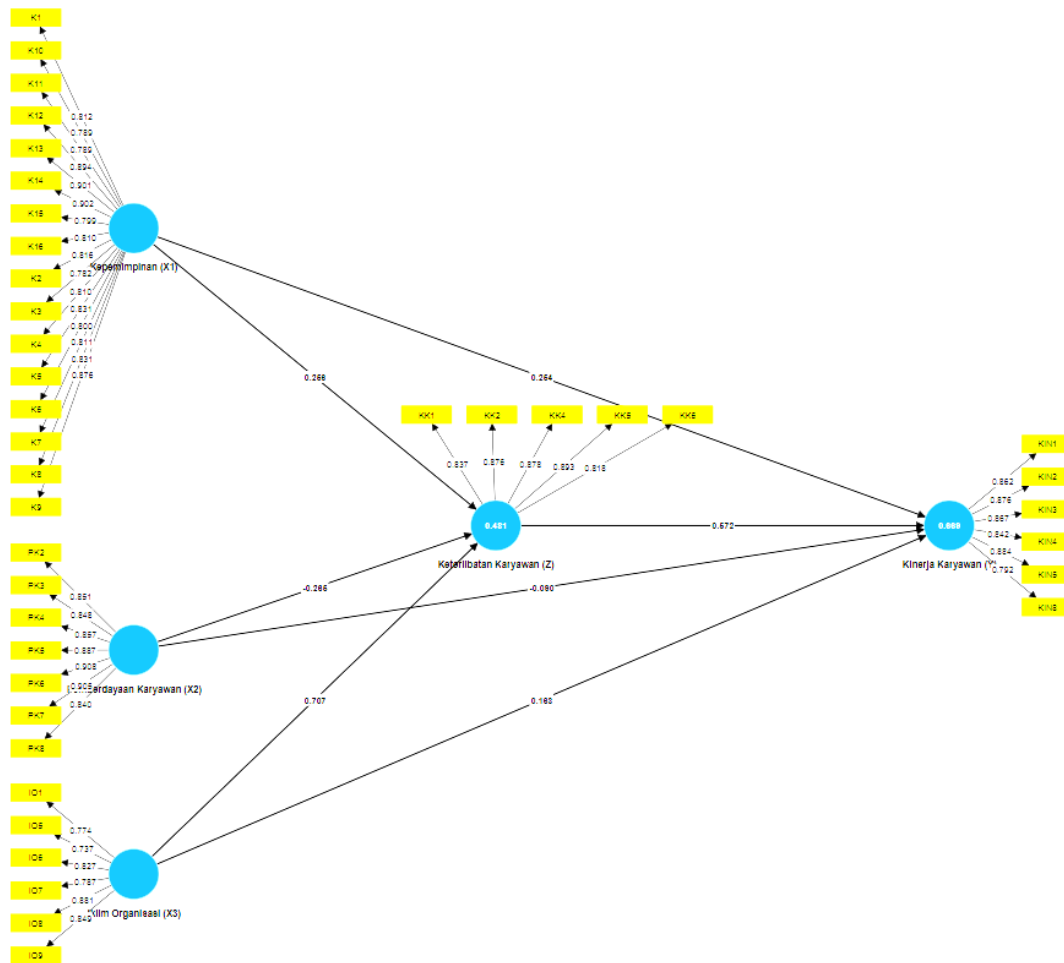
Sumber: Processed Research Data

Based on the table above, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the model fit test:

- a. The RMSEA value is 0.013, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the model meets the criteria for a good fit.
- b. The GFI value is 0.948, which exceeds 0.90, suggesting that the model satisfies the good fit criterion.
- c. The SRMR value is 0.027, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the model meets the good fit criterion.
- d. The NFI, TLI, and CFI values are all greater than 0.90, which also indicates that the model fulfills the good fit criteria.

**Analysis of Inner Model (Structural Model) Test Results**

The inner model explains both the direct and indirect effects among latent constructs, which are commonly assessed through path coefficient values, R-square ( $R^2$ ), and effect size ( $f^2$ ) (Hair et al., 2017). The evaluation of the inner model aims to determine whether the empirically developed structural model is able to adequately explain the dependent variables.



Source: Processed Research Data  
**Figure 2. Results of the Inner Model (Structural Model) Test**

Based on the structural model, the following are the results of the R-square (R<sup>2</sup>) test in this study:

**Table 5. R-Square (R<sup>2</sup>) Test Results**

Variabel Endogen	R-square	R-square adjusted
Employee Performance (Y) (Female Employee Performance)	0,481	0,473
Employee Engagement (Z) (Female Employee Engagement)	0,669	0,663

Sumber: Processed Research Data

Based on the test results presented in the table above, the R<sup>2</sup> value for the Employee Engagement construct is 0.669, indicating that Leadership, Employee Empowerment, and Organizational Climate are able to explain 66.9% of the variance in Employee Engagement. This value falls within the strong category. Meanwhile, the R<sup>2</sup> value for the Employee Performance construct is 0.481, which indicates that Leadership, Employee Empowerment, Organizational Climate, and Employee Engagement have a weak influence on Employee Performance, as the value does not exceed the 0.50 threshold.

Subsequently, the researchers conducted the F-square (f<sup>2</sup>) test, and the results obtained are presented in the following table:



**Table 6. F-Square (f<sup>2</sup>) Test Results**

Exogenous Variables	Employee Engagement (Female)	Employee Performance (Female)
Leadership	0,046	0,068
Employee Empowerment	0,028	0,005
Organizational Climate	0,208	0,014
Employee Engagement (Female)	-	0,513

Source : Processed Research Data

Based on the Effect Size (f<sup>2</sup>) test results using the assessment criteria where f<sup>2</sup> ≥ 0.35 indicates a large effect, approximately 0.15 indicates a medium effect, and approximately 0.02 indicates a small effect, it can be concluded that each independent variable exerts a varying degree of influence on the dependent variable. The f<sup>2</sup> value for the effect of Leadership on Employee Engagement (female) is 0.046, which falls into the medium effect category. The effect of Employee Empowerment on Employee Engagement (female) is 0.028, which is categorized as a small effect. Meanwhile, the effect of Organizational Climate on Employee Engagement (female) is 0.208, which is classified as a medium effect.

Meanwhile, the f<sup>2</sup> values for the effects of the three exogenous variables—Leadership, Employee Empowerment, and Organizational Climate—on Employee Performance (female) are 0.068, 0.005, and 0.014, respectively, all of which fall into the small effect category. This indicates that the influences of Leadership, Employee Empowerment, and Organizational Climate on Employee Performance (female) are relatively weak. However, the effect of Employee Engagement (female) on Employee Performance (female) yields an f<sup>2</sup> value of 0.513, which falls into the large effect category, indicating a strong influence on Employee Performance (female).

**Discussion**

Based on the hypothesis testing results, the following discussion conclusions are obtained as presented in the table below:

**Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Results**

H	Variable			Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Conclusion	
	Exogenous (X)	Mediation (Z)	Endogenous (Y)					
1	Leadership	Employee Engagement (Female)	-	0,256	2,322	0,020	Terima	H1 (Signifikan)
2	Employee Empowerment	Employee Engagement (Female)	-	-0,265	1,690	0,091	Terima	H0 (Tidak Signifikan)
3	Organizational Climate	Employee Engagement (Female)	-	0,707	5,469	0,000	Terima	H1 (Signifikan)
4	Leadership	-	Employee Performance (Female)	0,254	2,587	0,010	Terima	H1 (Signifikan)
5	Employee Empowerment	-	Employee Performance (Female)	-0,090	0,776	0,438	Terima	H0 (Tidak Signifikan)
6	Organizational Climate	-	Employee Performance (Female)	0,163	1,211	0,226	Terima	H0 (Tidak Signifikan)

H	Variable			Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Conclusion	
	Exogenous (X)	Mediation (Z)	Endogenous (Y)					
7	-	Employee Engagement (Female)	Employee Performance (Female)	0,572	8,003	0,000	Terima	H1 (Signifikan)
8	Leadership	Employee Engagement (Female)	Employee Performance (Female)	0,147	2,252	0,024	Terima	H1 (Signifikan)
9	Employee Empowerment	Employee Engagement (Female)	Employee Performance (Female)	-0,152	1,652	0,099	Terima	H0 (Tidak Signifikan)
10	Organizational Climate	Employee Engagement (Female)	Employee Performance (Female)	0,404	4,560	0,000	Terima	H1 (Signifikan)

Source : Processed Research Data

Based on the table above, the following conclusions are drawn from the hypothesis testing results:

1. The p-value for the effect of Leadership (X1) on Employee Engagement (female) (Z) is 0.020, which is less than 0.05; therefore, H1 is accepted, indicating a significant effect of X1 on Z. These results imply that Leadership has a positive and significant impact on Employee Engagement (female). The stronger and more appropriate the leadership characteristics perceived by employees, the stronger the level of Employee Engagement (female) within the organization, particularly within the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE).
2. The p-value for the effect of Employee Empowerment (X2) on Employee Engagement (female) (Z) is 0.091, which is greater than 0.05; therefore, H0 is accepted, indicating that X2 does not have a significant effect on Z. These results indicate that Employee Empowerment does not have a positive or significant impact on Employee Engagement (female), meaning that the employee empowerment practices implemented by the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) have not resulted in increased engagement among female employees within the organization.
3. The p-value for the effect of Organizational Climate (X3) on Employee Engagement (female) (Z) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05; therefore, H1 is accepted, indicating a significant effect of X3 on Z. These results imply that Organizational Climate has a positive and significant impact on Employee Engagement (female). The more favorable the organizational climate perceived by DGCE employees, the stronger the level of Employee Engagement (female) within the organization.
4. The p-value for the effect of Leadership (X1) on Employee Performance (female) (Y) is 0.010, which is less than 0.05; therefore, H1 is accepted, indicating a significant effect of X1 on Y. These results indicate that Leadership has a positive and significant impact on Employee Performance (female), meaning that the stronger and more appropriate the leadership characteristics perceived by employees, the better the performance of female employees in carrying out their work for the organization, particularly within the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE).
5. The p-value for the effect of Employee Empowerment (X2) on Employee Performance (female) (Y) is 0.438, which is greater than 0.05; therefore, H0 is accepted, indicating that X2 does not have a significant effect on Y. These results indicate that Employee Empowerment does not have a positive or significant impact on Employee Performance (female), meaning that the employee empowerment practices implemented by the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) have not resulted in an improvement in the performance of female employees within the organization.

6. The p-value for the effect of Organizational Climate (X3) on Employee Performance (female) (Y) is 0.226, which is greater than 0.05; therefore, H0 is accepted, indicating that X3 does not have a significant effect on Y. These results indicate that Organizational Climate does not have a positive or significant impact on Employee Performance (female) within the DGCE environment, meaning that even an improvement in the perceived organizational climate does not lead to a positive increase in the performance of female employees in the organization.
7. The p-value for the effect of Employee Engagement (female) (Z) on Employee Performance (female) (Y) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05; therefore, H1 is accepted, indicating a significant effect of Z on Y. These results indicate that Employee Engagement (female) has a positive and significant impact on Employee Performance (female), meaning that the stronger the level of engagement of female employees with the organization, such as the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE), the better the performance of female employees generated within the organization.
8. The p-value for the indirect effect of Leadership (X1) on Employee Performance (female) (Y) mediated by Employee Engagement (female) (Z) is 0.024, which is less than 0.05; therefore, H1 is accepted, indicating a significant mediating effect of Z on the relationship between X1 and Y. These results indicate that Leadership has a positive and significant indirect effect on Employee Performance (female) through Employee Engagement (female). The stronger and more appropriate the leadership characteristics perceived by employees, the stronger the level of Employee Engagement (female) within the organization particularly within the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE), which ultimately leads to an improvement in Employee Performance (female).
9. The p-value for the indirect effect of Employee Empowerment (X2) on Employee Performance (female) (Y) mediated by Employee Engagement (female) (Z) is 0.099, which is greater than 0.05; therefore, H0 is accepted, indicating that the mediating effect of Z on the relationship between X2 and Y is not significant. These results indicate that Employee Empowerment does not have a positive or significant indirect effect on Employee Performance (female) through Employee Engagement (female). The employee empowerment practices implemented thus far for DGCE employees have not yet been able to generate a strong effect on the engagement of female employees, which ultimately has not resulted in a positive improvement in their performance.
10. The p-value for the indirect effect of Organizational Climate (X3) on Employee Performance (female) (Y) mediated by Employee Engagement (female) (Z) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05; therefore, H1 is accepted, indicating a significant mediating effect of Z on the relationship between X3 and Y. These results indicate that Organizational Climate has a positive and significant indirect effect on Employee Performance (female) through Employee Engagement (female). The more favorable and positive the organizational climate created and perceived by employees, the stronger the level of Employee Engagement (female) within the organization—particularly within the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE)—which ultimately leads to a positive improvement in Employee Performance (female).

### **The Effect of Leadership on Female Employee Performance Mediated by Female Employee Engagement**

The Effect of Leadership on Employee Engagement and Employee Performance (Female), based on the findings of this study, effective Leadership plays a significant role in enhancing both Employee Engagement and Employee Performance among female employees. This is consistent with leadership theory, which emphasizes the importance of moral inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation in motivating employees

(Bass & Avolio, 1994). Managerial support, particularly from leaders who demonstrate openness and communicative behavior in the workplace, strengthens employees' sense of ownership toward their work and the organization, as stated by Janiukštis (2024), who noted that "supportive managers strengthen employees' sense of belonging and enhance their productivity."

Thus, effective Leadership not only facilitates the creation of a positive work climate but also establishes conditions that enable employees to be engaged physically, emotionally, and intellectually, as articulated by Kahn (1990). Leaders who are able to inspire female employees by articulating a meaningful vision and clear goals enable employees to perceive their work as important and as making a positive contribution. Furthermore, through individualized consideration, leaders demonstrate genuine concern for the needs and development of each female employee, thereby fostering a sense of being valued and appreciated.

Thus, it can be concluded that the results of this study support the findings of Parlinda and Wahyudin (2008), who stated that leadership style can generate work motivation, which in turn has a positive and significant effect on the performance of female employees. Furthermore, as articulated by Burns (1978), the leadership adopted in this study emphasizes the interaction between leaders and followers that is capable of enhancing motivation and moral values. Leaders characterized by moral inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation are able to create a climate that supports Employee Engagement among female employees. Employees who are led in such a manner feel valued and supported, making them more likely to engage physically, cognitively, and emotionally in their work, in accordance with Kahn's (1990) definition of Employee Engagement.

The relevant dimensions of Employee Engagement (female) include emotional and intellectual engagement, whereby female employees are emotionally motivated, develop a sense of ownership toward their work and organization, and are intellectually encouraged to innovate and generate creative ideas that ultimately enhance their performance. This study confirms that employees, including female employees, who are emotionally and intellectually engaged are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of performance (Mangkunegara, 2009). This is reflected in the achievement of work outcomes that meet quality standards as well as in task-related initiative, which serve as indicators of Employee Performance (female) in this study.

Ultimately, the results of this study reinforce several assumptions derived from the theoretical perspectives of the following scholars:

- a. Burns (1978), in his concept of leadership, emphasized that leaders who are able to inspire and provide individualized consideration can enhance subordinates' motivation and moral values.
- b. Kahn (1990) stated that Employee Engagement is a condition in which individuals fully express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in their work, which serves as a prerequisite for superior performance and is fostered by Leadership factors.
- c. Paredes (2024) found that job satisfaction, which is also closely related to Employee Engagement, is a significant predictor of employees' engagement and active contribution, which can initially be shaped by appropriate leadership characteristics.
- d. Parlinda and Wahyudin (2008) demonstrated that effective leadership style and motivation have a positive impact on performance, which is highly relevant for female employees who receive empowerment through Leadership.

This study concludes that Leadership has a positive effect on Employee Performance (female) through the enhancement of Employee Engagement (female). Supportive and inspirational Leadership that provides individualized consideration fosters emotional and intellectual engagement, which in turn improves the quality of female employees' performance

within the organization. A positive Organizational Climate further strengthens this process by providing managerial support and a conducive working environment.

### **The Effect of Employee Empowerment on Female Employee Performance Mediated by Female Employee Engagement**

The next variable assumed to influence Employee Engagement and Employee Performance, particularly among female employees, is Employee Empowerment. Employee Empowerment and Employee Engagement are closely related concepts in this study, as both are associated with providing employees with opportunities to contribute intellectually and emotionally. Arslan (2018) emphasized that intellectually empowered employees tend to generate innovative ideas and become more actively involved in work processes.

However, based on the hypothesis testing results of this study, it was found that Employee Empowerment does not have a positive or significant effect on Employee Performance mediated by Employee Engagement (female). This indicates that the empowerment efforts implemented thus far for employees at the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) have not been able to generate a strong effect on Employee Engagement among female employees, which ultimately has not led to a positive improvement in performance. This finding, therefore, does not support the assumption proposed by Makhmut et al. (2023), who argued that empowerment and supervisory support enhance Employee Engagement among female employees, which in turn directly affects individual and organizational performance. In other words, current employee empowerment efforts, particularly for female employees, have not yet been sufficiently significant in shaping their engagement with the organization, and consequently have not contributed to performance improvement, unlike Leadership and Organizational Climate.

Several aspects may explain the rejection of this hypothesis. First, it relates to the complexity of the empowerment and engagement processes. Employee Empowerment is a complex process that involves aspects of autonomy, competence, social support, access to information, recognition, and responsibility (Arslan, 2018; Janiukštis, 2024). However, not all dimensions of empowerment are necessarily well perceived by employees or effectively translated into active work engagement. Internal employee factors such as intrinsic motivation, perceptions of managerial support, and organizational culture may act as intermediating variables that influence this relationship.

Second, this result may be attributed to the suboptimal mediating effect in linking empowerment and performance among female employees. Employee Engagement (female) as a mediating variable may not be sufficiently strong or optimal in connecting Employee Empowerment with performance improvement. This means that even when empowerment is provided, if Employee Engagement—consisting of emotional, intellectual, and physical engagement (Sugianingrat & Widyawati, 2019)—does not increase significantly as a result of organizational empowerment efforts, the impact of empowerment on performance will also remain insignificant.

Third, contextual organizational and environmental factors may also play a role. The organizational context and work environment may not fully support empowerment in generating optimal engagement and performance. As previously noted, social support, communication, and job satisfaction also influence engagement and performance. Without proper management of these aspects, empowerment alone is insufficient to produce a significant effect.

Fourth, the influence of external factors and measurement instruments must be considered. This study may indicate that the measurement model and indicators used have not fully captured the dimensions of empowerment and engagement that affect performance. In addition, external factors such as workload, stress, and individual characteristics may also affect the results. Thus, regardless of how strong empowerment efforts are, if factors such as workload

and individual characteristics are not taken into account, organizational empowerment initiatives will ultimately be insufficient to strongly shape engagement and performance.

In conclusion, Employee Empowerment must be supported by a tangible increase in Employee Engagement and other supporting factors in order to exert a significant influence on Employee Performance among female employees. If Employee Engagement (female) as a mediating variable is unable to capture the changes resulting from empowerment, then a significant effect on performance will not emerge. This finding is consistent with the explanation that the dimensions of empowerment, engagement, and performance are interrelated yet complex and are influenced by multiple interdependent aspects.

### **The Effect of Organizational Climate on Female Employee Performance Mediated by Female Employee Engagement**

This study supports the findings of Sugianingrat & Widyawati (2019), which indicate that constructive social relationships among employees can enhance Employee Engagement, thereby strengthening team performance, including that of female employees. This suggests that the role of Organizational Climate in fostering a conducive environment for engagement and organizational performance—encompassing managerial support, team collaboration, organizational values and norms, as well as recognition and rewards—has been proven to exert a positive impact on employee engagement. Tagiuri & Litwin (1968) defined Organizational Climate as the quality of the internal environment experienced by organizational members and shaped by organizational policies and practices.

This study also supports the findings of Nazir (2017), who stated that recognition of employees' hard work (as a form of positive climate) enhances their commitment to the organization. Furthermore, Berberoglu (2018) emphasized the importance of teamwork in fostering a sense of togetherness that supports improved work performance. With a supportive Organizational Climate, employees feel more valued and motivated, which is consistent with the findings of Sugianingrat & Widyawati (2019), who identified Employee Engagement as an indicator of job satisfaction and increased productivity.

Furthermore, the relationships among the three exogenous variables in this study are also interrelated. Effective Leadership is able to empower female employees by enhancing energy, emotional stability, and providing individualized support. Leaders who are able to create a positive Organizational Climate also strengthen the sense of belonging and Employee Engagement among female employees, which in turn has a positive effect on their Employee Performance. In addition, the influence of Leadership on female Employee Performance tends to be shaped by the context of a conducive Organizational Climate, including adequate managerial support and teamwork, which further amplifies the positive effects on engagement and performance.

One factor that receives particular attention is employee well-being as a supporting element of engagement and performance. This study emphasizes the importance of employees' mental and physical well-being as an integral part of a healthy Organizational Climate. Al'Ararah (2024) stated that employee well-being, as a component of a healthy organizational climate, has a direct impact on productivity and job satisfaction. This is consistent with theories suggesting that an organizational climate that supports employee well-being can enhance motivation and emotional attachment, which subsequently improves overall work performance.

Thus, based on theoretical perspectives and the results of this study, it can be concluded that the simultaneous presence of effective Leadership and a positive Organizational Climate encourages employees' emotional, intellectual, and physical engagement. This engagement subsequently exerts a positive impact on the improvement of individual and organizational performance as a whole. Employee well-being emerges as a crucial supporting factor in this process. Accordingly, organizational management needs to pay close attention to these three

variables as part of its human resource management strategy to achieve sustainable organizational effectiveness.

Meanwhile, the Employee Empowerment variable within the DGCE context has not yet been sufficiently strong to support the influence generated by Leadership and Organizational Climate in shaping positive Employee Engagement and Employee Performance among female employees. This analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of these variables within the DGCE organizational context and their relevance to existing theories and literature.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Female Employee Engagement plays a crucial role in mediating the effects of Leadership and Organizational Climate on Female Employee Performance in the Narcotics Enforcement Unit of the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE). Female Employee Engagement serves as a critical pathway that strengthens the relationship between these factors and performance outcomes. Meanwhile, the Employee Empowerment variable does not exert a positive indirect effect on Female Employee Performance through Female Employee Engagement as a mediating variable.

Effective Leadership and a conducive Organizational Climate have been proven to enhance engagement, which ultimately leads to improved performance. Inspirational, supportive, and communicative leaders are able to foster emotional, intellectual, and physical engagement among female employees in their work. Similarly, a positive and conducive Organizational Climate characterized by managerial support, strong teamwork, aligned values and norms, as well as clear recognition and reward systems, creates a sense of security, comfort, and motivation that encourages employees to participate fully.

Conversely, Employee Empowerment does not exert a meaningful influence when tested through the mediation mechanism of Employee Engagement. Empowerment practices reflected in perceived opportunities to contribute, receive support, and exercise autonomy do not necessarily determine whether employees become more engaged and committed to the organization. This finding highlights that not all organizational aspects contribute equally to performance improvement, and that the quality of leader–employee relationships as well as a supportive work atmosphere are more decisive, particularly in high-risk work contexts such as narcotics enforcement.

Overall, this study affirms that Female Employee Engagement is not merely a psychological aspect but constitutes a strategic factor capable of driving organizations toward superior performance outcomes. The findings further underscore the need for special attention to the work experiences of female employees, who face demands and dynamics that differ from those of other employees.

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