



# The Influence of *Diuwongke* on Work Engagement With Positive Affect as a Mediating Variable On Plantation Employees

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to determine the influence of *diuwongke* on work engagement among plantation employees, with positive affect as a mediating variable. A quantitative method was used and the measuring instruments included work engagement, *diuwongke*, and positive affect scales, which were adapted from previous studies. Furthermore, the sample population consisted of 368 plantation employees, who were selected using the total sampling method. Hypothesis testing was carried out using a quantitative approach through the Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM PLS) technique through SmartPLS application bootstrapping. The results showed that *diuwongke* had a positive influence on positive affect and work engagement. Positive affect also had a positive and significant impact on work engagement. Moreover, there was a decrease in the value of the path coefficient from direct to indirect influence, but it remained significant ( $c = 0.457 > c'' = 0.111$ ). This indicated that positive affect partially mediated the relationship between *diuwongke* and work engagement. Based on these findings, *diuwongke* could influence work engagement with or without the presence of positive affect.

**KEYWORDS:** work engagement, *diuwongke*, positive affect, plantation employees

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Human resources play a crucial role within organizations and companies. In an effort to achieve the vision of the company, it is important to consider not only the prevailing times and technology but also employees, as they represent valuable assets. Furthermore, they serve as the main driving force behind the execution and determination of activities in an organization, ultimately affecting the overall sustainability. Several studies have shown that the presence of good and superior employee performance can increase organizational effectiveness and productivity. To achieve optimal organizational performance, it is important to emphasize the need for positive behavior and emotions among workers (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Burke, Koyuncu, Jing, & Fiksenbaum, 2009). Engagement has been reported to be one of the key concepts closely related to these factors (Burke et al, 2009).

Work engagement holds significant importance and has emerged as a top priority for leaders aiming to enhance effectiveness, innovation, and competitiveness, including in Indonesia (Rahmadani & Schaufeli, 2022). Robbins & Judge (2017) also stated that it posed a genuine concern for most organizations because only a few employees were reportedly engaged with their work. This was consistent with a recent survey conducted by Hayes, Chumney, & Buckingham (2020) in the Global Workforce Study 2020, where the work engagement among employees was in a low category. Furthermore, only 14% of employees had a sense of attachment or full involvement with their work. The significance of engagement has become more pronounced as individuals often dedicate a substantial amount of time to their job (Breevart & Demerouti, 2015).

According to previous reports, work engagement is a positive and fulfilled state of mind, which is directly linked to the job of an individual. It also encompasses several key aspects, including vigor, which is characterized by high levels of energy and mental endurance while working. Dedication commonly manifests as enthusiasm, pride, and inspiration, while absorption refers to a state of deep concentration and involvement in

work, often accompanied by a distorted sense of time and difficulty disengaging from a job (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engaged employees exhibit distinctive characteristics that set them apart, such as expressing new ideas, showing an attitude of passion and enthusiasm, taking initiative, and being optimistic (Marciano, 2010). Meanwhile, disengaged workers display a range of unfavorable traits, such as showing displeasure with work in the form of verbal expressions, negative attitudes, and behavioral indicators. They also tend to blame others for performance issues and frequently complain about work (Cataldo, 2011).

Asrin, Mariatin & Novliadi (2019) stated that 31.91% and 68.09% of employees in the plantation industry were fully and partially engaged, respectively. Isriadi (2012) in the private plantation industry showed that 11.45% and 73.46% of workers had full and partial engagement, respectively, while 15.30% were in the low or disengaged category. Furthermore, according to Robinson, Perryman & Hayday (2004), the key factor driving engagement is the employee's perception of being valued and involved. One of the significant factors influencing this perception is the treatment received from their leaders. This concept aligns with the notion of diuwongke proposed by Rahmadani & Schaufeli (2022).

The concept of Diuwongke is derived from Javanese philosophies and translates to uwong in Javanese and orang in Bahasa Indonesia, which literally means human. In combination with the active voice di-kan/ke (Javanese/Indonesian), di-uwong-ke means 'to be treated as a human being'. According to Rahmadani & Schaufeli, 2022, this treatment involves recognizing and valuing the existence of individuals, listening to their opinions, and considering their contributions. In the context of action, the word humane refers to acts that involve awareness (reason), free will, and mind (heart) (Rukiyanto & Sumarah, 2014). A previous study revealed that actions based on these three elements led to the exhibition of moral behaviors and individuals could distinguish between good or bad attitudes. The concept of diuwongke refers to how individuals perceive the treatment they receive from others, particularly in the context of leadership styles or situations involving high power and social status.

Employees who feel valued, recognized, and treated as diuwongke at work are more likely to experience support from the organization. This can contribute to the development of psychological security, fostering positive emotions, such as happiness, joy, and love among employees. According to Maynard (2020), the presence of positive emotions toward leaders helps to enhance the positive affect of workers. Positive affect is a condition characterized by pleasant feelings, such as enthusiasm, activeness, and alertness in individuals. It is also associated with high levels of energy, concentration, and pleasant attachment (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988). Furthermore, positive affect can be used as a potential mediating variable in understanding the engagement of employees (Quoidbach, et al., 2010; Wang, et al., 2016; Yan, Zhang, Akhtar, & Liang, 2021; Diener, Thapa, & Tay, 2020).

The plantation examined in this study is owned by a foreign private company located in North Sumatra. Based on the observation results, certain employees consistently arrived late and left early, extended their break period by engaging in games and conversations with colleagues, and expressed dissatisfaction with the system of the company and their work. Furthermore, there was a frequent occurrence of workers reporting sick almost every day, and some failed to adhere to the standard operating procedures (SOPs). Based on previous findings, these characteristics are indicative of disengaged employees. In terms of the leader's interactions with employees, some workers actively avoided contact and engaged in discussions about the bad leadership in the organization. However, others perceived the current leader as fair and effective. This indicates that employees' perceptions of being valued can affect their overall performance. Workers who feel well-treated and valued tend to have positive affect and vice versa, and this could affect their level of work engagement owned by employees.

Based on the description above, this study proposes hypotheses that 1) diuwongke has a positive influence on positive affect and work engagement, 2) positive affect has a positive influence on work engagement, and 3) positive affect can mediate the relationship between diuwongke and work engagement.

## **II. METHODS**

This study used quantitative methods with independent (diuwongke), mediator (positive affect), and dependent (work engagement) variables. Furthermore, the mediator variables influenced the relationship between the independent and dependent into an indirect relationship. The sample population consisted of all employees who work in plantation locations owned by foreign private companies domiciled in North Sumatra, totaling 368 participants.

In the study, the number and characteristics of the participants were assessed (Sugiyono, 2016). The samples were selected using the total sampling technique, where the number of respondents was the same as the total population. This indicated that a total of 368 plantation employees were utilized for the procedures. The data collection method employed in this study involved the use of a scale. Furthermore, work engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which was developed based on the theory of Schaufeli & Bakker (2003). UWES consisted of three dimensions, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption,

with a total number of 9 items. It also utilized seven answer choices based on the tendency of responses or employees' feelings when working, namely Always, Very Often, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost Never, and Never.

The positive affect was assessed using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) developed by Watson, Clark & Tellegen (1988). PANAS consisted of ten positive affect, including interest/attention, passion, strong, enthusiasm, pride, alert/vigilant, excited, diligent, attentive, and active. It also utilized five answer options, namely Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, and Very Often. The diuwongke scale was measured by adapting the measuring instrument developed by Rahmadani & Schaufeli (2022). Furthermore, it was arranged based on one component, namely "treated as a human being" with a total of ten items and five answer choices, including Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Quite Agree, and Strongly Agree.

Data analysis was carried out with the structural equation modeling-partial least squares (SEM-PLS) using SmartPLS software. Yamin (2009) suggested that three activities could be performed at once using SEM, including checking the validity and reliability of the instrument (equivalent to confirmatory factor analysis), testing the relationship model between latent variables (equivalent to path analysis), and obtaining a useful prediction model. SEM-PLS was used in this study due to several considerations, such as the small sample size and the presence of a weak theoretical basis in a variable. Solimun, Fernandes, & Nurjannah (2018) stated that PLS was a reliable tool for testing prediction models due to several factors, namely not based on various assumptions and could be used to predict models with weak theoretical foundations. It could also be used for abnormally distributed data as well as formative and reflective indicators. Hair, et al. (2014) stated that the use of SEM-PLS was compatible with small or large sample sizes.

During the usage of SEM-PLS, two tests should be carried out according to Solimun, Fernandes, & Nurjannah (2018), namely measurement model testing (Outer Model) and Structural Model Testing (Inner Model). The outer Model was often used to test the measuring instrument before conducting the study. The first step involved performing a convergent validity test to determine the value that explained the relationship between an indicator and its latent variable. Convergent validity was assessed based on the loading factor, where values  $> 0.7$  were acceptable. Meanwhile, outer loading values  $< 0.4$  were eliminated from the analysis process, and those between 0.4 and 0.7 could be considered for elimination. The elimination process often helped in increasing the composite reliability value or average variance extracted. The convergent validity test results showed that the loading factor values of the three variables met the inclusion criteria, namely a range of 0.713 to 0.888.

A discriminant validity test was also carried out to determine the difference between a particular construct and others. This could be performed by comparing the square root value of the average variance extracted (AVE) of each latent variable with the correlation between other latent variables in the model. The minimum limit of AVE was 0.5 which was the acceptable value. The results of the discriminant validity test showed that the AVE values of the three variables met the specified minimum limit. Furthermore, values of 0.682, 0.697, and 0.661 were obtained for the diuwongke, positive affect, and work engagement variables, respectively. Reliability testing was performed in this study to assess the performance of the block of indicators used in measuring the latent variable. The assessment process was carried out with Composite Reliability values, where the minimum threshold was  $> 0.7$ . The test results indicated that the composite reliability values of the three variables met the minimum threshold, with diuwongke, positive affect, and work engagement having 0.955, 0.958, and 0.946, respectively.

Testing the Structural Model (Inner Model) involved specifying the relationships between latent variables. In Partial Least Squares (PLS), the Structural Model was evaluated by examining the Goodness of Fit Model values, which measure the goodness of the relationships between the latent variables. Furthermore, one way to assess the Goodness of Fit Model was by looking at the percentage of explained variance, which was determined by the R<sup>2</sup> value for the dependent variable constructs. A higher R<sup>2</sup> value indicated a better predictive model for the study. The path coefficients or inner model values showed the level of significance in the hypothesis testing (Solimun, Fernandes, & Nurjannah, 2018).

Hypothesis testing was carried out by examining the p-values with a significance level of 5% or  $p < 0.05$ . The decision regarding the mediating variable was made through two steps, namely estimating the direct effect between the independent and dependent variables. The indirect effect was also simultaneously estimated by introducing the mediator between them. Furthermore, the decision regarding the mediation was based on several criteria (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The hypothesis was rejected when the path coefficient from the direct to indirect effect remained significant and unchanged. If the path coefficient from the direct effect to the indirect effect decreased but remained significant, it indicated partial mediation. A decreased and insignificant path coefficient indicated the presence of full mediation.

### **III. RESULT AND DUSCUSSION**

Based on the results of structural model testing (inner model), the Goodness of Fit Model value seen through the R<sup>2</sup> value was 0.452. This indicated that *diuwongke* and positive affect could account for work

engagement by 45.2%, while the remaining was influenced by other variables. The  $R^2$  value for positive affect was 0.325, indicating that *diuwongke* had a 32.5% influence, while the remaining was affected by other variables outside the study.

	R Square
AP	0.325
UWES	0.452

Furthermore, the hypotheses in this study were answered using statistical analysis results presented in the table below.

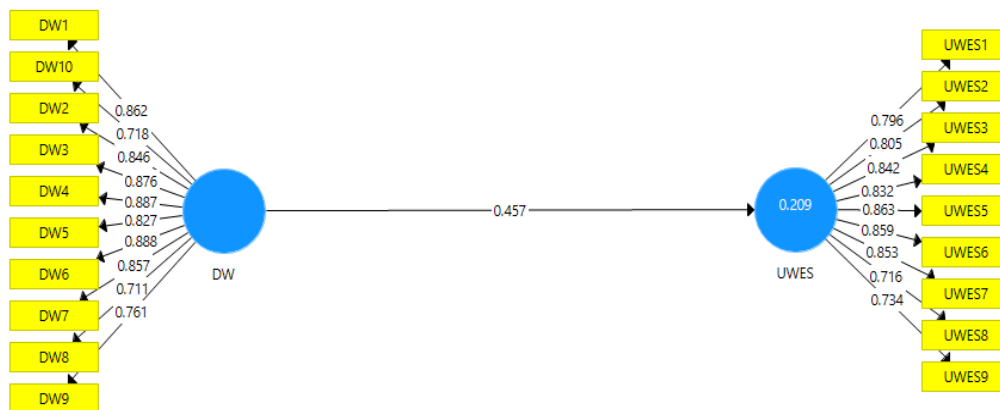
	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
AP -> UWES	0.603	0.606	0.052	11.697	0.000
DW -> AP	0.570	0.569	0.046	12.418	0.000
DW -> UWES	0.111	0.110	0.051	2.168	0.031

H1: *Diuwongke* had a positive and significant influence on the positive affect. Furthermore, the statistical analysis showed a p-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , which indicated that the  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted. Based on the results, the higher the employees perceived they were treated humanely, the higher their positive affect.

H2: *Diuwongke* had a positive and significant influence on work engagement. The statistical analysis showed a p-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , indicating that  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted. Based on the results, the higher the employees perceived they were treated humanely, the higher their work engagement.

H3: Positive affect had a positive and significant influence on work engagement. The statistical analysis revealed a p-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , indicating that  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted. Based on the results, the higher the employees' positive affect, the higher their work engagement.

Hypothesis testing was carried out in two stages, and the first involved estimating the independent direct effect on the dependent variable. Based on statistical analysis results, the path coefficient value of the *diuwongke* variable for work engagement was 0.457 (c value).



In the second stage, the indirect effect was estimated simultaneously by adding the mediating variables between the independent and dependent variables. Based on the results, the *diuwongke* path coefficient on work engagement and positive affect were 0.111 (c value) and 0.570 (a value), respectively. Meanwhile, the positive affect path coefficient value on work engagement was 0.603 (a value). The next step involved the determination of the category of the mediating variables, which was used to answer the fourth hypothesis.

H4: Positive affect mediated the relationship between *diuwongke* and work engagement. Based on the analysis, the value of the path coefficient from the direct to indirect effect decreased ( $c'' < c$ ) and remained significant. This indicated the presence of partial mediation, as proposed by Baron & Kenny (1986).

Maynard (2020) stated that the presence of positive emotions in employees towards their leaders could also increase the positive, leading to the feeling of happiness. Furthermore, positive emotions were often developed based on the way leaders treated their subordinates as well as the presence of good relationships with other colleagues (Wulandari & Widyastuti, 2014). In plantation settings, a collective work culture was

commonly applied, where specific work targets were assigned based on areas. This led to a high intensity of meetings and frequent interactions between employees to achieve common goals. A previous study revealed that a strong collectivity environment could foster positive affect in individuals due to high involvement and recognition of their existence in groups (Kitayama et.al, 2000). This feeling of being valued and acknowledged played a crucial role in the development of positive experiences, leading to increased positive affect.

Based on working experience, the majority of the plantation employees had worked for more than 5 years. This extended period fostered a sense of attachment, as they had collectively faced challenges, provided mutual support, and built task and social dependencies together. This helped the employees to build good relationships by exhibiting the *diuwongke* behavior, leading to the involvement and recognition of all individuals within their respective groups.

Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez (2001) stated that the higher the level of relationships between employees, the stronger the bond with their work or organization. This finding was consistent with the results of this study, where *diuwongke* had a positive influence on work engagement. The presence of good relationships between leaders and colleagues increased the perceptions of being treated well for employees, thereby creating a sense of attachment to the company. Rahmadani & Schaufeli (2022) stated that *diuwongke* could moderate the relationship between engaging leadership and work engagement. This indicated that it had a role in increasing work engagement.

The results of this study also showed that positive affect had a positive influence on work engagement. This indicated that the higher the level of happiness among employees, the higher the level of attachment to the company. These findings were in line with Chinanti & Siswati (2018), as well as Robertson & Cooper (2011) and Lyubomirsky (2008) that happiness could affect performance at work.

According to Quoidbach, et al., (2010), Malinoski & Lim (2015), Wang, et al., (2016), Yan, Zhang, Akhtar, & Liang, (2021), Diener, Thapa, & Tay (2020), positive affect could be a mediating variable for viewing and increasing work engagement among employees. In this study, both *diuwongke* and positive affect partially affected the dependent variable. This showed that *diuwongke* could affect work engagement with and without the positive affect. Furthermore, positive affect was an intrinsic individual factor, which involved the employee's feeling of being able to choose, competence, meaningfulness, and progress (Thomas, 2009). This often varied for each employee, depending on how they perceived the treatment within an organization.

The Broaden-and-build theory explained how positive emotions, such as gratitude, joy, happiness, interest, and the desire to anticipate something, broadened the awareness and skills of an individual. These emotions could also encourage the birth of new thoughts and actions to explore (building) (Fredrickson, 2001). The tendency to take new actions encouraged employees to adapt to their work conditions. In this case, adaptability involved the ability of employees to deal with changes in the work environment.

Adjustment in the work environment was often associated with change of leaders, leadership styles, attitudes, work rules, and culture. Consequently, the employees were required to adapt to the current leadership. The impact of these changes was not significant when they occurred at the top management level due to a collective work culture among employees. This was because the interactions between the subordinates and leaders tended to be collective in their respective work areas. However, if plantation employees experienced a change in position due to rotation or demotion, they also had to adapt to the new environment or position. This naturally provided a different situation for each worker.

The adaptability of employees played a role in helping them adjust to environmental changes. It was also important to possess coping skills to ensure that these adjustments did not affect their effectiveness. In this study, the majority of the samples were males due to the sampling location and job descriptions, which required more physical labor. However, there was no significant difference between gender and work engagement (Drake, 2012; Sipayung, 2012; Pri & Zamralita, 2017).

Based on age, the majority of the participants were aged 25-44 years, accounting for 75.3% of the sample population. Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) explained that the older the employees, the more engaged they were with work. Furthermore, 91.58% of employees had worked for more than 5 years in the company. Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) reported that there was a positive relationship between tenure and work engagement. This indicated that work engagement increased along with the length of service. Based on the description of the participants' characteristics, the 3 variables assessed in this study were in the high category. This showed that employees felt treated in a *diuwongke* manner by their leaders, leading to a positive affect at work and higher engagement with their company.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Based on data analysis carried out using Smart PLS on 368 respondents, *diuwongke* had a positive influence on positive affect and work engagement. The results also showed that positive affect had a positive impact on work engagement and could partially mediate the influence of *diuwongke* on work engagement. *Diuwongke* and positive affect had a 45.2% effect on the work engagement of plantation employees, while the

remaining was influenced by other variables. Furthermore, diuwongke accounted for 32.5% of positive affect, and the remaining was influenced by other variables outside this study.

The results showed that positive affect partially mediated the influence of diuwongke on work engagement. This indicated that diuwongke could still have an impact without involving positive affect. Furthermore, the descriptive analysis results showed that the 3 study variables were in the high category. This showed that the employees were treated well by their leaders, leading to a high level of positive affect and engagement with work.

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