Gendered Work Conditions, Job Resources, and Employee Performance in State-Owned Enterprises: A Systematic Review

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Abstract. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) operate under combined public-value and commercial mandates, making employee performance a strategic issue of both organizational and policy significance. This paper finalizes a concise systematic synthesis prepared in accordance with an Atlantis Press proceedings format. The review examines recent literature addressing gendered work conditions, job characteristics, job resources, employee engagement, and performance within SOEs and closely related public-sector settings. Drawing on this body of literature, the review finds that the evidence does not yet support a direct claim that men and women perform differently in SOEs, primarily because gender-disaggregated employee-level performance studies remain scarce. Instead, the most consistent evidence across the reviewed literature indicates that employee performance is shaped by factors such as job design, organizational support, meaningful work, leadership, trust, well-being, and engagement. While board-level gender-diversity studies offer relevant insights for theorizing authority and representation within organizations, they cannot substitute for employee-level evidence on performance outcomes. Based on this synthesis, the review concludes that gender should be treated less as a simple demographic predictor of performance and more as a structural condition—one that may shape employees' access to voice, resources, developmental opportunity, and authority within the organization. These findings carry implications for how future research and SOE management practices approach gender in relation to performance.

Keywords: State-Owned Enterprises; Gendered Work Design; Job Resources; Work Engagement; Employee Performance.

1 Introduction

State-owned enterprises (SOEs) are hybrid organizations. They must deliver public value while also meeting commercial and managerial performance expectations. For this reason, employee performance in SOEs cannot be understood only as an individual outcome. It reflects how work systems, public mandates, organizational resources and leadership practices are translated into daily task performance and service quality [1,2].

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The original manuscript asked whether men and women perform equally in SOEs. The reviewer noted that this question is important but difficult to answer with the available evidence, because the literature is dominated by indirect work-design and engagement studies, public-sector comparators and board-level governance studies. Only a small part of the evidence directly tests gender at the employee level. The final manuscript therefore reframes the question. Rather than claiming that gender itself determines performance, this article asks how gendered work conditions may shape access to the resources that support engagement and performance.

This reframing is important for two reasons. First, work engagement research consistently shows that performance is driven by job resources, meaningful work, support, autonomy, trust and leadership rather than by static demographic categories alone [6,8]. Second, gendered organization research suggests that inequality is often reproduced through role expectations, promotion systems, access to authority and evaluation processes, even when formal performance criteria appear neutral [20,21].

In SOEs, the risk of analytic confusion is especially high. Board-level studies on women directors are useful for understanding representation, legitimacy and authority [16,19], but they do not answer whether ordinary male and female employees perform equally in operational, administrative or professional roles. Similarly, studies on engagement, job demands and HR practices explain the mechanisms of performance, but they often do not disaggregate the findings by gender. The contribution of this review is therefore mechanism-oriented: it identifies what the literature can and cannot support, and it proposes a research agenda for studying gendered access to performance-enabling conditions in SOEs.

2 Methods

The review followed a concise PRISMA-informed procedure [5]. The objective was not to estimate a pooled effect size, because the corpus varied in level of analysis, setting, design and outcome measures. Instead, the synthesis used a structured narrative approach to examine whether gender, job characteristics, job resources and work engagement explain performance in SOEs and comparable public-sector organizations.

The eligibility window was limited to the last ten years, with priority given to studies from 2021-2026 to reflect post-pandemic work redesign and current SOE reform debates. Older foundational literature was retained only where necessary for core theoretical concepts. Eligible studies were peer-reviewed journal articles in English that examined SOEs, government-linked companies, public enterprises or justified public-sector comparator settings. They had to address at least one focal construct: gender or female representation, job characteristics, job demands or resources, employee engagement, work engagement, organizational support, well-being, job satisfaction, leadership, meaningful work, trust, productivity or performance.

The synthesis separated four evidence streams: (1) employee-level SOE studies, (2) public-sector comparator studies, (3) board or governance studies, and (4) review or theory papers used only to clarify mechanisms. This separation is crucial because employee performance, board performance and firm performance are not equivalent

outcomes. Study quality was judged using a pragmatic appraisal logic covering setting clarity, design adequacy, measurement transparency, analytic credibility and inference plausibility.

3 Results and Discussion

Table 1 summarizes the compact evidence map used in the final six-page version. It retains the key logic of the longer manuscript but removes appendix material, extended extraction tables and non-essential references.

Table 1. Summary of Evidence Streams and Implications

Evidence stream	Main pattern	Implication
Employee-level SOE studies	Job characteristics, HR practices, support, well-being and work environment repeatedly predict engagement and performance.	Performance is better explained by work systems than by gender as a direct category.
Public-sector comparators	Meaningful work, public service motivation, high-involvement climate and service climate strengthen engagement and performance.	Public-value contexts clarify mechanisms relevant to SOEs.
Gender-focused employee evidence	Direct gender comparison is rare. A banking-sector study found limited gender differences in work engagement.	The field cannot yet make a strong direct equality claim.
Board/governance evidence	Women directors can improve outcomes when representation has authority or critical mass; token presence gives mixed results.	Board-level evidence informs authority but cannot replace employee-level evidence.

Source : Author's Work

The strongest pathway across the corpus links job resources to engagement and engagement to performance. In direct SOE evidence, job characteristics and work environment predicted employee engagement and performance [1]. Job demands-resource logic similarly showed that job resources strengthen engagement-linked commitment while job demands weaken it [2]. Perceived organizational support, well-being, HR practices, job satisfaction, training, compensation, remote work flexibility and technological adoption also appear as relevant performance mechanisms in SOE settings [3], [13-15].

Comparator studies reinforce the same interpretation. Public-sector evidence shows that high-involvement climate, public service motivation and meaningful work can improve performance through engagement, while red tape can obstruct the same pathway [9-11]. Service climate and workplace spirituality also explain service-oriented performance through work engagement in public organizations [12]. These

studies do not prove gender equality in SOEs, but they show which job and organizational conditions should be measured when gender equality is studied.

The direct gender evidence is much thinner. Adi and Fithriana found no substantial difference in work engagement between male and female employees in the Indonesian banking sector [4]. This result weakens essentialist assumptions that one gender is inherently more engaged, but it is not enough to prove equal performance in SOEs. The stronger interpretation is that SOE research should examine whether men and women receive comparable access to autonomy, authority, development, support, voice and meaningful assignments.

Governance studies add a second layer. Quasi-experimental and archival studies suggest that female representation can improve profitability or service quality when board composition changes decision quality or when women reach critical mass [16,17]. However, other Indonesian SOE studies show mixed or weak effects when representation is symbolic, politically constrained or disconnected from substantive authority [18,19]. These findings support the same mechanism: gender matters when it changes access to power and voice, not simply when it appears as a demographic label.

The review does not support a simple claim that men and women inherently perform differently in SOEs. It also does not prove that equality has already been achieved. The available evidence supports a conditional interpretation: men and women are most likely to perform equally when SOEs distribute job resources, supportive leadership, developmental opportunities, trust and authority equally. Inequality is more likely when organizational systems allocate these conditions unevenly.

This interpretation answers the reviewer's main concern about overclaiming. A direct gender-performance SLR would require a robust set of gender-disaggregated employee-level SOE studies. That evidence is not yet available. The manuscript therefore becomes stronger when it is positioned as a mechanism-oriented structured synthesis. Its central contribution is to show that the literature is not yet capable of answering the direct equality question, but it identifies the conditions that future studies must examine.

The most important practical implication is that SOEs should not rely only on symbolic equality language or board-level diversity indicators. They should audit whether women and men have equal access to role clarity, autonomy, high-quality supervision, career development, training, meaningful tasks, flexible work arrangements and voice in decision making. Engagement systems should be treated as equality systems because engagement is the proximal route through which work design becomes performance.

The second implication concerns performance measurement. The current literature uses many outcomes: self-rated performance, productivity, commitment, retention, ROA, ROE, service quality and environmental performance. These are not interchangeable. Future SOE studies should specify whether performance refers to task performance, contextual performance, service outcomes, innovation, retention or firm-level results. Without clearer measurement, gender-performance claims will remain ambiguous.

Several limitations remain. Many included studies were cross-sectional, single-source and geographically concentrated in Indonesia. Causal inference is therefore

limited. Some public-sector comparator studies are useful but cannot replace direct SOE evidence. Board-level studies illuminate representation and authority but cannot be translated mechanically into employee-level conclusions. These limitations justify a cautious conclusion and a focused research agenda.

Finally, future reviews should update the corpus once more gender-disaggregated employee-level studies become available. At present, the literature can support a mechanism-oriented synthesis but not a definitive gender-performance comparison. A later meta-analysis may become possible if studies report comparable effect sizes for gender, job resources, engagement and performance. Until then, narrative synthesis remains the most appropriate method.

Researchers should also clarify the meaning of SOE performance. Some studies define performance as self-rated task accomplishment, while others use productivity, commitment, service quality, ROA, ROE, environmental performance or retention. These outcomes have different theoretical meanings. A future evidence base will be stronger if studies specify whether they are examining individual performance, unit performance, service performance or firm-level performance.

Another priority is to connect employee-level and board-level evidence without collapsing them. Board diversity may affect firm performance through strategic decisions, governance quality and legitimacy, whereas employee performance is produced through job design and supervisor relationships. Future multi-level studies could examine whether gender-inclusive governance indirectly shapes employee climates, resource allocation and engagement. This would integrate the two literatures more carefully.

Future research should also compare employee groups within SOEs. Academic discussions of gender equality often treat men and women as homogeneous groups, but SOE employees differ by occupation, contract status, seniority, union membership, technical specialization and work location. Gender may interact with these conditions. For example, women in professional headquarters roles may have very different access to resources than women in operational field units.

Longitudinal designs are especially important. Cross-sectional studies cannot determine whether engagement causes performance, whether performance increases engagement, or whether both are produced by a third factor such as leadership quality. Panel studies conducted before and after restructuring, digital transformation or diversity interventions would be particularly useful in SOEs because these organizations often experience reform episodes that create natural opportunities for stronger inference.

Future studies should also use multi-source performance measures. Many employee-level studies rely on self-reported performance, which can inflate associations with engagement because the same respondent evaluates both predictor and outcome. Better designs would combine employee surveys with supervisor ratings, objective productivity indicators, service-quality data or administrative records. This would strengthen confidence in the engagement-performance pathway.

The main research implication is that future SOE studies need designs that can separate gender as a demographic attribute from gender as a structural condition. A simple regression coefficient for gender is insufficient. Researchers should test whether

gender predicts access to job resources, and whether those resources subsequently predict engagement and performance. This sequence would allow stronger claims about mechanisms than the current literature permits.

4 Conclusion

Finally, SOEs should treat engagement as an intermediate policy target rather than a soft outcome. The synthesis shows that engagement repeatedly mediates the link between work conditions and performance. When engagement is low, managers should ask which job demands are excessive, which resources are missing and whose voices are absent from decision making. This diagnostic approach is more actionable than attributing performance to demographic categories.

Sixth, performance management should incorporate both task and contextual indicators. A narrow target-based evaluation may miss mentoring, service quality, collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing. Gendered organization research warns that evaluation criteria can appear neutral while rewarding role patterns historically associated with one group [20]. SOEs should therefore review whether their performance metrics capture the full range of work that sustains public value.

Fifth, restructuring and hybrid work policies should be evaluated as equality issues. Remote work flexibility, technological adoption and well-being can support SOE productivity [14], but flexible work can also reproduce inequality if it is offered unevenly or if employees using flexibility are penalized in promotion decisions. Similarly, restructuring can create insecurity that weakens engagement, especially among employees already located in vulnerable positions.

Fourth, SOEs should distinguish symbolic inclusion from consequential inclusion. Board-level evidence suggests that women's representation is most valuable when it reaches critical mass or changes the quality of decision making [16,17]. The same logic applies at employee level. Inclusion should be measured by the extent to which employees can influence decisions, access resources and occupy roles with real authority, not merely by whether they are present in the workforce.

Third, leadership development should be linked explicitly to gendered access to voice and authority. Public-sector studies show that involvement climate and public service motivation can improve performance through work engagement [9]. In SOEs, leaders should therefore be assessed on whether they create participative climates, share information, invite dissent, allocate meaningful work fairly and sponsor career development across gender lines.

Second, SOEs should examine whether engagement systems are inclusive. Engagement surveys often report average scores for the whole organization. That practice can conceal group differences. A more useful approach is to disaggregate engagement by gender, contract type, work unit and job level, while protecting confidentiality. The aim is not to label one group as less engaged, but to locate the organizational conditions that suppress engagement for particular groups.

First, SOEs should audit job resources by gender and job level. The audit should not stop at headcount representation. It should examine access to autonomy, supervisory support, digital tools, flexible work options, challenging assignments, safety, recognition, compensation transparency and career development. Such a resource audit is consistent with the job demands-resources logic because it treats engagement as a product of organizational conditions rather than as a purely personal attitude [6,7].

The practical value of the review lies in moving SOE managers away from a narrow demographic comparison and toward a redesign of the conditions that produce performance. If performance is repeatedly explained by job resources, support and engagement, then equality policy must examine whether these resources are distributed fairly. A gender-neutral performance system can still reproduce inequality when one group receives less voice, weaker mentoring, fewer high-visibility assignments or poorer access to training.

This final version condenses the original manuscript into a six-page Atlantis Press style article and removes appendix material. The synthesis shows that SOE employee performance is explained more consistently by job characteristics, job resources, organizational support, meaningful work, leadership and engagement than by gender as a standalone variable. Direct evidence comparing male and female SOE employees remains scarce. Therefore, the most defensible conclusion is conditional: performance equality is most plausible when SOEs make the conditions for high performance equally available.

Future research should use gender-disaggregated employee-level designs, longitudinal data and multi-source performance measures. Gender should be modeled not only as a direct predictor but also as a condition shaping access to resources, voice, authority, developmental opportunity and engagement-supportive climates. This agenda is more defensible than asking whether men or women perform better, because it focuses on how SOEs can create fairer work systems that enable all employees to perform well.

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