

# Gender and organizational commitment: evidence from a nationwide survey in Poland

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organizational  
commitment

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The study examines whether affective organizational commitment and its drivers differ between Polish female and male employees.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Our proprietary data are from ongoing surveys conducted by a major Polish HR consulting firm. The nationwide survey of nearly 3,000 Polish workers in 2020 constitutes the data set in this analysis. Regression analysis is applied to analyze the relationship between organizational commitment, gender and other variables.

**Findings** – The study provides support for the job model, that is, women and men have similar levels of commitment once all other factors are controlled. Although the results show that, *ceteris paribus*, the organizational commitment of women is statistically significantly higher than that of men, the effect size is trivial in practical terms. The study also discloses the fact that the determinants of organizational commitment of men and women are similar, thus refuting a commonly held notion about gendered job attribute preferences. Support for gender as a moderator between organizational commitment and its antecedents is not found. COVID-19-related work adjustments do not seem to have affected the commitment of Polish male and female workers to their employers.

**Originality/value** – The study adds to the scarce empirical literature on organizational commitment in Poland. To date, only a small number of such studies exist for Poland, and all of them use small homogeneous samples and limited questionnaires. The results are of value to researchers as well as HR managers seeking to improve long-term commitment to organizations.

**Keywords** Affective organizational commitment, Commitment antecedents, Gender, Poland, COVID-19

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

In 2021, various media outlets in Poland reported on findings from a study by Kincentric, which showed that about 25% of employees – nearly twice as much as in the United States and the world on average – did not identify themselves with their company, often spoke negatively about it, and were ready to change jobs provided the right offer came along. Given the low degree of employee commitment in the Polish workforce and the rising prevalence of temporary contracts and similar work arrangements in our increasingly turbulent times,

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long-term commitment to organizations becomes a dominant issue for managers and researchers.

This study focuses on employee organizational commitment in Poland. We are most interested in the influence of gender on employee commitment to their organization. Why is the relationship between gender and organizational commitment important for Poland? Women constitute more than 40% of employed people in the country (GUS, 2021). Although Poland has a long history of feminist activism, it is also under a strong influence of the conservative social views of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the post-1989 family policy reforms in Poland facilitated “implicit familism” or “private maternalism” as they provide limited support from institutions and leave care primarily to the family (Glass & Fodor, 2007; Heinen & Wator, 2006; Saxonberg & Sirovátka, 2006; Saxonberg & Szelewa, 2007; Szelewa, 2017). Hence, stereotypically, women in Poland are often perceived as the ones responsible for household chores and family care, whereas their professional lives are of secondary importance. These stereotypes continue to impact workplace norms and practices when employers view women as less committed because they might easily quit their jobs for the sake of their families (Gąciarz, 2011; Sielska, 2015; Siemińska, 1996). Whether there are differences in organizational commitment between women and men emerges as an important research issue because women are likely to face discrimination if they are inaccurately perceived as less committed to the organization than men.

This study strives to assess whether there is a difference in organizational commitment between Polish female and male employees, *ceteris paribus*. The study also examines whether the drivers (i.e. antecedents and correlates) of organizational commitment differ for men and women. The data used in this analysis were collected in 2020 (the early phase of the COVID-19 outbreak); therefore, the study additionally explores whether the changes in the workplace brought about during the pandemic affected employee organizational commitment. Such an investigation will be of interest to the field of HRM and OB, as employee commitment to a company is an important variable that affects a variety of workplace outcomes as well as the retention of human resources. High levels of employee organizational commitment are related to improved business performance, productivity, profitability, employee retention, quality of organizational work-life, employee physical and mental well-being, and workplace culture (Meyer, 2016).

Although there is a considerable amount of research in this field, there is still ongoing debate about the empirical evidence regarding the relationship between gender and organizational commitment. Individual studies on the subject and several meta-analyses report contradictory and inconsistent results (see, e.g. Becker *et al.*, 2009; Marsden *et al.*, 1993; the meta-analyses by Aven *et al.*, 1993; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Some studies found that gender and commitment were unrelated; while others reported that women tended to be more (less) committed than men, although the correlation was often weak and/or the magnitude of the difference was small. Becker *et al.* (2009) concluded that:

It is important to recognize that not only is the workplace changing – but so is the worker. Therefore, we need more research to understand how changing demographics are likely to affect the nature, development, and consequences of commitment. Age, gender, and education have all been studied in the past, and the relations with commitment have generally been found to be weak or inconsistent. However, we have yet to take a systematic look at how these and other demographic factors might relate to various commitment targets (p. 446).

Furthermore, the majority of studies focused on highly developed Western countries, and there has not been much research carried out in Poland. We found only a handful of such studies in English-language journals (Kmieciak, 2021; Lewicka, 2020; Lewicka & Rakowska, 2017; Lipka & Król, 2021; Wołowska, 2014). Hence, this article adds to the scarce empirical

literature on organizational commitment in Poland, as only a few such studies exist for Poland and all of them use small and often homogeneous samples, limited questionnaires and a limited number of control variables. Moreover, it is important to investigate predictors of organizational commitment in different national environments as the meaning of commitment and its predictors may be linked to national and organizational culture (Becker *et al.*, 2009; Fischer & Mansell, 2009). Our proprietary data come from ongoing surveys of individual workers conducted by a major Polish HR consulting firm. The cross-section data set comprises nearly 3,000 individuals working in the Polish labor market in 2020.

The article is structured as follows. We begin by describing the theoretical background and three research questions of the study. Next, we describe our data set, the variables used in the analysis and the estimation method. Then, we present estimation results and discuss our findings and implications. Finally, we discuss limitations and directions for future research. The study comes with the five online Supplements located on Insight, Emerald's content hosting platform.

## 2. Theoretical background and research questions

### 2.1 *Affective organizational commitment*

Commitment has emerged as one of the most voluminous and significant areas in HRM; however, the definitions of commitment in HRM studies are “imprecise and inconsistent” (Van Rossenberg *et al.*, 2022, p. 3). Van Rossenberg *et al.* conducted a thorough systematic literature review (303 articles) of commitment research within HRM and identified dozens of definitions, targets and measures of commitment. Given a plethora of conceptualizations, van Rossenberg *et al.* recommend that HRM researchers should choose and provide a definition of commitment that is consistent with the way they approach commitment in the study.

The chosen definition of commitment in this study is warranted by the nature of the data under analysis. Commitment is defined as affective commitment to the organization, referring to “the employee’s emotional commitment to the organization, characterized by enjoyment of the organization and a desire to stay. Employees with strong affective commitment remain with the organization because they want to do so.” (Allen, 2016, pp. 31–32) or, similarly, “an individual’s psychological bond with the organization, as represented by an affective commitment to the organization, a feeling of loyalty toward it, and an intention to remain as part of it” (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012, p. 343). According to Van Rossenberg *et al.* (2022), the use of the affective commitment dimension of the three-component model has been prevalent in HRM, despite a strong criticism of the three-component model (Solinger *et al.*, 2008) and the significant conceptual development in the field (Klein & Park, 2016). It may be due to the fact that affective commitment is a core essence of organizational commitment (Mercurio, 2015, p. 389) and correlates significantly and more strongly with a wider range of outcome measures than continuance or normative commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 311). It makes the understanding of the determinants of affective commitment an important task. For the sake of brevity, throughout the article, we use “organizational commitment” or simply “commitment” in lieu of “employee affective commitment to the organization.”

### 2.2 *Antecedents and correlates of organizational commitment*

Because of the empirical links between organizational commitment and various positive work-related outcomes, there has been a surge of studies on its predictors over the past decades. However, research on commitment antecedents continues to be “relatively

unsystematic,” the list of antecedent factors is “lengthy” and “not particularly informative,” and “the development of a comprehensive framework for the classification of the antecedents of commitment is still a work in progress” (Becker *et al.*, 2009, pp. 422, 442). Nonetheless, researchers have made great strides in that direction, and several broad categories of antecedent influences of commitment are now recognized. A meta-analysis by Meyer *et al.* (2002) is one of the most comprehensive available today, summarizing and combining the results of 155 studies involving more than 50 thousand employees. Concerning affective organizational commitment, the authors identified the following major antecedents and correlates: demographic characteristics, psychological qualities, job and workplace characteristics, work experiences, and subjective perceptions and satisfaction (see Meyer *et al.*, 2002, Tables 3 and 4 on pp. 30–33). The strongest correlations involving affective commitment were with employee perceptions and satisfaction, while correlations with the demographic characteristics were generally low and statistically insignificant.

### *2.3 Gender and organizational commitment*

Scholars often view the relationship between gender and organizational commitment through the lenses of work role centrality, that is, the degree of importance that work plays in people’s lives. Work role centrality has a significant impact on the way employees manage their work–family–leisure–community interface. Studies indicate that employees with a high level of work role centrality tend to view work as crucial in their lives, dedicate more time and effort to work-related activities, and feel a strong sense of identification and commitment to their work role. The link between work centrality and gender rests on the idea that managing work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts is more challenging for women than for men (Eby *et al.*, 2005; Michel *et al.*, 2011). Most studies have found that women, in general, have a lower level of work centrality (Kostek, 2012). However, recent research has found more evidence for similarity rather than difference in the degree of work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts and work centrality experienced by men and women (Shockley *et al.*, 2017). This results from an increasing representation of women in the workforce, a corresponding change in gender role expectations and family life, a growth in the number of dual-earner and single-parent employees, and individual values that increasingly emphasize work–life balance.

Exploration of the relationship between gender and organizational commitment is usually based on two models: the gender model and the job model (Aven *et al.*, 1993; Lorence, 1987; Marsden *et al.*, 1993). The gender model stresses differential socialization, family ties, and labor market opportunities for women and men, which will result in different commitment levels. The job model asserts that both women and men will demonstrate comparable levels of organizational commitment, once demographic and workplace characteristics are controlled for. There are various arguments as to why women and men might differ in commitment levels, and they do not always lead in the same direction. On the one hand, family-related factors – such as married status, household chores, childcare, sick or elderly care – are expected to inhibit women’s commitment to the organization. Furthermore, women often experience gender-based discrimination and receive unfair and biased treatment from their supervisors and colleagues in the workplace. If this is the case, women’s identification with their work role may be negatively influenced, potentially resulting in reduced commitment. On the other hand, compared with men, women often face more limited job opportunities and career prospects, and need to exert more effort to attain their professional goals and objectives. Consequently, having overcome obstacles to get where they are, women are expected to value the links with their organizations and bear more emotional costs of departing from them, and their organizational commitment is expected to be higher than that of men. Overall, these two opposing viewpoints may boil down to the argument that the

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organizational commitment of women and men varies more based on individual, job and work characteristics than on gender, and women and men are expected to display similar levels of organizational commitment when all those factors are considered.

*Research Question 1.* Do female and male employees differ in their level of organizational commitment, *ceteris paribus*?

The second avenue of our study is the examination of whether the drivers (i.e. antecedents and correlates) of organizational commitment and/or the strength of their linkages to commitment are similar or different for men and women. Gender schema theory (Bem, 1981) and social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) explain how people acquire and construct gender-related behaviors. In organizational settings, gender roles and stereotypes might cause men and women to differ in their job attribute preferences. It is expected that men would express stronger preferences for “masculine” job attributes, and women would express stronger preferences for “feminine” job attributes (Konrad *et al.*, 2000; Terjesen *et al.*, 2007; Tolbert & Moen, 1998). For instance, earnings, autonomy and promotion are believed to be more important for men, while women are likely to value good interpersonal relationships, good work conditions, and intrinsically enjoyable and meaningful work. A meta-analysis by Konrad *et al.* (2000) found significant gender differences in 33 of the 40 examined job attribute preferences. Although the effect sizes were small, the directions of the differences were generally consistent with gender roles and stereotypes. Despite the common view that women and men are profoundly different psychologically, the gender similarities hypothesis by Hyde (2005) asserts that women and men are highly similar on most psychological variables. A meta-analysis by Zell *et al.* (2015) revealed a minor overall difference between women and men in various domains, encompassing over 20,000 individual psychological studies. However, the researchers underscore conditions under which gender differences may emerge and caution against the conclusion that gender differences are trivial or nonexistent.

*Research Question 2.* Are the drivers of organizational commitment and/or the strength of their linkages to commitment similar or different for men and women?

Finally, a notable feature of our data set is that it includes details about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the professional lives of Polish workers. The survey was conducted in 2020, which was the first year of the COVID-19 outbreak. The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented economic and social disruption worldwide, including economic recession, uncertainty, psychological distress, insecurity, isolation, burnout and mental health issues. Theoretically, all the aforementioned phenomena are assumed to reduce organizational commitment. For instance, conceptual models of economic stress suggest that recessions represent a primary macroeconomic stressor that may undermine affective organizational commitment through increased exposure to secondary stressors at work (Probst, 2005). Psychological contract theory contends that employees may view the perceived lack of job security as a breach of the psychological contract with their employer, resulting in a reduction of affective commitment to the organization (Rousseau, 2011). An affect theory of social exchange asserts that workplace loneliness may lead to the lack of social interactions or immersion with the organization (Lawler, 2001), and greater professional isolation may reduce their sense of belonging and hence make employees feel less committed to their organizations (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Empirical research on COVID-19 and affective organizational commitment is still limited. In general, the research indicates a moderate or minimal adverse effect of COVID-19 on commitment. The direct negative impact was moderated by various forms of work support (such as benevolent leadership, supervisor accessibility, support from colleagues, etc.) and personality traits (like resilience, occupational self-efficacy, readiness for change, etc.)

(Anand *et al.*, 2023; Deschênes, 2023; Mihalache & Mihalache, 2022). Furthermore, results indicate that the effects of COVID-19 were stronger for men than for women (Buecker & Horstmann, 2021). Hence, the third avenue of our study is to assess whether the changes in the workplace brought about during the pandemic affected employee organizational commitment.

*Research Question 3.* Did the workplace accommodations and employer's support during the COVID-19 pandemic affect the organizational commitment of women and men in the Polish labor market?

A remark is in order here. We believe that research questions are more appropriate than hypotheses in an exploratory study like ours. As pointed out by Lund (2022), the research question is considered broader than its hypothesis in the sense that the research question has several possible answers, while the hypothesis corresponds to one or some of the possible answers.

### 3. Data and variables

#### 3.1 Data set

Sedlak&Sedlak (S&S) is the oldest Polish HR consulting company that has been operating in Poland since 1990. The company offers a wide array of services in the area of HRM and HRD, including a number of opinion surveys. The S&S survey that we use in this study is the web-based Polish Job Satisfaction Survey (in Polish – Ogólnopolskie Badanie Satysfakcji z Pracy, OBSZP). [Online Supplement #1](#) describes the development of the survey questionnaire, the validity and reliability of its instruments, the data collection process and the representativeness of the survey data.

We use cross-sectional data from the 2020 OBSZP survey. Our sample consists of 2960 employed individuals with data on their socio-demographic characteristics – gender, age, education, tenure at the current workplace, hierarchical job level, department, branch of the economy, type of employment (work contract or other arrangements), firm size, firm ownership, size of the city/town and administrative region where the respondent works. The “perceptions and satisfaction” part of the survey consists of 65 questions covering 12 dimensions: satisfaction with remuneration, relations with direct supervisors and coworkers, autonomy, information and communication, work organization and working conditions, firm management, a firm's reputation in the consumer and labor markets, professional development, job fit, and bond with the firm. All responses are measured using a 1–5 point Likert scale: strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), somewhat agree (4) and strongly agree (5).

For this study, we use the 12 predetermined dimensions (survey scales or composite measures) that reflect employees' subjective perceptions and satisfaction. These dimensions have been formalized and are currently employed by S&S (see [Online Supplement #1](#)). Performing EFA or CFA on our data was beyond the scope of this study. First, as Harpe (2015, p. 840) indicates, “Scales that have been developed to be used as a group must be analyzed as a group, and only as a group. . . . Separating the items conceptually ‘breaks’ the theoretical measurement properties of the aggregated scale as it was originally developed.” Second, we wanted this study to be in line with S&S's approach and the findings to be consistent and comparable with the company's past and future research.

We calculated a mean score for the items included in each survey dimension. This practice is recommended, particularly for measuring less concrete concepts, such as satisfaction, confidence, motivation and loyalty (Sullivan & Artino, 2013, p. 542). We treat all the composite scores as continuous (Harpe, 2015, p. 842). [Table 1](#) shows the means and standard deviations for all 12 composite scores and the number of survey questions used in each construct.

Composite measures	N	All		Men		Women	
		Mean	StDev	Mean	StDev	Mean	StDev
Organizational commitment	5	3.000	0.965	3.035	0.954	2.940	0.980
Pay satisfaction	6	2.835	1.016	2.951	1.002	2.640	1.010
Job fit	4	3.227	0.983	3.300	0.971	3.102	0.990
Job autonomy	3	3.776	0.926	3.868	0.883	3.619	0.976
Training and professional development	7	3.160	0.909	3.206	0.894	3.082	0.929
Relationships with direct supervisors	9	3.668	0.906	3.729	0.872	3.565	0.951
Relationships with coworkers	6	3.950	0.685	3.999	0.650	3.867	0.733
Information and communication	4	3.558	0.825	3.588	0.807	3.506	0.853
Working conditions and work organization	5	3.294	0.818	3.328	0.816	3.236	0.819
Effectiveness of management in running a firm	10	3.078	0.836	3.118	0.837	3.010	0.832
A firm's reputation in the consumer market	3	3.813	0.769	3.843	0.763	3.762	0.776
A firm's reputation as an employer in the labor market	3	3.670	0.837	3.720	0.808	3.583	0.878
Total	65	Nobs = 2,960		Nobs = 1,864		Nobs = 1,096	

**Note(s):** The number of survey questions used in each composite measure (N), average values on a 1–5 point Likert scale (Mean), and standard deviations (StDev)

**Source(s):** Authors' own calculations

**Table 1.** Subjective perceptions and satisfaction: descriptive statistics

To verify the reliability and validity of the 12 composite measures, we used correlation-based techniques. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and inter-rater reliability was assessed using two forms of the intra-class correlation coefficient. Discriminant validity was assessed using pair-wise correlations, the number of correlation violations, the three versions of the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, and the variance inflation factor (VIF). All the estimated reliability and validity measures fall within the recommended acceptable range. This indicates that the items within each composite measure are adequately intercorrelated and that our composite measures, aiming to represent the underlying latent constructs, are reliable, do not measure the same phenomena, and are genuinely distinct from one another. The detailed results of reliability and validity tests are presented in [Online Supplement #2](#).

### 3.2 Variables used in the analysis

**3.2.1 Dependent variable.** The definition of employee affective organizational commitment (as used in this study) was provided in [Section 2.1](#). The operational definition of affective organizational commitment used by S&S is based on the five questions (or, more precisely, statements) available in the OBSZP survey. The first statement – “You feel an emotional connection with your firm” – reflects employees' feelings of psychological bond and belonging to the organization. The second statement – “You are proud to work for this firm” – reflects employees' pride in organizational membership. The last three statements – “You see

your future with the firm for which you currently work,” “You often think about changing jobs” and “If you had the opportunity to move to a competitor-firm, you would be willing to consider this option” – reflect employees’ intent to remain with the organization. The S&S website provides the following description of this survey scale: “Individuals with high scores on this dimension feel strongly connected to the company. They are planning their future with their current employer, and competitive offers are not interesting to them. Employees with low scores on this dimension are not committed to the company. They do not see their future with it, and they are thinking about changing employers or actively looking for a new job.”

Noteworthy, as a for-profit company, S&S relies only on its own survey questions so as to avoid intellectual property rights violations and possible licensing problems. [Online Supplement #3](#) elaborates on how the five aforementioned questions from the OBSZP survey relate to the questions about affective organizational commitment used in HRM research. [Online Supplement #3](#) also presents the results of the CFA analysis showing that the five variables (i.e. five questions in the OBSZP survey) are most closely associated with the “employee affective organizational commitment” latent construct and that the unifactor model adequately fits the data [1]. On a 1–5 scale, the average value of this composite score is 3.035 for men with the distribution of 14.1% (1), 28.2% (2), 38.2% (3), 18.3% (4) and 1.2% (5). For women, the average value of this composite score is 2.940 with the distribution of 16.2%, 31.9%, 34.1%, 16.4% and 1.3%, respectively.

*3.2.2 Explanatory variables.* The variables available in the OBSZP survey allow us to consider many of the most important antecedents and correlates of organizational commitment identified by [Meyer et al. \(2002\)](#), see [Section 2.2](#). Consistent with [Meyer et al. \(2002\)](#), we grouped the potential explanatory factors used in this study into four major domains:

- (1) Individual demographic characteristics. These include age and education. For male respondents, the average age is 37.8 years (ranging from 18 to 81), and for female respondents, the average age is 36.8 years (ranging from 20 to 65). In general, women in our sample are more educated than men: 84.5% of them had a college/university degree or higher, while only 15.5% completed high school or lower. For men, these figures are 78.1% and 21.9%, respectively.
- (2) Individual job and workplace characteristics. The predominant majority of the respondents are hired employees with a work contract: 94.4% of women and 88.6% of men. The rest are engaged in other types of employment. Regarding organizational hierarchical position, 8.2% (3.4%) of males (females) identify themselves as directors or top managers, 27.4% (21.6%) as team leaders, 54.5% (62.0%) as specialists, and the rest – 9.9% (13.0%) – are blue-collar workers. The average tenure at the current workplace is about 5 years for both genders: 5.6 years for men and 5.2 years for women. Out of the 19 departments available in the survey, the highest shares of the male respondents are employed in IT (24.1%), production (12.2%), maintenance and repair (8.4%) and sales (8.2%). For females, the top departments are finance and accounting (18.6%), administration and management office (12.9%), HR and personnel (12.9%) and customer service (7.1%). Out of the 19 branches of economy available in the survey, the most frequently reported industries for both men and women are manufacturing, construction and retail: 38.6% of the male respondents and 27.9% of the female respondents work in those three branches. The absolute majority of the respondents – 82.2% of men and 71.9% of women – work in private companies, with approximately 50/50 split between employment in private firms with majority Polish ownership and private firms with majority foreign ownership. The



distributions of the male and female respondents according to firm size are quite similar: 3.1% (4.2%) of men (women) work in companies with 1–5 employees, 17.9% (21.1%) in companies with 6–50 employees, 25.5% (25.0%) in companies with 51–250 employees, 28.0% (26.2%) in companies with 251–1,500 employees and 25.5% (23.5%) in companies with more than 1,500 employees. Finally, we control for locational characteristics of employment, i.e. macro-geographical regions and city/town size.

- (3) Employee subjective perceptions and satisfaction. We measure them with 11 composite scores. [Table 1](#) shows the means and standard deviations. On a 1–5 scale, the highest average score is for the “relationships with coworkers” measure (3.999 for men and 3.867 for women), and the lowest average score is for the “pay satisfaction” measure (2.951 for men and 2.640 for women). As noted earlier (in [Section 3.1](#)), [Online Supplement #2](#) covers the detailed results of reliability and validity tests for all the composite measures.
- (4) COVID-19’s impact on work lives. One of the survey questions asked, “What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your professional situation?” We coded the answers to this question as follows: 5 = definitely negative (11.5% of respondents), 4 = moderately negative (27.6%), 3 = neutral/no influence (37.1%), 2 = moderately positive (14.9%) and 1 = definitely positive (9.0%). Reporting a positive impact of COVID-19 is not very surprising, as many employees in Poland perceived the switch to remote work mode as positive ([Błaszczuk et al., 2022](#)). The average of the responses was 3.2 implying that, overall, Polish employees felt no impact of COVID-19 on their professional lives in 2020. This could be because the survey for this study took place in 2020, during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic when the situation in Poland was not severe (it worsened in 2021). Another survey question asked, “Your employer is taking proper care of employees in the context of the COVID-19 threat.” Using a 1–5 point Likert scale, the average was 3.83, with 67.4% rather or definitely agreeing with the statement, 19.6% neither agreeing or disagreeing and only 13.1% rather or definitely disagreeing.

#### 4. Estimation method, regression diagnostics and testing regression coefficients

We treat our dependent variable – the “organizational commitment” composite measure – as continuous ([Harpe, 2015](#), p. 842) and use the OLS regression model to examine the relationship between it and a set of explanatory variables described in [Section 3.2.2](#). [Online Supplement #4](#) outlines the reasons for selecting multiple regression over SEM in our study. Further, many statisticians warn against using OLS for ordinal dependent variables, as the assumptions of OLS regression are likely to be violated. However, given certain requirements pertaining to the number of items in a composite scale (at least 5), slight skewness, large sample size, etc., it seems nevertheless possible to apply OLS to ordered data and recover true parameter estimates. [Online Supplement #4](#) presents the tests for normality of error terms, multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity, suggesting that the OLS method is appropriate [[2](#)].

Column (1) of [Table 2](#) shows the OLS estimation results for the entire sample. In this study, we were particularly interested in determining whether the effects of explanatory variables on organizational commitment are the same for women and men. Columns (2) and (3) of [Table 2](#) show the separate estimation results for male and female employees. A brief look at the estimated coefficients gives some indication that the coefficient estimates for men and women are similar. The Wald test supports this observation by failing to reject the null hypothesis of no difference between the two coefficient vectors (see the last row in [Table 2](#)).

Variables (A)	All (1)	Men (2)	Women (3)
<i>Individual demographic characteristics</i>			
Gender Woman (Ref: Man)	0.077***		
Ln(Age, years)	0.341***	0.347***	0.317***
Education College or higher (Ref: High school or lower)	-0.073***	-0.066**	-0.100**
<i>Subjective perceptions and satisfaction</i>			
Pay satisfaction	0.111***	0.112***	0.106***
Job fit	0.451***	0.447***	0.468***
Job autonomy	0.016	0.007	0.019
Training and professional development	0.126***	0.134***	0.122***
Relationships with direct supervisors	0.023	0.034*	0.003
Relationships with coworkers	0.030*	-0.007	0.079***
Information and communication	-0.060	-0.075	-0.045
Working conditions and work organization	0.048***	0.039*	0.072**
Effectiveness of management in running a firm	0.109***	0.115***	0.093**
A firm's reputation in the consumer market	0.063***	0.048**	0.096***
A firm's reputation as an employer in the labor market	0.148***	0.174***	0.105***
<i>Individual job and workplace characteristics</i>			
Firm ownership (Ref: Public sector)			
Private with majority Polish ownership	-0.050	-0.042	-0.063
Private with majority foreign ownership	-0.135***	-0.143***	-0.134**
Individual business activities	0.068	0.137	-0.021
Firm size (Ref: <50 employees)			
51–250 employees	-0.033	-0.058	-0.002
251–1500 employees	-0.004	-0.042	0.056
1501 and more employees	-0.053*	-0.101***	0.025
Type of employment: Hired with a contract (Ref: Other types of employment)	0.086**	0.080**	0.124*
Ln(Tenure at the current workplace, years)	0.150***	0.143***	0.173***
Hierarchical position (Ref: Rank-and-file)			
Specialist	-0.040	-0.024	-0.055
Team leader	-0.002	0.021	-0.042
Director and top manager	0.005	0.050	-0.073
Size of a city/town (Ref: <20,000 residents)			
21,000–100,000	-0.020	0.004	-0.037
101,000–200,000	-0.042	-0.053	-0.028
201,000–500,000	-0.058	-0.058*	-0.058
501,000 and more	-0.058*	-0.046	-0.089*
Department (19 dummies)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Industry (19 dummies)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Macroregion (6 dummies)	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>COVID-related questions</i>			
COVID's impact on work-life	0.006	0.001	0.009
The employer is taking proper care of employees	0.012	0.020	0.002
R <sup>2</sup> -sq	0.742	0.745	0.751
N variables (including the intercept)	76	75	75
N observations	2,960	1,864	1,096
Wald test of no difference in the two coefficient vectors		71.205	(p-value = 0.603)

**Note(s):** Unstandardized coefficients. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Significance at 1, 5 and 10% level. See Section 3 for the description of variables used in estimations

**Source(s):** Authors' own calculations

**Table 2.**  
Estimation results

Using the test recommended by Paternoster *et al.* (1998), we find no statistically significant difference between individual coefficients for men and women, with only two exceptions – the “relationships with coworkers” composite measure and for one of the departments (see [Online Supplement #4](#)).

Regression analyses conducted separately for men and women are indicative of whether gender may (or may not) act as a moderator between organizational commitment and its antecedents. As there is no significant difference between the coefficients for male and female subsamples, gender does not seem to act as a moderator in the associations between commitment and the other variables. Besides the mentioned tests, assessing the statistical significance of the difference between the two coefficients can be approached by considering a joint model across the two groups, including all the variables and their interaction terms with gender. The regression model specified in Column (1) of [Table 2](#) was augmented by the interactions between each of the variables and gender (with Woman = 1, Man = 0), one variable at a time. [Online Supplement #4](#) provides a summary of the results for selected variables (eleven composite measures, age, education and tenure). In the moderated regressions, gender retained its statistical significance. However, no support was found for gender as a moderator between organizational commitment and its predictors, with one exception. The interaction terms are not statistically significant (with one exception “relationships with coworkers”) and do not contribute significant variance to the regression equation beyond the basic specification in [Table 2](#). Thus, overall, the relationship between organizational commitment and its antecedents does not appear to vary by gender.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 *The impact of gender*

For the entire sample in Column (1) of [Table 2](#), we observe that, *ceteris paribus*, the organizational commitment of female employees is statistically significantly higher than that of male employees (the coefficient is 0.077, *p*-value = 0.001). Using the estimated coefficients for women from Column (3) of [Table 2](#) and holding all the explanatory variables at their subsample means for men, we calculated the predicted counterfactual average commitment score for women and then compared it to the actual mean scores for women and men. If female workers had the same average levels of all explanatory variables as male workers but female coefficients, their predicted counterfactual average commitment score would be 3.119, that is, 0.179 higher than the actual mean score of 2.940 for women and 0.084 higher than the actual mean score of 3.035 for men. The Oaxaca–Blinder approach helps us disentangle the contribution of different factors to the observed mean female–male commitment differential of  $-0.095 = 2.940 - 3.035 = (2.940 - 3.119) + (3.119 - 3.035) = -0.179 + 0.084$ . The first term ( $-0.179$ ) is attributed to differences in personal and job characteristics between women and men, and the second term (0.084) is attributed to differences in the impact of these characteristics on commitment. Thus, differences in observed characteristics appear to be responsible for the lower actual commitment score of women in our sample as compared to men. Although differences in the estimated coefficients (i.e. in the impact of these characteristics on commitment) work toward reducing this gap, they are not enough to offset the large negative impact of differences in observed personal and job attributes.

### 5.2 *The impact of employees' perceptions and satisfaction*

As seen in [Table 2](#), seven out of the eleven composite measures reflecting employees' views on job and organization are highly and positively correlated with organizational commitment for both men and women: job fit, training and professional development, pay satisfaction, working conditions and work organization, the effectiveness of management in running a

firm, a firm's reputation in the consumer market and a firm's reputation as an employer in the labor market.

The "job fit" measure reflects congruence between job design and an employee's strengths, experience, needs and preferences. Using a framework of social exchange theory, both theoretical and empirical literature suggest that person-job fit is an important predictor of employees' commitment to their organizations. The results of our analysis are in line with these previous studies. Fit for a job is the *strongest* predictor of organizational commitment among the eleven composite measures in our analysis: the estimated coefficient is 0.447 for men and 0.468 for women.

The literature is not unified on the specific direction of the effects of training and development on organizational commitment. There is widespread agreement that participating in professional training is a crucial factor influencing employee commitment. Alternatively, some studies found little or no evidence of a positive relationship between training and organizational commitment and even expressed concern that training and commitment may be negatively related, as employees who received significant levels of training may become more competent and, hence, more likely to look for alternative employment. In our sample, training and development, along with job fit, is one of the major predictors of organizational commitment: the relationship is positive and highly statistically significant (0.134 for men and 0.122 for women).

Researchers assert that the extent of commitment to an employer is likely to be determined by employees' perceptions of how they are rewarded for their performances. Employees who believe that they are fairly rewarded for their work are more likely to be motivated to excel and increase their commitment. On the other hand, reported consequences of pay dissatisfaction include a variety of unwanted employee behaviors, such as lowered job satisfaction, absenteeism and high turnover. A positive and highly statistically significant coefficient on the "pay satisfaction" measure (0.112 for men and 0.106 for women) confirms that employees who perceive their pay as fair and contingent on their performance are more likely to commit to their organization.

Several studies revealed that employees reciprocate favorable work conditions with increased organizational commitment, while unfavorable work conditions lead to employee burnout, absenteeism, complaints and grievances, ultimately diminishing their commitment to the company. Consistent with this prior evidence, the estimated coefficient on the "working conditions and work organization" measure is positive and significant, albeit not large in magnitude (0.039 for men and 0.072 for women).

The final two measures that are positively and strongly related to employee organizational commitment for both genders are the firm's reputation in the consumer and labor markets. The estimated coefficients in Table 2 suggest that for men, a company's image as an employer has a stronger impact on organizational commitment than a company's image among consumers (0.174 vs 0.048), while for women the difference is not that large (0.105 vs 0.096). The uncovered strong relationship between a firm's external image and employee commitment is consistent with prior studies. In general, the process of company branding involves two steps: first, a company must establish a robust brand to project the right image for attracting and recruiting a talented workforce, and second, current employees naturally build their organizational commitment by being associated with a prestigious brand.

The next two composite measures reflect employees' relations with their direct supervisors and coworkers. Overall, social exchange theory treats organizational commitment as an exchange commodity and suggests that employees will be more likely to develop more affiliation and commitment toward the organization when they form collegial and supportive relationships with managers and coworkers. Some empirical evidence suggests that supervisor and coworker support may be a more valuable resource for female workers than for male workers. As female employees are more likely to experience work-

family conflict and related stress, social support at work may lessen or mitigate the effect of psychosocial stressors through regular collaborative and friendly rapport with colleagues, direct lines of communication with managers and staff, open discussions about employees' plans for their professional development, etc. Therefore, the relationships between perceptions of social relationships at work and work commitment may be stronger for women than for men. The evidence regarding gender differences in the effects of perceived social support in our sample is not clear-cut. For women, relationships with coworkers strongly affect organizational commitment (with a coefficient of 0.079), while relationships with direct supervisors seem to have no effect on it. For men, relationships with direct supervisors are shown to be only marginally significant, and relationships with coworkers are not significant at all.

In the end, despite the anticipation that job autonomy and workplace information and communication would strongly and positively link to commitment, the estimated coefficients are not statistically significant for both genders. Many studies reported that increased autonomy, the quality of information flow and information adequacy strengthened organizational commitment; however, some studies discovered a weak or no relationship. Our finding of no association between autonomy and information and communication and organizational commitment is puzzling, adds to the mixed empirical evidence in earlier investigations, and warrants further investigation.

### *5.3 The impact of employees' demographic, job and workplace characteristics*

The other results reported in [Table 2](#) concern employees' demographic characteristics and their objective job and workplace attributes. Age, tenure at the current workplace and type of employment (a contract) significantly increase employee organizational commitment for both genders. This is because as age or tenure increases, the opportunities for alternative employment become more limited and the perceived attractiveness of the current employer increases. Moreover, employees accumulate "side bets" over time that would be lost if they quit the company, for example, the loss of a pension fund, seniority, career advancement, etc.

An employee's educational level appears to be negatively related to organizational commitment. This relationship is significant for both men and women. A negative correlation between education and commitment has often been reported previously. It is believed that this inverse relationship may arise because highly educated employees may perceive that their education, knowledge and skills are not adequately rewarded, may have higher expectations that the organization may not be able to meet and satisfy, and may believe that their education and skills would transfer easily to another organization.

The results in [Table 2](#) reveal that firm ownership impacts commitment level. Employees in the private sector seem to be less committed as compared to their public sector counterparts. More interestingly, while the level of commitment is only slightly lower in the private companies with majority Polish ownership, the level of commitment is much lower (in terms of its magnitude and statistical significance) in the private companies with majority foreign ownership. This finding is in contrast to the prior studies and to the longstanding stereotype that depicted employees in the public sector as lazy, inefficient and non-committed. However, more recent studies reported that the level of organizational commitment in the public sector was on par with that in the private sector. Further research is needed to shed more light on the relationship between firm ownership and organizational commitment in Poland.

Total number of employees captured the firm size. Prior research on the association between firm size and organizational commitment produced inconsistent findings. Some studies reported a positive relationship and argued that larger companies may offer better opportunities for promotion and attractive wages, thereby resulting in more committed employees. An alternative point of view countered that larger companies are less personable;

hence, employees working in larger organizations may not form strong personal bonds with their employers and colleagues, making them less likely to identify with and commit to the organization. Our results for men are in line with the latter point of view: Table 2 shows a negative and significant relationship between organizational commitment and firm size. However, we found no such relationship for women.

Finally, hierarchical position, department, industry and geographical location of employment (city/town size and macroregion) all produced insignificant correlations with organizational commitment. However, there is some slight evidence that the city/town size may weaken organizational commitment, possibly due to more job opportunities in big cities.

#### *5.4 COVID-19 and organizational commitment*

The results in Table 2 show that the COVID-19 pandemic did not impact the organizational commitment of men and women in our 2020 sample.

## **6. Concluding remarks, theoretical and practical implications, limitations and venues for future research**

### *6.1 Concluding remarks regarding the research questions*

*Research Question 1:* The results are consistent with a job model explanation of organizational commitment. Although, *ceteris paribus*, the association between gender and commitment is statistically significant in the direction of women showing higher commitment, the correlation is small in magnitude and may be considered negligible for practical purposes. Furthermore, the decomposition analysis clearly shows that the observed female–male differential in commitment results entirely from the differences in job and socio-demographic attributes of women and men, and not from gender per se. These findings refute stereotypes suggesting that Polish women are less committed to their employing organizations than men, thereby helping to dispel inaccurate clichés and establish that women and men are similar in this aspect.

*Research Question 2:* The results suggest that the impacts of different predictors on commitment are not as gendered as they were previously thought to be. For both genders, the study finds that younger and more educated employees tend to be less attached to their organization. Meanwhile, employees with longer tenure and job contracts, working in the public sector and in smaller companies tend to show higher levels of organizational commitment. The study demonstrates that demographic characteristics (gender, age and education) play a relatively minor role in the development of commitment [3]. In contrast, employees' perceptions and satisfaction appear to have much stronger impacts on organizational commitment and are equally and significantly important for both men and women.

Consistent with the gender similarities hypothesis, statistical tests do not show any significant difference between the estimated coefficients for women and men (except for the “relationships with coworkers” variable, which is significantly associated with organizational commitment only for women). A plausible explanation for the fact that the correlates of organizational commitment do not appear to be appreciably different for women and men may be the growing equality between genders at the workplace and the increasingly blurring roles of gender in society. As gender equity is often publicly endorsed at the policy level, women may become more open to acquiring traditionally “masculine” values, and men may become more open to acquiring traditionally “feminine” values. More research is needed to determine the veracity of these speculative explanations for Poland.

*Research Question 3:* Our finding that the COVID-19 pandemic did not impact the organizational commitment of men and women in our 2020 sample differs from that of

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Lipka & Król (2021) who surveyed 1,000 employees in Poland in May 2021 and concluded that “the pandemic changed – at least temporarily – employee’s attitudes to loyalty.” As noted earlier, the pandemic situation in Poland was not very serious in 2020 and became much worse in 2021. This may explain our findings of no perceived COVID-19 impact on commitment.

### 6.2 *Theoretical and practical implications*

The overarching purpose of this study was to clarify the relationship between gender and affective organizational commitment, using a large nationwide survey in Poland. Several research implications emanate from this study. Due to conflicting theories and inconsistent empirical evidence, there is limited agreement in academic literature regarding the relationship between gender and organizational commitment. Our study compellingly demonstrates that women and men are more alike than different, suggesting that only some of the existing theories – the job model and the gender similarities hypothesis – are supported by data. Theoretically, our results imply that extant theories predicting lower organizational commitment of women are inaccurate and may be based on incorrect assumptions, at least when focusing on samples of employed people. Finally, our national study provides the most comprehensive picture of the gender-organizational commitment relationship in Poland available to date.

Our findings have important implications for practice. First, by showing a small association between gender and commitment, our study challenges conventional wisdom and constitutes a critical step in changing harmful stereotypes. The idea that women have lower organizational commitment is culturally embedded in society and widely communicated in popular media. Many companies do not clearly and accurately understand the organizational commitment of women as a consequence. Lack of understanding leads to the perception that women are less committed to their organizations, which in turn affects many management decisions, such as promotion, performance evaluation and compensation. Hence, women are likely to face career penalties based on assumptions that they, by virtue of being female, are highly family-oriented and experience low levels of organizational commitment. A clearer understanding that, *ceteris paribus*, women and men exhibit similar levels of commitment could lead to more appropriate decisions by managers and facilitate better policies and practices that will focus on job characteristics and market opportunities for women. Second, our findings of a relatively minor role of demographic characteristics in the development of commitment support the argument that the attempts of HR departments to select employees solely based on their demographics will be less effective as compared to careful post-entry management of their experiences at the workplace. Third, the study confirms that pay satisfaction is *not* the major influence on commitment. Job fit, training and professional development are more strongly related to commitment than pay satisfaction for both men and women. Many companies have traditionally used increasing wages as a dominant longstanding part of their strategy to foster a sense of connection and commitment among their employees. However, in recent years, the effectiveness of this approach has been increasingly questioned, with research and practice indicating it may not be sufficient to motivate organizational commitment. Hence, HR managers should pay special attention to other (than wages and benefits) strategies or support a holistic approach that covers both fair remuneration as well as employment conditions and professional development.

### 6.3 *Limitations and future research*

As with all studies, there are limitations. First, this study uses cross-sectional data collected during 2020. Hence, it can only comment on the correlations among variables; no conclusions can be made regarding causality. Further, by considering observations belonging to only one

point in time, the study examines commitment as a static construct. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to explore how organizational commitment of men and women develops, dissipates and dissolves, and whether the development of commitment as a process differs between men and women.

Second, even with the inclusion of numerous control variables in our analysis, there is a possibility of omitted variable bias due to unobserved characteristics. For instance, there are a number of other individual factors, not available for this study, that play an important role in shaping commitment or the predisposition to commit of men and women. Further research should expand the present results to a wider range of predictors (e.g. individual psychological qualities and family-related personal events). Moreover, to minimize common method bias that occurs when using self-reported data, future studies should also use objective and multi-informant data.

Third, the study tends to view commitment as an individual-level phenomenon responsive to immediate perceptions, experiences and satisfaction. Commitment theorists argue that these immediate personal experiential drivers of commitment are likely to be greatly affected by more macro influences, such as organizational factors, policies, procedures and national culture. These factors deserve greater research attention in the future.

Fourth, the study adopts a variable-centered approach (in which the goal is to explain relations among variables) and focuses on only one form/mindset of organizational commitment, the affective one. It is now widely accepted that multiple commitment mindsets (e.g. affective, normative and continuance) often combine to influence behavior. Future research will benefit from a person-centered approach considering potentially complex interactions among commitment mindsets and identifying commitment profiles of men versus women. It would also be interesting for future studies to investigate commitment profiles of men and women directed at one work-related target (i.e. organization) as well as at one non-work-related target (i.e. the family) in order to specifically examine how the work and non-work domains combine in the formation of a commitment profile of each gender.

### Notes

1. As noted in [Section 3.1](#), we use the predetermined survey scales (i.e. composite measures) that have been formalized and are currently employed by S&S. Performing CFA on our data was beyond the scope of this study. However, we conducted CFA on the five questions comprising the “employee affective organizational commitment” composite measure in order to confirm its unifactor structure and see how each variable (i.e. survey question) loads onto this specific latent construct.
2. We also used the ordered probit model in order to see whether the estimation results differ significantly between the two estimation methods. The patterns (i.e. sign and significance) of coefficients obtained by OLS and ordered probit are very similar (see [Online Supplement #5](#)).
3. Note that if we use Age instead of  $\ln(\text{Age})$  in [Table 2](#), the estimated coefficients are 0.009 for women and 0.008 for men.

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### Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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