

# WORKPLACE COMMITMENT AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING IN THE POST-COVID-19 ERA AND ITS IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*The COVID-19 pandemic rapidly changed how people and organizations function. For many, it is the most drastic shift since the Industrial Revolution, as it has created increased uncertainty and posed threats to the performance and viability of organizations and their employees. This study explores the impact of COVID-19 on employees' commitment and well-being, as well as the consequences of varying commitment levels for employees and organizations. Although prior research has examined pandemic-related workplace changes, the effects on employee commitment, particularly within small businesses and entrepreneurial settings, remain underexplored. To address this gap, this exploratory study examines the extent of employees' commitment levels and their impact, primarily among small enterprises in the United States. Using text mining techniques, we analyzed unstructured data to uncover key patterns and themes.*

*The findings reveal that 54.29% of participants reported maintaining or increasing their commitment levels, while 45.71% reported a decrease in commitment. Employees who maintained commitment most frequently cited flexible working arrangements, the organization itself, the nature of their work, pay and benefits, and management/leadership as key factors. Conversely, less committed employees most often cited poor management/leadership, work overload, and stress as primary causes. Lower commitment was associated with increased turnover intentions, reduced engagement, decreased productivity, and diminished happiness. These insights offer important implications for small businesses, entrepreneurial ventures, and broader organizational management strategies in the post-pandemic era.*

**Keywords:** *COVID-19, Organizational commitment, Small business, Entrepreneurship, Employee retention, and Employee well-being.*

## INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on how people interact, respond to work organization, and communicate. It presented one of the most salient challenges to organizations

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regardless of their size or type, including adjusting the workforce to drastically altered work conditions that shifted the working environment to a remote one and/or implementing new workplace policies and procedures to limit human contact (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

The pandemic, with its related variants, unquestionably affected people across the world, causing feelings of uncertainty coupled with panic and stress, and impacted everything. The US and most of the world have witnessed major upheaval and tremendous impacts on the economy, medicine, social interaction, people's behavior, productivity, logistics, and distribution channels.

One key deflection when the pandemic started was a fast shift in social and behavioral changes resulting from social distancing, masking, and isolation from others. Such mitigation efforts created weak social ties, which impacted communication and trust (Avena, 2021; Betsch, 2020). The pandemic penetrated many homes and created a need for lockdown and quarantine, which caused many to be separated from their families. Coupled with the unknowns of the state of our economy and the lack of vaccines in 2020 to counter the spread of the pandemic, many people found themselves struggling with mental health issues. We know that it created adverse mental health effects in previously healthy people and that it was especially harmful to people with pre-existing mental health disorders (Moreno *et al.*, 2020).

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of entrepreneurs, managers, and organizations' human resources departments has become increasingly complex in creating and retaining a committed workforce (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Idris, 2014). While such complexity affected many organizations, its impact was exigent due to these organizations' limited resources (Fairlie, 2020). To that end, organizational practitioners and scholars have been intensely searching for answers to the reasons that influence an individual's decision to stay in an organization or leave (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Nasser *et al.*, 2022). The current state of post-COVID is in dire need of more research on commitment, as it has been assessed as a predictor of employee retention in past studies (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Suliman & Ilies, 2000). Additionally, organizational commitment (OC\*) has also been investigated as a predictor of employee effectiveness in conducting the mission and vision of organizational leadership (Singh & Gupta, 2015).

Main and Bottorff (2024) asserted that a small business's role is not limited to job creation only; its significant contributions to innovation, economic dynamism, and the country's overall prosperity are prominent. Accordingly, examining people's commitment to their organizations with a focus on small businesses and entrepreneurship in the post-pandemic era is the primary objective of this paper. Providing an in-depth look into the consequences of their commitment to their organizations could provide critical information to management and organizations.

The reason that the study focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on organizational commitment and well-being is the fact that this issue has been lamented in the literature and has been subject to limited scholarly inquiry. In this study, 70.48% of its sample came from small businesses, as indicated by the survey data collected for this study. Study findings might help expand the knowledge regarding the causes of organizational commitment. The subject of lack of commitment and well-being in the post-COVID-19 era has been lamented in the literature and has only been subjected to limited scholarly inquiry.

[\*Organizational Commitment (OC) in this study is defined as "an attachment to the organization, characterized by the intention to remain in it; an identification with the values and goals of the organization; and a willingness to exert extra effort on its behalf." (Porter *et al.*, 1974, p. 604)].

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The Impact of COVID-19 on Individuals and the Disruption of Intra-Organizational Relationships**

The pandemic has presented an uncommon situation of uncertainty and confusion, risks to employees, unpredictable performance measures, and best practices that organizations should adopt, among other challenges. It presented an unprecedented disruption in both personal and organizational aspects. It may have negatively impacted individual behavior by contributing to a rise in incivility and rudeness, which may well be caused by chronic exposure to stress and an anxiety-inducing news cycle and reduced time spent around others (Drake & Ponce, 2022).

Drake and Ponce (2022) noted that the pandemic and its related social restrictions forced many people to change how they interact and communicate. People switched mostly to text-based and social media means as opposed to face-to-face communication. This may have resulted in social displacement and virtual interaction. According to Fattal (2022), there is evidence from the caring professions that the on-the-job situation for many has become worse because of the economic fallout from COVID-19, inflation, and geopolitical strife. All the variables play a role in and affect the US workforce. For instance, workers in the caring professions are working harder and looking after more patients, while hospitals and clinics are understaffed. As a result, working professionals are faced with more threats, violence, and political pressure on the job. According to one analysis based on data retrieved from an online survey of healthcare professionals, 45.7% of polled nurses reported exposure to incivility as compared to the era before the pandemic (Drake & Ponce, 2022).

Green (2022a) suggested that when companies requested their employees to work remotely from home in 2020 due to the pandemic, the plan for most was meant for the employees to return to work and not stay remote indefinitely. However, it seems that many workers do not feel they want to go back to the office, and organizations are struggling to figure out why and how to lure them to return through enticements such as free food, prizes, and even alcoholic beverages.

Organizations, including small businesses, are realizing that the proportion between on-site and remote work will likely not return to the pre-COVID-19 era's proportions, as employees' preferences have changed, and so many employees have experienced the convenience of remote work and utilized the technological tools that facilitated their remote work. This transformation might also imply a decrease in dependency on teamwork and an increase in the utilization of management through individual objectives and rewards (Foss, 2021).

This is an unprecedented organizational reality. While employers have the power to simply order their employees back to work, many take a softer approach out of fear of losing

significant portions of their staff--to be more specific, their key employees, if they do (Green, 2022a). This disruption to the functioning of the organizations added to the other economic and non-economic consequences. De Cremer (2022) asserted that one of these disruptions of the pandemic was the sudden transition from people working on-site to working remotely, which resulted in managers struggling to lead and coordinate their subordinates' work. This new reality precipitated a failure to build trust in working relationships.

To add to the challenge, people are continuing to quit their jobs. Some are going to different organizations or industries, and others are leaving the workforce entirely (Dowling & Fusaro, 2022). Some are rethinking their jobs considering their experience with burnout, pay disparity, the danger on the job, and the lack of available childcare needed by some employees (Fattal, 2022). Research by McKinsey in August 2021 revealed that 40 percent of employees indicated they were likely to leave their organization in the next three to six months. Follow-up research in April 2022 by the same organization revealed that the same percentage of employees were still likely to leave. This fundamental shift is not limited to certain employees and industries only, but across all levels of the workforce, from frontline employees to executives (Dowling & Fusaro, 2022).

According to Dowling and Fusaro (2022), employees today value flexibility, meaningful work, and compensation. Getting those who quit to get back to work is an organizational uphill battle (Dowling & Fusaro, 2022).

### **Organizational Commitment (OC)**

The organizational commitment (OC) concept is categorized as a spontaneous, organic process that develops through the association of an individual with an organization (Messner, 2013; Allen & Meyer, 1996). Employees' commitment is essential as it affects their engagement in the organization and contributes to their retention (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Tuna *et al.*, 2011).

Committed employees usually have a greater sense of job satisfaction, which may be a predictor of their engagement in the organization as they are more willing to invest in their work. Studies suggested that committed employees have a sense of purpose that helps advance organizational goals and objectives, while less committed employees do not (Al-Jabari and Ghazzawi, 2019; Tuna *et al.*, 2011).

In their pursuit of overall stability, an increase in productivity, and strengthening the organization's financial viability, organizations recruit, train, and retain skilled employees (Faloye, 2014). In doing so, such organizations strive to create a committed workforce.

When used as a predictor of employee retention, OC has become the focus of managers in as well as human resource departments, as organizations and managers are becoming more focused on learning and understanding the factors that create or even contribute to employees' commitment, and leverage this to enhance retention and performance (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Idris, 2014; Steel, *et al.*, 2002).

In addition to the emotional bond between the goals and values of the organization and the employee, OC's formation is relevant to the exchange relationship between the employee and the organization in every aspect, including the perception of fair pay and benefits, the perception

of fairness in the internal processes of the organization, the opportunity to learn and be promoted, and having a supportive superior, among others (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Coyle, 2019; Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021). The post-COVID era resulted in people evaluating what they wanted out of their lives and rethinking their futures and jobs. This has been translated into various terms and brands that include lying flat, joining the 'great resignation,' or quitting (Green, 2022 b). These movements send a straightforward signal about work. Today, it seems that "The reason for bosses to concern themselves with these trends isn't that they're describing real behavior, but that so many people [find them appealing](#). They speak to employees' fantasies, not their actual career plans." (Green, 2022 b, para. 3).

Meyer and Allen (1991) defined commitment as a multidimensional construct that indicates the relative strength of the individual's identification, involvement with, and loyalty to the organization. In that construct, there are three dimensions of OC, namely, affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC), and continuance commitment (CC). These three dimensions are based on the attitudes and perceptions of employees' loyalty to the organization, such as turnover intentions, on-the-job behavior, and employee well-being (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

In this context, Affective Commitment (AC) is the emotional attachment to the organization. Individuals remain within an organization determined by an employee's personal choice to remain committed to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Singh & Gupta, 2015).

On the other hand, Continuance Commitment (CC) refers to the concept of cost-benefit analysis (Meyer & Allen, 1991). According to Singh and Gupta (2015), whether an employee remains with the organization will be evaluated in terms of the perceived costs of leaving. Influenced by tenure, positional authority, or length of service, employees choose to remain committed because they feel they have too much at stake. Beck and Wilson (2000) labeled CC as a contractual attachment to the organization. Mahal (2012) asserted that while the decision by an individual to stay is profit-based and is associated with continued services, the termination of benefits is cost-based and associated with the individual's leaving.

Finally, Normative Commitment (NC), according to Meyer and Allen (1991), reflects an individual's sense of commitment due to a feeling of obligation. It is a perceived societal expectation in which one remains loyal to the organization that provides compensation for services rendered as opposed to a personal commitment (see also Singh & Gupta, 2015). NC is thus characterized by Messner (2013) as the work behavior of individuals guided by a sense of duty, obligation, and loyalty toward the organization. It is important to understand that the commonality among the three dimensions of OC is that commitment is based upon the psychological state of individuals and their attitude toward the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

OC can be better understood through the employees' psychological attachment to the organization. This attachment, according to Porter *et al.* (1974), is based on one's attitude, organizational identification, involvement, and loyalty. Employee attitude is a perspective that implies either a psychological or an affective relationship between the employee and the organization, which is based on the individual's identification with, and involvement in, the organization.

This theoretical conceptualization became known as the *Exchange Theory of Employee Commitment*. Porter *et al.* (1974). Accordingly, individuals consider whether their goals and values align with those of the organization. If so, there is a high likelihood of commitment, loyalty, and attachment (Porter *et al.*, 1974).

### **The Importance of Employee Commitment to Small Business and Entrepreneurship**

While commitment is important to any organization regardless of its size, its importance to small businesses and entrepreneurship is very crucial as it tends to bolster their success and sustainability. Small businesses and entrepreneurship play an especially important role in the economic development of society (e.g., Duarte, 2004; Fiseha, 2015). According to the Pew Research Center (2024), small businesses employed an estimated 56.4 million workers in 2021 and brought in over \$16.2 trillion in revenue. According to the US Small Business Administration (2024), there are a total of 33.2 million small businesses. These businesses employ about 61.7 million people, which accounts for 46.4% of the private sector workforce (US Small Business Administration, 2023). It also accounted for 62% of net new job creation since 1995 (SBE Council, 2023). These facts underscore the importance of small businesses and entrepreneurship.

Saridakis *et al.* (2013) suggested that firm size and management practices tend to explain the levels of organizational commitment (OC) in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). They argued that employee commitment tends to be higher in organizations with high employee satisfaction as compared with organizations of comparable size with low employee satisfaction.

Akehurst *et al.* (2019) concluded that job satisfaction and commitment to the team are factors that have a direct and positive effect on entrepreneurship. In small businesses and entrepreneurial settings, the owner's emotional attachment to their business is connected to their personality, which might positively or negatively impact employees' satisfaction and commitment. Therefore, owners and managers must ensure employees' satisfaction and commitment to business growth and sustainability. It was also revealed that highly committed employees suggested improved productivity and happiness/satisfaction as some of the consequences of their commitment (e.g., Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019). Similarly, Kruger and Rootman (2010) concluded that an unmotivated workforce leads to dissatisfaction and low commitment levels among employees in small enterprises. Some of the possible consequences of this dissatisfaction include higher costs, business closures, and a negative effect on the economy, to name a few. Therefore, Employee satisfaction and employee commitment are vital for the success of any business (Kruger & Rootman, 2010).

As the primary objective of the study is to examine employee commitment to their organizations with a focus on small business and entrepreneurship in the post-pandemic era, we provide an in-depth look into the consequences of employees' commitment to their organizations, it is also intended to fill the gap that exists in the literature as the impact of employee commitment in small business and entrepreneurship has received limited attention.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection

The current research developed a unique survey script, which consists of two sections: Section A requested participants' demographics, and Section B asked the study's participants to reflect on their past organizational commitment level, i.e., the time they worked before the era of COVID-19, and compare it with their current commitment level. Additionally, they were asked to share the reason(s) for such suggested level of commitment, regardless of whether it is higher or lower, and suggest its consequences on them as individuals and on their organizations.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses through the fact that no names were requested, and there was no need for the respondent to identify her/his organization other than the organization's size and type. All surveys were gathered and coded before they were studied, and the data were aggregated before any results were reported.

All respondents resided in Southern California. Surveys were either collected in person or via e-mail to about 125 working adults in Metropolitan Los Angeles and the Inland Empire of Southern California between September and December 2022. Of the 125 people solicited, 105 volunteered to participate in the current study and completed the survey. Based on that, the response rate was about 84%.

Out of the 105 participants, 70.48% of the study sample came from small businesses. Study participants came from various organizations and different industries, including health care, technology, manufacturing, education, hospitality, and service, among others, to assess their commitment to their organizations in the post-COVID-19 era. (Please refer to Table 1 for a summary of the study demographics.).

### Data Analysis

This study employed a variety of methodologies to analyze the collected dataset, which is composed of structured and unstructured data. Regarding the structured data analysis is concerned regarding respondents' demographics and organizational commitment, this study used Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence to examine whether participants' organizational commitment level is related to their demographic characteristics. Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence is commonly used to assess if there is an association between two categorical variables (Shih & Fay, 2017). Thus, this method is usable for our nominal variables with respect to demographics and the level of organizational commitment.

In the unstructured data regarding the reasons for certain organizational commitment levels and the consequences to the person and organization, the current study utilized text-mining techniques to prepare, explore, and analyze such reasons and consequences. The Text Explorer tool in JMP Pro 18 was utilized to identify high-frequency terms and phrases within participants' responses. Stemming techniques were applied together to group words with similar roots. In

addition, conceptually related terms, such as "Management," "Leadership," and "Supervisor," were combined into a single category to better capture common themes. The Local Data Filter was used to isolate responses based on specific commitment levels and their corresponding reasons and consequences. Key terms were then reviewed in context to extract meaningful insights and gain a better understanding of the underlying themes. Based on the Term Table generated by Text Explorer, the Document Count was used to determine how many individual participants (documents) mentioned each term at least once, rather than relying solely on the total frequency of term appearances. This approach provides a more participant-centered analysis by calculating the percentage of respondents associated with each theme, thereby offering a more accurate and meaningful interpretation of the prevalence of reasons and consequences linked to different commitment levels.

In addition, sentiment analysis, a method for identifying and extracting subjective information about the opinions, sentiments, and emotions expressed in the text (Pang & Lee, 2008), was conducted to explore sentiments in responses about the reasons and consequences of organizational commitment. The sentiment scores of small business and non-small business groups were compared using the Student's t-test for means comparisons.

It is important to state that, as in any behavioral study, the sample of surveyed participants is seldom systematic. Therefore, respondents' reasoning or belief validity at the time of the survey might have been reduced by their biases and attributions.

Gender	Number of Responses (n)	Same or Higher Commitment	Lower Commitment	Percentage (%)
Male	60	31	29	57.14
Female	45	26	19	42.86
<b>Age</b>				
Less than 25	36	14	7	20.00
26-35	28	16	12	26.67
36-45	21	19	17	34.29
46-55	10	3	7	9.52
56 and above	10	5	5	9.52
<b>Rank</b>				
Employee	49	23	26	46.67
Upper Management	10	7	3	9.52
Middle Management	25	13	12	23.81
First-Line Management/Supervisor	18	11	7	17.14
Other	3	3	0	2.86
<b>Years of Experience</b>				
Less than 5	41	24	17	39.05
5 to 10	34	20	14	32.38
10 to 15	18	6	12	17.14
15-20	10	6	4	9.52
20 and above	2	1	1	1.90
<b>Type of Industry</b>				
Education	22	12	10	20.95
Health Care	13	3	10	12.38
Manufacturing	15	7	8	14.29
Service	24	16	8	22.86
Technology	21	11	10	20.00
Other	10	8	2	9.52
<b>No. of Employees</b>				
Less than 100	32	21	11	30.48
100-499	42	20	22	40.00
500-999	15	7	8	14.29
1,000-4,999	9	5	4	8.57
5,000-9,999	2	0	2	1.90
10,000 and above	5	4	1	4.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.00</b>

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and Table 1 display data summaries reflecting the guiding research questions and respondents' responses, that is, (1) the level of respondent's commitment, (2) the reasons behind the stated commitment level, (3) the consequences of this level of commitment to the person, and, (4) the consequences of the respondent's commitment level to the organization.

In this study, the discussions focus on the most common reasons suggested by at least 20% of the study sample. However, other reasons for higher or the same commitment levels that were below this percentage need not be ignored. It is important to note that the percentage of the total responses does not add up to 100%, as participants were not limited to only one reason.

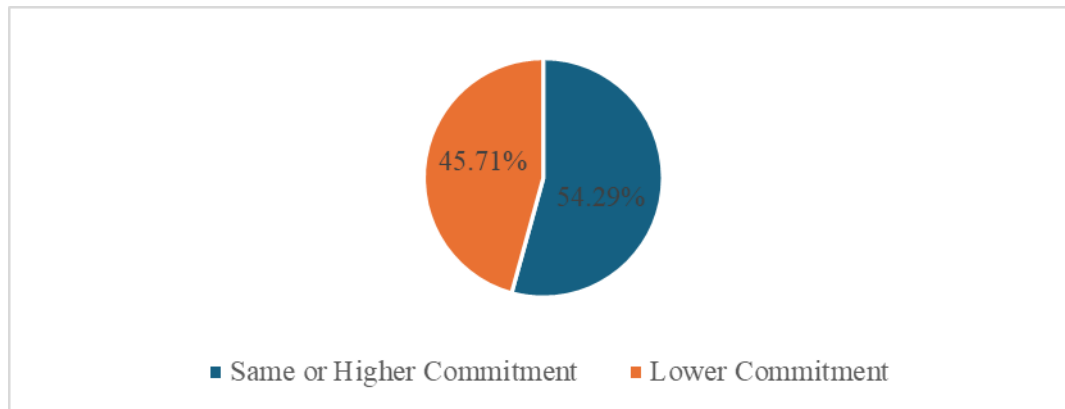
### **Commitment Level**

Responses revealed that fifty-seven people, or 54.29% of the respondents, believe they have the same commitment or feel more committed than the previous year(s), i.e., the era before COVID-19. They are experiencing a higher commitment to their organizations. On the other hand, forty-eight people, or 45.71% of the sample, stated that their commitment was lower than it had been before the COVID-19 era.

Although organizational commitment and employee engagement are distinct constructs, organizational commitment pertains to an employee's psychological attachment to the organization, whereas engagement reflects enthusiasm, involvement, and dedication to one's work tasks. Given their close association, existing engagement benchmarks provide valuable context for understanding broader patterns in employee attitudes. According to Gallup, approximately 33% of U.S. employees were classified as engaged before the COVID-19 pandemic (Gallup, 2017), rising slightly to 34% during the early pandemic period (Gallup, 2021). Compared to these benchmarks, the 54.29% commitment rate observed in this study suggests higher employee attachment. Nonetheless, the substantial proportion of participants (45.71%) reporting decreased commitment mirrors broader post-pandemic concerns about workforce instability, as highlighted in recent Gallup and McKinsey reports (De Smet et al., 2021; Dowling et al., 2022).

Almost 46% of lower committed employees is an alarming figure, as this is an exceptionally high percentage of low-committed employees (Figure 1 below). Such lower commitment has a severe impact on the organization. Organizational sustainable growth is dependent on committed and engaged employees. This lower-than-before commitment from almost half of the employees can severely harm an organization. It leads to higher absenteeism and turnover (e.g., Ashar et al., 2013; Woods et al., 2012), decreased productivity (e.g., Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Osa & Amos, 2014; Phipps *et al.*, 2013), and a decrease in customer satisfaction (e.g., Gounaris, 2005; He *et al.*, 2011; Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2004), among others.

**Figure 1**  
**Respondents' Commitment Level**



### Small Business and Organizational Commitment Level

Following the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), this study defines small businesses as organizations with fewer than five hundred employees. The data sample was classified into small business and non-small business groups based on the organizational size data. It generated a binary variable, Small Business, with the value of 1 as a small business, and zero means a non-small business.

To examine whether small businesses perform differently from non-small companies in terms of employees' organizational commitment level, this study applied the Chi-Square test of independence to determine whether organizational commitment levels are related to whether a company is a small business. The results indicate that there is no significant association between organizational commitment level and whether one belongs to a small business group or not at any significance level.  $X^2(1, N = 105) = 0.127, p = 0.7220$ . It suggests that employees' organizational commitment levels did not differ in small or non-small businesses.

### Commitment and Demographics

Based on the data regarding commitment level and the study demographics that are shown in Table 1, the study used Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence to examine whether participants' organizational commitment level is related to their demographic characteristics.

The analysis showed that there was no significant association between gender and organizational commitment at any significance level.  $X^2(1, N = 105) = 0.387, p = 0.5339$ . It suggests that Organizational Commitment did not differ by gender.

Similarly, there is no significant association between organizational commitment level and other demographic characteristics, including (1) age. ( $X^2(4, N = 105) = 3.837, p = 0.4235$ ); (2) organizational rank

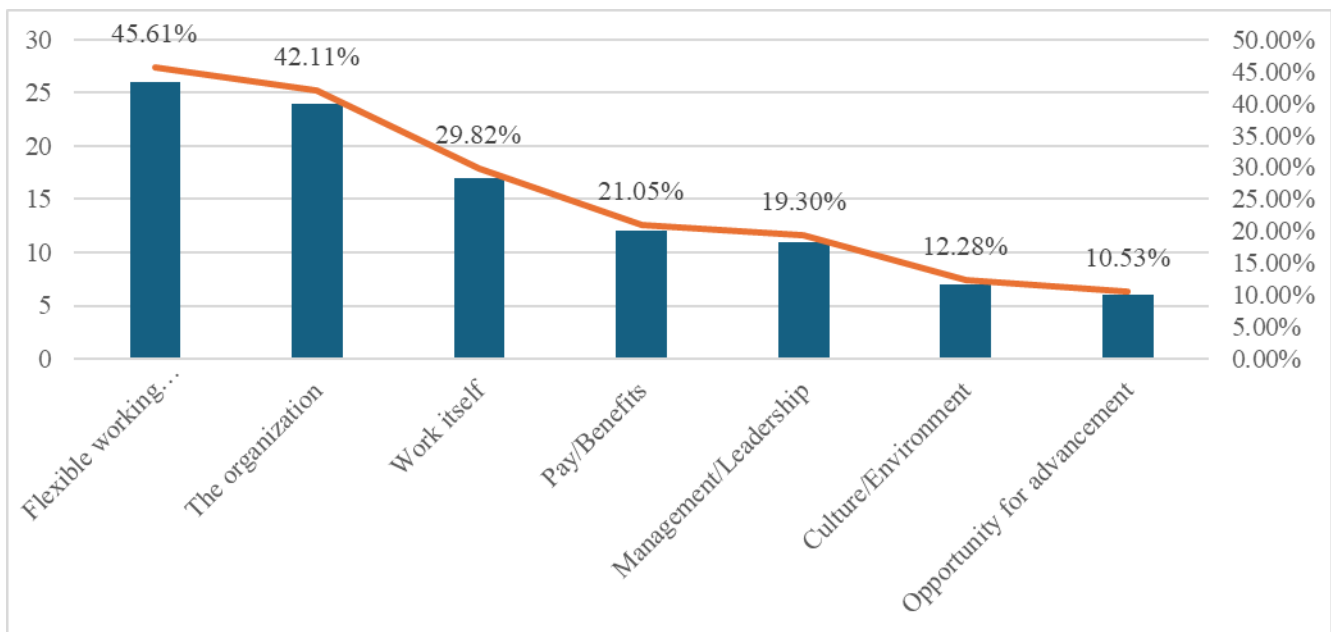
( $X^2(4, N = 105) = 4.978, p = 0.2896$ ); (3) the number of years in the organization ( $X^2(4, N = 105) = 3.911, p = 0.4181$ ); (4) organizational type ( $X^2(5, N = 105) = 9.631, p = 0.0864$ ); and, (5) organization size ( $X^2(5, N = 105) = 6.474, p = 0.2628$ ) at a 5% significance level.

Accordingly, the results of the study suggest that Organizational Commitment (OC) did not differ by age, management rank, years of working experience, organizational type, or organization size.

**Reasons for Same or Increased Commitment Level**

As stated earlier, fifty-seven people reported that their commitment to the organization is the same or higher. When participants were asked about their reasons for having the same or higher commitment level, they cited varied reasons. However, as some of the reasons provided were synonymous with each other, they were grouped to provide a more meaningful analysis and avoid redundant terms. Accordingly, the top reasons shared by the respondents were: flexible working arrangements/virtual work (45.61%); organization (42.11%); the work itself (29.82%); pay/benefits (21.05%); and management/leadership (19.30%). Please see Figure 2 below for a complete illustrative list of reasons and their frequencies.

**Figure 2**  
**The Reasons Behind Respondents' Same or Increased Level of Commitment (N= 57)**



### ***Flexible working arrangements/virtual work***

Not surprisingly, twenty-six respondents, or 45.61% of the study participants with the same or higher commitment, cited flexible working arrangements and/or virtual work as a crucial factor for their same or higher commitment. Coupled with the availability of modern technology today, many employees prefer flexible work arrangements. The findings align with Maxwell *et al.* (2007), who concluded that providing flexible work arrangements produces positive outcomes for organizations as far as employee recruitment and retention. It also enhanced employee relations and their commitment. Additionally, flexible work arrangements impacted employees' job satisfaction (Wheatley, 2017). It also helped balance employees' work-life, in which interns helped reduce stress levels, increasing employees' well-being and reducing absenteeism and turnover (Austin-Egole *et al.*, 2020; Russell *et al.*, 2009). Similarly, Choo *et al.* (2016) suggested that providing flexible working arrangements positively impacted organizational commitment and work-family conflict.

### ***The Organization itself***

Twenty-four study participants, or 42.11% of the sample with the same or higher commitment, cited the organization itself as one of their reasons for their same or higher commitment. Studies have shown a positive relationship between the strength of the identification with one's organization and employees' commitment (e.g., Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019) and perceived organizational prestige, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Tuna *et al.*, 2016; Karanika-Murray *et al.*, 2015).

Satisfaction in the organization reflects the employee's appreciation of the organization's overall climate. A good organizational climate helps boost morale, motivation, and trust, and positively impacts the organization in every aspect. While Hup Chan (2006) suggested that identification with one's organization helps sustain organizational commitment, Lee *et al.* (2015) concluded that organizational identification is the basis where the general sets of attitudes and behaviors are engendered. The employee's identification with the organization directly impacts employee's general behavior. Similarly, Im *et al.* (2015) suggested that the perceived organizational support, which involves employees' perception regarding the care of their organization regarding their well-being, coupled with the perception that the organization values their contributions, is strongly linked to their emotional bond to the organization.

Studies researching commitment denoted a positive relationship between organizational climate and organizational commitment (e.g., Berberoglu, 2018; Noordin *et al.*, 2010). A positive organizational climate affects organizational performance by influencing employee motivation, and which, in turn, affects employee performance.

The relationship with the organization is influenced by the employee's psychological contract, which is an implicit agreement between the employee and the organization that outlines mutual expectations, perceptions, obligations, and beliefs. This psychological contract differs from the formal employment contract and has a more impactful effect on the person. Accordingly, the organizational climate is indeed important to the employee's A feeling of belongingness and commitment is fostered as the organizational climate is the aggregate of

psychological climates, which are individuals' perceptions of their work environments (e.g., Berberoglu, 2018; Noordin et al., 2010).

Berberoglu (2018) asserted that notions such as job satisfaction, performance, need for affiliation, need for achievement, organizational commitment, and organizational effectiveness, to name a few, are directly influenced through the perception of the existence of a positive organizational climate.

As trust, attitudes, and behaviors, among others, are functions of the organization's culture, this study suggests that identification with one's organization is also a factor in valuing the organization's culture. Accordingly, seven participants, or 12.28% of the study sample, cited culture/environment as one of the reasons for their commitment. These twenty-four participants who stated "the organization" also meant and built their views on the culture. This will also validate the importance of the organizational culture and environment in the life and commitment of the employees.

The current finding is in line with studies' findings that organizational culture represented through employee-oriented values and ethical behavior predicts affective commitment (Manetje & Martins, 2009; Ortega-Parra & Ángel Sastre-Castillo, 2013).

### ***Work itself***

Seventeen out of fifty-seven participants with the same or higher commitment, or 29.82% of the sample, cited the work itself as one of the reasons for their same or higher commitment. Satisfaction with challenging work and positive work experience is usually an important influence on organizational commitment.

Research findings supported the views that people who value their work and experience challenging work conditions are motivated to perform, are satisfied, and committed (e.g., Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Cesário & Chambel, 2017). Mottaz (1988) concluded that intrinsic rewards that stem from the work itself are significantly more powerful determinants of commitment than extrinsic rewards. Similarly, Dixon *et al.* (2005) asserted that job challenges positively correlated with affective organizational commitment.

### ***Pay/Benefits***

As expected, pay and benefits have a role in employees' commitment to their organization. Accordingly, twelve out of fifty-seven participants with the same or higher commitment, or 21.05% of the sample, stated pay/benefits as one of their reasons for their same or higher commitment.

Satisfaction with the pay and other benefits had a significant impact on affective as well as normative commitment (Dhawan & Mulla, 2011). Similarly, Kee *et al.* (2016) proposed that there is a significant relationship between financial compensation, such as salaries, bonuses, and merit pay, and organizational commitment. Satisfaction with someone's pay had both direct and indirect effects on turnover intention. People who are satisfied with their outcomes tend to stay and continue working for the same organization (Kevin *et al.*, 1998).

### ***Management/Leadership***

Leadership and supervisory practices could create a sense of importance in employees and make them feel part of the decision-making process and a part of the organization. Research studies present strong support for the significant role leadership plays in the life of the organization and its members, as employees' dedication and commitment are positively influenced by the organization's *leadership* (e.g., Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Tuna *et al.*, 2011).

In this study, eleven out of fifty-seven participants with the same or higher commitment, or 19.30% of the sample, identified management/leadership as one of the reasons for their continued commitment. Numerous studies have suggested that employees' performance and commitment are positively related to organizational leadership (e.g., Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Kim & Brymer, 2011).

This finding is aligned with studies that have shown that commitment is positively influenced by employees' feeling a sense of trust in their managers or supervisors (e.g., Cho & Park, 2011; Nayir, 2012; Tam & Lim, 2009; Vanhala *et al.*, 2016). This trust is usually based on the employees' perceptions of positive support from their managers or supervisors, especially about injustices they experienced in their organization and the perceived fairness and capability of the organization's policies and practices. Trust in management and leadership might lead to job satisfaction (e.g., Cho & Park, 2011), organizational innovation (e.g., Michaelis *et al.*, 2009), and an improvement in the quality of services to customers (e.g., Gounaris, 2005). The absence of this trust will harm the organization.

Employees' higher level of organizational commitment is positively correlated to the managers and leaders who value their people and provide them with the needed consideration, motivation to perform, ongoing communication, and support. Additionally, the continuous interaction cements such commitment (e.g., Grabowski & Stefańska, 2024; Ndlovu *et al.*, 2021).

Leaders play a pivotal role in employees' commitment. They can influence and compensate people fairly, make strategic decisions, motivate employees, and set organizational policies and practices to ensure an ethical culture and environment that might enhance people's commitment (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019).

Abreu, Cunha, and Rebouças (2013) argued that organizational leadership has a major influence on people in either a positive or negative way. When individuals perceive fairness in their relationship with their supervisor and consistency in their practices, higher levels of commitment are shown (Kasemsap, 2013). In small businesses, the characteristics of the owner reflect the owner's personality that is inseparably connected to family needs and desires, which creates an emotional attachment to the business (e.g., Valéau, 2023).

Ethical leadership practices improve employees' sense of belonging, pride, and loyalty, eventually leading to affective and normative organizational commitment.

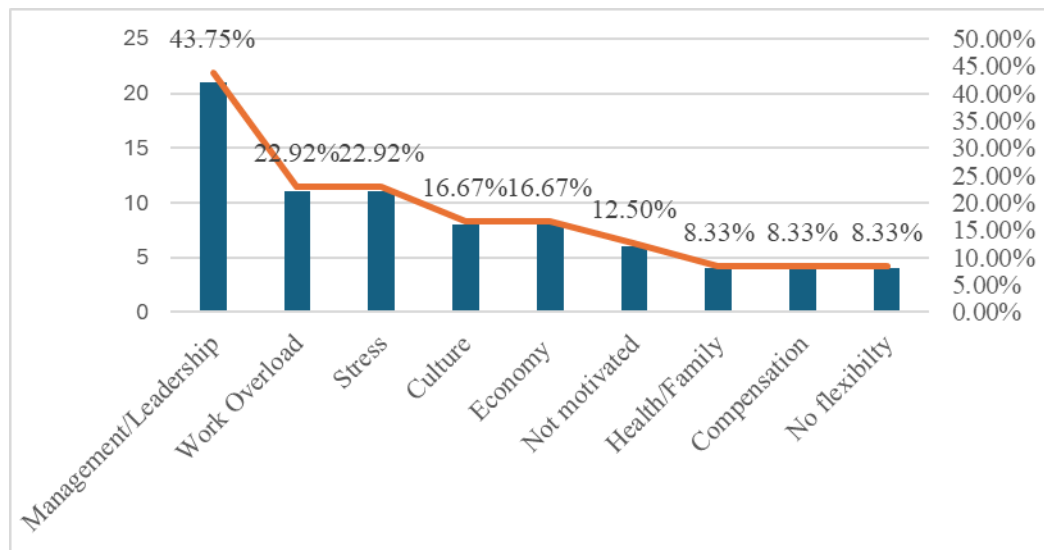
### **Reasons for Lower Commitment Level**

In this study, forty-eight out of 105 participants, or 45.71%, reported that their commitment to the organization was lower than it had been before. When participants were asked about their reasons, they cited several. However, as stated before, as some of the provided

reasons were synonymous with each other, they were grouped to provide a more meaningful analysis to avoid redundant terms.

The top reasons for respondents' lower commitment, as shared by them, were Management/leadership (43.75%), work overload (22.92%), stress (22.92%), organizational culture (16.67%), and the state of the economy (16.67%). Please refer to Figure 3 below for a complete illustrative list of reasons and their frequencies.

**Figure 3**  
**The Reasons Behind Respondents' Lower Level of Commitment (N=48)**



***Management/Leadership***

While leadership and supervisory practices could create a sense of importance in employees and make them feel like valued members of the organization and its decision-making process, the absence of good leaders or managers will negatively impact people. In this study, twenty-one out of forty-eight participants with lower commitment, or 43.75% of the study participants, stated that bad management/leadership was one of the reasons for their lower commitment.

Bad leadership can have devastating effects on individuals, groups, and organizations. Brady (2021) suggested that organizations have a large number of exceptionally good bosses and several unbelievably bad bosses. The boss's impact is not limited to the inside of the workplace, as it bleeds into a person's overall life satisfaction. The reality is that the organization and its employees have mutual expectations. As the organization expects its employees to be committed to its goals, it needs leadership and management that value and treat them fairly.

According to Ghazzawi (2023), some managers or leaders fail to effectively manage or lead by exhibiting behaviors that might include being insensitive to others, arrogant, cold, betraying trust, playing politics, overmanaging, not providing directions, and/or not being able to

think strategically. Thus, leaders play a significant role in the extent to which employees develop a better emotional bond and commitment at work.

This observed pattern aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959), which posits that factors such as supervision and organizational policies function as hygiene factors: their absence or poor quality leads to dissatisfaction, but their presence does not necessarily foster higher satisfaction or stronger commitment. In our study, management and leadership were cited more frequently as reasons for dissatisfaction among less committed employees, supporting the interpretation that effective leadership primarily prevents dissatisfaction rather than driving increased organizational commitment.

### ***Work Overload***

In this study, eleven out of forty-eight participants with lower commitment, or 22.92% of the sample, experienced having too much work, which led to a higher level of exhaustion. While the views of the respondents showed that work overload has negatively influenced their commitment to their organization, the same reason has contributed to their turnover intentions. This is in line with other research findings that a work overload resulted in employee burnout and diminished commitment, resulting in increased turnover intention (e.g., Abdulaziz *et al.*, 2022; Jung & Kim, 2012).

### ***Stress***

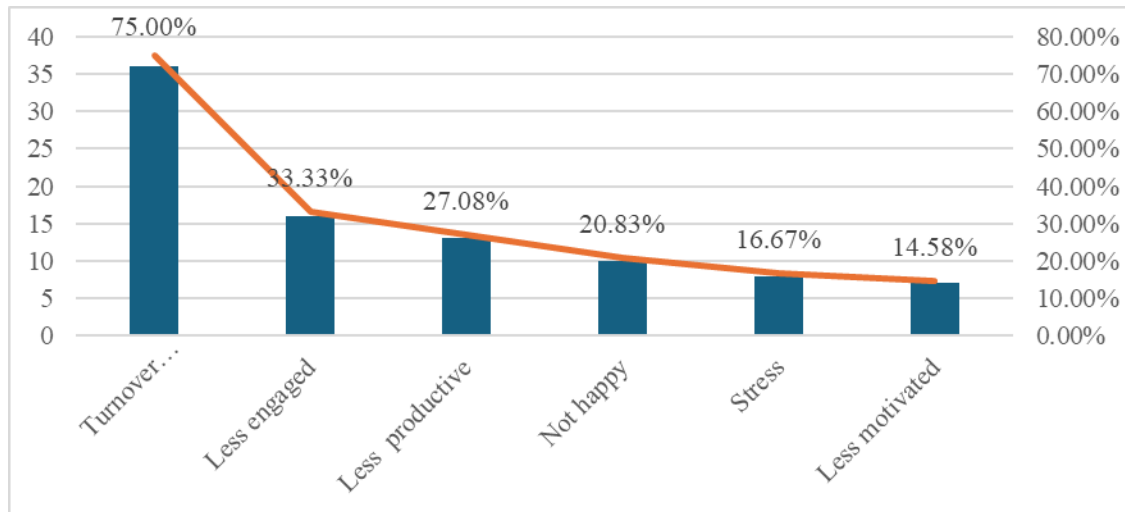
While stress could also be a consequence of work overload, it was confirmed that eleven participants, or 22.92% of the sample, stated that experiencing stress was a reason for their lower commitment.

Workplace stress can be triggered by a range of factors, from subtle experiences, such as unwarranted reprimands by a leader, to more pervasive challenges, including work overload or persistent bullying by supervisors (e.g., Jacobs, 2019). Thus, an adverse workplace environment and bad leadership could induce frustration and lead to occupational stress (e.g., Ekiabor, 2016).

## **Consequences of Lower Organizational Commitment on the Person**

As noted earlier, forty-eight out of 105 participants, or 45.71%, reported that their commitment to the organization was lower than it had been before. When asked about what they believe are the consequences of their lower commitment level, they cited various consequences. However, as some of the consequences provided were synonymous with each other, they were grouped to provide a more meaningful analysis and avoid redundant terms. Accordingly, the most frequently cited consequences of lower commitment, as reported by respondents, included turnover intention or actual turnover (cited by 36 participants, 75.00%), being less engaged or careless (16 participants, 33.33%), lower productivity (13 participants, 27.08%), and feelings of unhappiness (10 participants, 20.83%). Please refer to Figure 4 below for a complete illustrative list of consequences and their frequencies.

**Figure 4**  
**Consequences of Lower Organizational Commitment on the Person (N=48)**



#### ***Turnover Intention/Turnover***

Turnover intention is the cognitive precursor of a leaving behavior from someone's organization (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). On the other hand, turnover is the voluntary act of the separation behavior of someone from the organization (George & Jones, 2012). This sequence is relevant to dissatisfaction with various organizational aspects that might include leadership, organizational culture, and environment, among other factors. The absence of good leadership results in the employees forming intentional turnover behavior, and that will eventually lead to voluntary turnover.

Not surprisingly, thirty-six out of forty-eight respondents with low commitment, or 75%, reported turnover or turnover intention because of their lower organizational commitment. Study results agreed with Titt (2022) that the great attrition of employees shows no signs of slowing, as many as 40 percent of people surveyed in 2022 considered leaving their jobs, some for a different career or working temporarily or part-time. As stated before, one of the key reasons for lower commitment is the absence of good management/leadership. The presence of inadequate management or failed leadership contributes to the employee's low morale, lower productivity, job dissatisfaction, and possible voluntary turnover (Collins & Collins, 2002; Ghazzawi, 2023).

#### ***Less Engaged***

Employees who are engaged in their work and committed to their organizations give companies crucial competitive advantages, including higher productivity and lower employee turnover (e.g., Ghazzawi, 2023; Vance, 2006). On the contrary, less engaged employees are also less productive and less committed to their organization. It comes as no surprise that sixteen out of forty-eight respondents with low commitment, or 33.33% of those who claimed lower commitment, said that their lower engagement was associated with their lower commitment.

Vance (2006) asserted that employee engagement is the degree to which employees fully occupy themselves in their work, coupled with the strength of their commitment to the organization and role. Engagement is a process that starts with organizational practices that include "job and task design, recruitment, selection, training, compensation, performance management, and career development. Such practices affect employees' level of engagement as well as job performance. Performance and engagement then interact to produce business results." (Vance, 2006, p. 7).

This lack of commitment results in a less engaged workforce. Research findings indicated a positive relationship between employee engagement and commitment; a highly committed employee is usually a highly engaged one (e.g., Moletsane *et al.*, 2019; Phipps *et al.*, 2013).

### ***Less Productive***

The current study suggests that lower commitment resulted in lower productivity, as claimed by thirteen out of forty-eight respondents with low commitment, or 27.08% of those who claimed lower productivity due to lower commitment. Practically speaking, a less committed employee could be less productive. This concept was validated through study findings that indicated relationships (both correlational and predictive) between employee productivity and organizational commitment (e.g., Osa & Amos, 2014; Phipps *et al.*, 2013).

Bestman and Elekwachi (2022) suggested that *this type of workforce that shifted towards a virtual work arrangement quite possibly influenced the post-COVID world and paused major challenges* for organizations and human resource managers to maintain the needed motivation of their employees to maintain their productivity.

### ***Not Happy***

Among participants reporting lower commitment, 20.83% (10 individuals) cited unhappiness consequently. When including the 14.58% (7 individuals) who indicated a lack of motivation, which may be strongly associated with feelings of unhappiness, the proportion increases to 35.41% (17 individuals) of respondents experiencing lower commitment tied to diminished emotional well-being.

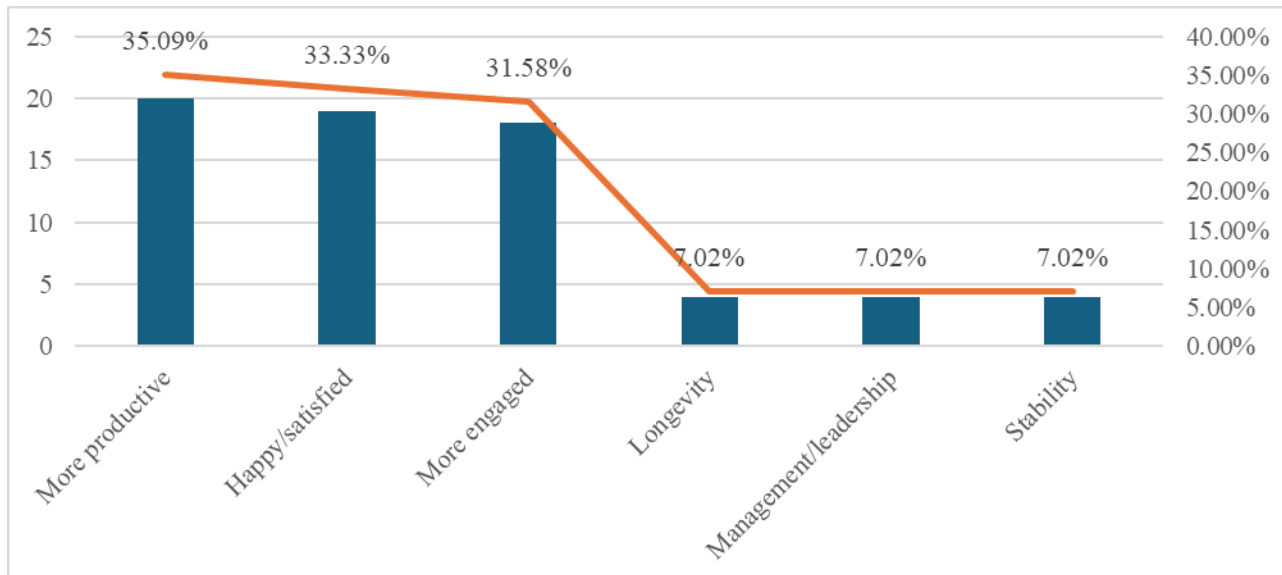
A happy employee is usually a committed employee. Research findings provided evidence that this belief or perception is true. Happiness at work impacts employees' emotional bond with the organization (e.g., Field & Buitendach, 2011; Semedo *et al.*, Ribeiro, 2019). Happiness is closely tied to the quality of organizational leadership, as reflected in the work environment and culture.

## **Consequences of Same or Higher Organizational Commitment on the Person**

As stated earlier, fifty-seven people reported that their commitment to the organization is the same or higher. When participants were asked about the impact of their same or higher commitment level on them, they cited various consequences. However, as some of the consequences were synonymous with each other, they were grouped to provide a more meaningful analysis and avoid redundant terms. Accordingly, the top consequences shared by the respondents were: More productive (35.09%), cited by twenty people; happy/satisfied (33.33%),

cited by nineteen people; and more engaged (31.58%), cited by eighteen people. Please refer to Figure 5 below for a complete illustrative list of consequences and their frequencies.

**Figure 5**  
**Consequences of Same or Higher Organizational Commitment on the Person (N= 57)**



### ***More Productive***

Not surprisingly, twenty people, or 35.08% of those who claimed commitment to the organization, cited being more productive as one consequence of their commitment. The results of the studies indicated a positive relationship between organizational commitment and productivity, and this is in line with others who suggested similar findings (e.g., Dixit & Bhati, 2012; Salleh *et al.*, 2016). While the degree of an employee's productivity leads to favorable organizational performance and constitutes a key indicator of organizational success, those who are committed are usually more productive and less likely to leave their organization. This result is like other research studies that suggested that organizational commitment positively affects employee productivity (Bakiev, 2013; Hanaysha & Majid, 2018).

Berberoglu (2018) postulated that employees' commitment towards their organization has a significant relationship with the overall organizational performance, as performance is found to be positively correlated with committed employees. Similarly, other studies propounded that leadership commitment to the organization directly affects organizational performance and employee engagement as their high commitment influences the development of an environment that leads to organizational effectiveness and productivity (e.g., Nasomboon, 2014; Chiok Foong Loke, 2002).

### ***Happy/Satisfied***

Happiness, productivity, and job satisfaction are closely related. Happy/satisfied were cited by nineteen study participants, or 33.33% of those who claimed commitment to their organization. Happy employees are usually productive employees, and productive employees tend to be satisfied. The relationship between happiness and work is a complex and dynamic interaction that runs in both directions, as work and employment are not only drivers of happiness, but happiness can help shape job market outcomes, productivity, and firm performance (e.g., De Neve & Ward, 2017).

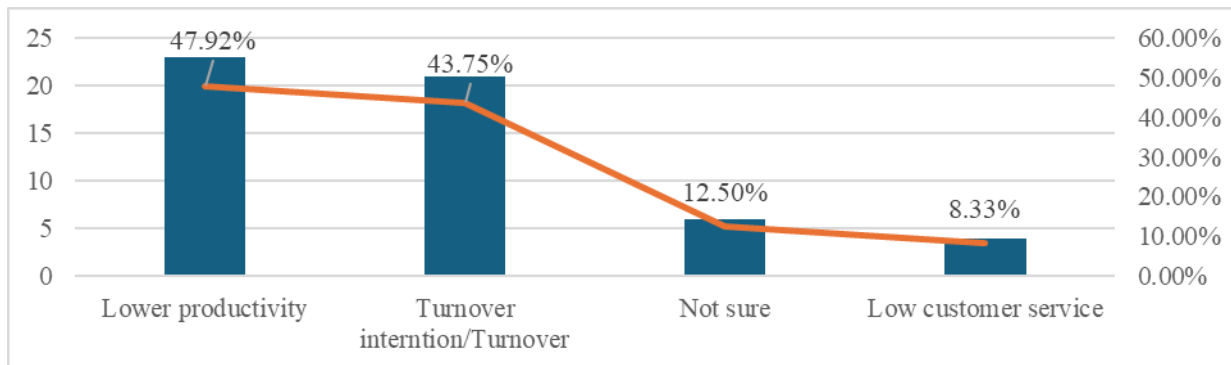
Studies researching the subject have linked job satisfaction to organizational commitment as job satisfaction is an individual's positive or negative attitude toward their job; it influences commitment and engagement (e.g., George & Jones, 2012; Ghazzawi, 2008). Satisfaction stems from various organizational dimensions that include recognition, compensation, supervision, job security, and advancement on the job, among others (Ghazzawi, 2008). Satisfaction generates happiness for the employees. What strongly influences job satisfaction is life satisfaction and vice versa. The idea that overall life satisfaction, meaning happiness or well-being, will have a stronger relationship with performance is supported by empirical research (Ghazzawi, 2008; Jones, 2006; Vroom, 1964). Research evidence shows that happiness has important consequences for both individuals and organizations (Fisher, 2010; Robertson *et al.*, 2011).

### ***More Engaged***

Being more engaged because of organizational commitment was cited by eighteen people, or 31.58% of those who claimed commitment to the organization. Studies have shown that employees' organizational engagement is quite low in the global arena, as only 21 percent of the employees surveyed are engaged in their work and willing to go the extra mile to help their organization, as opposed to 38 percent who are partly or fully disengaged (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). Accordingly, improving employee engagement leads to positive outcomes for their organizations.

People's perceptions of the meaning of the workplace are more relevant to how they are connected and engaged with their organizations, and that is closely reflected in their level of performance (Kular *et al.*, 2008). This also implies that people seek more meaning in their day-to-day work than they do in their personal lives. Accordingly, organizations should strive to make work and its environment more meaningful to their organizational members, thus leading to more committed/engaged and productive employees (Anitha, 2014; Kular *et al.*, 2008).

**Figure 6**  
**Consequences of Low Organizational Commitment on the Organization (N=48)**



### Consequences of Low Organizational Commitment on the Organization

As stated earlier, forty-eight out of 105 respondents, or 45.71% of the sample, reported that their commitment to the organization was lower than it had been before. When asked what they believed were the consequences of their lower commitment level, they cited various consequences. However, as some of the consequences provided were synonymous with each other, they were grouped to provide a more meaningful analysis and avoid redundant terms. The respondents' top cited consequences were (1) Lower productivity, cited by twenty-three people (about 47.92%), and (2) Turnover intention/turnover, cited by twenty-one people (43.75%). Please refer to Figure 6 for a comprehensive list of consequences and their corresponding frequencies.

#### ***Lower Productivity***

Although sustained productivity was noted because of organizational commitment, reduced productivity was similarly cited as an outcome of lower commitment. A total of twenty-three participants, 47.92% of those with low commitment, indicated that diminished productivity resulted from their decreased commitment. Productivity is referred to as the outcomes or tasks accomplished that are in line with the job description of an employee in a particular period (Hanaysha & Majid, 2018).

As stated before, Organizational Commitment has a positive effect on employee productivity and its lack will negatively impact the organization, this finding is in line with those who suggested that uncommitted or less committed employees for whatever reason(s) that include stress, compensation, working environment, or leadership are likely to have lower productivity (e.g. Dixit & Bhati, 2012; Dost & Tariq, 2012; Ekiabor, 2016).

#### ***Turnover Intention/Turnover***

It is not surprising that turnover intention and/or turnover were cited by twenty-one study participants, or 43.75% of those with low commitment. This finding parallels the same consequence on the same study participants who experienced lower commitment levels, as

discussed in a previous section of this paper. As stated before, turnover intention refers to the voluntary separation behavior of someone from the organization (e.g., Coomber & Barriball, 2007; George & Jones, 2012). Good leadership, complemented by a collaborative culture, is important to keep employees away from forming intentions to leave (Sun & Wang, 2017). Ghazzawi (2023) asserted that the lack of commitment, coupled with job dissatisfaction, plays a significant role in someone's intention or actual turnover behavior.

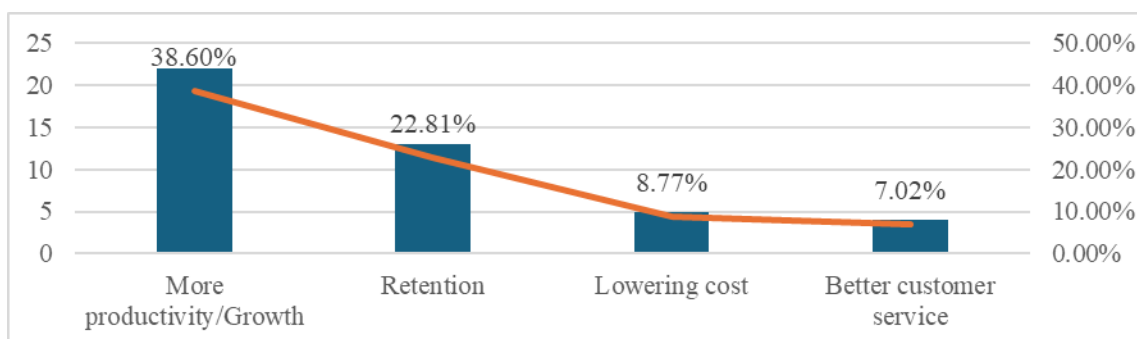
### Consequences of Same or Higher Organizational Commitment on the Organization

A total of fifty-seven people reported that their commitment to the organization is the same or higher. When participants were asked about the impact of their same or higher commitment level on the organization, they cited various consequences. Expressions of consequences that were synonymous with each other were grouped to provide a more meaningful analysis. The top consequences shared by the respondents were: more productivity and growth, cited by twenty-two people (38.60%), and retention, cited by thirteen people (22.81%). Please refer to Figure 7 below for a complete illustrative list of consequences and their frequencies.

#### *More Productive/Growth*

The belief that the organization will be more productive and enjoy more growth was suggested by twenty-two people, or 38.60% of those with the same or higher commitment. This result is consistent with other studies' findings that showed that productivity and growth have been associated with organizational commitment as organizations strive and grow when having committed employees (e.g., Agu, 2015; Phipps *et al.*, 2013).

**Figure 7**  
Consequences of Same or Higher Organizational Commitment on the Organization (N= 57)



#### *Retention*

In this study, retention was a consequence of the organization, as was suggested by thirteen study participants, or 22.81% of those with the same or higher commitment. It is not unusual to find a happy and satisfied employee who is productive and more likely to stay, as opposed to others who are not. Retention or not, this reflects management and leadership. While

the absence of good leadership contributes to organizational dysfunction, employee stress, and an intention to leave the organization, the presence of good leadership is a recipe for organizational and individual success (Ghazzawi, 2023). As leadership makes the place, its presence contributes to employees experiencing high morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention. This is consistent with Manion (2004) and Quratulain *et al.* (2018).

### Sentiment Analysis on the Reasons and Consequences of Organizational Commitment

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to understand employee sentiment regarding the organization's commitment to fostering positive workplace dynamics and enhancing overall productivity.

This study employed sentiment analysis to explore sentiments related to the reasons and consequences of organizational commitment as expressed in the participants' answers to related survey questions in the text. To assess whether the size of a company impacts sentiment, this study classified organizations as either small businesses or non-small businesses. It examined whether sentiment scores differed significantly between the two groups.

Participants' comments regarding the reasons and consequences of organizational commitment were analyzed using sentiment analysis in Text Explorer within JMP Pro 18, producing an overall sentiment score for each comment. The sentiment score typically reflects the emotional tone of a comment, with positive, negative, or zero values indicating diverse types of sentiment. For example, a negative sentiment score of the consequences of organizational commitment indicates unfavorable or critical sentiment in the comment. To statistically test the differences in sentiment scores between small businesses and non-small businesses, this study performed a one-way analysis of the overall sentiment score by company type. A Student's t-test for means comparison was conducted to evaluate the significance of any differences in sentiment between the two organizational categories. Table 2 below shows the main results of the sentiment analysis.

Analysis	Group	Mean Sentiment Score	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Analysis of the reason for organizational commitment	Small Business	2.47	4.453	-0.951	0.344
	Non-Small Business	10.26	6.880		
Analysis of the consequences of organizational commitment on a person	Small Business	-3.31	3.896	-0.417	0.678
	Non-Small Business	-0.32	6.020		
Analysis of the consequences of organizational commitment on organizations	Small Business	-5.162	2.935	-0.956	0.342
	Non-Small Business	0.000	4.535		

The above-stated results suggest that the sentiment regarding organizational commitment reasons and consequences does not vary significantly across company sizes. Employees from both small and non-small businesses appear to share similar sentiments toward the reasons and consequences of organizational commitment.

### ***Interpretation of the Sentiment Analysis for Small and Non-small Businesses***

The lack of a significant difference in sentiment scores between small and non-small businesses implies that employee perceptions regarding the reasons and consequences of organizational commitment are consistent across diverse types of businesses. This insight suggests that initiatives to address or improve organizational commitment could be developed with broad applicability across various business sizes.

## **CONCLUSION**

The pandemic was an inflection point for many people. Its impact, including the lockdown and social distancing, caused them to reevaluate many things in life. Some felt the need to rethink their careers and organizations, seeking a career that is rewarding in every aspect, and be in a fulfilling organizational environment.

This study clearly shows that 54.29% of its sample are committed, compared to 45.71% who cited lower commitment than before the COVID-19 era. While about 46% are less committed, this figure is too high and will not be welcome news for organizations.

The study also concluded that there is no significant association between gender, age, position in the organization, type of industry, size of the organization, or years of experience and organizational commitment at any significant level.

No single factor drives commitment to be either low or high, but our research revealed areas of distinction and overlap. People who believe they are committed cite flexible working arrangements/virtual work, the organization, work itself, pay/benefits, and management and/or leadership as their reasons for the same or higher commitment. Others, on the other hand, cited management/leadership, work overload, and stress as their reasons for lower commitment.

Respondents cited turnover intention/turnover, being less engaged, less productive, or not happy, as some of the consequences of lower commitment. On the other hand, being more productive, happy, satisfied, and engaged is seen because of the same or higher commitment.

## **MANAGERIAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

As stated before, having an almost 46% lower committed employee is an alarming figure and not welcome news for any organization. This percentage of less committed employees is exceptionally high. The clear finding from this study is that organizational commitment is crucial to employee satisfaction and well-being, and for organizational growth and sustainability. The lack of commitment results in turnover intention that might translate into turnover, lower engagement with the organization, and lower productivity, among other consequences.

Accordingly, the study findings have important implications for organizational leaders and academics that could help foster commitment and employee engagement, including the following.

### ***(1) Meaningful Conversations/Connection with Employees***

Better periodical connections between management and employees to ensure meaningful conversations are needed as it helps in listening to employees' evolving needs and building trust, especially at a time when some employers are moving away from virtual work or flexible work arrangements that employees look at as a lost benefit that they have enjoyed with being closer to family and further from the commuting hassle.

Some of the practical/specific recommendations for managers and entrepreneurs to promote meaningful connection with their employees include leading by example, listening to the employees with passion, communicating with respect, being authentic and transparent, following up on what was agreed upon, having a clear communication channel, and ensuring having a culture that promotes openness and honesty (see also Dessler, 2013).

### ***(2) Creating a balanced work arrangement***

It is recommended that organizations be open to hybrid work models that will allow flexibility for employees. However, this requires new organizational procedures, policies, and support that bring efficiency to the organization and the employee. This type of accommodation increases productivity as committed employees are more likely to be productive and perform at an elevated level. In addition, a balanced work arrangement will minimize absenteeism and voluntary turnover. Committed employees are less likely to call in sick or leave the organization.

Specific/practical recommendations for balanced work arrangement will be through ensuring that owners and managers focus more on employees' productivity as opposed to hours worked, ensuring that employees take breaks, led by example, offering flexible hours and remote working arrangements, ensuring that employees are not overworked, and possibly more time off given for the employees on their birthdays and other occasions if possible (see also Dizaho et al., 2017).

### ***(3) Cultivating internal talents***

To cultivate talents internally, it is recommended that organizations promote from within the organization as opposed to external recruitment unless it is felt necessary. Doing so helps foster commitment and improve retention. Cultivating internal talents complements the development of capabilities. This study suggests that organizational leaders in general and small business owners, entrepreneurs, and managers may conduct a skills gap analysis (SGA) to assess employees' current skills and competencies and compare them with the firm's desired skills and competencies to train and develop their workforce.

Other recommendations for small business owners, entrepreneurs, and managers include providing continuous feedback to employees and creating a culture of a learning organization where employees' learning and development are at the center of the organization. Additionally, it

ensures that owners and managers embody the same commitment, values, and ethics that are expected from their employees (e.g., Dessler, 2013; Hirt *et al.*, 2017).

#### ***(4) Fostering a Culture of Trust***

*Trust* is the key building block for any organization or team, regardless of its type or size. It is extremely important, especially when an organization is faced with significant pressure and uncertainty, such as during a pandemic. Building a culture of trust that is centered around creating a sense of community, establishing relationships within the organization, and connecting people at all levels is expected for organizational growth and sustainability. This culture of trust requires that employees also possess a good understanding of the organization's goals, mission, vision, and strategies. It also requires collaboration and camaraderie, where people sense that everyone cares about everyone else. This also requires inspiring and transparent/authentic leadership.

Practical/specific recommendations to foster a culture of trust for owners, managers, and entrepreneurs are to lead by example, communicate openly and honestly, be transparent in everything the organization does, encourage employees' interaction with management and leaders, foster collaborations, and promote accountability. (see also Harris, 2013). In addition, ensuring the practice of organizational justice is another means of achieving a culture of trust and boosting commitment (e.g., Gulluce *et al.*, 2015; Taner *et al.*, 2015).

### **LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

While this empirical research attempts to contribute to knowledge regarding organizational commitment, it has several limitations, and subsequently, the study conclusions are made with caution.

One limitation of this study is the potential for respondent bias in self-assessing changes in organizational commitment. Because participants were asked to reflect on their perceived commitment compared to pre-COVID-19 levels, some may have experienced recall bias or difficulty objectively evaluating their past attitudes. As a result, the reported commitment levels may be overstated or understated. Future research could strengthen these findings by incorporating longitudinal designs or external benchmark data collected before the pandemic to minimize reliance on retrospective self-assessments.

A second limitation is that the study sample was small (N=105), mostly based in one geographical area, Southern California, and participants worked mostly for small businesses (about 70.48%). It is also recommended that future research has a larger population sample with various organizational sizes and a more diverse population, including various countries and varied cultures.

Having a more diverse sample enhances the generalizability of the results. With a larger population sample, future studies may use Term Selection in Text Explore to select important word terms in the unstructured data and then combine them with the structured data in the demographics part to build up data analytics models to get a reasonable assessment as to what contributes more to participants' organizational commitment and the profile or the attributes of participants with higher or lower organizational commitment.

Future research would benefit from additional comparative studies and semi-structured interviews with managers to further examine this phenomenon and increase the study's reliability.

Despite all the limitations, the available results provide important findings and useful contributions to the ongoing research on organizational commitment.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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