

The role of occupational context and recruiters' expectations in explaining gendered hiring preferences

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Motivation & Research Questions

Hiring constitutes a critical stage in perpetuating **gendered labor market inequalities** [1, 2]. Because many occupations are culturally connoted as either male or female, **gender stereotypes** may shape employers' preferences and generate hiring inequalities [3, 4]. Thus, employers and their gender stereotypical beliefs play a significant role in the hiring process [5, 6].

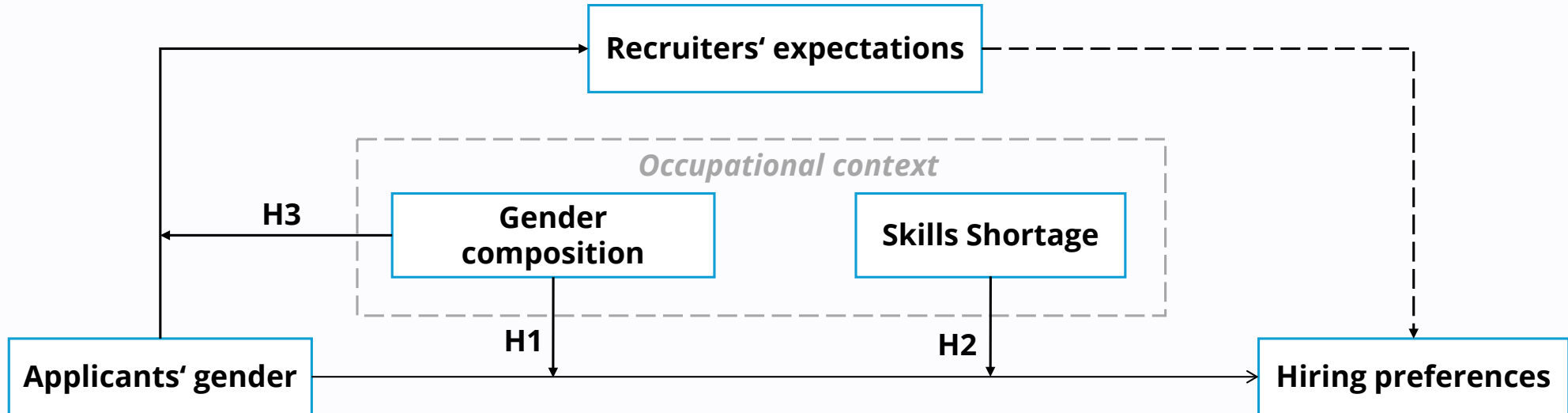
Research questions:

- 1. Does the **gender composition** of an occupation influence gendered hiring preferences?
- 2. Does **occupation-specific skill shortage** mitigate gendered hiring preferences?
- 3. Can gendered preferences be explained by recruiters' **gender-stereotypical expectations**?

Theoretical Background

Labour queues: Employers create preference hierarchies ("queues") of job applicants based on selection criteria (e.g., educational credentials, gender, ethnicity) [7].

Gender stereotypes: Because gender stereotypes foster gendered performance expectations [8, 9], women are expected to be more productive [10], committed [11] and better fitting in female-dominated occupations [12] and vice-versa.



Hypotheses:

- **H1:** In gender-segregated occupations, applicants of the majority gender are preferred.
- **H2:** High occupation-specific skill shortage reduces gendered hiring preferences.
- **H3:** Majority-gender applicants receive higher expected scores for productivity, commitment, and team fit.

Data & Methods

Experimental design:

- **Factorial survey experiment (FSE)** embedded in Swiss employer survey
- **Target population:** Recruiters responsible for filling an advertised vacancy in the entry-level labor market
- **Sampling:** 2'073 vacancies in 72 occupational fields.
- **Design:** Separate D-efficient experimental designs in all occupational fields. Each recruiter rated 8 CV vignettes.

Vignette dimensions	Vignette levels
Gender	- male - female
Highest educational credential (different plausibilities depending on occupational field)	- Federal VET Certificate (2 years) - Federal VET Diploma (3-4 years) - Federal VET Diploma & vocational baccalaureate - Federal Diploma of Higher Education - Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education - University of Applied Sciences Bachelor - University Bachelor
Work experience (* after attainment of highest educational credential)	- 0 years - 3 years - 6 years
Final grade	- satisfactory - very good
Mother tongue (fixed)	- Swiss german
Family status (fixed)	- Unmarried, no children

Variables:

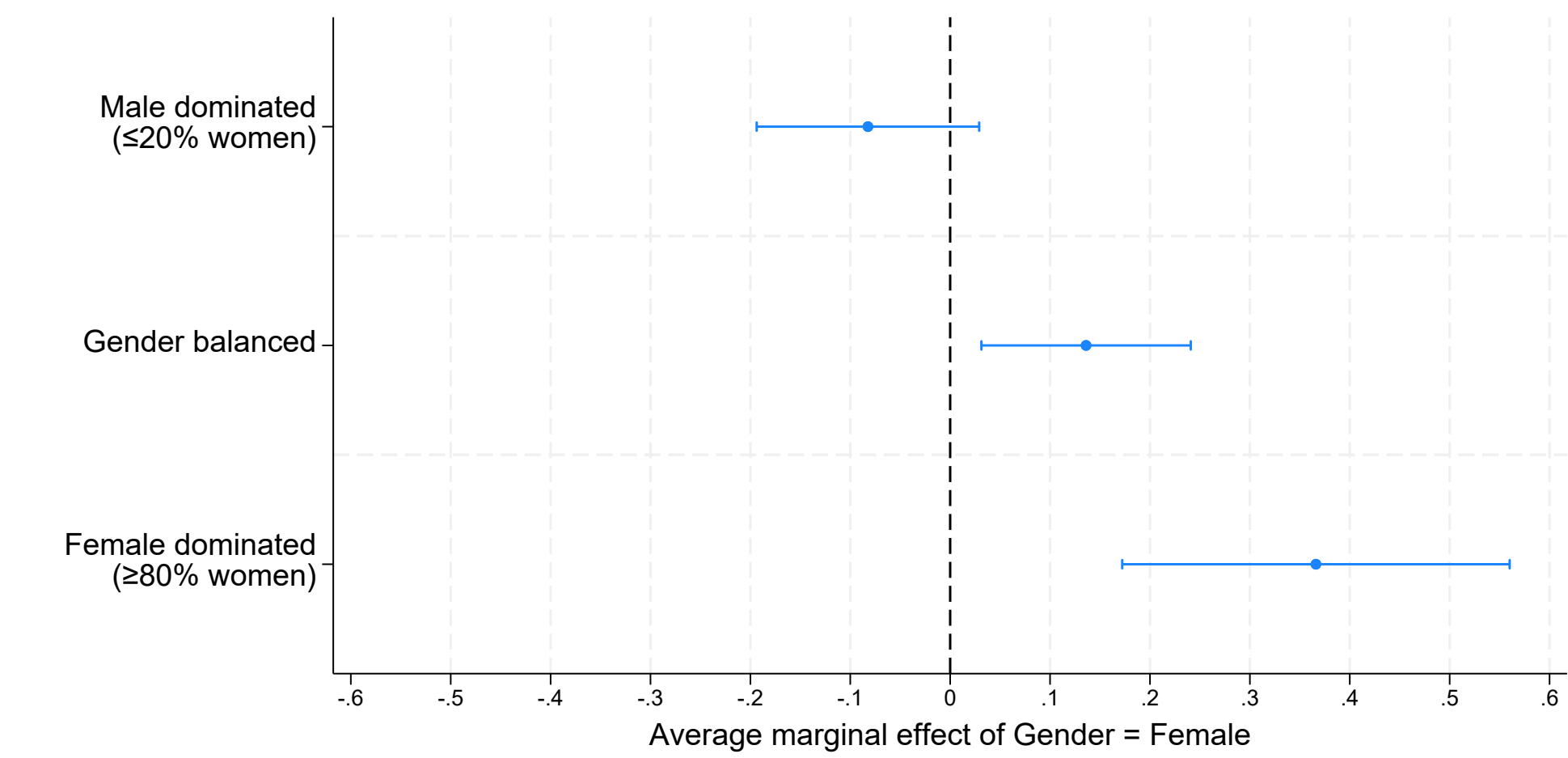
- **Measured variables:** Likelihood of consideration for job (0-10), expected performance (1-7), expected commitment (1-7), expected team fit (1-7)
- **Contextual variables:** Occupational gender type (% women), Skill Shortage Index (high vs. low/moderate)

Methodological approach:

- Pooled analysis of all experiments with 3-level random effects models

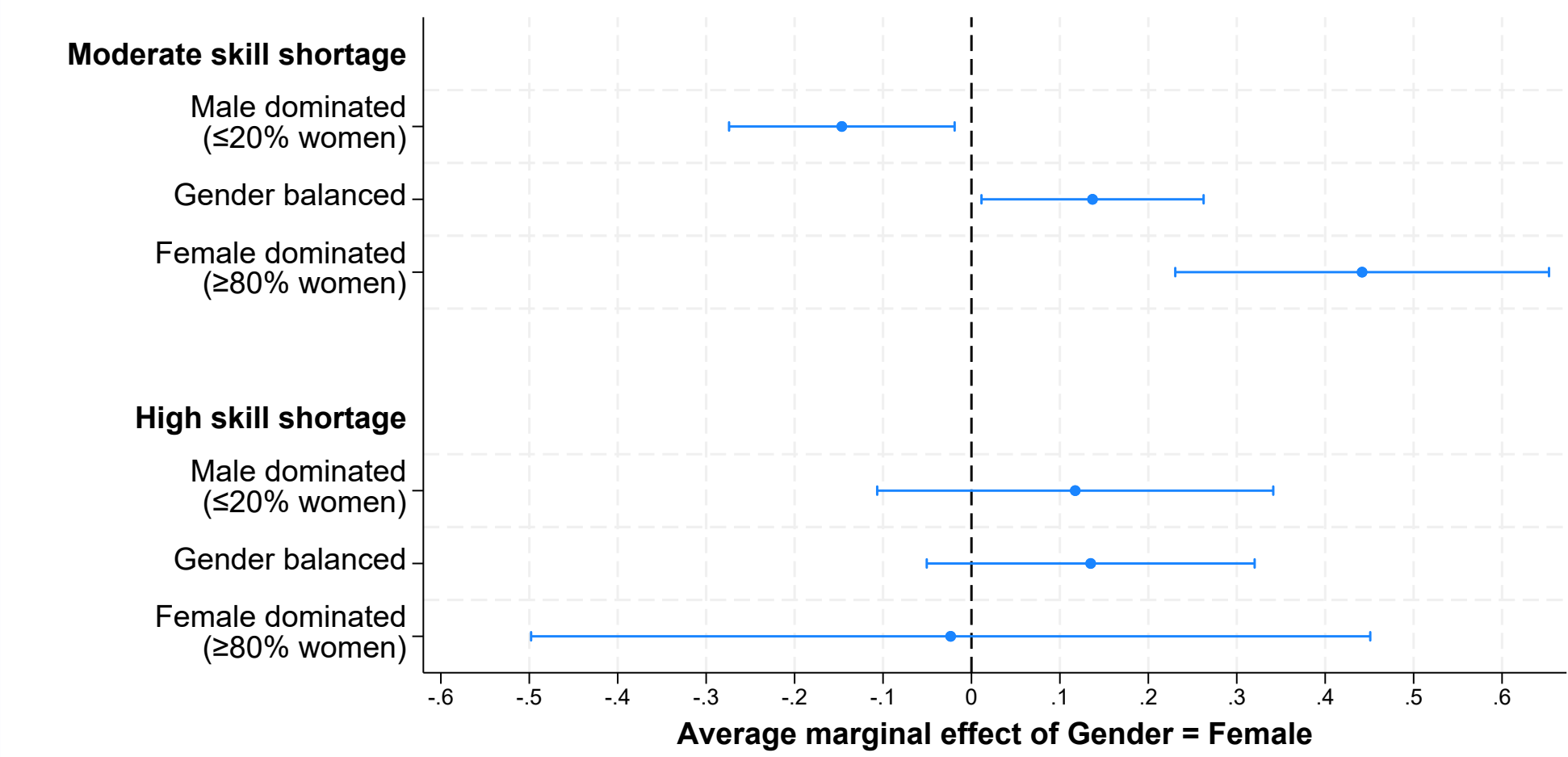
Results

RQ1 — Difference in ratings by occ. gender type



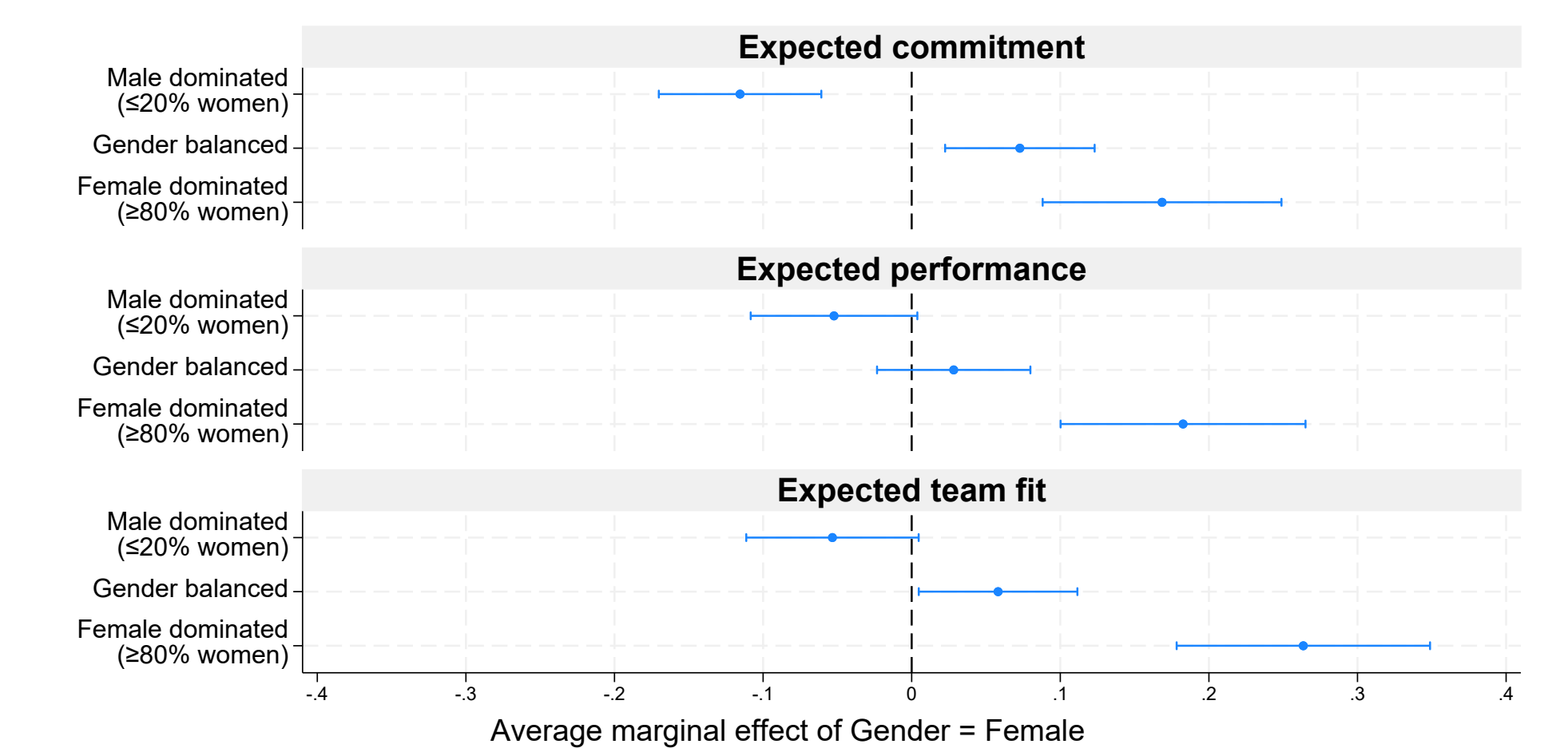
- Women are significantly preferred in female-dominated occupations (≥80% women).
- No statistically significant gender differences in male-dominated occupations.

RQ2 — Skill shortage attenuates bias



- Gendered hiring preferences are limited to occupations with low/moderate skill shortage.

RQ3 — Expectations differ by occ. gender type



- In female-dominated occupations, expectations of productivity, commitment, and team fit all favour women.
- In male-dominated occupations, only commitment expectations favour men.

Conclusions

- Gender as a ranking criterion matters in a handful of strongly segregated occupations (*additional results not shown*).
 - Traditional disadvantages of women are increasingly limited to a few male dominated niches in the labor market
 - Women are especially preferred in precarious occupations (low status, wages, ...)
- Employers adjust their ranking when vacancies are hard to fill, reducing gender bias in hiring.
- Employers have different expectations regarding female and male applicants which potentially mediate hiring preferences.

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Links

