



THE WHISPERED FAREWELL: UNDERSTANDING THE PHENOMENON OF QUIET QUITTING AND ITS ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATION

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ABSTRACT:

In the modern employment landscape, turnover remains a persistent challenge for organizations globally. Amidst the more noticeable resignations, a subtler form of departure known as "quiet quitting" has emerged. This phenomenon is characterized by employees fulfilling the bare minimum requirements of their job, exhibiting minimal effort, time, or enthusiasm beyond what is strictly necessary. This phenomenon has gained attention across various platforms and has become the subject of social movements and investigations. Quiet quitting reflects low work engagement, job dissatisfaction, and reluctance to exceed minimum job requirements due to unsatisfactory employee-employer relationships. Understanding the underlying causes and implications of quiet quitting is essential for both employees and organizations. This review article explores the prevalence, underlying motives, causes, and consequences of quiet quitting in contemporary workplaces. It also sheds light on the overlooked challenges of managing employee attrition by conducting an extensive literature review. The article discusses the implications of quiet quitting for employee engagement, turnover management, and organizational culture. By illuminating this often-overlooked aspect of employee behavior, organizations can gain insights into addressing and mitigating the negative effects of quiet quitting, fostering a more transparent and resilient work environment.

Keywords: Quiet Quitting, Turnover, Employee Engagement, Organizational Behavior, Workplace

INTRODUCTION:

In the dynamic landscape of modern employment, turnover remains an ever-present challenge for organizations worldwide. While some departures are marked by grand exits and vocal

expressions of discontent, a subtler form of resignation often goes unnoticed—the phenomenon known as "quiet quitting." Quiet quitting entails fulfilling only the essential duties of one's job without investing additional time, effort, or enthusiasm beyond what is strictly required. Despite its name, quiet quitting does not involve the employee actually resigning from their position; instead, they persist in their role while collecting a salary (Mahand and Caldwell 2023). The term "quiet quitting" has recently become a growing concern in communities worldwide via various platforms. It has become the focus of many social movements and investigations. The objective of the quiet quitting is to continue working rather than quit so that the stressful events at the workplace are limited to working hours and do not affect one's personal life. Concrete evidence regarding the originator of the term "quit quite quitting" remains elusive. However, some accounts suggest that economist Mark Boldger introduced the phrase around 2009 (Greg 2024). On the other hand, the Los Angeles Times documented that Bryan Creely, a career coach formerly a corporate recruiter based in Nashville, utilized the term for the first time on his social media platform in 2022 (Pearce 2022). Despite the uncertainty surrounding its inception, the concept resembles the earlier emergence of "lying flat" in China, emphasizing a shared inclination towards disengagement from relentless work commitments (Greg 2024).

Global Patterns of Quiet Quitting

The quiet quitting phenomenon has impacted various global workforces, including the United States and the United Kingdom (Lord 2022; Schweyer 2022). The Gallup Report identified a parallel trend, revealing that at least half of the U.S. workforce comprises quiet quitters. Additionally, during the second quarter of 2022, the ratio of engaged employees to actively disengaged employees stood at 1.8 to 1. Specifically, 32% were categorized as engaged, while 18% were actively disengaged. According to the report's longitudinal data, this represents the lowest level of engagement witnessed in the past decade, indicating a trend progressively permeating the workforce. Once considered primarily a Western occurrence, the practice of quiet quitting is extending its reach worldwide. According to Gallup's 2023 "State of the Global Workplace" report, nearly 6 in 10 employees of the global workforce comprises quiet quitters (Gallup 2023). This phenomenon is gaining recognition in Asian business landscapes as well, with its prevalence acknowledged in corporate sectors, including Japan, South Korea, Singapore, China and India. However, the current research predominantly focuses on Western corporate environments.

In India, as per the Slack study, as many as 16% Indian participants admitted to quiet quitting or fulfilling the job requirements but not going above and beyond (Sangani 2022). A survey of 1,097 South Korean employees conducted by the local job search website Incruit found that over half engage in quiet quitting, with dissatisfaction with salary and benefits cited as the main reason by 32.6%, followed by lack of enthusiasm for the company's work (29.8%) and preparation for job change by 20.5% (The Straits Times 2024). The concept has also become viral in China with the "Bailan (quiet quitting; lying flat; tangping or let it rot in English)"

movement, a sophisticated Chinese movement that resists a highly arduous and production-oriented society (Campton, Tham, and Ting 2023).

Given its increasing relevance in modern workplaces and its ramifications for both employers and employees, comprehending the causes, manifestations, and impacts of quiet quitting is imperative for employers aiming to uphold productivity and employee engagement. Additionally, quiet quitting threatens individual career satisfaction and overall workplace morale, necessitating a comprehensive examination of strategies to address and mitigate its occurrence. As quiet quitting becomes more prevalent, synthesized research and evidence-based insights are needed to guide organizations in effectively managing this phenomenon. Therefore, this review article delves into quiet quitting, aiming to uncover its causes, explore its impact on employers and employees, and assess effective strategies for mitigation. This review article can serve as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to navigate the complexities of contemporary workplace dynamics and foster environments conducive to employee engagement and retention.

QUITE QUITTING- UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM:

At first glance, "Quiet Quitting" and resignation resembles to be the same, but that is not true and, at the same time, may not seem problematic because employees are not disengaging from the core task. In an HBR review, Professors Anthony C. Klotz and Mark C. Bolino noted that quiet quitters continue in their job by completing their minimum required work. Generally, they do not come early to work, stay late, attend only the mandatory meetings, and are not emotionally or intellectually engaged (Klotz and Mark 2022). Quiet quitting is different from quitting one's job. It refers to continuing work by maintaining a work-life balance by doing only mandatory requirements (Shatakshi 2022). Mark Boldger's definition of the quite quitting phenomenon explains the declining passion for achievement and describes employees' low commitment to work. It encapsulates the silent withdrawal and disengagement of employees from their positions due to unfulfilled expectations, dissatisfaction, or a lack of motivation. While it doesn't manifest as formal resignation, the diminishing performance indicates a covert yet impactful attrition phenomenon (Greg 2024).

As opposed to quitting their jobs, quiet quitters reject the idea that their lives should be dominated by work. Quiet quitter is an individual who, despite being expected to excel, feels undervalued or unrecognized by their supervisor and consequently chooses not to perform at their highest level of dedication (Smith 2022). Previous findings suggest that when employees perceive a lack of appreciation, they respond by exhibiting minimal personal commitment and opting for quiet quitting to react to their employers' behavior (Gagné and Meyer 2014; Hopke 2022). Zaid Khan's (@zaidleplin) TikTok video proved instrumental in disseminating awareness of this issue. In the video, Khan elucidates quiet quitting as a phenomenon wherein employees abstain from overtly resigning from their positions but cease to invest discretionary

effort beyond the contractual obligations of their roles. This concept parallels historical labor strategies, likening quiet quitting to the practice of working to rule, wherein employees strictly adhere to contractual duties without engaging in additional collaborative efforts such as teamwork, idea-sharing, and creative initiatives. Distinguishing between quiet quitting and explicit resignation lies in the discernible level of commitment and the explicit articulation of intentions to depart the organization (Brown et al. 2023). In the wake of a recent Wall Street Journal article that reported that 50% of today's employees have chosen to limit their commitment to their jobs (Smith 2022), a barrage of information has surfaced about the “quiet quitting” phenomenon and its impact on the competitive advantage of companies. Pundits in the press and academic scholars alike decry the alleged lack of motivation of Millennial and Generation Z workers (Campton, Tham, and Ting 2023). However, the quiet quitting movement can also be explained as a growing percentage of employees attempting to communicate to employers that the workplace environment is no longer healthy for employees and needs to change (Ellis and Angela 2022). Studies on quiet quitting show that the psychological and economic effects on employees who return to regular working hours and work-life after the Covid-19 pandemic trigger the tendency to quit quitting” (Aratani 2023). Quiet quitting manifests as an employee's unwillingness to be an extra-mile performer, typically resulting from an organization's inability to create a meaningful relationship with its employees (Zenger and Joseph 2022). This is in line with Yikilmaz's opinion that quiet quitting is withdrawal shown by workers by imposing low work engagement and an attitude of dissatisfaction regarding problems at work, which have an impact on reduced welfare and increased conflict between work and life (Yikilmaz 2022).

To conclude unlike outright quitting, quiet quitters maintain a work-life balance by fulfilling only mandatory requirements, signaling a rejection of the notion that work should dominate their lives. This behavior often stems from feeling undervalued or unappreciated by supervisors, leading employees to disengage quietly rather than actively resigning. As organizations strive to retain talent and foster a positive work environment, addressing the underlying causes of quiet quitting becomes imperative to mitigate its impact on employee morale and productivity.

REASONS FOR QUITTING:

Despite the widespread recognition of quiet quitting within contemporary organizations, the stark truth is that many organizations are either unwilling, ill-equipped, or incapable of adequately addressing this phenomenon. It has been reported that employers have consistently failed to address employees' needs and present an array of disturbing statistics about the ineffectiveness of many modern leaders (Sturt and Todd 2018).

The key reasons for quiet quitting are discussed below:

- **Work-Life balance:** work-life balance is related to balanced conditions and harmony between life and work. The pandemic has changed people's opinions on work-life balance across generations. One out of every five workers worldwide intends to leave their current position in 2022, according to PwC's "Global Workforce - Hopes and Fears" poll. Even if all generations have reviewed their work-life balance, Gen Z holds dramatically different opinions from all earlier generations regarding careers and what constitutes success in life and the workplace (Callahan 2022). As said by Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) to be able to achieve work-life balance, a millennial generation worker must fulfill three aspects, namely time balance, role balance, and satisfaction balance. Achieving a balance between work and personal life is crucial for fostering the psychological, emotional, and cognitive well-being of workers, which in turn supports organizational effectiveness. Poor work-life balance has detrimental effects on employee health, well-being, and ultimately, organizational performance. The implementation of strategies to enhance work-life balance involves efforts aimed at reducing conflict between work and personal life, thereby enabling individuals to enhance their performance effectiveness while also attending to other aspects of their lives.
- **Toxic workplace culture-** Poor organizational culture was recognized as one of the most important reasons for voluntary employee resignations. A study examined employee attrition in Culture 500 companies in 2021 and found that one of the most important direct causes of Great Resignation is related to toxic corporate culture (Sull, Sull, and Zweig 2022). They argued that the most important features of the toxic corporate culture that encourages resignation are failing to promote diversity, equality, and inclusion and having workers who feel disrespected, and unethical behavior. Toxic organizations have problem-solving procedures that are fear-driven and rarely result in good decisions. They exhibit poor internal communication, and their interpersonal relations are characterized by manipulative and self-serving motives (Bacal and Associates 2022)
- **Low salary and other benefits-** Throughout history, money has consistently remained one of the most significant factors influencing job motivation, making it a crucial area of study for researchers. Lu et al. (2016) argued that hospitality industry employees tend to quit jobs when they are paid a relatively low salary. Perry (2021) indicates that IT organizations increased wages to attract new employees and maintain existing ones. If the salary isn't enough to meet the basic needs or to support the lifestyle, employees may feel compelled to look for better-paying opportunities. A low salary can make employees feel undervalued and unappreciated for their skills and contributions, leading to dissatisfaction and ultimately, resignations they see limited opportunities for career growth and salary progression within the organization.
- **Failure to fulfill promises:** Unfortunately, supervisors and managers in an alarming number of companies lack empathy and compassion toward their employees, often ignoring signs of employee suffering and treating employees as commodities rather than as valued partners (Dutton and Monica 2017). Employees who work in "command and control" organizations frequently cite their companies' toxic top-down organizational culture as a reason why they are dissatisfied with their leaders (Matos, O'Neill, and Lei 2018). Caring about employees

includes providing what is necessary for an individual's well-being, mental health, welfare, maintenance, and protection (Jon Clifton 2022). Organizations that demonstrate care and compassion create a consistent experience where employees know their organization cares about them, and the evidence suggests that those employees then reciprocate with higher levels of personal commitment (Hall 2014).

- **Failure to tackle diversity and inclusion issues:** Diversity, equity, and inclusion and treating all employees with respect and dignity have become major area of concern for a growing group of employees – especially for younger employees and minorities (Schroth 2019). Emphasizing diversity and inclusion provide opportunities for employees to engage in activities that promote fair treatment; a healthier respect for people with different backgrounds; and greater feelings of engagement, belongingness, and commitment (Bhuyan and Caldwell 2022).

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO FOR QUITE QUITTING?

- **Employers should respect work-life balance-** Work-life balance is the balance between the work-life and private life of the employees (Kalliath and Brough 2008). Before the pandemic, this leisure time, which the employees needed, was provided with paid leaves and flexible working hours (Sirgy and Lee 2018). However, with the pandemic, the fact that remote working became permanent has largely eliminated leisure activities and disrupted the work-life balance of the employees (Vyas 2022). Since the onset of COVID-19, people have shifted their focus towards maintaining a healthier lifestyle while working. It's no longer just about earning a paycheck but also about enjoying various aspects of life. Achieving a balanced work-life dynamic is crucial for employees to work efficiently without undue stress. Organizations can support this by prioritizing employees' physical and mental well-being through initiatives such as counseling sessions, incorporating yoga and meditation practices during work hours, providing nutritious meals, and offering gym facilities.
- **Making work more fun-** With the Covid-19, many employees had to work remotely. This result was not taken by the decision of the employees but by the decision of governments or businesses (Hajal 2022). However, many businesses that could not discover this business model's potential during the remote working period saw their employees as those who do not work, avoid work, do not read work-related e-mails, and are constantly slacking off (Raheel, Rahim, and Naeem 2022). Therefore, businesses burdened their employees with more than the work and responsibility they had to do during and after the pandemic (Cerullo 2023). Employers and organizations that prioritize creating an enjoyable and low-stress work environment are highly valued by employees. This approach fosters motivation and enthusiasm among employees, leading to exceptional results. Additionally, employees feel empowered to contribute innovative ideas and creative solutions to challenges, actively engage in team discussions, and ultimately enhance productivity and company growth.

- **Implementing employee wellness and well-being program-** Wellness and wellbeing are high priority topics for Millennials and Generation Z and organizations that acknowledge the importance of employees' welfare and wellbeing have been shown to be more profitable and have happier and healthier employees (Jim Clifton 2019). Such programs need not be expensive, but educating employees about managing work-related and personal stress and creating supportive Human Resource Management systems that demonstrate a commitment to employees have been found to improve employee morale and performance (Krekel, Ward, and De Neve 2019).
- **Re-motivating the employees-** Today, the critical factor to business success is to motivate employees (Sekhar, Patwardhan, and Singh 2013). All kinds of problems, including quiet quitting, will be eliminated sooner or later in businesses whose employees are motivated. However, the internal or external factors motivating each employee differ. For example, the economic crises experienced in many sectors after the pandemic caused an increase in the financial concerns of the employees (Iyer and Simkins 2022). Hence, to boost employee morale and combat quiet quitting, it's essential to cultivate an environment of open communication where employees feel heard and valued. Regular one-on-one meetings provide opportunities to address individual concerns and encourage dialogue about disengagement factors. Recognizing and appreciating employees for their contributions publicly reinforces positive behavior.
- **Rebuilding the company culture-** Business culture defines vital elements such as employees' values, beliefs, behaviors, and business processes (Widarko and Anwarodin 2022). As said by Cameron & Quinn, regularly assessing employees' attitudes and perceptions about the organization, the alignment between behavior and core values, and how leadership and the organization culture is perceived make it possible to identify opportunities to address areas needing attention and to reinforce values and behaviors that get off track. Employees seek to be treated with respect and fairness, especially considering the significant portion of their lives spent at work. Dissatisfaction and perceived mistreatment are major drivers of voluntary resignations or quiet quitting. Additionally, while job enrichment can enhance employee engagement and satisfaction, it should be a voluntary pursuit rather than an expectation imposed upon employees. Enrichment initiatives should align with employees' intrinsic motivations and interests, rather than being mandated solely for the benefit of the manager or company (Cameron and Robert 2005).

CONCLUSION:

Quiet quitting is a deliberate response to an unhealthy work environment, often stemming from factors like low compensation and limited development opportunities. It's not an abrupt decision but rather a gradual accumulation of dissatisfaction. Understanding employees' needs is crucial for fostering a desirable work environment that prioritizes both organizational and employee growth. Employers must invest in building trust by actively listening and adapting to their employees' concerns. Many organizations are transforming their work environments to resemble

a home for employees and adjusting employee assistance programs (EAPs) accordingly. Failing to address these issues can lead to high turnover rates and hinder organizational growth. It's essential for individuals to pursue work aligned with their interests to maintain their well-being and productivity.

Quiet quitting represents a significant yet understudied phenomenon in organizational behavior, with implications for employee engagement, turnover management, and organizational culture. By understanding the motivations, mechanisms, and consequences of silent exits, organizations can take proactive steps to address the root causes of quiet quitting and foster a more transparent and resilient work environment. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study has provided valuable insights into the factors driving employees to choose silent exits, the strategies employed to execute such departures, and the impacts on individual, team, and organizational dynamics. Moving forward, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of quiet quitting on organizational performance and employee well-being, as well as the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing turnover rates and improving workplace satisfaction.

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