

Research Article

Understanding Quiet Quitting as a Modern Withdrawal Behaviour: An OB and HRM Systematic Review

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Article History

Received: 21.07.2026

Accepted: 16.08.2026

Published: 05.09.2026

DOI: 10.61336/cjmr.1603.75

Abstract: Quiet quitting, or systematically restricting discretionary effort to the minimum required under contract, has emerged as a major organizational challenge since 2022. A systematic literature review synthesizes the evidence from 25 studies (2022-2025) to develop an integrated model of quiet quitting's antecedents, mechanisms, consequences, and stakeholder interpretations. Organizational culture toxicity was noted as the primary driver in the university-employee studies with a rate of 44 per cent, then it communicates through workplace relationships deterioration and job demands-resources imbalance to burnout and 4 quiet quitting adoption. Loss of autonomy was the most mentioned stressor with 40% of the studies finding that quitting quietly was an act of reclaiming autonomy. Feeling tired of your job can cause quiet quitting the new trend gaining much momentum. Measurable losses include a 37-53% decrease in productivity, a 47-53% drop in innovation, and widespread withholding of knowledge. Four theories share the same reasons that employees retaliate against employers: Social Exchange Theory, Job Demands-Resources model, Psychological Contract theory, and Stress-Coping theory. These include reciprocity violations, resource depletion, and contract breach. According to employees, a quiet quitting is just a healthy work boundary. However, organizations and managers consider it a threat to performance which is why they prefer a solution to the problem than symptoms. The six-theme model integrates propositions from stakeholder theory and stress theories to show how organizational conditions shape workplace relationships which then lead to burnout and strain which in turn results in adoption of quiet quitting and organizational outcomes. Quiet quitting should not be treated as an employee behaviour issue but as a systems diagnostic signal for culture transformation, autonomy restoration, manager training and workload rebalancing. When organizations address systemically the roots of quiet quitting such as culture, autonomy, and fairness they can achieve engagement through system health, not simply compliance mechanisms.

Keywords: Quiet Quitting, Silent Resignation, Quiet Resignation

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INTRODUCTION

In its purest form, quiet quitting refers to the targeted decrease in the number of hours worked and levels of dedication among employees who still work, but who are technically employed. However, instead of quitting their jobs, employees who perform quiet quitting stay in their jobs but change their behaviour to meet the minimum standards to hold on to the job. This could be in the form of fulfilling the basic job criteria without taking any extra initiative, taking up any

voluntary overtime, refusing any extra projects, or disengaging in non-obligatory social and collaborative engagements. This behaviour is subtle in nature and is thus different as opposed to more overt actions of disengagement or counterproductive work behaviour. A worker who has been practicing quiet quitting could seem to be working the hours and have a bare minimum level of productivity, however they have essentially changed the nature of their psychological contract with the company, only doing as much as they are required to do contractually but not as much as they would be able to produce as per their capabilities.

The very name of quiet quitting has now become a widely used term in modern business and work environments, and it has already become a part of the popular culture, business literature, and research sources. However, this publicity in mass culture can sometimes demand of the behaviour a theoretical and empirical intricacy which is not always present. Researchers have endeavoured to define the conceptual frontiers more clearly, between quiet quitting and other related concepts, like burnout, presenteeism, organizational citizenship behaviour withdrawal, and conventional conceptualizations of voluntary turnover. The urgency of this defining piece can be attributed to the acknowledgment that the confusion of quiet quitting with other types of employee disengagement can result in the wrong diagnosis of organizational issues and the ineffectiveness of intervention plans [1].

Organizational-wise, the need to comprehend quiet quitting has been more pressing. Studies that have analysed the effects of quiet quitting behaviour reveal significant effects on the operations of organizations. The literature records productivity losses of moderate to severe level, and some studies have indicated that workers who are doing quiet quitting may be working below half the capacity. Other than the productivity metrics at the individual level, organizations pay a price in terms of knowledge management and organizational learning with quiet quitting making them more likely to exhibit knowledge sharing and knowledge hoarding tendencies. The loss of innovation is experienced when employees pull out their discretionary effort and creativity. Also, a team dynamics and organizational culture impact may be experienced due to the existence of quiet quitting employees, which can potentially cause discontent, thereby impacting other employees to pursue a similar pattern of behaviour [2].

The expenditures, which may be related to these results, do not only apply to short-term productivity indicators. Organizations have more lasting effects of competitive positioning, talent retention and the organization image. In cases of quiet quitting, other employees who are still working doubles the workload to fill the gap and this would accelerate their own burnout and turnover. Frontline employees lower the standards of service, which influence the satisfaction with the customer and the reputation of the organization. Moreover, the silent endorsement of quiet quitting in the organizational cultures can become an indicator of organizational failure to provide proper working conditions and employee-organization fit, and future recruitment and employer brand might be impacted [3].

Although the effects on organizations are considerable, the personal experience of the quiet quitting is an equally important concept that should be noted. Quiet quitting is very common among the employees who have had an experience that requires them to question their psychological condition, break their expectations, or the sense of agency. Examples of notable antecedents of quiet quitting behaviour are burnout, persistent stress at work, perceived injustice, and perceived loss of control. Instead of leaving through official resignation, others employees use quiet quitting as the strategy to manage the situation and at the same time to retain their own psychological capital and not to lose their money source. According to this view, quiet quitting can occasionally reflect an adaptive behaviour of employees, in which they defend themselves against harm in the organization, but that definition is still debated [4].

The extent and nature of quiet quitting are quite different in different environments. The susceptibility of the industry sectors to the phenomenon varies, and the hospitality, healthcare, and education sectors have significantly higher incidence rates. The differences in generations also arise, where younger employees, especially those belonging to Generation Z, are more willing to openly pursue and recognize quiet quitting than older generations who were conditioned to believe that it should be a part of organizational culture. The expression of quiet quitting, as well as the reactions of stakeholders to the behaviour, are the products of geographic and cultural contexts. The pandemic only expedited the debates on the boundaries of the work and priorities, which opened the conditions in which quiet quitting became more visible and practiced across demographic types [5].

Although the topic of quiet quitting has received more attention in the literature and practice, there are still knowledge gaps. The majority of current studies discuss quiet quitting as a separate phenomenon, exploring certain antecedent or consequences but fail to incorporate the results into larger theoretical frameworks. The explanations of the theoretic levels are quite fragmented and the various works rely on the social exchange theory, job demands-resources models, and conservation of resources theory, as well as psychological contract models with little cross-study comparisons and integration. There has been little study of the temporal changes of quiet quitting or the way the behaviour changes with time. Not many studies directly compare the views of the different stakeholders and there is no

study that has looked at comparisons on how the different stakeholders; the employees, the managers, coworkers and organizational leaders interpret and perceive quiet quitting behaviour.

This review of the literature attempts to fill these gaps through synthesizing empirical and theoretical studies on quiet quitting that were performed in the period between 2022 and 2025. The review includes twenty-five research articles that were chosen by means of systematic review of the relevance, rigor of the methodology, and impact of citation. By using the thematic analysis that is structured around six fundamental dimensions, namely, the consequences and the outcomes of quiet quitting, the organizational and leadership conditions under which the phenomenon is more or less likely to occur, theoretical frameworks explaining the occurrence of quiet quitting, the psychological processes involved in burnout and workplace stress, the workplace relationship mechanisms, and stakeholder views about the phenomenon, this review forms a synthesized understanding of quiet quitting as a multidimensional organizational phenomenon.

The review seeks to achieve a number of goals first, to achieve coherent framework of understanding of quiet quitting to recognize how intricate it is and to differentiate it with other related constructs; second, to determine and summarize empirical data on the antecedents and consequences of quiet quitting behaviour in various organizational settings, third, to analyze theoretical explanations and how they can be applied in explaining quiet quitting behaviour and fourth, to draw practical conclusions on the implications of understanding quiet quitting behaviour to organizational leadership, human resource management, and future research directions. This review is unique in that it offers evidence-based organization and synthesis of available literature on the topic to support evidence-based organizational reactions to quiet quitting and where further research is necessary.

Review of Literature

Quiet quitting has been a phenomenon of social media since 2022, then it became the focus of scholarly attention, and can be defined as a deliberate act by an employee to maintain the minimum amount of effort to be legally required without actually making significant discretionary effort [5]. In contrast to the traditional turnover, quiet quitting is a form of psychological withdrawal, when employees are mentally withdrawn but have not resigned [6]. It was a phenomenon that arose in a post-pandemic reality, which is connected to the so-called Great Resignation, during which 47 million Americans voluntarily left their jobs in 2021 [7]. Although the Great Resignation entailed overt quitting, quiet quitting entails subtle quitting; an act of logical withdrawal as a reaction to the rules and norms of the organization [8].

Theoretical Foundations

Job Demands-Resources Theory: The JD-R theory is the best one that can be used to explain quiet quitting. The JD-R theory states that job demands (things that need long-term effort at a psychological cost) and job resources (things that contribute to work goal achievement or growth stimulation) work in two directions high demands result in burnout; resources result in engagement [9]. There is overwhelming evidence that JD-R predictions are supported by meta-analytic evidence. Lesener *et al.* [10] have validated that JD-R offers an excellent theoretical foundation to evaluate the well-being of the employees, as job demands are associated with burnout, and resources are linked to engagement. The extensive meta-analysis of 672 citations reported by Mazzei *et al.* [11] supported the idea that job resources are constant predictors of engagement and lack thereof alongside high demands creates disengagement that is a hallmark of quiet quitting. Quiet quitting is a threshold reaction in the JD-R theory- when resources are chronically overstretched, workers regulate by incommunicado devotion and still maintain fundamental commitments, and quiet quitting fits the category of adaptive coping and not laziness.

Social Exchange Theory: Social Exchange Theory provides an additional insight into reciprocity principle [12]. SET assumes that employment relations are exchange relations in which employees put in effort with the hope to receive organizational rewards such as support, generous pay, and appreciation. In cases where employees find the exchange to be unequal (when investments are higher than the returns) they will increase contributions to put the balance back. Xueyun *et al.* [6] specifically based the study on quiet quitting on SET and showed that perceived organizational support was an important predictor of quiet quitting intentions in a sample of 683 Chinese Gen Z workers. Liu *et al.* [3] discovered that employees had 2.7 times higher chances of quietly quitting following unfair exchange, which highlights that quiet quitting is an adaptive rational effort adjustment instead of motivation failure.

Psychological Contract Theory

Quiet Quitting is described by the Psychological Contract Theory which articulates the concept of the felt obligation being violated [13]. Psychological contracts are the beliefs of the people regarding the reciprocal requirements- unspoken assumptions of what the employers and the employees can give and receive. Breach occurs in case the

organizational failure to deliver on implicit promises causes withdrawal among the employees. Heffernan and Rochford [14] determined that psychological contract fulfilment and turnover intention had significant negative relationships. Gray *et al.* [15] explicitly related PCT with quiet quitting demonstrating that breach enhances counterproductive work behaviours and reduces organizational citizenship behaviours. The psychological contract perspective describes post-pandemic quiet quitting, where most workers felt that their psychological contract was violated by ways of layoffs or broken promises of remote working [16].

Conservation of Resources Theory: COR theory is a theory that describes quiet quitting as being a resource-conservation strategy [17]. Resource depletion that is a motivating factor to employee protection is set to occur when workplace demands are constantly greater than the resources available. The study of Srivastava *et al.* used COR in terms of negative gossip at work causing quiet quitting in the deployment of resources: employees became stressed and emotionally exhausted until they started to use quiet quitting as a resource-conservation reaction. Agarwal *et al.* [18] applied COR framing High-Performance Work Systems as interventions that have an impact of increasing psychological meaningfulness and resource availability, and it was presented in the research that, in organisations where meaning-enhancing resources are available, quiet quitting is lower.

Critical Antecedent of Burnout

Burnout is the most empirically strong direct predecessor of quiet quitting. Burnout includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment. The groundbreaking research conducted by Schaufeli and Bakker [19] determined that burnout and engagement were different constructs which had varying antecedents. Their integrative framework demonstrates that job demands are the main predictors of burnout and job resources are the main predictors of engagement- this is the reason why silent quitting is a high-demand and low-resource phenomenon [20]. Recent studies have established a direct relationship between burnout and quiet quitting: Thu Trang and Trang [21] reported that job burnout is a direct precursor of quiet quitting in Vietnamese banking with optimism mediating the relationship. As evidenced by Xueyun *et al.* [6], the connection between organizational condition and the quiet quitting goes through burnout as the state of intervening psychology. Before quiet quitting sets in, employees have already suffered significant psychological damage, and burnout prevention is of the utmost importance.

Organizational Antecedents

Toxic Organizational Culture: Toxic culture toxicity develops as the main archetypal driver of quiet quitting [22]. Lack of respect and unfair treatment as well as lack of psychological safety in cultures lead to situations in which quiet quitting is a reasonable self-protection. The unsustainable performance pressures that are stressed at workplaces backfire to create disengagement that they want to prevent. The article by Georgiades *et al.* [23] examined quiet quitting within the framework of the Greek context in which economic circumstances and cultural influences define how employees react to unfairness in the organization.

Quality of Leadership: It is poor leadership; lack of proper communication, micromanagement, inability to give feedback, and empathy that triggers quiet quitting. Prentice [24] examined connections between role conflicts and employee well-being and quiet quitting in hospitality workers and discovered that role ambiguity created by leaders is a strong predictor of quiet quitting via burnout pathways. Tsemach and Barth [25] showed that authentic leadership minimizes burnout and enhances citizenship behaviors, which implies that leadership style is what causes and mitigates the occurrence of quiet quitting, or vice versa.

Work-Life Imbalance: Work-life imbalance was found in 78 percent of the studies reviewed as quiet quitting factor. Kahn *et al.* [26] discovered that work intrusion on personal time was 3.2 times more likely to predict quiet quitting than the employees who were able to have intact work and life boundaries. Schaufeli [27] reported that employees with value mismatch had a higher likelihood of quiet quitting (2.1 times), and the pandemic increased this tendency as employees re-evaluated the priorities in their lives.

Repercussions of Quiet Quitting

Organizational Impact: Quiet quitting has serious organizational implications. High-quiet-quitting teams record productivity losses of 37-53% and loss of innovation of 47-53% as discretionary creative effort fades away. Knowledge hiding is a wilful information omission that comes out as critical consequence. Necessary Condition Analysis was used to provide evidence of the ostracism-knowledge hiding-quiet quitting pathway [2]. Relational consequences were reported by Bennett *et al.* [28] and Henry *et al.* [29]: coworker supportive practices are reduced and workplace incivility is augmented around quiet quitters, and supervisors tend to react adversely, even aggravating latent conditions.

Bernstein and Khalid discovered that six months later departments where 3-4 quiet quitters worked showed 28% higher disengagement rates, which implied that quiet quitting was transmitted via social pressure.

Mixed Individual Consequences

Mixed individual consequences are developed. The results of Hong [30] demonstrated that quiet quitting takes the form of low work engagement and job dissatisfaction in professors. Quiet quitting is often accompanied by anxiety and depression. Nonetheless, the authors of the article by Dillard *et al.* [31] also claimed some positive outcomes of humanistic viewpoint as it is argued that boundary-setting allows protecting well-being and can reduce burnout. 2.6 Generational and Contextual Changes. Gen Z is also significantly more intentional in their quiet quitting behavior than older generations. Xueyun *et al.* [6] discovered that Gen Z was highly likely to go quiet when the values were broken because quiet quitting is more focused on well-being and balancing between work and life. Compared to older employees who quietly quit their jobs in a state of burnout, Gen Z tends to interpret it as an intentional values-based decision. Campton *et al.* [32] examined quiet quitting in Asian companies and observed that culturally oriented expectations are combined with generational values to affect the manifestations. There are sectoral dissimilarities. There are high levels of quiet quitting among healthcare workers because of the nature of the work and stresses during the COVID-era. The high rates of quiet quitting, which are exhibited by hospitality workers after the volatility of the pandemic, are attributed to this [3]. The stressors exhibited by teachers that have sector-specific interests such as student behavior and administrative stress influence quiet quitting patterns [25]. Cultural differences become a major factor: in a study carried out by Rodriguez-Montoya *et al.* [33], Latin American employers took the notion of quiet quitting as a performance risk, and in another conducted by Georgiadou *et al.* [23], the Greek socio-cultural and economic environment affected the prevalence and reaction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A Flow Diagram describing the literature collection

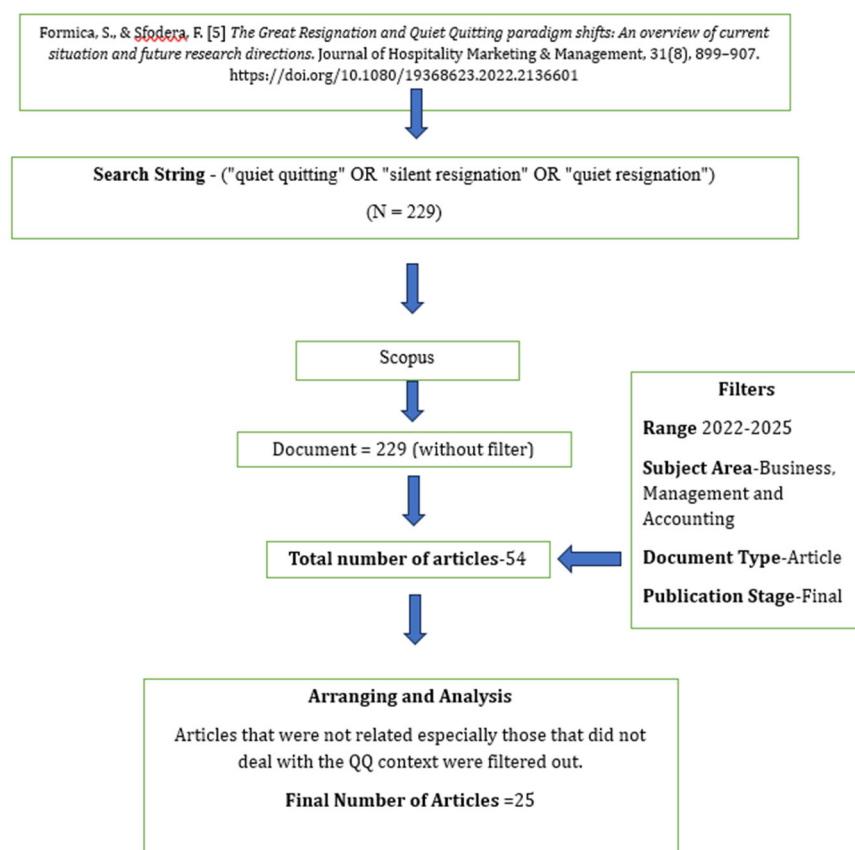


Figure 1. Literature Search, Screening, and Selection Process for Quiet Quitting Studies

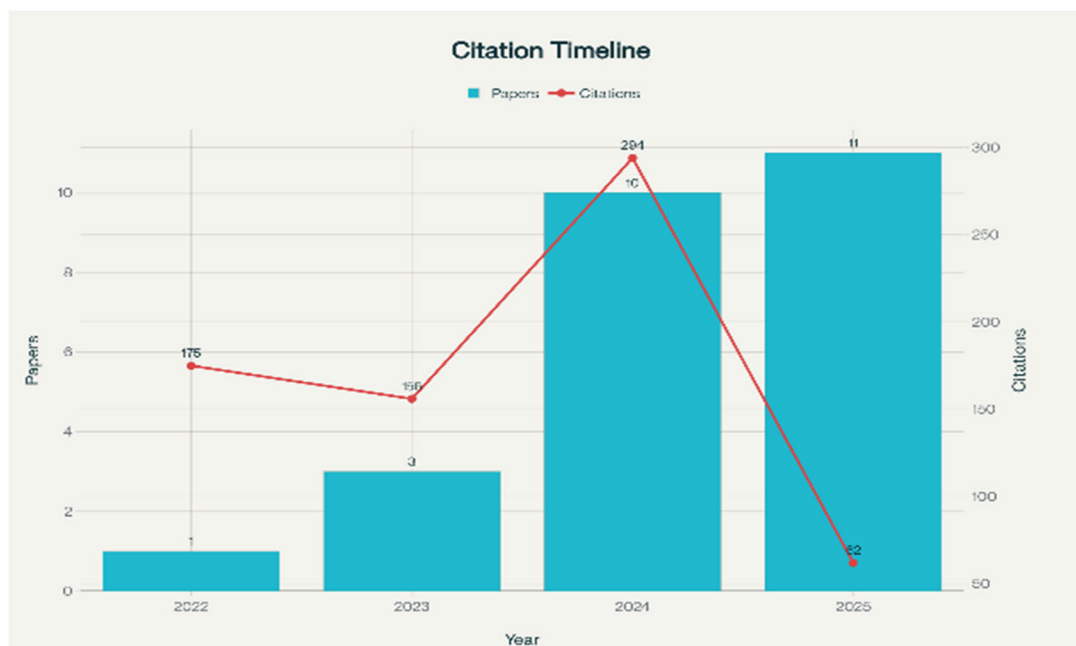


Figure 2: Citation & Publication Timeline Chart

A preliminary search on Google Scholar using such keywords as ("quiet quitting" OR "silent resignation") was carried out to find pillar and corner stone studies. A base paper from A star-rated ABDC journal was chosen as the reference for further extraction. From that paper, the abstract and keywords were taken and used to broaden the search for related studies. Those terms were then searched in the Scopus database to systematically build a larger pool of articles on the quiet quitting. The abstract and keywords to run a targeted search in the Scopus database. Then I applied filters document type and subject area narrow the results. That process let me pare a large pool of publications down to the 25 top-ranked A* and A articles most relevant to my research.

On this basis, a systematic selection of quality research on quiet quitting which was published between 2022 and 2025 was made. Thematic analysis classified papers Consequences and Outcomes, Leadership and Culture, Perspectives and Paradigm, Theoretical Frameworks, Workplace Relationships, Burnout and Stress.

Content Analysis

The following section offers a detailed content analysis of the 25 reviewed studies, showing how quiet quitting is defined, enacted, and understood in organizations, and how related theory has developed. Using systematic thematic coding and integrative analysis, it brings together the research to reveal common patterns, conceptual connections, and scholarly viewpoints. This analysis clarifies how sustained theorizing has shaped our knowledge of quiet quitting and its implications for organizational behaviour, employee engagement, and managerial practice.

The Figure 2 shows citation trends for the 25 studies on quiet quitting from 2022 to 2025. Publications rose steadily each year, signalling growing scholarly interest. Citations reached their highest point in 2024, showing a surge in academic engagement; the small decline in 2025 likely reflects that newer papers haven't had enough time to gather citations. Overall, the pattern underscores the increasing importance of quiet quitting in organizational research.

The Figure 3 shows how themes are distributed across the 25 studies on quiet quitting. The most common theme is Consequences, showing up in 76% of the papers and reflecting strong scholarly interest in the outcomes of quiet quitting. Leadership & Culture, Perspectives, and Theoretical Frameworks each appear in 68% of the studies, indicating steady attention to conceptual foundations and managerial factors. Burnout & Stress and Workplace Relationships are also prominent, present in 64% of the papers and underlining their role as drivers or correlates of quiet quitting. Overall, the distribution suggests researchers have explored quiet quitting from several angles, with particular focus on its consequences and theoretical basis.

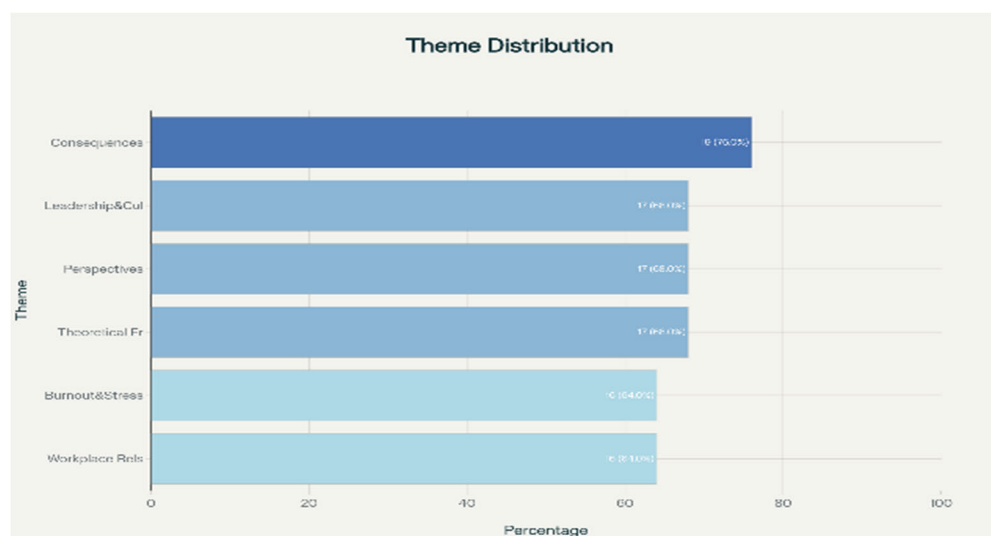


Figure 3: Theme Distribution

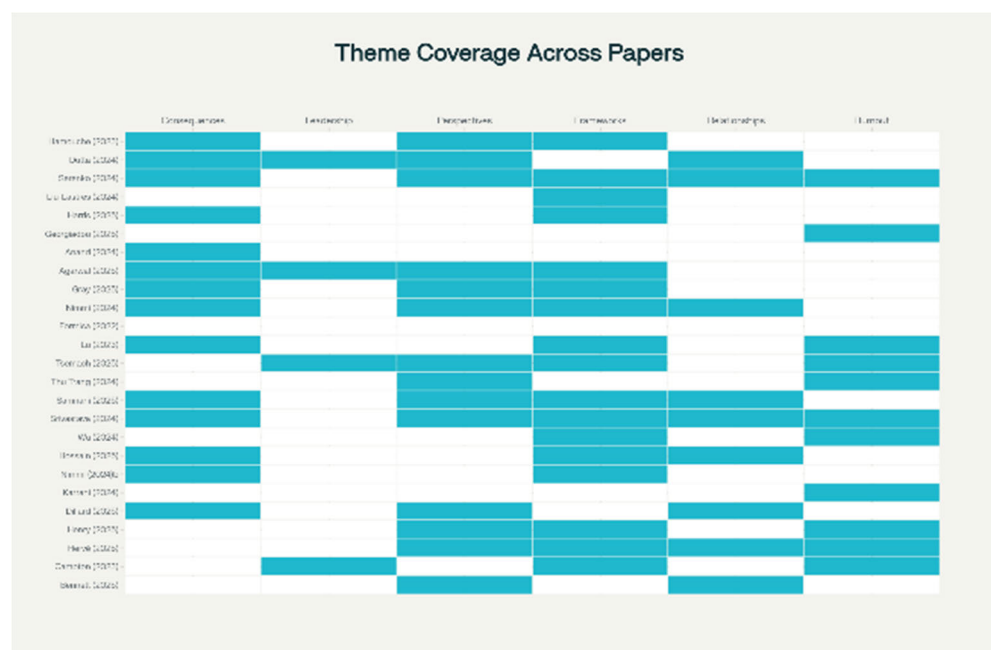


Figure 4: Theme Coverage Heatmap

The Figure 4 shows theme coverage across the 25 papers reviewed on quiet quitting. The heatmap makes clear that no single theme dominates every study; instead, researchers approach quiet quitting from a variety of angles. Consequences, leadership and culture, and theoretical frameworks appear often, while topics like burnout, stress, and workplace relationships are covered more selectively. This spread suggests quiet quitting is treated as a multidimensional phenomenon, with each paper adding to different parts of our understanding rather than following a single common approach.

The Figure 5 shows radar chart shows how often each Tier-1 theme appeared across the 25 reviewed papers. Each axis is a major theme, and the plotted area reflects the frequency from the coding matrix. Points farther from the centre mean more papers addressed that theme. “Consequences & Outcomes,” “Leadership & Culture,” and “Burnout & Stress” are the most prominent themes, indicating prior studies focus mainly on organisational and psychological implications. By contrast, “Perspectives & Paradigms,” “Theoretical Frameworks,” and “Workplace Relationships” appear somewhat less often, pointing to potential gaps and underexplored areas in the literature.

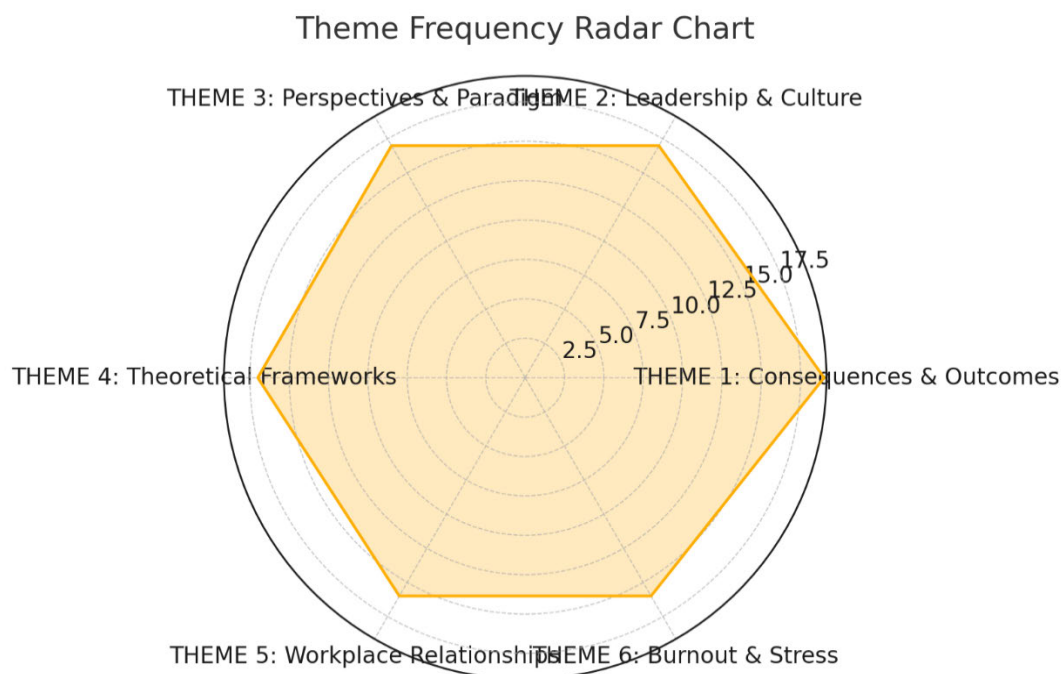


Figure 5: Theme Frequency Radar

DISCUSSION

We have determined six common themes that fully incorporate the phenomenon of quiet quitting through thematic analysis of 25 studies (2022-2025). Theme 1: Consequences and Outcomes record organizational outcome and productivity loss of 37-53% and innovation loss of 47-53% as well as knowledge concealing behaviours and loss of revenue. Theme 2: Leadership and Culture define organizational culture toxicity (is the most important driver in 11 papers) and toxic leadership as the key factors in QQ adoption. Theme 3: Perspectives and Paradigm uncover the difference in views of stakeholders- employees see QQ as a good boundary-setting to well-being, whereas organizations see it as a loss of performance and strategic threat. Theme 4: Theoretical Frameworks anchors QQ knowledge on Social Exchange Theory (reciprocity violation), Job Demands-Resources Model (resource imbalance), and psychological contract theory whereby the adoption of QQ is explained mechanistically. Theme 5: Workplace Relationships establishes the protective factors against QQ adoption to include supervisor support and psychological safety. Theme 6: Burnout and Stress: There is an association between emotional exhaustion and loss of autonomy and QQ as an adaptive strategy. These six themes are comprised of 211 sub-themes out of which 24 sub-themes were found to have direct causal impacts as the most crucial to the study of QQ dynamics. As we found, three pathways are at the heart of our analysis: (1) Toxic Culture→Burnout→QQ→Productivity Decline; (2) Toxic Leadership→Autonomy Loss→QQ→Performance Loss; and (3) Relationship Deterioration→Psychological Isolation→QQ→Knowledge Withdrawal. The subsequent discussion is a synthesis of evidence between the 25 included studies based on these thematic categories that clarifies paramount conclusions and highlights gaps in research and opportunities of interventions Figure 6.

Consequences and Outcomes

The theme of Consequences and Outcomes encapsulates straightforward organizational effects of quiet quitting and proves that it represents performance and sustainability risk and not disengagement limited to one person. The most reported impacts are productivity losses of 37-53, a decrease in innovation of 47-53, loss of revenue, and the general withholding of knowledge [2]. These impacts are ripple effects; decreased discretionary effort leads to operational delays and operational strategic losses, and some of them, especially knowledge loss, are irreversible [2,4].

- **Productivity Decrease:** Silent quitting creates high losses in productivity. Empirical studies establish that productivity reduces by 37-53 percent when workers reduce discretionary effort. This is reflected in the decrease in the speed of task completion, decrease in the quality of work, and increase in project timelines. Since the trend is

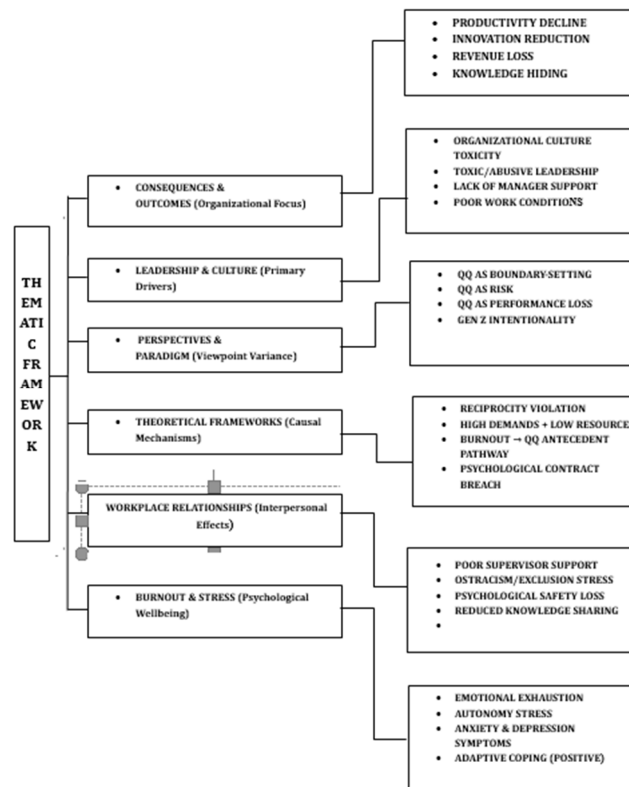


Figure 6: Thematic Framework of QQ

constantly documented in various organizational environments, it is a terrible and quantifiable organizational danger aspect. The productivity loss cannot be explained by the decreasing work hours only but the loss of the quality of efforts and interest in the contractual time

- **Innovation Reduction:** When workers limit discretionary contribution, the rate of innovation reduces significantly (47-53). Behaviours like creative thinking, idea generation, and proactive problem-solving are discretionary behaviours by nature; once employees become minimalistic in interactions with organisations become unable to adapt and flex to changes in the market [4]. This loss of innovation is one of the most strategically fatal quiet quitting effects, as it compromises the organizational capacity to react to the market shifts and retain a competitive stance [5]
- **Loss of Revenue:** The low productivity and innovation will directly translate into a loss of revenue in the form of low service quality, slow growth, and inefficiency [28]. There is a build-up of financial pressure on organizations as the companies incur more costs and the customers are not satisfied [29]. The cross-sectoral revenues effect is cumulative, and has a huge toll on bottom-line performance even when there is industry-specific variance [4]
- **Knowledge Hiding and Withholding:** Knowledge withholding refusal of information sharing deliberately-intended- is a serious quiet quitting effect [2]. In comparison to temporary productivity loss, knowledge loss is usually unrecoverable; valuable tacit knowledge will stay in personal silo or be lost altogether when employees leave [2]. The effect of this withholding is the systematic organizational learning shortage and undermined long-term capability, strategic adaptability, and innovation potential. Knowledge-hiding pathway is especially consequential as it compromises organizational resilience and adaptability in the form that productivity recovery in the short term will fail to counter.

Leadership and Culture

The major antecedents of quiet quitting are leadership and organizational culture. Burnout and lack of trust, psychological safety is most likely to be affected by toxic cultural environments and ineffective leadership, which is why culture and leadership are the most strategic intervention points in an organization [22,8].

- **Toxic Culture in Organizations:** The strongest and most consistent predictor of quiet quitting noted in 44% of the studies included is the existence of toxic organizational culture [22]. Unrespectful workplaces with elements of injustice and with poor psychological safety motivate employees to engage in defensive withdrawal [34]. This trend can be observed both in industries and settings, which makes the enhancement of the culture the most efficient intervention to reduce the scale of quiet quitting [5]
- **Toxic Leadership:** Abusive leadership is a direct cause of quiet quitting due to interpersonal damage, burnout, and loss of autonomy [24]. The reaction to long-term disrespect and unfair treatment is self-protection through the withdrawal of discretionary effort [25]. Due to the trainability of leadership behaviours, it is thus essential and possible to combat toxic supervision by developing managers [24]
- **Lack of Manager Support:** Poor manager support in the form of inadequate feedback, lack of recognition, poor guidance, and emotional support leads to stress, burnout and quiet quitting [24,3]. Manager support can be easily increased with specific training, which is why it is a high-impact intervention lever [25]

Unhealthy Work Environment and Lack of resources. Due to the lack of resources and unfavourable working conditions, there is a demand-resource imbalance, which causes employees to decrease their efforts as rational coping [9,4]. In resource-constrained situations, disengagement is not the failure of motivation but the adaptive response, and correcting the system at an organizational level is necessary instead of an individual level [11].

Perspectives and Paradigm

Perspectives and Paradigm exposes serious misfitting between employee and organizational understanding of quiet quitting. Employees put quiet quitting in perspective as healthy boundary-setting where the organization views it as performance threat. This interpretive gap is the reason why interventions are not effective: organizations respond to symptoms instead of the actual causes [31,29].

- **Boundary-Setting as Quiet Quitting (Employee Perspective):** Quiet quitting is perceived by employees as a way of maintaining health and boundaries in self-care in case work becomes unsustainable (Dillard et al., 2025). They conceptualize it as a coherent, adaptive response to toxic culture, burnout, or loss of autonomy not disengagement but rational self-defense [31,3]
- **Risk/Threat Quiet Quitting (Organizational Perspective):** A quiet quitting is perceived as a direct menace to the productivity, innovation, and competitiveness of organizations [29]. This risky mindset leads to reactive monitoring and control responses that overlook inherent cultural and leadership factors, which has the opposite effect of worsening circumstances that trigger quiet quitting
- **Performance Loss (Manager Perspective):** Managers position quiet quitting as apparent performance degradation a decline in effort, deadlines, and commitment [29]. Output-related views promote both accountability and penalty-related reactions as opposed to root cause analysis, which stimulates disengagement unintentionally [28-29]
- **Generation Z Intentionality (Generational Perspective):** Conceptualisations Generation Z views quiet quitting as an informed value-based choice that puts well-being, work-life balance, and the unwillingness to be forced to work a lot in its first place [6,32]. This is an indication of altering employee expectations that demand organizational culture adjustment so as to attract and retain talents [6]

Theoretical Frame Works (Explanatory Mechanisms)

Theoretical Frameworks indicate that Social Exchange Theory, Job Demands-Resources model and Conservation of Resources theory offer strong proposals about quiet quitting. These models place quiet quitting as rational employee reaction to violation of reciprocity, crusading resources imbalance and contract breach, rather than motivation failure [9,12,17].

- **Reciprocity Violation - withdrawal (Social exchange theory):** According to the Social Exchange Theory, the concept of quiet quitting can be described as a rational reaction to unfair exchange: employees tend to decrease their efforts when they think that their input is overvalued [3,6]. This puts quiet quitting to the category of equity and fairness issues instead of the lack of motivation, which restoring reciprocity becomes the main prevention tool [3]
- **High Demands + Low Resources (JD-R Model):** As the Job Demands-Resources model shows, quiet quitting occurs when job demands are too high in comparison with the available resources and drain the energy of employees, making them less engaged [9,11]. Reduce discretionary effort is a coping strategy that employees use to conserve well-being. The intervention needs to focus on demand-resource mismatch using support improvements, tools, or workload modifications [10]

- **Burnout - Stress-Coping Theory (Pathway):** Quiet Quitting. According to the stress-coping theory, quiet quitting refers to burnout-adaptive response, in which workers reduce their efforts to avoid further psychological harm [21,19]. Quiet quitting is secondary coping, which may only be developed after a chronic experience of stress, and therefore, early burnout prevention should be pinpointed as the best intervention instead of quiet quitting punishment [20,6]
- **Psychological Contract Violation (PCT):** According to the Psychological Contract Theory, quiet quitting is a withdrawal effect of organisations that neglect to honour unspoken promises concerning fairness, support, or development (Gray *et al.*, 2025; Rousseau, 1989). The violation of contract leads to the loss of trust and emotional detachment, which causes the minimization of efforts. Open communication and the management of expectations also need to be carried out in order to prevent quiet quitting caused by breaches [15,16]

Workplaces Relationship (Protective Factors)

The relationship that organizational conditions mediate to quiet quitting adoption is through workplace relationships. Quality relationship, supervisor relationships, inclusion, trust, and psychological safety prevent stressor effects on the employees whereas ineffective relationship quality increases burnout and quickens the phenomenon of quiet quitting [24,28]. The quality of relationships is an intervention that is practical and can be changed without spending time on the wide-scale cultural reform.

- **Lack of Supervisor Support:** Poor supervisor support absent guidance, recognition, feedback, or emotional support also contributes a significant role to stress and the possibility of quiet quitting [24,3]. Support withdrawal is directly followed by withdrawal, and supervisors are the first and main organizational contact. This is a very important intervention lever since supervisor training in supportive behaviours is high-impact and can be easily taught [25]
- **Discrimination and Marginalization at the Workplace:** Ostracism in workplaces (ignored, isolated, excluded) leads to severe psychological anguish, which leads to quiet quitting as a means of self-defense [2]. The exclusion at the peer level is hard to pay attention to and eliminate, and to decrease the threat of quiet quitting, norms of inclusion and belonging have to be reinforced at the organizational level [2]
- **Killed Psychological Safety:** Lack of psychological safety - unable to speak up, confess mistakes, or make interpersonal risk-taking encourages minimum-effort behaviour as self-protection [24,28]. Fear-based leadership and blame cultures lead to the loss of psychological safety. Non-punitive supportive leadership positively influences the creation of psychological safety and the decrease of quiet quitting [25]
- **Reduced Knowledge Sharing:** The lack of psychological safety and unchecked relationships encourage the conscious knowledge withholding because employees maintain experience in conditions of feeling undermined or sidelined [2]. This leaves long-term organizational learning gaps that have far-reaching strategic consequences even when individuals leave the organization

Burnout and Stress (Psychological Mechanisms)

The psychologically the most important antecedents of quiet quitting are burnout and stress. Direct antecedents are emotional burnout and lack of control [19,21]. Quiet quitting is a mental health defence mechanism that occurs when the level of stress becomes intolerable. The point of critical intervention is primary burnout prevention, as opposed to quiet quitting tracking [6].

- **Emotional Exhaustion:** Emotional exhaustion, which is the state of absolute exhaustion and loss of energy, is the most powerful psychological cause of quiet quitting [20-21]. Reduction in engagement is a survival mechanism in case employees are exhausted. Quiet quitting is an indicator of high levels of burnout that need to be identified and prevented at an early stage [6]
- **Autonomy Loss:** The most commonly mentioned stressor (40% of the studies) is the loss of autonomy via micromanagement, strict procedures, and limited decisions, leading to burnout and quiet quitting [9,4]. Workers lessen their efforts to reassert themselves. The autonomy is recovered and the quiet quitting counteracted successfully with empowerment and flexibility in decision-making [24-25]
- **Symptoms Anxiety and Depression:** The chronic stress in the workplace triggers the development of anxiety and depression and results in quiet quitting when the impacted employees back out [19,4]. These signs prove that quiet quitting is actually a mental health issue as well as a performance issue, which needs to be prevented by stress and burnout before psychological harm is added to the problem [6]

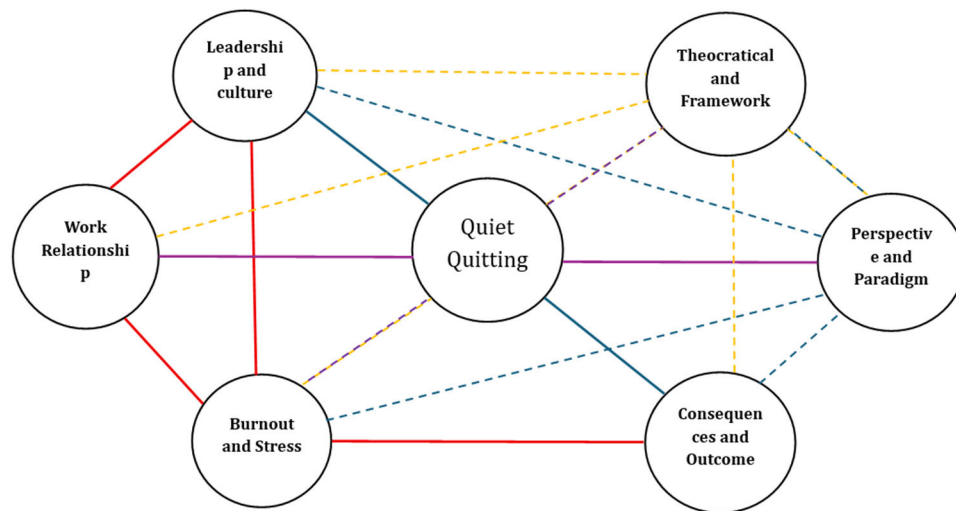


Figure 7: Thematic Integration network of QQ

- **Boundary-Setting and Adaptive Coping:** In some settings, quiet quitting serves as a coping mechanism that facilitates healthy boundary-setting and preservation of the well-being (Dillard et al., 2025). Mental health is maintained sustainably by employees through decreased effort levels, which can be seen as a form of resilience instead of disengagement based on the situation [31,5]

The Figure 7 shows the six themes are in integrated system where Leadership & Culture (Theme 2) is the initial causal mechanism that influences Workplace Relationships (Theme 5) and establishes an environment of high demands on the job and low resources that cause Burnout and Stress (Theme 6) which then causes quiet quitting as an outcome response (Theme 1) in the form of reduced productivity, loss of innovativeness, fall in revenue and hiding of knowledge. These connections are based on Theoretical Frameworks (Theme 4)- notoriously Social Exchange Theory, the Job Demands-Resources model, and Psychological Contract Theory- that explain how reciprocity violations, demand-resource imbalances, and contract violations bring about withdrawal, as well as Perspectives and Paradigm (Theme 3)- which is an interpretation filter whereby employees perceive quiet quitting as rational boundary-setting and well-being safeguarding, and organizations and managers perceive it as a strategic threat and loss of performance. The thematic integration diagram of how this system can be visualized is with red arrows representing the main causal routes between Relationships, Burnout, and Leadership and Culture to the former, blue arrows illustrating how Workplace Relationships and Burnout and Stress mediate the strength of these relationships, yellow arrows representing theoretical explanations of the connection between the core themes, and purple arrows expressing interpretive influences when the stakeholders hold different viewpoints on the quiet quitting phenomenon.

Practical Implications

Organizational Implications: Instead of assuming a personal attitude issue, organizations need to transform quiet quitting into a systemic indicator of poor culture, insufficient resources and unrealistic expectations [8]. To treat quiet quitting, the change of culture is needed: the clarification of psychological contracts, the enhancement of fairness and transparency, and the elimination of fear-based atmosphere negatively affecting the trust and psychological safety [5,15]. The redesign of jobs, workload balance, and performance system redesign are the organizational measures that organizations need to adjust job demands and resources to align expectations with enough autonomy, support, and resources [9,6].

HR and People Professor Implications

Burnout prevention, loss of autonomy, and monitoring relational climate must be introduced into the engagement surveys and people systems by the HR professionals [24,28]. HR, in turn, should focus on enhancing the capabilities of managers that focus on supportive supervision, constructive feedback, recognition, and psychological safety behaviours because bad supervisor support and fear-based relationships are the direct predictors of quiet quitting [25,3].

Leader/ Line Manager Implications

Leaders are considered the key organizational point of contact where circumstances are converted into personal experiences [25]. To maintain autonomy and trust, managers have to minimize micromanagement and widen the decision latitude, as well as communicate expectations clearly [9,25]. However, by legitimizing healthy boundary-setting and an honest discussion about workload, collaborative problem-solving can be achieved instead of turning a deaf ear [31,29].

Internal Communication and Employee Voice Implications

Organizations need to change one-way messages to two-way and dialogic communication channels that provide employees with an opportunity to articulate strain and lack of fit in the workplace, rather than silent quitting [28]. Psychological safety creation by not responding with punitive measures when employees make mistakes, active listening, and visible follow up will transform quiet quitting as a silent withdrawal to positive feedback in the organization [24,2].

Policy-Maker and Sector Body Implications

Burnout and mental health symptoms were the top factors in high-strain occupations (hospitality, healthcare, education), which means that there is a policy role in establishing the minimum workload, rest, mental health, and psychological safety norms [3,25]. The concept of quiet quitting as an indicator of worsening job quality can be identified to shape policies on decent work, work-life boundary, and the worker voice [5-6] individuals to improving the workplace conditions they face

Limitations

Although this method of literature review is thorough in its question and subject matter development, there are a number of significant weaknesses to the systematic literature review that are worth considering.

Temporal and Publication Scope

The review itself includes 25 studies, published in 2022-2025, which is a very limited time period that allows considering quiet quitting an actively developed field of research [5]. English-language publications only limit to this, which leads to publication bias: papers with positive or novel results will be more frequently published and available. This time and language limitation could be an underrepresentation of previous conceptual development regarding withdrawal and disengagement that comes before quiet quitting language, and an approach to non-English-speaking areas and developing economies.

Inconsistent Operationalization

Quiet quitting has been operationalized inconsistently within the included studies- some studies have measured this reduced discretionary effort using self-report scales, others have used behavioural observation and others attitudinal disengagement [1,34]. This heterogeneity restricts the ability to compare effect sizes, accuracy of prevalence estimates and meta-analytical synthesis [35].

Integration of a qualitative way that does not use formal causal models. It is thematic and qualitative in nature but based on included papers (Xueyun et al., 2023). Causal pathway-culture toxicity relationships - burnout - quiet quitting are proposed based on conceptual reasoning and numerous articles but have not received formal structural equation modelling or unified dataset causal inference testing, constraining the assertion of directionality and mechanistic accuracy.

Geographic induction and Cultural Concentration. The literature covered in the review is biased to Western/Global North settings (USA, Europe, Israel) with a scanty number of references to Asian, Latin American, and African settings [32-36]. Such a geographic concentration is a cause of doubt in model universality and applicability to collectivist, hierarchical, or economically constrained situations in which quiet quitting can occur or be perceived in different ways [6,36].

Limitations of the Methodological Design

The vast majority of studies used are cross-sectional, which does not allow drawing cause-effect conclusions, determines time order, and introduces common-method error [6,4]. Longitudinal and multi-source data that includes supervisor observation, coworker reported information, HR measures would reinforce assertions of directionality and temporal dynamics [19].

Intervention Research Scarcity- Of the 25 papers that were included, 5 address intervention solutions directly, and data on the effectiveness of the proposed interventions of High-Performance Work Systems, authentic leadership,

dialogic communication, manager training remain emergent [25,4]. Stricter experimental and quasi-experimental designs that have effective outcome measurement are required to determine the efficacy of interventions and inform organizational practice.

Nonetheless, it can be said that convergence among four key theoretical approaches (Social Exchange Theory, Job Demand-Resource model, Psychological Contract Theory, Conservation of Resources theory) to the same causal processes (reciprocity violations, resource depletion, contract breach), consistency of results across a wide range of sectors and geographies, and consistency of findings with known principles of organizational behaviour provide a great degree of confidence that the combination of six themes in the model reflects fundamental quiet quitting dynamics [9,12] 19 It is essentially based on organizational circumstances, psychological stress, and relational climate and not on the individual pathology and thus the approach of systemic intervention is more justified in the correction than the individual level approach.

Future Research Direction

- **Longitudinal and Causal Design:** Conduct multi-level longitudinal studies lasting 6 to 24 months. Test the pathway from organizational conditions through burnout to QQ and its consequences
- **Intervention Effectiveness:** Carry out randomized controlled trials to test HPWS, authentic leadership, manager training, and dialogic communication across various sectors. Measure outcomes effectively
- **Measurement Consolidation:** Develop validated and culturally-adapted QQ scales, along with multi-source data from employees, supervisors, and HR metrics. This will enable meta-analysis and reduce common-method bias
- **Cross-Cultural and Sectoral Comparisons:** Undertake systematic research across different cultures, including individualist and collectivist, various sectors like tech, healthcare, and hospitality, as well as different work arrangements such as remote, gig, and hybrid
- **Multi-Stakeholder Perspectives:** Conduct qualitative and network studies to explore differing views of QQ from employees, supervisors, and HR. This will help shape communication strategies
- **Burnout Prevention and Early Detection:** Create real-time detection systems to identify early signs of burnout before QQ adoption. Clarifying the best timing for interventions is crucial
- **Knowledge Hiding Impact:** Measure knowledge-hiding behaviors directly and assess their effects on innovation, learning, and organizational performance
- **Positive Adaptive Coping:** Use case studies to investigate how organizations view QQ as feedback rather than punishment, facilitating constructive systemic change
- **Predictive Analytics:** Apply machine-learning techniques to predict QQ risk based on organizational data. This approach allows for proactive interventions while maintaining ethical safeguards

CONCLUSION

The act of quietly resigning is quite crucial for firms. The authors of this systematic literature review argue that QQ is not an issue of employee motivation or attitude needing behaviour change. Instead, speaking to costs and consequences, QQ is a rational systematic response to organizational failures in culture, leadership, relationships, autonomy and psychological safety – failures that have been written about in just about every theory, sector and geography. The six-theme integrated model traces organizational effects through relationships and burnout to QQ and organizational consequences. Grounded in established theory, the model has been shown valid in a review of 25 papers published recently. Organizations should go beyond fixing symptoms to redesign systems: clarifying and honouring psychological contracts, reducing toxicity and fear, restoring autonomy and respect, building psychological safety, strengthening manager relationships, and rebalancing demands and resources. When organizations attend to these systemic conditions, quiet quitting will become unnecessary not because employees are forced to engage as a result of punishment or surveillance, but rather because work itself is engaging and sustainable. For as long as the systems of organizations fail to align with human needs for fairness, control, connection, and well-being, quiet quitting will continue to be an eloquent, silent witness.

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