

Quiet Quitting: A Millennial Perspective on Workplace Dissatisfaction and Retention Challenges

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Abstract: Quiet quitting is a phenomenon where employees disengage from their work and intentionally underperform as a way of expressing their dissatisfaction with their job or employer. In Malaysia, around 46% of millennial employees are considering quitting their jobs quietly, which can have a significant impact on both the individual and the organisation, especially if key performers or those with critical knowledge and skills depart. However, little is known about the underlying psychological and organisational factors that contribute to this behaviour. Thus, the purpose of this study is to look at the causes, effects, and preventative measures of quiet quitting among Malaysian workers as well as potential solutions for this tendency. To get a better understanding of the psychological and organizational reasons leading to such phenomenon among Malaysian employees, an integrated study of self-determination theory and organisational support theory is proposed. Methods for collecting qualitative data were used in this study. Data was gathered by means of employee interviews. Convenience sampling was used to choose the respondents since participants were chosen based on their availability and desire to participate. The results demonstrate the significant role that psychological (e.g., job dissatisfaction, lack of opportunities for career development) and organizational (e.g., lack of communication, work-life balance, positive culture, lack of leadership) factors play towards quiet quitting among employees. In theory, this research provides a more thorough comprehension of the topic under investigation by putting out a more resilient and all-encompassing structure. This discovery has the potential to boost organizational performance and productivity by fostering more encouraging and fulfilling work conditions for workers.

Keywords: Psychological Factors; Organisational Factors; Personality; Motivation; Resilience

1. Introduction

According to Aziz et al. (2018), quiet quitting is leaving a job without giving your employer official notice. Such a strategy may be chosen by certain employees who would rather resign from their position without providing a reason (Formicaa, 2022; Minkus, 2022). Quiet quitting, sometimes referred to as quiet resignation, is the practice of workers leaving their present position and beginning a job search without telling their employer or coworkers (Azizan & Bakar, 2021). In recent times, businesses in Malaysia have grown more concerned about quiet quitting. According to a research by Cheng (2022), "quiet quitting" is a frequent occurrence among Malaysian workers. Intentionally underperforming and silently disengaging from work as a means of expressing unhappiness with one's job or employer is what this refers to. According to JobStreet (2021), 46% of Malaysian workers are thinking of secretly leaving their jobs. This indicates that many employees are likely engaging in quiet quitting. This can have a significant impact on businesses, especially if the departing employees are key performers or possess critical knowledge and skills. Depending on the role the employee played within the organisation, their departure could mean the loss of valuable knowledge and expertise. This could affect the organisation's ability to carry out its mission, deliver products or services, or perform at the same level it did before the employee left. Overall, the impact of quiet quitting will depend on the specific circumstances surrounding the employee's departure and the culture of the organisation they are leaving.

According to the Yun-Han (2022) research, most of the Malaysian millennial employees' experience stress. Due to the intensity and pressure of their task, sixty-five percent of people report feeling burned out. Malaysia runs a heightened risk of losing talent owing to a falling ringgit versus the US dollar as global prospects become more alluring. Also, people's priorities have changed because of the epidemic, ongoing unhappiness, and growing mistrust of business, which has led to the quiet quitting. Even while greater pay, a better work-life balance, and more chances for learning and growth are at the top of the list, fulfilling them needs more than a checklist.

However, this phenomenon has received limited attention in research literature, yet it can have significant implications for both employees and employers. Additionally, not much is understood about the organizational and psychological basis that support quiet quitting. In order to better understand this phenomenon and its effects on both employees and employers, this study will look at the causes and effects of quiet quitting among employees.

We integrated two theories namely the self-determination theory [SDT] (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and the organizational support theory [OST] (Eisenberger et al., 1986) as the foundation for this study. This integration may provide a better understanding of the issue under investigation. This also bridges the current theoretical gaps that exist and thus creates a more thorough theoretical base.

The findings from this study can help to understand the factors leading to quiet quitting, and therefore, can help organizations develop new policies and approaches to stop such behavior. This will further help to create new trainings and policies to retain the valuable employees and help them in dealing with stress, burnout, and job discontent. This will ultimately boost organizational performance and employee productivity.

2. Literature Reviews

In today's fast-paced, competitive workplace, organisations are becoming increasingly concerned about employee retention (Hom & Griffeth, 2020). Despite the fact that most organisations focus on identifying and treating the causes that lead to overt leaving, quiet quitting is growing more common (Formicaa, 2022). Quiet resignation refers to the act of an employee leaving their job without causing any noise (Aziz et al., 2018; Constantz, 2022). This behaviour may cause employee morale to drop, attrition to increase, and productivity to decrease.

In today's workplace, quiet quitting is becoming more common. As such, it is critical for organizations to recognize and address the organizational and psychological aspects that lead to this phenomenon (Lee, Park & Shin, 2023). To keep top talent and a motivated and productive staff, organizations must take the initiative to solve these issues. Additionally, companies may address these problems by putting in place procedures and policies that place a high value on the growth, well-being, and recognition of their workforce (Ayachit & Chitta, 2022).

Quiet Quitting among Employees and its impact in Malaysia

Quitting quietly may have a big effect on businesses. First, disgruntled workers could not be putting in their best effort at work, which could result in a loss of production. Second, it may lead to a loss of expertise and knowledge as important players may depart without passing on their abilities to others. Thirdly, it could lead to a negative work environment as the remaining employees get discouraged and doubtful about the company's future. According to Azizan and Bakar(2021) , there is inadequate amount of recognition for their work, very limited opportunities for professional advancement, and a lack of poor conviction in management. Employees need to address this phenomenon with supreme concern and at the same time this issue needs to take utmost interest in order to prevent employee disengagement and turnover. To address and resolve this burning problem, businesses in Malaysia should concentrate on enhancing employee engagement and retention. This might implicate emerging opportunities for professional development, providing competitive compensation and benefits, and fostering an optimistic workplace environment to achieve maximum profits for organization.

2.1 Psychological Factors

One of the extreme psychological variables that drives quiet quitting is job discontent (Shoss,2017). If employees think that they are getting ignored, underappreciated, or unsupported in their personal workplace then they become more inclined to disengage and eventually make themselves engage to quit the job silently. Research illustrates that job dissatisfaction is a main reason as a contributor to voluntary employee turnover, adversely causing job satisfaction, absenteeism, and efficiency with productivity among staff members (Hom & Griffeth, 2020). There's also a concern of the psychological factor of missing opportunities for career advancement. Employees who are majorly concerned and feel that there is no such space for advancement in their present position are more likely to get embittered and explore alternative options. Employees who are involved in quiet quitting frequently work for organizations that lack distinct career trajectories or employee improvement programs.

2.2 Organisational Factors

The organizational factors that majorly play a vital character for quite quitting is a lack of communication and feedback within the company (Dhingra et al, 2021). Employees, especially those who don't get continuous feedback or communication from the higher authority like manager or fellow staff members are more disposed to become disengaged and eventually the consequence is quitting their jobs without any pre-warning. This serious communication gap can drive employees to feel completely isolated and detached from the organization, which, over time, may scale down their motivation and morale confidence. Another key challenge confronting organizations is a lack of work life balance (Schein, 2010). Employees who are majorly engaged with overworked, stressed out, or burned out are more prone to disengage and silently quit their jobs. Organizations that consequently overlook work life balance get the potential threat of increased absenteeism, decreased efficiency, and declined employee satisfaction.

2.3 Underpinning Theory

In order to get more conscious knowledge of psychological and organizational factors that contribute to employees quitting quietly, a combination of two important theories were integrated are such; the self – determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and the organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al, 1986). SDT has been majorly occupied to explore a series of aspects of workplace behaviors, such as; employee motivation and engagement. As an example, Dhingra et al. 's2021 study identifies a relationship between increased employee motivation and engagement and the satisfaction of the key psychological requirements for appositeness, competence and autonomy. To get the highest amount of utilization, this theory can examine how the ability of workers to discreetly leave their jobs to affect the fulfilment of psychological need and demand.

And, commitment and turnover are two of the most discussed components in organisational research including OST. According to Formicaa (2022), in any organization, employee commitment and perceived organisational support are highly associated. Hence, this concept can be the used for determining employee commitment to the organization and their likelihood to quietly quitting

So, by approaching these concepts from a border perspective, this study significantly contributes to our better understanding of organizational and psychological factors that take a major initiative for quiet or silent resignations among employees and take crucial initiative to monitor the progress of interventions and preventative measures in on time.

3. Methodology

The important Techniques for collecting qualitative data were applied in this study. The qualitative information was gathered through semi-structured interviews with employees who had discreetly quit. A wide range of resources, such as social media, email lists from previous employment, and personal networks, were used to locate and choose the participants. After the participants were identified, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents. For the interview, a total of 10 millennial employees were selected using a purposeful sampling method. This is because, this method allowed the researchers to focus on individuals who can provide rich and diverse insights into the research question (in this case the millennial employees who has involved in quiet quitting). The network of the industrial collaborator of this research were utilised in identifying the participants. The data analysis involved thematic analysis of the qualitative data to identify patterns, themes, and commonalities in the data to gain insights into the research questions.

4. Discussion

The demographic profile shows that majority of the respondents were male. In terms of working experiences, majority of the respondents have 1-5 years of experiences. For the duration in the current job, eight out of the ten respondents have less than five years. Table 1 below shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Gender	Male	Female	
	7	3	
Years of Experience	1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	
	6	4	
Duration at Current Job	1 - 3 Years	4 - 8 Years	8 Years +
	8	1	1

Source: Developed in this study

During the interview, we asked the respondents on the signs of quiet quitting. The first question was, *“from your personal experience, can you describe some signs of quiet quitting?”* Some of the responses are given below.

“One clear sign of quietly quitting that I’ve noticed is when an employee starts showing up late or missing deadlines consistently. It’s like they’re no longer invested in maintaining their previous standards”.

“I’ve observed that employees who are quietly quitting often stop participating in meetings or discussions. They may become noticeably disengaged and less willing to contribute ideas or feedback”.

“I’ve seen that employees who are quietly quitting often start exhibiting a negative attitude or complaining frequently. This dissatisfaction is usually coupled with a decreased level of effort in their work”.

“One sign I’ve noticed is a lack of participation in team-building activities or social events. Employees who are quietly quitting often avoid these events, which can lead to a sense of isolation”.

Based on the responses, we identified some of the negative signs that leads to quiet quitting. Majority of the responses highlighted the signs of disengagement from current role and how these lead to their reduced commitment. This further confirms that companies should understand the reasons behind quiet quitting and thus requires better management strategies to mitigate this behaviour. Employers should ensure an open communication environment, providing works those are meaningful, timely recognition and rewarding who deserves, and ensure that employees feel valued and supported. For any organisations, it is very important mitigate the root causes of disengagement and rebuild a more engaged and motivated workforce.

Further we asked the respondents on their job dissatisfactions, *“What factors contribute most to your job dissatisfaction?”* Some responses are highlighted below.

“My dissatisfaction with my employment is mostly due to the absence of a well-defined career path. It seems like there isn't much room for growth or a true future here in the absence of obvious prospects for progress”.

“One of the main problems, in my opinion, is that my work is not given enough credit or attention. It demotivates me and makes me wonder if my efforts are appreciated when my contributions are ignored”.

“Growth plan, upskill, Balanced working environment, better remuneration mostly factors here”.

“Work-life balance, good salary, cooperative team, and the opportunity to work alongside great leaders”.

“Bad boss, salary, bored with the job description, no definite career path”.

Moreover, the reasons behind employees' job dissatisfaction were investigated into. A poor work environment, unclear communication, a lack of opportunities for professional growth, and a lack of recognition are the main causes of the problems listed. Employee job dissatisfaction is a major concern for organisations and is frequently the result of several significant factors. One of the primary findings is that there are limited opportunities for career advancement, which greatly adds to employee demotivation because they believe there is no clear path forward. In addition, their morale may suffer and they may feel that their contributions are not respected. Two major reasons of communication problems that result in misconceptions and a disconnected attitude are a lack of feedback and unclear expectations. An unfavourable work environment characterized by high levels of stress, poor management practices, or an inhospitable culture can also worsen job satisfaction. Together, these components create a difficult workplace that diminishes engagement and decreases commitment.

Further we asked, *“How does quiet quitting affect an employee’s performance and productivity?”* Some responses are highlighted below.

"Quitting quietly has a detrimental effect on output as psychologically disengaged workers are less inclined to share ideas or work well with others, which causes team growth to stagnate".

"Quitting discreetly typically results in lower-quality work being produced by the employee. Because of their disengagement, they aren't making the required efforts or paying enough attention to detail, which reduces the efficacy of their product".

"Because quiet quitting leaves gaps in workflow, it reduces productivity. Disengaged workers may abandon projects incomplete or neglect to convey crucial information, which results in delays and inefficiencies".

"Employees in the mood of quiet quitting does only what is necessary. This can lead to a drop in performance, that eventually affects the team's overall productivity and success".

"It decreases motivation and negatively impacts job performance. They are less likely to do extra jobs and thus impact the productivity levels".

These shows how quiet quitting can impact individual as well as team's job output and performance. There are often noticeable declines in individual and team performance because of silent resignation. Disengaged workers typically put in less effort than is required, which reduces the amount and quality of the output. This reduced output, when dispersed over a team, can compromise individual efficacy and impact the group's overall performance. If the people concerned do nothing, it could further disrupt workflow and efficiency by impeding creative thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative efforts. Because of this, the effectiveness of each individual member as well as the collective impact of quiet quitting affect the team's cohesion and overall performance.

"How does quiet quitting affect team dynamics and overall morale in your workplace?" was another question we posed. Below are some noteworthy replies.

"When people leave quietly, it create a huge negative impact on everything. Most importantly, it creates confusion and mistrust among team members. It impacts to productivity and build lack of confidence".

"Team will not get motivate on there own role and performance will be degraded".

"If the number is high, it could decrease team morale".

"Definitely it affect team bonding and team KPI".

"Increased workload, decreased collaboration, lowered morale, reduced quality & innovation, erosion of trust, and leadership challenges".

These answers shed insight on the ways in which quiet resignation can negatively impact team relationships and morale, highlighting problems with equity, cooperation, and general team spirit. Silent resignation undermines fairness, cooperation, and team spirit, all of which have a detrimental impact on the dynamics and morale of the business. Resentment and a sense of unfairness can arise when team members leave without communicating their displeasure, causing an imbalance where the surviving members must pick up the slack. Employees that quietly leave their jobs may cease participating in group projects and communications, which can impede their efforts. This disengagement can also negatively impact teamwork. Furthermore, when some team members are obviously less devoted, the group's cohesion and excitement diminish, which has a detrimental effect on morale and productivity. Furthermore, trust and friendship are compromised.

Lastly, we posed the question, "What do you think organizations can do to prevent employees from quietly quitting?" Below are some noteworthy replies.

"Better salary and work life balance".

"More one to one conversation, talk with empathy, and mentoring".

"Organizations can prevent quiet quitting by fostering a supportive work culture that prioritizes employee recognition, engagement, and work-life balance".

"Look for the signs, listen to employees, and provide a clear path to career growth. Managers need to understand the career aspirations of their supervisees and set a path that fulfils such goals".

"Show the value of their responsibility, recognize their contribution, career plan/progression, etc".

These comments indicate scepticism on the various strategies that organisations may use to stop silent resignations, stressing that these strategies may not be effective if underlying problems with meaningful

involvement, management, and culture are not addressed. Organisational efforts to end silent resignations are usually met with resistance because they fail to address the underlying issues that lead to issues with meaningful involvement, management, and culture. If fundamental structural concerns are not addressed, a cosmetic technique such as introducing extra perks or policies may prove ineffective. The efforts seem to be insufficient, if the communication and leadership don't significantly improve. Furthermore, Band-Aid fixes that ignore the fundamental reasons of discontented workers may result if opportunities for actual engagement are not given and if employees' contributions are not honestly acknowledged with priorities. Therefore, until these primary problems are committed, efforts to fight silent leaving may be unsuccessful.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the crucial aspect of silent resignation implies several challenges to better understanding and addressing workplace dissatisfaction, especially in the eyes of millennials. Millennials have few unique characteristics like pretending they value meaningful work and are very good at communication so they get disillusioned when their requirements are not accepted. Their narrative majorly highlights the significance of addressing the original causes of job dissatisfaction. It is very much important that if superficial solutions—say for example benefits or symbolic gestures don't identify the actual issues such as poor management, limited career growth, and an intimidating work atmosphere, they will repeatedly fall short.

Therefore, it is important for any organization to implement and maintain policies such as; flexible work arrangement, regular base feedback and remediation programs, scope and opportunities for professional development and encouraging a positive workplace culture can significantly increase employee engagement and retention. By proactively identifying all these concerns, employers can offer an excellent working environment with a more engaged, effective and loyal workforce and at the same time they are able to mitigate the effects of silent resignation within the organization. And eventually by addressing and understanding the subtleties of quitting from a millennial perspective can heighten retention tactics and become more fostered in the workplace.

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