



## Understanding Quiet Quitting: Triggers, Antecedents and Consequences

*Sessiz İstifayı Anlamak: Tetikleyicileri, Öncülleri ve Sonuçları*

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### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic, which shook the whole world, has changed employers' and employees' traditional work behavior patterns. The adaptation of organizations to new systems such as flexible working hours and working from home has brought problems such as work-life imbalance, although it is seen as in favor of employees. The concept of "quiet quitting" which means spending minimum effort and taking less responsibility in the workplace, has become an increasingly crucial agenda for employees, employers, and governments. This study aims to reveal what quiet quitting is, its similarities and differences with related concepts in the literature, and its causes and consequences theoretically. This study has provided important implications in terms of addressing the concept of quiet quitting in depth in the literature and pioneering future studies.

**Keywords:** Quitting, Organizational Behavior, Resignation, Silence

### Öz

Tüm dünyayı sarsan COVID-19 pandemisi, hem işverenlerin hem de çalışanların geleneksel çalışma davranış kalıplarını değiştirmiştir. Örgütlerin esnek çalışma saatleri ve evden çalışma gibi yeni sistemlere uyum sağlaması, çalışanların lehine görülse de iş-yaşam dengesizliği gibi sorunları da beraberinde getirmiştir. İş yerinde minimum çaba harcamak ve daha az sorumluluk almak anlamına gelen "sessiz istifa" kavramı, çalışanlar, işverenler ve hükümetler için önemi giderek artan bir gündem haline gelmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı sessiz istifanın ne olduğunu, literatürdeki ilgili kavramlarla benzerlik ve farklılıklarını, nedenlerini ve sonuçlarını teorik olarak ortaya koymaktır. Bu çalışma sessiz istifa kavramının literatürde derinlemesine ele alınması ve gelecek çalışmalara öncülük etmesi açısından önemli çıkarımlar sağlamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İşten Ayrılma, Örgütsel Davranış, İstifa, Sessizlik

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of “quiet quitting” has become increasingly popular in a wide range of social video platforms especially TikTok in 2022. For instance, American TikToker @zaidlepplin posted a video on quiet quitting that went viral, saying "Work is not your life" (Kudhail, 2022). The phrase supports that many employees refuse the notion of going above and beyond in their careers, characterizing their lack of enthusiasm as "quitting." These employees claim that it is not about getting off the business payroll. In reality, the aim is to stay on track—but to devote your time to activities outside of the office and separate their careers from their personalities.

Quiet quitting, which means spending minimum effort and taking less responsibility in the workplace, has become one of the important agenda topics today. 1002 people between the ages of 18-50 participated in the “Quiet Quitting” research conducted by Youthall. While 57.3 % of the respondents were female and 41.6 % male, 74.3 % of the respondents were actively working and 25.7 % were not currently working. While 24 % of the participants stated that they were in the quiet quitting process, 46.6 % stated that they were inclined to this concept. While 15 % of the participants claimed that they were not prone to quiet quitting, 14 % stated that they did not know what the concept was. The research listed five main reasons for quiet quitting as follows: Low salary (35 %), work-life imbalance (21.7 %), unclear job descriptions (15 %), blocked career paths (14.2 %), and long working hours (7.9 %) (Youthall, 2022).

According to Youthall (2022:21), the reasons for quiet quitting overlap with the causes of other negative work-related attitudes and behaviors such as organizational silence, burnout, cynicism, and deviant behaviors (Kanter & Mirvis, 1991; Jenkins & Maslach, 1994; Dyne et al., 2003). Interestingly, although the reasons overlap, this new concept differs from other work-related attitudes in certain aspects. Quiet quitters, like employees with other negative attitudes and behaviors, perform their job-related role behaviors at a minimum level, while avoiding extra-role behaviors that will create synergy for their organizations. Extra-role behavior is an optional behavior that is not in the employee's official job description but contributes to the realization of the organization's goals (Robbins et al., 2013). However, while the outputs of other negative attitudes and behaviors are clearly noticed within the organization, the effects of quiet quitters on their organizations are much more complex and much more difficult to compensate. Because, unlike other organizational attitudes and behaviors, they do not have easily observable outputs such as leaving the job, not coming to work, and low performance. On the contrary, they try to protect both personal and business resources by meeting their job requirements at a minimum level.

The main goal of this study is to reveal what is quiet quitting, a new concept experienced by employees after the COVID-19 pandemic, its similarities, and differences with the related concepts in the literature, its triggers, antecedents, and consequences. We begin by defining the concept more precisely by articulating related theories. We then discuss the differences and similarities between “quiet quitting” and other work-related concepts like organizational silence, burnout, cynicism, and deviant behaviors. Thirdly we define the triggers, antecedents, and consequences of quiet quitting. A conclusion summarizes the concept and discusses it considering some management approaches.

## **2. What is quiet quitting?**

The popular concept of “quiet quitting” is used to put the work out of mind by fulfilling the minimum job requirements without spending too much of the energy and time of the employees on work-related issues. The concept in question consists of two words “quiet” and “quitting”.

The first part of the concept, “quiet”, literally takes place in the organizational behavior literature as "silence". Voice and silence in organizations are two intertwined strategies. Organizational voice is a desirable phenomenon, and this is because it is not only a strategic communication tool with management but also an appropriate communicative tool used to improve organizations (Dyne et al., 2003). Silence in organizations means not only not speaking, but also not writing, not presenting, not hearing, ignoring, hiding, avoiding, and boycotting in the workplace (Hazen, 2006).

Silence behaviors of employees in organizations can cause very serious consequences in business life. For example, in 2015 it was revealed that Volkswagen Company modified its emissions test results to sell more diesel cars in the United States than its competitors. As a result of the investigations, it was ascertained that the changed test results were known by the employees, but they remained silent for fear of losing their jobs. This silence costs Volkswagen substantial compensation. There are four main reasons why employees in organizations remain silent: (1) Employees fear that their real thoughts will cause reactions, (2) the opinion that speaking will be useless, (3) the thought of avoiding conflict, and (4) employees do not want to be a peace-disturber (Ryan & Oestreich, 1991). In addition to individual factors, Milliken et al. (2003) express other factors that affect organizational silence behavior such as an unsupportive organizational environment, organizational ethical principles, insufficient communication with managers, the inexperience and professional inadequacies of the employees, and employees' fears about their future in the organization and their prejudices against managers.

The view that silence behavior can have negative and permanent results both at the organizational and individual level and that it can negatively affect the performance of the organization in the long term has been supported by several studies (Morrison & Milliken, 2000:707; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Employee silence has many negative effects, especially on employees (Shojaie et. al., 2011). Communication is the key success factor in organizations. If silence occurs in organizations, the communication climate in the organizations and as a result, the general functioning of the organization suffers (Bagheri et al., 2012).

Due to the lack of dialogue in organizations, the climate of trust within the organization (Nafei, 2016), job performance, and job satisfaction levels of employees (Bagheri et al., 2012) are negatively affected. Employee silence also disrupts the morale and motivation of employees, causing an increase in behaviors that negatively affect individual and organizational activities such as absenteeism, delay, turnover, and quitting work. Sometimes, employees cannot leave their jobs even if they have the intention to quit due to their continuance commitment. As a contemporary term, this situation is expressed by the term “quiet quitting”.

The second part of the concept, “quitting”, is one of the most researched topics in the organizational behavior literature. The term “quitting” refers to voluntary resignation. In general, employees quit their jobs for reasons such as taking another job, dissatisfaction, or retirement. However, the word “quitting” in the concept of “quiet quitting” is used literally as an indication of an intention to quit. Intention to quit is a situation that arises due to employees' dissatisfaction with the conditions in the working environment (Rusbult et al., 1988).

The transformation of intention to quit, to quit the job is a process and is affected by many factors (Hom et al., 1992). This process also includes thinking about quitting the job, looking for a new job, evaluating alternative job opportunities, and deciding to stay or quit (Addae et al., 2006). The fact that employees have started to think about another employment opportunity is an indicator of their intention to quit (Jaros, 1997). If the employee is not satisfied with his job and has different job alternatives, he/she will prefer to leave the organization (Lee et al., 2004). When employees think about leaving the organization, their behaviors towards their job change, and they need to follow and evaluate alternative job opportunities (Hwang & Kuo, 2006). However, they are committed to continuing their current job until they find a better job opportunity and use their time to fulfill the requirements of their current job at a minimum level. Therefore, quiet quitting refers to an attitude of employees based on spending minimum effort and taking less responsibility for their work. Attitudes are made up of three components (Robbins & Judge, 2013). The cognitive component is the belief in the way things are. The

affective component is the more critical part of the attitude, as it calls upon emotions or feelings. The behavioral component describes the intention to behave in a certain way toward someone or something. Quiet quitters evaluate their work only as a means of living (the cognitive component). For the affective component, quiet quitters have no attachment to their organization and for the behavioral component, quiet quitters tend to perform the bare minimum.

## **2.1. Related theories and approaches**

There are several theories and approaches that support the concept of quiet quitting, its antecedents, and outcomes such as the job demands-resources model, the job characteristics model, the conservation of resources theory, the resource-based approach, the cognitive strategy school approach, dynamic capabilities theory, organizational flexibility and agility, and organizational learning theory.

The job demands-resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001) supports that each job has two specific risk factors associated with job stress: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to the sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills required by the job. In this respect, it is associated with some physiological and/or psychological costs for individuals such as high job pressure and an unfavorable physical environment. Job demands do not necessarily have to be negative; employees can also experience job stress when they must exert high effort. On the other hand, job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job. These resources can provide functionality in getting the job done. Job resources can meet the physical and psychological needs of employees. It can enable them to learn and develop. These resources are very important not only for meeting job demands but also for motivating employees.

According to Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics model, task significance, autonomy, and feedback are important job resources for employee motivation. Job resources are generally defined at the organizational level (e.g., pay, career opportunities, job security), interpersonal and social relationship level (e.g., manager and colleague support, organizational climate), design of job level (role clarity, participation in decision making), and task level (e.g., skill variety, task identity, task importance, autonomy, performance feedback). Poorly designed jobs or chronic job demands (e.g., overwork, emotional demands) consume employees' mental and physical resources and therefore lead to burnout. Employees try to meet excessive work demands by maintaining their performance with increasing subjective efforts. However,

increased activities and subjective effort can cause results such as decreased attention, fatigue, and burnout. If the job resources are more than their demands, the employees are motivated and show positive work attitudes and behaviors.

Similarly, according to the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), employees with personal and social resources tend to behave in the continuity and development of their resources. Employees show negative attitudes and behaviors when they perceive that their resources are under threat, lost, wasted, or cannot be recovered. Within the scope of both situations, employees with a quiet quitting attitude focus on meeting minimum job demands by using their minimum resources, with an approach based on spending minimum effort and taking less responsibility.

The resource-based approach (Wernerfelt, 1984), which states that an organization can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage with its rare, inimitable, and non-substitute valuable resources, has been criticized for its lack of explaining knowledge and learning. This void is filled by the knowledge-based perspective. Individuals are regarded as a crucial resource that adds value to organizations (Levitt & March, 1988). Thus, the development of individuals and their extra-role behaviors is crucial for organizational competitiveness. Because individuals may create strategies, achieve high performance, and contribute to organizational learning using the tacit knowledge gained through various channels of learning. Moreover, individuals who are continually learning and developing are also a dynamic competency component for the organization.

Mintzberg's (1998) cognitive strategy school support that creating strategy depends on individuals' intellectual capabilities. Briefly, the strategy is formed by individuals' visual perception, intuition, synthesis capabilities, and tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966). One of the organization's dynamic capabilities is the ability to adapt to changing environments and to be proactive (Augier & Teece, 2007). Other dynamic competencies include the organization's ability to utilize its assets in line with changing technology environments and market conditions and the creation of organization-specific internal and external capabilities. According to the theory, long-term competitiveness depends on dynamic competencies, namely the ability to create and maintain intangible assets/intellectual capital.

The capability to adapt to customer demands and requirements as quickly as possible by using corporate capabilities in the face of changing surroundings and technologies is defined as organizational flexibility and agility. There are four basic providers of flexibility and agility;

organization, technology, innovation, and people (Sharifi & Zhang, 2001). If managers leverage all providers appropriately, the organization will become flexible and agile, gaining a sustainable competitive position in the market. If they are at the management level, quiet quitters will hesitate to fully utilize these elements.

Organizational learning is a process that is routine-based, history-dependent, and goal-oriented. Individuals are the ones who adopt and do routine processes (Levitt & March, 1988). They are also individuals who continuously learn and develop themselves. Thus, the individual's quiet to organizational processes, which is at the core of all learning processes, might cause a two-way problem. The first is that it makes no contribution to organizational learning and passively participates in all processes. Second, it does not contribute to other people's learning by not incorporating what they have learned into organizational processes, and it affects progressive learning. Both cases are likely to have a negative impact on the organization's performance. Exploration of new opportunities via the use of old certainties is at the heart of organizational learning (March, 1991). Quiet quitters, on the other hand, have lost interest in organizational procedures. They do not appear to be eager to discover new opportunities for the organization and do not contribute to the learning process.

## **2.2. Differences and similarities between quiet quitting and other work-related concepts**

There are four basic concepts associated with quiet quitting in the organizational behavior literature: Organizational silence, burnout, cynicism, and deviant behavior. To be able to understand the concept well, it is important to reveal the similarities and differences between these concepts.

### **2.2.1. Organizational silence**

Many scholars have highlighted the importance of an upward flow of information and communication for organizations (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1994). However, organizational silence refers to the absence of this process, which is detrimental to organizations. More recently, the term "organizational silence" refers to the collective phenomenon of doing or saying extremely little in response to critical problems or issues confronting an organization or industry (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). According to the traditional view, corporate silence is a passive reaction of employees who are afraid for a variety of reasons (losing their job, not being promoted, being excluded by the group, being teased, being mistreated by the management, etc.). However, Pinder and Harlos (2001) suggest that contrary to common belief, organizational silence is a deliberate and proactive activity. They

are said to purposefully push the organization or management to have issues by not speaking up about tacit information (Dyne et al., 2003).

Quiet quitting and organizational silence may appear to be distinct explanations for the same phenomena, but they are not. To briefly touch on the main differences between them, the first is how individuals handle organizational problems. Individuals who have had their proposals ignored when contributing to the solution of a problem prefer to keep silent, which is known as organizational silence. However, quiet quitters lack the drive to identify the organization's problem.

The second fundamental difference involves individuals' expectations of promotion inside the organization. Individuals who are afraid of not getting promoted, being excluded, or losing their job may choose to remain silent in the workplace. Quiet quitters, on the other hand, have no fear of losing their jobs and are continuously looking for organizations that offer better workplace conditions. These conditions are related to the quality of life they maintain. Sometimes it's about having flexible working hours, or it's about having short working hours, and sometimes it's about earning money to support their work-life balance. Furthermore, when people enter the quiet quitting phase, they often do not anticipate being promoted within the organization.

Finally, individuals may choose organizational silence to gain group acceptability or to harm the organization. However, quiet quitters tend to perform the bare minimum. They avoid unforeseen unemployment in this way. Their motive here is not to help the organization, but to keep doing the job that earns their money.

### **2.2.2. Burnout**

Firstly, the term burnout (Freudenberger, 1974), which was first intended to describe the emotional energy depletion experienced by volunteer healthcare personnel, was subsequently employed to explain the psychological exhaustion experienced by service workers (Maslach, 1976).

Burnout may have a detrimental impact on the individual, organizational, and societal levels. Individually, it has a detrimental impact on physical, mental (Papathanasiou, 2015), and emotional well-being (e.g., increased levels of stress, anxiety, substance use, aggressive behavior, increased tendency to depression, decreased self-efficacy) (Jenkins & Maslach, 1994). Employees' negative effects on their colleagues can lead to undesirable outcomes such



as lower efficiency, greater intention to quit, and poor performance (Borritz, 2006; Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009). The organizational reflection of burnout, articulated as the spillover effect paves the way for negative emotions, attitudes, and actions inside the company to negatively influence other employees and create a negative atmosphere in the organization.

Individuals suffering from burnout are not the same as quiet quitters. These two phenomena have varying effects on organizations. The first of these is the organization's performance. Individuals who are burnt out have a detrimental impact on organizational performance. Quiet quitters, on the other hand, produce mediocre results.

The second main difference is related to how individuals handle their personal life. Individuals who suffer from depersonalization, one of the sub-dimensions of burnout syndrome, tend to isolate themselves from both their work and personal life. Individuals that are depersonalized fail to satisfy job demands, whereas quiet quitters perform mediocrely. Furthermore, quiet quitters handle their interactions with their peers and superiors in the most energy-saver manner. They devote most of their leftover energy to their non-work life.

The last main distinction is how individuals perceive their own potential. Individuals believe they lack the ability to meet job demands, according to the low personal achievement dimension of burnout. Quiet quitters, on the other hand, do not feel inadequate and continue to put in barely enough effort to avoid being fired or attracting notice.

### **2.2.3. Cynicism**

Cynicism is a distrustful behavior in which individuals are motivated solely by self-interest and the well-intentioned behaviors of others are mocked. Work-oriented cynicism refers to opposition to a job that does not fulfill individuals and is not worth putting in long hours. The belief of individuals that there is selfishness and deception at the heart of the organization is referred to as organizational cynicism (Kanter & Mirvis, 1991). It is the product of people's frustrations and bad attitudes (Andersson, 1996). It is a reaction to injustice and administrative malfeasance (O'leary, 2003). It is a notion that reflects criticism of the organization's values, activities, and intentions.

Cynics and quiet quitters differ in their responses to negative management practices. Cynics distrust their peers or superiors because they believe the negative attributes are inherent in the individual. This, however, has no detrimental impact on their work routines or performance. Cynics tend to be cautious, believing that they would always safeguard the interests of

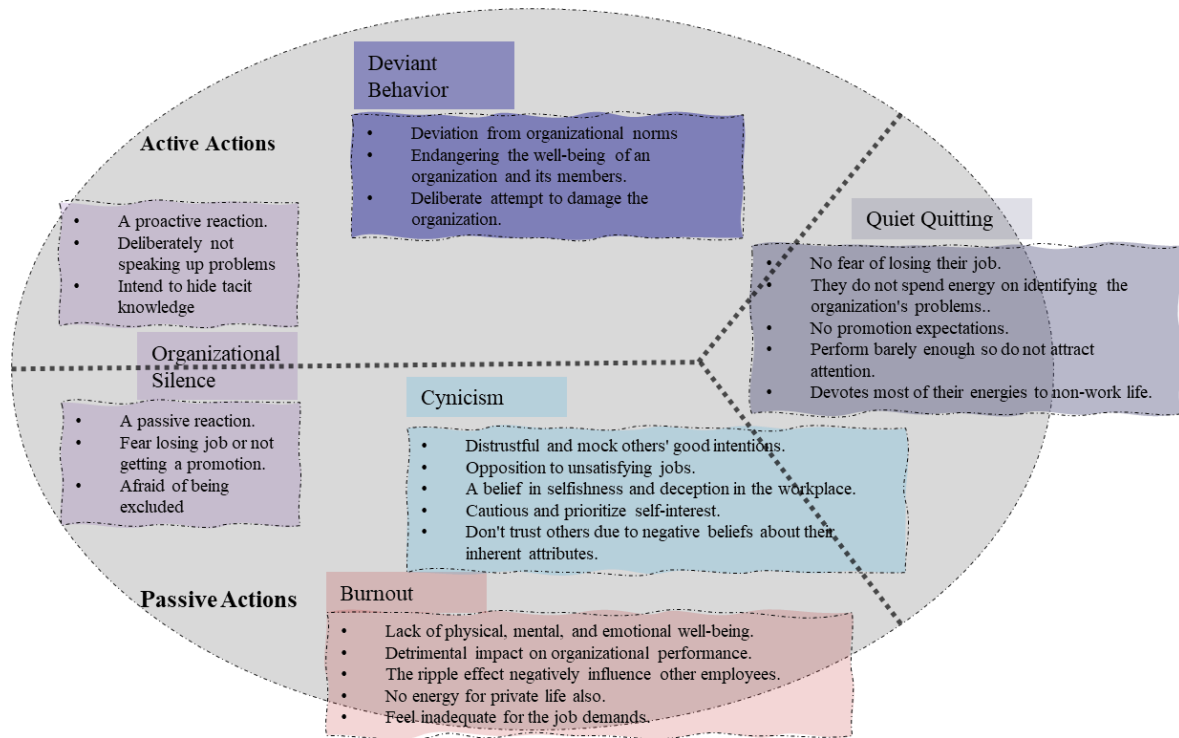
individuals. Quiet quitters, on the other hand, tend to make less effort, often because of large layoffs, unfair organizational behavior, and negative management behavior.

#### **2.2.4. Deviant behaviors**

Organizational norms are the rules, procedures, and expectations that regulate individual behavior inside an organization (Brewer & Walker, 2010). Organizational norms aid in the definition of accountability, equality, and ethical behavior (Borry, 2017). Deviation from organizational norms is one of the behaviors that arise as an unfavorable situation in organizations. Individuals who do not follow the norms affect the organization's operation creating an issue of deviation from the planned situation. Such activities are referred to as "deviant behaviors" by Robinson and Bennett (1995).

Employee deviance is described as a voluntary activity that breaches, critical organizational norms, endangering the well-being of an organization, its members, or both (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Workplace deviation behaviors include absenteeism, willful errors, slowing down, illegal use of workplace supplies, hostility, disobedience, insults, harassment, sabotage, gossip, accusations, theft, and lying (Spector & Fox, 2002).

Deviant behaviors in the workplace are clearly differentiated from behaviors exhibited by quiet quitters. Only the slowdown behavior is comparable to the working ways of the quiet quitters. When there is a business slowdown caused by deviant behavior, however, job demands are never fully completed or finished on schedule. The motivation for this activity is a conscious endeavor to harm the organization. However, quiet quitters, in particular, prefer to slow down not to harm the organization, but to maintain a work-life balance.



**Fig. 1.** *Negative Organizational Behaviors Scheme Based on Active/Passive Actions*

When negative organizational behaviors are evaluated as active and passive actions, the new concept of quiet quitting is more clearly differentiated from other behaviors. Active actions express the behaviors of individuals to harm the organizational performance and culture deliberately and proactively, while passive actions express the behaviors of individuals arising from their emotional states to harm the organization unintentionally. As seen in Figure 1, quitters do not tend to actively harm the organization and they do not have a destructive attitude towards the organization. they seek job positions where they can achieve work-life balance and give them the opportunity to develop their careers. They do not harm the organization in terms of performance, as they do not have preconceptions like cynics, fears like organizational silences, exhaustion, and perceptions of inadequacy like burned-out individuals. However, they offer mediocre output as they do not tend to be high performers. With these aspects, they show neither active nor passive action, they focus on their private lives and career development.

### 2.3. Triggers of quiet quitting

Although quiet quitting has greatly affected business life in recent years, it did not occur overnight. Before discussing the antecedents and successors of quiet quitting, it is useful to examine two important factors that trigger this concept: (1) The Great Resignation that occurred after COVID-19 and (2) the Generation Z employees who entered business life today.

### **2.3.1. Great resignation**

One of the most important precursors to the emergence of quiet quitting is the Great Resignation that came with the COVID-19 pandemic. Anthony Klotz, an assistant professor of management at Texas A&M University, brought forward the phrase "Great Resignation" (Cohen, 2021). The Great Resignation refers to the trend of a significant number of individuals leaving their jobs voluntarily following the COVID-19 outbreak throughout the world (Serenko, 2022:2; Braje, 2022). The Great Resignation covers both the business world and medical staff who are experiencing high levels of burnout during the pandemic (Sheather & Slattery, 2021).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many members of Generation Y and Z took their place in fast-growing companies, were promoted to higher levels, and progressed rapidly on the career ladder. But things changed after the COVID-19 pandemic. Although young people were not laid off, companies began to reorganize and restructure their core business processes. Young employees, who were faced with the work-from-home system, had to cope with its difficulties and they started to quit their jobs. This is how the Great Resignation began (Serenko, 2022).

Birinci and Amburgey (2022) perceived the Great Resignation as the Great Reshuffle which means a process of seeking the best available options on the job market. Serenko (2022) argued that the abrupt departure of many coworkers in a short period of time may have a detrimental psychological impact on the remaining workers, generating anxiety, stress, and disappointment. Moreover, employees who are in such poor mental health are less inclined to share their knowledge with others (Issac et al., 2021; Kmiecik, 2022), which may limit intra-organizational information flows. These arguments support the relevance of Great Resignation to quiet quitting. For this reason, it is inevitable that the antecedents of the Great Resignation and the quiet quitting will be similar.

### **2.3.2. Generation Z employees**

Nowadays, generation Z employees are beginning to enter the workforce, and Generation Y managers, which are progressing in their careers, are in charge of managing these new employees (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). As a matter of fact, 45.2% of the participants in the quiet quitting were Generation Z. While 13.2% of Generation Z participants stated that they are in the quiet quitting process, 50.9% are prone to the quiet quitting process (Youthall, 2022).

Although Generation Z shares many features with Generation Y, it also contains many new behavioral patterns (Iorgulescu, 2016). One of the most important features of the Z generation

is that they always have the internet and smartphones as a part of their lives (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). For this reason, Generation Z usually communicates through text, emoji, and video, and has less competency in face-to-face communication (Turner, 2015).

Generation Z is the most achievement-oriented generation (Barna Group, 2018) and opportunities for career progression motivate them (Schawbel, 2014). As a result, individuals want to be involved in decision-making processes and have their opinions valued by the organization. Moreover, Generation Z individuals are pragmatic and realistic. They are encouraged by assuring that they have a safe life outside of the workplace, even though they are concerned about making a difference (Patel, 2017). For this reason, the most important feature that this generation is looking for is a flexible work schedule, and a fun working environment with paid leaves (Turner, 2015). Generation Z employees expect a good working atmosphere, to be treated with respect, good development opportunities at work, self-realization, corporate values and ethics, and trust (Poradnikprzedsiebiorcy, 2022).

#### **2.4. Antecedents of quiet quitting**

As a result of the literature review, this study examined the antecedents of quiet quitting in five basic categories: (1) Work-life imbalance, (2) toxic workplace culture, (3) low salary, (4) lack of career advancement opportunities, and (5) work overload.

##### **2.4.1. Work-life imbalance**

According to Youthall's (2022) research, while the first reason for quiet quitting is the low salary among all participants, the first reason for the Generation Z participants is the work-life imbalance. When it comes to selecting a job, Generation Z prioritizes work-life balance (Workforce Institute at Kronos, 2019, as cited in Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). Millennials also prefer flexible hours and schedules that result in a better work-life balance (Karsh & Templin, 2013, as cited in Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021:491). After witnessing their parents' layoffs and divorces, millennials prefer to focus on their private life rather than their careers (Ng et al., 2010). Considering that the two most important generations of quiet quitting are Generation Y and Generation Z, it can be argued that one of the most important reasons for quit quitting is the work-life imbalance that comes with COVID.

Many researchers state that work-life imbalance is one of the most important reasons for Great Resignation (Dill, 2021; Hymes, 2021; Kaplan, 2021). Since working during COVID radically changed individuals' affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes, the causes for departing

from their jobs during the Great Resignation were markedly different from those during the pre-COVID period (Malmendier, 2021). During the lockdown period, employees had the unique chance to reconsider their relationship with work, reframe their priorities in life and professional and career plans, and recognize that work should be more than just a salary. Consequently, people decided to move closer to their family members and friends, to enjoy the peace and quiet outside of a bustling city, to obtain a desirable work-life balance, to prevent burnout, or to accelerate retirement plans (Dean & Hoff, 2021; Hsu, 2021; Thompson, 2021).

#### **2.4.2. Toxic workplace culture**

Poor organizational culture was recognized as one of the most important reasons for voluntary employee resignations (Sull, Sull, Zweig, 2022). Workplace culture is one of the main reasons why employees leave their jobs (SHRM, 2019, as cited in Braje, 2022).

Sull, Sull, and Zweig (2022) 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. 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 which 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). A toxic culture is also defined as a culture in which employees encounter uncertainty and a lack of trust in a manager's abilities, forcing workers to consider quitting a job, exploring alternative possibilities, and finally pursuing one of them (SHRM, 2019, as cited in Braje, 2022). Therefore, it can be argued that employees working in an organization with a toxic culture tend to quiet quitting process when they seek another job.

Managers constitute the most important dimension of organizational culture. Zenger and Folkman (2022) stated that quiet quitting is about bad managers, not bad employees. Data on 2,801 managers evaluated by more than 13,000 reports show that people's motivation to go the extra mile is often more about their manager's ability to build a healthy relationship with them than their willingness to work hard.

### **2.4.3. Low salary**

From past to present, one of the most important elements of job motivation is money and therefore it constitutes an important field 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.

One of the criteria that Generation Z employees, which is dominant in business life today, give importance to their salary and other financial incentives. Witnessing the effects of the financial crisis on their parents made Generation Z individuals more financially cautious and concentrated on savings and job security (Patel, 2017). Generation Z individuals had to grow up in a culture of safety because overprotective parents unwittingly withdrew their chance to acquire life skills (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019, as cited in Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

Research shows that although Gen Z chooses a job based on salary, the factors that keep them in an organization are not financial. Generation Z values compensation less than other age groups. When given the choice between a boring but well-paid job and a position that offers less money but more satisfying tasks, 50 % will go for the second option (Deloitte, 2022).

### **2.4.4. Lack of career advancement opportunities**

One of the factors affecting employees' turnover intention is career progression (McGinley et al., 2014) for both Generation Y and Generation Z employees. Career advancement was identified as a key factor boosting employee retention, especially, since long-term career advancement is the primary motivator for Generation Y employees (Zopiatis et al., 2014). Wong et al. (2017) found out that clear career paths were also crucial for Generation Y employees to stay with the organization.

Moreover, the most important factor affecting the job selection of Generation Z members is the advancement opportunities, so they tend to prefer working in medium-sized companies or multinational companies (Robert Half, 2015). Therefore, the unsatisfied career advancement demands of the Y and Z generations lead them to quiet quitting.

### **2.4.5. Work overload**

One of the reasons for quiet quitting is long working hours, in other words, work overload (Youthall, 2022). Work overload is an important stressor experienced by frontline employees especially in the hospitality industry due to excessive task demand (Zhao et al., 2016). The work

overload leaves employees stressed and leads to employees' turnover (Haldorai et al., 2019). Many studies support that some predictors of employee turnover intention are work overload and the working environment (Poulston, 2008; Zhao et al., 2016; Zhao & Ghiselli, 2016; Haldorai et al., 2019).

Work overload is also an important source of stress for millennials individuals, who are one of the actors of quiet quitting. Studies have shown that the turnover intention of millennials is influenced by job satisfaction and work overload (Pradana & Salehudin, 2016; Purba & Ananta, 2018).

### **2.5. Consequences of quiet quitting**

The above-mentioned theories and approaches, which are associated with the causes of quiet quitting, also provide guidance in terms of predicting its consequences. The potential consequences of quiet quitting under these theories are presented in Table 1.

### **3. Conclusion and Discussion**

In this study, it has been attempted to reveal what is quiet quitting, a new concept experienced by employees after the COVID-19 pandemic, its similarities, and differences with the related concepts in the literature, its triggers, antecedents, and consequences. The authors began by defining the concept more precisely by articulating related theories. Then they discussed the differences and similarities between “quiet quitting” and other work-related concepts like organizational silence, burnout, cynicism, and deviant behaviors. At last, the authors tried to define the triggers, antecedents, and consequences of quiet quitting.

There are two important factors that trigger quiet quitting. These are (1) The “Great Resignation” that occurred after COVID-19 and (2) the Generation Z employees who entered business life in these days. Organizational outcomes of Great Resignation include loss of intra-organizational knowledge, lower business process efficiency, reduced relational capital, missed social connections, challenges attracting skilled human resources, eroded information transfer processes, and information leakage to competitors.



**Table 1.** *Consequences of Quiet Quitting*

Theory and Approaches	Consequences
Resource-based approach	<p>Qualified employees intending to quit can lead to a loss of competitive advantage for the firm.</p> <p>Pursuing a competitive strategy that emphasizes human resources can be hindered by quiet quitters, resulting in negative effects on company performance.</p> <p>Quiet quitters, who do not openly express their intention to leave, contribute to an unproductive performance that remains unaddressed.</p>
Cognitive school	<p>Quiet quitters prioritize personal life management, contrasting with the organization's perception that they are committed to enhancing their intellectual capital.</p> <p>This misconception hampers the implementation of effective strategies and performance outcomes driven by continuous learning, improvement, and tacit knowledge.</p> <p>Quiet quitters demonstrate a reluctance to participate in the organization's learning processes and development initiatives, instead focusing on securing better conditions for themselves.</p>
Organizational learning	<p>Reluctance to engage in the organization's learning process hinders the transfer of tacit knowledge possessed by these individuals to others.</p> <p>They also display hesitancy in acquiring knowledge generated within the organization.</p> <p>Ultimately, their lack of participation in learning processes is anticipated to lead to a decline in the overall learning culture within the organization.</p>
Dynamic capability	<p>Reluctance to perceive the environment, keep up with process development and adapt to it.</p> <p>Display of work that is just satisfactory, indicating concealment of competencies from the organization.</p> <p>Dysfunctional competency-oriented competitive strategies.</p>
Flexibility and agility	<p>Quiet quitters face challenges in demonstrating flexibility and agility, requiring additional effort in adapting to the dynamic nature of organizations.</p> <p>Their resistance to quickly adopting and embracing new technologies can impede technology development within the organization.</p> <p>They serve as barriers to innovation, as innovation often stems from the extra efforts and proactive mindset of individuals.</p>
Job demands-resource model	<p>Quiet quitters perceive their job as overly demanding and tend to passively seek job opportunities that minimize those demands.</p> <p>Engaging in a passive job search approach can contribute to subpar performance among quiet quitters.</p> <p>This situation places an increased workload on their peers, potentially causing highly motivated individuals to question the fairness within the organization.</p> <p>Peers burdened with heavier workloads may also experience excessive job demands, ultimately leading to negative effects on their performance.</p>
Job characteristics model	<p>Jobs that are poorly designed, lack career development opportunities, and require a high workforce can lead employees to quiet quitting and thus to burnout.</p>
Conservation of resources theory	<p>Quiet quitters develop negative work attitudes because they feel that their workforce and career development resources are wasted. They tend to do little work with little effort.</p>

Along this line, the increasing workforce participation of Generation Z employees brought different values and new behavioral patterns to the workplace. In general, quiet quitters pose a problem for the organization with their mediocre performance. This means that organizations cannot benefit from their human resources, which are critical resources for sustainable competitive advantage. In the light of this study, the authors suggest a number of managerial implications. These are (1) It is becoming more important to apply performance measurement methods that can detect quiet quitters in organizations. Quiet quitters are not weak performers that managers can easily notice. Also, they are not as ineffective as employees with burnout syndrome, and as inefficient and reluctant as organizational silents and cynics. (2) Dealing with quiet quitters, managers should keep communication channels open within the organization. Thus, they will have the opportunity to influence the attitudes of individuals who have begun to be affected by environmental developments and organizational routines. Especially, focusing on informal communication channels and out-of-office interviews will also positively affect group dynamics.

The typology of quiet quitters is not discussed in this study. It is thought that the quiet quitting attitude will vary according to the type of organization. In this respect, it is evaluated that quiet quitters will be better understood with the studies focusing on the differences between public and private sector employees. In addition, classifying and measuring different dimensions that explain the attitude of quiet quitters will also allow organizations to provide positive feedback.

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