



## The New Silence Trend for Organizations: Quiet Hiring

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**Abstract:** The reactive tendencies in silence, which have recently come to the fore in the business world, bring about the development of different adaptation skills for employees, managers and businesses. This research aims to conceptually understand and question the phenomenon of quiet hiring, which entered the literature after the concepts of quiet quitting and quiet firing. The fact that there is not much research on this concept, which has recently started to find a place in the literature, adds originality value to the study. In this article, which is a case study, the issue is examined at the level of definition, theoretical basis, antecedents, consequences, interaction with related concepts and recommendations. The quiet hiring approach, which aims to evaluate the existing human resource potential without going outside the organization, is characterized as a brand new employment policy in human resource management. The concept reveals a flexible understanding that responds quickly to silence instead of a passive aggressive organizational culture against silent reactions. At the end of the conceptual review, it was seen that quiet hiring has the potential to be successful if all human resources processes in enterprises are redesigned according to the organizational structure and human resource potential. When the literature is examined, it is determined that there is a gap in terms of both qualitative and quantitative research. Therefore, new studies can be designed that can increase the comprehensibility of the subject and question its relations with different concepts. In future research, it is important to develop terminology related to the concept, shape the theoretical basis, develop scales and guide new future studies.

**Keywords:** Quiet Hiring, Quiet Quitting, Quiet Firing

### 1. Introduction

Human resources, which remain strategically important despite Industry 5.0, artificial intelligence technologies, software and virtual structuring forms, are among the most important issues to be considered for businesses. High-performing employees have great added value for businesses that want to be organizationally successful (O'Boyle & Aguinis, 2012). However, it is not easy to find these employees, to include them in the organization and to strengthen the business relationship in a sustainable way. In this context, Gratton (2021), in a study conducted with 150 managers from different companies, stated that the biggest problems faced by businesses are recruiting and retaining employees. The world's leading technology businesses also emphasize the importance of reducing human resources turnover rates, preventing new hires and retaining existing employees (Houghton, 2022). This is supported by the fact that the number of job vacancies in the US has exceeded 11 million and businesses have announced that they are struggling to fill vacancies (Marone, 2024). In a period when it is difficult and costly to find qualified employees, it has become an important necessity to take into account the trends shown by human resources and for businesses to take action on them. At this point, quiet hiring, a brand new employer trend, has emerged as a prominent employer trend recently. Jackson (2024) defines quiet hiring as an approach that allows businesses to acquire new skills without hiring new employees. It generally refers to giving current employees more responsibilities beyond their current job descriptions. The focus of this research is on the concept of quiet hiring conceptually. Since it is a new concept in the literature, it is important to clarify the concept of quiet hiring, which has attracted attention both in the business world and in the scientific field, in order to manage the possible effects on businesses and employees in the future and to progress with the right steps in scientific research. In the conceptual framework of the study, the development of the phenomenon of silence in organizations is first discussed. Then, the phenomenon of quiet hiring and the theoretical basis of the concept are

included. After focusing on the antecedents affecting quiet hiring and the results revealed by the concept, inferences are made about its relationships with other silence trends. In the last section of the research, discussion and suggestions on the subject are included.

## **2. Conceptual Framework**

### **2.1. Development of silence phenomenon in organizations**

Silence in organizations first entered the literature in the 1970s. In Hirschman's study titled "Exit, Voice and Loyalty" published in 1970, silence of human resources was defined for the first time. According to this definition, although silence is passive, it has been accepted in a similar sense with approval and commitment (Çakıcı, 2007). Until the 1980s, employee silence continued to be researched with names such as silence spiral and candle effect (Brinsfield et al., 2009). From the mid-1980s to the 2000s, silence started to be associated with new concepts such as reporting problems instead of commitment, organizational opposition, obedience, organizational justice and complaining. By the end of the 90s, organizational loneliness, deaf ear syndrome, and ostracism have been addressed (Durak, 2012). Since the 2000s, it is noteworthy that research on silence has increased significantly. Especially in the field of organizational psychology, the concept has started to find a place frequently. The literature, which initially saw the concept as an affirming perspective for employees, has recently characterized it as a form of behavior that negatively affects human resources and evaluates its possible effects as greater than expected. The first study that emphasized the issue of organizational silence was Morrison and Milliken's (2000) research examining the process of silence in organizations and the conditions in these environments. Thus, the reasons for organizational silence were tried to be understood and the organizational conditions under which this process occurs were emphasized.

In 2009, economist Mark Boldger used the concept of quiet quitting for the first time. This concept, which has recently been active in the field of management, is actually a tendency that many employees have felt for a long time and shown in business life. Wheeler (2022) explained the concept as the employee switching to an energy-saving mode without leaving the job. Although quiet quitting is perceived as a behavioral tendency, it should be taken into consideration since its potential consequences affect many issues such as quality, innovation, efficiency and productivity (Campton et al. 2023).

While quiet quitting has not yet been accepted, the concept of quiet firing, which refers to the negative reactions of businesses to involuntary employees, has emerged as a response to quiet quitting. The concept is defined as directing human resources to leave their jobs over time by exposing them to unfair behaviors that will lead to resignation instead of actually terminating the business connection (Anand et al., 2023). Businesses have developed this managerial reaction in order to cope with the problematic work environments created by employees who do not fully own their work even if they do not leave the business. Although quiet firing may be seen as a solution in the short term, it can become a problematic approach in the long term due to the loss of existing human resources and recruitment costs. Therefore, organizations need to develop new and creative managerial employment policies for silent employee reactions. The concept that emerges at this point is quiet hiring.

### **2.2. Quiet hiring**

Hoff (2023) states that the post-pandemic period is a year that highlights the word silence for businesses. The silence trends that entered the management literature in a few months actually point to a trend that shows how employees and employers adapt to the developments in the world. Quiet hiring is a remarkable feature among these approaches and expresses the employer's tendency. Concept; Unlike quiet firing, it is a new employer trend arising from the idea that businesses should take care of their current employees and the skills they have (McRae et al., 2023). It can be expressed as a resolute employment policy in which businesses support and strengthen qualified employees and try to re-

engage employees who have lost touch with them. It ensures that recruitment is carried out quietly within the organization without reflecting on the external environment and stakeholders. The starting point is not to lose existing human resources and to solve the workforce need without outsourcing. In this sense, the missing roles and tasks in the mission areas are tried to be completed. According to Byrnes (2024), quiet hiring is an employment practice that puts all recruitment processes under the radar. Accordingly, supporting human resource functions such as talent scouting, compensation, internal promotions, performance appraisal, training and motivational practices also gain importance. Developed in response to today's labor fluctuations, the quiet hiring approach has a protective effect on both intellectual capital and psychological capital. Especially organizations with budget and capital constraints may turn to quiet hiring to save costs. According to Marone (2024), addressing human resource shortages without increasing the number of employees can be solved by reallocating talent. This approach, which takes into account not only organizational goals but also individual goals, leads to positioning employees in line with their expectations and taking advantage of the influence of qualified leaders among employees. In the quiet hiring process, employees are secretly monitored by human resources. Talented employees are first included in the process. Reports on employee performance are received from various managers. The focus is on the candidate who is accepted by everyone. Thus, the employee is evaluated while already at work (Yikilmaz, 2022).

The quiet hiring tendency is based on the fact that employers care about employees. Quiet hiring is an important step to improve the work-life balance of employees whose professional life is limited and to protect them against burnout (Campton et al. 2023). In this context, Harter (2022) emphasized that employees who feel ignored will eventually stop caring about their businesses and organizational goals and that the solution can be possible with a constructive approach.

The quiet hiring approach has disadvantages as well as contributions to businesses. First of all, when the concept is not applied correctly, employees may be perceived as being burdened with extra work (Lindzon, 2023). Quiet hiring brings about an environment where employees feel deceived when only additional work is given and motivating elements are not used (Rhee, 2023). Another disadvantage of the concept is the time loss and cost risk of errors during the implementation phase (Fuks & Harrison, 2023). The possibility that question marks that arise among employees about the economic power of businesses make it difficult to focus on the vision can be listed as another negative effect (Hoff, 2023). Another issue that employees worry about regarding quiet hiring in the Monster (2023) study is the problem of not being assigned tasks that are compatible with their abilities. In the same study, more than a quarter of employees stated that they would consider leaving their jobs if they were quiet hired and 4% stated that they would leave immediately, emphasizing the possible consequences of these concerns. In addition, since quiet hiring requires a serious structuring, it also has negative effects in terms of resistance to change that may be seen in employees.

The disadvantages of the quiet hiring approach, which aims to evaluate the potential of internal resources, have led to a second type of application of this approach. From time to time, businesses that quietly hiring from external sources instead of internal sources call this type external quiet hiring. When businesses have limited human resources, the skill and expertise gaps that arise can be filled with this approach. With the understanding that people with professional expertise can be employed temporarily or permanently as consultants, managers, project workers, it is easier to access different talents, the burden of existing employees can be lightened, working conditions can be flexible, and diversity in human resources can be achieved (Fuks & Harrison, 2023).

### **2.3. Theoretical basis**

All kinds of resources are scarce and valuable for businesses trying to survive in a world full of uncertainties where change occurs rapidly. Businesses need to be able to access resources and provide strategic responses to the environment in accordance with the conditions they are in (Child, 1972;

Aldrich, 1979; Oliver, 1991). In this context, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) developed the Resource Dependence Theory based on Emerson's (1962) assumptions about power and exchange (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005). Emphasizing the self-dependent nature of many inputs from raw materials to hardware tools, from information to human resources, the theory expresses the importance of proper resource management since these are processes that businesses cannot fully control (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). This theory deals with the stable and secure supply of resources. Businesses try to eliminate uncertainties in order to achieve stability in resource flow and strive to put themselves in a strong position in terms of resources. For this purpose, it is necessary to develop effective strategies and tactics in all processes related to resources (Davis & Cobb, 2010). In this context, the phenomenon of quiet hiring, in which businesses turn to their existing employees for human resources and develop strategies to use human resources more effectively, can be associated with resource dependency. As a result of silent reactions, low productivity employees or people who are directed to be dismissed can be prevented from increasing resource dependency in businesses.

Apart from the resource dependency theory, the quiet hiring phenomenon tries to analyze the needs of human resources related to the business. Vroom argued that individual needs and past experiences affect behavior and addressed the human-enterprise interaction through expectancy and motivation theories (Vroom, 1967). This connection is linked to the concept of quiet hiring in the sense that it is important to consider what desires employees have and what motivators they are influenced by. Therefore, the issue can be related to expectancy and motivation theories. Another dimension is the accurate identification of employee skills and potentials and the effective realization of internal positioning and promotions. This context makes it possible to explain quiet hiring with career theories. Because career theories deal with the compatibility of employees' personal characteristics and environmental conditions with each other and their careers. Many issues such as people's work areas, professional choices, career processes are taken into account in career theories (Tutar, 2020).

#### **2.4. Antecedents of the concept of quiet hiring**

The emergence of the quiet hiring approach coincides with the post-pandemic period. It is thought that changing working habits, economic pressures brought about by the pandemic, and evolving workforce dynamics triggered this process (Jackson, 2024). Ezeilo and Green-McKenzie (2023) also emphasized the effect of increasing quiet hiring by imposing new tasks on existing employees as a result of the prominence of digital workplaces in the post-pandemic period. Therefore, the pandemic can be considered as one of the important antecedents of the concept. It is considered normal that this period, whose impact is felt all over the world in the century we are in and whose process extends over years, has many sociological, cultural, and economic effects.

It can be stated that the phenomenon of quiet quitting has an important place when looking at the situations that are effective in the emergence of the quiet hiring approach that employers apply as a protection of the business and qualified employees. Quiet quitting is accepted as an economic and psychological problem that reduces the commitment of new generation employees to work, feeds on emotions such as stress, anxiety and anger, shakes the work-life balance and increases employee burnout (Yikilmaz, 2022). Although it is seen as a behavioral tendency, the phenomenon of quiet quitting, which initiates large resignation movements at the global level, is in a position to take precautions as it may affect other employees in the future. The quiet hiring approach brings an analytical perspective in order to reactivate employees who tend to quiet quitting, to prevent new resignations and to protect the rights of those who do not quiet quitting but work efficiently.

Another effective premise in quiet hiring is the technological conditions in the business world. Today, as we talk about transformational concepts such as robotic technologies and the metaverse world, the need for a highly skilled and qualified workforce will increase for businesses that can exist in this world. For this reason, it becomes more important to use existing human resources effectively and not to lose

qualified employees. Valier (2023) also emphasizes the momentum gained by the quiet hiring approach in this process by stating that it is necessary to rethink hiring processes around skills rather than roles. She also points out that businesses will strengthen their productivity by rearranging talents instead of hiring new employees in the future.

Another phenomenon that triggers the phenomenon of quiet hiring is the changing perspective of employers and managers. According to Gartner (2023), only 26% of employees believe that their organizations offer them unique contributions. Realizing that added value cannot be obtained from employees who believe that they are not valued, businesses have started to treat human resources as a scarce and strategic factor. Managements that discover the potential lying in their existing talent pools before the external environment have started to focus on a quiet hiring approach in order to be less affected by labor fluctuations and to avoid personnel shortages. As with all resources, human resources are limited and scarce. Therefore, this change in philosophy in organizations is preferred to gain a sustainable understanding of employees.

Another issue that drives the quiet hiring approach as a premise is the effort of businesses to avoid recruitment costs. Because the current economic climate and budget constraints make it more difficult for businesses to expand their workforce (Jackson, 2024). Activating and training existing employees and acquiring human resources by advertising, interviewing, evaluating, selecting, placing, harmonizing processes are not at the same cost. For this reason, the need to avoid high recruitment costs is also recognized as one of the reasons for the quiet hiring approach.

## **2.5. Consequences of quiet hiring**

Although the quiet hiring approach is an understanding adopted by businesses, its results are multidimensional. Yikilmaz (2022) states that this concept provides significant advantages for both the employee, the manager and the organization.

By adopting this approach, businesses gain a strategic advantage over competitors. An effect that encourages a culture of continuous learning and growth within the organization is created (Gartner, 2023). It supports reaching full potential, filling job vacancies, growing and developing, and becoming indispensable at the same time (Trainingmag, 2024). Competitiveness increases, recruitment and talent marketing costs decrease, productivity increases and business profitability increases (Yikilmaz, 2022). Businesses have the flexibility to adapt to changing needs and environmental conditions. It becomes easier to strengthen cultural adaptation and transform the organizational climate into a supportive environment (Marone, 2024).

Quiet hiring provides managers with the opportunity to redesign human resources management processes and use this resource correctly (Yikilmaz, 2022). Labor turnover rates decrease (Houghton, 2022). Productivity problems that need to be solved are encountered less frequently. Thus, it becomes easier to retain human resources. It is a chance to get rid of the workload related to the processes to be carried out regarding the recruitment of new people. People's perception of organizational justice is strengthened as it aims to activate all employees. The business can be more easily protected from organizational conflict and crisis environments that may be created by the imbalance between employees and non-employees.

Employees' skill deficiencies can be reduced through trainings and promotions used in the quiet hiring approach. In other words, employees' potentials are revealed. Incentives and rewards are utilized more to improve their skills. Employees' commitment levels and job satisfaction can be increased. Thus, external dependency on employees is reduced (Gartner, 2023). Negative workplace experiences of employees are reduced and attrition rates are reduced. Leadership qualities are strengthened (Marone, 2024). Employees who achieve their individual goals and feel valued may start to approach the

organization with belonging instead of moving away from it. Since psychological capital, which strengthens the organization, is supported, employees can reveal their potential more easily.

## **2.6. Relations between concepts (quiet quitting and quiet firing)**

When we look at the silence approaches adopted by the employee and the organization, it is seen that there are cause and effect relationships between them. In this context, it is stated that quiet quitting has a vicious cycle that triggers quiet firing and quiet firing triggers quiet quitting (Yikilmaz, 2022). Therefore, quiet firing can be considered as a related concept for quiet quitting in terms of both cause and effect. When we look at the factors that cause quiet quitting, inadequacies in terms of wages, career, performance appraisal and communication come to the fore. All these reasons are related to the phenomenon of quiet firing, which is accepted to trigger the concept (Youthall, 2022). In the study conducted by Ruvio and Morgeson (2022), it is stated that the strategies of excessive workload, not planning career future, problematic communication, not sharing critical information and not rewarding high performance that managers apply on employees reveal the quiet firing approach.

Two approaches developed by employers to quiet quitting are quiet firing and quiet hiring. While quiet firing is based on punishment, quiet hiring is based on rewarding. In passive-aggressive organizational cultures, businesses support quiet quitting and quiet firing. There is no effective wage-performance balance in a business where hard work has no extra return. The reward system that motivates employees is weak. Businesses in this situation start to slow down, centralize, breakdown in intra-organizational communication, and fail to reveal new talents (PwC, 2004). At this point, it is stated that quiet hiring was developed as the antithesis of the concept of quiet firing. Quiet hiring is considered as a process that adopts speed, flexibility, effective communication, analyzing talents and expectations, while maintaining a stable number of employees, as well as the discovery of promising employees. Considered one of Gartner's key workforce movements for 2023, quiet hiring is defined as an approach that can radically change traditional strategies (Gartner, 2023). For this reason, it is stated that many businesses resort to quiet hiring as a precautionary measure for quiet firing and quiet quitting (Houghton, 2022).

When it comes to the relationship between the phenomenon of quiet hiring and the concepts of quiet quitting and quiet firing, it can be stated that quiet quitting has a causally important position. This is because employees who tend to quiet quitting increase the work pressure on employees who do not tend to quiet quitting and create unfair working conditions within the organization (Klotz & Bolino, 2022). This makes it imperative for employers to take steps to protect employees with high performance. For this reason, quiet hiring has an understanding of protecting organizations from the possible effects of other silence approaches.

## **3. Discussion and Suggestions**

Quiet hiring is not suitable for every sector and every organization. While businesses where existing employees have the potential to take on new roles, managements who want employees to stay in the organization, workforce fluctuations and shortages in the sector prepare the environment for the application of the approach, it may not be an appropriate approach when the number of employees is low or existing employees are too full to take on additional responsibilities (Byrnes, 2024). Quiet hiring, which is an advantageous and constructive employment approach when implemented correctly, can turn into an approach that increases workload and does not motivate adequately when it is carried out with the wrong process. In this regard, Jackson (2024) emphasizes that quiet hiring practices that are not implemented transparently and correctly can lead to perceptions of favoritism and injustice. In this case, it is not possible to re-mobilize reluctant employees and bring qualified employees into the process more effectively. In order for the quiet hiring approach to be implemented in accordance with its purpose, some issues need to be emphasized.

The first of these issues is the fact that employee goals should be as important as organizational goals. Many employees expect to be recognized, their needs and abilities to be understood correctly and their performance to be evaluated correctly (Yikilmaz, 2022). For this reason, employees need to be analyzed well, from career goals to determining what will be motivating. It is especially beneficial for businesses to strengthen their performance evaluation systems. 360-degree performance evaluation can be used by businesses in this process.

Communication and participation in decisions are another important issue for the successful implementation of the quiet hiring approach. It is stated that employees who are not effective in decision-making during the quiet hiring process feel worthless (Jackson, 2024). For this reason, businesses that want to discover employee talents and see their potential correctly should strengthen internal communication. Human resources managers and experts need to establish an effective communication mechanism. Both horizontal and vertical communication channels should be used openly and effectively. Information should be shared and participative management practices should be supported. Employee participation should be ensured through regular meetings (Byrnes, 2024). The value given to them should be shown. Employees should be given feedback on implementation results (Marone 2024).

In the correct positioning of employees, the development opportunities offered in this field as well as the existing talent, potential and desire have an important place in quiet hiring. For this purpose, human resources should be supported with trainings. Proactive opportunities can be offered to employees by promoting a culture of continuous learning and development. Quiet hiring can produce sustainable solutions in the long term when supported by skills development activities (Gartner, 2023). Learning can start at the level of small groups and organizational culture can be made open to learning and development (Marone, 2024).

The benefits of employees taking on new work and learning new skills should be identified. They should be financially incentivized and remuneration should be transparent. Promotion processes should be designed in a clear and rational way and implemented with an accountable management approach. Employees with leadership skills should be brought to the forefront and supported to set an example for others. Appropriate organizational climate conditions should also be provided for employees whose career development is supported (Yikilmaz, 2022).

In order for quiet hiring practices to be more widely adopted by employees, human resources must create internal mobility policies, resort to external quiet hiring when necessary, increase their competence in motivating employees, and correctly align human resources information technologies with this process Kraszewski (2023). Determining the policies at the beginning, adapting the technology, and improving competencies can provide stability to the approach and create a relaxing effect during the transition process.

Among the issues that may come to the fore in the field of quiet hiring in the future are flexibility of working hours, human resource demands for skills, blurred work-home boundaries, increase in temporary jobs, remote work culture, artificial intelligence/machine learning, diversity, inclusiveness, management of differences, motivation-based working practices (Ezeilo & Green-McKenzie, 2023). Therefore, it is important for businesses to continue the quiet hiring approach with these practices in the future.

Looking at the literature, it can be stated that there is a significant limitation in the literature as the number of articles and studies on quiet hiring is very low. For this reason, both qualitative and quantitative research is necessary to strengthen the academic field. It is expected that these studies will contribute to a better understanding of the concept and to the correct progress of human resources practices. In this way, the sectors in which the concept stands out, the ways in which it is applied and its

results can be evaluated. Aspects that differ from conceptually confusing issues can be highlighted. In addition, the relationships with other administrative concepts can be questioned through the scales developed in connection with this subject. With the developed scales, more publications can be produced on the subject in the scientific platform, the concept can be established in the literature, and the results can be generalized more. In this sense, scale development is valuable for the acceptance of new concepts and faster progress.

In future studies, the concept of quiet hiring can be addressed together with practices such as human resources recruitment procedures, performance appraisal management, career development, in-service training, and talent management. Since it requires the redesign of processes, it can be examined together with the concept of reengineering, which is one of the important issues in the field of management. In addition, its relationships with concepts such as motivation, organizational justice, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and nepotism are also seen among the issues whose interaction can be questioned in the field of organizational behavior. When scale development studies are conducted, the subject can also be analyzed through research models. The effects of mediating or moderating variables can be examined in this way.

In this study, where the phenomenon of quiet hiring is conceptually addressed, the few scientific studies in the world and Türkiye are among the limitations affecting the research in the process of examination and conceptual inferences. In addition, conducting a cross-sectional study and not being able to extend the research to a long period of time imposes a time limit on the research. Despite these limitations, the article is expected to contribute to future studies.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In an age where communication has reached a dizzying speed and impact, it is seen that the reactions defined by silence come to the fore. In the literature where organizational silence was previously associated with obedience, acceptance and commitment, today it is emphasized that these reactions are not trivial and ordinary. There are even warnings about possible risks and effects. In this article, the quiet hiring approach, which has recently become prominent among silence approaches, is discussed with a conceptual analysis. Since the theoretical infrastructure of this issue, which has a high originality value due to being a new concept, is newly formed, it is aimed that the article will contribute to the field of management. The study is designed based on the definition, antecedents, consequences, theoretical basis, related concepts and suggestions on the subject of the concept, which entered the business life after phenomena such as quiet quitting and quiet firing. Accordingly, it is seen that there is a cause and effect relationship between the concept of quiet hiring and quiet quitting, while the concept of quiet firing was developed as an antithesis. Quiet hiring, which provides solutions for both quiet quitting and quiet firing, is defined as the effort of businesses to fully evaluate the human resources within the organization. The approach, which is accepted as an employer tendency developed against the silence of employees, includes employment policies applied in the field of human resources. The processes of fully discovering the employee, establishing effective communication, adopting a participatory management approach, evaluating performance correctly, providing training accordingly, planning promotions, determining remuneration and rewards are among the important steps for the quiet hiring approach that provides advantages when applied correctly in businesses. In sectors where the number of employees is insufficient, the workload is heavy or the labor market is not limited, this approach is considered difficult to prefer. At the theoretical level, it is noteworthy that conceptual studies and quantitative research to develop scales are needed to develop the literature on quiet hiring.



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