

EXPLORING QUIET QUITTING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE ANTECEDENTS, UNDERLYING PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES OF QUIET QUITTING

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Abstract—Quiet quitting is a phenomenon that has been gaining prominence in today's work environment, but the definition of what it entails and its relation with exiting forms of withdrawal has not been clearly established. In this regard, this literature review assesses the emerging literature on quiet quitting in order to establish whether it is a unique phenomenon or just a rehashing of already existing forms of withdrawal. Using the systematic literature review technique, the study evaluates the literature on the concept, its antecedents, psychological processes, outcomes and theoretical underpinnings. From the review, quiet quitting seems to be highly linked with disengagement, burnout, psychological withdrawal, low organisational commitment, and low discretionary effort, but it does not seem to be completely the same as any of these concepts. It seems that the special characteristic of the concept is the idea of remaining in employment while doing what one formally needs to do and limiting oneself deliberately or adaptively from taking up more responsibilities. Some of the gaps identified by the literature review include theoretical fragmentation, lack of integration of employees' agency, absence of longitudinal data, and lack of cross-cultural research on the topic.

Keywords: *Quiet Quitting, Antecedents, Employee Withdrawal, Work-Place Wellbeing, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, Work Disengagement.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, there has been considerable change in the very nature of work, thus impacting how employees perceive their relationship with organisations. Besides monetary gain and job security, employees are now more interested in having flexibility and autonomy at their jobs. They want recognition and a supportive working environment where they can take care of themselves in addition to their professional obligations. This is evident from the increased importance of the concept of employee experience, which considers work in terms of whether it is an enriching experience for employees in terms of development, meaning, and belongingness (Kahn, 1990; Rosso et al., 2010). At the same time, issues related to stress and burnout have helped employees realise the significance of safeguarding their psychological and personal resources. The lines between work and private life have blurred further still through remote and hybrid working and advances in digital technology. While all this can offer some flexibility, it has meant that there is the potential for work to go beyond traditional work hours and to make continuous availability expected. This, in turn, has made workers more aware of how they set the boundary between their professional and personal lives. Organisational commitment has also been shaped by this changing environment. Instead of commitment being understood as loyalty to the organisation, it could increasingly be viewed as a reciprocal relationship where the individual's commitment was met with fair and respectful treatment and organisational commitment to support them. Where the balance of this relationship was no longer satisfactory, then workers did not necessarily leave but they started to disengage with reduced emotional, cognitive and discretionary effort towards their job roles. Quiet quitting can only really be understood against this background.

QUIET QUITTING

In light of this evolving landscape of the modern workplace environment, the practice of quiet quitting has become one of the most discussed trends in today's employment and HRM discourse. The term usually stands for employees who stay in their jobs and consciously reduce their efforts beyond the demands of the job role itself, especially in terms of not exerting discretionary or extra-role efforts. Contemporary academic sources point out that quiet quitting does not involve actual departure from the job. On the contrary, quiet quitting deals with regulation of employees' levels of effort and involvement in the work process (Harris, 2025; Gray et al., 2025). Thus, Gray et al. (2025) consider quiet quitting to be intentional underperformance to minimum job standards, whereas Harris (2025) characterises quiet quitting as adherence to the contract without doing anything beyond the contract terms. More recent research on the topic has extended the definition to encompass lower levels of job and work engagement, less social participation within the organization and boundaries drawn between work and personal lives (Dilchert et al., 2026). In this way, quiet quitting is generally characterized by an employee remaining within the realm of the employment relationship while consciously or incrementally managing the extent of his work engagement and discretionary effort. This development has naturally created an increasing amount of academic interest in the nature, components and manifestations of this phenomenon in the modern workplace (Karrani et al., 2024; Yikilmaz, 2022; Magrizos et al., 2026; Harter, 2022; Morrison-Beedly, 2022; Hiltzik, 2022).

IMPORTANCE OF QUIET QUITTING TO HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM)

Quiet quitting is important to HRM not only because the consequences of this trend reach far beyond the individual employee decision to put in less effort but also because the key element of the problem, which is employee engagement, is vital to organizations. In this sense, the phenomenon of quiet quitting is connected to organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) because when an employee chooses to stop putting in extra effort, he or she may decide to stop doing all the discretionary actions that are not part of his or her job description. In fact, recent evidence proves that quiet quitting correlates with lower levels of OCB and counterproductive behaviours in the workplace (Gray et al., 2025; Mannan et al., 2026)). The topic of quiet quitting has significance for productivity and retention because low involvement may affect individual productivity whereas withdrawal may result in higher intentions to quit if initial reasons are left unaddressed (Gone et al., 2026). Notably, quiet quitting also introduces issues of employee well-being into the realm of HRM: recent studies link the issue of quiet quitting with stress, burnout and job satisfaction, indicating that withdrawal might be related to the process of managing the exhausted personal resources of employees (Fikriando et al., 2024; Dilekci et al., 2025; Dilchert et al., 2026). This means that quiet quitting creates some challenges for managers regarding the issues of leadership and job design: do managers offer enough support, autonomy, meaningfulness and clarity to their employees and are jobs designed in such a way that enables employees to stay engaged without constant depletion of their personal resources? At last, the issue of quiet quitting brings the topic of psychological contract straight to the surface. If employees perceive breaches in organisational promises or expectations, they might become less willing to reciprocate by putting more efforts. According to Gray et al. (2025), psychological contract breach was positively correlated with the levels of quiet quitting through job satisfaction.

Despite a growing academic interest in the phenomenon, the meaning and conceptual boundaries of quiet quitting remain vague. The concept seems to be related to such known constructs as employee disengagement, burnout, psychological withdrawal, low organisational commitment, low discretionary effort, and turnover intention. At the same time, the constructs have their own meanings since they refer to different aspects of the employer-employee relationship. Thus, while disengagement means reduced involvement into one's job, burnout is associated with exhaustion, and turnover intention involves employees' intentions to quit. On the other hand, quiet quitting may mean being at the same job while not putting any extra effort. Hence, the recent academic findings call for clarifying whether there is a need to introduce a new construct or whether quiet quitting can be considered just another type of known forms of employee withdrawal (Dilchert et al., 2026; Magrizos et al., 2026). Therefore, there is an urgent question in the field of Human Resource Management: Is quiet quitting a new phenomenon, or is it a new name for the already known types of disengagement and withdrawal?

TABLE 1: GAP IN THE LITERATURE

Research gap	Existing Studies	Uncovered	Focus
Conceptual inconsistency	Quiet quitting has been defined as reduced discretionary effort, role-bound performance, disengagement or boundary setting. (Harris, 2025; Dilchert et al., 2026).	There is still no clear conceptualisation domain of the concept.	Evolution and clarification of the concept of quiet quitting
Differing definitions	Variations in definitions of quiet quitting have been used in previous studies. (Harter, 2022; Hiltzik, 2022; Harris, 2025; Gray et al., 2025).	Defining quiet quitting differently makes it hard to accumulate previous knowledge and compare results.	Definition and operationalisation of quiet quitting in studies
Lack of theory integration	Various theories such as JD-R, Conservation of Resources and Social Exchange (Maheshwari, 2026; Islam et al., 2026).	Theory have been applied in individual studies. Current explanations are not well integrated due to few attempts to integrate competing/complementary theories.	An integrated theoretical framework of quiet quitting
Overlaps with existing constructs	Quiet quitting has been compared with concepts such as disengagement, burnout, OCB, withdrawal and turnover intention. (Fikriando et al., 2024; Gray et al., 2025; Dilchert et al., 2026).	The exact difference between the concept of quiet quitting and these existing constructs is not clear.	Quiet quitting vs disengagement, burnout and psychological withdrawal
Disjunctive antecedents and outcomes	Existing research has looked into workload, burnout, leadership, work-life balance, job insecurity, organisational support and turnover intention separately. (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023; Maheshwari, 2026; Islam et al., 2026).	The evidence is scattered and does not provide any insight into how individual, job-related and organisational factors may interact.	Integrated antecedent-mechanism-outcome model
Lack of longitudinal data	Most of the empirical studies use cross-sectional survey methodology. (Maheshwari, 2026; Islam et al., 2026).	This approach fails to provide enough insight into the development, changes or dynamics of quiet quitting.	The evolution of quiet quitting over time
Lack of cross-cultural evidence	Existing research covers a number of countries but is still limited to certain geographic and cultural regions (Islam et al., 2026).	Differences in employees' expectations, work value systems, leadership and boundaries have not been sufficiently studied.	Quiet quitting across cultural contexts
Limited data from emerging economies	While research has become increasingly global, there is still an unequal distribution of data among different countries and economic systems (Maheshwari, 2026; Islam et al., 2026).	In particular, emerging economies, such as those of India, continue to be rather underrepresented.	Quiet quitting in emerging economies: The case of India
Lack of integration of employee-	The existing literature tends to focus either on the employees' side, i.e., their well-being or on	There is not enough integration of employee experiences and	Linking well-being, leadership, job design,

organisation relationships	organisational variables, such as leadership and job design (Dilchert et al., 2026; Maheshwari, 2026).	organisational aspects into one explanation.	and other organisational aspects
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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND REVIEW OBJECTIVE

The notion of quiet quitting has rapidly transitioned from the workplace discourse into the scholarly HRM literature, but the conceptualization of quiet quitting remains contested. Specifically, recent empirical studies explain quiet quitting based on reduced discretionary effort, psychological withdrawal, disengagement and work-life boundary drawing, whereas systematic reviews document a patchwork of evidence and poor theory building (Dilchert et al., 2026; Islam et al., 2026). Equally important, the current conceptualisations often include the precursors and outcomes of quiet quitting, thus making it challenging to differentiate between quiet quitting and constructs like burnout, disengagement and organizational commitment (Pevac, N. 2023; Magrizos et al., 2026). In addition, the research on quiet quitting is not consistent in cultural and industry contexts, lacking qualitative, longitudinal and cross-cultural studies (Kachhap & Singh, 2024; Islam et al., 2026; Magrizos et al., 2026). Therefore, the key research problem does not consist of the mere existence of quiet quitting, but rather of its conceptualization and explanation.

It can be argued that the objective of this study is to gain a more coherent understanding of quiet quitting in the current HRM scenario. This study aims at analysing quiet quitting in a critical manner, and to analyse the definition and conceptualisation of quiet quitting. In addition, there is a need to differentiate between quiet quitting and related concepts such as disengagement, burnout, psychological withdrawal and organisational commitment in order to understand the reasons behind the emergence of quiet quitting and its implications. This research aims to explore the fragmented research conducted on employee, job and organisational factors along with the theoretical framework employed by researchers to define this phenomenon.

Thus, according to the arguments presented above, it is clear that quiet quitting (QQ) constitutes an intricate and dynamic type of workplace employee behaviour that should not be viewed in the narrow context of being one of the manifestations of low engagement or lower efforts at work. Despite the extensive body of literature that links QQ to employee disengagement, withdrawal, work-life balance, job dissatisfaction, perception of psychological contracts, and changing employee expectations, the concept is still ambiguous in terms of its definition, scope, antecedents and consequences. Specifically, there is a need for the distinction between QQ and other conceptually similar behaviours such as employee disengagement, job withdrawal, absenteeism, presenteeism and turnover intentions. Moreover, current literature does not provide adequate conceptualization of the factors that motivate employees to display QQ behaviour and organizational and individual consequences that may result from this behaviour. Against this background, the purpose of this review is to consolidate the emerging literature and answer the following research question:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. What is the conceptualisation and definition of quiet quitting as per the extant literature, and how does the concept of quiet quitting demarcate itself from other constructs, including but not limited to, employee disengagement, burnout, psychological withdrawal, organizational commitment, and low discretionary effort?

RQ2. What are the primary antecedents, mediators, and consequences of quiet quitting, and how can the fragmented theoretical and empirical body of knowledge be integrated to understand the phenomenon?

II. AVAILABLE LITERATURE ON QUIET QUITTING

Conducting a systematic search with keywords like “quiet quitting,” “quiet quitting and employee,” “quiet quitting and workplace,” and “quiet quitting and human resource management” reveals that the body of academic literature on the topic has grown rapidly since the concept became popular in the context of the workplace. The early academic literature on the topic focused on quiet quitting as an aspect of low levels of discretionary effort, employee engagement, work-life boundaries and psychological withdrawal. However, recent research is beginning to explore the antecedents, consequences and theoretical underpinnings of quiet quitting (Ozturk et al., 2023; Arar et al., 2023; Gone et al., 2026; Gray et al., 2025; Kanwal et al., 2026). Recent research on HRM has gone beyond looking at quiet quitting as disengagement. For instance, Dilchert et al. (2026) define it as a multidimensional psychological withdrawal encompassing job engagement, work engagement, workplace social relations and boundary setting. In similar fashion, Magrizos et al. (2026) state that quiet quitting can be of two types a proactive type where the employees deliberately

decide to do quiet quitting, and a more passive form of the same, driven by other considerations related to employee involvement. There are also several empirical and review studies which have associated quiet quitting with job demands, burnout, leadership, organizational support, employee wellbeing, turnover intentions and performance (Agarwal et al., 2025; Gone et al., 2026; Maheshwari, 2026). Overall, this body of literature highlights the fact that quiet quitting has emerged from a buzzword in the workplace environment to an HRM research topic of interest.

CONCEPTUALLY RELATED LITERATURE

This literature on quiet quitting can become even more relevant and significant once it is looked at through the prism of the other constructs which are conceptually close to it and include employee disengagement, burnout, psychological withdrawal, psychological contract, organizational commitment, discretionary effort, and employee engagement. Such a range of research shows that despite quiet quitting having some features which could be associated with already recognized types of employee withdrawal, there should still be certain differences between them (Fikriando et al., 2024; Dilekci et al., 2025). For instance, Gray et al. (2025) define quiet quitting as different from disengagement because of the fact that employees may perform all the necessary activities required from them while restricting themselves from any extra effort. Burnout represents another closely related construct, particularly because exhaustion and excessive job demands may encourage employees to reduce their involvement; however, recent evidence suggests that quiet quitting can also emerge from factors such as perceived injustice, job characteristics and unmet psychological contracts rather than burnout alone (Gray et al., 2025; Maheshwari, 2026; Almarzoqee et al., 2026). The psychological contract perspective is particularly relevant, as breach or non-fulfilment of organisational promises has been linked to greater quiet quitting through reduced job satisfaction (Gray et al., 2025). Quiet quitting is also connected with organisational commitment and discretionary effort because employees may remain members of the organisation while recalibrating their contribution to formal role requirements. Importantly, emerging evidence indicates that quiet quitting is associated with lower organisational citizenship behaviour and greater counterproductive work behaviour (Gray et al., 2025), while engagement appears to be negatively related to quiet quitting (Dilchert et al., 2026). Taken together, these studies suggest that quiet quitting sits within a broader network of employee attitudes and behaviours, making it important to establish where the construct converges with and where it differs from existing HRM concepts.

TABLE 2: EVALUATION AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE QUIET QUITTING

Author/Year	Definition or conceptualisation of Quiet Quitting	Critical Component	Behavioural or Psychological	Difference from Related Concepts
Formica & Sfodera (2022)	Individuals confine themselves to what they are supposed to do and refuse to do any activity other than those assigned to them in their formal job specification.	Conformity to formal roles	Behavioural	It puts an emphasis on limiting one to formal job description without leaving the job altogether.
Scheyett (2023)	Quiet quitting is linked with disengagement and individuals only do enough to be able to cope with work.	Low-effort	Behavioural + Psychological	Gives more importance to disengagement rather than formal job description.
Anand et al., (2024); Patel et al. (2025)	Explains quiet quitting in terms of psychological detachment and reduced engagement, along with lack of managerial support and issues of well-	Conformity to formal roles	Primarily Psychological	Greater than low-effort as it considers well-being and work-life balance.

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	being and work-life balance.			
Gray et al. (2025)	Employees intentionally do the bare minimum that is required of them in their jobs.	Intentional minimum effort	Behavioural + Psychological	Strong emphasis on the intentionality element and distinguishes quiet quitting from general disengagement.
Kanwal et al. (2025)	Quiet quitting may be carried out either actively through the deliberate restriction of extra-role behavior or passively through the decline in engagement.	Active versus passive withdrawal	Behavioural + Psychological	Introduces heterogeneity through active and passive withdrawal.
Harris (2025)	Employees intentionally regulate their work through the adherence to contracted duties while not voluntarily assuming extra responsibilities.	Work boundary / contracted duties	Behavioural	Emphasises the employees' intentional regulation of the work effort and responsibilities.
Dilchert et al. (2026)	Quiet quitting is seen as multidimensional psychological withdrawal, which consists of decreased job engagement, general work engagement, workplace social relations, and boundary setting.	Multidimensional withdrawal	Psychological + Behavioural	Moves beyond the minimum effort element towards general engagement and social connection.
Magrizos et al. (2026)	The quite quit is seen as a calculated approach which usually entails the withholding of discretionary effort, and can be either active or passive in nature.	Withholding discretionary effort	Behavioural + Psychological	Tries to determine what is common ground among all types despite different motivations and forms.

RECURRING THEMES IN THE QUIET-QUITTING LITERATURE

When examining how the definitions and conceptualisations compare, several recurring themes emerge, though some of them may carry greater significance than others in particular studies. It would therefore be unwise to assume that these recurring themes should automatically be equated with quiet quitting. Instead, these recurring conceptual themes can be considered a way of understanding the structure of quiet quitting.

TABLE 3: RECURRING THEMES IN THE QUIET-QUITTING LITERATURE

Recurring theme	How it recurs in the literature	Conceptional dimension	Studies supporting the recurring theme
Limited to formal job requirements	Performing only tasks that are strictly required Individuals limit themselves to performing strictly what their job role demands.	Adherence to formal role requirements	Formica & Sfodera (2022); Gray et al. (2025); Harris (2025)
Lowering of discretionary effort	Individuals limit themselves to performing only the minimum tasks that are required in their jobs.	Limitation of discretionary effort	Gray et al. (2025); Magrizos et al. (2026)
Psychological withdrawal	The level of involvement in one's work reduces psychologically.	Psychological withdrawal	Kahn (1990); Scheyett (2023); Dilchert et al. (2026)
Remaining in employment	Individuals stay employed in the company rather than quitting.	Continuity in employment	Harris (2025); Dilchert et al. (2026)
Boundaries of work and life	Employees control their access and make themselves available for activities outside work.	Boundaries of work and life	Harris (2025); Dilchert et al. (2026)
Withdrawing from extra-role behaviour	Employees are less likely to be engaged in extra-role behaviours, including citizenship behaviour.	Withdrawing from extra-role behaviour	Gray et al. (2025); Dilchert et al. (2026)
Organisational detachment	Low commitment or low identification with the organisation can be a component of quiet quitting.	Organisational detachment	Anand et al. (2024); Dilchert et al. (2026)

The above synthesis shows that the concept of quiet quitting cannot be explained by one kind of behaviour, such as doing only the bare minimum at work. According to the literature reviewed, quiet quitting seems to be related to the regulation of the boundaries of role, decreased discretionary effort, psychological withdrawal, and boundaries between work and life. Fulfilling the formal requirements of a job seems to be common for all people who experience quiet quitting, but at the same time, employees can decrease their contributions beyond roles, their emotional engagement and attachment to an organisation (Dilchert et al., 2026; Magrizos et al., 2026). However, these aspects should not be considered interchangeable with existing concepts, such as burnout, disengagement, and turnover intention. On the contrary, they refer to different approaches to regulating participation without leaving the organisation. Thus, this synthesis proves that quiet quitting should be viewed as a multidimensional construct of decreased work involvement, rather than poor performance or lack of commitment. At the same time, it paves the way for the next step of reviewing: finding out if these aspects can be considered core characteristics of quiet quitting or its antecedents, manifestations, or consequences.

TABLE 4: QUITE QUITTING VIS-A-VIS RELATED HRM LATENT CONSTRUCTS

Latent Construct	Core Definition	Similarities to Quiet Quitting (QQ)	Differences from quiet quitting (QQ)
Employee Disengagement	The withdrawal of one's physical, cognitive and emotional presence from their work role (Kahn, 1990; Richerdson, 2023; Almarzoqee & Apostolou 2025).	Both are characterised by the lack of psychological engagement and commitment to work.	Disengagement refers to a wider psychological experience, whereas QQ includes the regulation of discretionary or extra-role effort and continuous employment.
Burnout	A work-related state of emotional exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy at work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 2001).	Both can include the feeling of depletion, lack of involvement and unwillingness to invest further efforts.	Burnout is the state of psychological depletion; QQ does not involve being exhausted but is done voluntarily as boundary setting.
Psychological withdrawal	A phenomenon when employees psychologically disconnect from work while still physically being at their workstations (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990).	Both can imply remaining at work while psychologically disconnected from it.	Psychological withdrawal involves the whole range of withdrawal behaviours such as lateness, absenteeism and turnover behaviours.
Organisational commitment	The degree of identification and bonding an individual employee feels towards his organisation (Mowday et al., 1979; Meyer & Allen, 1991).	Less attachment to the organisation may be related to QQ.	Commitment is an attitudinal variable, while QQ is more of an issue of regulating work involvement.
Turnover intention	A conscious intention or willingness of an individual employee to leave the organisation (Tett & Meyer, 1993).	Thinking about leaving may be associated with QQ.	Turnover intention implies leaving employment; QQ implies staying in employment but not involving oneself additionally.
Work-to-rule	A conscious decision by employees to undertake only the duties and procedures legally stipulated by their contract of employment, as a form of industrial action (Edwards, 1979).	Commonality between both phenomena lies in reducing work effort to formal job demands.	Work-to-rule usually means a conscious industrial action; QQ usually concerns individual work involvement.
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)	Behaviours undertaken voluntarily beyond the formal job requirement that help with the functioning of an	QQ may entail reduction or curtailment of OCB as well as other types of extra-role behaviour.	OCB is an example of a positive extra-role behaviour, while QQ relates to curtailment or reduction of such discretionary effort.

	organisation (Organ, 1988).		
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The above discussion brings out a crucial issue from a conceptual point of view - that Quiet Quitting intersects with many existing constructs in HRM, but the intersection is not absolute. The psychological withdrawal or employee disengagement covers the psychological distance involved in QQ, and the burnout covers one of the possible states through which employees can decrease their participation. Organisational commitment refers to the employee's bond with the organization, while turnover intention refers to the likelihood of leaving the organization at some future time. Work to rule is the closest to the behavioural dimension of QQ. In the same way, OCB offers a valuable contrast because QQ can be described as a withdrawal of behaviour that is represented by OCB. The latest studies indicate that QQ can be defined as a unique construct that is found at the point of intersection of psychological withdrawal, lack of discretionary effort, and boundary management between work and life (Hamouche et al., 2023; Dilchert et al., 2026; Magrizos et al., 2026).

WHAT EXACTLY SETS QUIET QUITTING APART?

It seems that what sets quiet quitting apart is not necessarily the behaviours themselves but rather their specific combination. While quietly quitting employees will perform their job duties as expected, they will limit their discretionary effort, their extra-role behaviours and involvement in work to these obligations (Gray et al., 2025; Harris, 2025). Quiet quitting is different from burnout as burnout is mainly characterised by exhaustion and psychological stress (Maslach et al., 2001), and also from turnover intention, since the main problem there is the intent to leave the organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Quiet quitting is also distinct from organisational disengagement as the latter focuses on reduced psychological commitment while quietly quitting employees may calibrate their efforts consciously (Kahn, 1990; Dilchert et al., 2026). Recent literature shows that quiet quitting can involve work-life boundary management and a decrease in social relations at work, meaning that workers might be productive in their official capacities while intentionally managing the amount of work intrusion in their personal lives and identity (Dilchert et al., 2026). Similarly, Magrizos et al. (2026) note that the withholding of discretionary effort is another common element among different definitions of quiet quitting, even though the motives and manifestation of the phenomenon might differ. Quiet quitting could therefore be characterised by its combination of job retention, carrying out formal duties and avoiding discretionary participation. It is not total disengagement with work, but rather a new form of an employee's attitude towards work, being part of an organisation but managing how much they want to get involved in the work process.

There are no clear answers in the literature about whether quiet quitting should be considered an entirely different construct. The literature mentions certain features such as doing one's job formally and cutting down discretionary efforts, but these are consistent with concepts of disengagement, psychological withdrawal, and reduced organizational citizenship behaviour (Gray et al., 2025; Dilchert et al., 2026). The same issues of ambiguity in definition and conceptualization are raised by Magrizos et al. (2026). Thus, instead of treating quiet quitting as a unique concept, the literature must be critically analysed for establishing the need for such a concept.

SYNTHESIS OF THE ANTECEDENTS OF QUIET QUITTING

According to the current literature, antecedents to quiet quitting exist on several levels and not from an individual employee factor. From the individual perspective, personal values, expectations of one's career path, motivation and changed priorities can affect employees when allocating their efforts and setting boundaries. From the job perspective, the workload, too high job demands, lack of autonomy, insecurity and conflicts can affect employees' willingness to put in extra efforts (Maheshwari, 2026; Dilchert et al., 2026). At the organizational level, factors such as leadership, recognition, organizational support, fairness and psychological contract fulfilment seem most salient, as psychological contract violation has been found to be positively related to quiet quitting behaviour (Gray et al., 2025). Lastly, the work environment (hybrid and remote work, digital connectivity, new post-pandemic norms) may affect how employees perceive their work and regulate their availability and engagement (Dilchert et al., 2026; Islam et al., 2026). Hence, through this multilevel categorization, it becomes possible to move away from simply trying to understand "Why do employees quietly quit?" towards examining what influences quiet quitting.

TABLE 5: CLASSIFICATION OF ANTECEDENTS

Level	Antecedents (Potential)	Which may have potential impacts on QQ	Literature
Individual	Work values and career expectations	May impact an employee's willingness to expend extra effort and the value of work in their lives compared to other domains.	Dilchert et al. (2026); Maheshwari (2026)
Job	Job demands, workloads, lack of autonomy to do the task, role conflict.	High job demands or poor job quality may result in the restriction of extra effort by employees, while job autonomy may enable extra control over work involvement.	Marsh et al. (2022); Serenko (2023); Yildiz (2023); Dilchert et al. (2026); Maheshwari (2026)
Organisation	Organisational Leadership style, organisational recognition, organisational support and HR practices	Perception of treatment by the organisation may affect reciprocity and engagement.	Mahand & Caldwell, (2023); Gray et al. (2025)
Type of employment relationship	Psychological contract, perceived reciprocity, organizational commitment	Asymmetric employment exchange may affect employees' tendency to display discretionary actions.	Gray et al. (2025); Magrizos et al. (2026)
Context	Hybrid working, teleworking, digitalization, AI, post-COVID working model	Modification in the place of work, digitalization, and expectation may change the work-life boundary and involvement of employees.	Hofschulte-Beck (2022); Dilchert et al. (2026); Islam et al. (2026)

This categorisation shows that quiet quitting should not be treated solely in terms of the personal attitude of an individual employee. The current empirical research suggests that there is a link between what workers have to offer to the organisation, the design of their jobs, organizational management, and external environment within which workers conduct their business. This multi-level perspective is especially useful for your literature review since it enables you to find out whether any of the antecedents mentioned above were studied separately or together.

SYNTHESIS OF THE MECHANISMS LEADING TO QUIET QUITTING

There seems to be a suggestion in the existing literature that the impact of antecedents on quiet quitting is indirect rather than direct, and the mechanism for this is through psychological and relational mechanisms, such as burnout, disengagement, job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, and psychological contract violation. In this context, stressful work environment can deplete the psychological resources of the employees, cause exhaustion and reducing discretionary effort (Dilchert et al., 2026; Maheshwari, 2026). On the other hand, poor leadership and failure to meet organisational expectations can negatively affect perceptions of organisational support and cause psychological contract violation, resulting in reduced willingness of employees to put in extra effort (Harter, 2022; Pevec, 2023; Aydin et al., 2022; Morrison-Beedly, 2022; Hiltzik, 2022; Gray et al., 2025).

TABLE 6: CODING FRAMEWORK

Antecedent	Mediator	Outcome	Explanation	Literature Reference
High workload	Burnout / Emotional exhaustion	Quiet quitting	High demands can drain the employees of their resources, leading to withdrawal of further efforts from them.	Fikriando et al., 2024; Dilekci et al., 2025; Dilchert et al. (2026); Maheshwari (2026)
Excessive job demands	Psychological strain / Disengagement	Quiet quitting	Work demands may lead to psychological distancing from them by the employees.	Dilchert et al. (2026); Almarzoqee et al. 2026
Poor leadership	Perceived organizational support	Quiet quitting	The lack of support from managers may reduce the employees' sense of the value of their contributions to the organization.	Thakur & Srivastava, (2025); Cirak & Esen, 2025; Islam et al. (2026); Maheshwari (2026); Dilchert et al. (2026)
Psychological contract	Breach, Job dissatisfaction	Quiet quitting	The breach of psychological contract by the organization may lead to lack of reciprocation from the part of the employee.	Gray et al. (2025); Baran et al. 2024
Low recognition	Low organisational identification	Quiet quitting	Low recognition from the management side may result in low motivation for doing extra work.	Maheshwari (2026); Islam et al. (2026)
Poor work-life balance	Boundary Regulation	Quiet quitting	Low work-life balance is another reason why employees limit their work involvement.	Dilchert et al. (2026)
Low autonomy	Low job engagement	Quiet quitting	Lack of autonomy in the job may lower the engagement of employees.	Dilchert et al. (2026)
Organisational injustice	Low Trust and job commitment	Quiet quitting	Unfair treatment at the workplace may break the reciprocity relation between employee and employer.	Maheshwari (2026); Islam et al. (2026)

Quiet quitting could happen either due to the exhaustion of the employees, feeling of being unsupported and/or mistreated, weakening of the psychological contract or the deliberate formation of boundaries around the work. In this regard, these mechanisms should not be considered to be equivalent. The burnout is a resource depletion mechanism, the psychological

contract breach is a relational mechanism, the disengagement is a psychological mechanism, and the boundary regulation is a self-regulation mechanism. According to recent literature reviews, these theoretical mechanisms still remain quite scattered (Dilchert et al., 2026; Magrizos et al., 2026). That is why, analysing these mechanisms could help you to progress your review from the antecedent → quiet quitting model to the antecedent → mechanism → quiet quitting model.

SYNTHESIS OF THE EFFECTS OF QUIET QUITTING

Finally, in addition to analysing the antecedents, processes and mechanisms, the existing literature should pay attention to what takes place after the occurrence of quiet quitting, since its effects might go far beyond the individual. It appears that according to the available evidence, there could be both individual and organisational effects of quiet quitting, though the evidence is highly fragmentary. On the one hand, lack of involvement might relate to low engagement, satisfaction with work and overall well-being, whereas long-term withdrawal might be associated with stress, burnout or turnover intentions (Dilchert et al., 2026; Maheshwari, 2026). On the other hand, restriction of discretionary effort might influence organisational citizenship behaviour, performance, productivity, knowledge sharing and other types of employee behaviour which require their extra effort (Gray et al., 2025; Islam et al., 2026). Notably, these effects should not necessarily be treated as consequences, since some of them, such as burnout or poor well-being, might be used as antecedents or mechanisms in certain individual research works.

TABLE 7: OUTCOMES

Level	Outcome	Relation of outcome to quiet quitting	Literature that supports this relation
Employee	Well-being	Quiet quitting may be linked to employee well-being, especially when employees are using boundaries to conserve personal resources.	Pratiwi et al. 2023; Dilchert et al. (2026); Maheshwari (2026)
Employee	Job satisfaction	Quiet quitting can be a cause or an effect of dissatisfaction with the job situation.	Gray et al. (2025); Maheshwari (2026)
Employee	Engagement	Lower psychological and behavioural involvement can reinforce reduced work engagement.	Dilchert et al. (2026)
Employee	Stress	Pressure at work and withdrawal can be related through employee stress and resource depletion.	Dilekci et al. (2025); Dilchert et al. (2026); Bhawna et al. (2026)
Employee	Burnout	Burnout can either precede or co-occur with quiet quitting, depending on the research approach.	Ninaus et al. (2021); Serenko (2023); Maheshwari (2026); Dilchert et al. (2026)
Employee	Turnover intention	Withdrawal behavior can be correlated with turnover intention of the employees.	Gone et al. (2026); Islam et al. (2026)
Employee	Work-life balance	Boundary setting in association with quiet quitting may influence employees' work-life balance experience.	Fikriando et al., (2024); Dilekci et al., (2025); Dilchert et al. (2026)

Organisation	Productivity	Withdrawing from discretionary contribution may influence productivity of the individuals and the teams.	Islam et al. (2026); Maheshwari (2026)
Organisation	Performance	Boundary setting may influence performance-related dimensions.	Dilchert et al. (2026); Islam et al. (2026)
Organisation	OCB	Disengagement from voluntary behaviours constitutes an important aspect of quiet quitting.	Gray et al. (2025); Mannan et al. (2026)
Organisation	Innovation	Boundary setting in relation to initiative and discretionary contribution may limit innovation.	Maheshwari (2026)
Organisation	Service quality	Reduced involvement of the employees may have certain implications for their client interactions in service-oriented organisations.	Islam et al. (2026)
Organisation	Knowledge sharing	Reduced willingness to go beyond formal responsibilities may influence knowledge exchange practices.	Maheshwari (2026)
Organisation	Retention	Quiet quitting may be a sign of weakening ties and lead to employee departure.	Gone et al. (2026); Islam et al. (2026)

This framework allows to position quiet quitting as a linking construct between the organisational environment and the consequences for employees and the organisation. On the other hand, according to the literature, certain variables might play different roles in the framework. For instance, burnout can function as both antecedent and consequence in different studies. Thus, this ambiguity can become one of the most powerful motivations for the conceptual framework (Dilchert et al., 2026; Magrizos et al., 2026; Lotz & Bolino 2020; Atiq et al., 2025).

UNDERLYING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR QUIET QUITTING

The theoretical perspective is significant because it provides an explanation for how employees transition from the given situation at the workplace to low engagement and discretion. While the recently introduced body of knowledge related to quiet quitting references different established perspectives, none of the theories alone seems able to account for this phenomenon. The following is an overview of how each perspective explains this phenomenon and what is left unaccounted.

TABLE 8: IDENTIFYING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory	Explanation of Quiet Quitting (QQ)	Perspectives	Unexplained component
Social Exchange Theory	Employees evaluate reciprocity within the relationships with an organisation. If the level of support, recognition, or fairness is insufficient, the employees may cease making discretionary efforts.	Arar et al. (2023); Gray et al. (2025); Rahmadara & Rachmawati, (2025); Islam et al. (2026)	Explains nothing about QQ related to one's personal interests, boundaries between work and life or resource exhaustion.
Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory	Excess job demands cause exhaustion while limited resources lead to decreased engagement and motivate withdrawing extra efforts.	Dilchert et al. (2026); Maheshwari (2026); Gone et al. (2026)	It well explains strain and disengagement, but poorly explains the voluntary act of boundary drawing which is not necessarily caused by exhaustion.

Exploring Quiet Quitting: A Systematic Review of The Antecedents, Underlying Processes and Outcomes of Quiet Quitting

Psychological Contract Theory	The employee compares expectations from an organisation with his perception of reality and if the difference is noticed, reciprocity and motivation to give extra effort will be reduced.	Gray et al. (2025); Harris (2025)	Mainly explains QQ because of unmet expectations and does not explain employees' QQ caused by personal reasons.
Theory of Conservation of Resources	Protecting one's valuable psychological, emotional and physical resources is of high importance for the employee. Constant consumption of these resources at work leads to the need to limit discretionary efforts.	Maheshwari (2026); Dilchert et al. (2026)	It may explain withdrawal from work as a result of depletion of resources but does not explain QQ of employees who have not suffered any loss of their resources.
Self-Determination Theory (SDT)	Motivation of employees depends on their psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. In case these psychological needs are poorly supported, employees will lack intrinsic motivation and be disengaged.	Maheshwari (2026); Islam et al. (2026)	Directly explains motivational disengagement but lacks direct explanations of the choice to stay employed and limit extra-role efforts.

THEORETICAL INFERENCE

Based on the comparison made above, it can be deduced that quiet quitting is a multidimensional concept in theory. SET describes the concept as a result of reciprocity imbalances, while JD-R describes the mechanism of how demanding and exhausting work situations coupled with a lack of adequate resources lead to disengagement. Psychological contract theory describes the concept based on violations of expectations, whereas COR is concerned with resource protection, and SDT deals with motivation and psychological needs. However, none of the theories described above provides a full picture of the concept. What makes it especially interesting is the possibility of various pathways through which the concept may occur: an individual may withdraw because of the failure to reciprocate from the side of the organisation, demanding nature of work, expectation violations, or because he or she wants clear boundaries between work and personal life.

THEORETICAL SYNTHESIS

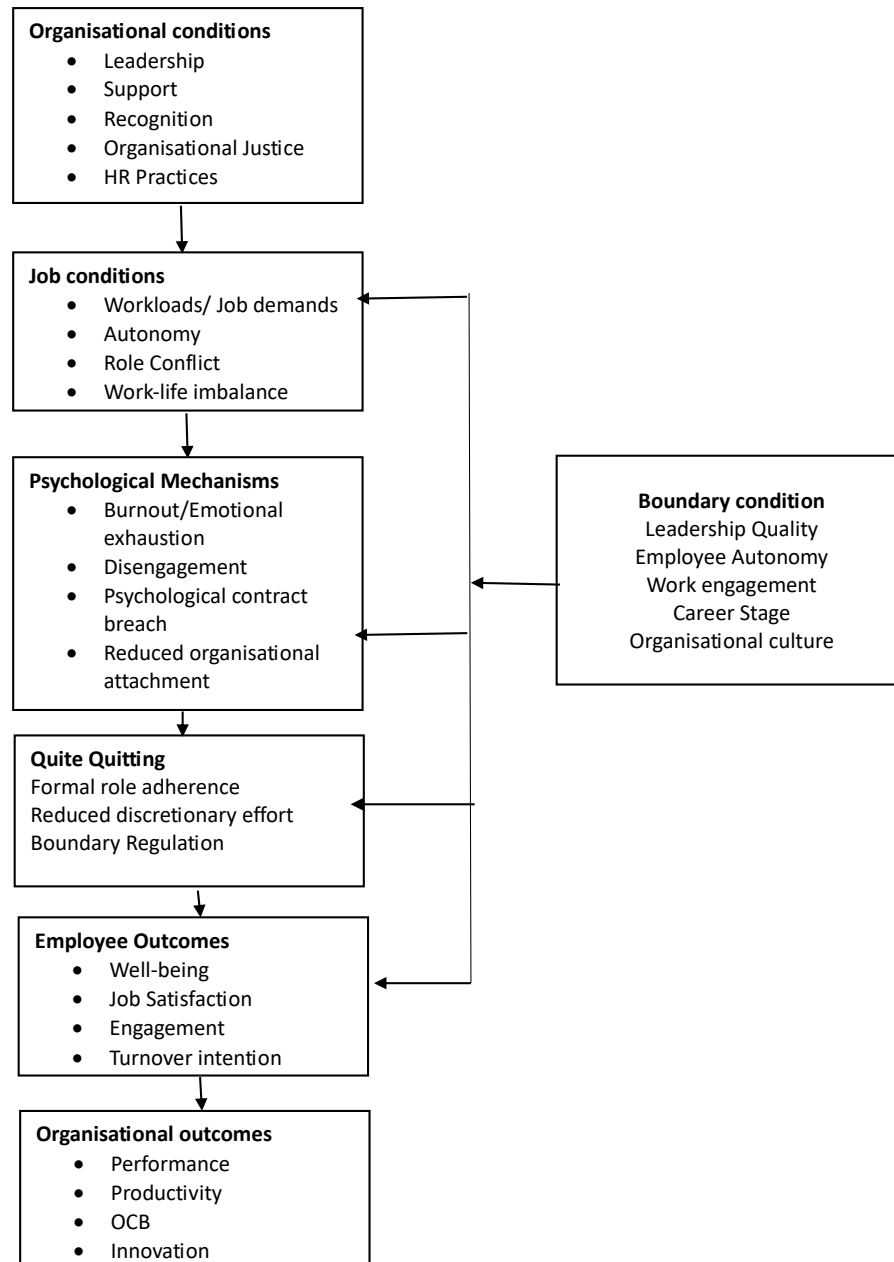
The review reveals the literature to be fragmented theoretically rather than being dominated by one theoretical lens in explanation. Each study is based on either Social Exchange Theory, Job Demands-Resources Theory, Psychological Contract Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, or Self-Determination Theory, with each providing explanation of one particular path leading to quiet quitting (Gray et al., 2025; Dilchert et al., 2026; Islam et al., 2026). However, these theories have seldom been combined in order to demonstrate how the combination of workplace factors, psychological processes, and decisions of employees works. Most importantly, the existing theoretical lenses focus more on stress, reciprocity, unfulfilled expectations or motivation while paying considerably less attention to the element of employees' agency, namely the conscious regulation of their performance and boundary setting even without severe exhaustion and workplace mistreatment (Harris, 2025; Magrizos et al., 2026).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework needs to arise from what is observed in the reviewed literature, rather than be forced into existence in advance. According to the literature review, quiet quitting can be described as a process wherein organisational and job conditions create an experience for the employee psychologically which then determines the level of effort he is willing to contribute above and beyond his actual job. Organisational characteristics, such as leadership, organisational climate, recognition, justice and HR practices might affect employees' perception of the employment relationship, while workload, job demands, autonomy and work-life imbalance affect the demands and resources associated with the job (Atalay & Dagistan, 2024; Gray et al., 2025; Dilchert et al., 2026). The emerging pattern of quiet quitting is characterised by the fact that an individual remains employed while following the official roles and

responsibilities along with a reduction in discretionary and extra-role activities (Magrizos et al., 2026). This may have an effect on employee-related outcomes such as well-being, satisfaction, engagement, and turnover intentions and organizational outcomes such as performance, productivity, OCB, and innovation (Dilchert et al., 2026; Islam et al., 2026). However, the effects may vary depending on certain boundary conditions such as leadership quality, autonomy of employees, work arrangements, career stages, and organisational culture.

INTEGRATED MODEL OF QUIET QUITTING BEHAVIOUR: DRIVERS, MECHANISMS, BOUNDARY CONDITIONS, AND OUTCOMES



This framework's crucial contribution to knowledge about the concept lies in its portrayal of quiet quitting as neither being a mere product of adverse working conditions but rather as a possible reaction that employees can engage in and use to adjust their engagement levels within the employment relationship. This allows for the separation of quiet quitting from the concepts of burnout, disengagement and turnover intention and the consideration of how they might be linked to it (Dilchert et al., 2026; Magrizos et al., 2026).

III. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: CONCEPTUALISATION OF QUIET QUITTING

There are enough works in the current literature on the topic that point out the importance of the concept of quiet quitting. However, there is no complete justification of its conceptual status as of yet. First, most of the studies were devoted to describing quiet quitting as being engaged only in tasks allocated to a person in the job description (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Galanis et al., 2023). Next, in the course of time, the definition of quiet quitting evolved into being associated with disengagement, low organizational commitment, burnout, and unwillingness to take up more than what was originally required of employees (Anand et al., 2023; Agarwal et al., 2025). Thus, the overlapping concepts created a certain conceptual confusion since quiet quitting is similar to existing withdrawal behaviour patterns and does not always correspond to them (Atalay & Dağıstan, 2023; Serenko, 2024). Empirical studies have confirmed the hypothesis since Gray et al. (2025) show that it is possible to operationalize quiet quitting as minimum-role performance, and Kanwal et al. (2025) state that it might be both a passive and an active choice. In the same vein, Agarwal et al. (2025) highlight the role of HR practices and psychological factors affecting quiet quitting, while Gone et al. (2026) point out connections with work-life balance, leadership, burnout and turnover intentions. Systematic review evidence shows that the existing literature is still fragmented, offering varying theories with little to no connections among antecedents, mechanisms and consequences (Islam et al., 2026; Maheshwari, 2026). The most important contribution made by the recent research is that of Dilchert et al. (2026), who conceptualise quiet quitting as multidimensional construct based on job engagement, work engagement generally, social connectedness and boundary management, and of Magrizos et al. (2026), who identify the persistent behavioural nature of quiet quitting, when employees keep doing what they are supposed to do but stop doing what is expected from them. What sets the phenomenon apart seems to be the blend of membership within the organisation, formal obligation fulfilment, and limited involvement through discretion. Literature, thus, endorses the notion of considering quiet quitting to be a relatively new and multi-dimensional employee involvement phenomenon, even though it is important to remember that the definition and the relationships between the phenomenon and the existing concepts need to be empirically validated. The most significant contribution of this review, therefore, is to connect the separate threads into a coherent chain starting from work environment through psychological processes to employee behaviour and consequences.

There are some research directions that can be pursued based on the conceptualization developed in this review. Firstly, it is necessary to verify empirically the existence of a difference between quiet quitting and disengagement, burnout, psychological withdrawal, and turnover intention. Secondly, the proposed antecedent-mechanism-quitting-outcome model can be examined further using mediation and moderated mediation approaches to reveal how organizational/job conditions lead to employee quitting. Finally, more consideration must be given to the role of employee initiative in the process of quiet quitting, specifically whether it reflects boundary regulation or resource protection by the employees (Harris, 2025; Magrizos et al., 2026). Fourth, longitudinal research is required to determine whether quiet quitting is just an ephemeral phenomenon, a consistent behavioural pattern or even a prelude to eventual job departure (Dilchert et al., 2026). Fifth, it would be necessary to investigate moderating factors such as leader effectiveness, autonomy, organizational culture, career maturity and hybrid work models. Finally, it is suggested to conduct cross-comparative and cross-cultural research, especially in emergent economies like India, to find out whether the nature and manifestation of quiet quitting depend on cultural norms, job practices and evolving employer-employee relationships (Islam et al., 2026; Maheshwari, 2026).

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