

# Is Quiet Quitting Real? Evidence from a Developing Country

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## **Abstract**

The phenomenon of Quiet Quitting has been a subject of academic and professional discourse for a considerable period. Although many definitions and justifications for Quiet Quitting have been suggested, no study has systematically been conducted as exploratory research on the actual motivations and behavioural expressions of workers who engage in Quiet Quitting. This study utilises comprehensive qualitative data obtained through interviews, with the participants consisting of a convenience sample of employees and managers currently working in the hospitality industry in Sri Lanka. The data underwent deductive analysis utilising the content analysis method. The findings reveal that the employee's propensity to quit is increasing. The determinants such as work-family conflict, employer branding, employee engagement, organisational culture and values, and employee voice seem dominant, attributing to Quiet Quitting.

**Key Words:** Career Advancement, Employee Engagement, Employee Resignations, Employee Voice, Employer Branding, Organisational Culture, Quiet Quitting, Work-family Balance

## Introduction

The contemporary understanding of global events is most effectively achieved by categorising them into the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods (Scheyett, 2023). Implementing company closures and lockout measures during the pandemic had significant adverse economic and financial consequences. However, these impacts have been mitigated mainly via government emergency assistance and economic interventions (Formica and Sfodera, 2022; Hamouche et al, 2023). Most concepts and paradigms that previously ruled international affairs before 2020 have undergone significant transformations (Mathushan and Kengatharan, 2022). However, the academic community needs more clarity about whether these paradigm changes can be solely attributed to the constraints imposed by COVID-19 (Hamouche et al, 2023; Serenko, 2023). As a result, the academic community is now experiencing a state of intellectual agitation to comprehend and interpret the dynamics of the novel world. Paradoxically, the emergence of the hustle culture is attributed to several factors, including the recent pandemic, globalisation, technological advancements, and employment transformations (Mahand and Caldwell, 2023).

Furthermore, the rise in rivalry among individuals employed in the corporate sector, coupled with a decline in their financial remuneration, has contributed to the emergence of a phenomenon known as "Quiet Quitting." Notably, two recent developments that have impacted enterprises, with a specific focus on the HR sector, pertain to their personnel and have been referred to as the "great resignation" and "Quiet Quitting." Both paradigm changes inevitably compel organisational practitioners and executives to reconsider their approach to internal marketing and, on a broader scale, human resources strategies and procedures (Formica and Sfodera, 2022; Anand et al, 2023). Undoubtedly, there has been a pre-existing issue of employee unhappiness within the business, as shown by high turnover rates and poor levels of engagement. This dissatisfaction is attributed to inadequate salaries, demanding work schedules, and prolonged working hours. The concept of Quiet Quitting was first introduced by economist Mark Boldger in 2009, but it gained significant traction in 2022, with the onset of the Great Resignation. The academic consensus suggests a link between the ongoing epidemic and the observed phenomena of Quiet Quitting (Anand et al, 2023).

The uploading of a video by TikToker Zaid Khan (@zaidleplin) was particularly helpful in attaining widespread recognition of the notion, resulting in its viral status. The postings made by TikTok user @zaidleplin, such as "Work is not your life" and "Your worth is not determined by productive output," have had notable consequences throughout other social media platforms. Sizable audiences, including the corporate sphere and diverse online social platforms, conducted extensive deliberations. The concept's susceptibility to widespread debate has resulted in its definition being approached from several perspectives. Analysing the talks, it becomes apparent that workers exhibit a state of "dissatisfaction and disengagement" towards their jobs. This is further compounded by suffering burnout due to a heavy workload and high expectations. Additionally, work-life balance is hindered as work encroaches into other aspects of their lives.

Nonetheless, Quiet Quitting has gained significant popularity, prompting many definitions and interpretations due to its association with social media platforms as a primary forum

for debate (Formica and Sfodera, 2022). A thorough examination of many academic databases, including Web of Science and Scopus, yielded no comprehensive or empirical research (Anand et al, 2023; Zhang and Rodrigue, 2023; Scheyett, 2023; Formica and Sfodera, 2022). The present circumstances need a comprehensive analysis of the idea using available literature, as it pertains to a significant concern related to employees' mental and physical health and productivity. Furthermore, it should be noted that this notion is relatively new in its development. This study aims to present conceptual research on Quiet Quitting within the given setting by using the existing resources, which have been collectively presented.

Amidst the pandemic and economic crises in Sri Lanka, several individuals within the workforce saw the potential for their professional responsibilities to be reconceptualised remotely or flexibly. However, they concurrently encountered virtual burnout and the erosion of distinct demarcations between their work and personal domains. Numerous personnel, including many social workers, were designated as "essential workers" and faced substantial and often perilous requirements for in-person work. The disillusionment and disengagement experienced by several employees may be attributed to the combination of post-pandemic pressures to resume employment and a work culture that offered limited incentives and prospects for personal development. Consequently, the phenomenon known as the Great Resignation ensued when many individuals, particularly those with the financial means to do so, voluntarily departed from their employment positions. For those who were unable or who chose not to resign, a viable option was discreetly disengaging from their roles, sometimes referred to as "Quiet Quitting" (Espada, 2022).

The act of dismissing the phenomenon of Quiet Quitting as a current topic of interest in the press can exacerbate disengagement among workers and fails to acknowledge the underlying and legitimate motivations that prompt individuals to withdraw from their professional responsibilities. In this vein, direct and proactive measures may prevent Quiet Quitting. However, the antecedents and consequences of Quiet Quitting are country / culture-specific and less focused on nations with a collectivist culture. Therefore, the present study fills a lacuna by examining the factors contributing to Quiet Quitting among employees in an under-researched collectivist nation, Sri Lanka.

This study offers valuable insights into the scope of the idea and demonstrates the key aspects that allow businesses to recognise the concept effectively and promptly within their own operations.

### **Literature Review**

Employees play a pivotal role in firms and are a significant source of competitive advantage if they are motivated and actively involved in their jobs (Mathushan and Shantha, 2024). Firms that cultivate an organisational culture that fosters a positive work atmosphere where workers experience well-being have a distinct edge in having engaged and dedicated staff (Mathushan and Kengatharan, 2022). The phenomenon of Quiet Quitting, the growing tendency on social media where individuals opt to fulfil their basic employment requirements instead of going the extra mile, has the potential to escalate further. This is a predicament since most contemporary occupations need a certain degree

of additional exertion to cooperate with colleagues and fulfil consumer requirements effectively. While there may be variations in the definitions, it is generally acknowledged that Quiet Quitting is when an individual does not formally resign from their employment. Instead, it fulfils the primary responsibilities associated with its role without exceeding the anticipated level of performance (Pearce, 2022).

Moreover, Quiet Quitting pertains to workers who effectively fulfil their job responsibilities but refrain from exceeding expectations or taking on additional tasks beyond their prescribed roles. Determining the veracity of Quiet Quitting as a novel phenomenon or an internet-based occurrence is challenging (Lawless, 2023). In conjunction with the enduring challenges of inadequate compensation, the primary factors contributing to the phenomenon known as Quiet Quitting encompass (a) the absence of greeting for one's performance and a sense of disdain, (b) the presence of a poisonous organisational culture, and (c) the pursuit of professional satisfaction and the intrinsic value derived from one's job.

Paradoxically, businesses worry about this transition and seek methods to deal with this shift. A suggested approach involves using AI-driven employee monitoring systems, originally used to oversee remote workers during the epidemic. Nevertheless, these methods are inadequate for addressing the needs of workers who want to preserve their physical and mental well-being since they violate essential rights such as privacy, autonomy, and dignity.

According to Scheyett (2023), Quiet Quitting is when individuals exhibit little effort to fulfil the basic requirements of their job without demonstrating any further dedication or investment of time and energy towards their professional responsibilities. It does not pertain to an employee's decision to resign. Notwithstanding, this relates to how an employee directs their attention towards job-related procedures during the time designated by the employer while abstaining from work activities during non-work intervals.

Quiet Quitting is a contemporary paradox that describes a longstanding problem in which individuals disconnect from their work, withdraw from their team, and adopt a passive attitude when they perceive a lack of control over their jobs (Rock and Dixit, 2023). This conduct is a typical sign of diminished motivation and involvement. Referred to as "learned helplessness," individuals surrender to ongoing and unavoidable pressures. Research indicates an innate tendency to exhibit passivity in the face of long-lasting hardship. To counteract learned helplessness, it is essential to provide workers with opportunities to exercise autonomy, enabling them to have a sense of control over their lives and decisions. This can be achieved by granting workers more autonomy and promoting utilising their existing autonomy to foster an internal centre of control. Greater autonomy for workers reduces the likelihood of resigning without causing a disturbance.

Although quitting is well recognised in today's organisations, it seems that many organisations are either reluctant, unprepared, or unable to deal with this situation successfully (Hare, 2022). Sturt and Nordstrom (2018) discovered that companies have continually neglected to meet the demands of their workers and have provided a range of

alarming facts about the inefficiency of several contemporary leaders, given the deficiencies and plain shortcomings of several contemporary CEOs in effectively inspiring their people (Smith, 2022). According to Block (2013), many people who quietly leave their organisations have said that they are no longer ready to remain committed due to the repeated failure of organisational leaders to treat workers as valuable persons.

The main drivers of Quiet Quitting are lacking a clear purpose, fair recognition, and the desire to maintain a work-life balance. Individuals who tend to withdraw from their work environment, sometimes called "quiet quitters," share many similarities with workers categorised as "not engaged." While these individuals may not display active disengagement, they demonstrate a psychological detachment from their employment, resulting in suboptimal performance and a failure to use their full potential. When employees exhibit Quiet Quitting, they refrain from exceeding expectations for their employer and instead limit their efforts to the minimum required to maintain employment security.

Ratnatunga (2023) highlights the importance of companies in establishing a motivated, committed, and nurturing atmosphere that enables individuals to flourish in both their professional and personal domains. According to Formica and Sfodera (2022), businesses should see workers as complete individuals who actively seek significance and purpose in their jobs. Serenko (2023) suggests that Quiet Quitting is often motivated by factors such as low motivation, burnout, or resentment towards managers or organisations, which might potentially jeopardise one's career. Mahand and Caldwell (2023) identify many key variables that contribute to silent resignation, including a decrease in organisational trust, growing employee disengagement, insufficient commitment to career growth, failure to recognise the worth of workers, and other related problems. Bell and Kennebrew (2023) emphasise the significance of favourable employer-employee relationships and the need to comprehend workers' perspectives of the social contract to address the issue of Quiet Quitting. According to Boy and Sürmeli (2023), the phenomenon of healthcare workers, especially young staff, silently leaving their jobs might harm healthcare quality by fostering a poisonous organisational culture.

Nevertheless, there are variations in researchers' viewpoints about the primary consequences of Quiet Quitting. The authors collectively examine the notion of Quiet Quitting, which refers to individuals disengaging from their job without formally resigning, as an increasingly prevalent occurrence that may adversely affect organisational results. Researchers argue that the pandemic has expedited the phenomenon of individuals silently leaving their jobs owing to burnout, excessive work demands, extended working hours, and a heightened need for a better work-life equilibrium. Shafiq and Aburub (2020) contend that organisations must recognise the significance of a conducive work environment, learning and development prospects, effective supervision, and positive interpersonal interactions to retain their skilled personnel. Failure of organisations to offer such an atmosphere may lead to employee disengagement and, eventually, silent resignation.

However, Human Resources (HR) and leadership teams may take some measures to alleviate this issue. One of the primary factors contributing to the phenomenon of Quiet

Quitting is a deficiency in (a) experiencing a sense of being valued and supported, (b) being provided with avenues for personal development and advancement, and (c) establishing a meaningful connection with the overarching mission of the organisation (Lord, 2022).

Quite Quitting is conceptualized as a form of employee working where the employee contributes to the job performance positively but in a way that is sufficient to survive on the job rather than giving the maximum possible contribution to the organization. In a way, it represents the employee's engagement in performing the job to the extent that is average but not high or very high, even though he or she can work and contribute more than average. It is not exactly employee engagement. Employee engagement is a hallmark of the relationship between an employee and his or her organization, as well as his or her job, and it is defined as the extent to which an employee gets involved in the job and the organization cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally (Iddagoda and Opatha, 2020). The concept of employee engagement includes the full involvement of the employee in performing the job and contributing to the organization to the full extent (by using his or her full potential). It is conceived that the concept of Quite Quitting differs from the concept of employee engagement in the sense that it does not include the full involvement of the employee in performing the job and contributing to the organization to the full extent (by using his or her full potential). It includes exerting the employee's effort to the minimum required to maintain employment security and working without significant creativity and innovation. Further, it differs from the concept of employee turnover in the sense that it does not include actual resignation by the employee from his or her job in the short term. Employee turnover refers to leaving an employee from the organization by terminating the employment (Opatha, 2019). However, Quite Quitting may result in leaving the organization in the long term.

Quiet Quitting might be seen as the antithesis of "quiet firing". In contrast to quiet resigning, quiet firing refers to the deliberate strategy employers use to encourage employees to willingly leave their positions by providing them with little compensation in terms of wages and perks. Hence, the notion of "Quiet Quitting" pertains to the employee's performance at a minimal level while strategically conserving their capabilities inside the workplace. The analysis of the idea of "Quiet Quitting" is warranted due to its association with quietness and the increasing prevalence of discussions around this concept across many platforms. Furthermore, exploring the possible adverse impact of Quiet quitting on people, companies, and the economy is crucial. These notions pertain to a scenario in which the employee and the employer experience adverse consequences, resulting in a decline in overall company performance for all parties involved and substantial economic losses worldwide.

## Methods

### **Participants**

The survey included employees and managers in hospitality industries in the northern province of Sri Lanka. An interview was conducted with a convenience sample of twelve employees and five managers. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling technique that involves selecting individuals from the target population based on practical considerations, such as their easy accessibility, geographical closeness, availability at a specific time, or desire to participate (Emerson, 2015). This approach is used to facilitate

the study's objectives. The sample included seven females and ten men, ages 30 to 55. Everyone had a diverse range of experiences from five to twenty-five years. The interviews were conducted either at the participants' respective institutions or at a location of their choice, at times outside their regular schedule.

### ***Instruments and Procedure***

The individual's involvement in the interviews was voluntary, and the interviews were done in Tamil, their first language. Initially, the respondents were instructed to introduce themselves, including fundamental details such as their workplace, positions, age, experience, and the duties they are responsible for. Subsequently, a series of open-ended inquiries were posed to ascertain how individuals exhibit Quiet Quitting during their tenure as employees and to uncover potential determinants that may influence the manifestation of Quiet Quitting. Each interview lasted around 30 minutes.

### ***Standardised Open-Ended Interview***

The interview procedure is well-recognized and explored within the qualitative research design. Interviews comprehensively understand participants' perspectives and insights about a specific subject matter. Frequently, interviews are supplemented with other methods of data collecting to provide the researcher with a comprehensive array of material for analysis (Gall et al, 1996). The standardised open-ended interview has a high degree of structure in the phrasing of the inquiries. However, the participants are consistently presented with the same questions framed to encourage unrestricted replies (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The inherent flexibility of an open-ended approach enables participants to provide comprehensive information at their discretion while also allowing the researcher to pose probing inquiries for further exploration. Standardised open-ended interviews are often used in research studies because they elicit comprehensive ideas and experiences from participants via open-ended questions (Turner III and Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022).

### ***Data Analysis***

The researchers used a deductive approach to content analysis to discern themes and patterns within the interview transcriptions. Content analysis allows academics to analyse substantial amounts of data efficiently and systematically. This approach might be advantageous in facilitating the identification and articulation of the central point of interest within many contexts, including individuals, groups, institutions, and societal spheres. Additionally, this strategy enables the derivation of conclusions that may be validated using other data-gathering techniques.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Employee Engagement and Well-being***

Employee engagement is a critical factor in employee retention. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive, committed, and satisfied (Saks, 2022). Disengagement is significantly associated with several adverse outcomes in the workplace, such as heightened job insecurity, diminished employee well-being, self-reported health symptoms, and overall discomfort and the prevalence of mental health issues. The individual actively involved in their job has a link with their tasks and colleagues,

consistently achieving satisfactory performance outcomes (Lee et al, 2020). Interviewee 2, a hotel manager, has this to say about employee engagement: *“Employee well-being is at the forefront of my daily routine. I start by fostering an open and inclusive environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their concerns. I regularly check with team members to gauge their workload and stress levels. If necessary, I encourage breaks and time off to recharge. Additionally, I promote work-life balance and support flexible scheduling when possible.”* Disregarding employee well-being harms workers' mental health (Kwon and Kim, 2020).

Organisations often need to provide a holistic job description and structure that prioritises the needs and well-being of employees when implementing a remote or hybrid business model (Sun and Bunchapattanasakda, 2019; Kwon and Kim, 2020; Lee et al, 2020). The two behavioural extremes of disengagement and engagement were identified as being on a continuum of psychological absence from work to psychological presence at work (Chanana and Sangeeta, 2021). A manager revealed, *“I advocate for employee assistance programs (EAPs), stress management workshops, and mindfulness training to promote mental health and emotional well-being. I encourage open discussions about mental health and create a stigma-free environment where my employees can seek support without fear of judgment. Additionally, I ensure that workload distribution is fair and manageable to prevent undue stress.”*

The analysis indicates a link between decreasing job engagement and the "Quiet Quitting" phenomenon, a decline in an employee's work-related performance and engagement. Specifically, the data suggests that work engagement has declined throughout the era of remote working. The disengaged employee exhibits reduced levels of engagement, demonstrating less involvement, suppression of thoughts and emotions, and diminished connection to their job tasks and colleagues.

A comprehensive examination of work disengagement revealed various factors that may be categorised into three main groups: human traits, job qualities, and organisational and workplace environments (Afrahi et al, 2022). Antecedents of individual characteristics encompass various factors, including demographics such as age, wherein older individuals may exhibit heightened disengagement in response to work-related changes. Additionally, education plays a role, as individuals with lower levels of education may experience increased disengagement due to limited skills and diminished self-confidence. Furthermore, negative affectivity, characterised by negative emotions and a pessimistic self-perception, is associated with elevated levels of disengagement. Conversely, individuals with high self-efficacy demonstrate superior coping mechanisms and a reduced propensity for disengagement. Lower levels of disengagement are also linked to increased adaptation and resilience in the workplace, particularly in response to uncertainty. One of the informants stated that *“In situations where an individual exhibits deficiency in their skills, knowledge, and talents, rendering them unable to achieve success and unable of acquiring these necessary competencies through on-the-job training, it is unlikely that they will be able to engage effectively or perform at a high level in their present position”*.

According to Afrahi et al. (2022), individuals with a proactive approach towards their professional growth are less likely to experience disengagement. While employee



engagement is a proactive approach to keeping employees motivated and committed, Quiet Quitting highlights the importance of recognising and addressing disengagement before it leads to significant talent loss and decreased organisational performance. One manager manifested that. *“Organisations should actively monitor employee engagement levels through surveys, feedback mechanisms, and regular check-ins to address Quiet Quitting. Addressing the root causes, such as improving leadership, recognising and rewarding employee contributions, and offering growth opportunities, can help re-engage disengaged employees and prevent further attrition”*.

Quiet Quitting occurs when employees experience a state of exhaustion because of unaddressed job stress. Employee engagement plays a significant role in preventing or mitigating the phenomenon of "Quiet Quitting." When employees are engaged, it generally results in a more positive and fulfilling work experience, reducing the likelihood of disengagement and Quiet Quitting. To ensure that employee engagement positively impacts the prevention of Quiet Quitting, organisations should actively work on fostering a culture of engagement. This includes providing opportunities for professional growth and development, recognising and rewarding employees for their achievements, encouraging a healthy work-life balance, promoting open communication and a culture of feedback, and ensuring that employees clearly understand the company's mission, values, and goals.

### **Employer Branding**

Given the persistent worldwide talent scarcity, organisations actively pursue holistic approaches to attract and retain prospective and existing employees (Guthridge et al, 2008). Employer branding is a strategic approach in human resource management (HRM) and brand marketing. It involves promoting a distinct and appealing image of a company as an employer, both internally and externally, to enhance recruitment and retention efforts. Employer branding has branding strategies to improve organizational attractiveness, it is defined as a formal attempt made by an organization to create a distinct identity for the organization within the minds of job seekers, and this distinct identity is recognition for the organization as a desirable entity to work for (Opatha, 2024).

Scholars suggested that employer branding can be an effective organisational strategy to differentiate from competitors and gain a competitive advantage in the labour market (Lievens, 2007; Collins and Stevens, 2002; Lievens and Highhouse, 2003; Martindale, 2010). Employer branding is considered a prominent strategy for addressing the difficulties associated with recruitment and employee retention. It is evident by one of the informants, *“According to my understanding; we are proud to be associated with a reputable employer brand that is likelier to remain engaged and committed to our work. This pride can buffer against the negative feelings that lead to Quiet Quitting.”*

A strong employer brand often conveys opportunities for career growth and development. Employees who believe in these opportunities are less likely to disengage and quietly quit, as they see a path for advancement within the organisation. Another informant revealed, *“I would say that a strong employer brand can attract candidates who align with the company's values, culture, and mission. When we identify with the*

*organisation's brand, we are more likely to feel engaged and committed to our work, reducing the likelihood of Quiet Quitting."*

Engaged employees with a positive view of their employer's brand are likelier to become brand ambassadors. They may refer friends and colleagues to work at the company, which can further strengthen the workforce and reduce the risk of Quiet Quitting. A positive employer brand can help retain top talent by creating a sense of loyalty and commitment. When employees are proud to be associated with their employer and believe in its values, they are less likely to quietly quit and seek opportunities elsewhere.

### **Organisational Culture and Values**

Over time, a toxic culture inside an organisation may significantly impact its overall performance. When a company permits the proliferation of toxic subcultures, workers impacted by such environments may probably exhibit disengagement from their work, participate in negative discussions about their employer on employee review platforms such as Glassdoor or Indeed, or actively seek other employment opportunities. In a broader context, the organisational culture tends to serve as a more dependable indicator of industry-adjusted attrition than workers' salary evaluations. A toxic corporate culture is the strongest predictor of industry-adjusted attrition and is ten times more important than compensation in predicting turnover (Sull et al, 2022). The leading elements contributing to toxic cultures include failure to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, disrespected workers, and unethical behaviour (Sull et al., 2022). A toxic culture is the most significant factor pushing employees out the door during the Quiet Quitting. The lack of official and informal acknowledgement for high-performing individuals is an additional cultural factor that might indicate attrition. The inability to acknowledge and appreciate employee success is very probable to result in the departure of the most productive individuals inside an organisation. However, leaders committed to achieving success in the competition for talent throughout Quiet Quitting and beyond need to undertake additional measures. Organisations must comprehensively comprehend the many aspects of their cultural framework contributing to employee disengagement and attrition and take appropriate steps to acknowledge and rectify these factors. Primarily, addressing and eliminating factors that lead to developing a detrimental cultural environment is essential. An informant supported this statement. *"Our organisational culture is highly collaborative and team-oriented. There's a strong emphasis on innovation and a shared commitment to our mission. Overall, it's a positive and supportive culture."*

One employee stated, *"I haven't experienced a significant misalignment, but there have been times when I felt certain decisions or actions needed to fully reflect our stated values. It can be a bit disheartening when that happens."* The variable that consistently had the most predictive power with toxic culture was leadership. The significance of leadership is widely acknowledged and it emphasises a fundamental truth: Leaders can only enhance the company culture if they demonstrate a willingness to enforce accountability among themselves and their peers concerning detrimental conduct. *"It's important for organisations to be open to feedback and work to bridge any gaps actively. They can involve employees in discussions about values and culture and make adjustments if necessary to ensure a better fit."* Fostering a workplace culture that

values work-life balance and respects personal time is essential and to encourage employees to take their vacation days and prioritise self-care.

### **Employee Voice**

In the contemporary landscape of highly competitive corporate environments, the input of employees via comments and recommendations has significant importance in enhancing the overall functioning of organisations, hence impacting performance outcomes. According to Ashford et al (2009), leaders and key decision-makers often need more awareness of the challenges and problems identified by frontline staff. They may mistakenly believe that the absence of negative feedback implies a favourable situation and that they possess comprehensive knowledge of the organisation's operations. Individuals may believe that workers have a sense of freedom in expressing their thoughts and opinions to higher authorities without acknowledging the prevalent hesitancy and apprehension experienced by many employees in engaging in upward communication. One hotel sector employee suggested, *“Organisations should create a room for employees to share their concerns and opinions. Establishing a compelling voice inside an organisation is pivotal in fostering employee trust, promoting innovation, enhancing productivity, and facilitating overall organisational improvement.”*

Organisations should strive to create an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing themselves and addressing their concerns to prevent the detrimental effects of Quiet Quitting on both individuals and the organisation. *“I enjoy the autonomy I have in my role. It allows me to take ownership of projects and make a meaningful impact. The most challenging part of my job is managing tight deadlines. Sometimes it feels overwhelming.”* Workers require room to proactively share recommendations, concerns, information regarding difficulties, or work-related views with those in higher positions within the organisation. When individuals choose to refrain from providing such feedback, they are demonstrating a state of silence, denying their organisation access to potentially valuable knowledge.

This study suggests that the articulation of thoughts and ideas, either spoken or written, pertains to issues such as job satisfaction, organisational challenges, and the need to improve workplace conditions and achieve personnel, team, departmental, or corporate objectives. An informant disclosed, *“I feel optimistic about my career growth here. I've had discussions with my manager about potential advancement opportunities, and it's encouraging.”*

To address Quiet Quitting, firms must proactively monitor employee engagement, conduct regular check-ins, and address issues contributing to disengagement. Encouraging open communication and addressing concerns can help prevent Quiet Quitting from becoming a widespread problem (Olson-Buchanan and Boswell, 2002; Detert and Burris, 2007). Employees express their ideas, suggestions, concerns, information about problems or opinions regarding work-related matters to individuals with the authority to take appropriate action. Formal grievance settlement procedures and joint consultation are useful strategies in this regard.

The primary objective of employee voice is to facilitate improvement or change within the organisation (Detert and Burris, 2007). Understanding the many aspects associated with employee voice is crucial since it enhances organisational success. One of the informants stated, *“Encouraging employee voice is crucial for organisations because it can improve decision-making, innovation, and employee morale. When employees feel heard and valued, they are likelier to be engaged and committed to their work.”* He also reported, *“Leaders who prioritise and promote employee voice enhance engagement and job satisfaction and tap into a valuable source of insights and ideas that can drive organisational improvement and innovation.”* The importance of leadership in promoting employee voice cannot be overstated since leaders can create an environment where workers feel at ease and see fewer threats to expressing their opinions. Furthermore, without employee voice, workers would likely have a sense of insignificance and lack of acknowledgement. This phenomenon has the potential to result in an increased likelihood of workers expressing an intention to resign from their positions. Change-oriented leadership is characterised by effective transformational leadership, fosters an environment where workers see a lessened danger of issues and possess personalities conducive to engaging in constructive voice behaviours. In this context, workers exhibit a decreased propensity to resign or see their future employment in an alternative business.

### **Work-life Balance**

Work-life balance is the tendency to become fully engaged in the performance of every role in one’s total role system to approach each role and role partner with attentiveness and care (Wood et al, 2020). Research supports that balancing work and personal life is associated with favourable outcomes such as enhanced organisational performance (Wong et al, 2020), job engagement (Jaharuddin et al, 2019), job satisfaction (Aruldoss et al, 2022), higher organisational commitment (Hutagalung et al, 2020; Allen et al, 2000), and turnover intention (Jaharuddin et al, 2019). It helps to balance work and personal life, which significantly contributes to the overall well-being of individuals. This includes several aspects, such as their level of contentment with their health, family life, and general satisfaction (Keyes, 2002). This is evident in the following lines: *“According to me, finding a balance between my professional and personal lives is what work-life balance means to me. It means being able to perform in my profession while still making time for my family, hobbies, and self-care.”*

Work-life balance and Quiet Quitting are closely related to employee well-being and job satisfaction (Wood et al, 2020). An imbalance between work and personal life can contribute to Quiet Quitting, where employees disengage from their work without openly expressing their dissatisfaction (Jaharuddin et al, 2019). One of the managers provides a statement: *“Some co-workers have become more reclusive, taking more sick days and displaying a lack of passion for their jobs. Even if they are physically there, they seem to be emotionally disconnected.”*

Work-life balance is a critical factor in preventing Quiet Quitting. When employees struggle to balance work and personal life, they are more likely to become disengaged, negatively impacting their well-being and job performance. Employers should actively promote and support work-life balance to reduce the risk of Quiet Quitting and maintain a productive, satisfied workforce. Employers can take steps to support employees in achieving a better

work-life balance. This includes offering flexible work arrangements, encouraging employees to take breaks, and respecting boundaries around working hours. An informant disclosed, *“I would say that if we struggle to maintain a proper work-life balance, we are more likely to experience burnout and job dissatisfaction. This imbalance can lead to resigning our job or Quiet Quitting as we emotionally detach from our work and disengage without openly expressing our concerns.”*

A crucial factor in achieving work-life balance is the attainment of a significant degree of involvement in professional responsibilities. Assuming that job-related objectives have significance for the person and that the individual achieves success in attaining these goals, a heightened degree of involvement in work life is expected to generate good effect. Reaching goals in one's professional life improves work-life balance and positively impacts other essential aspects of life. For instance, the study conducted by Poelmans et al (2008) demonstrates that individuals who exhibit a high level of engagement in their professional and personal lives can effectively attain a state of work-life balance. This is accomplished through three fundamental mechanisms: (1) the transfer of positive emotions from one domain to another, (2) the enhancement of role performance in various domains through the acquisition of skills and experiences, and (3) the integration of multiple life domains to facilitate the seamless transfer of positive experiences and emotions. One of the informants reported *“In my profession, I believe, the organization provides some flexibility regarding work hours and remote work opportunities. This adaptability has been critical in helping me to strike a fair work-life balance. I try to prioritise my time and set boundaries around my work hours. I also find that regular exercise and mindfulness practices help me manage stress and maintain balance”*.

Achieving a high work-life balance necessitates significant involvement in work-related responsibilities that result in many positive emotions by effectively transferring positive abilities, principles, advantages, social standing, and emotions from work-related roles to other roles in non-work domains. Significant involvement in one's professional life positively impacts personal well-being, such as overall life satisfaction. This is attributed to role enrichment, which refers to how engagement in one aspect of life affects performance and quality of life in other aspects of life (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006).

Quiet Quitting is a widely discussed topic among employees despite its inherent lack of verbal expression, implying a significant concern. This issue substantially jeopardises firms' operational efficacy and performance and employees' enduring sense of purpose. Hence, it is evident that Quiet Quitting requires prompt attention from senior executives and scholars. Given the topic's novelty, a dearth of research findings has been documented in different countries and cultural contexts. Inside this particular environment, it is deemed acceptable to do academic research to ascertain the present state of affairs inside firms and to enhance comprehension of this matter to implement efficient management practices.

The present study comprehensively analyses the causes and consequences of Quiet Quitting in Sri Lankan organisations and sheds some light on addressing these concerns effectively. Although the proposed framework has the potential to yield positive outcomes, it serves as a brief illustration of possible measures that might be implemented

practically to address the prevailing sense of discomfort that is impacting organisations. One of the primary concerns encountered by managers in the aftermath of the pandemic is the establishment of trust, fostering organisational commitment, promoting employee welfare, and cultivating a feeling of belonging. These challenges are becoming more urgent in our industry.

When individuals encounter excessive workloads and feel overwhelmed, inadequate remuneration and limited prospects for personal and professional development, they see themselves as having yet to take any other course of action. It is crucial to prioritise the formal conceptualisation or potential abandonment of the phrase "Quiet Quitting." This step will aid in mitigating the existing uncertainty around the many meanings and interpretations associated with the concept's significance.

Given the recent body of disengagement research, it has been suggested that disengagement should not be viewed as a direct conceptual opposite of engagement. Furthermore, the existing literature primarily focuses on interventions that enhance engagement or alleviate burnout. In light of this, it is pertinent to inquire whether these interventions are equally effective in addressing the phenomenon of Quiet Quitting. Quiet Quitting may be seen as a potential reaction to burnout, akin to the maladaptive coping mechanism of disengagement, or as a proactive approach to prevent burnout by prioritising work-life balance.

The field of HRM has recently called scholarly contributions that address various research inquiries about a special topic centred on the phenomenon of Quiet Quitting. Some of the more intriguing inquiries in their inventory include how one can effectively discern individuals who quit quietly, given their inherently inconspicuous nature and potential aversion to drawing attention. Does a workplace exhibit a contagion effect about Quiet Quitting quietly? How do remote, hybrid, and in-person work arrangements interact with or influence the occurrence of Quiet Quitting? Are there any positive consequences that employers may encounter due to Quiet Quitting? What is the correlation between Quiet Quitting and the phenomenon known as the Great Resignation, and what factors have contributed to the recent surge in the prevalence of Quiet Quitting, particularly considering the existence of similar terminologies and the enduring presence of withdrawal behaviours? Instead of disregarding the occurrence of employees quietly leaving their jobs, companies should strive to comprehend the underlying factors contributing to this phenomenon and implement practical measures to address the issue. The limited number of studies on disengagement contributes to a greater understanding of its implications, with contradictory findings on its impact on work performance. Consequently, there is a growing need for more investigation in this field. The literature reveals many repercussions, as identified by Afrahi et al (2022), which include emotional commitment (reversed), extra-role performance (reversed), in-role performance, physical discomfort, psychological disquiet, and turnover intentions.

Understanding the antecedents and consequences of Quiet Quitting is essential for organisations seeking to foster a more engaged and productive workforce. Identifying the causes of disengagement and implementing strategies to address them can mitigate the negative impacts of Quiet Quitting on individual employees and the organisation. Further

research and empirical studies are needed to explore these factors in different organisational contexts and industries, offering insights into tailored interventions and preventive measures.

### Conclusion

The notion of "Quiet Quitting" does not include the literal act of resigning from a job but rather refers to a behavioural approach adopted as a precautionary measure to mitigate the negative consequences associated with departing employment. Employee protection encompasses various definitions contingent upon the specific perspective being considered. In essence, it refers to safeguarding employees from burnout and related phenomena by ensuring they meet the minimum productivity standards set by their job while maintaining their overall well-being by cultivating a healthy work-life balance. Employees deploy a defensive mechanism in response to diverse job requirements and an escalating workload.

The act of quietly quitting a job is characterised by a more subtle and subdued approach in comparison to the more direct and explicit act of openly abandoning a job. The phrase is not meant to be interpreted literally but as a figurative expression. Instead of employees resigning from their positions, they are relinquishing the notion of surpassing expectations. Individuals who experience dissatisfaction with some aspects of their existing organisation or job choose to fulfil the minimal requirements.

Individuals who tend to withdraw from active participation, sometimes known as "quiet quitters," persist in fulfilling their normal job responsibilities while abstaining from engaging in discretionary behaviours, commonly referred to as citizenship behaviours, as identified by studies. Moreover, in the case of occupations characterised by clearly delineated duties, this issue may not pose a significant challenge. However, numerous organisations depend on a labour force willing to assume additional responsibilities when needed. Additionally, it is essential to note that employees have positive outcomes when they actively participate in citizenship behaviours, which encompass actions that contribute to the betterment of the organisation and its members. These benefits extend to both their well-being and their professional development. Therefore, the phenomenon Quiet Quitting can adversely affect companies and employees, necessitating leaders to comprehend and rectify its underlying origins.

Quiet quitters who give up easily are not characterised by their quietness or subtlety but by their conspicuousness. Employees exhibit many indicators that serve as cautionary signals. They are easily noticeable if one is actively searching for them. Ultimately, those who withdraw silently do not want to be disregarded. The individuals express a desire for their voices to be acknowledged and for constructive transformations to occur. Companies must collaborate with their workers to develop a comprehensive plan that fosters workplace well-being and mitigates burnout. Employees are entitled to realistic work expectations, conducive organisational cultures, avenues for professional development, and the opportunity to cultivate enthusiasm for their respective roles. Leadership is responsible for addressing organisational dysfunctions and ensuring an excellent work-life balance for people.

While the research findings of this study have offered valuable insights for theory and practice, it is important to note several limitations. This research has focused on the hospitality industries in the northern province of Sri Lanka. Owners/managers of the hospitality industry often declined our invitation for a personal visit. It can be recommended that adding a large sample to this kind of study would add more value to existing work on quiet quitting. The conclusions drawn from our research are limited in scope due to the small sample size, thereby preventing us from making broad generalisations to all hospitality industries in Sri Lanka or comparable developing nations.

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