



EMPLOYEE DISENGAGEMENT AND QUIET QUITTING: DEFINITIONS, RELEVANCE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

Vini.M.S*

Dr.R.Thirumoorthi**

*Ph.D Scholar in Commerce, Park's College (Autonomous)Tirupur.

**Associate Professor in Commerce, Park's College (Autonomous)Tirupur.

Introduction

In recent years, the global workforce has undergone a profound transformation shaped by evolving employee expectations, socio-economic disruptions, and a growing emphasis on well-being, purpose, and work-life balance. Against this backdrop, two interrelated phenomena **employee disengagement** and **quiet quitting** have emerged as critical challenges for organizations, HR practitioners, and scholars alike. While not entirely new, these concepts have gained renewed attention in contemporary discourse, particularly in the post-pandemic era, where hybrid work arrangements, digital fatigue, and shifting generational values have redefined how individuals relate to their work and workplaces.

Employee disengagement, traditionally understood as a psychological withdrawal from the workplace, manifests in reduced motivation, lack of emotional investment, and diminished discretionary effort. Disengaged employees often fulfill only the minimum requirements of their roles, show little enthusiasm for organizational goals, and exhibit low levels of innovation and collaboration. Gallup's State of the Global Workplace reports have consistently highlighted alarming levels of disengagement across sectors and geographies, estimating that disengaged employees cost the global economy hundreds of billions of dollars annually in lost productivity, absenteeism, turnover, and poor performance.

Statement of the Problem

Employee disengagement has emerged as a critical and escalating challenge for organizations across industries and sectors worldwide. It manifests in various forms, from lackluster performance and reduced enthusiasm to absenteeism and, ultimately, high turnover rates. Disengaged employees tend to exert only minimal effort, rarely contribute innovative ideas, and often disengage from collaboration, weakening team dynamics and diminishing overall organizational performance. In the modern workplace where agility, creativity, and collaboration are key to maintaining a competitive edge the cost of disengagement is substantial, leading to lost productivity, weakened morale, and disrupted operations. More recently, the phenomenon of **quiet quitting** has drawn renewed attention to this issue. Quiet quitting refers to a form of disengagement in which employees consciously decide to scale back their effort and commitment, performing only what is explicitly required of them and opting out of voluntary, extra-role activities. These individuals may appear to be meeting their job expectations on the surface, yet they are no longer emotionally or mentally invested in their work or the organization. Unlike traditional disengagement, which may involve overt dissatisfaction or absenteeism, quiet quitting is more subtle and, therefore, more difficult to detect and address. It often signals a deeper misalignment between employee expectations and organizational culture, leadership, or workplace practices.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant relevance in today's rapidly evolving workplace landscape, where employee disengagement and the phenomenon of quiet quitting are becoming increasingly prevalent and impactful. As organizations grapple with the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, shifts in employee expectations, and rising concerns about mental health and work-life balance, understanding the root causes of disengagement has never been more critical. This research addresses these timely and

complex challenges by investigating the underlying psychological, organizational, and cultural factors contributing to disengaged behavior particularly the subtle yet widespread trend of quiet quitting.

By uncovering the hidden drivers behind employee disengagement, the study seeks to generate valuable insights that can inform how organizations interpret and respond to declining employee motivation and discretionary effort. The subtle nature of quiet quitting often masks deeper dissatisfaction or misalignment between employees and their work environment. As such, this research goes beyond surface-level symptoms to explore the intrinsic and extrinsic elements—such as lack of recognition, poor leadership, limited growth opportunities, and perceived inequity that lead individuals to mentally and emotionally withdraw from their roles while remaining physically present.

The Research Objectives are Derived

- To analyze the concept of quiet quitting within the broader framework of employee disengagement.
- To identify key internal and external drivers (e.g., leadership style, organizational structure, workload) that influence disengagement.
- To evaluate the impact of disengaged employees on organizational outcomes such as performance, retention, and culture.
- To develop actionable recommendations for organizational leaders and HR practitioners to reduce disengagement and improve employee engagement.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a **quantitative research design** to investigate the causes and implications of employee disengagement and quiet quitting. A structured survey questionnaire was administered to collect primary data from respondents.

Sampling and Participants

The sample consists of **583 employees** from various sectors, including private, public, and nonprofit organizations. Respondents were selected using a **convenience sampling technique** to capture a diverse demographic profile, ensuring a broad representation of age, gender, education, and experience.

Primary Data

Primary data were collected through a **self-administered online questionnaire** comprising closed-ended questions. The survey assessed respondents' awareness of quiet quitting, their personal engagement levels, perceived drivers of disengagement, and preferred organizational interventions. The data collected enabled quantitative analysis of patterns and trends related to employee disengagement.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were sourced from academic journals, industry reports, government publications, and reputable survey databases such as Gallup and McKinsey. These data provided theoretical frameworks, historical trends, and global statistics that contextualize and support the primary data findings.

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations, to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and responses. The analysis aimed

to identify significant factors influencing disengagement and validate emerging trends related to quiet quitting.

Sampling Design For 583 Respondents

Stratified Random Sampling (with Proportionate Allocation)

- **Strata Formation:** Divide the population into relevant **strata (subgroups)** based on key variables such as:
 - Industry sector (e.g., IT, manufacturing, healthcare, education, retail)
 - Organization type (private vs. public sector)
 - Job level (entry-level, mid-management, senior management)

Sample Size Justification

- The total sample size of **583** is statistically sufficient to represent a diverse working population in a district like Coimbatore.
- At a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, this sample size is appropriate for a population of thousands, ensuring generalizability.
- It also allows for **meaningful subgroup analysis** (e.g., comparing engagement levels across sectors or age groups).

Breakdown (Illustrative Only)

Sector	Estimated % in Workforce	Sample Size (Proportional)
Manufacturing	30%	175
IT & Services	25%	146
Education	15%	87
Healthcare	10%	58
Retail & Trade	10%	58
Others	10%	59
Total	100%	583

Sub-Hypotheses

1. **H1a:** Lack of employee recognition is positively associated with employee disengagement.
2. **H1b:** Poor leadership quality significantly contributes to quiet quitting behavior.
3. **H1c:** Limited career development opportunities are positively correlated with employee disengagement.
4. **H1d:** Workplace culture has a significant effect on the likelihood of employees quietly quitting.
5. **H1e:** There is a significant difference in levels of disengagement across different sectors (e.g., IT, manufacturing, education).

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into employee disengagement and the phenomenon of quiet quitting, several limitations should be acknowledged to ensure a balanced interpretation of the findings.

1. Geographical Limitation

The study is confined to employees working within **Coimbatore district**, Tamil Nadu. As such, the findings may not be fully generalizable to employees in other regions or countries where cultural, economic, and organizational dynamics may differ significantly.

2. Self-Reported Data

Data for the study is collected through **self-administered questionnaires**, which rely on participants' honesty, memory, and self-awareness. This introduces the potential for **response bias**, including social desirability bias, where respondents may underreport disengagement or overstate positive experiences.

3. Limited Scope of Variables

Although the study attempts to identify key drivers of disengagement and quiet quitting, it may not capture all possible influencing factors. Elements such as personal life stressors, mental health conditions, or macroeconomic factors are not deeply explored in this study.

Tableno.4.1,Showing the age of the Respondents

Sl.No	Age	Frequency	Percent
1	18-24 years	95	16.3
2	25-34 years	161	27.6
3	35-44 years	140	24.0
4	45-54 years	96	16.5
5	55 and above years	91	15.6
	Total	583	100.0

Interpretation

Table No. 4.1 presents the age distribution of the respondents in the study. Out of the total 583 respondents, the largest group falls within the **25–34 years** category, comprising **161 respondents (27.6%)**, indicating that young adults form the major share of the sample. The **35–44 years** group represents **140 respondents (24.0%)**, showing a significant proportion of middle-aged participants. Respondents aged **45–54 years** account for **96 individuals (16.5%)**, while **95 respondents (16.3%)** belong to the **18–24 years** category. The smallest proportion is observed among those **55 years and above**, with **91 respondents (15.6%)**. Overall, the distribution suggests that the respondents are fairly spread across different age groups, with a stronger presence of individuals in the young and middle-age ranges.

Tableno.4.2,Showing the gender of the respondents

Sl.No	Gender	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	331	56.8
2	Female	247	42.4
3	Transgender	5	.9
	Total	583	100.0

Interpretation

Table No. 4.2 presents the gender distribution of the respondents included in the study. Out of the total **583 respondents**, the majority are **male**, accounting for **331 respondents (56.8%)**. **Female respondents** represent the second largest group with **247 individuals (42.4%)**. A smaller portion of the sample consists of **transgender respondents**, totaling **5 individuals (0.9%)**. This distribution indicates that although participants from all three gender categories are represented in the study, males form the dominant share of the sample, followed by females, while transgender respondents constitute a very small proportion.

Tableno.4.3,Showing the educational qualifications of the respondents

Sl.No	Educational qualification	Frequency	Percent
1	High school / Secondary school	78	13.4
2	Diploma / Certificate	184	31.6
3	Bachelor's degree	223	38.3
4	Master's degree	73	12.5
5	Professional	25	4.3
	Total	583	100.0

Interpretation

Table No. 4.3 illustrates the educational qualifications of the respondents included in the study. Out of the total **583 respondents**, the highest proportion holds a **Bachelor's degree**, accounting for **223 respondents (38.3%)**, is indicating that a large segment of the sample has completed undergraduate education. This is followed by respondents with a **Diploma or Certificate qualification**, representing **184 individuals (31.6%)**. Those who have completed **High school or Secondary school** make up **78 respondents (13.4%)**. Meanwhile, **73 respondents (12.5%)** possess a **Master's degree**, showing the presence of postgraduate education among a smaller portion of the sample. The least represented group consists of respondents with **Professional qualifications**, totaling **25 individuals (4.3%)**. Overall, the data suggests that most respondents have attained at least a diploma or undergraduate level of education.

Tableno.4.4,Showing the job position of the respondents

Sl.No	Job position	Frequency	Percent
1	Entry-level	151	25.9
2	Mid-level	171	29.3
3	Senior-level	156	26.8
4	Supervisory	80	13.7
5	Managerial	25	4.3
	Total	583	100.0

Interpretation

Table No. 4.4 presents the distribution of respondents based on their job positions. Among the **583 respondents**, the largest proportion belongs to the **mid-level position**, with **171 respondents (29.3%)**, indicating that a considerable number of participants hold intermediate roles within their organizations. The **senior-level category** accounts for **156 respondents (26.8%)**, showing a substantial representation of experienced employees. This is followed by **entry-level employees**, comprising **151 respondents (25.9%)**, which reflects the presence of individuals at the beginning stages of their careers. The **supervisory level** includes **80 respondents (13.7%)**, while the **managerial level** has the smallest share with **25 respondents (4.3%)**. Overall, the data suggests that respondents are distributed across different organizational levels, with a higher concentration in mid and senior positions.

Tableno.4.6,Showing the experience of the respondents

Sl.No	Experience	Frequency	Percent
1	Less than 1 year	61	10.5
2	1–3 years	171	29.3
3	4–6 years	176	30.2
4	7–10 years	95	16.3
5	11–15 years	50	8.6
6	More than 15 years	30	5.1
	Total	583	100.0

Interpretation

Table No. 4.6 illustrates the work experience of the respondents included in the study. Out of the **583 respondents**, the largest group has **4–6 years of experience**, comprising **176 respondents (30.2%)**, indicating that many participants have a moderate level of professional experience. This is closely followed by respondents with **1–3 years of experience**, accounting for **171 individuals (29.3%)**. Those with **7–10 years of experience** represent **95 respondents (16.3%)**, while **61 respondents (10.5%)** have **less than 1 year of experience**. Respondents with **11–15 years of experience** total **50 (8.6%)**, and the smallest proportion consists of those with **more than 15 years of experience**, with **30 respondents (5.1%)**. Overall, the distribution indicates that a majority of respondents fall within the early to mid stages of their professional careers.

Tableno.4.7,Showing the agree level of the respondents for the select variables

Sl.No	Variable	Agree Level					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1	V1	106	325	66	51	35	583
2	V2	106	321	67	55	34	583
3	V3	105	323	67	48	40	583
4	V4	105	340	58	49	31	583
5	V5	105	322	71	50	35	583
6	V6	104	329	65	50	35	583
7	V7	102	327	69	50	35	583
8	V8	111	325	65	48	34	583
9	V9	110	306	65	58	44	583
10	V10	102	353	52	45	31	583

V1: My workload has increased significantly over the past year

- **Interpretation:** A majority of respondents agree that their workload has increased, with **106 strongly agreeing** and **325 agreeing**. Only a small portion are neutral or disagree.
- **Major Finding:** Most respondents (**431 out of 583, 73.9%**) perceive an increase in their workload over the past year.

V2: I often feel pressured to complete tasks beyond my job description

- **Interpretation:** The data shows that respondents generally feel pressure to handle tasks outside their core responsibilities, with **106 strongly agreeing** and **321 agreeing**.
- **Major Finding:** A significant portion (**427 respondents, 73.3%**) feel pressured to perform duties beyond their job description.

V3: I clearly understand what is expected of me in my role

- **Interpretation:** Most respondents indicate clarity in their role expectations, with **105 strongly agreeing** and **323 agreeing**.
- **Major Finding:** A large majority (**428 respondents, 73.4%**) have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.

V4: I frequently feel overwhelmed by work responsibilities

- **Interpretation:** Many respondents experience feelings of being overwhelmed, with **105 strongly agreeing** and **340 agreeing**.
- **Major Finding:** A high proportion (**445 respondents, 76.3%**) report frequent feelings of being overwhelmed by work responsibilities.

V5: My work environment enables me to perform at my best

- **Interpretation:** Respondents generally agree that their work environment supports optimal performance, with **105 strongly agreeing** and **322 agreeing**.
- **Major Finding:** Most respondents (**427 respondents, 73.3%**) feel that their work environment is conducive to performing at their best.

V6: I can maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life

- **Interpretation:** The data shows that respondents moderately agree on maintaining work-life balance, with **104 strongly agreeing** and **329 agreeing**.
- **Major Finding:** A majority (**433 respondents, 74.3%**) believe they can achieve a healthy balance between work and personal life.

V7: My job often requires me to work outside normal working hours

- **Interpretation:** Many respondents report working beyond standard hours, with **102 strongly agreeing** and **327 agreeing**.
- **Major Finding:** A significant portion (**429 respondents, 73.6%**) frequently work outside normal working hours.

V8: I regularly experience burnout symptoms

- **Interpretation:** A substantial number of respondents indicate experiencing burnout, with **111 strongly agreeing** and **325 agreeing**.
- **Major Finding:** Most respondents (**436 respondents, 74.8%**) report experiencing regular burnout symptoms.

V9: I have enough time to recover between workdays

- **Interpretation:** Opinions are more divided on recovery time, though **110 strongly agree** and **306 agree**, some remain neutral or disagree.
- **Major Finding:** A majority (**416 respondents, 71.3%**) feel they have sufficient time to recover between workdays, though less strongly than other factors.

V10: Work stress negatively affects my personal life

- **Interpretation:** Respondents overwhelmingly agree that work stress impacts personal life, with **102 strongly agreeing** and **353 agreeing**.
- **Major Finding:** A very high proportion (**455 respondents, 78.0%**) perceive that work-related stress adversely affects their personal life.

Table No.4.8, Showing problems faced by the respondents in the working place

Sl.No	Problems	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	Total
1	P1	83	42	56	42	67	25	43	58	59	32	31	45	583
2	P2	66	42	60	55	70	27	44	63	42	21	24	69	583
3	P3	87	39	57	39	68	27	38	42	66	36	33	51	583
4	P4	75	54	62	45	60	24	42	63	42	21	24	71	583
5	P5	90	47	69	43	70	21	35	44	53	28	28	55	583
6	P6	76	35	42	34	73	29	51	69	49	24	28	73	583
7	P7	104	43	61	28	49	21	35	44	57	44	40	57	583
8	P8	67	35	66	54	70	27	47	48	46	24	28	71	583
9	P9	120	51	71	50	64	18	24	6	60	48	42	29	583
10	P10	35	64	91	64	79	30	54	68	6	12	11	69	583
11	P11	54	48	78	46	77	33	45	35	48	24	24	71	583
12	P12	64	33	38	24	48	29	53	79	71	33	29	82	583

Henry Garrett Ranking Formula

Step 1: Percent Position

$$\text{Percent Position} = \frac{100(R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j} \quad \text{Percent Position} = \frac{100}{N_j} (R_{ij} - 0.5)$$

Where:

- R_{ij} = Rank given for the i^{th} factor by the j^{th} respondent
- N_j = Total number of factors ranked by the j^{th} respondent

Step 2: Garrett Score

- The calculated **percent position** is converted into a **Garrett score** using the standard Garrett table.

Step 3: Total Score Calculation

$$\text{Total Garrett Score} = \sum (\text{Number of respondents for each rank} \times \text{Garrett score})$$

Step 4: Mean Score

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\text{Total Garrett Score}}{\text{Total number of respondents}}$$

Step 5: Ranking

- The factor with the **highest mean Garrett score** is given **Rank 1**,
- Next highest is Rank 2, and so on.

Simple Explanation

- Convert ranks → into percent positions
- Convert percent positions → into Garrett scores
- Multiply scores with frequencies

- Find total & mean score
- Rank based on highest score

Overall Interpretation (Hendry Garrett Approach)

The distribution of scores across F1–F12 indicates the relative severity of workplace problems. Problems with higher frequencies in **top ranks (F1–F4)** are considered more critical. From the table, issues like **toxic work culture (P9)**, **psychological unsafety (P7)**, **inadequate compensation (P5)**, and **poor leadership (P3)** emerge as dominant concerns among respondents.

Findings

- The analysis indicates that **respondents aged 25–34 years constitute the highest proportion (27.6%) of the sample**, making them the most represented age group in the study.
- The data reveals that **male respondents form the largest segment of the sample, accounting for 56.8% of the total respondents.**
- The analysis shows that **respondents with a Bachelor’s degree constitute the largest group, representing 38.3% of the total sample.**
- The results indicate that **mid-level employees form the largest group, representing 29.3% of the total respondents.**
- The analysis reveals that **the healthcare sector accounts for the largest proportion of respondents, representing 22.5% of the total sample.**
- The analysis shows that **respondents with 4–6 years of experience form the largest group, accounting for 30.2% of the total sample.**
- **The findings show that** employees with 1–2 years of experience in their current organization represent the largest proportion, accounting for 35.3% of the respondents
- The analysis highlights that **full-time employees form the largest group, representing 45.6% of the total respondents.**
- The findings reveal that **married respondents constitute the largest proportion of the sample, accounting for 62.1% of the total respondents.**
- The analysis shows that **the largest group of respondents (31.0%) earns between Rs.15,001 and Rs.25,000 per month.**
- The analysis reveals that **local residents form the largest segment of the respondents, accounting for 58.5% of the total sample**
- Most respondents (**431 out of 583, 73.9%**) perceive an increase in their workload over the past year.
- A significant portion (**427 respondents, 73.3%**) feel pressured to perform duties beyond their job description.
- A large majority (**428 respondents, 73.4%**) have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.
- A high proportion (**445 respondents, 76.3%**) report frequent feelings of being overwhelmed by work responsibilities.
- Most respondents (**427 respondents, 73.3%**) feel that their work environment is conducive to performing at their best.
- A majority (**433 respondents, 74.3%**) believe they can achieve a healthy balance between work and personal life.
- A significant portion (**429 respondents, 73.6%**) frequently work outside normal working hours.
- Most respondents (**436 respondents, 74.8%**) report experiencing regular burnout symptoms.

- A majority (**416 respondents, 71.3%**) feel they have sufficient time to recover between workdays, though less strongly than other factors.
- A very high proportion (**455 respondents, 78.0%**) perceive that work-related stress adversely affects their personal life.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Workload Management

Organizations should implement effective workload distribution strategies to prevent employee overload. Regular monitoring and realistic task allocation can help reduce excessive pressure.

2. Role Clarity and Job Boundaries

Although role clarity exists, many employees perform duties beyond their job scope. Employers should clearly define job responsibilities and avoid unnecessary role expansion to reduce stress.

3. Stress Management Programs

Companies should introduce stress management initiatives such as:

- Counseling services
- Wellness programs
- Mindfulness and relaxation sessions

4. Promote Work-Life Balance

Organizations should discourage excessive overtime and encourage flexible work arrangements to help employees maintain a healthier balance between personal and professional life.

5. Burnout Prevention Strategies

To address high burnout levels, employers can:

- Provide adequate breaks
- Encourage leave utilization
- Reduce continuous work pressure

6. Employee Support Systems

Establishing strong support systems, including mentoring and peer support, can help employees cope with workplace challenges more effectively.

7. Career Growth and Stability

Since many employees have short tenure in their current organization, companies should focus on retention strategies such as career development opportunities and job security.

8. Compensation Review

Considering the moderate income levels, organizations may review salary structures and provide incentives to improve employee satisfaction and motivation.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the majority of respondents are young professionals aged 25–34 years, predominantly male, and holding a Bachelor's degree. Most participants are mid-level employees working in the healthcare sector, with moderate work experience (4–6 years) and relatively shorter tenure (1–2 years) in their current organization. A significant proportion are full-time employees, married, earning a monthly income between Rs.15,001 and Rs.25,000, and primarily local residents.

The findings highlight a concerning trend regarding workplace stress and workload. A large majority of respondents reported an increase in workload, frequent pressure to perform tasks beyond their job roles, and extended working hours. Although many employees have clarity about their roles and perceive their

work environment as supportive, a high percentage experience burnout symptoms and feelings of being overwhelmed.

Despite a moderate level of perceived work-life balance and recovery time, work-related stress significantly impacts employees' personal lives. Overall, the study suggests that while organizational structures and role clarity are relatively strong, excessive workload and stress remain critical challenges affecting employee well-being. This study provides an overall understanding of the demographic profile and work-related experiences of employees, with a strong focus on workload and stress. The results indicate that the workforce is primarily composed of young, educated, and mid-level professionals who play a crucial role in organizational functioning.

The analysis highlights that while employees generally have clarity in their roles and perceive their work environment as supportive, they are simultaneously facing increasing job demands, extended working hours, and responsibilities beyond their defined roles. These factors contribute significantly to high levels of stress, frequent feelings of being overwhelmed, and widespread burnout symptoms. Although some employees report maintaining a reasonable work-life balance, the overall findings suggest that work-related stress continues to negatively affect their personal lives and well-being.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need for organizations to strike a balance between productivity and employee well-being. Addressing workload issues, reducing stress, and promoting a healthier work environment are essential for improving employee satisfaction, performance, and long-term organizational success.

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