

Quiet Quitting and Employee Engagement: An Empirical Study of Gen Z Workforce Behaviour in Service Industries

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Abstract: The present study aims to explore the correlation between quiet quitting and employee engagement among service organizations□ employees especially Generation Z workers. This research is to be investigating the impact of factors related to the work, including recognition, workplace culture, leadership support and work-life balance on quiet quitting behaviour. A descriptive research approach was used and the primary respondents were 180 Gen Z working in banking, retail, hospitality, healthcare and IT service sectors who were interviewed using a structured questionnaire format. Data was interpreted using statistical tools which include percentage analysis, correlation and regression analysis. The results showed a strong negative correlation between employee engagement and “quiet quitting,” suggesting a negative relationship between the two: employees who are more engaged are less likely to psychologically disengage from their job. The factors that most influenced employee engagement were found to be WLB and leadership support. Organizations need to create policies and practises centering on investments in employees to improve engagement and dissatisfaction with "quiet quitting" among Generation Z workers, concludes the study.

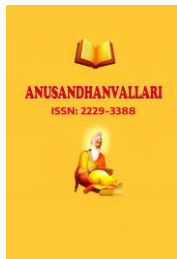
Keywords: Quiet Quitting, Employee Engagement, Generation Z, Service Industries, Work-Life Balance, Workplace Culture, Organizational Behaviour.

Introduction

Enormous shifts in the workplace in the recent years, and even more so since the pandemic, have led to changes in employees' attitudes to work, organizational commitment and career expectations. Salesforce's becomes one of the most talked-about phenomena in the workplace that has come about because of this revolution is “quiet quitting.” Quiet quitting (QQ) is a behaviour defined as employees' conscious choice to spend only a specific amount of effort and emotion on a certain aspect of their job, the part that is required for someone to fulfill the agreed duties and responsibilities (Moczydłowska, 2023). It's not that workers cease to be part of their firm, though they do cease to feel committed to their jobs or the goals of their organization. This is particularly common for younger (Generation Z) staff in service occupations.

Generation Z, or those ranging between 1997 and 2012, are a group whose values and expectations in the workplace are unique. Some differences between the previous generations and Gen Z workers include changing employment expectations, such as a desire for good work-life balance, flexibility, mental health support, impactful work, opportunities for growth within the organization and workplace cultures that are inclusive (Kycia et al., 2021). That makes it more likely that young workers will become disengaged with organizations that don't offer a supportive work culture or match their personal or career goals.

Engaging employees and connecting with customers are essential for the success of the service sector and a number of industries, such as communications, information technology, finance, information, retail and



hospitality. According to Khan (1990), employee engagement (EE) is the amount of emotional, cognitive and behavioral commitment employees have toward their work and organisations' aims. Employees who are highly engaged are known to have enthusiasm, commitment, innovativeness, and be productive; on the other hand, those who are disengaged employees are known as low motivation, low productivity, absenteeism and withdrawal behaviours (Saks, 2006).

QQ is causing big problems for organisations as it directly impacts on service quality, customer satisfaction, employees' productivity, and retention. Research has shown that factors including employee burnout, workplace stress, negative organisational culture, lack of appreciation, low pay and poor leadership have all been identified as having a big impact on employee disengagement and 'QQ' behaviour (Maslach et al., 2001; Xueyun, 2023). All this has heightened the sense of isolation and emotional detachment in the workplace, particularly for younger-aged employees, considering the recent emergence of hybrid and remote working arrangements.

Additionally, as mental wellbeing and boundaries become more significant in the workplace, workers are less likely to feel committed to work. Furthermore, as mental health and personal boundaries gain greater focus and priority in the workplace, workers are less likely to feel committed to work. In reality, however, QQ is not the same as laziness or inactivity but showcases Gen Z's approach to balancing work with their personal lives and safeguarding their mental health (Ochis, 2024). But ongoing disengagement can have a negative impact on the organization's culture, innovative efforts, teamwork and sustainability, especially in service businesses where employee attitudes directly impact customer experiences.

While the concept of QQ is gaining traction in the world, research examining its linkage with EE among service sector Gen Z employees in India is scanty. The current research mostly centres on conceptual analysis and on the context of the West in the workplace. Thus, it is important to examine empirically the interesting behavioural patterns, engagement levels and organisational context of silent resignations in service sector employees of the Gen Z age.

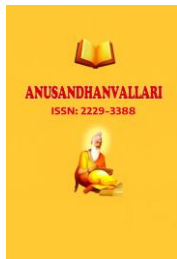
Sociological Perspective on Generation Z and Quiet Quitting:

To comprehend the "quiet quitting" phenomenon about the Gen Z employees, it is not just a matter of studying the organizational behaviour theory/employment engagement model(s). Further, the specific work issues are also closely tied in with broader societal shifts as well as other transformation (sociological, economic, technological or cultural) that affect the way young employees post-pandemic see their role in the workplace.

Generation Z was raised during a time of digital saturation, economic uncertainty, enhanced understanding and awareness of mental health issues, and shifting perceptions of what work means. People of this generation have been raised on social media posts and articles on burnout, toxic productivity, work-life balance, and corporate exploitation. The beliefs of generation z towards what an organization embodies and what their job would look like in the future is affected by these factors.

One major cause of quiet quitting is the changing expectation of employees towards the employer. A previous generation may have viewed an employee's lifelong loyalty to their organization; stable job; and the promise of upward mobility within the same organization as key elements of professional success. But that does not appear to be the case for today's workers.

Many workers now view their employment relationship as transactional rather than relational. This has happened due to mass layoffs, an unstable economy, an increase in contract working, and lower job security. As a result, Generation Z employees are less likely to consider their employer in an emotional way as they do not consider that these stable and caring employees contribute to their wellbeing over the long haul.



As employees continue to come to terms with the ongoing scenario, burnout continues to plague many of them due to work-from-home fatigue. Many are feeling demotivated due to a heavier workload combined with no bonus or ever-increasing hours. Same types of content were seen on the internet. The phenomenon of quiet quitting refers to when employees stop making an effort at the workplace.

Instead of going the extra mile beyond the job requirements, employees have been quietly quitting by only putting in the required minimum effort at work. Quiet quitting means not being emotionally invested in the job. But this does not mean employees working in such a capacity do not positively engage with their work or company. Likewise, several employees have become disconnected.

Due to digital culture, there have been significant changes in the workplace behaviour of Generation Z. It has become commonplace for employees to voice their dissatisfaction with their workplaces and talk about their rights in the workplace on social networking sites like TikTok, LinkedIn, Instagram, Reddit as well as YouTube. As a result of discussions that happen in these ubiquitous online tribal communities, the expectation of organisations from employees such as working overtime for no pay, being available 24 hours a day, equating productivity to working for money has come into question. This cultural change has led to the employees of Generation Z at the workplaces creating a boundary between their work and personal life and disallowing toxic workplace cultures which hamper their mental health.

Current articles have given the definition. If you need definitions based on any other word or topic, mail us.

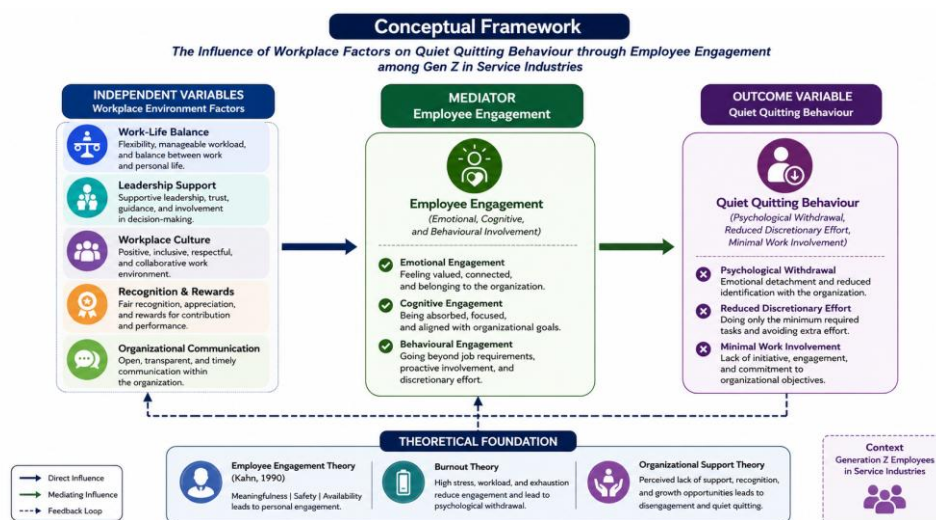
As per the definition given by Orians (1977), behaviour directed to help others is called prosocial behaviour. Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder and Penner (2006) further define prosocial behaviour as “situations in which the individual acts to benefit another”. Prosocial Behaviour – demystified cites that prosocial behaviour is defined as the voluntary behaviour whose intention is to help others.

An act of sharing, donating, cooperating, assisting, or giving is a prosocial behavior. Such behaviour can occur either with a reward or without one. Common in nature be it in .

In India, the complexities surrounding sociological influences get exacerbated due to the presence of hierarchical organizational structures, collectivistic social norms, and prevailing social norms regarding the concept of getting successful in careers. The Indian service sector typically supports long hours, high performance, and the importance of managerial authority. The proposed working arrangements appear to be at odds with the work styles that Gen Z employees are increasingly preferring. This includes autonomy, flexibility, and work-life balance. The ongoing cultural shift from an obedience-oriented workplace to one that is more individual centered may be causing Indian Gen Z employees to engage in quiet quitting, which could be one possible outcome of this contradiction or disconnect.

Quiet quitting is not just an organizational challenge or an employee attitude issue, but rather a reaction of sociological significance. It stems from an evolution of values among the generations, changing conditions in the labour market, influences of a digital culture and larger social changes about the meaning of work and one's identity in contemporary society.

Theoretical Framework:



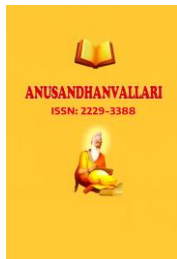
The theoretical framework of the present research presents the relationship among workplace factors, employee engagement and quiet quitting behaviour. According to the framework, these chosen organizational and psychological factors impacting Gen Z employees' perceived work environment will have a significant impact on employee engagement. As a result, this variable plays an important role in determining whether Gen Z employees respond to engaged behaviour or quiet quitting behaviour. Employee performance is an independent variable of work-life balance, leadership support, workplace culture, and more. This includes contributing to the overall work environment of the Gen Z employees.

The dimensional framework is a schema that explains how situation factors help employees to become emotionally, cognitively and behaviourally engaged with their organization. An employee's engagement levels increase because of supportive supervision, healthy workplace culture, appropriate recognition, transparency, and a good work-life balance. Employee engagement is a mediating variable that refers to the psychological presence, motivation and involvement of an employee in his role and organization.

Conversely, when these circumstances do not occur, not everyone meets the requirements, and this may result in emotional exhaustion, dissatisfaction, and the psychological detachment of employees. For example, the overloading of work, when the employee's hard work is not acknowledged and appreciated, the unavailable communication, limited exposure, and economic opportunity or toxic workplace environment. As a result, they may be quieter quitters who tend to show psychological withdrawal, reduce discretionary effort, and generally show minimal involvement beyond necessary job performance.

As the framework further outlines, employee engagement is a key linkage in organizational quiet quitting factors. Greater engagement leads to decreased quiet quitting and vice versa. Otherwise, an employee engages less, they dual mentally quit from their work roles. As a result, a company that encourages investment in employee wellness, leadership backing, acknowledgement, work environment, etc.-could drastically minimize disengagement and enhance the commitment of the workforce (Gen Z employees).

The study is largely categorized under the Employee Engagement theory which states that three psychological conditions-meaningfulness, safety and availability need to exist that essentially target employee's self-perceptions, which is a core condition to engage employees. The Burnout and Organizational Support theories further bolster the foundation of the research. According to both theories, employees who experience stress,



burnout, and lack of workplace relationships and organizational support are likely to withdraw psychologically from organizational goals and develop a quiet quitting tendency.

Literature Review

It's universally acknowledged that EE is a key contributor to organizational and employee performance. The term “personal engagement” was first coined and described by Kahn (1990) as the employee's feeling of psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability in the work place. Certain employees (Schaufeli et al., 2006) show positive attributes such as vigour, dedication, and absorption in their job, which help to positively impact on the organization's outcomes.

The word, QQ, has got attention in the academic sphere by its current popularity among younger workers. Moczydłowska (2023) noted that QQ can be considered psychological withdrawal in that workers only do what is necessary and nothing more. The study came up with the concept that younger workers are paying more and more attention to their personal health, instead of getting too involved in their work.

Work stress points and burnout are reported to be one of the factors that greatly help to influence a silent resignation from their workplace. However, Maslach et al. (2001) suggested that EE, depersonalization, and reduced PA have adverse effects on employee motivation and commitment. To support this argument, Xueyun (2023) examined the link between employee burnout and QQ, as well as the link between poor organizational support and QQ intention within the Generation Z employees. Xueyun (2023) discovered that burnout has positive relationship with the intention of QQ among Generation Z employees, while poor organizational support has positive relationship with intention of QQ among Generation Z employees.

Here's a big hint for the job market: One generation of employees is vastly different from the next. Kycia et al (2021) concluded that Gen Z employees appreciate flexible schedules, purposeful work, honesty, and having leaders that support them. If an organization is not in line with these expectations, they experience less engagement with their work and may have more deterred young people.

Effective organizational culture and management practices also shapes EE and QQ attitude. Affective organizational commitment is more notable that it in turn improves employees' commitments toward organizations and decreases their withdrawal tendencies according to Allen and Meyer (1996). But unhealthy staff cultures and bad leadership are factors of disengagement and resignation.

Kimberley Alimmah et al. (2023) explored how the negative workplace climate affects the concept of QQ among Gen Z workers and concluded that the interaction between negative workplace climate and organizational commitment holds greater significance. When employees reported high levels of negative experiences and were experiencing toxic behavior in the workplace, they were more apt to feel detached from the job and to reduce their discretionary effort.

The other thing that recently research studies are finding is that QQ can be a reaction to unachievable expectations at work and work-life imbalance. According to Ochis (2024), there are growing concerns regarding Gen Z workers' dislike of organizational cultures that encourage cramming down a lot of work, and being available for work at all hours of the day. That study also recommended a re-thinking of the orientation, communication and engagement practices of organizations in line with the expectations of younger employees.

While there is a considerable amount of literature existing on EE, burnout, and employees' work stress, there is limited empirical evidence directly discussing the connection between QQ and EE from Gen Z employees in service-sector jobs. In addition, research based on service sector in India is largely limited. For this reason, the

present study aims to add to current literature by empirically exploring the behavioral components of the QQs and EE of the employees in service organizations from Generation Z.

Objectives

1. To study the attitude of the employees towards engagement in service companies of Generation Z employees.
2. Analyze how WLB, leadership support, and work culture affects Gen Z employees' QQ behaviour.
3. To explore the correlation between EE and QQ phenomenon of Gen. Z in the service industry.

Methodology

This study is a quantitative approach with descriptive research design used to analyze the relationship between employees with QQ and EE in service fields. Primary data will come from a structured questionnaire that will be asked of Gen Z workers across a variety of industries including retail, healthcare, information technology services, telecommunications, hospitality and banking. For choosing the respondents from the study area, a technique of conveniences sampling will be adopted. The respondents will be 180 in number from the age group Generation Z. The questionnaire are used to track the extent of staff motivation, balance, organizational support, work environment, and QQ behaviour. The secondary data sources will be research journals, books, research reports, published articles related to the topic of EE and workplace behaviour.

Results and Discussion

In the current study, responses from 180 Gen-Z employees across various service sectors, banking, retail, hospitality, healthcare, IT, and services were analyzed. This was conducted using statistical methods such as percentage analysis, mean score analysis, correlation, and regression analysis that were used to determine the correlation between EE and QQ behaviour.

Table 1 Mean Score of Employee Engagement Factors

Variables	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Work-Life Balance	4.12	0.71
Leadership Support	3.95	0.82
Career Growth Opportunities	3.88	0.76
Recognition and Rewards	3.69	0.91
Workplace Culture	4.01	0.74
Employee Engagement Overall	3.93	0.68

The table shows that among all these factors, work-life balance has the highest mean score (4.12), suggesting that Gen Z workers are highly conscious of the importance of flexibility and greener aspects of their work life. The construct of workplace culture and leadership had also high mean values and led to the conclusion of their importance to address employee dedication. The scores of recognition and reward was comparatively low, which means that respondents were not satisfied with the practices of recognising and rewarding.

Table 2 Analysis of Quiet Quitting Behaviour Among Respondents

Quiet Quitting Indicators	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
I perform only assigned duties	68	17	15
I avoid additional responsibilities	63	20	17
I feel emotionally disconnected from work	57	18	25
I prioritize personal life over work commitments	74	11	15
I feel less motivated toward organizational goals	61	16	23

The results show that there is certainly some sight of sore curtailed working among gen Zs. Approximately 74% of the respondents said they prefer to put their own life before their work for the organization, and 68% reported that they do only what is assigned to them. The findings indicate that in reality, with many Gen Z workers enforcing a psychological divide between their work and personal life, this has led to a decrease in discretionary effort while at work.

Table 4 Relationship Between Employee Engagement and Quiet Quitting

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance Value (p)
Employee Engagement & Quiet Quitting	-0.724	0.000

A correlation coefficient of (-0.724) shows that there is a strong but negative relationship among EE and QQ behaviour. The p-value obtained is < 0.05 indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. Put another way, there's a stronger association with greater EE on the risk of QQ in service-oriented jobs among Gen Z employees.

Table 5 Regression Analysis

Variables	Beta Value	t-value	Significance (p-value)
Work-Life Balance	-0.412	-5.821	0.000
Leadership Support	-0.336	-4.762	0.001
Workplace Culture	-0.287	-4.118	0.002
Recognition & Rewards	-0.219	-3.227	0.004
R Square	Adjusted R Square		
0.638	0.624		

According to the performed regression analysis, the greatest role in the suppression of QQ behaviour is played by WLB among Gen Z employees and secondly is leadership support and workplace culture. The value of R-square equals 0.638 indicating that the value of 63.8 per cent. variation on QQ behaviour can be explained by

the independent variables that are chosen. The significance levels of less than 0.05 explains that the variables were important in affecting QQ tendencies.

Hypothesis Testing

To determine whether there exists a statistically significant relationship between EE factors and QQ behaviour, correlation has been used.

H0: There is no significant relationship between EE and quiet quitting behaviour among Generation Z employees in service industries.

Table 6 Correlation

Variables Tested	Correlation Value (r)	p-value	Result
Employee Engagement and Quiet Quitting	-0.724	0.000	Significant

The results of the correlation analysis provide a strong negative relationship between engagement and QQ behaviour and the EEs with the r-value of -0.724. The testimony of the p-value (0.000), which is lower than the significance level of 0.05 allows to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. It means that EE plays a significant role in QQ behaviour of Generation Z workers in service companies. Increased engagement levels will decrease the risk of employees psychologically detachment themselves to the work roles.

Discussion

According to the results of the current research, QQ represented as a major workplace behaviour among Generation Z employees in the service sector. This analysis indicated that most Gen Z employees are more likely to keep work and personal life unaffected, meaning that they dedicate rather limited discretionary effort and engagement with organizational activities. The result coincides with the information provided by Moczydlowska (2023), who remarked that younger workers are becoming more focused on mental health and work-life balance, rather than being excessively committed to the organization.

This paper also found the EE as a key predictor of the QQ behaviour. The high negative relationship between EE and QQ suggest that when employees are subjected to positive working environment, good leadership, recognition and opportunities to enhance their careers, there are less chances of them becoming psychologically disengaged with the job. These results correlate with engagement theory as postulated by Kahn (1990) which focuses on the psychological meaningfulness, and safety as prerequisite of employee involvement.

The work-life balance proved to be the strongest variable that influenced the preferences of Gen Z workers to QQ. Its findings indicate that workers who feel overworked, stressed, or that there are disproportions between their personal and work roles are more likely to limit their contribution to the work to the minimum duties. This confirms the claims made by Ochis (2024), who stressed that the younger generation of employees highly regards flexibility and personal well-being in the contemporary working contexts.

The matters of EE also were also heavily influenced by leadership support and workplace culture. Workers on conditions of positive organizational cultures and supervisors who were supportive were found to have low tendencies of QQ. On the contrary, disengagement among employees was brought about by poor recognition systems, a lack of appreciation, and poor communication practices. This can be affirmed by Saks (2006) who found that support and recognition of an organization have a positive influence on EE and organizational commitment.



An additional finding of the study is that the concept of QQ is not merely equivalent to an employee's lack of ambition or a sign of their laziness. To them it's a way of dealing with stress, burnout, and the demands of the workplace that are too high. But failing to actively engage can have a detrimental impact on productivity, the quality of customer service, innovation, teamwork, and employee retention overall, though especially in service based industries where employees' engagement with customers directly impacts customer satisfaction.

In conclusion, the study underscores the important of organizations to adapt their EE programs to the changing expectations among Generation Z employees. In a service organization, employers have to pay attention to building positive work cultures, work-life balancing, better recognition programs, and clearer communication channels to prevent the phenomenon of □QQ□ and foster long-term loyalty of employees.

Conclusion

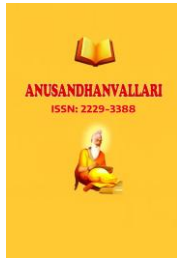
The results indicate that the organization's post-pandemic expectations of the job has affected its workforce's behavioural emotional disconnection from the organization and an increased focus on work-life balance, have set the stage for most services job seekers of Generation Z to affirm their sentiment of QQ. EE was found to significantly negatively correlate with psychologically quitting, suggesting that greater EE correlates with lower rates of psychologically quitting. Aspects like leadership support, positive workplace culture, recognition and career development are all essential in improving workflow engagement of Gen Z employees. The research also reveals that QQ isn't always seen as a sign of weak work ethic among younger staff, but rather as a way for them to prioritize their mental health and set boundaries. If the organizations don't meet these changing employee expectations, they may see lower productivity, poor employee morale, and higher turnover.

Recommendations

The study proposes that Generation Z employees have different expectations and behavioural traits of service organizations; therefore, it is recommended to have employee-centric engagement strategies in the service organizations. To prevent disengagement and passive resignations, organizations can encourage flexible working options, work-life balance programs, mental health support programs, and transparent communication to prevent QQ. The leadership to support employees, employee recognition programs, career development opportunities also need to be improved. Organizations can also enhance workplace satisfaction by engaging in regular employee feedback, a training program, and a wellness initiative, to help find any disengagement issues at an early stage. Moreover, employers are guided to build Working Environments that are inclusive and supportive, fostering co-operation, appreciation and active involvement of all employees in organisational activities, which helps build the overall stability of the workforce and enhances organisation performance.

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