



## Special Issue Call for Papers

### The Disquiet of Quiet Quitting: Understanding and Applications of a Popular Trend in HRM Scholarship & Practice

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Responding to increasing work pressures, job stressors, and sharp declines in real pay (Markotoff, 2022), an increasing number of employees have disengaged from their work and aim to fulfill their duties to the bare minimum so as not to get fired but without going the “extra mile.” This phenomenon, coined “quiet quitting”, has received growing attention from the press and academic scholars as evidence suggests it is increasing in prevalence. Although the term was first used in 2009 by economist Mark Boldger (Buscaglia, 2022) to describe Chinese workers’ disassociation from jobs that required long hours and that led to poor mental health, social media has caused it to explode into the popular agenda (Scott & Burnett, 2022). The most recent viral social media trend is called “bare minimum Mondays,” a term popularized by Millennial influencer, Mary Jo Mayes, which has already received over 2 million views on the social media platform (Kato, 2023).

Despite its recent prevalence on social media and the popular press, quiet quitting is not a new idea. Historically, employees have used the similar notion of “work to rule” as an effective tool of industrial action to disrupt their employers’ business operations without breaking any laws and risking dismissal (Lord, 2022). However, quiet quitting is less collective and stems from an individual’s desire to silently protest their current work conditions and protect their own mental health. Some quiet quitters simply reject the notion that their lives should be dominated by work (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023) and refuse to sacrifice their health, wellness, and personal relationships to benefit their employers (Smith, 2022). It is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic prompted greater reflection on the relative value of time spent at work as opposed to time spent with family, on hobbies or enjoying one’s personal life. Indeed, in a recent survey, 57% of quiet quitters said their work-life balance has improved (this percentage increases up to 65% for working parents with young children; Davis et al., 2022). Detert (2023) argues that a more appropriate term for quiet quitting is “calibrated contributing” because, in reality, the phenomenon reflects an effort to enhance fairness in the workplace: employees who engage in such behaviors are simply matching their work outputs and efforts to what they receive from their employers. Thus, the “quiet quitting” movement has been strongly associated with a similar movement called “acting your wage” (Kundhail, 2022). Regardless of the term used, however, quiet quitting seems to be a phenomenon that is gaining momentum. For instance, according to a recent global survey by Gallup (Global Workplace: 2022 Report) 19% of the global workforce is now “actively disengaged” from their work.

According to Harter (2022), Gallup's recent U.S. survey revealed that some actively disengaged employees can be broadly attributed to the ambiguity of employers' expectations, feeling that the employers do not care about their employees, dissatisfaction with opportunities for learning and development, as well as a disconnect or misalignment with the employers' mission and values. In addition, some employee disassociation can also be traced to issues such as failed leadership (Tavanti, 2011), lack of motivation, empowerment, and meaningfulness in the workplace (Soane et al., 2013), all issues that are extensively researched in HRM literature. In contrast, some have suggested that quiet quitting can be attributed to younger workers' reluctance to adapt to the existing "work culture," demanding a focus on progressing their careers at the expense of their personal lives (Callahan, 2022). It can also be seen as an attempt by some employees to demand change in their working conditions and communicate that their current workplace situation is not healthy. The degree to which quiet quitting is a response to undesirable work conditions or to changing attitudes toward work is unknown.

Whether employees are pushing back due to a strong labor market (Ellis & Yang, 2022), objecting to the blurred boundaries between work and personal life brought by the pandemic (Magrinos et al., 2022), or silently protesting overworked, understaffed, and under-compensated working conditions, the fact is that quiet quitting is widespread. Because quiet quitters are intentionally performing to the level of minimum job requirements, traditional motivational explanations including equity theory (Adams, 1965), expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), and the theory of planned behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) may apply. However, traditional motivational approaches including goal setting, incentives, and job enrichment may not be effective in addressing quiet quitting. When quiet quitting is due to a shift in values toward spending time with family and hobbies rather than on status or career advancement, work values congruence (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998) may be more relevant.

We argue that a unique focus on quiet quitting is needed to better understand this trend and what it means for the workplace of the future, as it highlights the need to better understand and meet employees' needs and expectations. In addition, even though quiet quitting at a surface level may not seem threatening for organizations as employees still fulfill their basic job requirements, quiet quitting can be detrimental to organizations. First, quiet quitters, by definition, do not perform to their maximum potential nor do they engage in organizational citizenship behaviors that have been linked to important organizational outcomes such as service quality (Morrison, 1996). To the extent extra-role behaviors can be viewed as the outcome of effective HRM systems and practices (e.g., discretionary HRM practices; Gavino et al., 2012), the phenomenon of quiet quitting may in some cases also signify a failure of the HRM systems and practices employers utilize (e.g., scheduling practices, poor hiring, or a lack of advancement opportunities may increase the prevalence of quiet quitting). Second, because they are trying to keep their jobs, quiet quitters try to manage impressions and stay "under the radar" to avoid attention that could lead to a negative performance review or termination. They may thus engage in deception and emotional labor that can lead to negative consequences including burnout, and based on conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) possibly to defensive attempts to conserve resources that could include sabotage and retaliation. Third, because of the speed and reach of social media, quiet quitting may have negative consequences for the attractiveness and reputation of some employers and could even create a broader negative attitude toward work and employers among an entire generation.

On these grounds, the proposed Special Issue will be of significant interest for both scholars and managers and provide the impetus to stimulate future research with the overarching purpose of a) exploring the attitudes and behaviors involved in quiet quitting, b) understanding the

antecedents and the consequences of this phenomenon, and c) providing recommendations for HRM practice to effectively manage it.

We welcome conceptual, review, qualitative, or quantitative contributions that offer novel insights and address themes and questions on the topic of “quiet quitting” including, but not limited to:

### **Theme 1: Understanding and Defining the Phenomenon of Quiet Quitting**

- *How should quiet quitting be defined, how is it understood and experienced by employees and employers, and how is it different from other similar notions such as “calibrated contributing” (Detert, 2023) or “reluctant staying” (Li et al., 2016)?*
- *How is quiet quitting related to the “Great Resignation” (Formica & Sfondra, 2022) after the COVID-19 pandemic?*
- *How can we measure quiet quitting and is new scale development needed?*
- *Is quiet quitting a new name for an old phenomenon and, if so, why has it “caught on” now? Is it distinct from or how does it relate to other social media trends, such as “tang ping/lying flat,” “antiwork,” “act your wage,” and “bare minimum Mondays”?*
- *Is quiet quitting more prevalent across specific employee segments (e.g., Gen Zers, working parents, etc.) or specific situations (e.g., during financial hardship, after being rejected for a promotion, when facing high work-life pressure, during a tight labor market, among employees working from home) and why?*
- *Is quiet quitting more evident in specific job types such as health care, academia, or hospitality and if so, why (e.g., the effects of COVID-19, understaffing, or poor working conditions)?*

### **Theme 2: Exploring the Antecedents and the Consequences of Quiet Quitting**

- *What are the key antecedents of quiet quitting (e.g., some employees may quietly quit due to a desire to leave but inability to change employers or retire, others may choose quiet quitting over a high career orientation and engage in quiet quitting regardless of their job, and some may engage in quiet quitting due to unfavorable workplace characteristics such as understaffing and overwork)?*
- *What are the underlying psychological mechanisms behind quiet quitting?*
- *What are the boundary conditions and individual differences that affect employee propensity to quietly quit, as opposed to actively quitting or staying engaged at work (e.g., financial need, career achievement orientation, work-family demands, understaffing, or supportive supervision)?*
- *What employee attitudes and behaviors result from quiet quitting?*
- *What are consequences of quiet quitting for employees’ well-being, productivity, and overall wellness?*
- *What are the consequences of quiet quitting for co-workers, work teams, and managers? Is there a contagion effect that accompanies quiet quitting? Are there age, gender, or generational differences in how managers, teams, or co-workers may respond to an employee’s quiet quitting?*
- *What are the consequences of quiet quitting for key organizational outcomes, such as performance, organizational culture, and/or service quality?*
- *Are there any positive effects of quiet quitting for employers? Said differently, is quiet quitting necessarily “bad” for employers, or does it represent a healthy boundary? Is the retention of adequate performers ever sufficient to counterbalance any negative effects?*
- *Can quiet quitting lead to the identification of “gaps” and “blind spots” in HRM systems and practices?*

- *Given that quiet quitters are, by definition, quiet or often try to stay hidden, what are the diagnostic tools HR practitioners can use in order to identify them?*

### **Theme 3: HRM Systems, Processes, and Practices that Can Curtail the Phenomenon of Quiet Quitting**

- *Which HRM practices and systems of practices are associated with an increase or decrease in quiet quitting (e.g., work scheduling, remote work, or advancement opportunities)?*
- *How can employers effectively identify and respond to, engage, or responsibly manage quiet quitters given that quiet quitters are meeting minimum job requirements?*
- *Which HRM practices and systems of practices are more successful in identifying, preventing, and addressing the phenomenon of quiet quitting?*
- *What are the roles of HRM managers and line managers in dealing effectively with the phenomenon of quiet quitting?*
- *Do flexible work arrangements or hybrid work enhance or reduce quiet quitting?*
- *How does the overall HR strategy influence the level of quiet quitting in organizations?*

### **Submission Window: 1-30 April 2024**

**Submission Process:** Authors can submit their papers between 1<sup>st</sup> –30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 to *Human Resource Management* via the online submission system. Authors should select “Special Issue” as the article type, select “yes” to the special issue question, and select which SI (quiet quitting) the submission is for. Authors should also state the name of the intended SI in their cover letter. Papers should be prepared and submitted according to the journal’s guidelines available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/17488583/homepage/forauthors.html>. All papers will be subject to the same double-blind peer review process as in regular issues of *Human Resource Management*.

If you have questions about a potential submission, please contact Professor John Delery at [jdelery@walton.uark.edu](mailto:jdelery@walton.uark.edu) using ‘Quiet Quitting HRM Special Issue’ as the email title.

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