

FROM BURNOUT TO BOUNDARIES: WHAT DRIVES QUIET QUITTING IN TODAY'S WORKFORCE?

Effat Binte Kabir^{1*}, Mst. Kaniz Fatama¹, Rifa Tashfia Tayeba¹, Nabila Kamal¹

¹Department of HRM, School of Business & Entrepreneurship
Independent University, Bangladesh

Abstract

This research seeks to investigate the factors contributing to quiet quitting and its effects on modern settings. The findings aim to help managers and HR professionals understand the behaviors that lead to quiet quitting, while also providing strategic insights into handling disengagement and nurturing a workforce that is more resilient, diverse, and committed. The study's results indicate that an employee's personality traits and understanding of the psychological contract affect their decision to leave, while their job satisfaction and motivation are shaped by factors such as equity, trust, commitment to the organization, and appreciation. The present research employs a qualitative exploratory method to offer in-depth insight into environmental influences and behavioral tendencies associated with quiet quitting.

Keywords: Quiet quitting, psychological contract, personality traits, organizational commitment

Introduction

The idea of “quiet quitting” has recently attracted considerable attention in organizational behavior research, as it signals a small yet important shift in employee performance expectations. Quiet quitting denotes a mental disengagement rather than a physical action like leaving, which is common in regular turnover. People become disengaged from the company if the company fails to meet the fundamental requirements specified in the agreement. Nowadays, the most talked-about topic in relation to corporate culture, performance, and sustainability is quiet quitting, once seen as a sign of marginal detachment (Afi, 2025). Two powerful frameworks for comprehending quiet quitting are personality and the psychological contract.

People's characteristics affect how they perceive stressors, handle professional issues, and stay motivated. Individual characteristics determine the likelihood that employees will engage in quiet quitting. Extraversion and openness are two characteristics associated with the propensity to work harder. According to Törnroos et al. (2019), neuroticism, on the other

* Corresponding Author: Effat Binte Kabir, E-mail: kabireffatsbe@iub.edu.bd

hand, increases withdrawal levels and makes people more likely to withdraw. Additionally, extraverted workers are less likely to experience burnout in stressful circumstances, such as the pandemic, and are therefore less likely to quietly quit in such situations (Moon et al., 2023). Angelini et al. (2023) found a similar negative correlation between conscientiousness and exhaustion, which, in turn, indirectly reduces the likelihood of quietly departing. Furthermore, low agreeableness and high neuroticism correlate with a heightened risk of burnout, which precedes withdrawal behaviors, as shown by systematic reviews (Angelini et al., 2023). Personality serves as a main motivator for employee engagement or passive disengagement, rather than merely a contributing factor. However, additional factors can also play a role in quiet quitting, such as implicit agreements or psychological contracts. This study focuses on quiet quitting as a process of organizational disengagement, given its susceptibility to personality traits and the ways the psychological contract can either increase or weaken it. To understand why some people quit their professions and others become devoted, quiet quitting is placed on the periphery of psychological agreements and personality types, both of which are recognized as key processes. Consequently, our research emphasizes the psychological phenomenon of quiet quitting in today's work environment, while also providing employers with insights to help them anticipate, understand, and address this urgent concern.

This paper aims to investigate the relationship between quiet quitting and the Big Five personality traits. It also examines how various personality traits affect employees' propensity to engage in quiet quitting behaviors. Finally, it looks at how the psychological contract- the perceived duties and expectations between employers and employees influences employees' propensity for quiet quitting.

Previous studies have too often investigated personality traits, psychological contracts, and quiet quitting independently, neglecting their combined impact on employee behavior. Moreover, most of these studies were quantitative and limited to Western countries, which may not fill the knowledge gap needed to examine how personality traits, together with the psychological contract, both relate to and help shape quiet quitting behaviors, particularly in developing countries like Bangladesh. To obtain a preliminary understanding of the connection between personality factors, psychological contract, and quiet quitting practices, this study used a qualitative exploratory approach. Employees from a variety of professional backgrounds participated in a few semi-structured interviews. These questions served as a guide for the interviews: (1) if personality affects the desire to take on additional tasks, (2) if introversion or extroversion impacts the willingness to exceed official tasks, (3) In comparison to your present experience, how do you see the promises made by your company throughout the hiring process? Has any disparity affected your willingness to go above and beyond what is required of you at work? (4) How do you think your employer's unfulfilled expectations influence your decision to reduce effort?

Literature Review

Quiet Quitting

One type of work disengagement that has recently gained significant attention in the research on organizational behavior is quietly quitting. According to Patel et al. (2025), there has been a noticeable shift in how employee involvement has been conceptualized in recent years. In an effort to maintain official working hours, employees deliberately minimize the amount of labor they put in to meet the minimum threshold. Maslach and Leiter's (2021) description of quiet resignation as a sign of burnout implies that employees employ it as a coping mechanism to manage the consequences of persistent workplace demands. The four perspectives—personal traits, technology, organizational citizenship behavior, and psychological contracts—are all crucial elements influencing quiet quitting in the modern workplace, even though the idea remains relatively recent. Among these, personality types have a big influence on quitting quietly. When someone merely fulfills the bare minimum requirements of their job, they avoid taking on more responsibilities or making emotional commitments without actually quitting.

Extraversion and Quiet Quitting

Sociability, assertiveness, enthusiasm, and a desire for external stimulation are traits of extraversion (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Extraverts are motivated by communication and feelings of gratitude, and they are usually more involved in teamwork. Experiments have shown that extraversion is a protective factor against disengagement. For example, Moon et al. (2023) found that extraverted workers were less likely to experience burnout during the pandemic, thereby reducing the likelihood of disengagement or silent resignation. Tornroos et al. (2019) found a favorable correlation between extraversion and attitudes about organizational fairness, which increases discretionary effort and reduces disengagement. Since quiet quitting frequently necessitates disengagement from the team, extraverts who value visibility and social recognition are unlikely to be drawn to it. Because extraversion combines personal motivations with organizational commitment, it reduces the likelihood of quiet quitting in this situation. According to Costa and McCrae (1992), introversion is the opposite of extraversion and is characterized by reservedness, lower social stimulation needs, and a tendency to work alone. Even though introversion isn't always a bad thing, stressful work environments can coexist with introversion, leading to disengagement. When their job or other unfulfilled expectations stress out an introvert, they may find it easy to cope by quietly departing because they do not want to collaborate or argue with their coworkers.

Conscientiousness and Quiet Quitting

Conscientiousness, defined by self-discipline, organization, dependability, and goal orientation, is well known as a protective factor against disengagement (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Success, accountability, and a strong sense of duty drive conscientious people. They are less likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors at work and more likely to maintain consistent effort, especially in adverse situations. Additionally, Angelini et al. (2023) found a negative correlation between conscientiousness and burnout, which, in turn, reduces the likelihood of quiet quitting. Practically speaking, conscientious workers

may believe that quiet quitting is incompatible with internal performance requirements. Their strong self-control tends to prevent them from exerting the least amount of effort, even when they are dissatisfied. Alternatively, they can discover coping strategies such as problem-solving, compromise, or task rearrangement. As a result, conscientiousness provides a strong defense against quiet quitting tendencies.

Neuroticism and Quiet Quitting

According to Costa and McCrae (1992), neuroticism is characterized by a tendency toward emotional instability, anxiety, moodiness, and elevated stress reactivity. In demanding work environments, neurotic individuals experience unpleasant emotions more frequently and are more vulnerable to psychological stress. The most common of the Big Five traits, neuroticism, is linked to quiet quitting, burnout, stress, and withdrawal behaviors. Neuroticism has been identified by Angelini et al. (2023) as a significant risk factor for occupational burnout, leading to disengagement and silent resignation. Furthermore, Tornroos et al. (2019) found that neurotic individuals view obstacles rather than chances in their careers, which exacerbates withdrawal symptoms.

Openness to Experience and Quiet Quitting

Costa and McCrae (1992) defined openness as the ability to innovate, adapt, and gain experience. Dealing with change, technical improvements, and the needs of innovation is made easier when there is a high degree of openness. Conversely, when faced with a unique circumstance or disruptive force, employees with low openness tend to become disengaged. Uygungil-Erdogan et al. (2025) found a relationship between digital anxiety and withdrawal intentions, with turnover intentions and quiet quitting serving as a mediating factor. Openness acts as a barrier to disengagement, as it enables constructive adjustment, whereas low openness increases the risk of quietly quitting during uncertain and transitional times.

Agreeableness and Quiet Quitting

According to Costa and McCrae (1992), prosocial conduct, cooperation, empathy, and trust are all demonstrated by the attribute of agreeableness. Cooperation, support, and harmonious relationships inspire agreeable individuals. To assist others and preserve organizational cohesion, individuals are more inclined to participate in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), including activities beyond their formal job responsibilities. A lack of agreeableness is associated with lower cooperation, predisposition to conflict, and withdrawal in the context of quiet quitting. Low agreeableness increases burnout and the likelihood of disengagement when combined with neuroticism (Angelini et al., 2023). On the other hand, highly likable workers might not be prepared to go peacefully because disengagement threatens interpersonal trust and group unity.

Psychological Contract and Quiet Quitting

The psychological contract, which reflects implicit mutual expectations between employers and employees, is one of the most important explanatory factors for quiet quitting. Employees will, in theory, not put in any more discretionary effort if they believe

that neither their obligation nor their promise was fulfilled. The relationship between poor motivation and unfulfilled expectations is supported by research showing that exhaustion and agreement violations are structural factors that enhance quiet quitting (Xueyun et al., 2023). Additionally, it is shown that contract violations demotivate workers and raise turnover intention outcomes comparable to silent resignation (De Clercq et al., 2024). The relevance is in the fact that employees' discretionary effort is based on the psychological contract, and when they are removed, their effort level drops to a minimum.

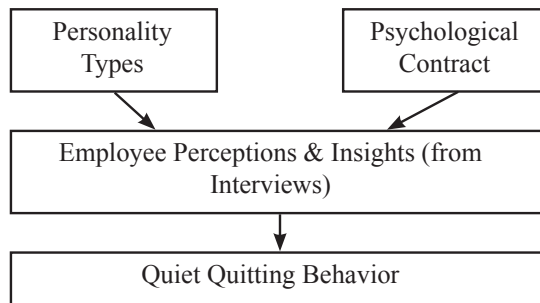


Figure 1. Conceptual Model Developed from the Study Findings

Methodology

The qualitative exploratory approach investigation drew upon data collected from 16 respondents through interviews and purposive sampling. The respondents ranged in age from 23 to 52, with the younger adult cohort (early to late twenties) making up the majority. People in the early stages of their careers made up the majority of the sample, as the modal age was 27. The sample was fairly balanced in terms of gender, with 7 males and 9 females. Because both age positioning and gendered outlooks are likely to affect employees' experiences with and perceptions of quiet quitting, this demographic makeup offers a useful background for evaluating the results. The results should be regarded as preliminary and illustrative rather than generalizable, given the small sample size. The purpose of this study was to offer conceptual insights and suggest areas for further research rather than to reach firm conclusions.

Findings & Discussion

Despite the dataset's limited size, numerous trends were identified that could guide future research with larger samples. The research reinforces the notion that an individual's personality strongly influences discretionary effort, which is directly associated with the likelihood of quiet quitting. For example, extroverts frequently volunteer to work longer hours and in groups because they draw their energy from social interaction and teamwork. They will view increased work as an opportunity to network and learn, which will reduce the likelihood that they will quietly resign. As one interviewee has explained:

"Because I am an extrovert, I can communicate and solve any defined problem at work, so it is okay to persevere through any emergent challenge that may arise."

On the other hand, introverted employees may be more reluctant to take on unexpected

tasks and prefer well-organized ones. Again, withdrawal is not necessarily implied by this. Alternatively, they can put in extra effort in less noticeable ways, such as working overtime or assisting coworkers covertly. In many situations, establishing boundaries based on appearances is really more similar to their need for structured work than disengagement. According to one interviewee,

“Even though I am an introvert, I enjoy working and can put in extra hours.”

Other personality traits that were highly predictive of extra-role conduct included introversion and extroversion. Workers with high conscientiousness, agreeableness, or openness to new experiences volunteer for additional work because they feel required to do so, because they love solving challenges, or because they appreciate their teams. Because they naturally assume leadership roles, they are less likely to leave their jobs. On the other hand, people driven by autonomy or recognition may put out less effort if they do not feel valued.

However, neurotic employees are more likely to quit quietly. The level of perceived injustice or unfulfilled commitments at work can be heightened by tendencies to worry, have self-doubt, and overreact to letdowns. They will therefore most likely detach as a coping strategy. One respondent expressed this sentiment as follows:

“I believe that no matter how hard I work, it will never be sufficient. I question why I should keep working so hard when my efforts do not appear to be appreciated.”

The interviews also revealed that when companies break their commitments, employees are likely to become frustrated, put in less effort, and resign quietly.

“My drive lowered when I did not get the promised resources since I felt that my efforts were not valued.”

On the other hand, when organizational practices match employees' expectations, they are more likely to feel inspired and involved at work. These results indicate that “quiet quitting” involves more than simply personal preferences or character traits. Rather, it largely hinges on how employees perceive the organization's adherence to or violation of their psychological contract.

“Motivation is greatly impacted by trust. When there is trust, I believe that my efforts will be rewarded appropriately, which inspires me to lead and assist others.”

A combination of organizational conditions and personality characteristics can also account for extra-role activity. Extroverted workers contribute even more successfully when they work in environments that are encouraging, transparent, and fairly compensated. In a similar vein, introverted employees might perform better with strict supervision, unambiguous policies, and suitable incentives. Quiet quitting is typically caused by a variety of factors, including workplace and personal factors, as well as a loss of enthusiasm. The findings suggest that personality traits, fairness, trust, and the completion of the psychological contract all influence quiet quitting. This implies that employees' perceptions of fairness, reliability, and upholding contracts influence their decisions to exert more or

less effort. Therefore, companies that wish to reduce quiet quitting must consider employee characteristics and workplace behavior when creating engagement initiatives.

Limitations, Future Studies, and Conclusion

The study's results may not be as applicable due to the limited sample size. Future research could use larger, more varied samples to investigate the relationship fully. It might also be beneficial to conduct research that monitors these connections over time.

According to earlier studies, the Big Five personality traits provide a strong basis for understanding why some workers remain engaged while others become disengaged. Employees' daily work environments are influenced by institutional, cultural, and technical factors, as well as personal preferences, which may lead to subtle disengagement. Therefore, it is essential to focus on its analysis. This study investigates the relationship between personality qualities and different psychological contracts, as well as the possibility of employees disengaging covertly.

References

- Afi, N. J. (2025). The Silent Disengagement: Exploring the Impact of Quiet Quitting on Organizational Culture. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(6), 1508-1530.
- Angelini, G. (2023). Big five model personality traits and job burnout: a systematic literature review. *BMC psychology*, 11(1), 49.
- Costa Jr, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). The five-factor model of personality and its relevance to personality disorders. *Journal of personality disorders*, 6(4), 343-359.
- De Clercq, D. (2025). Psychological contract breaches, plans to quit, and destructive voice behavior: catalytic effects of proactive personality. *European management journal*, 43(3), 481-491.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2021). Understanding the burnout experience: Recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*, 20(1), 3-20.
- Moon, Y. K., O'Brien, K. E., & Mann, K. J. (2023). The role of extraversion in the great resignation: A burnout-quitting process during the pandemic. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 205, 112074.
- Patel, P. C., Guedes, M. J., Bachrach, D. G., & Cho, Y. (2025). A multidimensional quiet quitting scale: Development and test of a measure of quiet quitting. *PloS one*, 20(4), e0317624.
- Törnroos, M., Elovainio, M., Hintsala, T., Hintsanen, M., Pulkki-Råback, L., Jokela, M., ... & Keltikangas-Järvinen, L. (2019). Personality traits and perceptions of organisational justice. *International journal of psychology*, 54(3), 414-422.
- Uyungil-Erdogan, S., Şahin, Y., Sökmen-Alaca, A. İ., Oktaysoy, O., Altıntaş, M., & Topçuoğlu, V. (2025). Assessing the effect of artificial intelligence anxiety on turnover intention: The mediating role of quiet quitting in turkish small and medium enterprises. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(3), 249.
- Xueyun, Z., Al Mamun, A., Masukujjaman, M., Rahman, M. K., Gao, J., & Yang, Q. (2023). Modelling the significance of organizational conditions on quiet quitting intention among Gen Z workforce in an emerging economy. *Scientific reports*, 13(1), 15438.