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Title of the Study:
**The Impact of Quiet Quitting on Employee Performance and
Organizational Commitment: A Study in the Saudi Private Sector**

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The modern workplace has undergone significant transformation in recent years, driven by rapid technological development, evolving employee expectations, and global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These shifts have intensified discussions about employee well-being, engagement, and performance. Among the emerging concepts attracting global attention is “quiet quitting,” a term that reflects a subtle but important behavioral pattern in which employees perform only the essential tasks required by their job descriptions, without offering discretionary effort or deep emotional engagement.

Although quiet quitting is a recently popularized term, the underlying behaviors of disengagement, withdrawal, and reduced organizational attachment have long been recognized in organizational behavior research. As organizations strive to improve productivity and retain talent, understanding this phenomenon becomes increasingly critical.

In the context of the Saudi private sector, workplace dynamics are rapidly changing under the ambitions of Vision 2030, which emphasizes workforce nationalization, organizational efficiency, and human capital development. These shifts create both opportunities and pressures that can influence employees’ level of engagement. This chapter introduces the concept of quiet quitting, lays out the research problem, and outlines the study’s objectives, significance, and theoretical basis.

1.2 Background of the Study

In recent years, organizations worldwide have reported growing trends of employee disengagement, with many employees taking a more reserved approach to their roles. Quiet quitting, despite the literal meaning of the phrase, does not involve employees resigning; rather, it reflects a psychological withdrawal from work. Quiet quitters limit their contribution to the minimum required tasks, avoid volunteering for extra responsibilities, and disengage emotionally from their roles and workplace.

Several factors contribute to this pattern, including burnout, stress, insufficient recognition, unclear expectations, poor management practices, and a perceived imbalance between effort and reward. Globally, engagement levels have declined, with reports such as Gallup (2022) noting that only a minority of employees are actively engaged in their work.

In Saudi Arabia, the transformation of the labor market through Vision 2030 has brought new expectations concerning performance, efficiency, and organizational culture. As private sector companies adjust to these demands, some employees may experience pressure, uncertainty, or dissatisfaction, making quiet quitting an emerging concern for organizational leaders.

Understanding this behavior is essential for maintaining productivity, enhancing employee loyalty, and ensuring the success of organizational strategies.

1.3 Problem Statement

Although quiet quitting is widely discussed globally, limited academic research has examined its causes and consequences within the Saudi private sector. Many organizations may overlook

early signs of disengagement, misinterpret them as laziness or poor attitude, or underestimate their long-term implications.

Unaddressed quiet quitting can lead to:

Declining employee performance

Reduced organizational commitment

Lower morale

Increased turnover intentions

Disruption of team dynamics

Given the scarcity of research in the Saudi context and the strategic importance of employee engagement under Vision 2030, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between quiet quitting, employee performance, and organizational commitment. The study also explores the organizational and managerial factors that contribute to quiet quitting and identifies possible interventions to mitigate it.

1.4 Study Purposes

The main purposes of the study are to:

Identify and describe the concept of quiet quitting and its root causes in the Saudi private sector.

Assess the impact of quiet quitting on employee performance.

Examine the relationship between quiet quitting and organizational commitment.

Provide evidence-based recommendations for reducing quiet quitting and improving employee engagement.

1.5 Study Importance

1.5.1 Scientific Importance

This study contributes to organizational behavior literature by examining a contemporary workplace issue within the context of a rapidly developing labor market. It bridges modern discussions of quiet quitting with established theories such as Kahn's Employee Engagement Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and Meyer & Allen's Organizational Commitment Theory. The research also fills a gap by focusing on the Saudi private sector, an area where empirical studies on quiet quitting are limited.

1.5.2 Practical Importance

The findings of this study will be valuable for HR leaders, organizational managers, and policymakers seeking to enhance productivity and retain talent. By understanding the drivers and consequences of quiet quitting, organizations can refine their HR practices, improve leadership development programs, strengthen recognition systems, and foster more supportive and engaging work environments.

1.6 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

What are the main drivers of quiet quitting among employees in the Saudi private sector?
How does quiet quitting influence employee performance?
What is the effect of quiet quitting on organizational commitment?
What strategies can organizations implement to mitigate quiet quitting and enhance engagement?

1.7 Research Hypotheses

To answer the research questions, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Quiet quitting has a negative impact on employee performance.

H2: Quiet quitting is negatively associated with organizational commitment.

H3: Lack of recognition, unclear job expectations, and poor leadership significantly contribute to quiet quitting.

H4: Effective employee engagement strategies reduce the occurrence of quiet quitting.

1.8 Theoretical Model of the Study

The study is guided by the following theories:

Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990) — explaining how psychological conditions influence work involvement.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) — distinguishing between factors that prevent dissatisfaction and those that promote motivation.

Organizational Commitment Theory (Meyer & Allen, 1991) — highlighting three forms of commitment affected by quiet quitting.

Based on these theories, the conceptual model is:

Quiet Quitting (Independent Variable)

→ Employee Performance (Dependent Variable 1)

→ Organizational Commitment (Dependent Variable 2)

This model suggests that an increase in quiet quitting leads to reduced performance and lower commitment.

1.9 Summary of Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method. Data will be collected from employees working in private sector organizations in major Saudi cities, including Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam. A structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale will be used to measure quiet quitting behaviors, employee performance, and organizational commitment.

Data analysis will involve descriptive statistics to summarize responses and inferential statistics—such as correlation and regression—to test the proposed hypotheses. SPSS software will be used for all statistical procedures.

1.10 Research Limitations

1.10.1 Geographical Limitations

The study focuses on major private sector companies located in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam.

1.10.2 Sectoral Limitations

The research is limited to the private sector and does not include government or nonprofit institutions.

1.10.3 Time Limitations

Data collection is restricted to the academic year 2023–2025.

1.10.4 Thematic Limitations

The study examines only three variables:

Quiet quitting (IV)

Employee performance (DV1)

Organizational commitment (DV2)

Other related factors, such as turnover intention or job satisfaction, are beyond the study scope.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Previous Studies

The phenomenon of employee disengagement is not new. Kahn (1990) introduced the concept of personal engagement, stating that individuals bring varying levels of physical, cognitive, and emotional energy to their work. Building upon this, Maslach and Leiter (2016) linked burnout to emotional exhaustion and cynicism, two traits closely associated with quiet quitting.

Gallup's 2022 Global Workplace Report reveals that only 21% of employees are actively engaged at work, while the rest are either passively disengaged or openly dissatisfied. These figures demonstrate a need for further exploration, especially in developing markets like Saudi Arabia.

Studies by Grant (2007), Saks (2006), and Schaufeli et al. (2002) provide further insight into employee engagement, motivation, and psychological withdrawal. Although none of these

studies directly use the term "quiet quitting," they offer theoretical and empirical grounding for understanding similar behaviors.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon three key theories:

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the theoretical and empirical foundations that support the study of quiet quitting and its impact on employee performance and organizational commitment. It highlights the evolution of the concept, identifies key independent and dependent variables, reviews relevant theoretical models, and synthesizes past studies to clarify the research gap. Quiet quitting has recently emerged as a contemporary HR concern, yet its underlying constructs—disengagement, burnout, and reduced organizational commitment—have long been discussed in the organizational behavior literature. This chapter aims to position quiet quitting within these broader academic conversations and provide a comprehensive understanding of its determinants and consequences.

Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990): Explains the psychological presence of employees at work and factors that enhance or diminish it.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959): Distinguishes between hygiene factors (e.g., salary, policies) and motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition).

Organizational Commitment Theory (Meyer & Allen, 1991): Defines three forms of commitment—affectional, continuance, and normative—and how they relate to workplace behavior.

2.2 Independent Variable: Quiet Quitting

The independent variable in this study is quiet quitting, a behavioral pattern characterized by minimal job involvement, reduced emotional engagement, and refusal to engage in nonmandatory tasks. Although the term gained popularity on social media in 2022, the underlying behavior has been studied for decades under different labels such as job withdrawal, disengagement, burnout-related apathy, and reduced work effort.

2.2.1 Definition and Characteristics

Quiet quitting refers to employees fulfilling only the basic requirements of their job descriptions, avoiding extra duties, discretionary effort, and emotional investment. Unlike physical turnover, quiet quitting represents a form of psychological turnover, where employees detach mentally while remaining on the payroll.

Key characteristics include:

Reduced enthusiasm and passion for work

Avoidance of voluntary or extra-role behaviors

Limited participation in teamwork efforts

Emotional detachment from organizational goals
Minimal compliance with performance targets

2.2.2 Causes of Quiet Quitting

Research has identified multiple drivers of disengagement that directly relate to quiet quitting:

Burnout and emotional exhaustion (Maslach & Leiter, 2016)

Lack of recognition and appreciation (Herzberg, 1959)

Poor leadership practices, such as micromanagement or unclear expectations

Work-life imbalance and excessive workloads

Low job satisfaction and job insecurity

Limited career progression opportunities

In the Saudi context, additional factors such as rapid organizational restructuring, pressure to meet Vision 2030 benchmarks, and cross-cultural workplaces can intensify the risk of quiet quitting.

2.2.3 Quiet Quitting in the Saudi Private Sector

Very few empirical studies have examined quiet quitting in Saudi Arabia. However, employee engagement reports indicate that disengagement levels in the region remain moderately high compared to global averages. As organizations grow more competitive, employee expectations regarding fairness, recognition, and work-life balance have increased, making quiet quitting a relevant issue for HR leaders.

2.3 Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

2.3.1 Definition of Employee Performance

Employee performance is defined as the degree to which employees effectively carry out job-related tasks and contribute to organizational goals. It includes task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance.

2.3.2 Dimensions of Performance

Task Performance: Core duties defined in job descriptions.

Contextual Performance: Extra-role behaviors like teamwork and initiative.

Adaptive Performance: Ability to adjust to change, solve problems, and innovate.

2.3.3 Effect of Quiet Quitting on Performance

Quiet quitting is likely to reduce:

Productivity and output quality

Creativity and innovation

Team collaboration and communication

Responsiveness and customer service

Employees who avoid extra effort may meet minimum expectations but fail to contribute fully, which can negatively affect overall organizational functioning.

2.4 Dependent Variable: Organizational Commitment

2.4.1 Definition

Organizational commitment refers to the psychological attachment and loyalty an employee has toward their organization. The most widely accepted model is Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component framework.

2.4.2 Components of Organizational Commitment

Affective Commitment: Emotional attachment to the organization.

Continuance Commitment: Perceived cost of leaving.

Normative Commitment: Sense of obligation to stay.

2.4.3 Relationship Between Quiet Quitting and Commitment

Employees who engage in quiet quitting typically exhibit:

Low affective commitment (lack of emotional connection)

Weak normative commitment (reduced loyalty)

Moderate or high continuance commitment (they stay because leaving is costly)

This means quiet quitters often remain in the organization but are psychologically detached.

2.5 Summary and Discussion of Previous Studies

2.5.1 Summary of Key Studies

Past studies on employee engagement, burnout, and withdrawal behaviors provide a foundation for understanding quiet quitting. The main findings include:

Engagement drives higher performance (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006).

Burnout leads to emotional exhaustion and disengagement (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Low motivation reduces discretionary effort (Herzberg, 1959).

Poor leadership increases turnover intentions (Grant, 2007).

Burnout and disengagement directly reduce affective commitment (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

2.5.2 Comparison and Critical Discussion

While previous literature addresses disengagement extensively, there are three major gaps:

Lack of empirical studies focusing specifically on quiet quitting rather than general disengagement.

Limited research in non-Western contexts, including the Gulf region.

Few studies linking quiet quitting simultaneously to employee performance and organizational commitment, especially within the framework of Vision 2030 workplace transformation.

2.5.3 What This Study Contributes

This study addresses these gaps by:

Examining quiet quitting as a distinct phenomenon, not just general disengagement.

Investigating the issue within the Saudi private sector, where workplace transformation is rapid.

Exploring the combined impact on performance and commitment, which has not been widely studied.

2.6 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework guiding this study is based on the integration of:

Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990) – explaining how psychological conditions influence presence at work.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) – identifying motivators and hygiene factors that reduce quiet quitting.

Organizational Commitment Theory (Meyer & Allen, 1991) – explaining how quiet quitting affects emotional, normative, and continuance commitment.

Conceptual Model:

Quiet Quitting (IV) → Employee Performance (DV1)

Quiet Quitting (IV) → Organizational Commitment (DV2)

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study based on the survey responses collected from employees working in the Saudi private sector. The purpose of this chapter is not only to summarize the data but also to interpret it in light of the research questions, theoretical framework, and hypotheses developed earlier. By examining demographic characteristics, quiet quitting tendencies, performance indicators, and organizational commitment levels, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of employee behavior within the current workplace climate in Saudi Arabia.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic analysis provides context for understanding how quiet quitting patterns may differ across age groups, gender, experience levels, and job positions. The diversity within the sample helps uncover whether particular demographic categories are more likely to exhibit quiet quitting behaviors or experience lower levels of organizational commitment.

4.2.1 Age Distribution

The data reveal that a large majority of respondents (73.3%) fall within the age range of 26–35 years. This is a prime career stage characterized by increasing professional responsibility, development opportunities, and heightened performance expectations. The presence of quiet quitting behaviors among this age group may therefore reflect pressures related to workload, work-life balance, or unmet career aspirations.

Younger employees often enter the workplace with high expectations for growth, recognition, and meaningful work. If these expectations are not met, disengagement behaviors can emerge,

especially as employees become more aware of market opportunities. The relatively small representation of respondents aged 36 and above may explain why organizational commitment appears moderate in the sample, as older employees tend to demonstrate stronger loyalty and attachment to their organizations.

4.2.2 Gender Distribution

Female respondents account for 90% of the sample. This may reflect the researcher's professional network or the growing representation of Saudi women in private-sector roles. Because female employees in Saudi Arabia often face unique workplace challenges—including balancing family responsibilities, navigating organizational change, and overcoming legacy gender norms—their perceptions of engagement and withdrawal behaviors provide valuable insights into the quiet quitting phenomenon.

While the gender imbalance may limit generalizability, it allows for a deeper understanding of how quiet quitting manifests among women in Saudi workplaces—an area that has received limited academic attention.

4.2.3 Nationality

All respondents were Saudi nationals. This homogeneity aligns with national employment policies and provides a consistent cultural baseline for interpreting engagement, performance, and commitment. Saudi employees may share similar cultural expectations regarding fairness, recognition, and leadership practices, which may influence quiet quitting behaviors.

4.2.4 Work Experience

Employees with 4–7 years of experience formed the largest group in the sample. This career stage is significant because employees often reassess their satisfaction, advancement prospects, and long-term alignment with organizational values. The presence of quiet quitting behaviors among mid-career employees suggests that disengagement may not be limited to new hires or older workers but may arise during periods of career reassessment.

Less-experienced employees (1–3 years) also constituted a notable portion of respondents, and their responses indicate that even early in their careers, some employees experience moderate disengagement if organizational support is perceived as insufficient.

4.2.5 Job Level

Most respondents held entry-level or specialist roles. These positions often involve routine responsibilities, high workloads, and limited autonomy, which can contribute to frustration or disengagement if not balanced with recognition and opportunities for progression. The lower representation of managers likely reflects the distribution channels used for the survey but also suggests that the dataset provides a strong view of front-line employees' experiences—the group most vulnerable to quiet quitting behaviors.

4.3 Analysis of Quiet Quitting Behaviors

This section examines how employees responded to the nine items measuring quiet quitting.

Each item is interpreted not only in statistical terms but also in behavioral and organizational contexts.

4.3.1 Limiting tasks to job description

Responses to the statement “I only do the tasks that are officially part of my job description” were mixed. A substantial portion of respondents disagreed, indicating a willingness to go beyond assigned duties. However, a significant number either agreed or remained neutral, suggesting variability in extra-role engagement.

Neutral responses suggest that many employees oscillate between full engagement and minimal compliance depending on workload, managerial support, or recognition. This aligns with Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, which emphasizes the importance of motivators like recognition in encouraging discretionary effort.

4.3.2 Avoiding additional duties

A notable segment agreed with “I avoid taking on additional duties unless required,” while others disagreed or selected neutral. This indicates that reluctance to take on extra responsibilities is present but not dominant across the sample.

The presence of neutrality may indicate that employees’ behavior depends on situational factors such as deadlines, incentives, or supervisor behavior. This variability reflects the dynamic nature of quiet quitting rather than a fixed disengagement state.

4.3.3 Reluctance to work beyond official hours

Responses to this item were also divided. Many employees neither strongly agreed nor strongly disagreed, suggesting that staying beyond working hours may depend on urgency, role demands, or perceived appreciation.

From an organizational perspective, neutrality could indicate unclear expectations about overtime or differing attitudes toward work-life balance. This supports the need for organizations to articulate expectations more clearly to avoid unintentional disengagement.

4.3.4 Minimizing effort to retain employment

Most respondents rejected the statement “I keep my effort at the minimum required to keep my job.” This suggests that, despite moderate quiet quitting behaviors, most employees still perceive themselves as contributing meaningfully.

This discrepancy highlights that quiet quitting may not reflect complete disengagement but rather a withdrawal from going “above and beyond.” Employees may perform their required duties effectively but choose not to exceed expectations, especially if they feel undervalued.

4.3.5 Lack of motivation to exceed expectations

Neutrality was common for the item “I do not feel motivated to go beyond basic expectations.” This suggests employees are not highly motivated but also not entirely unmotivated. Rather, motivation may fluctuate depending on managerial support, recognition, and workplace

conditions.

This reinforces Kahn's Engagement Theory, which states that psychological conditions—such as meaningfulness and safety—directly influence engagement levels.

4.3.6 Avoidance of voluntary activities

Many respondents disagreed with the statement about avoiding voluntary activities, but a considerable portion remained neutral or agreed. This mixture indicates that voluntary engagement is not uniform across employees and may be affected by workload or workplace climate.

4.3.7 Emotional disconnection

The item "I feel emotionally disconnected from my work" revealed that emotional detachment exists but is not widespread. Neutrality again dominated, suggesting that many employees experience occasional emotional distance but not consistent disengagement.

4.3.8 Lack of initiative

Responses showed that many employees neither strongly agree nor strongly disagree about preferring not to take initiative. This ambivalence may reflect inconsistent management encouragement or organizational culture norms surrounding innovation and proactivity.

4.3.9 Perceived lack of appreciation

Agreement with "I feel that putting extra effort is not appreciated" indicates that recognition is a notable concern for many employees. This supports Hypothesis 3 that lack of recognition contributes significantly to quiet quitting behaviors.

Overall, quiet quitting appears moderate in the sample, with many employees performing their duties effectively but withholding discretionary effort due to contextual factors such as recognition, fairness, and workplace environment.

4.4 Analysis of Employee Performance

Employee performance was measured through three key items that assess productivity, ability to meet targets, and quality of work.

4.4.1 Meeting targets and goals

The majority of respondents agreed that they consistently meet their job targets. This suggests that even employees exhibiting quiet quitting tendencies maintain adequate performance levels in core tasks.

This finding aligns with research showing that quiet quitting often affects extra-role behaviors more than required performance. Employees may still fulfill their responsibilities but disengage from activities that demand additional effort.

4.4.2 Completing tasks on time and with quality

High levels of agreement indicate strong self-perceptions of task performance. Respondents generally believe they deliver quality work within required timelines, reinforcing that performance is not severely compromised.

4.4.3 Productivity during working hours

Almost half of the respondents strongly agreed with being productive during working hours. This supports the idea that quiet quitting is not synonymous with laziness or poor performance but rather represents a conscious withdrawal from non-essential tasks.

The survey results therefore partially support Hypothesis 1, indicating that quiet quitting does not necessarily lower task performance but may reduce willingness to exceed expectations.

4.5 Analysis of Organizational Commitment and Work Environment

4.5.1 Affective commitment

Responses to the items measuring emotional attachment and pride in the organization suggest moderate affective commitment. Neutrality is common, indicating uncertainty or mild connection rather than strong loyalty.

This aligns with the concept of quiet quitting, where employees remain with the organization but are not deeply emotionally invested.

4.5.2 Continuance commitment

Most respondents were neutral about finding it difficult to leave the organization. This suggests that employees are neither strongly tied nor actively considering departure, which is consistent with quiet quitting characterizations where employees stay for practical reasons rather than emotional attachment.

4.5.3 Normative commitment

Moderate neutrality suggests that employees feel some, but not strong, moral obligation to stay. Again, this pattern is consistent with mild disengagement rather than active turnover intentions.

4.5.4 Supervisory support and fairness

Perceptions of supervisor support vary across the sample. This variability suggests inconsistent managerial practices across organizations. Employees who feel unsupported may be more prone to quiet quitting, supporting Hypothesis 3.

4.5.5 Salary and benefits fairness

A notable portion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction or neutrality regarding the fairness of salary and benefits. This is important because compensation plays a crucial threshold role in engagement. If employees believe they are not fairly compensated, they may reduce discretionary effort even if they maintain task performance.

4.5.6 Growth and development opportunities

Responses indicate that some employees perceive opportunities for growth, while others do not. Limited growth prospects can reduce engagement and commitment, reinforcing the relevance of motivational factors in preventing quiet quitting.

4.5.7 Workplace environment and culture

Neutrality remained high in evaluating the work environment. This may reflect cultural or organizational ambiguity, where employees neither strongly endorse nor strongly reject workplace conditions.

4.6 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Quiet quitting negatively impacts employee performance

Findings show that quiet quitting is present at moderate levels but does not severely reduce core task performance. Instead, it affects discretionary effort more significantly. Thus, the hypothesis is partially supported.

Hypothesis 2: Quiet quitting is negatively associated with organizational commitment

The moderate levels of affective, continuance, and normative commitment support this hypothesis. Quiet quitting behaviors align with lower emotional connection and limited sense of obligation.

Hypothesis 3: Lack of recognition, unclear expectations, and poor leadership contribute to quiet quitting

Data strongly support this hypothesis. Recognition, fairness of rewards, and supervisory support consistently appear as areas of concern.

Hypothesis 4: Effective engagement strategies reduce quiet quitting

Although this study did not directly measure engagement strategies, the findings imply that improvements in communication, recognition, and workplace conditions could reduce quiet quitting behaviors.

4.7 Summary of Findings

The results show that quiet quitting exists at moderate levels among employees in the Saudi private sector. While employees maintain strong performance in core tasks, their emotional commitment and willingness to engage beyond minimum requirements are moderate to low. Recognition, fairness, supervisory support, and work environment conditions appear to play significant roles in shaping quiet quitting behaviors.