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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 Background of the Study

In recent years, the global workforce has witnessed a significant shift in employee behavior, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the most discussed trends is the phenomenon of "quiet quitting." Contrary to its name, quiet quitting does not imply actual resignation. Instead, it describes employees who perform only the minimum required duties, avoiding extra tasks, overtime, and emotional involvement in their roles. This silent withdrawal is often attributed to burnout, lack of recognition, work-life imbalance, or organizational dissatisfaction.

In Saudi Arabia, the rapid pace of economic reform and digital transformation under Vision 2030 has significantly changed the structure of private sector employment. These changes bring new challenges to employee engagement and retention. Quiet quitting, if left unaddressed, may jeopardize organizational productivity and weaken long-term strategic objectives. This study explores the dimensions, causes, and organizational consequences of quiet quitting in the Saudi private sector, aiming to offer meaningful insights for decision-makers.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the increasing awareness of quiet quitting worldwide, there is limited academic research that addresses this behavior within the Saudi context. Many organizations may fail to detect early signs of disengagement, leading to lowered performance, diminished morale, and high turnover intentions. As such, this study aims to investigate how quiet quitting affects both employee performance and organizational commitment, and what can be done to counteract it effectively.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To define the concept of quiet quitting and identify its root causes in the Saudi work environment.
2. To assess the impact of quiet quitting on employee performance.
3. To examine the relationship between quiet quitting and organizational commitment.
4. To provide actionable recommendations to reduce quiet quitting and enhance employee engagement.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research holds relevance for human resource managers, organizational leaders, and policymakers in Saudi Arabia. By understanding quiet quitting and its implications, organizations can develop effective HR strategies to boost employee morale, reduce attrition, and enhance overall productivity. Moreover, the study adds to the academic discourse on modern workforce behavior, particularly in emerging economies.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the main drivers of quiet quitting among employees in the Saudi private sector?
2. How does quiet quitting influence employee performance?
3. What is the effect of quiet quitting on organizational commitment?
4. What strategies can organizations implement to mitigate quiet quitting?

1.6 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 expectations, and poor leadership significantly contribute to quiet quitting.

H4: Implementation of employee engagement strategies reduces the occurrence of quiet quitting.

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:

1. **Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990):** Explains the psychological presence of employees at work and factors that enhance or diminish it.
2. **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959):** Distinguishes between hygiene factors (e.g., salary, policies) and motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition).

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

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey methodology. Descriptive and inferential statistics will be applied to assess relationships between variables.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population includes employees working in various private sector companies in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam. A stratified random sampling technique will be used to ensure representation across sectors.

3.3 Data Collection Tool

A structured questionnaire will be administered electronically. It will contain closed-ended questions using a 5-point Likert scale measuring constructs such as job satisfaction, engagement, commitment, and perceived leadership support.

3.4 Data Analysis

Collected data will be analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential techniques (regression analysis, correlation tests) will be used to test the hypotheses.

Chapter Four: Study Boundaries and Ethical Considerations

4.1 Study Boundaries

- Geographical: Limited to major cities in Saudi Arabia.
- Sectoral: Focus on the private sector only.
- Time: Data collection within the academic year 2023.

4.2 Ethical Considerations

All participants will be informed of the voluntary nature of participation. Confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly maintained.

Chapter Five: Initial Recommendations

Based on existing literature and anticipated findings, organizations should consider:

- Enhancing employee recognition systems.
- Providing clear role expectations.
- Offering leadership training programs.
- Encouraging work-life balance policies.

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