

The quiet quitting scale: Development and initial validation

Source: aims-public-health | **Author:** Petros Galanis, Ioannis Moisoglou, Aglaia Katsiroumpa, et al. | **Published:** November 13, 2023 | **PMS Relevance:** PMS RELATED | **Type:** Research Study | **Geography:** Europe

Source URL: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10764970/>

Executive Summary

This article addresses the absence of a validated psychometric instrument for measuring quiet quitting among employees, a phenomenon that gained mainstream attention following a viral TikTok post in July 2022 and whose prevalence reportedly increased after the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors argue that a reliable and valid scale is necessary to identify quiet quitters, understand the phenomenon empirically, and inform organisational interventions. The study followed a structured instrument development process: item generation via literature review and employee interviews, expert content validation, cognitive interviews, pilot testing for face validity, item analysis, and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis on a convenience sample of 922 Greek employees. The resulting Quiet Quitting Scale (QQS) is a nine-item, three-factor instrument measuring detachment, lack of initiative, and lack of motivation. Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega both exceeded 0.80, CFA fit indices were acceptable, and concurrent validity was confirmed through statistically significant correlations with burnout, job satisfaction, and turnover intention measures. The authors conclude that the QQS is a brief, reliable, and valid tool, while acknowledging limitations including a convenience sample drawn exclusively from Greece, potential social desirability bias in self-report data, and the absence of an established cut-off score.

Key Insights

1. Quiet quitting is operationalised as a three-dimensional construct comprising detachment, lack of initiative, and lack of motivation, distinguishing it conceptually from both active turnover and burnout.
2. The QQS demonstrated statistically significant positive correlations with burnout measures (CBI and SIB) and turnover intention, and a negative correlation with job satisfaction, supporting concurrent validity.
3. The study fills an explicit measurement gap: despite the prevalence of quiet quitting discourse and related constructs in the literature, no prior validated instrument existed specifically for this phenomenon.

Practical Takeaways

- Organisations and researchers now have access to a brief, nine-item instrument with documented psychometric properties that can be used to screen for quiet quitting in workplace surveys.
- The scale's three-factor structure suggests that quiet quitting manifests across distinct behavioural and attitudinal dimensions — detachment, lack of initiative, and lack of motivation — which may inform differentiated diagnostic or monitoring approaches.

Critical Analysis

Strengths include adherence to a rigorous, multi-stage instrument development protocol encompassing content validity, face validity, item analysis, EFA, CFA, concurrent validity, and test-retest reliability. The sample size of 922 participants exceeds minimum requirements for both EFA and CFA. The use of multiple reliability estimators (Cronbach's alpha, McDonald's omega, Cohen's kappa, and intraclass correlation coefficient) strengthens the reliability evidence. Limitations include the use of a non-probability convenience sample recruited via social media and digital campaigns, which prevents calculation of response rates and limits representativeness. The sample is drawn exclusively from Greece, and the scale has not yet been validated in other linguistic or cultural contexts, constraining generalisability. The sample is notably female-heavy (72%) and highly educated (89.6% with a university degree), further reducing demographic breadth. Self-report methodology introduces social desirability bias risk. The absence of a cut-off score prevents categorical classification of employees as quiet quitters. The article's discussion section uses normative language ('should give particular attention') that slightly departs from neutral analytical framing. The concurrent validity comparators, while appropriate, do not include work engagement scales, which would have strengthened discriminant validity assessment. One author (Petros Galanis) is an editorial board member for the publishing journal, which represents a potential conflict of interest despite the stated recusal from editorial review.

Organizational Practice

The article describes a scale development study conducted in Greece involving 922 employees from both public and private sectors. Organisations are described as needing instruments to identify quiet quitters and develop interventions to reduce disengagement and turnover. Healthcare organisations are noted as a specific context where quiet quitting is identified as a risk to patient care quality and cost. The development process included structured interviews with employees across sectors including healthcare, hospitality, schools, and public services.

Strategic Implications

The development of the QQS points to growing recognition that disengagement exists on a spectrum prior to formal turnover, suggesting that PMS designs focused solely on output metrics or annual appraisals may not detect early-stage withdrawal behaviours captured by detachment, lack of initiative, and lack of motivation dimensions. The scale's concurrent correlation with turnover intention indicates that quiet quitting may function as a measurable precursor to attrition, which has implications for how organisations interpret engagement survey data. The post-pandemic context framing the study implies that PMS frameworks developed before widespread remote work and post-COVID workforce shifts may require supplementary diagnostic tools to capture changed employee-employer psychological contract dynamics.

Validation Status: passed