

A multidimensional quiet quitting scale: Development and test of a measure of quiet quitting

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Executive Summary

This article addresses the absence of a conceptually grounded definition and empirically validated measure of 'Quiet Quitting' — the pattern of employee behavior involving minimal workplace contribution just sufficient to avoid involuntary dismissal. The authors argue that Quiet Quitting is a distinct, multidimensional construct that differs meaningfully from adjacent phenomena such as burnout, turnover intentions, continuance commitment, and psychological contract breach. Through four sequential studies — an MBA student content validation sample, a Prolific panel of U.S. full-time employees (n=985), a global snowball sample across European countries (n=2,128), and a Portuguese field sample of full-time employees (n=1,897) — the authors develop and validate the Multidimensional Quiet Quitting Scale (MQQS), comprising behavioral and emotional dimensions. Key findings indicate that behavioral quiet quitting is negatively associated with interpersonal organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB-I), while emotional quiet quitting is negatively associated with organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB-O) and positively associated with turnover intentions. The authors conclude that the MQQS provides a valid, reliable instrument for future research into the nomological network, antecedents, and consequences of quiet quitting across organizational contexts.

Key Insights

1. Quiet Quitting is conceptualized as a two-dimensional construct comprising a behavioral dimension (deliberate restriction of effort to the minimum necessary to avoid dismissal) and an emotional dimension (comfort and satisfaction with that minimal contribution level), distinguishing it from burnout, turnover intentions, continuance commitment, and psychological contract breach.
2. Across three field samples, behavioral quiet quitting was consistently negatively associated with interpersonal organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB-I), while emotional quiet quitting was more strongly associated with reduced OCB-O and heightened turnover intentions, suggesting the two dimensions carry distinct predictive profiles.
3. The MQQS demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties — including internal consistency, factor structure, and nomological validity — across culturally diverse samples spanning the United States, 33 European countries, and Portugal, though cross-cultural variations in the prevalence and expression of quiet quitting remain an open empirical question.

Practical Takeaways

- Organizations and researchers now have access to a validated 13-item scale (MQQS) that can be used to measure quiet quitting separately from related constructs such as commitment, burnout, or

turnover intentions, enabling more precise diagnostic assessment of this behavioral pattern.

- The differentiated predictive validity of the behavioral and emotional dimensions suggests that interventions targeting withdrawal may need to address both the observable restriction of effort and the underlying affective comfort employees associate with minimal contribution — these may require distinct managerial responses.

Frameworks Mentioned

Social Exchange Theory — A theoretical framework used to explain behavioral and emotional quiet quitting as responses to perceived imbalance between workplace contributions and received benefits, predicting that employees reduce contributions when costs exceed perceived rewards.

Critical Analysis

Strengths: The study follows a rigorous, multi-stage scale development protocol across four distinct samples with varying national and cultural contexts, enhancing confidence in the MQQS's generalizability. Use of confirmatory factor analysis, Loevinger's H coefficients, relative weights analysis, and dominance analysis reflects methodological pluralism. Pre-registration and open code availability on OSF strengthen transparency. The article provides thorough conceptual differentiation of quiet quitting from adjacent constructs. **Limitations:** All data are self-reported, introducing common method variance concerns, and the authors acknowledge this limitation. Raw data are unavailable due to ethics commission restrictions, limiting full replication. The global sample (Study 3) was recruited via social media and mass email, resulting in a high dropout rate and potential self-selection bias. The Portuguese sample (Study 4) may not generalize beyond high-context European labor markets. The article concedes that omitted variable bias has not been fully addressed. The construct's temporal stability — whether quiet quitting is a transient post-pandemic phenomenon or a durable behavioral pattern — remains unresolved. The unified emotional dimension, while empirically supported, may collapse theoretically distinct positive and negative affective states. The study is entirely cross-sectional, precluding causal inference. **Potential bias:** The framing leans toward quiet quitting as organizationally detrimental, though the authors briefly acknowledge potential employee wellbeing benefits.

Organizational Practice

The article describes organizations across the United States, Europe, and Portugal where employees were observed or self-reported engaging in deliberate restriction of workplace effort to minimal levels. Field samples included full-time employees across industries in Portugal (drawn from the largest 30,000 public-limited and limited liability companies), U.S.-based full-time employees recruited via Prolific, and a global sample recruited through social media platforms and mass email. Portuguese companies were required by law to disclose annual financial information via IES forms, which were used as archival firm-level controls. Researchers distributed surveys through TikTok, Facebook, LinkedIn, a business magazine newsletter (Exame), and a dataset of over 1.6 million company emails from the Orbis dataset.

Strategic Implications

The validation of the MQQS across multiple national contexts suggests that quiet quitting may be measurable as a stable organizational phenomenon rather than a transient media trend, with implications for how organizations design engagement diagnostics and workforce monitoring instruments. The differential relationships between the two MQQS dimensions and outcomes (OCB-I, OCB-O, turnover

intentions) point toward the possibility that behavioral and emotional disengagement may follow distinct trajectories within the withdrawal process, which has implications for how PMS frameworks model the progression from reduced effort to eventual attrition. The cross-cultural evidence raises questions about whether performance management norms calibrated to high-engagement assumptions remain valid across labor markets with shifting employee expectations around work-life boundaries. The construct's grounding in social exchange theory also implies that PMS designs emphasizing reciprocity and perceived organizational contributions may be relevant contextual moderators of quiet quitting prevalence.

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