

# Quiet quitting: relationship with other concepts and implications for tourism and hospitality

Quiet quitting

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Received 6 November 2022  
Revised 16 January 2023  
18 February 2023  
Accepted 5 March 2023

## Abstract

**Purpose** – While quiet quitting is not an entirely new phenomenon, no published research has examined its relationship to existing concepts from a human resource management and organizational behavior perspective. Therefore, this study is a critical reflection that aims to demonstrate the relationship of quiet quitting with concepts researchers in tourism and hospitality have extensively used to study related phenomena.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Gray literature was mobilized to capture the momentum of this new phenomenon, whereas scholarly research was reviewed to identify existing concepts associated with quiet quitting and suggest directions for theory-building and empirical research.

**Findings** – In its contemporary form, quiet quitting mostly resonates with younger employees, due to the drastic changes in workplaces following the COVID-19 pandemic. While quiet quitting closely resembles collective industrial action such as “work to rule” and “acting one’s wage,” it also has a psychological dimension, and can be understood through concepts such as work withdrawal, employee cynicism, and silence. Multiple theories and concepts are proposed to facilitate the conceptualization and operationalization of quiet quitting (e.g. organizational citizenship behavior, social exchange, psychological contract, organizational justice, conflict theory, equity theory, two-factor theory, job demands-resources and conservation of resources theories).

**Practical implications** – This research provides practical suggestions to managers in tourism and hospitality to prevent the occurrence of quiet quitting in the first place, as well as effectively handling it once it occurs.

**Originality/value** – Studies addressing quiet quitting are rare. This paper attempts to synthesize diverse concepts and theories associated with quiet quitting to understand its meaning, potential causes and to suggest avenues for future research.

**Keywords** Quiet quitting, Withdrawal behavior, Work engagement, Organizational citizenship behavior, Extra-role performance, Generations

**Paper type** Research paper



## Highlights

- Quiet quitting involves employees withholding discretionary efforts at the workplace to prevent burnout and improve their work–life balance.
- Pre-existing work conditions create fertile ground for the emergence of quiet quitting.

- COVID-19 has acted as a catalyst for the emergence of quiet quitting.
- Quiet quitting relates to existing concepts from human resource management (HRM) and organizational behavior.

### 1. Introduction

Quiet quitting describes a work-related phenomenon whereby “one does not literally quit one’s job, but rather simply does the work that is expected of the position, without going above and beyond what is expected” (Scheyett, 2022). This phenomenon witnessed significant media attention since a TikTok video on it went viral during the summer of 2022 (Khan, 2022). Recent academic research suggests that quiet quitting may not be an entirely new phenomenon (Formica and Sfodera, 2022; Yikilmaz, 2022). However, the changes in the organization of work following COVID-19 and the ways work are traditionally organized within tourism and hospitality (Díaz-Carrión *et al.*, 2020) are likely to propel quiet quitting even further in the months and years to come (Formica and Sfodera, 2022; Yikilmaz, 2022).

According to a recent Gallup survey, half of the American workforce are quiet quitting their work (Constantz, 2022). This trend is pronounced in tourism and hospitality, whereby after the end of COVID-19 shutdowns and restart of operations, there was a significantly higher reduction in employee productivity than in other industries (Gordon and Sayed, 2022; Khan *et al.*, 2022). In short, the high-paced nature of work (Kalargyrou *et al.*, 2023); the working conditions typical of tourism and hospitality that demand staff to routinely go above and beyond the call of duty to satisfy customers’ demands – which oftentimes can be excessive or/and expressed aggressively (Wang *et al.*, 2022) – the high levels of emotional labor stemming from the expectation to always serve customers with a smile (Pugh, 2001); the relatively low pay (Mohsin *et al.*, 2022) and respect of jobs in tourism and hospitality (Díaz-Carrión *et al.*, 2020); all create fertile ground for quiet quitting to flourish in the industry.

While quiet quitting is still topical, commentators in the news media (Lord, 2022) and academia (Formica and Sfodera, 2022; Yikilmaz, 2022) have suggested that this phenomenon is not entirely new, and that it is associated with low work engagement and unionized actions (i.e. work to rule). However, to the best of our knowledge, no academic effort to this point has attempted to systematically examine the relationship of quiet quitting with the existing theories and concepts developed in HRM and organizational behavior that are widely used in tourism and hospitality to study a multitude of work-related phenomena. Doing so will allow a better appreciation of the extent to which existing theories, concepts and research methodologies can be used to empirically study this phenomenon. It will also help determine whether new theoretical and methodological tools need to be borrowed from other scientific fields, or even developed anew.

Given this research gap, we provide three main reasons that make this topic worth investigating. First, this phenomenon seems to have taken the form of a social movement that has the potential of generating a change in employee behaviors across tourism and hospitality organizations (Davis *et al.*, 2005). Second, it may have an impact on the relationship between employees and their employers by altering the nature of contracts binding these two parties (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2019). Finally, it challenges the widespread emphasis among tourism and hospitality providers on exceptional customer service, which oftentimes relies on employees going above and beyond the call of duty (Johanson and Woods, 2008). This last challenge may have far-reaching implications for the tourism and hospitality sectors, in which a focus on exceptional customer service is considered a key source of competitive advantage.

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Therefore, this critical reflection has three goals:

- (1) to describe the background and causes of quiet quitting;
- (2) to examine its relationship with existing concepts from HRM and organizational behavior; and
- (3) to identify opportunities for research advancements that can support tourism and hospitality organizations in developing appropriate interventions for managing quiet quitting.

## 2. Background and causes of quiet quitting

Although termed in various ways (e.g. low engagement, work-to-rule, etc.), quiet quitting appears to have been around even before the COVID-19 pandemic (Yikilmaz, 2022). However, its occurrence increased dramatically in the post-COVID-19 period, leading commentators to attribute the observed rise in this phenomenon to the COVID-19 pandemic (Le *et al.*, 2023). In the tourism and hospitality industry, low levels of employee satisfaction had been recorded even before the pandemic, in part due to low compensation, as well as the lack of employee recognition, both of which characterize the tourism and hospitality industry (Formica and Sfodera, 2022; Mohsin *et al.*, 2022).

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has shaken employees and organizations. It increased mental health issues (Kalargyrou *et al.*, 2023), unemployment, job insecurity, flexible work arrangements, the wide adoption of remote working (Hamouche and Chabani, 2021) and virtual experiences (e.g. in hospitality and tourism) (Wei *et al.*, 2022). COVID-19 has not impacted all economic sectors equally. While some sectors were laying off their employees and closing their businesses, others were facing a workforce shortage (Hamouche and Chabani, 2021). The tourism and hospitality industry was among those significantly hit by COVID-19 (Aguiar-Quintana *et al.*, 2021; Chen and Chen, 2021; Mertzanis *et al.*, 2023). The pandemic generated a career shock with a long-lasting effect, which will reshape individuals' career decisions and choices (Akkermans *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, the post-COVID-19 period was marked by an exceptionally high turnover rate (Oh *et al.*, 2022), evidenced by a large number of resignations, also known as the "great resignation" (Liu-Lastres *et al.*, 2023; Serenko, 2022).

While COVID-19 and its consequences have fueled quiet quitting from a macro (i.e. societal) level, factors at the micro (i.e. organizational, employee) level have also been propelling this phenomenon. One such factor is employees' forsaking the "hustle culture" mentality (Constantz, 2022). This does not necessarily suggest that employees hate their jobs and careers, or that they are slacking at work. It rather indicates that the current organizational culture, which is predominantly directed toward high-performance work systems and competition among employees, is detrimental to employees' morale, well-being (Ogbonnaya and Messersmith, 2019; Teo *et al.*, 2020) and work-life balance (Pearce, 2022). Hospitality is an example of an extremely high-paced industry with a level high of pressure placed on managers and employees to be productive (Kalargyrou *et al.*, 2023).

Another reason driving quiet quitting is that the COVID-19 pandemic forced employees to slow down and re-evaluate their lives by questioning how they were spending their time and what moments they were missing out on by themselves and with their loved ones. Thus, rejecting the idea that their entire lives should revolve around work, employees are now willing to redefine their commitment to paid work and also focus on what gives them a sense of fulfillment (King, 2022; Zenger and Folkman, 2022).

A further condition at the micro level that has escalated quiet quitting relates to unrealistic work demands and employees' desire to avoid burnout and protect their mental health (Khan *et al.*, 2022). According to a survey by ResumeBuilder (2022), eight out of ten quiet quitters were burnt out. Burnout occurs when employees experience emotional exhaustion, cynicism (depersonalization) and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. These experiences stem from a high level of work stress that is hard to manage because of high work demands and a lack of organizational support and recognition for their efforts (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Maslach *et al.*, 1996). COVID-19 placed additional requirements on employees at the workplace, such as the use of face masks, regular hand washing and frequent testing, all of which were coupled with low social support and blurred work-life boundaries (Hamouche and Chabani, 2021).

Poor management and leadership are also key contributors to quiet quitting (Yu *et al.*, 2020). A recent study found that "the least effective managers have three to four times as many people who fall in the 'quiet quitting' category compared to the most effective leaders" (Zenger and Folkman, 2022). This study also showed that such managers have 14% of their employees quiet quitting, compared with 20% of employees who were willing to expend extra effort at the workplace. However, effective managers who had good relationships with their employees witnessed 62% of their employees willing to expend extra effort and only 3% who were quiet quitting.

Employee dissatisfaction and disengagement are other reasons for quiet quitting. They are also recognized to influence employees' turnover intention in the hospitality sector (Oh *et al.*, 2022). The Gallup report (Constantz, 2022) revealed a decline in employee engagement, especially among the younger generations, due to a lack of encouragement and opportunities to learn and grow. Furthermore, the results of the survey by ResumeBuilder (2022) showed that one in ten employees was putting less effort into his/her job at the time of the study, compared to six months before. Half of them reported that this has not gone unnoticed, which might suggest that employees' dissatisfaction could be related to a perceived lack of recognition at work. Furthermore, this survey revealed that nine in ten quiet quitters could be incentivized to work harder at work through a higher salary, more paid time off, better health care, promotion and greater recognition. These results clearly indicate that employees who quiet quit are looking for a balance between monetary rewards, work-life balance, development, self-achievement and recognition.

Finally, a common thread observed among almost all quiet quitters has been that this phenomenon is more widespread among younger workers. Quiet quitting has resonated more with Generation Z. Generations differ in how they experienced the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Schawbel, 2020). However, it appears that Generation Z's experience of the pandemic was extremely negative because they were in the middle of a transition into adulthood, both personally and professionally (Goh and Baum, 2021). This transition was far from smooth and weighed heavily on their mental health. In fact, most of them experienced a career shock because of the high level of layoffs that they had witnessed. This is especially true for those whose first jobs had been in industries highly impacted by the pandemic, such as tourism and hospitality (Sun *et al.*, 2022). Finally, many experienced a delay in their graduation, which postponed their entry into the job market, affecting various aspects of their lives such as relationships, health and family. In turn, these setbacks enhanced their socially conscious mindset and motivated them to seek a change and a better future (Schawbel, 2020).

### 3. Relationship of quiet quitting with existing constructs

Recent academic work suggests that quiet quitting is not an entirely new phenomenon (Formica and Sfodera, 2022). Whereas some commentators argue that the phrase "acting

their wage” may better encapsulate what employees are doing when they say that they are quietly quitting (Kaplan, 2022), others highlight the psychological dimensions of the phenomenon by explaining that quiet quitting employees “fulfill their job description but are psychologically detached from their work” via setting boundaries on their discretionary efforts at work (Constantz, 2022).

From an industrial relations perspective, quiet quitting has also been equated to the old concept of “work to rule,” which refers to employees doing the bare minimum at work to pressurize their employer to raise their salary or improve their working conditions (Lord, 2022). Working to rule is a form of collective industrial action over a dispute under the umbrella of trade unionism. However, quiet quitting is more likely a personal and psychological form of action related to employees’ individual desire for work–life balance, healthy boundaries between work and their personal lives and good mental health – rather than a union organized action.

These expositions of quiet quitting bring to mind some concepts rooted in HRM and organizational behavior. First, the idea of going above and beyond at work invokes the concepts of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and extra-role performance. OCB refers to “individual behavior that is discretionary, not explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). Similarly, extra-role performance, which is the opposite of in-role performance, involves employees performing additional duties and tasks that are not outlined in their formal job description (Organ, 1988). Quiet quitters are those who decide to not go above and beyond what is required at work, and perform their jobs only based on the requirements outlined in their formal job description.

Thus, they set boundaries around their discretionary behaviors and extra roles that are not formally recognized at the workplace. This suggests that quiet quitting lies at the low side of OCB. However, it is not yet clear whether employees are setting boundaries to all OCB dimensions identified in the literature, namely, altruism, civic virtue, courtesy and sportsmanship (Organ, 1988), or on other dimensions they determine based on their own perception and interpretations, given that roles have become more ambiguous, and jobs have moved away from clearly defined tasks and responsibilities (Organ, 1997). OCB toward customers has been extensively used by tourism and hospitality researchers as a key variable affecting customer–employee interactions (Lee *et al.*, 2017; Xu *et al.*, 2022).

Second, the reference to quiet quitting as employees’ fulfilling their job description while being psychologically detached from their work (Constantz, 2022) also brings to mind the concepts of work withdrawal, cynicism and employee silence. According to Hanisch and Hulin (1991, p. 111), work withdrawal refers to the:

Behaviors dissatisfied individuals use to avoid aspects of their specific work role or minimize the time spent on their specific work tasks while maintaining their current organizational and work-role memberships.

Similarly, quiet quitters choose to remain in their organization while maintaining their organizational and work–role membership. However, unlike work withdrawal, quiet quitters do not look to minimize the time spent on their work tasks. Instead, they look to work their wage and limit the time spent on extra activities that are not listed in their formal job description. Furthermore, work withdrawal may involve absenteeism and lateness (Hanisch and Hulin, 1991), but nothing suggests that it is the case in respect of quiet quitting. Psychological withdrawal and job withdrawal have been the subject of intensive study within tourism and hospitality, especially as a result of customer mistreatment of frontline employees (Le *et al.*, 2023; Raza *et al.*, 2021).

Cynicism, also known as depersonalization, is the adoption of a detached attitude toward work combined with indifferent and cold behavior that employees may adopt toward their job, peers and organization (Maslach *et al.*, 1996). By setting boundaries between work and private lives, and not going above and beyond what is required, employees may seek to protect their mental health and prevent burnout (Yikilmaz, 2022). Burnout starts with emotional exhaustion, followed by cynicism and poor performance (Maslach *et al.*, 1996). Facing high levels of work stress is associated with increased emotional exhaustion, causing employees to distance themselves from the source of their stress in an attempt to control the situation. Doing the bare minimum might be a way of distancing oneself psychologically and emotionally from sources of work stress. Unlike cynicism, quiet quitting does not necessarily mean indifference and cold behavior toward job requirements and peers and to this point, it has not been associated with poor performance. Recent academic work in tourism and hospitality has revealed that employees can develop cynicism due to factors such as workplace incivility, co-worker support, service rules (Baker and Kim, 2021) and narcissistic leadership (Aboramadan *et al.*, 2021).

Finally, employee silence involves employees intentionally withholding their expressions of information, opinions, concerns or questions concerning their organization (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2003). Employees who decide to quietly quit their job will do it silently (Yikilmaz, 2022), without informing their employer. Simultaneously, they may avoid expressing their ideas, questions or opinions because they consider it outside the scope of their formal job requirements or because this will open doors for extra tasks. They can also be silent about their intention to work their wage, probably for fear of losing their job. Employee silence has been a key outcome variable of, among others, leaders'/supervisors' behaviors toward employees within tourism and hospitality contexts (Aboramadan *et al.*, 2021; Al-Hawari *et al.*, 2020).

As the description of some key concepts from HRM and organizational behavior indicates, quiet quitting does not seem to be an entirely new concept. However, its specific form is contingent on the contemporary shifts in the workplace and the younger generations' perception of work-life balance (Scheyett, 2022). These shifts need to be understood in light of COVID-19 and its ensuing effects on work practices such as remote working and great resignation. Driven by these shifts, employees seem to be more willing to set boundaries between their work and their private life, which might have been blurred because of an organizational culture that fosters high pressure and high performance.

#### **4. Opportunities for theory building and empirical research on quiet quitting**

The discussion in the previous sections suggests that despite the unique combination of changes in the macro environment (e.g. COVID-19, great resignation) and micro environment (e.g. remote working, re-prioritization of employees' life goals), quiet quitting relates to and even resembles existing concepts recognized in the HRM and organizational behavior. These have, over the years, been used extensively by researchers in tourism and hospitality for explaining related phenomena. In this section, we provide researchers with guidance on how to use such concepts, to help them further evaluate the extent to which quiet quitting is a prevailing new phenomenon or a window-dressing for ongoing, well-known concepts.

First, researchers could examine how quiet quitting can be conceptualized within the context of job performance and employees' discretionary behaviors and its possible impact on employee outcomes. For this purpose, OCB (Organ, 1988) is perhaps the most relevant theoretical framework for understanding quiet quitting. It can help answer questions such as whether quiet quitting can be conceptualized as employees' refusal to engage in



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citizenship behaviors, and if so, does it involve all OCB dimensions (i.e. altruism, civic virtue, courtesy and sportsmanship), or does it encompass other dimensions related to the contemporary reality of workplaces?

Second, researchers can examine how quiet quitting might be conceptualized within the context of employer–employee relationships. According to [Organ \(1990\)](#), employees go beyond their job description to adopt OCBs when their relationship with their employer is based on a social exchange, i.e. a relationship that exists outside the formal employment contract, involving non-specified contributions. In this context, theories such as social exchange ([Blau, 2017](#); [Emerson, 1976](#); [Homans, 1958](#)), psychological contract ([Argyris, 1960](#); [Levinson et al., 1962](#); [Rousseau, 1995](#)) and organizational justice theories ([Greenberg, 1987](#)) might be used. Social exchange theory is recognized to address the relationship between employees and their employers, putting forward the norm of reciprocity and the trade of effort and loyalty in exchange for benefits such as compensation, and recognition. Psychological contract theory is also based on the norm of reciprocity that is not specified in a formal contract. It refers to employees' perception of their obligations toward their employer and vice versa. When they are fulfilled, these mutual obligations can be related to job satisfaction and OCB.

Organizational justice theory is based on the premise that employees' behavior can be influenced by their perception of fairness and justice regarding their workplace, the implemented procedure, their interactions with others and the outcome of their work ([Greenberg, 1990](#)). In this context, researchers can examine the impact of the organization's culture on employees from the perspective of reciprocity, fairness and compatibility. Such theories can help to develop distinct conceptual frameworks for assessing the antecedents of quiet quitting, such as employees' perception of fairness, organizational justice (e.g. distributive, procedural, interactional) and organizational support.

Third, researchers could use theories focusing on the relationship between quiet quitting and employees' need for work–life balance. For example, conflict theory ([Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985](#)) posits that life and work are two domains that have different requirements, making them completely incompatible. Therefore, the fulfillment of one aspect of the individual's life requires a sacrifice in the other aspect. Such a theory can help researchers develop a conceptual framework that explains employees' need for work–life balance. Researchers can explore whether employees' awareness of the importance of balancing these two different domains is a factor in quiet quitting behavior and whether it can influence their definition of extra tasks.

Fourth, researchers could consider using motivational theories such as equity theory ([Adams, 1963](#)) and two-factor motivation-hygiene theory ([Herzberg, 1966](#)) to investigate whether quiet quitting is a consequence of employees' demotivation or job dissatisfaction. This can help to investigate the mechanisms through which quiet quitting develops. Equity theory can help to explain whether quiet quitting is an attempt to restore equity in a situation of a perceived unbalance between efforts at work and outcomes received as the counterpart of these efforts.

The two-factor theory ([Herzberg, 1966](#)) helps to address antecedents of quiet quitting through concepts such as employee demotivation, dissatisfaction, unpleasant working conditions and job insecurity. This theory made a distinction between motivation factors, which contribute to job satisfaction (e.g. recognition, advancement and learning, experience achievement), and hygiene factors, which contribute to job dissatisfaction (e.g. unpleasant working conditions, job insecurity, unfair salary). In this case, motivation factors can be used as moderators in the relationship between job dissatisfiers and quiet quitting in tourism and

hospitality. Researchers can also examine whether quiet quitting is an employee's attempt to take control over a situation of perceived inequity or dissatisfaction at work.

Finally, given that burnout has been mentioned in literature as one of the causes of quiet quitting, job demands–resources theory (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001) and the conservation of resources (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) are useful in this case. Job demands–resources theory suggests that job positions have risk factors (demands) and mitigating factors (resources), which are related to job stress and ultimately influence employees' health, behavior and performance. COR theory posits that individuals strive to acquire, protect and maintain their resources (e.g. personal characteristics, conditions and energies that they value). In this context, a loss of one resource (e.g. the balance between work and personal life) can generate a succession of resource loss, such as health resources (e.g. emotional exhaustion), due to the level of stress that can be generated, which negatively impacts employee's work satisfaction and leads to a behavioral change (e.g. quiet quitting). These theories can guide the assessment of psychological processes leading to quiet quitting and link them to mental health issues at work, such as burnout. It can also aid researchers in identifying the risk factors (demands) associated with psychological disconnection that characterizes quiet quitters and help discover the attenuating factors (resources). This can, in turn, guide organizational interventions in tourism and hospitality that ultimately contain the factors (demands) propagating quiet quitting. Such an approach could include constructs related to job demands, such as workload, emotional job demands, physical job demands and lack of recognition as antecedents of quiet quitting. It could also help explore the moderating role of constructs related to job resources, such as autonomy, co-workers, and supervisor support, and examine the effects of quiet quitting on organizational outcomes such as organizational performance.

## 5. Conclusions

Although the topic of quiet quitting has received widespread media coverage, it has received minimal scholarly attention both within tourism and hospitality as well as the broader management literature. This study was an attempt to trace the background and causes of quiet quitting, and identify its similarities and relationships with existing concepts from HRM and organizational behavior. As a mindset driven by a younger generation of employees seeking a better future for themselves, quiet quitting seems to have taken the form of a social movement that could reshape the contemporary labor market. Quiet quitting seems to represent an expression of employees' profound need to create a balance between their work and personal lives. In the current study, we have attempted to present some of the groundwork necessary to further illuminate this neither entirely new nor entirely old work-related phenomenon. We hope that our research and that of other scholars and public commentators will motivate further research on this phenomenon in the near future.

### 5.1 Theoretical implications

This paper contributes to the body of research on human resources management as well as employee behavior in tourism and hospitality in several ways. First, it is among the first scholarly papers addressing the highly mediatized phenomenon of quiet quitting in general, and more specifically, in the tourism and hospitality industry. It describes its background and potential causes from macro (i.e. societal) and micro levels (i.e. organizational, employee), which represents an important contribution, given the impact of COVID-19 on society, organizations and employees. This study contributes to the broadening of the scope of existing research on the post-pandemic effects of COVID-19 on employees in the hospitality and tourism sectors. While some studies examined the great resignation



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phenomenon that marked the post-pandemic era in these sectors (Liu-Lastres *et al.*, 2023), jeopardizing their stability and sustainability; this study examines quiet quitting as another complex phenomenon that emerged during the same period. Quiet quitting represents a paradigm shift that may influence HRM in the hospitality and tourism industries. It appears to take the form of a social movement led by a new generation of workforce that is dominantly present in these industries. Hence, this study inspires research on the post-pandemic social changes that can reshape the future of these industries.

Second, this study synthesizes diverse concepts related to quiet quitting (mainly work-to-rule, OCB, work withdrawal, cynicism and employee silence) from different perspectives (i.e. HRM, organizational behavior, industrial relations and psychology) as an attempt to clarify its meaning, identify similarities and differences and determine whether quiet quitting is a new or an old concept that has simply been revived using a revamped name. By doing so, this study creates a bridge between different disciplines within tourism and hospitality research, which helps to foster an understanding of this phenomenon from different perspectives. This is necessary, given the complexity of the phenomenon of quiet quitting. To the best of our knowledge, no academic effort to this point has attempted to systematically examine the relationship between existing concepts, using a multidisciplinary approach, which represents an important contribution of this study. Based on the analysis of these concepts, this study suggests that quiet quitting does not seem to be an entirely new concept. However, its specific form is associated with contemporary shifts in the workplace and the younger generations' perception of work–life balance (Scheyett, 2022). These shifts need to be understood in light of COVID-19 and its ensuing effects on work practices, which pushed employees to be willing to set stronger boundaries between their work and their private lives, which might have been blurred because of high work pressure and high-performance organizational culture.

Third, this study provides guidelines and paves the way for more research on quiet quitting, more specifically in tourism and hospitality, by proposing key theories that can help to advance the understanding of this critical phenomenon that influences employees' behavior at work. Theories such as social exchange, psychological contract and organizational justice were suggested to develop a theoretical framework that examines the antecedents of quiet quitting based on the principles of reciprocity (employee–employer) and fairness (e.g. employees' perception of fairness and organizational support). Furthermore, conflict theory was suggested to examine the antecedents of quiet quitting from a work–life balance perspective. Motivation theories (e.g. equity theory and two-factor motivation-hygiene theories) were also recommended to investigate whether quiet quitting is a consequence of employees' demotivation or job dissatisfaction. Moreover, this study recommended the use of job demands–resources and the COR theories as relevant theoretical guidelines to investigate the psychological processes undergoing quiet quitting and link them to mental health issues at work (such as burnout), to examine risk factors, attenuating factors and potential organizational outcomes.

These theories are widely used in tourism and hospitality research to study a multitude of work-related phenomena but have not been used to examine quiet quitting, which represents an important contribution of this study. To the best of our knowledge, no academic effort to this point has attempted to systematically examine the relationship of quiet quitting with existing theories developed in HRM, organizational behavior and psychology. Doing so will help to expand the scope of tourism and hospitality research and allow a better appreciation of the extent to which existing theories and research methodologies can be used to empirically study the phenomenon of quiet quitting, or alternatively, determine whether new theoretical and methodological tools need to be borrowed from other scientific fields, or even developed anew.

### 5.2 Practical implications

Quiet quitting can be challenging for organizations for two main reasons. First, its virality coupled with non-converging interpretations creates uncertainty for managers regarding its exact nature and potential impact on their organizations. Second, managers are uncertain as to which interventions would be most effective in dealing with this phenomenon without risking a backlash. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that many companies deteriorated the working conditions of employees suspected of quiet quitting, by forcing them to resign (Constantz, 2022). As such, quiet quitting can create a form of stigma toward employees' behavior, with managers possibly misattributing such behaviors to employees' low willingness to do their job, leading employees to harbor hate toward their organizations, careers and bosses.

Tourism and hospitality providers will benefit from providing training to managers to deal with quiet quitting (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2022). Clarifying job requirements and discussing them with the employee is paramount to identifying discomfort zones and necessary resources. An organizational diagnosis through focus groups and surveys is recommended to collect employees' feedback regarding their level of satisfaction, work engagement, working conditions and perception of the organization's culture. Moreover, managers can evaluate the effectiveness of the organization's family-friendly practices and policies to promote work-life balance.

Quiet quitting provides tourism and hospitality providers with the opportunity to rethink HRM practices and to adapt them to the new reality of the labor market and the needs of a new generation of employees. Given the emerging trends in the contemporary labor market, rethinking the management style, the organization's culture and HRM practices can help tourism and hospitality providers retain their employees, motivate them and build strong employer branding. Furthermore, adopting a human-centric approach to management can also help create a balance for both employees and organizations in this industry. For example, managers should have regular (weekly) in-depth discussions with their team members to boost their engagement (Elkhwesky *et al.*, 2022). They should identify and understand employees' needs and expectations of individual growth and development (Mohsin *et al.*, 2022). Further, they should communicate what the organization can offer to enhance long-term goals achievement, promote transparency and ensure the alignment of organizational and employees' needs (Sun *et al.*, 2022).

They should invest in their human capital (Khan *et al.*, 2021) and develop a human-centered HRM strategy to enhance employees' resilience building and development, all of which are necessary in the hospitality sector (Giousmpasoglou *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, managers should offer flexibility (Mohsin *et al.*, 2022) as well as learning and development opportunities to employees through a competency-based approach that is able to overcome the lack of flexibility of job-based approaches (Capaldo *et al.*, 2006).

Furthermore, tourism and hospitality providers will gain from addressing situations of poor management and leadership, identified as potential causes of quiet quitting (Yu *et al.*, 2020). In fact, dysfunctional and destructive leadership styles, such as narcissistic leadership (Aboramadan *et al.*, 2021), abusive supervision (Al-Hawari *et al.*, 2020; Yu *et al.*, 2020) and despotic leadership (Albashiti *et al.*, 2021), and their negative effects on employees behaviors as well as their attitudinal (Aboramadan *et al.*, 2021; Al-Hawari *et al.*, 2020) and work-related outcomes (Albashiti *et al.*, 2021) are well documented in the tourism and hospitality literature. Therefore, it is necessary to discourage these types of leadership and train managers to prevent poor management styles.

### 5.3 Limitations and future research

Being among the first academic efforts attempting to offer a more systematic understanding of quiet quitting, this study has several limitations. First, it is a critical reflection paper that may be impacted by researchers' experiences and opinions. In this context, the literature was used to

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support the authors' understanding of the phenomenon. Second, given the purpose of the paper, conceptual development and empirical analysis were not performed. Finally, this paper relied only on theories and constructs from HRM and organizational behavior to examine quiet quitting. Other perspectives could have been used to expand the understanding of this phenomenon, such as theories from general management (e.g. systems approach, [Simon, 1962](#)), sociology (e.g. institutional theory, [Greenwood \*et al.\*, 2017](#)) and marketing (e.g. service quality, [Parasuraman \*et al.\*, 1985](#)). To overcome these limitations, we offer some more actionable recommendations for researchers interested in studying quiet quitting.

First, given the non-converging interpretations of quiet quitting, the development of a working definition and conceptualization is necessary. By situating it within various related concepts, this study has paved the first steps toward this direction. After conceptualization, scholars should aim to operationalize quiet quitting to uncover its distinctiveness and its relationship with other constructs such as OCB, work withdrawal, cynicism and employee silence. We believe that it is crucial for scholars to develop and test this operationalization and demonstrate the predictive validity of its measures. Empirically demonstrating the discriminant validity is critical for preventing construct proliferation, which could limit the advancement of research on quiet quitting, considering its relatedness to various concepts.

Furthermore, given the lack of empirical research on the factors giving rise to quiet quitting, the collection of empirical data to illuminate this process is critical. To this end, the first step is to situate quiet quitting within the theoretical frameworks presented in the previous section. Doing so would help scholars evaluate the extent to which the constructs used in these frameworks influence quiet quitting and its impact on employees' psychological processes and behaviors. In addition, a multilevel approach could be adopted to place quiet quitting across individual (e.g. sociodemographic, personality, etc.) and organizational (e.g. work arrangements, organizational culture, etc.) levels of analysis, and assess for any spillover effects across levels. Analyses at the organizational level could encompass numerous factors such as HRM practices, organizational support and organizational culture. As such, a multilevel approach could help assess whether individual- or organizational-level factors bear most of the responsibility for the rise of quiet quitting.

Moreover, comparative research is necessary to understand variations in quiet quitting among generations (i.e. Generation X, millennials, Generation Z). For example, research can be conducted to compare generations regarding quiet quitting intention or behavior. Future research can also identify the potential explanatory factors at the individual and organizational levels, such as their definition of work; individual values; organizational commitment, embeddedness, as well as support and work arrangements. Such comparative research can also help examine differences based on gender and ethnicity, as women and ethnic minorities, for example, often cannot afford to quiet quit because they are more likely to be perceived negatively ([Rieck, 2022](#)). Furthermore, comparative research can also be performed across different tourism and hospitality sectors such as hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, etc.

Finally, conducting longitudinal research is critical for capturing causal effects and understanding the dynamic processes through which quiet quitting evolves and influences workplace outcomes. For example, researchers could explore how HRM practices can change and evolve to address quiet quitting over time. They can also examine whether employees who have decided to quietly quit, maintain or alter such behaviors in the long run.

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