

The Phenomenon Of Quite Quitting In The World Of Work: A Sociological Perspective On The Change In The Professional Ethos Of Generation Z

Puji Hastuti¹, Wahyuningrat², Akbar Yuli Setianto³

Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Purwokerto, Indonesia^{1,2}
Kantor Kemenag Kabupaten Purbalingga, Indonesia³

Article history:

Received: 2025-05-20
Revised: 2025-06-19
Accepted: 2025-06-28

✉ Corresponding Author:

Name author: Puji Hastuti

E-mail: puji.hastuti@mhs.unsoed.ac.id

Abstract

The phenomenon of quiet quitting describes a phenomenon where employees only fulfill tasks according to job descriptions without taking further initiative, as a response to changes in social values and expectations of the workplace. This study explores the phenomenon of quiet quitting in the context of changes in the professional ethos of Generation Z with a sociological approach. The results of the study indicate that quiet quitting is not only related to burnout or exhaustion, but also a reflection of the mismatch between employee expectations and work reality. Generation Z prioritizes work-life balance, mental health, flexibility, and inclusivity, which is in contrast to a work culture that prioritizes excessive hard work. In this context, alienation theory suggests that lack of recognition, control, and meaning in work can trigger quiet quitting behavior. This study proposes that organizations need to adjust their policies and leadership styles to create a work environment that is more supportive of employee well-being and engagement, which in turn will improve performance and loyalty to the company

Keywords: Alienation; Generation-Z; Quiet-Quitting; Work-Ethic; Work-Life Balance.

1. Introduction

Quiet quitting refers to a phenomenon in which employees actively choose to fulfill only the duties listed in their job description, without taking the initiative to do additional work or volunteering to go beyond the call of duty. This phenomenon focuses on meeting the minimum expectations of the job, with the primary goal of maintaining employment status without sacrificing personal well-being. This phenomenon arises in response to several social and organizational factors that play a role in shaping this behavior, such as demanding working conditions and lack of appropriate rewards or compensation. Quiet quitting is not only related to exhaustion or burnout, but also reflects a shift in the values and expectations that employees have about the world of work. (Rahmadara & Rachmawati, 2025; Safariyani & Fadillah, 2025; Serenko, 2023).

The phenomenon of quiet quitting can be influenced by various factors, including burnout and exhaustion due to excessive workload. Many employees feel burdened by demands that do not match the rewards or awards received, so they begin to reduce their involvement in the workplace (Serenko, 2023; Safariyani & Fadillah, 2025). In addition, dissatisfaction with the poor communication system between employees and management also worsens the atmosphere, creating feelings of alienation that lead to decisions to reduce work effort. Other factors that play a role are perceived injustice in the workplace and the failure of management to provide effective inspiration and leadership. Overall, this

phenomenon reflects a mismatch between employee expectations and the realities of the work world they face.(Caldwell & Mahand, 2023; Naim et al., 2025).

Understanding the changing professional ethos of Generation Z is crucial as they bring new values that impact the dynamics of the workplace, such as mental health, inclusivity, and a clear sense of purpose, as well as a desire for frequent feedback. Generation Z also emphasizes flexibility, work-life balance, and the adaptation of technology to the workplace.(De Castro Neves, 2025; Dhawan, 2025). Today, they are starting to take leadership roles and drive change in traditional leadership models with a focus on sustainability and emotional intelligence.(Nedelko & Cresnar, 2020). While challenges such as high turnover and value differences with previous generations exist, they offer great opportunities for innovation and the creation of a more adaptive and inclusive work culture. Organizations that can adapt their policies and leadership styles to the values of Generation Z will be more successful in attracting and retaining young talent.(Handoyo et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of quiet quitting—where employees simply work according to their contract without any extra effort—can be understood as a response to social changes and new values in the workplace. This shift is driven by cultural changes, the expectations of the younger generation, and the impact of the pandemic that emphasizes the importance of work-life balance and a rejection of an overly competitive work ethic. Cross-country studies show that quiet quitting arises from a complex interaction between cultural norms, institutional changes, and individual coping mechanisms for modern work pressures.(Georgiadou et al., 2025; Hamouche et al., 2023).

The concept of alienation, as proposed by Marx, is very relevant to understanding quiet quitting. Employees who feel unrecognized or experience a breach of their psychological contract tend to withdraw emotionally and functionally from their work.(Flenady & Corbin, 2024; Geng et al., 2025). Axel Honneth's recognition theory highlights that lack of recognition at work drives individuals to seek meaning and appreciation outside of work, so that quiet quitting becomes a form of compensation for feeling unappreciated (Flenady & Corbin, 2024). Burnout, conflict, and organizational injustice also reinforce this tendency for alienation and withdrawal behavior (Donald et al., 2024; Geng et al., 2025; Naim et al., 2025). In addition, social values, especially those held by the younger generation, shape a work ethic that emphasizes work-life balance, mental health, and organizational justice rather than unconditional loyalty to the company. This shift in values is reflected in the rejection of the expectations of the "entrepreneurial ethic" that demands excessive emotional involvement in work.

The main objective of this study is to explore the phenomenon of quiet quitting in the context of the changing professional ethos of generation Z and provide a deeper sociological perspective. This study aims to understand how new values brought by generation Z, such as work-life balance, mental health, and adaptation to technology, affect their behavior in the workplace, and how these factors contribute to the phenomenon of quiet quitting. The results of this study are expected to provide clearer insights into the dynamics of the changing world of work, and how organizations can adjust their policies and leadership to attract and retain young talents from generation Z, who have different hopes and expectations than previous generations.

2. Method

This research uses a library research method developed by Zed(2008)in his book "Literature Research Methods". This method was chosen because it is in accordance with the characteristics of the study which aims to analyze the phenomenon of quite quitting from a sociological perspective through in-depth theoretical and conceptual studies. Literature study is a study conducted by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting secondary data from various literature sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, research reports, and other academic publications that are relevant to the research topic. In the context of this study, the literature sources used include theories of sociology of work, literature on generation Z, previous studies on changes in work ethic, and empirical data that have been published related to the phenomenon of quite quitting in various countries and industries.

The data collection process was carried out through a systematic search of relevant literature using keywords such as "quite quitting", "generation Z", "work ethic", "industrial sociology", and "work culture change" in various academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, JSTOR, and other digital libraries. Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques to identify patterns, main themes, and relationships between concepts that emerged from the literature reviewed. This study also uses a descriptive-analytical approach to describe the phenomenon of quite quitting comprehensively and analyze it from various sociological perspectives, including generational theory, social change theory, and sociology of work theory. The validity of the study was ensured through source triangulation, namely by using various types of literature from different authors and perspectives to obtain a holistic and objective understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

3. Results

The phenomenon of quiet quitting is a topic that is increasingly attracting attention in the workplace, especially in the context of social changes affecting Generation Z. In this study, quiet quitting is explained as the attitude of workers who only fulfill tasks according to their job descriptions, without taking further initiative or being emotionally committed to the job. The results of the study indicate that this phenomenon is influenced by various social, cultural, and organizational factors that create a mismatch between worker expectations and the reality of the workplace, especially for Generation Z. This phenomenon not only reflects problems related to burnout or excessive work demands, but is also a response to changing values and expectations that are developing in the workplace.

Changes in Work Ethic in Generation Z

Generation Z brings new values that influence the dynamics of the workplace, such as the need for work-life balance, mental health, flexibility, and the importance of inclusivity and clear goals. These values are directly related to their attitudes towards the workplace and their involvement in their work. Unlike previous generations who focused more on loyalty and more competitive career achievements, Generation Z prioritizes personal satisfaction and a more balanced quality of life between work and personal life.(De Castro Neves, 2025; Dhawan, 2025).

In Generation Z, the quiet quitting phenomenon emerged as a response to changing expectations about work. They no longer feel the need to sacrifice personal well-being in order to achieve high standards at work. Instead, they seek to maintain jobs that allow them to maintain a balance between their personal life and career. Previous studies have shown that Generation Z is more likely to value their work based on personal satisfaction and emotional well-being, rather than solely pursuing financial success.(Handoyo et al., 2025; Smith & Nichols, 2024). They are demanding that workplaces provide support for mental health and allow them to work more flexibly.(Krasulja & Vasiljević-Blagojević, 2024; Nguyen & Vu, 2025).

This shift in values also reflects a rejection of the workaholic culture that prioritizes live to work, where work often comes at the expense of employees' personal lives and mental health. Employees who identify with Generation Z values prefer to work in an environment that supports diversity, inclusion, and recognition for their achievements, rather than simply getting a paycheck and a promotion without any appreciation or emotional involvement.

The Influence of Social Change Theory in the World of Work

Social change theory suggests that changes in social and cultural structures, including in the workplace, influence individuals' perspectives and behaviors toward work. The influence of globalization, technological advances, and shifts in social values have contributed to the formation of a Generation Z work ethic that prioritizes well-being and flexibility. Quiet quitting as a phenomenon that occurs among Generation Z can be understood as the result of the interaction between cultural norms that prioritize work-life balance and changes in organizations that are less able to adapt to these new values (Serenko, 2023; Naim et al., 2025).

A cross-country study conducted by Zhong et al. (2023) shows that the phenomenon of quiet quitting arises due to the mismatch between the demands of the world of work and the values upheld by Generation Z. In this case, the shift in work culture and expectations for more flexible and humane work have driven the emergence of this phenomenon. Based on research conducted by Hamouche et al. (2023), individuals who feel that their work is no longer meaningful or is not appreciated in the organization will tend to withdraw psychologically from their work, which ultimately leads to quiet quitting.

Alienation Theory in the Context of Quiet Quitting

The theory of alienation, expressed by Karl Marx, is very relevant in understanding the phenomenon of quiet quitting. Alienation occurs when individuals feel separated from their work, organizational goals, or even from themselves. This condition arises when workers feel they have no control over their work, feel that the work is meaningless, or lack social support from coworkers or superiors. The decrease in emotional involvement caused by this alienation can lead to quiet quitting (Flenady & Corbin, 2024).

Alienation dimensions such as feeling unappreciated and having no control over work can worsen the psychological condition of workers. Employees who feel alienated tend to reduce their efforts at work and only focus on fulfilling basic tasks without engaging emotionally or showing more initiative. Quiet quitting does not only occur as a reaction to excessive workload, but is also the result of a deep sense of alienation at work, where employees feel unappreciated or have no meaning in their work.

Engagement and Motivation in the Workplace

In this study, it was found that alienation and quiet quitting are interrelated with decreased employee engagement at work. Employees who feel emotionally uninvolved or do not receive recognition from the organization will lose their motivation to try harder. In contrast, employees who feel valued, have autonomy in their work, and work in an environment that supports their mental well-being will be more motivated to make greater contributions (Chaudhry, 2024; Palaz & Karabulut, 2023).

The importance of psychological empowerment and increasing social support in the workplace is also very relevant in preventing quiet quitting. When organizations provide opportunities for employees to feel ownership of their work and support their mental well-being, their engagement will increase, which in turn can improve performance and loyalty to the company. Therefore, one of the efforts that organizations need to make is to create an inclusive work environment and support employee development.

Implications for the World of Work

The phenomenon of quiet quitting reflects the mismatch between employee expectations and the reality of the work world they face. Therefore, to reduce this phenomenon, organizations need to adjust their HR policies to the values upheld by Generation Z, such as work-life balance and attention to mental health. Organizations that successfully create an environment that supports employee flexibility, recognition, and well-being will be able to attract and retain the best talent from Generation Z (Aggarwal et al., 2020; Handoyo et al., 2025).

Quiet quitting is not just an individual phenomenon, but a phenomenon that reflects major changes in the world of work. Changes in social values, expectations of work, and lack of recognition and organizational involvement play a major role in shaping this phenomenon. Therefore, it is important for organizations to understand the changing professional ethos that is happening to Generation Z and adjust their policies and leadership styles to create a more inclusive, flexible and supportive work environment for employee well-being.

4. Conclusion

The quiet quitting phenomenon among Generation Z reflects a profound shift in work ethics influenced by social, cultural, and organizational factors. Generation Z, who place greater emphasis on work-life balance, mental health, and inclusivity, has shown a rejection of the culture of overwork that often leads to burnout. This phenomenon is not only a response to exhaustion or work pressure, but also a reflection of the mismatch between employee expectations and the realities of the workplace. Alienation theory helps explain how job dissatisfaction, feelings of being unappreciated, and lack of autonomy can lead individuals to emotionally withdraw, leading to quiet quitting. Employees who feel alienated tend to do the bare minimum, without further involvement. Organizations need to understand this shift in values and adjust their policies and leadership styles, by creating a flexible work environment, supporting well-being, and recognizing employee contributions. This will help attract and retain Generation Z talent, and increase their engagement and performance. Therefore, this change in the workplace requires a more adaptive and humane approach from organizations to stay relevant to the needs of the new younger generation

References

- Aggarwal, R., Chaturvedi, S., & Mishra, D. (2020). Workplace Wellbeing: Understanding the Role of HR Practices in Employee Engagement. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 41(5), 501–522.
- Caldwell, C., & Mahand, T. (2023). Quiet Quitting – Causes and Opportunities. *Business and Management Research*. <https://doi.org/10.5430/bmr.v12n1p9>
- Chaudhry, S. (2024). Sustaining talent: a social exchange perspective on the Generation Z workforce. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/dlo-11-2023-0245>
- De Castro Neves, H. (2025). The Anxious Generation Theory and Generation Z Behaviour in the Workplace: A Correlation Analysis. *International Journal of Business Administration*. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijba.v16n1p74>
- Dhawan, T. (2025). Exploring How Gen Z is Bringing New Perspectives and Values to Leadership Roles: Lessons for Organizations. *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research*. <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2025.v07i01.35737>
- Flenady, G., & Corbin, T. (2024). Quiet Quitting as Compensatory Respect: Meaningful Work, Recognition, and the Entrepreneurial Ethic. *Philosophy of Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40926-024-00320-4>
- Geng, R., Geng, X., & Geng, S. (2025). Identifying Key Antecedents of Quiet Quitting Among Nurses: A Cross-Profession Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.16934>
- Georgiadou, A., Vezyridis, P., & Glaveli, N. (2025). “You Pretend to Pay Me; I Pretend to Work”: A Multi-Level Exploration of Quiet Quitting in the Greek Context. *Human Resource Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22292>
- Golubovskaya, M., Solnet, D., & Sakdiyakorn, M. (2021). Understanding Generation Z through collective consciousness: Impacts for hospitality work and employment. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102822. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102822>
- Hamouche, S., Papastathopoulos, A., & Koritos, C. (2023). Quiet quitting: relationship with other concepts and implications for tourism and hospitality. *International Journal of Contemporary*

- Hospitality Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijchm-11-2022-1362>
- Handoyo, S., Zahra, Y., & Fajrianthi, F. (2025). A comprehensive overview of Generation Z in the workplace: Insights from a scoping review. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v51i0.2263>
- Horman, J., Gentry, C., Callahan, C., Anderson, C., Overly, A., Leslie, B., Bickham, C., & King, J. (2021). Generation Z Perceptions of a Positive Workplace Environment. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 33, 171–187. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10672-021-09366-2>
- Krasulja, N., & Vasiljević-Blagojević, M. (2024). Business environment and quiet quit: Perspective of generation Z. *Serbian Journal of Engineering Management*. <https://doi.org/10.5937/sjem2401006k>
- Naim, M. F., Peethambaran, M., & Gone, Y. S. P. (2025). Sounding the silence: examining the antecedents and outcomes of quiet quitting. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijoa-09-2024-4794>
- Nedelko, Z., & Cresnar, R. (2020). Understanding Future Leaders: How Are Personal Values of Generations Y and Z Tailored to Leadership in Industry 4.0? *Sustainability*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114417>
- Nguyen, H. T., & Vu, M. H. (2025). Quiet Quitting: Insights from Generation Z workers in Vietnam. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management (IJSRM)*. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijsrcm/v13i01.em08>
- Rahmadara, B., & Rachmawati, R. (2025). Exploratory Study of the Phenomenon Quiet Quitting: Manager's Perspective in a Digital Company. *Jurnal Manajemen Teori Dan Terapan| Journal of Theory and Applied Management*. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jmtt.v18i1.68397>
- Safariyani, E., & Fadillah, A. F. (2025). Identification of Factors Causing Quiet Quitting in Organizations Based on the Perspective of Literature Studies. *JENIUS (Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia)*. <https://doi.org/10.32493/jjsdm.v8i2.44814>
- Sarwar, U., Aslam, M. K., Khan, S. A., & Shen, S. (2024). Optimizing human resource strategies: Investigating the dynamics of high-performance practices, psychological empowerment, and responsible leadership in a moderated-mediation framework. *Acta Psychologica*, 248, 104385. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104385>
- Serenko, A. (2023). The human capital management perspective on quiet quitting: recommendations for employees, managers, and national policymakers. *J. Knowl. Manag.*, 28, 27–43. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jkm-10-2022-0792>
- Smith, S., & Nichols, A. (2024). What do Gen Z really want from a workplace? *Strategic HR Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/shr-10-2024-0082>
- Westover, J. (2024). Gen Z and the Rise of Conscious Quitting: Helping Employees Find Meaningful Work Through Values-Aligned Leadership. *Human Capital Leadership Review*. <https://doi.org/10.70175/hclreview.2020.16.2.5>
- Zed, M. (2008). *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan*. Yayasan Obor Indonesia.