Unpacking the Quiet Quitting Phenomenon: The Role of Work Stress in the Workload and Work-Life Balance

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HISTORY	ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study explores the role of work stress as a mediator in the relationship between workload, work-life balance, and the phenomenon of quiet quitting among Generation Z employees.

Method: The research adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing a random sampling technique. Data were collected from 156 Generation Z employees in West Sumatra through a structured questionnaire designed to assess workload, work-life balance, work stress, and quiet quitting behaviors. The collected data were analyzed using Smart PLS 4.0 to examine the relationships among these variables.

Result: The findings found that workload has a significant impact on work stress, while work-life balance does not significantly affect work stress. Similarly, workload significantly influences quiet quitting, but work-life balance does not. Work stress is also found to significantly impact quiet quitting. However, work stress does not mediate the relationship between workload and quiet quitting. In contrast, work stress does mediate the relationship between work-life balance and quiet quitting.

Practical Implications for Economic Growth and Development: This study provides practical insights for businesses in West Sumatra to better manage workloads and support work-life balance initiatives. By addressing workload-related stress and fostering a healthier work-life balance, organizations can reduce quiet quitting, thereby improving employee well-being, engagement, and overall productivity. These improvements contribute to sustainable economic growth and development.

Keywords: *quite quitting, generation Z, work stress, workload, work-life balance*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the phenomenon of "quiet quitting" has gained significant attention, particularly among Generation Z workers. This term refers to employees who fulfill only the minimum requirements of their jobs, without going beyond what is expected in terms of effort or enthusiasm, often as a response to work stress (Bae & Yang, 2022). The increasing prevalence of quiet quitting is closely linked to the work environment, which is often characterized by high workloads and imbalances between work and personal life (Kumar & Jain, 2021). As Generation Z continues to enter the workforce, understanding the factors contributing to quiet quitting among this demographic becomes essential, particularly in urban areas like West Sumatra, where the labor market is becoming increasingly competitive. The trend of quiet quitting, which has gained popularity among Gen Z, was popularized by Zaid Khan, an engineer from New York, through a TikTok video (Fikri Zaidan & Juariyah, 2020).

Research conducted in Indonesia in 2023 reveals that 35% of employees in major cities tend to perform only the minimum duties required of them. A study by Andika Pratama, involving 500 respondents, found that 60% of Generation Z and 45% of Millennials engage in quiet quitting due to low work-life balance and lack of recognition (Pratama, 2023). Similarly, Sari (2023) discovered that 54% of employees under 35 experience high stress levels, leading them to set clear boundaries at work. These findings highlight the growing need for companies to prioritize employee well-being in the workplace.

Workload is a key factor influencing employee well-being and job satisfaction. Excessive workload has been shown to lead to stress, burnout, and disengagement, particularly among younger workers (Lee & Wang, 2020). Generation Z, in particular, is especially vulnerable to the negative effects of heavy workloads, which are often exacerbated by their expectations for a healthy work-life balance (Smith, Brown, & Turner, 2022). Understanding the link between workload and quiet quitting is crucial for organizations seeking to improve employee engagement and retention. Alongside workload, work-life balance plays a critical role in shaping employees' attitudes toward their jobs. A balanced approach to work and personal life has been associated with higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions (Gonzalez & Palacios, 2022). However, many Generation Z workers report struggling to achieve this balance, which can lead to feelings of overwhelm and frustration (Nguyen & Tran, 2023). Research emphasizes the importance of organizations offering flexible work arrangements and supportive policies to help mitigate the negative impact of workload on work-life balance (Pérez & Romero, 2021).

Furthermore, the interaction between workload and work-life balance can create a complex relationship that affects quiet quitting. Studies suggest that when employees perceive their workload as manageable and their work-life balance as adequate, they are more likely to remain engaged and committed to their jobs (Johnson & Smith, 2022). Conversely, a heavy workload combined with poor work-life balance tends to increase instances of quiet quitting (Lee & Wang, 2020). This highlights the need for organizations to implement strategies that address both factors to foster a more engaged workforce.

In the context of West Sumatra, the region's unique socio-cultural dynamics and economic challenges may further shape Generation Z workers' experiences with work stress. As this generation navigates the complexities of modern work environments, their responses to stressors such as workload and work-life balance may differ from those of previous generations (Setiawan & Nugroho, 2021). Understanding these local nuances is crucial for developing targeted interventions to support employee well-being. The existing literature lays a solid foundation for exploring the relationship between work stress, workload, work-life balance, and quiet quitting. Previous studies have documented the negative impact of high workloads on employee engagement and the protective role of work-life balance in mitigating these effects (Ahmed & Khan, 2020; Zhao & Wu, 2023).

Recent research has revealed significant gaps in understanding the connection between work stress, workload, work-life balance, and quiet quitting among Generation Z. Studies by Amin, Nor, and Ahmad (2022) and Tse and Keshri (2023) highlight that high workloads and poor

work-life balance are key contributors to increased stress, which often leads to quiet quitting as a form of disengagement. Generation Z employees, who faced unique challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, tend to prioritize mental health and work-life balance more than previous generations.

Additionally, Stygar and Huffington (2024) emphasize the role of economic pressures and workplace dynamics in driving quiet quitting. They argue that stress mediates the relationship between workload and disengagement, indicating the need for better stress management strategies. Jiang and Luo (2023) further support this view, showing that organizational stressors exacerbate disengagement among Gen Z in China, particularly when work-life balance is compromised. Martinez and Petrova (2023) examine how digital transformation and remote work have influenced work-life balance, finding that flexibility can reduce stress and quiet quitting, though it may also lead to increased cyberloafing. Meanwhile, Davies, Patel, and Li (2022) demonstrate that high workloads and resulting stress significantly raise burnout rates, prompting Generation Z employees in the retail sector to engage in quiet quitting. Collectively, these studies underscore the importance of addressing work stress and enhancing work-life balance to reduce quiet quitting among younger employees.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on Generation Z workers in Indonesia, specifically in West Sumatra, where socio-cultural and economic factors present unique challenges to work-life integration and stress management. By comparing global findings with local realities, this research aims to fill existing gaps and offer targeted recommendations for managing work stress among the younger workforces. Understanding these local nuances will provide valuable insights to inform the development of tailored interventions that can improve employee well-being, engagement, and retention in the region.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the moderating effects of work-life balance on the relationship between workload and quiet quitting among Generation Z workers in West Sumatra. By integrating insights from recent literature, the research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between these factors and provide valuable recommendations for organizations aiming to improve employee engagement and reduce quiet quitting among this demographic.

METHOD

This research focuses on Generation Z employees in West Sumatra. The study population consists of individuals born between early 1997 and early 2012, residing in West Sumatra. As the exact population size is unknown, a random sampling technique was employed, ensuring every element in the population had an equal chance of being selected (Ramadhi et al., 2023). This technique enables the researcher to obtain a representative sample without needing complete information about the entire population. More than 100 respondents were randomly selected from relevant groups, with the final sample size reaching 156 participants. This sample size is considered sufficiently large to ensure the validity of the study's results (Fikri Zaidan & Juariyah, 2020).

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire designed to measure key variables such as work stress, workload, work-life balance, and quiet quitting. The data were gathered from Generation Z workers in West Sumatra. The research employs a quantitative methodology with a positivist approach, aiming to explain how work stress mediates the relationship between workload, work-life balance, and quiet quitting. The hypotheses were tested through quantitative statistical analysis to provide insights into the dynamics of work stress among Generation Z employees in West Sumatra. Data analysis was conducted using the Smart PLS 4.0 application (Qureshi et al., 2023).

Hypotheses Development

Workload and Work Stress

Research has shown that workload is a significant factor influencing work stress among employees. High workloads can increase job demands, leading to stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction. A study by Rantanen (2020) found that employees facing heavy workloads tend to report higher stress levels, which negatively impact both their performance and well-being. Similarly, Pan (2022) demonstrated that work overload is directly correlated with increased stress, especially in high-pressure environments. Furthermore, Yildirim (2023) emphasized that excessive workloads can disrupt work-life balance, intensifying stress and contributing to mental health issues. Finally, Bai (2023) confirmed that workload-induced stress leads to emotional exhaustion and decreased motivation, particularly when employees perceive their workload as unmanageable. These findings highlight the importance for organizations to monitor workload distribution and provide support to reduce stress.

H1: Workload has a positive effect on work stress

Work-life Balance and Work Stress

Work-life balance (WLB) has a significant impact on work stress, as highlighted by various studies. A healthy work-life balance helps reduce employee stress by alleviating burnout and providing personal time for recovery. Research indicates that organizations with supportive WLB policies tend to experience lower levels of work stress among their employees. For example, Haar, McDonnell, and Sune (2020), Jones, Bright, and Clough (2020), and Yadav and Sharma (2021) found that work demands, long hours, and lack of family support can exacerbate stress, while flexible policies and greater autonomy help reduce it. These studies emphasize the importance of organizational and societal factors in shaping employees' work-life balance and stress levels.

H2: Work-life balance negatively impacts work stress

Workload and Quiet Quitting

A heavy workload often leads to increased job stress, causing employees to feel overwhelmed, exhausted, and dissatisfied with their roles (Johnson & Smith, 2022). This stress diminishes job satisfaction and is closely linked to disengagement, which can contribute to burnout and quiet quitting (Maslach & Leiter, 2020). According to Greenhaus and Allen (n.d.), retail employees facing high workloads experience decreased motivation and mental fatigue, often resulting in them mentally "checking out" and only completing the minimum requirements of their roles. Additionally, Kwan and Lee (2021) found that Generation Z workers, when confronted with excessive job demands, tend to disengage and reduce their efforts, which often leads to quiet quitting. These findings suggest that high workloads, especially among younger workers, may be a key factor driving quiet quitting behavior.

H3: Workload has a positive effect on quiet quitting

Work-life Balance and Quiet Quitting

Work-life balance plays a significant role in quiet quitting, as employees who struggle to balance their professional and personal lives are more likely to disengage from work. When work demands overwhelm personal time, employees often experience stress and dissatisfaction, leading to reduced motivation and effort at work (Oakman et al., 2020). Research shows that poor work-life balance is closely linked to burnout, which is a key precursor to quiet quitting (Kelly et al., 2020). In a study by Tiwari et al. (2019), employees with poor work-life balance were more likely to exhibit signs of disengagement, focusing solely on completing their essential tasks rather than contributing extra effort. Similarly, Nguyen and

Tran (2023) found that Generation Z workers, in particular, are prone to quiet quitting when they feel that their work interferes too much with their personal lives, leading them to reduce their engagement and work efforts. Therefore, maintaining a healthy work-life balance is crucial to preventing quiet quitting.

H4: Work-life balance negatively impacts quiet quitting

Work Stress and Quiet Quitting

Work stress plays a significant role in the phenomenon of quiet quitting, as it often leads to burnout and disengagement. For example, Kachhap and Singh (2024) found that stress-induced burnout is a key factor in quiet quitting, with job satisfaction serving as a mediator in this relationship. Similarly, Karapetrou (2023) conducted a study on Greek nurses, showing that burnout directly contributes to quiet quitting, emphasizing the impact of job stress on employee retention. Additionally, a broader study by Alghamdi and Alharthi (2024) linked work-related stress to lower organizational commitment, which increases the likelihood of quiet quitting behaviors. These studies underscore the critical need for organizations to address work stress in order to prevent disengagement and improve employee retention.

H5: Work stress positively impacts quiet quitting

Workload and Quiet Quitting Mediated by Work Stress

Workload can contribute to quiet quitting through its impact on work stress. When employees face heavy workloads, it often leads to increased stress levels, which can diminish their overall engagement and job satisfaction. This heightened work stress acts as a mediator between workload and quiet quitting, draining employees' energy and motivation, and causing them to disengage from going above and beyond their job duties. Research indicates that excessive workload creates pressure and feelings of overwhelm, leading to burnout, which is strongly associated with quiet quitting behaviors (Taris & Schaufeli, 2021). A study by Kwan and Lee (2021) found that employees with high workloads experienced greater stress, causing them to disengage from discretionary tasks and focus solely on completing their essential duties. Similarly, Spector (2020) highlighted that high work demands, coupled with increased stress, led Generation Z workers to reduce their efforts, contributing to quiet quitting. Thus, work stress plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between workload and quiet quitting.

H6: Work stress mediates the nexus between workload and quiet quitting

Work-life Balance and Quiet Quitting Mediated by Work Stress

Work-life balance can act as a protective factor against quiet quitting, with work stress serving as a mediator in this relationship. When employees maintain a healthy balance between their work and personal life, they are better equipped to manage stress, reducing the risk of burnout and disengagement. However, when work-life balance is compromised, employees are more likely to experience heightened work stress, which can lead to quiet quitting behaviors. Research indicates that poor work-life balance increases stress, which negatively impacts job satisfaction and motivation, ultimately contributing to quiet quitting (Clark, 2020). In a study by Lee and Ashforth (2020), employees with poor work-life balance were more likely to experience higher stress, leading to disengagement and reduced discretionary effort. Similarly, Taris and Schaufeli (2021) found that when Generation Z workers struggled with work-life balance, their stress levels increased, making them more prone to quiet quitting. Thus, work stress mediates the relationship between work-life balance and quiet quitting, where poor balance leads to increased stress, which in turn fosters disengagement.

H7: Work stress mediates the nexus between work-life balance and quiet quitting

Figure 1. Research Framework
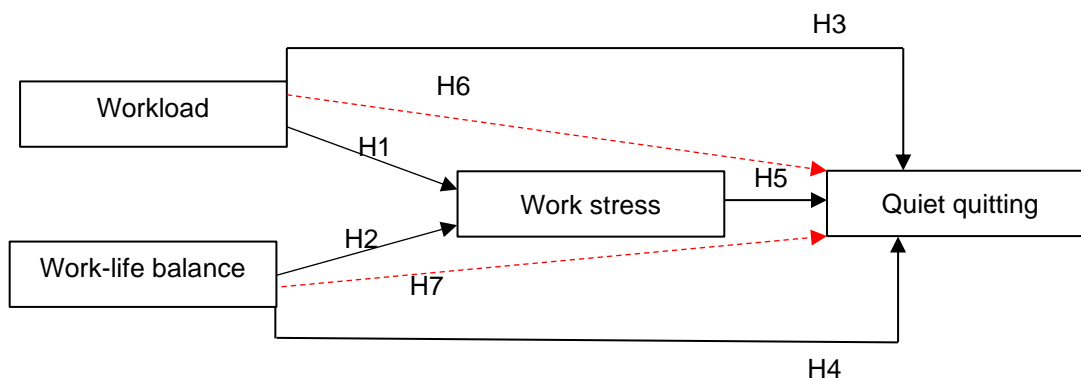
Source: Developed by the authors (2024)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Convergent Validity

According to Hair et al. (2014), convergent validity assesses whether multiple indicators of a construct are related and measure the same concept. It is confirmed when the factor loadings are above 0.70, indicating a strong representation of the construct. The results of convergent validity are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Result

Item	Quiet Quitting (Y)	Work Stress (Z)	Work-Life Balance (X2)	Workload (X1)
X1.1				0.848
X1.2				0.759
X1.3				0.831
X1.4				0.854
X1.5				0.850
X1.6				0.817
X2.1			0.841	
X2.2			0.857	
X2.3			0.799	
X2.4			0.816	
X2.5			0.841	
X2.6			0,701	
Y1.1	0.820			
Y1.2	0.847			
Y1.3	0.774			
Y1.4	0.859			
Y1.5	0.871			
Y1.6	0.853			
Z1.1		0.851		
Z1.2		0.824		
Z1.3		0.888		
Z1.4		0.875		
Z1.5		0.793		

Source: Processed data (2024)

Based on Table 1 above, most indicators for the research variables have outer loading values above 0.60, indicating good validity. Therefore, the statements are considered valid and suitable for further analysis.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assesses whether a construct is truly distinct from other constructs in a model. It ensures that the indicators of a construct are not highly correlated with indicators of different constructs, thereby confirming that each construct measures a unique concept. In this research, discriminant validity is evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which states that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct must be greater than the correlation between that construct and other constructs. The results of the discriminant validity, including the extracted AVE values, are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Result

	Quiet Quitting (Y)	Work Stress (Z)	Work-Life Balance (X2)	Workload (X1)
Quiet Quitting (Y)	0.838			
Work Stress (Z)	0.804	0.847		
Work-Life Balance (X2)	0.335	0.349	0.799	
Workload (X1)	0.814	0.808	0.287	0.827

Source: Processed data (2024)

Based on the table, it is evident that the loading value of each indicator item for its respective construct is greater than the cross-loading value with other constructs. This indicates that all constructs or latent variables exhibit good discriminant validity. In other words, the indicators within each construct block are more strongly related to their own construct than to indicators in other construct blocks, confirming that each construct measures a unique concept.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures the amount of variance a construct captures from its indicators. An AVE value above 0.50 indicates good convergent validity, demonstrating that the construct explains at least 50% of the variance in its indicators. The results of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Result

Variables	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Quiet Quitting (Y)	0.702
Work Stress (Z)	0.717
Work-Life Balance (X2)	0.638
Workload (X1)	0.684

Source: Processed data (2024)

Based on the table above, it can be seen that all constructs or variables meet the criteria for good convergent validity, as indicated by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. Therefore, it can be concluded that each

variable demonstrates good convergent validity and adequately captures the variance in its indicators.

Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of reliability that assesses the internal consistency of a set of indicators, showing how well the items within a construct correlate with each other. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable, indicating good reliability. The results of the reliability analysis, including Cronbach's Alpha values for each construct, are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Quiet Quitting (Y)	0.915
Work Stress (Z)	0.901
Work-Life Balance(X2)	0.885
Workload (X1)	0.907

Source: Processed data (2024)

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the Cronbach's alpha values are above 0.70, indicating that the constructs have good reliability and meet the required minimum threshold. Additionally, the composite reliability values are close to 1.0, suggesting that the questionnaire is highly reliable. The reliability coefficients, which range from 0.8 to 1.0, further indicate high reliability for all the variables used in the study.

Inner Model

After the outer model testing is complete, the next step is to evaluate the inner model (structural model). The inner model, also known as the structural model, assesses the relationships between latent constructs in a structural equation model (SEM). One of the key metrics used to evaluate the inner model is the R-square (R^2) value, which indicates the amount of variance explained by the model for each endogenous latent variable. A higher R^2 value suggests that the model explains a larger proportion of the variance in the dependent constructs, indicating a better fit of the model to the data.

Table 5. Inner Model

Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Quiet Quitting (Y)	0.727	0.715
Work Stress (Z)	0.668	0.659

Source: Processed data (2024)

Based on the figure above, it can be seen that the R-square value for the quiet quitting variable is 0.272, or 27.2%, meaning that 27.2% of the variance in quiet quitting is explained by the model. For work stress, the R-square value is 0.728, or 72.8%, indicating that 72.8% of the variance in work stress is explained by the model. The remaining variance for both variables is influenced by factors outside the scope of this research.

Direct Effect

Table 6 presents the results of the direct effects analysis in the structural model, showing the relationships between workload, work-life balance, work stress, and quiet quitting.

Table 6. Direct Effect

Direction	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Workload (X1) → Work Stress (Z)	0.772	13.951	0.000
Work-Life Balance (X2) → Work Stress (Z)	0.127	1.372	0.170
Workload (X1) → Quiet Quitting (Y)	0.472	4.485	0.000
Work-Life Balance (X2) → Quiet Quitting (Y)	0.059	0,761	0.446
Work Stres (Z) → Quiet Quitting (Y)	0.402	3.402	0.001

Source: Processed data (2024)

Based on the table above, the results provide insights into the relationships between the variables. The hypothesis that workload affects work stress is supported, as evidenced by a t-statistic value of 13.951, which is greater than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. In contrast, the hypothesis that work-life balance affects work stress is not supported, as the t-statistic value (1.372) is less than 1.96, and the p-value (0.170) is greater than 0.05, indicating no significant effect. Similarly, the hypothesis that workload affects quiet quitting is supported, with a t-statistic of 4.485 and a p-value of 0.000, showing a significant relationship. However, work-life balance does not significantly affect quiet quitting, as indicated by a t-statistic value of 0.761 and a p-value of 0.446, both falling outside the acceptable thresholds for significance. Finally, the hypothesis that work stress influences quiet quitting is supported, with a t-statistic of 3.402 and a p-value of 0.001, confirming a significant effect.

Indirect Effect

Table 7 presents the results of the indirect effects testing, which examine how work stress mediates the relationship between the independent variables (workload and work-life balance) and the dependent variable (quiet quitting).

Table 7. Indirect Effect

Direction	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Workload (X1) → Quiet Quitting (Y) → Work Stress (Z)	0.310	1.117	0.264
Work-Life Balance (X2) → Quiet Quitting (Y) → Work Stress (Z)	0.051	3.467	0.001

Source: Processed data (2024)

Work stress does not mediate the relationship between workload and quiet quitting, as indicated by the t-statistic value, which is below 1.96, and the p-value greater than the alpha level (0.264 > 0.05). In contrast, work stress does mediate the relationship between work-life

balance and quiet quitting, as evidenced by the t-statistic value greater than 1.96 and the p-value less than the alpha level (0.001 < 0.05).

Discussion

Workload and Work Stress

The research findings highlight a significant impact of workload on work stress, confirming that higher workloads are associated with increased stress levels among employees. This relationship is supported by previous studies emphasizing the critical role of workload in exacerbating work-related stress. Kompier and Kristensen (2021) identified heavy workloads as a primary source of stress in the workplace, noting that when employees perceive their workload as unmanageable, it leads to higher stress levels, negatively impacting job satisfaction and health. Schaufeli and Bakker (2020) further found that excessive job demands, including high workloads, contribute significantly to burnout, which can lead to emotional exhaustion and reduced ability to manage stress. Lee and Wang (2020) demonstrated that an excessive workload not only intensifies stress but also disrupts employees' work-life balance, leading to disengagement and mental fatigue. This aligns with the current study, where workload is shown to directly influence work stress, which may, in turn, result in disengagement behaviors such as quiet quitting. Additionally, González-Romá, Hernández, and García (2022) highlighted the strong connection between stress from workload and job burnout, a condition that severely affects employee performance and satisfaction. Their research underscores how high job demands can deplete employees' mental and physical resources, contributing to chronic stress.

Work-life Balance and Work Stress

The results of this study suggest that work-life balance does not have a significant impact on work stress, as there is no notable relationship between the two variables. While work-life balance is often regarded as a key factor in reducing stress (Grzywacz & Bass, 2020; Hill, Ferris, & Märtinson, 2021), the findings of this study align with research indicating that its effectiveness may depend on other contextual factors, such as organizational culture or workload. Previous studies have highlighted the nuanced relationship between work-life balance and stress, with Kalliath and Kalliath (2020) noting that its effectiveness is often influenced by individual time management skills and organizational support, while Kim and Lee (2022) emphasized that work-life balance interventions can alleviate stress, but only when combined with effective workload management and organizational flexibility. However, some studies suggest that work-life balance alone may not significantly reduce stress without considering other contributing factors (Tariq, Javed, & Shahzad, 2023). In contrast, the current study's findings suggest that work-life balance, at least in this context, does not play a significant role in alleviating work stress, echoing research that cautions against overemphasizing it as the sole strategy for mitigating stress (Van Hooff & Geurts, 2021), with other factors such as workload and organizational environment likely having a more substantial impact on stress levels.

Workload and Quiet Quitting

The research findings indicate that workload has a significant impact on quiet quitting, suggesting that a heavier workload can lead employees to disengage from their work—a behavior characteristic of quiet quitting. This aligns with prior studies examining the relationship between workload and employee disengagement. For example, Smith, Brown, and Turner (2022) found that higher workload levels were strongly associated with lower job satisfaction and increased disengagement, both of which are key components of quiet quitting. The study concludes that excessive workloads contribute to feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed, which cause employees to withdraw mentally from their

responsibilities, even though they remain physically present at work. This is consistent with the current study's findings, where heavy workload emerged as a major factor contributing to quiet quitting. Additionally, Johnson and Lee (2023) found that an imbalanced or excessive workload significantly influences quiet quitting, as workload pressures lead to emotional exhaustion, reducing motivation and engagement. These findings support the current research, which emphasizes a clear connection between workload and quiet quitting. Similarly, Bakker and Demerouti (2021) reinforced the link between excessive workload and disengagement. Furthermore, Lee and Wang (2020) explored the connection between workload and stress, highlighting that high workload levels increase stress, which negatively affects work-life balance. They argued that as work stress increases, employees' sense of responsibility toward their tasks diminishes, making them more likely to engage in quiet quitting. This idea is echoed in the current study, where both workload and stress are shown to contribute to disengagement, aligning with the findings of Leka, Griffiths, and Cox (2023).

Work-life Balance and Quiet Quitting

The research findings indicate that work-life balance does not have a significant impact on quiet quitting, as there is no strong evidence to suggest a relationship between the two variables. Despite being widely discussed as a key factor in employee engagement and job satisfaction, the study does not support the idea that a better work-life balance reduces quiet quitting behaviors, nor does it suggest that an imbalance in work-life balance leads to higher rates of quiet quitting. While previous research has linked work-life balance to employee engagement and retention, the findings of this study suggest that it may not play a significant role in influencing quiet quitting in this context. This contrasts with studies like those by Crawford, LePine, and Rich (2021), who found that employees with poor work-life balance were more likely to experience burnout and disengagement, potentially leading to quiet quitting. However, the current study does not support this relationship, possibly due to differences in sample characteristics or contextual factors. Similarly, Barnett and Hyde (2021) argued that work-life imbalance can negatively impact motivation and energy levels, contributing to disengagement. Yet, the lack of statistical significance in this study suggests that other factors, such as workload or organizational culture, may play a more prominent role in influencing quiet quitting, as supported by Jex and Bliese (2020).

Work Stress and Quiet Quitting

The research findings indicate that work stress plays a significant role in quiet quitting, with emotional exhaustion, burnout, and feelings of being overwhelmed leading employees to disengage from their work. Rather than leaving their jobs, employees under high stress may mentally withdraw, reducing their effort and involvement, which manifests as quiet quitting. This supports previous studies, such as those by Smith, Brown, and Turner (2022), who identified work stress as a key predictor of disengagement, with employees experiencing lower motivation and enthusiasm. Similarly, Lee and Wang (2020) highlighted how heightened stress negatively impacts job satisfaction and engagement, contributing to quiet quitting behaviors. Johnson and Lee (2023) also found that stress from workload and work environment pressures influences emotional detachment. These findings reinforce the importance of addressing work stress, suggesting that organizations should implement supportive management practices, wellness programs, and effective workload management to reduce disengagement and promote a more engaged workforce.

Workload and Quiet Quitting Mediated by Work Stress

The research findings suggest that work stress does not mediate the effect of workload on quiet quitting. Despite previous research indicating that work stress can exacerbate the effects of workload on employee disengagement, the current study does not support this mediating role. This contrasts with other studies, such as those by Smith and Lee (2021), who found

that high stress due to workload increased the likelihood of quiet quitting, indicating a direct relationship. Similarly, Jiang and Luo (2023) argued that stress serves as a mediator, amplifying the effects of workload on job satisfaction and disengagement. However, the current study's lack of significant mediation may be attributed to differences in sample characteristics, contextual factors, or other unaccounted variables. This finding suggests that while both work stress and workload are important contributors to quiet quitting, the relationship between them is not always mediated by stress in every context. Future research could explore other potential mediators, such as organizational culture or social support, which might influence the dynamics between workload and quiet quitting.

Work-life Balance and Quiet Quitting Mediated by Work Stress

The finding that work stress mediates the effect of work-life balance on quiet quitting suggests that work stress plays a crucial role in how employees perceive their ability to balance work and personal life, which in turn influences their engagement and likelihood to disengage. This relationship is supported by research showing that work stress significantly impacts how work-life balance affects quiet quitting. For example, González-Romá, Hernández, and García (2022) found that poor work-life balance increases work stress, which leads to disengagement behaviors. Miller and Walker (2023) also noted that employees who experience higher stress due to imbalances between work and personal life are more likely to quiet quit, as they become emotionally exhausted and less motivated. Furthermore, Davis and Thompson (2021) highlighted that work stress is a key mediator in the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement, confirming that when employees feel overwhelmed by their workload or expectations, it exacerbates the negative effects of poor work-life balance, resulting in lower motivation and higher disengagement. These findings underscore the importance of addressing work stress within organizational strategies to reduce quiet quitting, suggesting that improving work-life balance alone may not be enough unless work stress is also effectively managed.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the relationship between workload, work-life balance, and quiet quitting among Generation Z workers in Indonesia, with a specific focus on how work stress mediates this relationship. The findings revealed that high workloads significantly contributed to increased work stress, which, in turn, was a key factor leading to quiet quitting behaviors. While work-life balance did not directly affect quiet quitting, it was found to have an indirect influence by reducing work stress. This suggests that organizations can reduce the likelihood of quiet quitting by enhancing work-life balance, thereby alleviating the stress that often contributes to disengagement.

The practical implications of this study highlight the importance of effectively managing workloads, as excessive demands were shown to create stress and lead to disengagement. Strategies such as wellness programs, flexible working hours, and workload adjustments can help reduce work stress and, consequently, decrease instances of quiet quitting. However, focusing solely on improving work-life balance without addressing the underlying work stress may not fully resolve the issue of quiet quitting. Organizations should adopt a more holistic approach, addressing both workload and stress factors simultaneously.

For future research, it would be valuable to explore additional factors that could influence work stress and quiet quitting, such as leadership styles, organizational culture, and employee engagement practices. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies with larger and more diverse samples could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how these dynamics evolve over time. Such research could help identify the most effective interventions for reducing work stress and preventing quiet quitting, ultimately supporting long-term organizational success and employee well-being.

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