



## THE IMPACT OF THE QUIET QUITTING PHENOMENON ON EMPLOYEES IN SERBIA

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### Abstract:

Employees play a pivotal role in organizational functionality, underscoring the crucial importance of effective human resources management. In recent years, the global dissemination of a workplace behavior concept termed 'quiet quitting' has gained momentum through online platforms. This behavioral model involves employees performing the minimum required, showing reluctance to exceed expectations. This study explores the prevalence of 'quiet quitting' in organizations within Serbia, utilizing survey methodology. Our findings suggest that rather than a novel concept, 'quiet quitting' represents a contemporary label for an enduring behavior, characterizing individuals with limited workplace engagement often rooted in job dissatisfaction. While 'quiet quitting' is not widely recognized in Serbia at present, Generation Z members exhibit heightened susceptibility. This research, the first of its kind in Serbia, aligns with the identified global phenomenon, establishing a foundation for extensive exploration within both business and academic realms. Our extensive conclusions underscore the need for continued investigation into quiet quitting, contributing valuable insights for organizations seeking to comprehend, address, and elevate the discourse on employee engagement within the Serbian professional landscape.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the new term 'quiet quitting' has gained significant popularity on social media platforms. Specifically, this term became a phenomenon through various channels, particularly on TikTok. Quiet quitting represents a form of rebellion that is particularly distinctive among members of Generation Z (Gen Z) and younger Millennials (Gen Y). Defined by general consensus among researchers, millennials, often considered utopians, typically include individuals born from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, while Gen Z, often considered pragmatic realists and 'internet generation'



(Twenge, 2017), comprises those born from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s (Vision Critical, 2016). There is also a smaller group known as Zillennials, born between the early 1990s and the early 2000s, that is considered a microgeneration (CNN, 2023).

Although these generational definitions may slightly vary (Kolnhofer-Derecskei *et al.*, 2017), it can be asserted that a consensus has been reached, and the most widely accepted classification, which we will use in this paper, is as follows (Krasulja *et al.*, 2015): 1) Baby Boom Generation - individuals born between 1946 and 1964; 2) Generation X - those born between 1965 and 1979; 3) Millennials - from 1980 to 1995; 4) Generation Z - from 1996 onwards.

In the context of the impact of technological development on generational periods (Von Tunzelmann, 2000), it is crucial to note that these differences are influenced by a country's level of development. For instance, the advent of the internet and technologies like smartphones and computers became available later in other regions compared to some Western countries. Thus, being a member of Generation Z does not carry the same implications in the United States as it does in Serbia.

Although the term implies an employee resigning, it actually denotes the opposite - individuals refusing any form of overtime, additional, or unpaid work without adequate compensation and/or with a firm stance that additional engagement at work brings no significant rewards to the employee. This type of organizational behavior has existed for a long time, and we can freely say that this is a new term for old behavior that has taken on new and stronger dimensions after the COVID-19 pandemic (Aydin and Azizoglu, 2022). The phenomenon itself has its roots in the Chinese 'Lying Flat' movement (Hsu, 2022) and the American 'Great Resignation' trend, representing a continuation of these trends and an ideal solution - maintaining one's current job with minimal commitment to it.

As the primary cause of such behavior, the commonly cited factor is the so-called burnout syndrome, often attributed to the corporate culture of constant work. The new 'working' generations place more emphasis on mental health and well-being than previous generations. Additionally, Generation Z, the so-called 'born to be digital generation' (Šimunić, 2020), has grown up with digital devices, thereby recognizing numerous employment opportunities that may offer alternative benefits, such as flexible working hours, aside from the assumed salary.

The subject of this study is the analysis of the quiet quitting phenomenon and its impact on employees in companies within the territory of Serbia. For this purpose, research has been conducted through online surveys. Socially, the research contributes to understanding and addressing contemporary workplace challenges in Serbia, shedding light on a phenomenon that is on the rise but not widely recognized. Scientifically, it provides a foundation for future research, guiding both academic and practical efforts to enhance employee engagement and satisfaction in the evolving work landscape.

## **DECODING QUIET QUITTING: UNRAVELING THE PHENOMENON IN THE WORKPLACE**

The concept of quiet quitting entails the idea that an employee works just enough to ensure their survival in the job but refrains from committing to the notion of excessive dedication to it. One of the definitions of quiet quitting is that the employee performs the minimum of their duties, nothing beyond or above that (Formica and Sfodera, 2022). In essence, this definition describes an individual who fulfills tasks precisely as required and concludes the workday at the designated time, regardless of additional management demands. Therefore, they reject any form of extra, overtime, and particularly unpaid work (Cohen, 2022). All generations, when starting their careers, experienced job dissatisfaction; today's youth express it using social networks and hashtags (Ellis and Yang, 2022).



It is crucial to note that the employee does not decline additional engagement per se or due to personal whims but refuses it because they do not see the point in performing extra work for minimal (or no) compensation. In other words, the employee no longer serves the idea that the job is their life (Malinsky, 2022), and rejects the romanticization of work as a benefit in itself (doing extra to improve oneself or because it is deemed necessary) and expects adequate compensation for additional commitment.

The term was first coined by economist Mark Boldger in 2009 to describe the minimal commitment of employees to their jobs as a new term for behavior that has existed for a long time (Mahand and Caldwell, 2023). On top of that, we can state that quiet quitting represents a new form of withdrawal by employees in the workplace, manifested through low commitment and dissatisfaction stemming from job-related issues (such as stress, anxiety, overload, lack of support, etc.), leading to the disruption of overall well-being, job burnout, and conflicts with family. In this way, a reduction in social, economic, and psychological problems caused by unemployment will be ensured (Yikilmaz, 2022).

Furthermore, this phenomenon can be interpreted as employees' rebellion against emerging issues in the work environment, particularly after the changes that occurred in the post-COVID era, as it's better for them to be 'quiet quitting' than endure existing conditions and dissatisfaction (Zahn, 2023).

Quiet quitting, as the term suggests, is a silent, peaceful protest that has more psychological and individual characteristics (Harter, 2022). It's not about avoiding work, it's about not avoiding a meaningful life outside of work (Ahmed, 2022). Employers could address this type of protest through one-on-one meetings with employees, addressing their demands and ensuring a work environment where they genuinely feel the need to engage further (Lord, 2022).

The Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM, 2022) findings highlight the widespread concern among managers (51%) regarding the reality of quiet quitting, predicting adverse impacts on organizations, with 83% expecting a decline in workplace morale, 70% anticipating reduced productivity, and 50% foresee an impact on product quality, attributing the issue to organizational culture (60%) and identifying younger generations, including Millennials, as particularly susceptible (72%).

The very nature of this phenomenon is invisible, especially when it comes to hybrid working, where employees work from home. This raises the question of how to identify the first signs of quiet quitting. Joe Galvin, Chief Research Officer at Vistage Worldwide, identifies six indicators of this organizational behavior, encompassing chronic disengagement, minimal performance meeting only required standards, isolation from team members, avoidance of non-essential interactions or tasks, passive attendance at meetings, and reports of job overload from team members due to the negligence of one individual (Robinson, 2022).

On the other hand, managers who have long dealt with similar topics are not at all surprised by the emergence of this phenomenon. A recent study by the Society for Human Resource Management, involving 1,200 human resource managers, shows that only one-third of respondents believe that this is happening in their organizations (Constantz, 2022). In line with the above, for the purposes of this research, the phenomenon will be understood as the direct manifestation of low engagement at work due to changes that have occurred in the world and work environment. It serves the preservation of one's own mental health and the establishment of clear boundaries between personal and professional life. In light of the discussed framework, it is crucial to recognize the dynamic nature of quiet quitting and its adaptive responses to external factors shaping the modern work landscape. Technological advancements, global events, and evolving workplace expectations continuously influence the manifestation of quiet quitting.



Moreover, proactively addressing quiet quitting requires organizational initiatives that foster a positive non-discriminatory (Suttie, 2021) work culture and prioritize the mental well-being of employees (Milošević, 2022). Encouraging open communication channels that allow employees to express concerns, providing platforms for feedback, and actively involving them in decision-making processes can contribute to a healthier work environment (Bretous, 2022).

Another critical aspect to consider in the context of quiet quitting is the role of leadership and management. Leaders play a pivotal role in setting the tone for the organizational culture and influencing employee engagement, as 'employees who are engaged are more ready to use their maximum efforts to enhance and increase organizational innovation' (Lukić Nikolić, 2023). Therefore, it is essential for leadership to be attuned to the signs of quiet quitting and take proactive measures to address underlying issues, moreover so as the quiet quitting issue is a bad management, rather than a bad employee problem (Nordgren and Björs, 2023). This may involve regular check-ins with team members, creating a supportive and inclusive work environment, and providing resources for skill development and professional growth. This is even more important if we acknowledge the opposite concept of quiet promoting, where employees are assigned new tasks without guaranteed raises for extra work, and quiet leading, describing managers who fail to build relationships with employees, thereby undermining employee engagement and productivity (Lobell Ole, 2023). What is quite clear is that it is of paramount importance for those in human resource management to remain highly engaged (Alonso, 2022).

Furthermore, continuous monitoring and adaptation of organizational policies and practices are essential. As the nature of work evolves, organizations need to regularly reassess their approaches to performance management, work-life balance, and employee well-being. Flexibility in policies, such as offering remote work options and flexible schedules (Fuller and Kerr, 2022), can contribute to a more adaptive and responsive workplace, potentially mitigating some of the factors that lead to quiet quitting. Ultimately, a holistic approach that combines leadership awareness, employee support, and ongoing policy evaluation can contribute to a healthier and more resilient organizational ecosystem in the face of the challenges posed by quiet quitting, as the work life of new generations is defined by values, not money (Ernst and Young, 2021).

In the realm of addressing quiet quitting, fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional development is paramount. Providing opportunities for employees to acquire new skills, stay updated on industry trends, and pursue personal growth not only enhances their job satisfaction but also helps in combating stagnation and disengagement. Investing in training programs, mentorship initiatives, and career advancement pathways can signal to employees that their professional development is a priority for the organization, potentially reducing the likelihood of silent disengagement.

Lastly, regular and anonymous employee feedback mechanisms can serve as valuable tools for gauging the pulse of the organization. Anonymous surveys or suggestion boxes provide employees with a platform to express concerns, offer insights, and propose improvements without fear of reprisal. This open communication channel can uncover issues that might otherwise remain silent, allowing organizations to address underlying problems and cultivate a workplace that actively prevents quiet quitting.



## METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESIS

An online questionnaire was employed for the purposes of this research, designed using the Google Docs software. The questionnaire was then distributed to participants through social media platforms, primarily utilizing LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Due to the absence of a standardized questionnaire for investigating quiet quitting, we constructed our survey consisting of 25 questions, aligned with the theoretical framework of the research. The questionnaire encompasses both closed and open-ended questions, requiring approximately 10 to 15 minutes for completion. Additionally, it is structured into two sections.

The first section focused on socio-demographic questions and inquiries related to the formulated hypotheses. All employees across various functions within the company, including those holding positions in human resources management, were invited to participate in this section of the survey. The aim was to determine the existence of quiet quitting in companies within the territory of Serbia and identify its causes if present. The second section was exclusively designated for individuals holding positions in human resources management. The objective of this segment of the questionnaire was to explore the awareness of human resources managers regarding the current theme and the presence of the quiet quitting trend within their organizations.

This research encompassed 196 respondents, including 18 human resources managers and 178 employees in various roles within companies operating in the territory of Serbia. The participants represented diverse demographics, including different genders, age groups (based on different generations), educational levels, and employment sectors within various branches of the industry. Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage [%]
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	68	34.7
Female	128	65.3
<b>Age</b>		
18-27 (Gen Z)	77	39.3
28-43 (Millennials – Gen Y)	95	48.5
44-58 (Gen X)	23	11.7
59-67 (Baby boomers)	1	0.5
<b>Highest Education Acquired</b>		
High School	44	22.5
Higher vocational education	40	20.4
Bachelor's Degree	56	28.6
Master's Degree	53	27
PhD	3	1.5



Public / Private Sector		
Public	36	18.4
Private	160	81.6
Position		
Human Resources Manager	18	9.2
Other	178	90.8
Years of Work Experience		
1-5	102	52
6-10	51	26
11-20	29	14.8
21-30	14	7.2

Source: Authors

The statistical processing of data and analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 25. Descriptive statistics were applied to describe the sample, and Spearman's rank correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between variables. The significance level was set at 0.05 and 0.01 for the threshold value of significance. In accordance with the theme of the paper, the hypotheses in the research are:

- *H1*: There is a positive correlation between the presence of quiet quitting and low employee engagement;
- *H2*: There is a positive correlation between quiet quitting and job dissatisfaction;
- *H3*: There is a positive correlation between job dissatisfaction and an unfair reward system;
- *H4*: Social networks and the COVID-19 virus pandemic have contributed to the strengthening of the quiet quitting trend among Generation Z members;
- *H5*: There is a positive correlation between minimal employee engagement at work and the balance between private and professional life;
- *H6*: There is a positive correlation between the presence of quiet quitting and burnout syndrome at work;
- *H7*: There is a negative correlation between the presence of quiet quitting and the overall well-being of employees.

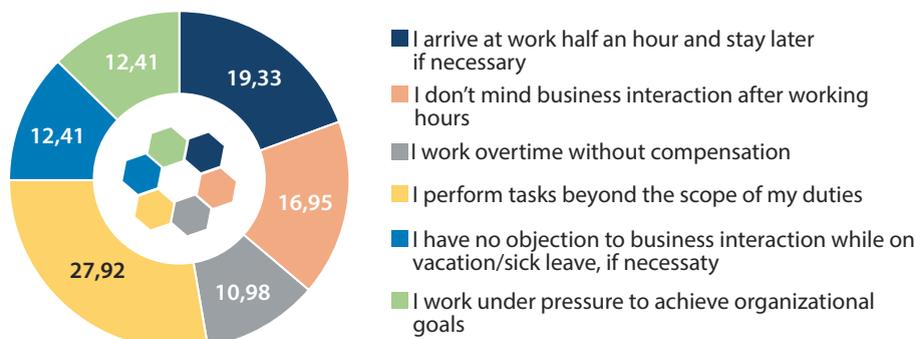
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results presented in Table 2, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents (over 80%) are willing to exert additional efforts to achieve the goals of the organization they work for. According to Figure 1, among respondents who are willing to invest additional efforts in achieving the goals of the organization, the most common efforts include: performing additional tasks beyond their duties (27.92%) and coming to work half an hour earlier, and staying longer if necessary (19.33%).

**Table 2.** Respondents' Answers to Questions about the Phenomenon of Quiet Quitting

Questions		Frequency	Percentage [%]
Are you willing to put in additional effort to achieve the goals of the organization you work for?	Yes	165	84.2
	No	31	15.8
Do you consider that you currently exhibit low engagement at your workplace?	Yes	38	19.4
	No	158	80.6
Do you consider that fair and equal treatment in terms of rewards is prevalent in your organization?	Yes	76	38.8
	No	120	61.2
Do you believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced a change in your attitude towards work?	Yes	83	42.3
	No	113	57.7
Do you believe that the content on social media related to business topics influences the formation of your attitude/dedication at work?	Yes	62	31.6
	No	134	68.4
In your opinion, is Generation Z (born from 1996 onwards) more susceptible to the influence of the 'quiet quitting' phenomenon compared to older generations?	Yes	146	74.5
	No	50	25.5
Are flexible working hours and the possibility of working from home important to you?	Yes	130	66.3
	No	66	33.7
Have you ever experienced burnout due to work?	Yes	135	68.9
	No	61	31.1
Do you believe you successfully balance your private and professional life, considering your current position?	Yes	152	77.6
	No	44	22.4
Have you noticed the presence of the phenomenon of quiet quitting among employees in your organization?	Yes	33	56.9
	No	25	43.1
Have you taken any corrective actions to minimize the occurrence of this phenomenon?	Yes	14	25.9
	No	40	74.1

Source: Authors

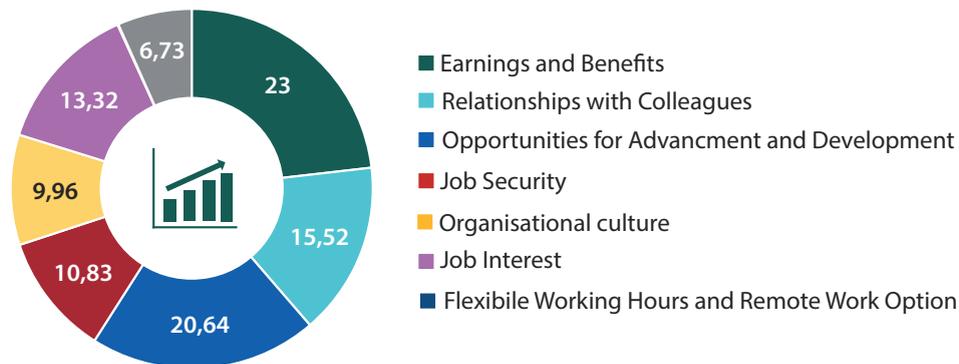
**Figure 1.** What additional efforts do you invest in achieving the goals of the organization?

Source: Authors



The majority of respondents (see Table 2) believe that they do not exhibit low engagement at their workplace (80.6%). Regarding the level of engagement, it is observed that respondents are highly engaged in their jobs (Median [M]=4.12, Standard deviation [SD]=0.96). The factors that respondents believe have the most significant impact on employee engagement in the company (see Figure 2) are primarily earnings and benefits (23%), followed by opportunities for advancement and development (20.64%).

**Figure 2.** Factors that Most Influence Employee Engagement



Source: Authors

The research has shown that respondents are moderately satisfied with their job ( $M=3.47$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ). The main reasons for job dissatisfaction (see Figure 3) are reported as earnings and benefits (21.82%) and management and HR practices (18.18%).

**Figure 3.** Main Reasons for Job Dissatisfaction



Source: Authors

More than half of the respondents (see Table 2) believe that fair and equal treatment in terms of rewards is not prevalent in their organization (61.2%). Participants feel they are not fairly rewarded for their efforts in the workplace ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=1.19$ ). Over half of the respondents think that the COVID-19 pandemic did not impact a change in their attitudes toward work (57.7%), and that content on social media related to business themes does not influence (see Table 2) their views or commitment to their work (68.4%).



A significant majority of respondents believe that Generation Z is more susceptible to the influence of the quiet quitting phenomenon compared to older generations (74.5%). Additionally, they consider (see Table 2) flexible working hours and the option to work from home important (66.3%). Nearly half of the respondents (see Figure 4) think that flexible working hours are crucial for achieving a balance between their personal and professional lives (48.25%).

Figure 4. Main Reasons for Flexible Working Hours



Source: Authors

The majority of respondents (see Table 2) have experienced burnout due to their jobs (68.9%) but still believe they successfully balance their private and professional lives (77.6%). The most common reasons for burnout at work (see Figure 5) are overtime and excessive workload (37%), as well as stress and pressure from superiors or deadlines (25%). Based on the research results, it can be concluded that respondents consider family and friends ( $M=2.67$ ,  $SD=1.73$ ), physical and mental health ( $M=2.86$ ,  $SD=1.56$ ), and financial stability ( $M=2.94$ ,  $SD=1.40$ ) as their top priorities, while free time for hobbies ( $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=1.31$ ) and career success ( $M=2.97$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ) are perceived as less important.

Figure 5. Why Have You Experienced Burnout in the Workplace?

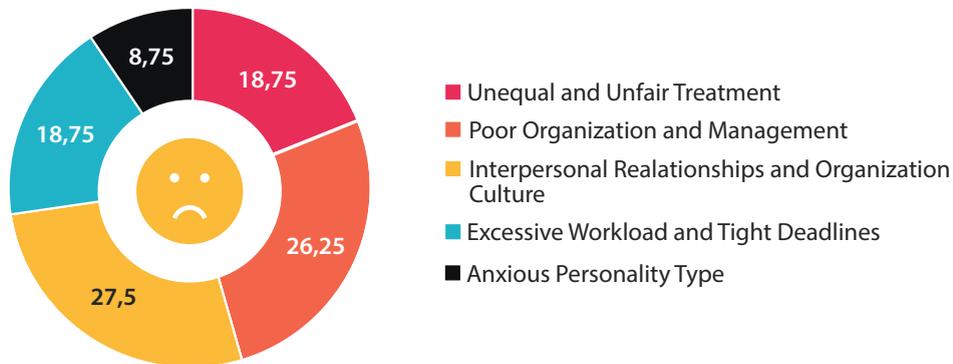


Source: Authors



Based on respondents' answers, it can be concluded that the participants do not frequently experience negative emotions ( $M=2.95$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ). Interpersonal relationships and poor organizational culture are the factors (see Figure 6) that most influence negative emotions in the workplace (27.50%), followed by poor organization and management (26.25%).

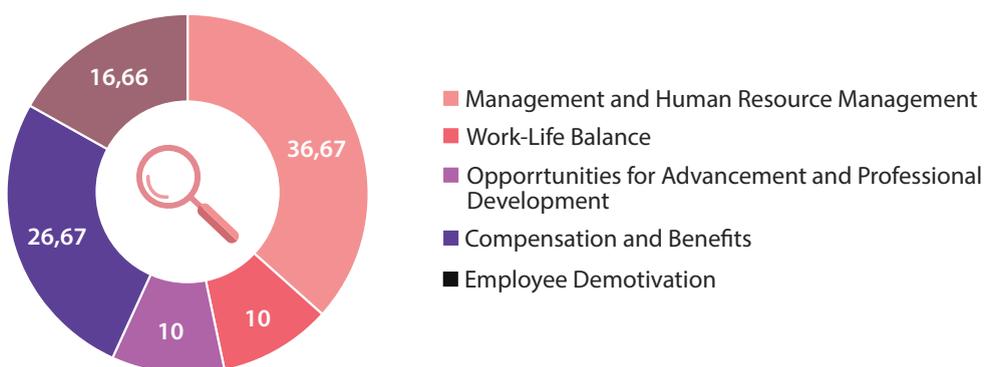
**Figure 6.** Main Reasons for the Occurrence of Negative Emotions in the Workplace



Source: Authors

With insights into the causes of the quiet quitting phenomenon among employees, the second segment of our survey delves into the perceptions and actions within the human resources department. More than half of the respondents working in the human resources department believe that the phenomenon of quiet quitting is noticeable among employees (56.9%), while the majority from that sector have not taken action to minimize this phenomenon (74.1%) (see Table 2). The key causes of the occurrence of the phenomenon (see Figure 7) are management and HR practices (36.67%) and compensation and benefits (26.67%).

**Figure 7.** Key Causes of the Occurrence of the Phenomenon of Quiet Quitting

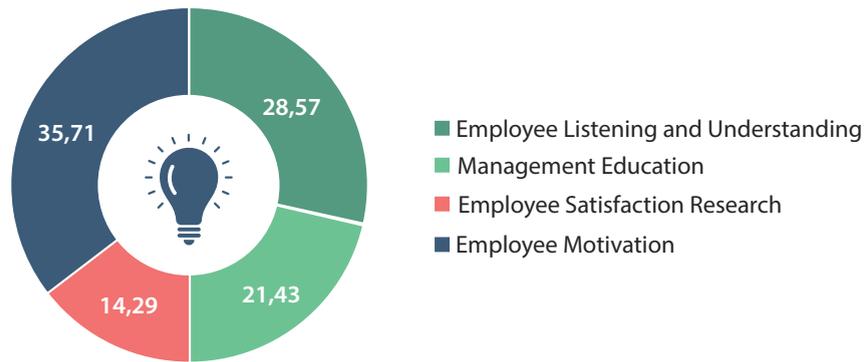


Source: Authors

The corrective actions most commonly taken to minimize the phenomenon of quiet quitting (see Figure 8) are motivating employees (35.71%) and listening to and understanding employees (28.57%).



**Figure 8.** Corrective Actions Taken to Minimize the Phenomenon of Quiet Quitting



Source: Authors

Based on Figure 9, it can be concluded that employees are most motivated through salary increases and bonuses (21.33%), as well as with the opportunity for advancement in line with gained experience and knowledge (14.67%).

**Figure 9.** How do you motivate employees?



Source: Authors

The research investigated whether there is a significant correlation between the additional efforts invested in achieving organizational goals and the questions posed within the research framework. Spearman's correlation analysis was applied for the purposes of the research.

**Table 3.** Correlation of Additional Efforts Invested in Achieving Organizational Goals with Other Questions

Additional Efforts Invested in Achieving Organizational Goals	Value
Experiencing Low Engagement in the Workplace	-0.212**
Level of Engagement in the Workplace	-0.205**
Job Satisfaction Level	-0.165
Is a fair and equal reward system present?	0.144
Assessment of fair rewarding in relation to effort	-0.233**
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on job attitudes	0.04
Impact of business-themed social networks on job attitudes	0.084
Susceptibility to the influence of Generation Z	-0.061
Importance of flexible working hours and the possibility of working from home	-0.043
Workplace burnout	0.071
Success in balancing private and professional life	0.102
Level of negative emotions at work	0.103

Source: Authors

Based on the results presented in Table 3, it can be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the additional effort invested in achieving the organization's goals and the manifestation of low job engagement ( $\rho=-0.212$ ), the degree of engagement ( $\rho=-0.205$ ), and the evaluation of fair reward in relation to effort ( $\rho=-0.233$ ). The correlation analysis reveals a small, negative correlation based on the coefficient values. This negative correlation suggests that an increase in additional effort towards organizational goals is associated with a decrease in low job engagement, an increase in overall engagement, and a higher evaluation of fair reward in relation to effort. Table 3 indicates low correlation values among other variables, suggesting no significant correlation. Further investigation explored the potential correlation between the manifestation of low job engagement and the study's posed questions.

**Table 4.** Correlation of Manifestation of Low Job Engagement with Other Questions

Manifestation of Low Job Engagement	Value
Level of Workplace Engagement	0.560**
Level of Job Satisfaction	0.384**
Is a Fair and Equal Reward System Present?	-0.205**
Assessment of Fair Compensation in Relation to Effort	0.266**
The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Job Attitudes	0.050
The Influence of Business-related Social Networks on Job Attitudes	0.138
Susceptibility to the Influence of Generation Z	0.021
Importance of Flexible Working Hours and the Possibility of Remote Work	0.104
Burnout at Work	-0.061
The success of Balancing Private and Professional Life	-0.015
Level of Negative Emotions at Work	-0.092

Note: \* Statistical significance at the 0.05 level \*\* Statistical significance at the 0.01 level

Source: Authors



Drawing from the findings outlined in Table 4, it can be concluded that a significant correlation exists between the manifestation of low job engagement and the degree of work engagement ( $\rho=0.560$ ), the level of job satisfaction ( $\rho=0.384$ ), the prevalence of fair and equal reward treatment ( $\rho=-0.205$ ), and the assessment of fair reward in relation to effort ( $\rho=0.266$ ). Based on the correlation coefficient values, it can be inferred that the correlation is large and positive between the manifestation of low job engagement and the degree of work engagement, indicating that respondents who do not exhibit low job engagement have a higher level of work engagement. The correlation is moderate and positive between the manifestation of low job engagement and the degree of job satisfaction, suggesting that respondents who do not exhibit low job engagement have a higher level of job satisfaction. The correlation is small and negative between the manifestation of low job engagement and the prevalence of fair and equal reward treatment, indicating that respondents who do not exhibit low job engagement perceive reward treatment as more fair. The correlation is small and positive between the manifestation of low job engagement and the assessment of fair reward in relation to effort, suggesting that respondents who do not exhibit low job engagement perceive a higher presence of fair reward. Based on the results presented in Table 4, there is no significant correlation between other variables, as confirmed by the low values of the correlation coefficients.

The research further investigated whether there is a significant correlation between the level of engagement at the workplace, job satisfaction, the assessment of fair rewards in relation to effort, and the level of negative emotions at work.

**Table 5.** Correlation between the level of engagement, job satisfaction, fair rewards, and negative emotions

	Level of engagement in the workplace	Level of job satisfaction	Assessment of fair compensation	Level of negative emotions
Level of engagement in the workplace	1			
Level of job satisfaction	0.352**	1		
Assessment of fair compensation	0.186	0.624**	1	
Level of negative emotions	0.073	-0.457**	-0.448**	1

Note: \* Statistical significance at the 0.05 level \*\* Statistical significance at the 0.01 level

Source: Authors

In accordance with the data provided in Table 5, it can be concluded that a significant correlation exists between the level of engagement at the workplace and job satisfaction ( $p=0.352$ ). According to the correlation coefficient value, the association is moderate and positive, indicating that as the level of engagement increases, job satisfaction also increases. There is a significant correlation between the level of job satisfaction and the assessment of fair reward ( $p=0.624$ ).

Based on the correlation coefficient values, it can be concluded that the association is strong and positive, where an increase in job satisfaction is associated with a higher assessment of fair reward concerning effort. There is a significant correlation between the level of job satisfaction and the level of negative emotions at work ( $p=-0.457$ ). According to the correlation coefficient, the association is moderate and negative, indicating that as job satisfaction increases, negative emotions at work decrease.



There is a significant correlation between the assessment of fair rewards and the level of negative emotions at work ( $p=-0.448$ ). Based on the correlation coefficient, the association is moderate and negative, suggesting that as the assessment of fair reward increases, negative emotions at work decrease. In conclusion, Spearman's correlation analysis was utilized to examine the potential significant correlations between questions related to the quiet quitting phenomenon and the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

**Table 6.** Correlation of Additional Efforts Invested in Achieving Organizational Goals with Other Questions

	Gender	Age	Education	Sector	Position	Years of Work Experience
Additional Efforts Invested in Achieving Organizational Goals	-0.03	0.030	-0.024	0.025	0.138	-0.064
Manifestation of Low Engagement in the Workplace	0.13	0.193	0.021	0.101	-0.067	0.094
Level of Engagement in the Workplace	0.13	0.175	-0.007	0.065	-0.005	0.177
Level of Job Satisfaction	0.005	0.032	-0.017	0.201**	-0.149	0.024
Is a fair and equal reward system prevalent?	-0.008	0.185	0.028	-0.080	0.073	0.133
Assessment of fair rewarding in relation to effort	0.06	-0.067	0.035	0.169	-0.219**	-0.091
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on job attitudes	-0.03	0.051	0.083	0.153	0.049	0.072
Impact of social networks focusing on business topics on job attitudes	0.01	0.217**	0.106	0.159	0.050	0.155
Susceptibility to the influence of Generation Z	-0.01	0.076	-0.061	0.006	-0.057	0.116
Importance of flexible working hours and the possibility of remote work	-0.13	0.096	-0.298**	-0.164	0.002	0.173
Workplace burnout	0.02	-0.187	-0.084	-0.051	0.099	-0.207**
Success in balancing private and professional life	-0.12	0.021	0.106	0.066	-0.041	0.015
Degree of negative emotions at work	-0.02	0.171	0.044	-0.131	0.115	0.073

Note: \* Statistical significance at the 0.05 level \*\* Statistical significance at the 0.01 level

Source: Authors

As per the conclusions highlighted in Table 6, it can be concluded that there is no significant correlation between the posed questions and the gender of the respondents, as confirmed by low correlation coefficients. Additionally, a significant correlation exists between the impact of social networks on job attitudes and age, where younger respondents consider the impact of social networks more significant. From the results, it can be inferred that there is no significant correlation between the other posed questions and the age of the respondents, as confirmed by low correlation coefficients. Moreover, a significant correlation exists between the importance of flexible working hours and the



possibility of remote work with the level of education, where respondents with higher education find flexible working hours and the possibility of remote work more important. It can be concluded that there is no significant correlation between the other posed questions and the education level of the respondents, as confirmed by low correlation coefficients. Additionally, there is a significant correlation between job satisfaction and the sector in which respondents work, with those working in the private sector being more satisfied with their current jobs.

Also, it can be concluded that there is no significant correlation between the other posed questions and the sector in which respondents work, as confirmed by low correlation coefficients. Furthermore, there is a significant correlation between the rating of fair reward in relation to effort and the position of the respondents, where those working in the human resources sector have a higher rating of fair reward. It can be concluded that there is no significant correlation between the other posed questions and the position of the respondents, as confirmed by low correlation coefficients. Additionally, there is a significant correlation between years of work experience and job burnout, where an increase in years of work experience is associated with a decrease in job burnout. Moreover, there is no significant correlation between the other posed questions and the years of work experience of the respondents, as confirmed by low correlation coefficients. In the end, Table 7 will provide a summarized overview of the outcome of the hypothesis based on research results.

**Table 7.** Summarized presentation of the outcome of the hypothesis

	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>H1</b>	There is a positive correlation between the presence of quiet quitting and low employee engagement	<b>Confirmed</b>
<b>H2</b>	There is a positive correlation between quiet quitting and job dissatisfaction	<b>Confirmed</b>
<b>H3</b>	There is a positive correlation between job dissatisfaction and an unfair reward system	<b>Confirmed</b>
<b>H4</b>	Social networks and the COVID-19 virus pandemic have contributed to the strengthening of the quiet quitting trend among Generation Z members	<b>Partially confirmed</b>
<b>H5</b>	There is a positive correlation between minimal employee engagement at work and the balance between private and professional life	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>H6</b>	There is a positive correlation between the presence of quiet quitting and burnout syndrome at work	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>H7</b>	There is a negative correlation between the presence of quiet quitting and the overall well-being of employees	<b>Rejected</b>

Source: Authors

As evident from the results, hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were confirmed, while H4 was partially confirmed. The study revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic did not significantly impact respondents' job attitudes, with over half (57.7%) responding negatively. Unlike global trends, Serbia's historical experience with various crises may explain this resilience. However, it is important to note that our hypothesis was partially confirmed, considering variations in industry-specific data. This underscores the nuanced nature of the impact, as other research studies may present (Demirović Bajrami *et al.*, 2020) divergent findings dependent on the industry under consideration.



On the other hand, H5 was rejected, indicating that the work-life balance did not affect individuals' workplace engagement. The robust social connections prevalent in Serbia, coupled with the reluctance to compromise professional commitments for personal life, are plausible contributing factors to this outcome. On the other hand, some studies (Golubović and Golubović, 2015) show that in Serbia, 85% of women and 77% of men experience work-family conflicts, primarily due to organizational work structures and inflexible schedules.

It is essential to recognize that our findings pertain solely to the parameters of this study, and broader exploration is warranted. Some studies (Žnidaršič and Marič, 2021) suggest that an augmentation in work-life balance correlates positively with life and work satisfaction, positing that enhanced life satisfaction can in turn contribute to heightened work engagement, underscoring the need for further research in diverse settings.

Furthermore, H6 was rejected, showing no positive correlation between the presence of quiet quitting and burnout syndrome at work. Despite 68.9% experiencing burnout, respondents remained highly engaged and moderately satisfied. This challenges the conventional notion that burnout and high engagement are mutually exclusive. Notably, a considerable number of respondents, primarily in their early career stages, demonstrate a propensity to exceed expectations, emphasizing their readiness to go the extra mile with no fear of overburn. There is also a likelihood that individuals who do not extend efforts beyond their regular work responsibilities are less susceptible to experiencing burnout, as elucidated in the Introduction, where burnout is attributed to a corporate culture emphasizing continuous work. It is important to note, however, that burnout does not solely arise from constant work (Bayes, Tavella, and Parker, 2021); factors such as a lack of perceived rewards or fulfillment, unclear job expectations, limited control over one's work, and feeling of inefficacy or unfulfillment in the professional role also contribute to its occurrence.

Additionally, H7 was rejected, suggesting that impaired well-being and frequent negative emotions at work don't necessarily reduce employee engagement. The nature of individuals' jobs and their commitment may play a role. Negative emotions are primarily influenced by interpersonal relations, poor organizational climate, and ineffective management.

## CONCLUSION

In the paper, we have analyzed the phenomenon of quiet quitting, with an emphasis on its impact and role in Serbia. The opinion expressed is that this phenomenon is nothing more than a new term for old organizational behavior. Quiet quitting truly describes individuals who are not engaged in their work, are mentally detached from it, and remain in the workplace primarily for the sake of income. There will always be, and there always has been a certain number of people who will not be fully committed to their work.

Key methodological limitations of this research are the sample and the timeliness of the topic. Considering that the phenomenon was brought into focus in 2022, with no previous research in Serbia and no standardized questionnaire for empirically exploring quiet quitting, the questionnaire presented in the paper should serve as a starting point that shall be further developed. The term itself is still not widely known to the general public, so there is a possibility that a lack of understanding among respondents contributed to these results. Additionally, inconsistent and inconclusive responses from respondents posed a challenge, and the quantitative nature of this research can be attributed to the electronic form of the questionnaire.



In addition to quantitative analysis, the integration of qualitative methodologies, including interviews, focus groups, and case studies, can provide a multifaceted understanding of the motivations, experiences, and contextual nuances surrounding quiet quitting, thereby enriching the depth and comprehensiveness of our research. Further research in this field should involve a larger sample of respondents to evenly cover all generations and other socio-economic groups. The focus should also be on the length of work experience, considering that attitudes, opinions, behavior, and job satisfaction changes over the years. Research should be directed toward differences between industry sectors and specific positions individuals hold. Furthermore, we believe that this topic should be exclusively viewed as a category of employee engagement, shaping future research questions accordingly.

In conclusion, considering the research results, a review of relevant literature, and the author's assessment, we can draw the following conclusions:

- *Individual Characteristics Play a Significant Role:* Personal traits, attitudes, and values, strongly influence the tendency towards quiet quitting. These factors contribute to a complex interplay of elements that affect an individual's engagement with their work;
- *Long-Term Job Engagement vs. Burnout:* Individuals can experience burnout while remaining highly engaged in their work. This challenges the common notion that engagement and burnout are mutually exclusive. High levels of engagement, coupled with additional tasks and tight deadlines, may lead to burnout;
- *Generational Differences in Quiet quitting:* The findings point to generational disparities, with Generation Z being more prone to quiet quitting. Understanding these generational differences is crucial for organizations seeking to tailor their strategies and interventions to the specific needs and expectations of different age groups;
- *Connection Between Job Satisfaction and Engagement:* The intricate relationship between job satisfaction, engagement, and quiet quitting is emphasized in our research. While financial stability remains a primary motivator for employees to stay in their current positions, job satisfaction and a sense of purpose are crucial aspects that organizations should consider to enhance employee engagement;
- *Prevalence of Quiet Quitting in Serbia:* The phenomenon of quiet quitting, while witnessing an upward trajectory, is not as widespread in Serbia as observed in economically advanced nations such as the USA and EU member states. Furthermore, a notable exception exists within Generation Z, which demonstrates a higher familiarity with this phenomenon;
- *Impact of Low Living Standards:* A significant contributing factor to the limited prevalence of quiet quitting in Serbia is attributed to the low living standards of the population. Economic constraints compel individuals to endure adverse working conditions, at least temporarily, as a means of ensuring their survival;
- *Inherited Work Culture and Career Notions:* The investigation into quiet quitting unfolds the influence of a generational work culture, often referred to as the boomer work culture. Success in one's career is predominantly perceived through the lens of completing education at a state faculty, securing a position in a state-owned enterprise, enjoying a modest yet stable income, and ultimately relying on state support during retirement. Also, cultural and societal factors play a pivotal role in shaping attitudes toward work and career choices. Understanding these nuanced influences is crucial for designing targeted interventions and fostering a work environment conducive to employee engagement;



- *Alternative Coping Mechanisms in Serbia:* Contrary to opting for quiet quitting, employees in Serbia tend to pursue alternative strategies. This often involves frequent job changes and seeking employment in state institutions. Such choices are motivated by the pursuit of financial security and a desire for increased personal time;
- *Organizational Measures Are Crucial:* Organizational measures, such as clear task distribution, reduced workload, additional days off, and employee education on the phenomenon, can serve as preventive measures. Addressing these aspects can contribute to a healthier work environment and potentially reduce the instances of quiet quitting;
- *Need for Further Research and Awareness:* The study emphasizes the need for more extensive research, particularly with a larger and more diverse sample of participants. Additionally, it underscores the importance of raising awareness about the concept of quiet quitting, as it may not be widely understood among respondents, potentially influencing the research outcomes.

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## UTICAJ FENOMENA „TIHOG OTKAZA“ NA ZAPOSLENE U SRBIJI

### Rezime:

Zaposleni imaju ključnu ulogu u poslovanju svakog oblika organizacije, te je dobro upravljanje kadrovima od vitalnog značaja. U 2022. godini pojavljuje se „nova“ ideja o ponašanju na radnom mestu, a posredstvom interneta i društvenih mreža rasprostranjuje se među zaposlenima širom sveta. Reč je o fenomenu „tihan otkaz“ koji opisuje model ponašanja gde zaposleni obavlja minimum svojih zaduženja, ne želeći da ide iznad ili preko toga. Fenomen se najčešće dovodi u vezu sa pandemijom koronavirusa, pripadnicima generacije Zed i mlađim Milenijalcima i samom angažovanošću radnika, koja je u globalnom padu poslednjih nekoliko godina.

Ovo istraživanje ima za cilj da identifikuje i opiše problem tihog otkaza, da utvrdi ključne razloge za nastanak samog fenomena, kakve efekte i posledice ima po zaposlene i da utvrdi njegovo prisustvo u organizacijama koje posluju u Srbiji. U radu je zaključeno da fenomen nije nikakva novina, već novi naziv za stari oblik ponašanja, koji zapravo predstavlja nisko angažovane pojedince na radnom mestu, a čije ponašanje često proizilazi iz nezadovoljstva poslom. U Srbiji ne postoji velika rasprostranjenost ovog trenda, premda su pripadnici generacije Zed podložniji njegovom uticaju.

Razumevanje ovog problema može umnogome pomoći liderima, ne samo da saniraju nastale štete, već i da pravovremeno reaguju i sprovedu preventivne mere, u svrhu dobrobiti organizacije i njenih zaposlenih. S obzirom na to da je tihan otkaz novonastala pojava u svetu i da još uvek postoji mali broj istraživanja, ova studija predstavlja sveobuhvatni prikaz postojeće literature i služi kao osnov za dalja istraživanja u poslovnoj i akademskoj zajednici.

### Ključne reči:

„tihan otkaz“,  
Republika Srbija,  
obaveza radnika,  
sagorevanje,  
ljudski resursi.