

Minimalism vs Productivity Demands: Silent Resistance or Breach? Quiet Quitting Through an Employment Law Lens

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate the phenomenon of quiet quitting from the context of modern employment laws where employees who will only engage in minimal work effort, thus meeting only the bare minimum expectations and disengaging from extra discretionary effort, which is often seen as a form of resistance against escalating productivity demands. It critically evaluates whether such disengagement is an act of silent resistance or a breach of employment contract. The paper examines the issue of employee rights, productivity goals, as well as the interaction of employment law, besides offering a framework for evaluating the social and legal ramifications of this trend. This is in order to comprehend how different jurisdictions handle quiet quitting and its possible repercussions for both employers and employees, the article draws on case studies, international legal perspectives, and empirical research. In addition to making sure that workplace cultures and legal frameworks change in a way that supports safe and effective working conditions, the paper offers some suggestions for addressing the root causes of silent resignation.

Keywords: silent resistance, quiet quitting, employment law lens.

INTRODUCTION

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the idea, practice, and social media trend known as “quiet quitting” gained widespread public and scholarly attention (Corbin & Flenady, 2024). Many employees experienced exhaustion resulting from the transition to remote work during the pandemic which made it harder to separate between personal and professional life. In response to increasing demands, quiet quitting has become a strategy for employees to safeguard their mental health by establishing more defined boundaries at work, rather than reacting rebelliously. (Bremen, 2022).

This occurs when workers only do their job duties that they are required to do without making extra effort in which it is often interpreted as a reaction to an unfair workload burden. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has established a worldwide standard for worker protection which includes fair treatment, having balanced workload as well as protecting mental health to be considered as part of “decent work” (ILO, 2024). However, unlike Malaysia’s Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (OSHA) which mainly focuses on the physical risks but doesn’t clearly address mental health problems associated with constant digital work and blurred personal boundaries (Adeoye & Elegunde, 2023; Omar, 2020). As a result, without stronger protections, Malaysia would risk falling behind the global work standards, making it harder for workers to maintain a healthy balance between their jobs and mental health.

In Malaysia, the Department of Industrial Relations Malaysia (JPPM) and the Trade Unions can be said to play an important role when it comes to industrial relations as well as protecting the rights and welfare of the employee in the workplace. They act as a link between companies and employees, resolving disputes and employment-related concerns (Abd Aziz et al., 2023). Trade unions actually are so much more than only

negotiating salaries and working conditions as they also symbolise workers' collective power to safeguard their interests (Abd Aziz et al., 2023). While quiet quitting often being viewed as a coping mechanism of the individuals, it actually reflects on the deeper issues such as burn out, poor work life balance and even lack of freedom of voicing their opinion (Beccia et al., 2022). In addition, trade unions also assist in balancing the power of the employers as well as the government as their efficacy is dependent on a variety of circumstances which includes the economy, employer attitudes, and also the government labour policy (Abd Aziz et al., 2023). This form of support is very essential in reducing silent resistance as well as quiet quitting (Beccia et al., 2024). Studies show that, when the employees feel supported by the collective representation, fair mediation then their job satisfaction will increase dramatically (Beccia et al., 2024). Therefore, by supporting and working together with the trade union and JPPM can help in building a more equitable and healthier workplace, perhaps reducing the quiet quitting by making the employee more protected and being heard.

Some legal scholars argue that quiet quitting is still lawful as long as employees do their actual job duties without misconduct (Taylor, 2020). In addition, a long-term disengagement could be seen as not fulfilling the duty of good faith especially in roles that expect flexibility and initiative (Lewis & Adams, 2021). In many workplaces, going beyond the job description is encouraged or rewarded, so by just doing what's required can look like they don't perform (Glick & Greenberg, 2021), creating a grey area between legal rights and workplace expectations. Similarly to non-disclosure agreements, in which it frequently silent the workers as quiet quitting besides illustrating on how power could actually imbalance the workplace stifle transparency and how the silent resistance can turn into a form of self protection (Barnes, 2023).

Other than that, this paper also seeks to determine whether or not quiet quitting should be viewed as a silent form of resistance due to the employee's rational response to the unhealthy productivity norms or a breach of contractual obligations that are able to undermine the workplace's harmoniness. Meanwhile, understanding the legal boundaries of this movement is also critical not only for the legal practitioners and employers, but also towards shaping the future of work in a manner that would respect both of the contractual expectations as well as the human limitations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quiet quitting has gained increasing attention due to a workplace phenomenon, particularly in the post-pandemic era. It basically refers to the employees who actually just fulfills only their formal job's responsibilities while consciously withdrawing themselves from extra discretionary tasks. While some may view this as a disengagement, there are also who actually view it as a rational response to the excessive workload demands. According to the Equity Theory of motivation, employees evaluate their effort based on fairness in rewards, meaning that if they perceive an imbalance between input and compensation, they may reduce their contributions accordingly (Redman, 2022). It is also further argued that quiet quitting aligns with compensatory respect, whereby the employees somehow set the boundaries in response to diminish a workplace recognition (Corbin & Flenady, 2024).

From a legal point of view, quiet quitting raises critical questions on the contractual obligations and also on the workplace expectations. The contract law governs the employment relationships and the employees are compelled to fulfill only the responsibilities based on what they have formally agreed to (Taylor, 2020). The Employment Rights Bill, which was debated in the UK Parliament in March 2025, has addressed these evolving concerns as well as proposing clearer protections for employee autonomy and fair work expectations (UK Parliament, 2025). It also emphasizes legal safeguards for workers against the unfair dismissal and excessive contractual demands besides promoting workplace flexibility as well as job security.

Studies consistently highlight the impact of workplace well-being on employee engagement. High demands in production are related to a decline in mental health, worse work satisfaction and the increasement of stress level (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2021). In response, quiet quitting can be viewed as a self-preservation mechanism, rather than workplace revolt (Bremen, 2022). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognises mental health as an essential component when it comes to producing good working conditions besides calls for fair workload distributions worldwide (ILO, 2024). However, Malaysia's Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (OSHA) primarily addresses the physical hazards while leaving gaps in mental health

protections related to workplace stress (Adeoye & Elegunde, 2023; Omar, 2020).

Global comparisons offer further insights on employee disengagement. Sweden's Work Environment Strategy (2021–2025) has emphasises on burn out prevention and the employee wellbeing (Government of Sweden, 2021). On the other hand, Sweden's approach promotes the flexibility and individual work arrangements which merge the employee productivity need with the well being initiative in reducing the reliance on quiet quitting as a coping mechanism.

Recognition theory is being applied to quiet quitting in order to demonstrate that employees disengage when workplace recognition is not enough (Corbin & Flenady, 2024). Employees naturally seek validations for their contributions, and if their efforts go unnoticed, they may reconsider their commitment to non-contractual obligations (Corbin & Flenady, 2024). Their research found that organizations promote meaningful work and authentic recognition effectively in mitigating disengagement which leads to higher morale in a workplace (Corbin & Flenady, 2024).

Medical and Psychological Perspective

Burnout is a severe workplace issue that would have an impact on both mental and physical well-being which often leads to disengagement and may cause depersonalisation whereby the employees become detached from their work and colleagues, as well as a loss in personal achievement, lowering motivation and job satisfaction (Maslach, 1981). Burnout is common in the healthcare professions, where nurses face extreme pressure which likely would affect their well-being and organisational efficiency (Galanis et al., 2023b). In the banking sector, burnout also plays a significant role in quiet quitting, with optimism shown to moderate its effects (Trang & Trang, 2024). In addition, employees experiencing high personal and work-related burnout are more likely to disengage unless they have psychological resilience, such as optimism, to manage their stress (Trang & Trang, 2024).

Several studies have shown a significant correlation between burnout and quiet quitting. According to the studies which show that there is a positive correlation which proves that job burnout is a predictor of quiet quitting (Lu et al., 2023). Employees that are burnt out are more likely to disengage, making reduction on their effort to only what is required for them to do (Gün et al., 2024). A multivariable analysis further supports this connection by demonstrating that burnout has a direct influence on workplace disengagement (Galanis et al., 2023a). Furthermore, studies on Chinese Gen Z employees shows that burnout has a major impact on their decision to quit the job, which also indicates generational differences in how employees dealing with work stress (Xueyun et al., 2023).

Organisational Behaviour and HR Perspective

Employee satisfaction is essential for organisational success as the workers perform better when they feel valued, appreciated, and fairly compensated (Harvey, 2024). A lack of collaboration between the management and the employees may lead to ineffective workload distribution as well as increasing the level of stress (Harvey, 2024). When a team collaborates and management delegates tasks effectively the workloads will become manageable besides reducing burnout and improving productivity (Harvey, 2024). Additionally, work-life balance plays a significant role in job satisfaction, and flexible work schedules along with the adequate breaks would help in enhancing the employee well-being (Harvey, 2024).

Flexible schedules are especially very important in maintaining employee commitment, with studies showing that nearly all respondents relate workplace flexibility to stronger job engagement (Cieniewicz, 2016). HR departments play an important role in promoting professional development and leadership training, especially for supervisors of telecommuting employees, as this enhances the workplace adaptability and engagement (Cieniewicz, 2016). Furthermore, HR teams should actively identify disengagement and burnout as well as providing meaningful work opportunities to strengthen the employees' long-term commitment (Cieniewicz, 2016).

Quiet quitting occurred when the employees disengage without resigning which has become more common due

to burnout, long work hours, and dissatisfaction with leadership (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023; Serenko, 2024). The employees now prioritise personal well-being and have been limiting their tasks to what's required, which may protect them from exhaustion but at the same time could also slow the career growth. The contributing factors would include poor leadership, lack of recognition, weak workplace culture, and unmet promises (Ratnatunga, 2022). To address this, the organisations should adopt engaging leadership styles, offer a flexible work policies, and foster the recognition and inclusion to maintain motivation and long-term commitment (Schaufeli, 2021; Jaharuddin & Zainol, 2019; Boxall & Purcell, 2022).

Legal and Contractual Perspective

The practice of quiet quitting which refers to the employees who stop doing the "extra" work outside of the terms of their employment contract is actually creating all sorts of headaches when it comes to the employment law. This is because, from a legal point of view, if the work that an employee is doing is actually meeting the terms of their contract which includes the volume and the quality then they are considered to be just basically doing just what they were supposed to. So, the fact that the employees are refusing to take on extra responsibilities outside of their usual hours does not cause them to break their contract unless it actually says so. However, if the people are quite quitting in a way that it would start to interfere with getting the job done or it is just generally becoming at odds with the idea that the employees should be looking out for the employer's interests, then it could certainly raise some concern. Therefore, in order to minimise the chance of disengagement then the employers are urged to communicate with the expected outcome (Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP, 2022).

Employment relies on a contractual relationship that is subject to both explicit terms and implied duties. Express terms refer to essential elements of employment, such as job description, working hours and compensation. Conversely, common law recognizes implied duties, which include obligations like cooperation, fidelity, and reasonable care. However, employment contracts are rarely exhaustive. Therefore, courts will rely on implied terms to fill in the gaps left by explicit terms (Stone and Deakin, 2014). Fidelity and cooperation are the two most basic implied duties. These duties demand workers to act in good faith and support their employer's business interest (Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP, 2022).

The difference between the formal legal contract and the psychological contract is the unwritten expectations that both employers and employees hold. Psychological contracts which include loyalty, voluntary work, and emotional commitment are not legally binding but have a big impact on workplace culture and behaviour (Rousseau, 2000). Quiet quitting might be interpreted as a response to the breakdown of psychological contract in situations where workers feel overworked and underappreciated. However, employees' decision to restrict employment to formal contractual responsibilities is acceptable since psychological contracts are not enforceable in court.

Psychological contracts differ in In Malaysia, The Malaysian Employment Act 1955, sets minimum pay requirements for pay, hours and rest days but is clearly silent on behavioural norms or informal aspects of employment. As a result, Malaysian courts have to interpret implied duties due to the absence of clear statutory direction which leaves individuals confused on how to deal with situations like quiet quitting. Unlike Malaysia, the UK has started to acknowledge the importance of workplace culture and employee well being in terms of legal issues. There is a development in understanding the need to safeguard employees from unreasonable demands while maintaining contractual balance (Lewis et al., 2021).

Technological and Digital Surveillance Perspective

Discussions about employee liberty, privacy, and mental health privacy have grown. In order to maintain productivity, the popularity of remote work in the post-pandemic era has led to an increase in the use of monitoring tools, such as keystroke logging, camera surveillance, and biometric tracking (Ball, 2021). Although these devices are supposed to boost productivity, they usually violate employees' privacy, which leads to stress and mistrust of employers.

The most significant provisions of the law that has regulated the UK's workplace monitoring in its legal

framework are the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act of 2018. These regulations mandate that employee monitoring in all cases should be fair, legal and transparent. By conducting Data Protection Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), which consider the proportionality and the need and the need for surveillance practices, employers can ensure that workers are aware of the reason and nature of data collection.(DavidsonMorris, 2023). Disobedience of that implied obligation of mutual confidence and trust that is part of the employment contract can draw legal sanction, including constructive dismissal actions, if surveillance procedures breach these obligations (Skadden,2020).

The psychological impacts of mass surveillance are considerable. Empirical research suggests that over-monitoring can actually contribute to high levels of anxiety, lower job satisfaction, and compromised overall mental well being among the workers. This creates a culture where the workers engage in “quiet quitting” working on exactly what their job demands because they do not feel they can work more as means to regain a sense of agency and preserve their mental health (Institute for the Future of Work, 2023) In addition, the ethical aspects of surveillance technology cannot be avoided. The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) has taken an action against organizations that have processed biometric data unlawfully, highlighting the need for the necessity and proportionality in using such technology (The Guardian, 2024). The absence of robust legal safeguards in some jurisdictions only increases these risks, which leaves the workers vulnerable to disproportionate surveillance practices.

In conclusion, while there may be tons of advantages in productivity and safety from digital monitoring technologies, their use also needs to be carefully weighed against the employees’ privacy and welfare rights. Employers need to have open policies, carry out regular DPIAs, and promote open communication with the employees in order to build a workplace atmosphere that would prioritizes agency. The recognition of quiet quitting as a reaction to over-monitoring is highlighting the need for legal protection of the workers from intrusive monitoring and ensuring a balance between work and ensuring a balance between work and life.

Socio-economic Perspective

The emergence of the quite quitting phenomenon has become a powerful reflection of the socio-economic perspective in the current workplace. The implicit standards of cooperation, loyalty, and good faith that frequently transcend explicit job descriptions are called into questions by quite quitting (Zeilikman, 2022). However, many legal scholars argue that unless an employment contract expressly requires discretionary effort or overtime, an employee cannot be legally responsible for meeting solely their explicit obligations (Taylor, 2020). The implicit obligations of faithfulness is usually restricted to seniors needing discretion and trust in countries like the UK and Canada. For ordinary employees, the performance of stipulated duties is legally sufficient (Teh, 2024; Lewis & Adams, 2021). Therefore, silent resistance can be justified from a contractual perspective. However, this legal protection frequently conflicts with organizational cultures and managerial expectations that value voluntary overtime and overperformance, resulting in a normative gap whereby legal compliance is mistakenly seen as a sign of poor performance or a lack of attitude(Glick & Greenberg, 2021).

There are significant socioeconomic ramifications to this divergence. One way to interpret quitting is as a response to the larger neoliberal management philosophy, which sees workers as limitless resources with limitless potential. In this way, it is more about defying oppressive business practices that it is about breaking the law. The analogy made between non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and silent resistance is especially instructive as both serve as coping strategies in situations of unequal power dynamics, where workers keep quiet to prevent confrontation or retaliation (Barnes, 2023). Toxic workplaces are hidden by NDAs, while silent resistance completely avoids them. Both draw attention to institutional shortcomings in promoting worker autonomy, psychological safety and participation (Shinners, 2023; Starr, Sockin, & Sojourner, 2021).

As a result, a careful examination needs to go beyond the issue of whether silent resistance constitutes a violation of contract. Rather, it has to ask why workers are giving up on their extra work in the first place and whether the laws governing employment now sufficiently guard their rights to autonomy, mental health and a fair burden. Legal frameworks may be more in line with modern workplace realities if they were changed to specifically acknowledge psychological wellbeing, provide protection from repercussions for actions that set boundaries, and create a right to disconnect, as has been done in France and certain EU countries. In the

absence of such reform, the legal system runs the risk of supporting an organisational culture that puts productivity ahead of people.

In the end, quite quitting should be interpreted as a socioeconomic signal as a logical representation of boundaries in an unbalanced system rather than being written off as being lazy or disloyal. As a result, employment law needs to be changed to accommodate evolving job expectations, respect human limitations, and create systems that encourage rather than exploit labour. Quite quitting is a social protest against an unproductive existing quo, not just a legal oddity.

Political and Policy Perspective

From a political and policy point of view, the phenomenon of quitting highlights a crucial policy gap in the labour governance especially in the jurisdictions that still adhere to the ideological tenets of neoliberalism, as well as a general despair among the working class. A subtle but potent critique of the policy regimes that consistently put production and the profit ahead of the employee wellbeing and dignity is represented by those who support the idea of quitting, which is the act of carrying out only the tasks explicitly called by one's employment contract without making any extra effort. Labour laws in many countries including Malaysia, are still based on the neoliberal framework that support the employer choice, deregulation and market flexibility. Although the state's commitment to provide comprehensive worker protection has been undermined by these ideas, they are frequently defended in the name of economic efficiency (Standing, 2011).

One interpretation of the political inertia surrounding the silent resistance would be, it implicitly supports self exploitation and over performance as a standard of practices in the workplace. Perhaps as a result of the structural incentives linked to GDP growth and the national productivity indices, which profit from the underpaid or uncomfortable work, the policy makers tend to avoid recognising these dynamics. This reluctance is exacerbated by a regulatory culture that sees the employees as an input into the economic production machine rather than as a partners in governance. For example, it can be seen when the Employment Act 1955 which was amended in order to include an anti-discrimination and flexible work arrangements, still lacks mandatory stress audits, enforceable rights to disconnect and protections against an excessive workload. All of which are crucial in reducing the circumstances that would lead to silent resistance.

A wider ideology conflict is shown by the contrast between these progressive frameworks and the scant protection which could be found in many Global South states, notably Malaysia. The central argument is on whether the labour laws should serve as the only tools for economic expansion or as a check on capitalist excesses, in protecting the dignity and the interests of the workers. For example, Malaysia's current policy environment points to the former, as an exploitative standard to continue to exist unchecked due to legislative stagnation. By doing this, the state unintentionally invalidates the employees who rebel by quietly leaving their jobs by viewing their actions as a wrong one rather than acknowledging them as a political and logical reaction due to an unsustainable status quo (Weeks, 2011).

So, the first step in creating a better and equitable labour market for the policymakers in recognising that the silent resistance is by making a real indication of a structural failure rather than just a mere issue. Meaning that, it calls for both legal reform and a thorough re-evaluation of the principles in guiding the labour governance. The most important steps in this direction would be in establishing the work-life balance as a statutory norm, incorporating enforceable psychological norms, and acknowledging the mental health as a workplace right. Therefore, the silent resistance will be able to continue to be a form of a protest that is in compliant with the appearance as well as a revolutionary in its meaning until such reforms are being implemented.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a doctrinal qualitative legal research method assisted by comparative and thematic analysis to investigate the phenomenon of quiet quitting as an employment law issue. The doctrinal method is appropriate in interpreting statute provision, case law, and principles of law applicable to employment contracts and, more importantly, in determining whether quiet quitting involves a breach of contract or an

acceptable act of boundary setting. Such primary sources are Malaysian law like the Employment Act 1955 and Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994, and case law like *Spring v Guardian Assurance plc* [1995] 2 AC 296, and secondary sources ranging from legal commentaries, ILO reports, psychological models, and empirical researches of burnout and work disengagement. The comparative method borrows legal and policy responses from the United Kingdom, Sweden, the United States, Japan, and China to challenge the sufficiency of Malaysia's provisions in safeguarding workers' well-being. Thematic analysis is used to categorize findings into legal, psychological, socio-economic, and surveillance-related dimensions to facilitate a cross-disciplinary perspective on the topic.

Although it does not explicitly depend on the primary data collection, the study seeks to offer a critical legal understanding from the scholar discussion as well as the policy analysis.

FINDINGS

Quiet Quitting Is a Response to Systemic Workplace Pressure

According to the research that is being made, basically quiet quitting is more than just being lazy or refusing to work. Instead, it represents a deeper significance in terms of professional concerns like burnout, stress, and a lack of sufficient assistance, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those employees who feel overworked, underappreciated, or mentally exhausted often set the boundaries meaning to say that they would only be doing what is required for them to do based on their contracts. This act alone actually is not considered to be a rebellion act, but rather about a self-preservation. So, instead of quitting their jobs completely, the employees would try to make an effort on their part by protecting their mental health by stepping back from extra tasks that are not part of their job description. As for these reasons, this shows that quiet quitting is a rational reaction to an unsustainable workload and emotional strain that is faced by the employees. Therefore, when the employees know that their well-being matters just as much as their output, they are less likely to disengage or quietly withdraw from their work.

Burnout and Broken Psychological Contracts Drive Disengagement

The findings also highlight that many employees are quietly quitting due to their psychological expectations such as being respected, appreciated, and treated fairly in which somehow they are not met. Due to these unspoken expectations, although not legally binding, it is considered to be just as important as the written employment contract. When the workers feel that their extra efforts are being ignored or taken for granted, they will begin to disengage. Combining it with the issue of burnout, which also includes emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and mental fatigue, this somehow leads the employees to quietly pull away from their jobs. In addition to that, other sectors such as the one that involves education, healthcare, and banking, burnout has been directly linked to higher rates of quiet quitting. Therefore in order to resolve this and maintain this emotional bond, the employers need to be consistent by showing their appreciation in a way that is meaningful which may include verbal praise, thank-you emails, public recognition, and fair access to career growth and not just bonuses or promotions. As for the managers, they should also treat the employees with emotional fairness by listening to their concerns, involving them in decision making, and responding to their feedback without defensiveness. A respectful and inclusive environment where everyone may feel that their voice matters can actually help in rebuilding the emotional connection where many quiet quitters have lost. This also can help in preventing further disengagement, as the employees who feel recognised are willing to invest their energy more rather than just doing the bare minimum.

Quiet quitting is a form of a strategic withdrawal which rooted in structural workplace dysfunction

Literature review and legal scholarship analysis overwhelmingly shows that quiet quitting is not a random act of alienation but instead is a consciously made and psychologically complex reaction to deeply entrenched systemic flaws inherent in modern work cultures. Workers across the industries have increasingly rejected implicit contract expectations of overperformance, hyper availability, and emotional labor far in excess of the terms of their contracts. This silent resignation is especially common in post-pandemic hybrid environments, when physical boundaries have been erased and the employees are under silent pressure to perform hidden

beneath the guise of flexibility. The study claims that quiet quitting is not a manifestation of worker disengagement, instead it can be considered as a form of conscious resistance against controlling as a measure of maintaining individual well-being in the absence of institutional care. This is a dramatic change in the employer-employee relationship in one which old ideals about loyalty and professional development are giving way to an increasing focus on self-protection, mental well-being, and equilibrium.

Burnout and legal ambiguity jointly contribute to the prevalence of quiet quitting.

One of the consistent themes throughout the literature is how chronic burnout enables the phenomenon of quiet quitting. Emotional exhaustion, especially in service work and high-autonomy jobs, has been worsened with the digital age, with the employees being constantly besieged by long periods of screen time, blurred boundaries, and productivity metrics that reward exposure over production. However, while this entails significant emotional costs, the dominant employment law in nations such as Malaysia is relatively subdued with regard to mental health provisions or rights of flexible work. In addition, there is a minimal legal certainty about the scope of discretionary effort or the boundaries of implied obligations such as cooperation and good faith. Employees who fulfill their explicit contractual obligations may still be classified as underperforming if they disengage from implicit expectations, incurring reputational damage or tense working relations. This implies a mismatch of form between the legal protection of labor rights and the employer expectations. Thus, quiet quitting can be understood simultaneously as a manifestation of burnout as well as a coping mechanism for legal and institutional ambiguity.

DISCUSSIONS

Burnout Is a Strong Predictor of Disengagement

Burnout has been one of the main reasons for the employee to disconnect in today's work environment. This essentially happens when people are asked to cope with the chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and mental fatigue that were caused due to ongoing work pressure. Burnout, unlike the regular fatigue, is actually a much deeper issue whereby it makes the workers feel helpless, devalued, and insufficient to handle the demands put upon them. Therefore, the majority of employees would begin to disengage from their jobs not by resigning, but by indirectly reducing their involvement to only what is contractually required and this behaviour change is commonly referred to as quiet quitting.

In the majority of organisations, it is employees who are expected to do more than their formal job positions which also includes being requested to work late, assume additional responsibilities, or even be on call after working hours. Although some may comply with such expectations, the absence of reward, support, or commensurate remuneration could also lead to emotional exhaustion. Over time, this imbalance between effort that they have put in and reward that they actually receive somehow can results in frustration and powerlessness. The employees also would begin to feel that no matter how much they provide, it is never going to be enough. This emotional stress gradually builds up to burnout, which can triggers their disengagement.

Other than that, burnout is also strongly associated with high-stress jobs such as teaching, healthcare, and finance, as indicated by Li et al. (2019) and Galanis et al. (2023b), but it is not exclusively found in these professions. The reason is, any company that actually places too much stress on the workers without providing the required support can also lead to burnout. Meaning that, whatever kind of business it is, if they are setting a ridiculously high standards and making the individuals feel unsupported, the outcomes are more likely to be the same. So, burnout needs to be treated as a shared problem that is able to offer impact to the individuals in all kinds of industries.

There are a few studies, e.g., Trang & Trang (2024), which suggest that personal traits of optimism and psychological resilience can help buffer the effect of burnout. This might be true in certain cases, but to solely rely on the individual coping strategies as such may turn out to be blaming the employees rather than the root causes. This is because not all workers are equally mentally strong. For that matter, it is ridiculous to expect individuals to labor under harmful conditions for good. The employers, as such, have to take the leading role

in the prevention of burnout since they are the ones who are supposed to ensure that the workloads are manageable and that employees are given the due support and appreciation.

But burnout may also affect how the employees feel about their work and the people that they are working with. This is because, when one is burnt out, they become exhausted, detached, and lack interest in pushing themselves to get involved with their work. Thus, they might have no choice and still go ahead and do what they were told, but meanwhile, they would not do anything more than that. Yet this does not automatically mean that they were lazy or had a bad attitude. Instead, it is just seen as their way of protecting themselves from extra stress. Quiet quitting would be appropriate in this situation because the work setting would be too much for them to deal with.

To solve this issue, there is a necessity for the businesses to do something that would stop the burnout from happening. They have to ensure that the workload is distributed evenly, in support of work-life balance, and in building a workplace where individuals would feel valued and supported. Managers, on the other hand, should also call their employees regularly and provide assistance through feedback, so that the employees would feel heard, respected, and valued. Therefore, when people feel supported, they will be more likely to stay engaged and committed to doing their work.

Lastly, burnout may be employed as a robust predictor of disengagement and at the same time reflects a more basic structural problems at the workplace such as overwhelming demands, insufficient appreciation, and insufficient support by addressing that burnout it is not only vital for the employee's well-being but also in maintaining productivity as well as in reducing turnover. Therefore, the organisations that provide priority to mental well-being along with creating a healthier work environment are likely to be engaged and motivated with the employees.

Psychological Contracts Are Broken

In addition to legal contracts, employees have what is known as a "psychological contract" with their company. This relates to workers' unstated expectations, such as being treated with respect, receiving acknowledgement, and having equal opportunity. When these expectations are not satisfied, employees may feel disappointed or deceived, even if their legal rights have not been breached. This emotional separation might result in silent resignation, in which employees cease going above and beyond the call of duty.

Unlike legal contracts, psychological contracts are not being written down or enforceable in court. However, they play a big role on how the employees feel about their jobs. This is because, when the workers feel like their efforts are not being appreciated or that they are being taken for granted, they may lose trust in their employer which can lead to disengagement whereby the employees no longer feel motivated to contribute beyond the minimum standard. Therefore, the recognition theory supports this idea, showing that people need to feel seen and valued in order to stay committed.

In many workplaces, there is a culture in which it expects the employees to do more than what the employees are officially required to do which would include staying late, taking on extra tasks, or being constantly available. When these efforts are not being acknowledged, the employees may feel that the psychological contract has been broken. Therefore, this is when quiet quitting took place as resigning is not the best option to solve this. By setting boundaries and refusing to do more than what they are paid for. This is not an act of rebellion, but a way to protect their dignity and mental health. To rebuild the trust and prevent quiet quitting, the organisations need to pay attention to the emotional needs of their employees which would include giving regular feedback, recognising contributions, and creating a culture of fairness and respect. When the employees feel that their work matters and that they are treated fairly, they are more likely to stay engaged. Therefore, maintaining a strong psychological contract is just as important as following the legal one.

Although when it comes to burnout it is often linked to high-pressure jobs such as teaching or healthcare, as noted by Li in 2019 and Galanis in 2023 in their research, it can also may affect the workers who works in admin, retail, or even customer service when they face unrealistic demands or lack support. Trang and Trang in 2024 in his research suggested that optimism may reduce burnout. However, by just relying solely on personal

traits would actually places the burden on the employees where the employers who should be the one who takes the responsibility by ensuring manageable workloads and adequate support.

Disengagement at work isn't just caused by burnout but it's also may be triggered due to a breakdown of the psychological contract which refers to the unspoken expectations of the employees in which they have holding that would include being treated with respected, valued, and treated fairly. When these expectations are broken, the employees may feel disappointed or invisible, which leads them to emotional withdrawal and quiet quitting, where they stop going above the minimum required. Though not legally enforceable, the psychological contract strongly shapes motivation and workplace trust.

While the HR strategies a flexible working arrangements, leadership development, and task delegation as discussed by Harvey (2024) and Cieniewicz (2016) which help improve structure and balance, they don't always fix emotional disconnect. Although offering a flexibility may ease schedules, but then it won't restore the motivation for the employee if the employees still feel unappreciated. That is why recognition and emotional validation are essential and not optional. Even Maslach's burnout model from 1981 doesn't fully capture the disengagement that caused by the emotional detachment rather than exhaustion. Trang and Trang (2024) noted that personal traits like optimism can help reduce burnout, while Jaharuddin and Zainol (2019) emphasised employee responsibility in maintaining well-being. However, relying too much on individual coping shifts the burden away from the organisation. Not all employees have the same level of resilience, and they shouldn't be expected to manage stress alone when the real issue lies in broken trust or unmet workplace expectations.

In conclusion, burnout and broken psychological contracts are both strong predictors of disengagement and quiet quitting. These issues reflect deeper emotional and structural problems such as lack of recognition, unfair treatment, or excessive pressure. To truly reduce quiet quitting, organisations must go beyond surface-level policies and create a work culture that supports, values, and respects its employees at every level.

Quiet Quitting Reflects Systemic Work Issues

Silent resistance or quite quitting is neither a simple walkout nor an easy proclamation of personal separation or work withdrawal. It is a manifestation of profound structural dysfunctions in contemporary workplaces. Specifically during and following of the pandemic, the trend is a sensible, systemic reaction to persistent burnout, perpetual digital readiness, and blurring of life and work boundaries (Galanis et al., 2023). The workers are being asked to be constantly available as a result of blended work structures and productivity metrics that favor presenteeism at the expense of sustaining productivity. Employees disconnect, therefore, not because they lack enthusiasm, but as a survival mechanism psychologically. Studies show that the psychological and emotional stress of recurring performance expectations and poor support systems compels staff to redefine success by establishing limits through quiet quitting (Beccia et al., 2024).

Quiet quitting as a trend is revealing to us that certain workers no longer want to engage with the standard psychological contract of effort on a discretionary basis in exchange for amorphous promises of reward or mobility (Ming et al., 2023). It is best interpreted as a silent protest, where workers protest within cultures that exile voiced complaints for fear of reprisal or exclusion. Quiet quitting, sociologically, can thus be defined as a reaction towards unsustainable work demands and emotional burnout. Workers, especially members of younger generations, drop out as a way of ensuring their well-being and pushing back against unreasonable demands (Galanis et al., 2023).

Global labour organizations have realized the need to incorporate mental wellbeing in decent work frameworks. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024) holds the view that decent work in contemporary times incorporates psychological security, equitable workloads, and disconnection rights. Even the majority of country-based systems like Malaysia's Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (OSHA, 1994) are still largely targeting physical risks and continue to offer incomplete guarantees against electronic overwork or mental fatigue.

Additionally, research in Sweden indicates active policy-making is capable of reversing the causes of

disengagement. The Swedish Government Work Environment Strategy 2021–2025 prioritizes flexibility, preventing burnout, and long-term workforce health, reconciling legal arrangements with psychological demands (Government of Sweden, 2021). These policies not only reduce the incidence of burnout but also make employee boundary-setting an accepted, legal act. Malaysia and other Global South legal systems would also benefit from a similar reframing, conceiving quiet quitting not as disobedience but as a symptom of deeper institutional alignment issues.

Legal Ambiguity in Employment Contracts

Quiet quitting is legally ambiguous, in a middle ground between the technical compliance and the subjective underperformance. An employee who meets the terms of their written contract of employment would be doing their jobs as specified in their job description cannot be punished for not exceeding those requirements. To that degree, quiet quitting is in accordance with legal conduct. Yet, most contracts of employment have an implied terms in common law as well, including duties of good faith, loyalty, cooperation, and care (Deakin & Morris, 2020). The conflict occurs where the implied obligations are widely interpreted, especially in positions calling for initiative, flexibility, or trust.

In the United Kingdom, implied obligations have always supplemented express terms in order to make a successful employment relations to be possible. As explained by Deakin and Morris (2021), the courts are keen to interpret these obligations in a sense that reflects the parties' mutual expectations, without implying vague or overstretched standards of performance. In *Spring v Guardian Assurance plc* [1995] 2 AC 296, the House of Lords also assessed that implied terms should be weighed against the reasonable expectation of employer and employee.

These issues can occur in working environments like law, finance, or academia where the job entails a lot of freedom and occupational flexibility. Long-term quiet quitting in such environments cannot only be disaffection but also a possible violation of tacit contract commitments such as cooperation or loyalty, especially in cultures with a high organisational performance demands (Ming et al., 2023). Scholarly writers observe that such implied obligations as cooperation and loyalty must be inferred on the basis of reasonable expectation between the two parties. Courts have cautioned against their extension so that obligations may enforce workplace non-contractual norms (Deakin & Morris, 2021).

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This is exacerbated in Malaysia by the lack of express statutory provisions in relation to employees' mental well-being or regulatory obligations. The Employment Act 1955 and allied legislation provide a minimal specificity in regard to the implied terms, and the courts thus are forced to adopt recourse to common law principles that are not necessarily reflective of modern-day workplace realities (Rafizah Abu Hassan et al., 2023). However, the United Kingdom Parliament's Employment Rights Bill of 2025 has sought to implement a more employee-friendly principles that would be in favour of the the interest of employees' welfare, the clarity of the contractual terms in the new era of remote and hybrid working. ACAS informs that the aim of the Bill is to ensure that a flexible working becomes the norm unless the employers can provide reasons why not, thus balancing the legal requirement with the reality of the modern-day workplace (ACAS, 2025).

Hence, the legal uncertainty of quiet quitting highlights the imperative for reform of contract law that ultimately reconciles employer assumptions and worker autonomy. Without the more definitive articulation of discretionary effort and enforceable boundaries against violative behavior, employees will be legally compliant but susceptible to reputation or informal workplace sanctions.

The Outdated of Legal Framework on Mental Health in Malaysia

Malaysia's current occupational health and safety laws still lack the psychological or mental health demands of contemporary work environments. This is due to the primary aims of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (OSHA 1994) are focusing on physical safety and health hazards in the workplace, with some provisions for employee welfare. This shows that the laws have outdated where this law is not yet moved to the current issues or problem which is the mental health problem. OSHA 1994, mostly missing out the protections against mental health risks such mental fatigue, anxiety, burnout, and the psychosocial effects of digital labour.

In a world where remote work, hybrid arrangements, and 24/7 connectivity have become standard, the absence of clear statutory protection for mental wellbeing is not only outdated but incompatible with global labour standards. The shift to digital work has created long standing problems and issues at the workplace where it became worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The boundaries between home and work were blurred by a remote working, which frequently resulted in longer working hours without explicit pay or boundaries. (Ming, 2023). Many workers in Malaysia persisted in working outside of their contracted hours out of fear of losing their jobs or appearing uncommitted, which resulted in chronic stress and work life imbalance (Omar, 2020). Yet, OSHA 1994 does not impose any duty on employers to monitor, assess or mitigate mental health risks in the same way it mandates to handle physical hazards.

The ILO (ILO, 2024) has consistently emphasized the need for a comprehensive mental health protection as an essential component of a "decent work." The ILO's Global Commissions on the future of Work advocates for a psychological safety climate as a policy norm, urging states to revise the outdated statutes. Malaysia, however, lacks legally binding obligations for stress audits, mandatory mental health leave, or organisational wellbeing assessments. This gap jeopardises the employer accountability and exposes the employees.

Sweden provides a compelling model of what modern psychological protection in the workplace can look like. The Work Environment Strategy 2021-2025 (WES), which was introduced by the Swedish government, adopts a holistic approach which focuses on creating a sustainable, healthy and safe working life. The aim is to not just focus on the physical health but at the same time prioritizing the mental health, promoting adaptive working environments as well as preventing burnout (Government of Sweden, 2021). Under WES, the employers are legally obliged to consider workers' psychological limitations and promote long term wellbeing. WES emphasizes the importance of a good working environment for both women and men and includes a commitment to tripartite dialogue with social partners. France, similarly has implemented the "right to disconnect," providing employees with legal grounds to disengage from work communication outside the office hours as an essential protection in current digital presence (Mazoyer, 2021).

In contrast, Malaysian law is rooted in a neoliberal economic framework that prioritizes productivity and deregulation over employee welfare. Standing in his book the Precariat: The New Dangerous Class, which stated that a growing portion of the workforce whose rights are not fully recognised is known as the precariat or those in precarious positions which also refer to the underprotected employment. This happens because it does not take into account the emotional and cognitive needs of knowledge economies. Thus, OSHA serves as a legacy of the industrial era in this regard.

The consequences of this gap in the legal framework has significant implications. Psychological disorders like depression, anxiety, and burnout are not only medical concerns but also signs of workplace hazards. The long-term exposure to the mental health stressor may lead to high rate of employee turnover, decreased productivity, and absence from work as according to the research (Galanis,2023; Schaufeli,2021). To create a workforce that is both compassionate and productive,OSHA must be redefined to include mental wellbeing. In the absence of legislative reforms, Malaysian businesses routinely avoid responsibility by dismissing mental health as a personal issue (Beccia, 2024).

Additionally,although the Malaysia's Employment Act 1955 has been recently amended to provide a flexible working schedules, it still fails to include psychological evaluations or clearly define the rights and responsibilities of the employees that are experiencing mental distress (Salleh,2023). These problems are invisible in legal practice because there are no statutory definitions or thresholds for mental exhaustion.

Workplace bullying or digital overwork.

To conclude, the legal system in Malaysia is still stuck in a physicalist paradigm that does not reflect the reality that its workers experience. Malaysia's continued neglect for mental health is a sign of institutional negligence, as it became a major concern in the international employment law. Without reformation, the country might face the danger of not only falling short of international standards but also losing its human resource on a systematic basis. A legal reformation begins with the acknowledgement of mental health as a legislative right rather than a choice.

Silent Socio-Political Protest Through Quite Quitting

Quite quitting is a common practice of the workers whereby it being carry out their contractual duties without doing any additional work or other role responsibilities that are not relevant to their contractual duties. While it often be misunderstood as laziness or disengagement, this practice actually reflects a deeper socio-political and psychological response to the exploitative workplace cultures. It is a silent resistance against the dehumanisation of productivity standards entrenched in neoliberal economic structures, where workers are valued not for their well being or development but for their economic output. As such, quitting represents a collective indictment or current employment norms that fails to respect human limitation and dignity.

The socio-economic implications are profound. In capitalist economies, when an increasing productivity demands are rarely accompanied by increases in pay, job security, or working conditions in which this practice was viewed as a labour unsustainable relations (Greenberg and Larson 2021). Quite quitting appears as a logical coping mechanism against fatigue, surveillance, overwork and a culture that equates worth with relentless productivity. This aligns with the concept of "compensatory respect," which holds that employees disengage when their efforts go unappreciated or were not recognised (Corbin and Flenady 2024).

The labour ecosystem in Malaysia is no exception. As has been mentioned before, the Employment Act and OSHA 1994 do not specifically address the psychological challenge that current employees face including emotional labour, digital fatigue, and unrealistic demands from managers. Although they may be legally compliant, employees who limit their work to contractual obligations are sometimes condemned for failing to exhibit the implicit "hustle culture" that employers demand (Zeilikman, 2022). This discrepancy actually highlights on the gap between managerial culture and legal requirements, which employees are increasingly attempting to contest through quite quitting.

Quiet quitting also reflects a response to the managerial control mechanisms, such as non disclosure agreements (NDAs) as well as the workplace surveillance. The NDAs are increasingly bencriticised in silencing the victims of workplace abuse or even inequality, prioritizing the institutional image over the individual justice (Barnes, 2023). Psychological safety has also been undermined by a culture of mistrust bright by excessive monitoring through facial recognition, keystroke tracking or even "bossware" (Ball, 2021; Institute for the Future of Work, 2023). These mechanisms incorporate transparency, and when workers feel unsupported, they withdraw their efforts rather than confronting with the risk

From a political perspective, quite quitting challenges the ideological assumptions underpinning neoliberal labour policy. Capitalism, on the other hand, has normalised overwork as a moral imperative, conflating personal worth with economic productivity (Weeks, 2011). Malaysia's policy framework, which is heavily influenced by this ideology, still attracts labour as a factor of production rather than a social partnership. The employment law reforms have lagged behind in recognising the workers' emotional and psychological needs, with the state continuing to prioritize deregulation and flexibility for employers over enforcement of the rights of workers (Salleh, 2023).

Yet globally, there is no growing recognition in regards to the need for the balance. The United Kingdom's 2025 Employment Rights Bill proposes to safeguard for the employee autonomy and mental health (UK Parliament, 2025). Such reforms acknowledge that employment law must protect not only physical safety but also workers's time, privacy and mental boundaries. Malaysia, by contrast, still lacks any statutory mechanism to regulate psychological overwork, compounding the alienation felt by its labour force.

Quite quitting, therefore cannot be dismissed as a matter of personal attitude. It is a socio-political signal of institutional failure. An act of compliance that also opposes the emotional exploitation that is inherent in current's work culture. The most important question is why employees are withdrawing, not whether this behaviour breaches employment contracts. The answer probably due to the result of a system that lacks work ethics, or systems that prioritise burnout ahead balancing. In which this can deteriorate employees performance.

Lastly, silent resistance can be viewed as a contemporary kind of protest in which the employees quietly but actively oppose the system injustice and cultural exploitation that occur in the workplace. It emphasises how it is urgent for the legislation to uphold psychological safety, emotional labour, and employee autonomy is needed. Employees will continue to rebel in silence until such reform is implemented and demonstrating by contractual compliance that the system does not regard them as human beings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Build a Caring Workplace That Prevents Burnout and Builds Trust

Burnout is more than just tiredness; instead it can be considered as an extreme emotional and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress, a lack of control, and a sensation of being neglected. In order to avoid this, the company must stop focusing just on short-term health measures and instead address the underlying reasons, such as heavy workloads, unrealistic goals, and insufficient leadership. Actually by setting clear expectations, dividing work equally, and respecting personal time would all be helpful. However, it is critical not to expect responses after hours, since this may help reduce strain. Managers, on the other hand, should check in with employees on a regular basis to see how they're doing emotionally, and provide tools like counselling, stress-reduction programs, and guilt-free time off. At the same time, employees should feel valued and appreciated. A solid psychological contract based on trust, justice, and appreciation may help individuals remain emotionally linked. Simple behaviours such as expressing thank you, acknowledging work, and treating everyone equitably are important. When employees feel seen, heard, and supported, they are more likely to stay motivated, take responsibility for their job, and remain loyal to the organisation.

Redefine Work Culture to Inspire Commitment, Not Quiet Quitting

Many employees discreetly disengage, not because they are lazy, but because they are emotionally dissatisfied or constantly pressured to do better. Hustle culture drives people to stay late, reply after hours, and labour excessively which makes them feel as if their best is never enough. This somehow can lead to burnout and quiet quitting as a form of self-protection. In order to fix this, the companies must redefine success by focusing on quality, creativity, and teamwork which is not just hours or output. Leaders should set the tone by respecting personal time and avoiding habits like late-night emails or expecting instant replies. At the same time, emotional expectations are just as significant as formal agreements. When people feel unappreciated or being unfairly treated, they would progressively disconnect themselves. That is the reason why the company needs to cultivate a culture of thankfulness and fairness in which the simple acts like saying thank you, offering equal chances, and listening to criticism are standard. As a result, the workers would feel like they are being heard and valued when their input results in practical improvements. Individuals remain active not because they are pushed harder, but because they feel valued, supported, and truly part of a caring company.

Legally Recognising a Psychological Well-Being as a Dimension of Decent Work

In light of growing evidence that quiet quitting is a reaction to burnout and blurring of boundaries between life at work and life at home, Malaysia should update its employment law to have psychological safety as a right within the workplace. The Employment Act 1955 is presently lacking in emotional welfare and management of workload. Reform could be based on international benchmarks established by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024), now formally embracing mental health, reasonable workloads, and the right to disconnect as part of decency in work. Inculcating these safeguards would cut dependency on quiet resistance and make it absolutely clear that mental health is not at the margins but at the heart of decent employment relations.

Amendment to the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1994 also could be made by expanding the scope of employee protection that include psychological harm as safety hazard in order to cater the current mental health issue that employees are facing due to burn out. This amendment aligns with the ILO framework that advocates for integrating psychological risk into occupational health law.

Introduce Statutory Clarity On Discretionary Effort and Implied Obligations.

One of the main issues caused by quiet quitting is legal ambiguity around employees responsibilities outside the explicit terms of the agreement. Referring to the Malaysian labor law, the implied obligations like cooperation and loyalty have vague provisions with informal definitions, subjecting the employees to the unspoken sanctions and contracts, and refusing to do more than the norm. Researchers like Deakin and Morris (2021) have hypothesized that the implied obligations should be anchored in the mutual expectations and not to be taken too far in taking the step in enforcing the unspoken expectations. In the footsteps of legislation, such as the UK Employment Rights Bill (2025), Malaysia may introduce statutory restrictions on discretionary labor and enhance employees' rights to flexible work and establish boundaries. This would establish more specific draws expectations and mitigate uncertainty in the interpretation of lawful employee behavior.

Introduce Mental Health Ombudsmen

Concerning the backlog cases in the court, or where the employees could not afford to go to the court due to time or money constraints, Malaysia may establish a public body to handle mental health related complaints in the workplace. Referring to the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE, 2023), where they provide a national-level response system which Malaysia could replicate in an ombudsman model.

Although currently Malaysia has Department of Labour under Ministry of Human Resource, the cases that they bring to the Industrial court are only cases that related to the wages i.e. financial claims by employees and employers, as provided under section 69 of the Employment Act 1955. Whereas in addition, Section 69F of the Act allowed the employees to file a claim relating to discrimination in the workplace. However, this highlights how inadequate the laws and statutory body cater to mental health issues. Thus by establishing an ombudsman and amending the laws it would increase the efficiency and accessibility of a redress mechanism for mental health risk in the workplace. Not only that, establishing an ombudsman as an independent platform to resolve mental-health related issues would ease the court's burden, enable early intervention, and promote a healthier and more accountable work environment.

Control the Application of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs)

The use of NDAs in the employment contract issues involving bullying, burnout or psychological harm should be prohibited in Malaysia in order to solve any inequality in the workplace. By limiting the transparency, protecting the company's reputation, and silencing the victims, NDAs are frequently used as a tool of abuse to maintain harmful workplaces. NDAs are originally created to protect confidential company data, their use in mental health related conflicts weakened accountability and discouraged systematic change. By controlling and outlawing the application of NDAs, Malaysia can promote an open culture, help victims to seek justice fearlessly, and encourage employers to put mental health and corporate integrity first.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, quiet quitting is a complex and response to a deep-rooted problems in today's workplace. Rather than becoming an issue of laziness or the employee apathy, it stems from chronic burnout, lack of recognition and the failure of organisations to support the workers' emotional and psychological well-being. In addition, legally quiet quitting does not amount to a breach of contract when employees perform their duties as outlined in their formal agreements, though uncertainties arise due to implied expectations such as loyalty and cooperation. In many workplaces, especially in Malaysia, legal protections have not kept pace with evolving work cultures and digital demands, leaving mental health issues and emotional labour unaddressed. Besides that, quiet quitting also represents a form of silent protest, especially in environments where open expression is discouraged and where NDAs and excessive surveillance suppress workers' voices. The other countries like

the United Kingdom, Sweden and France are already taking steps to align labour laws with the modern challenges. To move forward, Malaysia needs to follow the trends by reforming current jurisdiction, integrating into the employment frameworks to recognise mental health as a statutory right, ensure fair workloads and create workplace culture built on respect and trust. In the end, quite quitting is ultimately not a sign of weakness but a rational form of self preservation in a system that often overlooks the humanity factors of its workers.

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