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***Author for correspondence:** Email:
samian@psikologi.unair.ac.id

The Quiet Quitting Epidemic: Toxic Workplaces, Job Insecurity, and Gen Z's Search for Grit

Erza Agistara Azizah, Samian,* and Fendy Suhariadi

Faculty of Psychology, Airlangga University, Indonesia

Abstract

The high prevalence of quiet quitting (QQ) among Generation Z (a global average of 59%, with the figure in Indonesia being even higher, reaching 67.84%) indicates a profound problem within the current work industry. Particularly in the high-pressure financial sector, Gen Z is suspected to be highly susceptible to toxic work environment (TWE) and job insecurity (JI) as triggers for QQ. Therefore, this study aims to explore the moderating effects of organizational career growth (OCG) and grit on QQ's relationship with TWE and JI, based on the Conservation of Resources Theory and using a quantitative approach. The sample consisted of 107 Gen Z employees in the financial sector. Data analysis was performed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results demonstrate that TWE and JI have a positive and significant effect on QQ. OCG and grit significantly weaken the effect of TWE on QQ, but do not significantly moderate the effect of JI. These findings serve as a reference for organizations to anticipate QQ among Gen Z by providing clear career development paths, grit training programs, and a stable work environment through long-term contracts and open dialogue regarding company sustainability.

Quiet quitting (QQ) is a work behavior where employees limit their efforts to strictly their basic responsibilities, disengaging from any activities that are voluntary or above and beyond. This occurs when they perceive that their organization has not fulfilled its workplace obligations (Karrani et al., 2023). The prominence of QQ has been significantly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which blurred the boundaries between employees' work and personal lives and led to a shift in mindset from "living to work" to "working to live" (Lord, 2022). For employees dissatisfied with their current work culture but unable to leave their jobs, quiet quitting (QQ) has become an alternative behavior (Kruse & MDiv, 2023).

According to Gallup's (2023) "State of the Global Workplace" survey found that 59% of employees worldwide engage in QQ. Indonesia's workforce shows an even higher percentage, at 67.84%. This high percentage results in significant losses and poses a serious risk for companies. In fact, the global economy has lost nearly \$9 trillion of its GDP due to this phenomenon (Gallup, 2023). In addition to causing economic losses, QQ is concerning for organizations and management (Nordgren et al., 2023), as it can decrease work productivity, morale, and work quality as well as impact customer satisfaction (Yildiz, 2023).

The QQ phenomenon is prevalent among younger generations. Surveys show that employees aged 18–29 years are reluctant to work beyond their normal working hours (Elgan, 2022). Generation Z is particularly vocal about expressing QQ, more so than other generations. Defined as impatient, brave, and unafraid to be trailblazers (Baldonado, 2018), Gen Z challenges existing ideas and work cultures (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015), and their QQ behavior can lead to decreased workplace morale. Currently, it is essential to understand and address quiet quitting among Generation Z, especially as the majority of millennials are expected to retire by 2050 (Xueyuan et al., 2023).

Research on QQ has typically been conducted through literature reviews, but there is still a lack of empirical studies on the factors driving it (Hamouche et al., 2023) and efforts to minimize it (Pevec, 2024). This study aims to fill these gaps and provide a more comprehensive understanding of how QQ occurs. Moreover, this study follows the future research direction of Hamouche et al. (2023), applying the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to examine the QQ phenomenon.



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COR theory posits that human behavior is driven by the acquisition and preservation of valuable resources, such as conditions, personal characteristics, objects, and energy. Individuals strive to minimize resource loss, and if these efforts fail, they are likely to employ defensive mechanisms to protect their self-efficacy (Hobfoll et al., 2018). These can manifest as QQ behavior (Srivastava et al., 2023).

Several studies have reviewed the factors triggering QQ. According to a literature review by Arar et al. (2023), two components influence individuals to engage in it: managerial/organizational factors and employee-related factors. Managerial/organizational factors refers to various aspects stemming from managerial or organizational attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics that directly impact employees' work experiences (Arar et al., 2023). Among these, a toxic workplace environment (TWE) is a significant cause of QQ (Arar et al., 2023). In the same citation, employee-based factors are defined as individual characteristics and subjective perceptions that influence how employees respond to organizational conditions (Arar et al., 2023). One employee-based factor that is particularly relevant and widespread today is job insecurity (JI), as highlighted by recent findings from (Delloite, 2023).

Based on factors arising from managerial or organizational attributes (Bacal and Associates, 2022), TWE occurs when companies fail to promote diversity, equality, and inclusion, leaving workers feeling disrespected and subjected to unethical behavior. TWE reflects poor internal communication and manipulative, egocentric interpersonal relationships (Bacal and Associates, 2022). Arar et al. (2023) mentions that in organizations with poor internal communication, employees lack a platform to voice their thoughts, which fosters the belief that going beyond expectations will not be rewarded. It is also stated that when the work environment is rife with conflict and injustice, employees lose the resources needed to perform optimally. Even when they meet job requirements or occasionally go above and beyond, they are not appreciated for their efforts, leading them to suppress their desire to contribute more than their basic duties (Arar et al., 2023).

Further empirical research on the relationship between TWE and QQ is needed, especially as a survey by HP (2023) found that 62% of Indonesian workers feel they lack a healthy relationship with their jobs. According to Delloite (2023) "2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey," approximately 60% of Gen Z employees report having experienced inappropriate conduct in the workplace within the past year, encompassing issues such as microaggressions and harassment. Studies have shown that employees in toxic environments are likely to participate in QQ, reducing their engagement, motivation, and productivity (Hobfoll et al., 2018). However, these studies have not focused on identifying factors that could weaken TWE's influence on QQ, leaving a gap for this research to address.

COR theory states that organizational and manage-

rial conditions are critical factors for employees (Hobfoll et al., 2018). A toxic workplace environment causes them to feel a loss of valuable resources, leading them to minimize this loss by intentionally performing less work and being unwilling to contribute further (Hao et al., 2022). Sull et al. (2022) argue that the most significant features of a toxic workplace are its inability to promote diversity, equity, respect for employees, and ethical behavior. We thus hypothesize that TWE has a significant positive effect on QQ (H1).

Employee-related factors also play a role in determining how individuals engage in QQ. One such factor is job insecurity (JI) (Arar et al., 2023). Delloite (2023) "2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey" found that unemployment is a significant concern among Generation Z workers, ranking as the second most important issue after the cost of living. Although no empirical research has directly examined JI's effects on QQ, previous studies have linked JI to other work behaviors, such as reduced organizational commitment (M Sverke and J Hellgren and K Näswall and A Chirumbolo and H De Witte and S Goslinga, 2004), decreased performance (De Witte, 2005), and diminished organizational citizenship behavior (Bultena, 1998). Since dissatisfied and less-committed employees are less dedicated to their organizations, JI also increases their turnover intentions (Davy et al., 1997), threatening organizational sustainability (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). From the perspective of COR theory, JI poses a serious threat to employees because job security is a resource that ensures their access to other resources, such as income to meet economic needs. Its potential loss drives them to engage in QQ (Sjöberg, 2018). Therefore, we hypothesize that JI has a significant positive effect on QQ (H2).

Understanding the factors driving QQ behavior in the workplace is essential for developing effective strategies to minimize it (Pevec, 2024). COR theory emphasizes that individuals invest resources to protect against loss, recover from loss, and acquire new resources. These additional resources, which can be personal or workplace-provided, can mitigate the negative impacts of stressors (Hobfoll et al., 2018). According to Delloite (2023), 22% of Generation Z employees respond to emails outside working hours to enhance their promotion opportunities. The same report highlights that this generation places high value on career growth opportunities and is easily bored with routine tasks. For this reason, organizations should identify employees' skills and offer job rotation programs that allow collaboration with other departments aligned with their interests, fostering career development and advancement potential (Xueyun et al., 2023). QQ employees seek a balance between financial rewards, development, self-achievement, and recognition (Hamouche et al., 2023). Weng and McElroy (2012) state that the organizational career growth (OCG) variable is related to this pursuit, because it is defined as the concept that career advancement within an organization is reflected through the employee's own efforts to progress toward personal career goals and acquire professional skills,

as well as the organization's attempts to reward those efforts through promotions and salary increases. Thus, the variable of organizational career growth (OCG) was chosen as a moderator that originates from within the organization.

COR theory suggests that individuals experience stress when they lack sufficient physical and psychological resources to cope with stressors (Hobfoll et al., 2018). It also posits that individuals are motivated to protect themselves from resource loss by acquiring resources for personal growth (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Career growth opportunities provided by organizations are just such critical resources for employees (Lu et al., 2015), particularly those from Gen Z, who prefer work environments that support mentoring, learning, and professional development (Gaidhani et al., 2019). Employees who possess greater personal and job-related resources are better equipped to manage workplace challenges and achieve their career objectives compared to those with fewer (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Consequently, they are likely to experience less emotional stress when faced with a toxic work environment and job insecurity. Based on this explanation, we hypothesize that OCG weakens the positive impact of TWE on QQ (H3) and OCG weakens the positive impact of JI on QQ (H4).

According to Serenko (2023), QQ is considered a double-edged sword. While it supports employees' work-life balance, it also jeopardizes their professional careers. Hence, alternative methods to address workplace stress without resorting to QQ are crucial (Serenko, 2023). Work stress and work-life imbalance should not justify QQ. Instead, employees should recognize their responsibility to foster a productive and stress-free work environment and seek mental health support when needed. They should cultivate positive traits, viewing work stress as a challenge so as to improve their mood and performance (Serenko, 2023). It is also important to help organizations retain employees by addressing factors contributing to employee well-being (Agrawal et al., 2022).

One coping strategy put forth by O'Neal et al. (2016) is fostering grit among workers. Grit is essential for organizations and employees to thrive (Duckworth, 2017). It is a key factor in overcoming mental health pressures and developing resilience and mental toughness, helping individuals cope with stress and increasing their chances of success and well-being (Stoffel & Cain, 2018). COR theory explains grit as an internal resource that helps reduce the impact of stress arising from a toxic work environment and job insecurity. It makes employees more likely to maintain optimism and positive emotions, rather than complaining or blaming the environment and circumstances (Wang et al., 2023). Thus, when employees feel a significant loss of resources, as when facing a toxic environment or job insecurity, grit can reduce or eliminate the emergence of negative emotions and cause them to less easily become stressed and emotionally exhausted (Wang et al., 2023). In light of these findings, we propose the following hypotheses—H5: Grit weakens the positive impact of TWE on QQ and H6: Grit weakens the positive

impact of JI on QQ.

Methods

This research draws on five variables: toxic workplace and job insecurity as independent variables, quiet quitting as a dependent variable, and career growth and grit as moderating variables.

Data Collection and Participants

This study used a non-experimental design with a cross-sectional approach. Since most cross-sectional surveys are completed by respondents at a single point in time, this type of research is considered highly susceptible to potential common method bias (CMB). Therefore, a CMB test was performed to ensure that there was no variance bias present (Podsakoff et al., 2024).

The respondents in this study are: 1) Generation Z employees born between 1995 and 2010 (Tulgan, 2013) [this is based on a survey conducted in the United States, which indicates that willingness to work overtime has declined among employees aged 18–29 (Elgan, 2022)]; 2) employees with a minimum tenure of three months in their company [according to Weng and McElroy (2012)], administering the OCG measurement tool is only appropriate for employees with at least three months' tenure, as this is considered the minimum time required to evaluate career growth opportunities within an organization]; and 3) employees working in the financial industry [since Hamilton and Lordan (2023) state that the phenomenon of quiet quitting [QQ] occurs more frequently in that sector].

The minimum sample size required to test the model was determined through a priori power analysis. Following the recommendation of Hair et al. (2017) the researchers used Cohen's analysis, which considers statistical power and effect sizes, as a guideline for determining the minimum sample size with the PLS-SEM method. The parameters for this were drawn from a previous studies by Al-Khayari et al. (2024) using the F-test for statistical test linear multiple regression: fixed model, R^2 deviation from zero, with an effect size of 0.30, error of 0.05, and power of 0.95, involving nine predictors. The results suggested a recommended minimum sample size of 88 respondents. The determination of the effect size is based on a study conducted by Funder and Ozer (2019), which explains that a measurement of 0.30 indicates a potentially strong effect both in the short- and long-term.

Data collection was performed through an online survey (using LimeSurvey) over a period of one month, from August to September 2024. The questionnaire included attention checks to ensure respondents paid close attention while completing it. A total of 116 participants were collected, but after data cleansing of questionnaires that failed the attention check (9 participants), the final number of analyzed participants was 107. See Table 1. The participants' age range was between 18 and 29 years, with an average of 24.7 years ($SD = 2.95$). Their tenure ranged from 3 to 24 months, with an average of 11.2 months

Table 1
Profile of Respondents

	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	87.9%
	Male	12.1%
Education	High School	29.9%
	Bachelor's Degree	58.9%
	Master's Degree	11.2%

Note. $n = 107$.

($SD = 6.05$). Salaries ranged from IDR 1,500,000 to IDR 7,200,000, with an average of IDR 4,480,000 ($SD = 1,740,000$). The study participants were predominantly female (87.9%), and the majority held a bachelor's degree (58.9%), followed by high school education (29.9%) and a master's degree (11.2%).

Instruments

This study used the QQ measurement tool developed by Karrani et al. (2023). This unidimensional questionnaire consists of 10 items. TWE was measured using a questionnaire created by Rasool et al. (2021) which encompasses three dimensions (harassment, bullying and ostracism) with a total of 7 items. JI was measured using De Witte (2005) JI Scale, also a unidimensional questionnaire, consisting of 4 items. OCG was measured using the OCG Scale developed by Weng and McElroy (2012). This questionnaire comprises four dimensions and a total of 15 items, asking respondents to assess their career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth while working in their current company. Grit was measured using the questionnaire created by Duckworth and Quinn (2009), which includes two dimensions and a total of 8 items, asking respondents to assess their consistency of interest and perseverance of effort. All measurement tools utilized a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this study is partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), with the assistance of SmartPLS version 3 to estimate the effects among the hypothesized constructs. The PLS-SEM approach is applied to test the research model through a two-step data analysis of the measurement model and the structural model.

In the first step, the measurement model (outer model) is evaluated based on reliability and validity. The second step involves assessing the structural model (inner model) for its predictive capacity (Pan et al., 2023) by examining the relationships between latent variables.

Results

Common Method Bias

The Harman single-factor test was used to assess common method bias. The largest factor accounted for 32.1% of

the variance, which is below the 50% threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2024). Therefore, no evidence of common method bias was detected in the analysis.

Correlation Matrix

We examined the correlation matrix to identify potential effects of control variables (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2015). The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate that age and salary are significantly correlated with quiet quitting, where younger employees tend to engage in QQ more frequently than older employees and employees with lower salaries are more likely to engage in it compared to those with higher salaries. Age and salary were thus controlled as variables in this study when testing the hypotheses.

Measurement Model Assessment: Validity & Reliability

The outer model was used to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments. Indicator reliability was evaluated using the composite reliability (CR) value, with a threshold set at greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). As shown in Table 3, the CR values range from 0.894 to 0.964, demonstrating that the indicators meet the reliability standards. Measurement validity was examined through convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is established when outer loading values exceed 0.6 (Hair et al., 2017) and the AVE (average variance extracted) for each construct is above 0.5. In this study, the outer loading values range from 0.603 to 0.970 and the AVE values range from 0.549 to 0.768, both of which surpass the 0.5 threshold, confirming convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2016). All values are below 0.85, which is the threshold for HTMT. The HTMT results in Table 4 range from 0.016 to 0.679, demonstrating that the constructs fulfill the requirements for discriminant validity.

Model Fit

The fit summary in Table 5 shows that SRMR = 0.069 (less than 0.08) (Henseler et al., 2016) and NFI = 0.697, which is lower than 0.9 (Yusif et al., 2020). While an NFI of 0.9 or higher is generally considered acceptable in the literature, this fit index varies between 0 and 1, with 1 being ideal (Yusif et al., 2020). The value for d_ULS (5.178) is smaller than its 95% bootstrapped confidence interval (7.620), and d_G (3.015) is smaller than its 95% bootstrapped confidence interval (5.510) as well, indicating that the measurement model still fits the overall model.

NFI often suffers from significant bias under certain conditions, such as small sample sizes. It performs the worst compared to other fit indices and is not recommended (Doğan & Özdamar, 2017). Meanwhile, the SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) has higher power to reject non-fitting models, especially with small samples (i.e., $N \leq 200$) (Shi et al., 2019). Therefore,

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	—									
2. Tenure	-0.304**	—								
3. Salary	-0.574***	-0.713***	—							
4. Gender	-0.399***	-0.267**	-0.289**	—						
5. Education	-0.616***	-0.655***	-0.912***	-0.306**	—					
6. TWE	-0.323***	-0.024	-0.159	-0.186	-0.162	—				
7. JI	-0.333***	-0.053	-0.265**	-0.014	-0.268**	0.346***	—			
8. OCG	-0.431***	-0.005	-0.198*	-0.163	-0.147	0.492***	0.360***	—		
9. Grit	-0.117	-0.005	-0.068	-0.022	-0.028	0.031	0.036	-0.015	—	
10. QQ	-0.435***	-0.013	-0.199*	-0.183	-0.138	0.573***	0.512***	0.659***	0.094	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. TWE: Toxic Workplace Environment, JI: Job Insecurity, OCG: Organizational Career Growth, QQ: Quiet Quitting. Gender (0 = Female, 1 = Male), Education (1 = Senior high school, 2 = Bachelor's degree, 3 = Master's degree).

given the sample size below 200 in this study, the model fit will focus on the fit measure indicated by SRMR.

Structural Model Assessment: Hypothesis Testing

In Table 6 and Figure 1, it can be seen that four of the six proposed hypotheses are supported ($p < 0.05$), namely Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 5. Meanwhile, two are not supported ($p > 0.05$), specifically Hypotheses 4 and 6. Based on the results, both TWE ($\beta = 0.262$, $p < 0.05$) and JI ($\beta = 0.161$, $p < 0.05$) have a positive and significant effect on QQ.

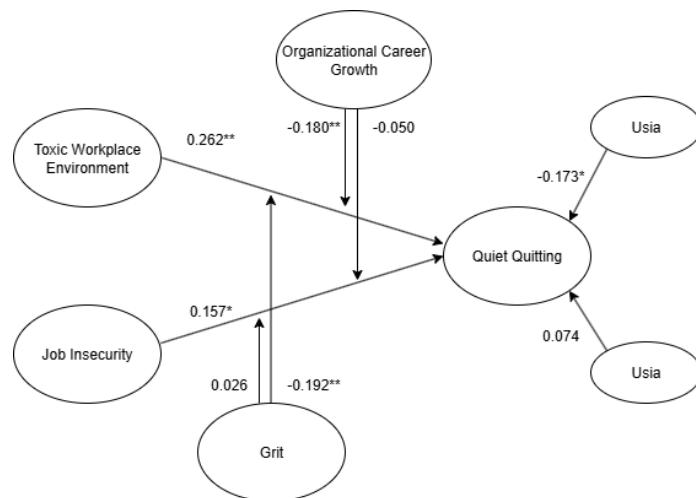
For moderation interactions, OCG weakens the positive effect of TWE on QQ ($\beta = -0.180$, $p < 0.05$), but its moderation effect on the positive relationship between JI and QQ is not significant ($\beta = -0.050$, $p > 0.05$). Grit likewise weakens the positive effect of TWE on QQ ($\beta = -0.192$, $p < 0.05$) but does not significantly moderate the positive relationship between JI and QQ ($\beta = 0.026$, $p > 0.05$). For control variables, age is significantly negatively correlated with QQ ($\beta = -0.173$, $p < 0.05$) and salary has no significant effect on QQ ($\beta = 0.074$, $p > 0.05$).

Discussion

The results of the testing show that the first hypothesis is accepted: QQ in Gen Z is proven to be influenced by TWE. This is in line with the unique manner in which Gen Z responds to toxic work environments (Gaidhani et al., 2019), i.e., they tend to withdraw from full engagement with their work. It also aligns with Srivastava et al. (2023) finding that an unhealthy work environment triggers feelings of anger and stress, reduces creativity, and increases the desire for revenge (Martinescu et al., 2021), resulting in the emergence of negative emotions and ultimately reducing the employee's attention and effort toward the organization (Spoelma & Hetrick, 2021). Referring to the COR theory's statement that the loss of resources has a greater impact than their gain (Hobfoll et al., 2018), when faced with a toxic environment, employees who realize their resources are limited and perceive

Figure 1

Empirical Model of the Effects of Toxic Leadership and Job Insecurity on Quiet Quitting, with Organizational Career Growth and Grit as Moderators



their imminent losses as significant will proactively engage in QQ to protect themselves from external threats and thereby prevent further losses.

The present study also shows that QQ in Gen Z is directly influenced by JI, and so the second hypothesis is accepted. This result reflects Gen Z's strong need for job security and organizational stability, as noted by Bodziewicz (2016). These are the most important things they seek in the workplace, as they place high value on long-term security once employed. Previous research has also highlighted the negative impact of JI on employee engagement, namely that it leads to decreased participation and initiative when working (Getahun Asfaw & Chang, 2019). Based on the COR theory by Hobfoll et al. (2018), the absence of job security drains workers' resources through recurring thoughts and worries about their job future (Richter et al., 2020). When job security is lost, individuals feel threatened, leading to even greater loss of employee resources.

Regarding moderating effects, the findings revealed that both organizational career growth (OCG) and grit significantly weakened the positive influence of toxic work environment (TWE) on quiet quitting (QQ), thus supporting H3 and H5. However, neither OCG nor grit significantly moderated the relationship between JI and QQ; hence, H4 and H6 were not supported. Interestingly, while OCG's moderating effect on the JI-QQ relationship was negative (weakening), although non-significant, grit showed a positive (strengthening) yet non-significant moderating effect on the same relationship. This suggests that grit may potentially exacerbate, rather than mitigate, the impact of job insecurity on quiet quitting, although this effect was not statistically significant.

The acceptance of the third hypothesis aligns with the COR theory principle which states that individuals are motivated to protect themselves from resource loss by acquiring resources for personal growth and development (Hobfoll et al., 2018). As a result, OCG provided by the organization is considered an important job resource benefit for employees (Yoopetch et al., 2021). Those with high career growth opportunities within their organization can handle a toxic work environment better and achieve their career goals more successfully compared to those with low career growth opportunities. The acquisition of this resource leads to lower emotional stress for employees (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Grit is also proven to be a personal resource that reflects characteristics, conditions, or personal energy that support the achievement of work and life goals when experiencing toxicity in the work environment. Employees who possess grit remain focused and dedicated to achieving long-term objectives, even when facing obstacles and difficulties in the process (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). This study confirms the COR theory principle—grit, as a personal resource, can protect employees from a toxic work environment. When they experience toxic behavior from their coworkers, those with grit are able to ignore it without doubting their ability to perform their jobs. They also remain steadfast in carrying out their job responsibilities and stay focused on their long-term career goals (Kabat-Farr et al., 2017).

Contrary to our fourth hypothesis, the statistical result of this study shows that even when OCG is present, it does not significantly weaken the effect of JI on QQ. Prior research (Bohdziewicz, 2016) explains that Gen Z highly values job security, with security and stability being their most basic employment needs. According to Hobfoll et al. (2018) COR theory, the loss of resources causes disproportionately greater damage than their acquisition. Losing one's most important resources, such as job security, may hence exert a stronger negative effect than the benefits of acquiring resources like career growth opportunities in the organization.

Second, in line with the findings of Sun et al. (2022), our results suggests that employees with high job insecurity tend to avoid proactive behaviors due to their focus being placed on job preservation, activities that maintain job stability, and a strong intention to protect their

jobs. Meanwhile, according to Ma et al. (2024) if the OCG depends on proactive behaviors such as skill development, feedback seeking, or leadership initiative, then the psychological barrier created by JI may render the presence of OCG ineffective. As a result, employees with high JI are less likely to engage in proactive behaviors (Sun et al., 2022). Proactive behaviors contribute to employees' career growth, as they acquire new knowledge and learn new professional skills, which they then turn into competencies valuable for the organization (Ma et al., 2024). This effort is then rewarded with promotions and increased compensation, known as career growth (Ma et al., 2024). However, perceived inaccessibility of OCG due to JI may reduce employees' motivation to engage in career-enhancing activities. Therefore, the ineffectiveness of OCG in this context is due to employees being unable or unwilling to pursue it under the threat of job insecurity (JI) (Ma et al., 2024).

The moderating role of grit appears to differ for the JI stressor. This study showed that grit tends to strengthen the influence of JI on QQ, though not significantly. This phenomenon can be explained by the theory that grit is a "double-edged sword" (Erbe et al., 2024). Erbe et al. (2024) explained that grit can have a negative side, as individuals may become overly focused on a single goal—to maintain their job—without considering whether the work environment is still worth maintaining or whether their efforts are leading to self-harming results. In the context of this research, grit may cause employees to feel they must keep pushing ahead even when conditions are unsupportive. This can lead to greater emotional exhaustion and ultimately drive them toward QQ (Erbe et al., 2024). Consistent with the COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), job insecurity can accelerate the loss of resources, outweighing the acquisition of new ones, making it difficult for even highly gritty employees to maintain well-being. Although high grit is typically seen as a positive trait, in the context of job insecurity, it may actually worsen the tendency toward QQ (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

In terms of demographic variables, the results of the study show that age has a significant effect on QQ, with younger workers being more prone to engage in the behavior. This can be explained by the fact that older employees tend to have better emotional regulation abilities to help them cope with pressure (H. J. Kim, 2008). Doerwald et al. (2016) added that the knowledge and experience accumulated by older employees throughout their careers can help them overcome various workplace challenges.

The salary variable was found to have a positive but non-significant correlation with QQ. This may be because, according to Bryson et al. (2011), higher salaries provide employees with a greater sense of financial security. They understand that their pay remains the same regardless of whether they work harder or not, which may lead them to "do just enough" without making extra effort—matching the concept of quiet quitting (Bryson et al., 2011).

Implications

This study offers several practical implications that can be applied by organizations and Gen Z employees to create a healthy and productive work environment. For organizations, it is crucial to promote job stability by offering long-term contracts and engaging in open dialogue with workers about the company's direction and sustainability (Callea et al., 2014). Management should also maintain open communication to create a supportive and caring atmosphere (T. T. Kim & Karatepe, 2022). Previous studies suggest that sharing the challenges the business is facing and encouraging employee involvement in planning, implementation, and decision-making can help reduce the negative impact of insecurity, even in unstable environments (Huang et al., 2012). Similarly, clear communication of the company's future goals fosters predictability and enhances clarity within its ranks (Jiang et al., 2019). Employees often seek clarification regarding their roles when faced with uncertainty. Consequently, providing clear and realistic communication enables them to gain a better understanding of their future prospects and equips them with the resources needed to effectively manage doubt (Haldorai et al., 2023).

Organizations are also encouraged to foster a supportive and healthy job environment, such as implementing policies that encourage collaboration, fairness, and openness toward employees (Sarkar, 2024). Establishing strong anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies, along with leadership training to provide employees with a positive example, can also significantly reduce the potential for toxicity at work (Hershcovis et al., 2018). Investment in employee training and awareness programs about workplace toxicity and respectful behavior is another key part of creating a supportive environment, as is building crisis intervention mechanisms to support those who do experience severe workplace toxicity (Sarkar, 2024).

Based on the findings, organizations should focus on offering clear career development pathways and implementing training or coaching programs that strengthen employees' ability to handle challenges, manage stress, and adapt to difficult situations. These efforts can help maintain job engagement and reduce the likelihood of disengagement, even in less-than-ideal work environments.

For Gen Z employees, it is also important to be more proactive in seeking self-development opportunities, such as attending training, seminars, or courses that can enhance their work competencies and improve their competitiveness within the company. Furthermore, Gen Z can avoid QQ by learning how to overcome failure, accept constructive criticism, and remain motivated despite facing difficulties, while continuously evaluating whether their current work environment is worth maintaining or is worsening their situation.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, it was conducted using a cross-sectional design, meaning the data were gathered at a single point in time. Based on Pod-

sakoff et al. (2024), the weaknesses of the cross-sectional design is, first, the method variance can bias estimates of the reliability and validity of a latent variable. Second, uncontrolled method variance can bias parameter estimates of the relationships between measures of different constructs. Taris et al. (2021) stated that time-separated designs have advantages over cross-sectional designs with a single data source. This method allows for a reduction in the risk of common method bias (CMB) through temporal separation between the measurement of antecedents and outcomes. Podsakoff et al. (2024) noted that collecting data at different times should reduce CMB, as it decreases respondents' ability and motivation to access previous answers and maintain consistency when answering subsequent items. Temporal separation may improve causal inference between predictor and criterion variables and alleviate concerns regarding the influence of common method bias (CMB) (Podsakoff et al., 2024). Secondly, in this study, the moderators chosen did not provide significant results in the relationship between job insecurity and quiet quitting, highlighting the need for further research on other moderating variables that may weaken the effect of job insecurity on quiet quitting.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that TWE significantly affects QQ in Gen Z employees, confirming the first hypothesis. Younger employees are more vulnerable to this outcome because they tend to withdraw when faced with a toxic environment, which aligns with their generational characteristics. JI also directly affects QQ, in line with Gen Z's need for stable employment and supporting the COR theory, which states that the loss of job security leads to greater resource depletion and emotional stress.

OCG and grit were shown to play a moderating role in the relationship between TWE and QQ. However, neither moderates the relationship between JI and QQ. This indicates that job insecurity is a stressor that is hard to overcome, causing employees to focus on activities that maintain their job, limiting proactive behavior, and hindering the effectiveness of career growth opportunities. Additionally, grit can potentially worsen QQ when job insecurity is high because employees with grit may focus too much on job preservation at the expense of their well-being.

This study also found that younger employees are more prone to quiet quitting, likely due to less developed emotional regulation and shorter work experience. Finally, salary showed a positive but non-significant correlation with QQ, possibly because higher pay offers financial security but does not always incentivize extra effort.

Recommendations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, it was conducted using a cross-sectional design, meaning the data were gathered at a single point in time. Based on Podsakoff et al. (2024), the weaknesses of the cross-sectional design are 1) that the method variance can bias estimates

of the reliability and validity of a latent variable, and 2) that uncontrolled method variance can bias parameter estimates of the relationships between measures of different constructs. Taris et al. (2021) stated that time-separated designs have advantages over cross-sectional designs with a single data source. This method allows for a reduction in the risk of common method bias (CMB) through temporal separation between the measurement of antecedents and outcomes. Podsakoff et al. (2024) noted that collecting data at different times should reduce CMB, as it decreases respondents' ability and motivation to access previous answers and maintain consistency when answering subsequent items. Temporal separation may thus improve causal inference between predictor and criterion variables and alleviate concerns regarding CMB's influence (Podsakoff et al., 2024). Future research could use a time-lag method (collecting data at different times), which may provide a better understanding of the dynamics of variables' relationships by reducing the interrelation of predictor variables or their accessibility in respondents' memory (Podsakoff et al., 2024).

Second, the moderators chosen for this study did not provide significant results regarding the relationship between JI and QQ. As an alternative, the researcher suggests exploring other moderators, such as impression management, which may be more relevant in this context. Impression management can be used to improve relationships between employees and colleagues or superiors, which in turn may reduce the tendency for QQ (Sun et al., 2022).

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Authors' Contribution

EAA carried out conceptualization, writing of the original draft, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, and methodology. S contributed reviewing and editing, supervision, validation, and visualization, and FS aided in supervision and validation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest, whether financial or non-financial, that could have influenced the research, authorship or publication of this article.

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Orcid ID

Erza Agistara Azizah  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8826-3375>

Samian  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6261-4022>

Fendy Suhariadi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9679-2185>

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Table 3
Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency

Variable	Item Code	Outer Loading	CR	AVE
TWE	X11	0.913	0.894	0.549
	X12	0.731		
	X13	0.771		
	X14	0.717		
	X15	0.667		
	X16	0.750		
JI	X17	0.603		
	X21	0.942	0.903	0.699
	X22	0.798		
	X23	0.783		
OCG	X24	0.813		
	M11	0.953	0.949	0.555
	M12	0.739		
	M13	0.689		
	M14	0.708		
	M15	0.740		
	M16	0.709		
	M17	0.774		
	M18	0.756		
	M19	0.735		
	M110	0.735		
	M111	0.731		
	M112	0.741		
	M113	0.747		
Grit	M114	0.699		
	M115	0.683		
	M21	0.970	0.964	0.768
	M22	0.867		
	M23	0.872		
QQ	M24	0.891		
	M25	0.795		
	M26	0.892		
	M27	0.830		
	M28	0.884		
	Y1	0.937	0.926	0.559
	Y2	0.620		
	Y3	0.679		
	Y4	0.775		
	Y5	0.697		

Note. CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; TWE = Toxic Workplace Environment; JI = Job Insecurity; OCG = Organizational Career Growth; QQ = Quiet Quitting.

Table 4
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) for Discriminant Validity

Variable	QQ	TWE	JI	OCG	Grit
QQ	–				
TWE	0.596	–			
JI	0.540	0.370	–		
OCG	0.679	0.498	0.368	–	
Grit	0.126	0.038	0.066	0.016	–

Note. QQ = Quiet Quitting; TWE = Toxic Workplace Environment; JI = Job Insecurity; OCG = Organizational Career Growth. All HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.85, indicating adequate discriminant validity.

Table 5
Model Fit Indices Summary

Fit Index	Value
SRMR	0.069
Chi-square (χ^2)	1348.181
d_ULS	5.178
d_G	3.015
NFI	0.697

Note. SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; d_ULS = Squared Euclidean Distance; d_G = Geodesic Distance; NFI = Normed Fit Index.

Table 6
Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	p	Decision
Direct Effects				
H1	TWE \rightarrow QQ	0.262	<.001	Supported
H2	JI \rightarrow QQ	0.157	.014	Supported
Moderating Effects				
H3	OCG \times TWE \rightarrow QQ	-0.180	.006	Supported
H4	OCG \times JI \rightarrow QQ	-0.050	.174	Not Supported
H5	Grit \times TWE \rightarrow QQ	-0.192	.008	Supported
H6	Grit \times JI \rightarrow QQ	0.026	.361	Not Supported
Control Variables				
–	Age \rightarrow QQ	-0.173	.013	Significant
–	Salary \rightarrow QQ	0.074	.163	Not Significant

Note. TWE = Toxic Workplace Environment; JI = Job Insecurity; OCG = Organizational Career Growth; QQ = Quiet Quitting. β = standardized coefficient.