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The impact of a values-based career on employee quiet quitting

Ewa Mazur-Wierzbicka
Uniwersytet Szczeciński

Tomasz Gigol
Szkoła Główna Handlowa w Warszawie

Introduction and research aim

A protean career is an approach to one's career in which the individual, rather than the organization, is in control, and the core values are freedom and growth. However, when employees focus exclusively on internal values without self-direction, this can be maladaptive (Hall, Yip, Doiron, 2018).

The purpose of the study was to examine how being driven by personal values at work influences quiet quitting, understood as a strategy used by employees to adapt to working conditions. A quiet quitting is a phenomenon distinct from the intention to quit a job (Gigol, 2023).

Relationships between employees and their organizations are often described as relationships based on social or economic exchange (Shore et al. 2006). In this study, these were the mediating variables.

Research methods

A quantitative study (N=450) using a paper-and-pencil survey was conducted among working students enrolled in undergraduate, master's, and postgraduate economics programs at two universities in Poland.

The factor structure of the measurement based on the questionnaires used was verified using confirmatory factor analysis based on the DWLS (Diagonally Weighted Least Squares) method. The factor structure of each questionnaire was verified in a separate model. In each case, the fit indices CFI, NFI, RMSEA, and SRMR were calculated.
The model was verified using structural modeling (SEM) based on the maximum likelihood method. The statistical significance of the regression coefficients was verified using the bootstrapping method.

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Results and discussion

Regression coefficient values obtained for the final model

Dependencies			*Beta*	*p*
Value-based career	-->	Economic exchange	0.36	<0.001
Value-based career	-->	Social exchange	-0.21	0.006
Economic exchange	-->	Quiet quitting	0.56	<0.001
Economic exchange	-->	Turnover intention	0.15	0.043
Social exchange	-->	Turnover intention	-0.60	<0.001

Beta – standardized regression coefficient; p – statistical significance

Economic exchange was a statistically significant mediator of the relationship between value-based career and quiet quitting, *Beta=0.20, p<0.001*. The more strongly people are guided by values, the higher the level of economic exchange — and, as a result, the more pronounced the phenomenon of quiet quitting.
Social exchange was a statistically significant mediator of the relationship between value-driven career and the turnover intention, *Beta=0,13, p=0,004*. The more strongly people are guided by values, the lower the level of social exchange — and, as a result, the greater the intensity of their turnover intention.

This study is pioneer work. There has been no research on this topic in the context of economic exchange and quiet quitting. The study confirmed that a protean career is a positive phenomenon, provided that it combines a values-based approach with career self-direction. It has once again been confirmed that quiet quitting is a phenomenon distinct from turnover intention.

Conclusions

Quiet quitting should be viewed — as it has been so far — not only in the context of social exchange and the related unmet expectations of employees. Some employees are guided by their own values at work; they do not share the organization's values, and this approach means that their relationship with the company is based on an economic exchange. As a result, this leads to a more frequent use of the quiet quitting tactic.
The study's findings provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of quiet quitting and its predictors. They also point to economic exchange as a possible approach to employee performance. Managers and HR departments can better understand employee motivation and tailor their approach to working with them.

References

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