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Psychological Determinants of Quiet Quitting Intention Among Indonesian Civil Servants

Nazir Ultama Anugrah[1], Khairina Widya Primandari Haryono[1], Redo Tridinata Wijaya[1], Dewi Fransiska Simanjuntak[1], Lupi Yudhaningrum[1], R.A. Fadhallah[1]
[1] Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Quiet quitting has become a pressing concern for public-sector human resource management in post-pandemic Indonesia, where civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) face heavy workloads amid limited organizational resources. This study examined the simultaneous and partial effects of psychological reactance, organizational justice, and quality of work life on quiet quitting intention among Indonesian civil servants. Using a cross-sectional quantitative design, data were collected from 117 ASN (PNS and PPPK) selected through purposive sampling; all four instruments showed good to excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .825–.957). Multiple linear regression indicated that the three predictors together explained quiet quitting intention, $R^2 = .335$, $F(3, 113) = 19.008$, $p < .001$. Psychological reactance positively predicted quiet quitting ($\beta = .358$, $p < .001$) and quality of work life negatively predicted it ($\beta = -.266$, $p = .032$), while organizational justice showed no significant partial effect ($\beta = -.063$, $p = .607$). Curbing psychological reactance and improving working conditions may therefore matter more than perceived fairness alone in reducing quiet quitting among civil servants, offering practical direction for public human resource policy.

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Corresponding Author:

Name: Nazir Ultama Anugrah
Institution: Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia
Email: nazir.ultama@unj.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Quiet quitting has become one of the most widely discussed phenomena in human resource management since the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent scholarship defines it as employees intentionally performing only the minimum requirements of their job while refraining from contributions beyond what is explicitly required [1]–[3]. Quiet quitters remain formally employed and keep fulfilling core duties, yet they consciously withhold discretionary and extra-role effort [1], [2]. This pattern reflects a shift in the psychological contract between employees and organizations, from a social exchange grounded in trust and reciprocity [4] toward a more transactional and defensive relationship [1]. The consequences are not trivial: quiet quitting has been linked to lower organizational citizenship behavior, higher counterproductive work behavior, and strained relations with coworkers [1], [5].

The phenomenon is also relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 3 on good health and well-

being and Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth [6]. In Indonesia, civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) work under heavy workloads, limited organizational resources, and rigid bureaucratic procedures while being expected to meet performance targets. Recent Indonesian studies have begun to examine quiet quitting among ASN in relation to conditions such as perceived organizational support, toxic work culture, and workload [7], which makes its psychological determinants an urgent concern for both scholarship and public human resource policy.

This situation is consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which holds that when job demands are not balanced by adequate job resources, employees experience a decline in energy and motivation that can culminate in psychological withdrawal [8], [9]. Recent studies have identified a growing list of antecedents of quiet quitting, including unfulfilled psychological contracts [1], [10], low perceived control [2], high-performance work systems and the psychological conditions they create [11], illegitimate tasks [12], and poor quality of work life among healthcare professionals [13]. Reviews further point to overwork, burnout, and toxic organizational cultures as recurring drivers [14], [15].

However, this evidence comes mostly from Western, private-sector, or healthcare samples. To our knowledge, research on Indonesian civil servants remains limited and has not simultaneously tested psychological reactance, organizational justice, and quality of work life as predictors of quiet quitting [7]. Such an integrated test is particularly needed in bureaucracies characterized by high power distance [16], so that interventions target the root causes of quiet quitting rather than surface symptoms such as low work engagement.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the simultaneous and partial effects of psychological reactance, organizational justice, and quality of work life on quiet quitting intention among Indonesian civil servants. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of a quiet quitting model in non-Western public bureaucratic contexts and practically to civil-service human resource policies that are more responsive to employees' psychological needs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Quiet Quitting Intention and the JD-R Perspective

Quiet quitting is conceptualized as a deliberate restriction of work effort to formal role requirements [1], [2]. Kanwal et al. [3] distinguish passive from deliberate forms of quiet quitting, and Samnani and Robertson [17] argue that it is a relational rather than a purely personal decision. This study focuses on quiet quitting intention, that is, employees' inclination to confine their effort to the minimum, as captured by the Quiet Quitting Scale [18]. The JD-R model offers a general explanation: sustained job demands without sufficient job resources deplete energy and motivation, whereas resources sustain engagement and buffer the impact of demands [8], [9].

2.2 Psychological Reactance

Psychological reactance is a negative motivational state that arises when people perceive that their behavioral freedom is threatened or eliminated, and it drives attempts to restore that freedom [19]–[21]. In organizations, excessively controlling policies, rigid procedures, or instructions perceived as coercive can threaten autonomy and trigger reactance. Ren and Chowdhury [22] showed, in an experiment and a time-lagged field study, that automation-driven transformation heightened

employees' reactance, which in turn shaped job satisfaction, employment security, and turnover intention, with employee voice moderating the process. Related evidence indicates that low perceived control over one's work life increases quiet quitting [2]. Because hierarchical bureaucracies restrict civil servants' latitude in decision making, reactance should be a salient motivator of covert withdrawal. Therefore, **H1**: psychological reactance has a positive effect on quiet quitting intention.

2.3 Organizational Justice

Organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness [23]. Perceived injustice is a classic trigger of retaliatory and withdrawal responses, and recent evidence shows that fulfilled promises about fair treatment reduce quiet quitting, with job satisfaction as the transmitting mechanism [1]. Organizational justice may thus be an important determinant of quiet quitting, although its influence may be partly indirect. Therefore, **H2**: organizational justice has a negative effect on quiet quitting intention.

2.4 Quality of Work Life

Quality of work life (QWL) reflects the extent to which a job offers a balance between work demands and personal resources, supportive working conditions, fair compensation, and opportunities for career development [24]. Among healthcare professionals, psychological and physical dimensions of QWL were negatively related to quiet quitting [13]. In JD-R terms [8], [9], QWL constitutes a bundle of job resources; consistent with this view, work systems that foster psychological meaningfulness and availability have been associated with quiet quitting [11]. Therefore, **H3**: quality of work life has a negative effect on quiet quitting intention. Finally, because the three constructs are conceptually interrelated and each captures a different facet of the employee–organization relationship, they are expected to act jointly: **H4**: psychological reactance, organizational justice, and quality of work life simultaneously affect quiet quitting intention.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design and Participants

This study employed a non-experimental quantitative design with a cross-sectional approach. The dependent variable was quiet quitting intention, while the independent variables were psychological reactance, organizational justice, and quality of work life. The participants were Indonesian civil servants (ASN), comprising permanent civil servants (PNS) and government employees under work agreements (PPPK) with a minimum tenure of one year. Using purposive sampling, 117 civil servants took part, drawn from ministries (58.1%), regional governments (28.2%), and non-ministerial government agencies (13.7%). There were 63 women (53.8%) and 54 men (46.2%); most participants were aged 30–40 years (59.0%) and married (59.0%). Although the sample fell short of the initially planned 250 respondents, it exceeded the minimum sizes commonly recommended for multiple regression with three predictors ($N \geq 50 + 8m = 74$ for the overall model and $N \geq 104 + m = 107$ for individual predictors) [25].

3.2 Instruments

Quiet quitting intention was measured with the Quiet Quitting Scale (QQS) [18], using a 10-item adapted version. Psychological reactance was measured with the Hong Psychological Reactance Scale (HPRS) [26], comprising 11 items. Organizational justice was measured with the scale developed by Colquitt [23], comprising 20 items that cover the distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions. Quality of work life was measured with a 24-item scale based on Walton [24]. All instruments used a Likert-type response format and underwent cross-cultural adaptation following the guidelines of Beaton et al. [27] and the psychometric standards of the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* [28]. This adaptation was part of the initial stage of the research (Study 1), which tested the construct validity of the four instruments through confirmatory factor analysis before the hypothesis-testing stage reported in this article (Study 2). Internal consistency was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha [29], and coefficients above .70 were considered acceptable [30].

3.3 Procedure and Data Analysis

Data collection took place in three stages: presentation of the research procedure and objectives, completion of the informed consent form, and completion of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Form and offline in printed form. Participation was anonymous and voluntary to protect confidentiality and encourage honest responses. Data were analyzed in SPSS. After reliability testing, the classical regression assumptions (normality, linearity, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity) were examined [31]. Multiple linear regression was then used: the F-test examined the combined effect of the three predictors, the t-test examined the significance of each predictor's partial effect, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) indicated the proportion of variance in quiet quitting intention explained by the model.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 117 ASN respondents. Female respondents (53.8%) is outnumbered male respondents (46.2%). Most respondents were aged 30–40 years (59.0%), followed by those aged 21–30 years (21.4%), 40–50 years (16.2%), and over 50 years (3.4%), indicating a sample dominated by civil servants in the early to mid stages of their careers. Most respondents worked in ministries (58.1%), followed by regional governments (28.2%) and non-ministerial government agencies (13.7%). Regarding marital status, 59.0% were married, 37.6% were unmarried, and 3.4% were divorced or widowed. Overall, the sample covers civil servants from various types of government agencies in Indonesia.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	54	46.2
	Female	63	53.8
Age	21–30 years	25	21.4
	30–40 years	69	59.0
	40–50 years	19	16.2
	> 50 years	4	3.4
Type of agency	Ministry	68	58.1
	Regional government	33	28.2
	Non-ministerial agency	16	13.7
Marital status	Married	69	59.0
	Not married	44	37.6
	Divorced/widowed	4	3.4

Note. N = 117; f = frequency

4.2 Reliability of the Measures

Table 2 summarizes the reliability analysis. All four instruments exceeded the .70 threshold, indicating good internal consistency and suitability for measuring the study variables. The quiet quitting scale (10 items) obtained α = .865 and the psychological reactance scale (11 items) α = .825, both in the high range. The organizational justice scale (20 items) obtained α = .933 and the quality of work life scale (24 items) α = .957, both in the very high range. The quality of work life scale was thus the most internally consistent instrument and the psychological reactance scale the least, although the latter still met the criterion comfortably.

Table 2. Reliability of the research instruments

Variable	Items	α
Quiet quitting	10	.865
Psychological reactance	11	.825
Organizational justice	20	.933
Quality of work life	24	.957

Note. α = Cronbach's alpha

4.3 Classical Assumption Tests

The classical regression assumptions were tested before the hypotheses. The tests of normality, linearity, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity all indicated that the assumptions were met, so the data were suitable for multiple linear regression analysis.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 shows the results of the multiple linear regression. The simultaneous test showed that the three predictors jointly had a significant effect on quiet quitting intention, $F(3, 113) = 19.008$, $p < .001$. The model yielded $R^2 = .335$ (adjusted $R^2 = .318$), indicating that psychological reactance, organizational justice, and quality of work life together explained 33.5% of the variance in quiet quitting intention, while the remaining 66.5% was attributable to factors outside the model.

The partial tests showed that psychological reactance had a positive and significant effect on quiet quitting intention ($\beta = .358$; $t = 4.090$; $p < .001$): the higher an employee's reactance, the stronger the tendency toward quiet quitting. Quality of work life had a negative and significant effect ($\beta = -.266$; $t = -2.174$; $p = .032$): the better the perceived quality of work life, the lower the tendency toward quiet quitting. In contrast, organizational justice showed no significant partial effect ($\beta = -.063$; $t = -0.516$; $p = .607$).

Table 3. Summary of multiple regression analysis predicting quiet quitting intention

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	27.229	5.728	–	4.753	< .001
Psychological reactance	0.399	0.097	.358	4.090	< .001
Organizational justice	−0.044	0.086	−.063	−0.516	.607
Quality of work life	−0.114	0.053	−.266	−2.174	.032

Note. Dependent variable: quiet quitting. $R^2 = .335$; adjusted $R^2 = .318$; $F(3, 113) = 19.008$, $p < .001$

The regression equation based on the unstandardized coefficients is: Quiet Quitting = 27.229 + 0.399 (Psychological Reactance) − 0.044 (Organizational Justice) − 0.114 (Quality of Work Life). Table 4 summarizes the hypothesis tests. H1, H3, and H4 were supported, whereas H2 was not. The hypotheses were thus partially supported: psychological reactance and quality of work life were confirmed as significant determinants of quiet quitting intention among Indonesian civil servants, whereas organizational justice showed no significant independent effect when analyzed together with the other two predictors.

Table 4. Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Result	Decision
H1: Psychological reactance (+) → quiet quitting	$\beta = .358$; $p < .001$	Supported
H2: Organizational justice (–) → quiet quitting	$\beta = -.063$; $p = .607$	Not supported
H3: Quality of work life (–) → quiet quitting	$\beta = -.266$; $p = .032$	Supported
H4: Simultaneous effect of the three predictors	$R^2 = .335$; $F(3, 113) = 19.008$; $p < .001$	Supported

4.5 Discussion of the Finding

The three predictors jointly explained a substantial share of the variance in quiet quitting intention, supporting H4. This reinforces recent arguments that quiet quitting is not mere laziness but a deliberate, relational, and context-dependent recalibration of effort [1], [3], [17]. The pattern of partial effects, however, gives a more nuanced picture of which mechanisms matter most.

Psychological reactance was the strongest predictor, supporting H1. This agrees with reactance theory [19], [21] and with recent evidence that threats to autonomy and control translate into unfavorable work outcomes: reactance mediated the effect of automation-driven transformation on job attitudes [22], and low perceived control increased quiet quitting [2]. In a hierarchical, procedure-bound civil service, open defiance carries risks for employment status. Quiet quitting may therefore serve as a structurally safer, covert way of restoring psychological freedom through a gradual withdrawal of discretionary effort. The finding extends reactance theory, which has largely been examined in persuasion and communication contexts, to public-sector organizational behavior. The moderating role of employee voice reported by Ren and Chowdhury [22] also suggests that participatory channels may help defuse reactance before it turns into withdrawal.

Contrary to H2, organizational justice did not significantly predict quiet quitting once reactance and quality of work life were controlled. Recent work suggests several reasons. First, justice may operate indirectly: fulfilled justice promises were found to reduce quiet quitting through job satisfaction rather than through a stand-alone direct effect [1], so a direct-effects regression may understate its role. Second, the constructs overlap conceptually; perceived injustice may be expressed through reactance or through a lower perceived quality of work life, which itself includes fair compensation, so the unique variance of justice may have been absorbed. Third, Indonesia's bureaucratic culture, which tends toward high power distance [16], may make civil servants more accustomed to accepting hierarchical inequality, rendering them less sensitive to fairness than to threats to autonomy or to actual working conditions. Fourth, Liu et al. [12] argue that injustice perceptions tend to provoke retaliation or voice rather than calibrated minimum compliance, which implies that justice may predict overt counterproductive behavior better than the covert effort restriction that defines quiet quitting. Fifth, the composite justice score may have obscured dimension-specific effects [23]. These explanations are plausible but were not tested here and call for mediation and dimension-level analyses.

Quality of work life had a negative effect on quiet quitting intention, supporting H3. This is consistent with evidence that psychological and physical QWL reduce quiet quitting among healthcare professionals [13] and with the JD-R model [8], [9], in which a manageable workload, supportive conditions, fair compensation, and career development act as job resources that sustain psychological energy. Parallel findings link psychological conditions such as meaningfulness [11] and workload and workplace culture among ASN [7] to quiet quitting, and reviews highlight overwork and burnout as common drivers [14], [15]. Liu et al. [12] likewise show that quiet quitting can emerge from resource depletion, which supports reading it as a resource-conserving response to work experienced as draining. Taken together, the results suggest that, for civil servants, threats to personal autonomy and actual working

conditions are more proximal to the decision to withdraw psychologically than cognitive evaluations of fairness alone.

4.6 Implications

Theoretically, the findings contribute to a quiet quitting model that integrates reactance theory and the JD-R model in a non-Western public bureaucratic context. Future studies should test whether organizational justice acts through reactance, quality of work life, or job satisfaction [1], since a simple regression cannot capture such indirect paths. Practically, civil-service human resource management should not focus solely on formal-procedural fairness. First, excessively controlling managerial practices should be minimized and room for participation, voice, and work autonomy expanded to reduce reactance [22]. Second, quality of work life should be improved through policies on workload balance, welfare support, and clear career pathways. Managers should also avoid treating quiet quitting merely as disloyalty, because exhorting employees to be more committed may miss the underlying work conditions [12].

4.7 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be noted. First, the cross-sectional design does not allow causal conclusions. Second, non-probabilistic purposive sampling limits generalizability to all Indonesian civil servants. Third, the 117 respondents fell short of the planned 250, which may reduce statistical power and the precision of parameter estimates. Fourth, self-report questionnaires may have introduced common method bias [32]. Fifth, the model explained 33.5% of the variance, suggesting other unmeasured predictors such as burnout, leadership style, or job embeddedness. Future research should use probability sampling with larger and more representative samples, longitudinal or experimental designs, and mediation or moderation models, for example with burnout, work engagement, or job satisfaction as mediators. Qualitative approaches are also recommended to explore civil servants' subjective experiences of reactance and quality of work life, as planned in the subsequent stages of this research.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that psychological reactance, organizational justice, and quality of work life simulaneously explain a meaningful part of quiet quitting intention among Indonesian civil servants. A stronger tendency toward reactance increases, and a better quality of work life reduces, the inclination to withdraw effort, whereas perceived organizational justice has no independent effect when considered alongside the other two variables. Threats to psychological autonomy and everyday working conditions thus appear to be more proximal drivers of quiet quitting than evaluations of fairness alone. The study contributes a model that integrates reactance theory and the Job Demands–Resources model in a non-Western public bureaucratic setting and offers an empirical basis for civil-service human resource policies oriented toward work autonomy and employee well-being.

Public human resource managers are advised to reduce excessively controlling practices, widen participation and autonomy, and improve workload balance, welfare support, and career pathways. Future research should employ probability sampling with larger samples, longitudinal or experimental designs, mediation and moderation models (for example burnout, job satisfaction, and work engagement, or the separate dimensions of organizational justice), and qualitative approaches.

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