

The Role Of Employee Engagement In Mediating The Effects Of Meaningful Work, Hindrance Stressors, And Work-Life Balance On Quiet Quitting Among Generation Z Employees In Indonesia

Zuliandra Adelia Putri ^{1*}, Barkah ², Rizani Ramadhan ³, Arman Jaya ⁴, Hassanudin ⁵

^{1*,2,3,4,5} Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Tanjungpura, Jl. Prof.Dr.H.Hadari Nawawi /Jendral Ahmad Yani, Pontianak, Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia.

Corresponding Email: B1024221013@student.untan.ac.id ^{1*}

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Abstrak

Praktik "quiet quitting" telah menjadi masalah besar dalam manajemen sumber daya manusia, mengubah cara karyawan Generasi Z memandang loyalitas. Studi ini menganalisis apakah keterlibatan karyawan terkait dengan pekerjaan yang bermakna, faktor stres yang menghambat, dan keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan dalam konteks "quiet quitting" di kalangan pekerja Generasi Z di Indonesia. Menggunakan survei kuantitatif, kami mengumpulkan data dari karyawan Generasi Z dan menganalisisnya dengan Model Persamaan Struktural (SEM-PLS). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan beberapa pola yang tidak terduga, keterlibatan karyawan tidak berperan sebagai penghubung, menunjukkan bahwa antusiasme terhadap pekerjaan dan keputusan untuk membatasi beban kerja tidak selalu saling terkait. Hanya pekerjaan yang bermakna yang terbukti dapat mengurangi fenomena "quiet quitting", sementara faktor stres yang menghambat tidak memiliki pengaruh. Temuan mengejutkan lainnya adalah bahwa keseimbangan antara pekerjaan dan kehidupan pribadi sebenarnya meningkatkan fenomena "quiet quitting", yang menunjukkan bahwa beberapa karyawan menggunakan penarikan diri sebagai cara untuk mencapai keseimbangan. Berdasarkan hasil ini, organisasi sebaiknya lebih fokus pada penciptaan pekerjaan yang bermakna dan batasan kerja yang jelas, daripada hanya mengandalkan retensi emosional, karena tingkat keterlibatan yang tinggi saja tidak cukup untuk mencegah fenomena "quiet quitting".

Kata Kunci: Pekerjaan Bermakna; Faktor Penghambat; Keseimbangan Pekerjaan Dan Kehidupan; Keterlibatan Karyawan; Quite Quitting; Generasi Z; Indonesia.

Abstract

Quiet quitting has become a major issue in human resource management, changing how Generation Z employees view loyalty. This study looks at whether employee engagement connects meaningful work, hindrance stressors, and work-life balance to quiet quitting among Generation Z workers in Indonesia. Using a quantitative survey, we collected data from Generation Z employees and analyzed it with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS). The results show some unexpected patterns. Employee engagement did not act as a link, suggesting that enthusiasm for work and the choice to limit workload are not always connected. Only meaningful work was found to reduce quiet quitting, while hindrance stressors had no effect. Another surprising finding was that work-life balance actually increased quiet quitting, suggesting that some employees use withdrawal as a way to achieve balance. Based on these results, organizations should focus less on emotional retention and more on creating meaningful work and clear work boundaries, since high engagement alone does not prevent quiet quitting.

Keyword: Quiet Quitting; Employee Engagement; Meaningful Work; Work-Life Balance; Generation Z; Indonesia.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of quiet quitting has emerged as a significant workplace behavior trend in the last decade, particularly among Generation Z, who are beginning to dominate the global and local workforce (Xueyun *et al.*, 2023). Unlike traditional turnover, which is visible and measurable, quiet quitting refers to the behavior of employees who psychologically withdraw from their jobs while maintaining their employment status (Serenko, 2024). A critical dimension of this construct is that employees do not formally leave the organization, but psychologically reduce their level of engagement and commitment in a measurable and systematic way. Employees who experience quiet quitting tend to perform only the minimum job requirements, avoid additional initiatives, and show low levels of engagement with the organization, while still receiving their compensation and maintaining their formal position (Campton *et al.*, 2023). The fundamental difference between quiet quitting and turnover has very significant managerial implications for organizations (Pratiwi *et al.*, 2023). While turnover results in clearly measurable replacement costs, including recruitment, onboarding, training, and product knowledge transfer, quiet quitting causes a gradual and difficult-to-detect decline in performance, a decrease in innovativeness, and negative effects that spread to team dynamics without incurring explicit and visible replacement costs (Campton *et al.*, 2023; Galanis *et al.*, 2023). From an organizational citizenship behavior perspective, quiet quitting represents a withdrawal from the voluntary prosocial behaviors that traditional employees routinely engage in, such as helping coworkers, suggesting improvements, and mentoring junior staff. This withdrawal is more insidious and dangerous than traditional turnover because it is difficult to identify until its cumulative impact becomes significant. Indonesia has an alarming prevalence of this issue, according to empirical research. This composition demonstrates that 79 percent of Indonesia's workforce has low-engagement, with 17 percent actively withdrawing, indicating silent resignation. This tendency is becoming a standard in Indonesian workplace conduct. Only 30% of Generation Z show genuine engagement with their work (Taufik *et al.*, 2023) and 60% of Generation Z and 45% of Millennials quietly quit due to poor work-life balance and lack of recognition (Ramadhi *et al.*, 2024). These findings suggest that quiet resignation is a systematic result of a significant mismatch between organizational practices and generational expectations.

With Generation Z, born 1997–2012, entering the workforce in Indonesia, this topic is gaining prominence. This generation views work-life balance, work significance, and the workplace and organisation differently (Wahyudi & Sanyata, 2020). Generation Z demands life balance, meaningful employment, and well-being-promoting working conditions, unlike earlier generations (Bellini & Lomazzi, 2024). These traits suggest that standard human resource management may not be enough to engage this generation, which has crucial consequences for our study. Several key factors make the Indonesian context crucial. According to Statistics Indonesia, Indonesia has the largest Generation Z population in Southeast Asia, at 74.93 million people or 27.94 percent of the total population (Saraswati & Indiyati, 2022), with unique cultural and work values that differ from the Western context in which most previous research has been conducted. Western research findings cannot be directly transferred to Indonesia without substantial cultural contextualization and adaptation (Arquisola *et al.*, 2022). Second, digital revolution and the post-COVID-19 pandemic work paradigm shift have expedited the adoption of flexible working arrangements, which Generation Z prefers (Wiradendi Wolor *et al.*, 2023). However, many traditional Indonesian organizations have not fully adapted to these preferences, creating a significant gap between Gen Z's expectations and the actual organizational reality (Hendratmoko & Mutiarawati, 2024). This mismatch is a breeding ground for quiet quitting behaviors because it creates ongoing frustration. Third, research in the Indonesian context shows that 1 in 3 workers (33 percent) have left or are considering leaving their jobs because their personal values are not aligned with the organizational culture, indicating a fundamental and profound value gap (Na-Nan *et al.*, 2020). For Generation Z, who have more defined values and are less tolerant of value misalignment than previous generations, this mismatch directly drives quiet quitting behavior as a form of implicit resistance (Taufik *et al.*, 2024). Recent events show inconsistencies when considering employee cooperation to overcome opposition. Work enthusiasm can cause silent quitting (Afota *et al.*, 2024).

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The gap between Social Exchange Theory's positive reciprocity predictions and Gen Z's transactional character and decoupling of feelings from actions is a major research gap. This study will determine if Generation Z's work dynamics are more influenced by meaningful employment or involvement after the COVID-19 pandemic. This study chose a theoretical framework based on three complementary hypotheses to explain quiet quitting. JD-R presents a structural paradigm for how stressors, expectations, meaningful work, and work-life balance affect employee engagement and behavior (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). JD-R Theory covers structural elements that affect engagement, but not psychological mechanisms that explain why certain job demands drain engagement and certain resources promote it. SDT's psychological mechanism perspective improves JD-R (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Meaningful work and work-life balance satisfy autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which improves engagement, according to SDT. But barrier stresses prevent these expectations from being met, decreasing involvement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory

At the core of this research framework lies the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory. As articulated by (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024), the theory proposes a dual-process model where all job characteristics split into two distinct categories: *job demands* and *job resources*. Job demands represent of the physical, psychological, or organizational aspects of work that can require sustained effort and often come with a physiological cost. In contrast, job resources are the functional aspects that help achieve work goals, reduce the impact of demands, or stimulate the personal growth. In the context of this study, we categorize hindrance stressors as energy-draining demands that erode employee resilience. On the flip side, meaningful work and work-life balance serve as vital resources (Van De Voorde *et al.*, 2016). The logic here is straightforward yet powerful: while demands like hindrance stressors deplete an employee's mental battery, resources act as a recharge mechanism, fostering engagement and positive organizational outcomes.

2.2 Meaningful Work and Employee Engagement

Meaningful work is more than just a definition. It is how employees see their daily tasks as purposeful, valuable, and part of something bigger than themselves (Bellini & Lomazzi, 2024; Rosso *et al.*, 2010). For Generation Z, this is not just a bonus. It is often a must-have in their careers (Egerová *et al.*, 2021). Empirical evidence consistently links this sense of purpose to higher engagement levels. (Wandycz-Mejias *et al.*, 2025) recently highlighted that when employees perceive their work as meaningful, their job satisfaction rises and turnover intentions drop. This dynamic operates through self-determination mechanisms: meaningful work fulfills basic psychological needs, thereby fueling autonomous motivation. Furthermore, (Corbin & Flenady, 2024) frame meaningful work as a buffer against exploitative work cultures. They argue that when work feels significant, it acts as a form of "compensatory respect," preventing the cynicism that typically leads to quiet quitting.

2.3 Hindrance Stressors and Employee Engagement

Not all stress is the same. Some pressures can motivate people, but hindrance stressors are demands seen only as obstacles to personal growth and reaching goals (LePine *et al.*, 2005). In the JD-R framework, these stressors act like "energy vampires" that lower an employee's ability to stay engaged (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). Common examples are role ambiguity, conflicting instructions, and excessive red tape. All of these are linked to lower engagement (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2007). A recent study by (Alami *et al.*, 2024) in healthcare found that hindrance stressors like bureaucratic delays are main reasons for employees pulling back from their work. When people face unclear expectations or inefficient systems, they often respond by disengaging. In stress management literature, it is important to distinguish between motivating Challenge Stressors and destructive Hindrance Stressors are defined as work demands that are perceived as unnecessary obstacles to achieving personal goals and career growth, such as red tape,

office politics, role ambiguity, and role conflict. Unlike challenging workloads, hindrance stressors offer no potential future benefits, and therefore only drain employees' energy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024).

2.4 Work-Life Balance and Employee Engagement

Traditionally, Work-Life Balance (WLB) is defined as the equilibrium between work and non-work activities (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). However, recent literature suggests a shift in this definition for Generation Z. (Afota *et al.*, 2024)) emphasizes that WLB is not merely about time division but about psychological detachment and control over one's boundaries. For Generation Z, WLB is a fundamental (Nguyen *et al.*, 2023; Ragin-Skorceka & Falser, 2024). While traditional studies like (Kuancintami & Heryjanto, 2023) found that WLB acts as a resource enhancing engagement, (Michel *et al.*, 2022) suggest that the alignment between individual boundary preferences and organizational policies is crucial. This implies that for Gen Z, enforcing strict WLB might sometimes manifest as withdrawal if the organization does not support their boundary-setting needs (Xueyun *et al.*, 2023)

2.5 Employee Engagement and Quiet Quitting

Employee engagement is a positive, fulfilling state of mind at work, marked by energy, dedication, and vigor (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). Traditionally, engagement is seen as the main way to prevent psychological withdrawal, or quiet quitting (Kahn, 1990). (Agarwal *et al.*, 2024) found that psychological meaningfulness, part of engagement, links HR practices to quiet quitting. (Sitorus & Rachmawati, 2024) also found engagement acts as a mediator in the banking sector. However, new research challenges this idea. (Costantini *et al.*, 2025) suggest that quiet quitting can be a way for employees to save energy, not just a sign of low engagement. Employees may step back from extra tasks to avoid burnout, even if they are otherwise engaged.

2.6 Characteristics of Generation Z in the Workplace

Generation Z stands out from earlier generations in how they behave at work. Studies show that Gen Z values autonomy, flexibility, ongoing learning, and meaningful work (Bellini & Lomazzi, 2024). (Nguyen *et al.*, 2023) found that Gen Z is motivated more by internal factors like purpose and work-life balance than by external rewards. (Osorio & Madero, 2025) also found that Gen Z prefers flexible work options and sees them as basic needs, not just perks. When organizations are rigid or do not support these preferences, Gen Z employees are more likely to quietly quitting (Xueyun *et al.*, 2023).

2.7 Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, this phenomenon describes a condition in which employees do not physically leave the organization, but psychologically withdraw from commitments that go beyond their formal job description. In the midst of Generation Z's dominance in the workforce, the traditional loyalty paradigm based on "hustle culture" is beginning to erode and be replaced by values that prioritize mental health, life balance, and substantive work meaning. This report presents an in-depth analysis of relationship patterns formed within a conceptual framework involving meaningful work, hindrance stressors, and work-life balance as an antecedence, with employee engagement as mediators, to quiet quitting as a behavioral consequence.

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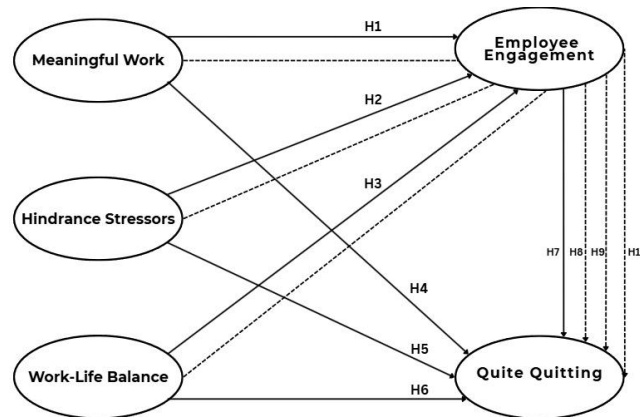


Figure 1. Research Framework

Based on the problem of the formulation and conceptual framework above, the research hypothesis put forward by the researcher is as follows:

- 1) H1: Meaningful Work → Employee Engagement
- 2) H2: Hindrance Stressor → Employee Engagement
- 3) H3: Work-Life Balance → Employee Engagement
- 4) H4: Meaningful Work → Quiet Quitting
- 5) H5: Hindrance Stressor → Quiet Quitting
- 6) H6: Work-Life Balance → Quiet Quitting
- 7) H7: Employee Engagement → Quiet Quitting
- 8) H8: Engagement Mediates The Effect Of Meaningful Work → Quiet Quitting
- 9) H9: Engagement Mediates The Effect Of Hindrance Stressors → Quiet Quitting
- 10) H10: Engagement Mediates The Effect Of Work-Life Balance → Quiet Quitting

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design to examine the mediating role of employee engagement on the relationship between meaningful work, hindrance stressors, and work-life balance on quiet quitting in Indonesian Generation Z employees (Taufik *et al.*, 2023). Data analysis uses Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0, which allows testing direct, indirect (mediation), and total effects simultaneously according to international journal publication standards (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

3.2 Population and Sample

The study population consists of Generation Z (born 1997-2012) who are actively working in Indonesia, aged 18-27 years, with at least one year of work experience, and are permanent or contract employees in companies with at least 50 employees (Hendratmoko & Mutiarawati, 2024). According to data from the National Statistics Agency in 2022, Generation Z accounted for 27.94% of the Indonesian population (approximately 75.49 million out of a total of 270.20 million), dominating the census followed by millennials at 25.87% (Saraswati & Indiyati, 2022). The sample size was set at 200 respondents based on the requirements of Structural Equation Modeling with 5 constructs and 10 indicators (Hendratmoko & Mutiarawati, 2024). Proposive sampling was used with stratification based on industry sector (technology, finance, retail, hospitality) to ensure sample representation from various Indonesian work contexts (Kuancintami, A., & Heryjanto, A. (2023). With 10 times rules One of Hair *et al.*'s most frequently cited contributions is a set of practical rules or rules of thumb for determining the minimum sample size, also

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using 17 indicators from the variables in the measurement table with a multiplier of 10, thus targeting 170 respondents to ensure the stability of the PLS-SEM model.

3.3 Instruments and Data Collection

Five internationally validated instruments adapted to the Indonesian context through back-translation were used. Meaningful work was measured using the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) with 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale (Steger *et al.*, 2012). Hindrance stressors were measured using 6 items assessing role ambiguity, role conflict, and organizational politics on a 5-point Likert scale (LePine *et al.*, 2005). Work-life balance was measured using 5 items on a 5-point Likert scale (LePine *et al.*, 2005). Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) with 9 items on a 5-point Likert scale (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). Quiet quitting was measured using 8 items assessing withdrawal behaviors and reduced effort on a 5-point Likert scale (Campton *et al.*, 2023).

3.4 Measurement Table

Below is a concise mapping of variables to definitions, indicators, Questionnaire Items, and citations that guide the measurement model.

Table 1. Measurement Table

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicator	Questionnaire Item	References
Meaningful Work	Meaningful work is the subjective experience of employees in interpreting their work as something valuable, purposeful, and contributing to themselves and others.	Positive Meaning / Psychological Meaning	I feel that my work has meaning for me personally.	(Steger <i>et al.</i> , 2012) Measuring Meaningful Work: The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI). Journal of Career Assessment, 20(3), 322-337.
			I find true meaning in my work.	
			I see my work contributing to my personal growth.	
			I feel proud of what I do in this job.	
		Meaning-Making through Work	My work helps me understand myself better.	
			I learn about the meaning of life through my work.	
			My work helps me see the world in a more meaningful way.	
		Greater Good Motivation / Social Impact	My work benefits society.	
			I feel that my work has a positive impact on the lives of others.	
			My work contributes to something greater than myself.	

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Hindrance Stressors	Hindrance stressors refer to work-related demands or circumstances that are perceived as obstacles or barriers to achieving goals and personal growth.	Role Ambiguity	I am unsure about what is expected of me in my job. My job goals and responsibilities are unclear.	(LePine <i>et al.</i> , 2005). A meta-analytic test of the challenge stressor-hindrance stressor framework. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i> , 48(5), 764-775.
		Role Conflict	I receive conflicting tasks from different people. I have to do things that should be done differently.	
		Organizational Politics	Organizational politics hinder my work effectiveness. People at my workplace build themselves up by tearing others down.	
Work-Life Balance	Work-life balance is an individual's perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in line with their life priorities.	Balance Perception	I am able to balance the demands of my work and personal life.	(Smeltzer <i>et al.</i> , 2016). Psychometric analysis of the work-life balance self-assessment scale. <i>Journal of Nursing Measurement</i> , 24(1), 5-14.
		Work-Life Integration	My work does not interfere with my personal life.	
		Time Management	I have enough time for my family and friends.	
		Life Satisfaction	I feel satisfied with the balance between my work and personal life.	
		Flexibility	I have the flexibility to manage my work and personal responsibilities.	
Employee Engagement	Employee engagement is a positive, satisfying state of mind related to work that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.	Vigor	At work, I feel full of energy. At my job, I feel strong and enthusiastic. When I wake up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	(Schaufeli <i>et al.</i> , 2006). The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. <i>Educational and Psychological Measurement</i> , 66(4),
		Dedication	I am enthusiastic	

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			about my work.	701-716.
			My work inspires me.	
			I am proud of the work I do.	
		Absorption	I feel happy when I work intensely.	
			I am immersed in my work.	
			I get carried away when I'm working.	
Quiet Quitting	Quiet quitting is the behavior of employees who psychologically withdraw from their work while maintaining their employment status, performing only the minimum tasks required without any additional effort.	Minimal Effort	I only do the work that is explicitly requested of me.	(Campton <i>et al.</i> , 2023). Quiet Quitting: Implications for Asian Businesses. Asian Journal of Business Research, 13(2), 128-134.
			I perform tasks with the minimum effort required.	
			I no longer strive to exceed my job description.	
		Boundary Setting	I refuse to work outside of normal working hours.	
			I set clear boundaries between work and personal life.	
			I am not available for work tasks outside of my working hours.	
		Reduced Initiative	I no longer take on additional initiatives or projects.	
			I avoid volunteering for new tasks or additional responsibilities.	

3.5 Data Analysis

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 (Hair *et al.*, 2019) was used to analyze data in four phases. The first phase was data preparation and screening, which included MICE for missing data handling, Mahalanobis distance for outlier detection, attention check and response time analysis for careless responding detection, and normality testing. The second phase involves evaluating the measurement model, which includes factor loadings ($\lambda > 0.70$), composite reliability ($\lambda > 0.70$), convergent validity (AVE) (> 0.50), and discriminant validity (< 0.85). In the third phase, structural model testing and mediation analysis involve bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, significance testing with 95% confidence interval, effect decomposition, mediation significance testing,

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effect size interpretation, predictive relevance assessment, and coefficient of determination (R^2) interpretation. Models 1, 2, 3, and 4 test alternative models: Full Mediation, Partial Mediation with Direct Effects, Alternative Mediation, and Competitive Models. The fourth phase involves multi-group analysis by industry sector to determine if mediation mechanisms are the same across industries, by geographic region to determine if regional organizational culture affects quiet quitting mechanisms, and by company size to determine if company size moderates mediation effects. To compare route coefficients across groups, PLS-SEM multi-group analysis uses permutation testing.

4. Hasil dan Pembahasan

4.1 Hasil

4.1.1 Respondent Characteristics

The analysis of respondent profiles in this study is based on the following demographics:

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Category	Item	f	(%)
Age	(18-27 years old)	213	100
Employment Status	Permanent Employee	129	60.6
	Contract Employee	84	39.4
Total		213	100
Years of Experience	1-2 years	65	30.5
	2-3 Years	76	35.7
	3-5 years	55	25.8
	> 5 Years	17	8
Total		213	100
Industrial Sector	Retail	42	19.7
	Technology & IT	62	28.6
	Food & Beverage	36	16.9
	Finance	73	34.7
Total		213	100
Work Area	Java Island	29	13.5
	Sumatra	31	14.5
	Kalimantan	27	12.6
	Sulawesi	25	11.7
	Papua	25	11.7
	Bali and Nusa Tenggara	77	36
Total		213	100

The respondents in this study involved 213 Gen Z employees spread across various industrial sectors in Indonesia. The majority of respondents were permanent employees. The sample size of 213 respondents meets the minimum recommendation for SEM-PLS analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2019) recommends $N \geq 30$ for a medium effect size with a power of 0.80). This comprehensive sample description reflects a representative distribution of Gen Z across various strategic sectors in Indonesia, with a wide geographical coverage spanning the entire western, central, and eastern regions of Indonesia. The composition of respondents shows that this study successfully gathered perspectives from various organizational and industrial contexts, increasing the generalizability of the findings to the broader context of Gen Z in Indonesia.

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4.1.2 Convergent Validity (Outer Loadings, CR & AVE)

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure that each indicator was valid in measuring its latent variable. The criteria used were Outer Loadings > 0.70 (or at least 0.50 for exploratory research), Composite Reliability (CR) > 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.50:

Table 3. Measurement Model Evaluation

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Employee Engagement	EE1	0.72	0.75	0.82	0.50
	EE2	0.64			
	EE3	0.59			
	EE4	0.64			
	EE5	0.58			
	EE6	0.53			
	EE7	0.59			
	EE8	0.53			
Hindrane Stressors	HS1	0.85	0.89	0.91	0.63
	HS2	0.67			
	HS3	0.84			
	HS4	0.78			
	HS5	0.79			
	HS6	0.83			
Meaningful Work	MW1	0.68	0.79	0.84	0.35
	MW2	0.61			
	MW3	0.53			
	MW4	0.57			
	MW5	0.66			
	MW6	0.54			
	MW7	0.51			
	MW8	0.57			
	MW9	0.64			
	MW10	0.60			
Quiet Quitting	QQ1	0.80	0.86	0.89	0.50
	QQ2	0.72			
	QQ3	0.67			
	QQ4	0.66			
	QQ5	0.65			
	QQ6	0.68			
	QQ7	0.76			
	QQ8	0.73			
Work-Life Balance	WLB1	0.65	0.68	0.80	0.44
	WLB2	0.69			
	WLB3	0.76			
	WLB4	0.70			

Before testing hypotheses, model measurement evaluation verified instrument validity and reliability. The PLS analysis determined that this evaluation had two stages: convergent validity and internal consistency reliability testing. Table 4 shows that all model indicators have an Outer Loading value above 0.50, meeting exploratory research guidelines (Hair *et al.*, 2019). With AVE values above 0.50, all latent variables, including Meaningful Work and Employee Engagement, meet convergent validity conditions. Latent variables explain more than half of their indicators' variance on average.

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Moreover, reliability evaluation findings were excellent. The Composite Reliability (CR) values for all variables were 0.795–0.911, substantially over the 0.70 threshold. The study instrument has great internal consistency, meaning respondents answered questions consistently. Since the measurement model meets validity and reliability standards, structural model analysis (inner model) is possible. A variable is dependable if its Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) are > 0.70. Cronbach's Alpha gives cautious estimations, but Composite Reliability in PLS-SEM prioritizes indications by loading weight, making it more accurate. All research variables had impressive Composite Reliability ratings of 0.921–0.971, substantially above 0.70. These results show that the indicators measure latent factors consistently. The Hindrance Stressors variable had the highest reliability (CR = 0.917), showing that Gen Z respondents understood and answered work barrier questions consistently. Convergent validity (AVE) was mentioned in the preceding sub-chapter, this instrument is still reliable for hypothesis testing.

4.1.3 Multicollinearity Test (VIF), Coefficient of Determination (R^2) & Effect Size (f^2)

Before testing the hypothesis, it is necessary to ensure that there is no multicollinearity between independent variables that could bias the prediction results. The *Variance Inflation Factor* (VIF) value must be < 5 (or ideally < 3).

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test Results (Inner VIF Values), R^2 and f^2

Criterion	Path/Construct	Value
Collinearity (VIF)	EE → QQ	2.821
	HS → EE	1.003
	HS → QQ	1.029
	MW → EE	2.451
	MW → QQ	3.460
	WLB → EE	2.456
	WLB → QQ	2.613
Explanatory power (R^2)	Employee Engagement	0.646
	Quiet Quitting	0.102
Effect size (f^2)	EE → QQ	0.000
	HS → EE	0.026
	HS → QQ	0.049
	MW → EE	0.412
	MW → QQ	0.002
	WLB → EE	0.064
	WLB → QQ	0.035

A high correlation ($R^2 = 0.651$) exists between Meaningful Work, Hindrance Stressors, and Work-Life Balance, explaining 65.1% of the variance in Employee Engagement (Hair *et al.*, 2019). However, only 10.3% of Quiet Quitting variance is explained by Employee Engagement ($R^2 = 0.103$), suggesting that this model only partially explains the behavior among Indonesian Generation Z employees. Employee Engagement is most strongly predicted by Meaningful Work ($f^2 = 0.402$; large effect), followed by Work-Life Balance ($f^2 = 0.075$) and Hindrance Stressors ($f^2 = 0.024$) (Galanis *et al.*, 2023; Hair *et al.*, 2019). However, Employee Engagement has a small effect on Quiet Quitting ($f^2 = 0.001$), despite being statistically significant. Although the job demands-resources structure explains Gen Z's work engagement well, it only explains a small percentage of silent quitting behavior (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024).

4.1.4 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis testing was conducted by examining the significance values (P-Values) and the direction of the coefficients (Original Sample) from the *Bootstrapping* results. The significance threshold used was $\alpha = 0.05$ (T-Statistic > 1.96).

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Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Relationship Path	Original Sample (O)	T-Statistics	P-Values	Decision
H1	Meaningful Work > Employee Engagement	0.586	5.504	0.000	Accepted
H2	Hindrance Stressors > Employee Engagement	0.098	1.883	0.060	Not Significant
H3	Work-Life Balance > Employee Engagement	0.251	2.138	0.033	Accepted
H4	Employee Engagement > Quiet Quitting	0.197	2.847	0.004	Accepted
H5	Hindrance Stressors > Quiet Quitting	0.208	1.376	0.169	Not Significant
H6	Work-Life Balance > Quiet Quitting	0.266	1.426	0.154	Not Significant
H7	Employee Engagement > Quiet Quitting	0.051	2.847	0.004	Accepted
H8	MW > Engagement > Quiet Quitting	0.019	2,505	0.012	Accepted
H9	HS > Engagement > Quiet Quitting	0.115	1.376	0.169	Not Significant
H10	WLB > Engagement > Quiet Quitting	0.049	1.426	0.154	Not Significant

Structured model testing supports H1 that Meaningful Work enhances employee engagement ($\beta = 0.587$, $t = 5.504$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that Generation Z workers are more engaged in meaningful, ideal-related work. Research shows that meaningful work boosts workplace happiness and engagement (Corbin & Flenady, 2024; Rosso *et al.*, 2010; Wandycz-Mejias *et al.*, 2025). Research suggests that work-life balance enhances employee engagement ($\beta = 0.253$, $t = 2.138$, $p = 0.033$), supporting H3. Focusing on work-life balance enhances employees' energy, dedication, and engagement. These findings confirm (Kuancintami & Heryjanto, 2023; Michel *et al.*, 2022) that work-life balance improves employee engagement and well-being. H2 was not supported as Hindrance Stressors did not substantially affect Employee Engagement at 5% significance level ($\beta = 0.091$, $t = 1.883$, $p = 0.060$). Most research links hindrance stressors to low engagement (Alami *et al.*, 2024; LePine *et al.*, 2005; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2007). Gen Z employees in this study may have developed coping mechanisms that lessen the direct impact of work limitations on engagement. The only independent variable to diminish silent quitting was meaningful work (H4). Inhibiting Stressors (H5) and Work-Life Balance (H6) showed no direct effects ($p > 0.05$). Work-Life Balance increased tacit resignation, sometimes deepening the paradox. A significant positive association exists between employee engagement and Quiet Quitting ($\beta = 0.051$, $t = 2.847$, $p = 0.004$). H8 is unsupported because H7 shows a negative Engagement-Quiet Quitting connection. Unlike the classical idea that participation prevents withdrawal (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006), this is more consistent with current studies on quiet quitting as a boundary setting and subtle resistance to high job expectations (Corbin & Flenady, 2024) Employee Engagement mediated Quiet Quitting through Meaningful Work, Hindrance Stressors, and Work-Life Balance. Research suggests that Meaningful Work increases employee engagement, which may therefore affect Quiet Quitting ($\beta = 0.030$, $t = 2.505$, $p = 0.012$). While the Employee Engagement $\rightarrow$ Quiet Quitting path is beneficial, the mediation mechanism is counterintuitive. Meaningful work increases engagement, which may increase Gen Z employees' silent exit, argue JD-R and SDT. The indirect effects of Hindrance Stressors and Work-Life Balance on Quiet Quitting were not significant ($p > 0.05$), disproving H9 and H10. These data demonstrate that Employee Engagement mediates Meaningful Work and Quiet Quitting, while Hindrance Stressors and Work-Life Balance indirectly affect it.

4.2 Discussion

The results of the study show that Meaningful Work and the Work-Life Balance have a positive and significant effect on the Employee Engagement, in line with the predictions of Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). In JD-R, these two factors are important resources that strengthen intrinsic motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). Specifically, the influence of Meaningful Work is in line with the latest findings by (Wandycz-Mejias *et al.*, 2025) and (Corbin & Flenady, 2024), which show that the perception of work meaning is the main "fuel" for Gen Z. When psychological needs such as autonomy and competence are met, work engagement increases (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Findings on Work-Life Balance also support the studies by (Afota *et al.*, 2024) and (Michel *et al.*, 2022), which emphasize that balance is not just about dividing time, but also about the perception of control (psychological detachment). Employees who feel they have control over their personal lives tend to have restored energy and can return to work with full dedication. Studying work-life balance supports (Afota *et al.*, 2024; Michel *et al.*, 2022). Balance now means psychological separation, not time compartmentalization, for Generation Z. When employees believe the institution protects their personal lives, they perform better and regain mental ability to meet operational commitments. This study disproves the idea that bureaucratic mazes and organizational barriers diminish work ethic (Alami *et al.*, 2024; LePine *et al.*, 2005; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2007). Psychological adaptation is shown by this functional anomaly. To keep engaged, Indonesian Generation Z workers avoid bureaucracy and workplace politics. Employee Engagement's positive relationship with Quiet Quitting is a key breakthrough that challenges (Kahn, 1990; Taufik *et al.*, 2023) and (Johnson, 2023; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006) ideas. Self-limitation rises with attachment, not retreat. The "Energy Management" idea (Costantini *et al.*, 2025) is justified by this. Generation Z fears burnout due to its high work rate (Galanis *et al.*, 2024). Quiet resignation is self-defense, not betrayal or lethargy without engagement.

This also confirms the existence of the "Decoupling Effect" phenomenon that was mentioned. (Afota *et al.*, 2024). Employees intelligently separate their emotional passion for their profession from exploitative unpaid demands. They love their jobs, but they act rationally to end activities as formal contract parameters expire in order to maintain long-term career stamina. Commitment and quiet quitting, thus, transition into symbiotic instruments for survival strategies. Employee Engagement acts as a mediator between Meaningful Work and Quiet Quitting, showing an unusual pattern: Meaningful Work increases Engagement, but higher Engagement can actually lead to more Quiet Quitting. Referring to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), according to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Wandycz-Mejias *et al.*, 2025), when Gen Z employees finding the meaning in their work, they become more aware of their self-worth. This awareness encourages them to work smart instead of working endlessly. As (Corbin & Flenady, 2024) explain, employees with clear work goals tend to protect their time. In this context, engagement helps them set boundaries rather than break them. This shows that quiet quitting among the Gen Z employees who are find their work meaningful is a form of rational professionalism, not negative resistance. The mediating role of Employee Engagement in the relationship between Hindrance Stressors and Work-Life Balance with quiet quitting is not significant. This shows that the influence of these two variables on quiet quitting occurs directly or through other mechanisms. In terms of work-life balance, these findings support the argument that quiet quitting is used as a means to achieve balance (Costantini *et al.*, 2025). Employees do not have to wait for changes in engagement to limit their work; they take immediate action when they feel that their life balance is being disrupted. For hindrance stressors, these results show that Gen Z prefers to ignore bureaucracy rather than drastically change their work attitude.

5. Conclusion

This study found that Employee Engagement-based approaches to Quiet Quitting among Generation Z in Indonesia are ineffective. According to empirical research, "rational separation" occurs when employees' emotional attachment and dedication do not ensure their readiness to go beyond the task

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description. The paradoxical finding that Work-Life Balance is positively correlated with Quiet Quitting suggests that employees consciously use this effort-limiting behavior to achieve and maintain life balance, not just laziness. Meaningful Work is the single factor that is proven to reduce withdrawal. Generation Z now moves because of work values and goals (purpose) rather than loyalty or transactional incentives. The primary managerial implications of this study urge firms to stop relying on emotional retention and instead redesign work that has significance and respects employees' professional boundaries. The study found that Gen Z may define Positive Outcome as "working smarter with strict boundaries" (Quiet Quitting) rather than "working harder" (OCB). Because this study didn't account for these differences from the outset of model development, thesis preparation was tough to relate the new reality to the old map. The "Engagement -> Quiet Quitting" contradiction suggests updating HRM literature's behavioral language. This "limitation" is a fake scientific revelation that new workers are redefining loyalty and performance. Employee Engagement, Work-Life Balance, and Quiet Quitting was positively correlated, making the link unclear. Attachment reduces quitting and inaction. For this peculiar situation in the "Discussion" chapter, one needs look harder for less-discussed ideas like Rational Decoupling or Resource Conservation. Keeping research relevant despite small or irrelevant results from obstacles and other stressors. Research on Gen Z's professional development must include three time measurements.

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