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Investigating the Mediating Effect of Quiet Quitting on Turnover Intention Across Generations X, Y and Z

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- This study sets out to examine the mediating role of quiet quitting in the relationship between various workplace antecedents and turnover intention, with a specific focus on generational differences across GenX, GenY, and GenZ.
Aims(s)- The primary aim is to identify the antecedents that show significant indirect generation-specific effects on turnover intention via quiet quitting.
Design/methodology/approach- Utilizing a sample of 2,193 urban and suburban employees from Berlin, Germany, this study tested a mediation model featuring five independent variables linked to quiet quitting, with turnover intention as the outcome variable. The analysis employed Cronbach's alpha, confirmatory factor analysis, multicollinearity checks, and multiple-mediation regression techniques.
Findings-The results reveal that quiet quitting partially mediated the relationship between dissatisfaction and turnover intention for GenY, as well as the relationship between negative extra-role behavior and cynicism/depersonalization for GenZ. Additionally, negative work-life balance showed partial mediation across all three generations-GenX, GenY, and GenZ. Full mediation effects were observed specifically in GenZ for both negative extra-role behavior and cynicism/depersonalization. No significant mediating effect of quiet quitting was found for disengagement.
Limitations of the study- The sample is limited to Berlin and its suburbs, with no comparative data from other regions. The generational groups are represented by moderately sized subsamples. Additionally, after conducting reliability analysis and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), most scales were reduced to just two or three items.
Originality/value- This study positions quiet quitting as a mediating factor within a network of related variables and is among the first to examine how these mediation effects differ across GenX, GenY, and GenZ.

KEY WORDS

Quiet Quitting, Turnover Intention, GenX, GenY, GenZ, Mediation Analysis

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1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of quiet quitting (QQ) is currently a topic of considerable interest within the research community, with some researchers identifying it as a 'new' construct (Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022; Johnson, 2023). It is defined as "employees doing the bare minimum for their work without any extra effort and contribution" (Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022, p. 285). This lack of investment in one's work can have significant consequences for organizations, such as an increase in turnover intention (Galanis et al., 2024) and subsequently falling labour productivity, low engagement and reduced organizational performance (Anand et al., 2023). According to Gallup (Harter, 2022) over 50% of workers worldwide may be considered as quiet quitters, which is estimated to a potential global GDP loss of $8.9 trillion per year due to low engagement. Interest in examining and better understanding the QQ phenomenon is thus understandable. The roots of QQ lie in the "great resignation" (Serenko, 2023) after the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Ng & Stanton, 2023), when employees had time to reflect on toxic work cultures (Sull et al., 2022). Since QQ went viral on TikTok (Galanis, Katsiroumpa, Vraka, Siskou, et al., 2023; Hamouche et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2022), the first reports suggest it to be a GenZ and young millennials trend (Harter, 2022).

However, little is known about variations in QQ among different generations. Thus, our study aims to provide preliminary insights into the comparative research call made by Hamouche et al. (2023).

QQ has had a broad study appeal within various management science fields, including business and management (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023), human resource management (Nimmi et al., 2024), and tourism and hospitality management (Hamouche et al., 2023). It has also been researched in social work (Scheyett, 2022), humanities and social sciences (Lu et al., 2023), and health science (Galanis, Katsiroumpa, Vraka, Siskou, et al., 2023). While most of these studies adopt a theoretical approach, conducting (systematic) literature reviews (e.g., Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022; Hamouche et al., 2023; Johnson, 2023; Kachhap & Singh, 2024), there are also some empirical studies. The latter emphasize the necessity of placing and studying QQ within a specific nomological network. These studies address constructs related to QQ, such as cynicism, extra-role behaviour, or disengagement (Anand et al., 2023; Hamouche et al., 2023). Therefore, considering such constructs as potential causes or antecedents of QQ and examining their relationships is currently an important avenue for further research (Kachhap & Singh, 2024).

Some researchers have expressed concerns regarding QQ being treated as a new concept (e.g. Boy & Sürmeli, 2023; Formica & Sfodera, 2022) and also surrounding the validation of QQ scales (e.g., Quiet Quitting Scale (QQS) by Galanis, Katsiroumpa et al. (2023) or Quiet Quitting Intention (QQI) scale by Anand et al. (2023)). Nevertheless, QQ continuously receives a widespread recognition in practitioner circles (e.g. Harter, 2022), as well as social media and executive boardrooms (Patel et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study seeks to provide more comprehensive empirical evidence by addressing the following research questions:

(1) To what extent does QQ predict employee turnover intention (Gabelaia & Bagociunaite, 2024)?

(2) Does QQ mediate the relationship between constructs related to QQ (i.e., antecedents) and employee turnover intention (e.g. K. T. Kim & Sohn, 2024)?

(3) Does the mediating role of QQ differ across generational cohorts, indicating generation-specific patterns in the QQ–turnover intention relationship (Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022).

Thus, this study sets out to examine the mediating role that quiet quitting has for the relationship between a number of different antecedents and turnover intention. This is done in relation to the different generations X, Y, and Z.

The structure of this paper is as follows. The theoretical section briefly outlines the origins of QQ and contrasts its definitions. Thereafter, QQ and its antecedents that are relevant for this study are defined and discussed briefly. The theoretical review section ends with the summary of the main research model for subsequent empirical analysis including hypotheses. The method section focuses on detailing the mediation analysis, followed by the presentation and discussion of our results.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 DEFINITIONAL INSIGHTS, THE ROOTS OF QQ AND SCALE REMARKS

In an attempt to draw a sharper line around the concept of QQ, Formica and Sfodera (2022, p. 900) state that "the term QQ refers to the limited commitment of employees to carry out the assigned duties and to relinquish from any other task not specified in their job description", which shows its attitudinal facet. This definition is enlarged by the behavioural facet that employees are doing the bare minimum without any extra effort (Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022) where 'bare minimum' means, that an employee "simply does the work that is expected of the position, without going above and beyond what is expected" (Scheyett, 2022, p. 5). The definition of QQ further entails an emotional facet that can be notes in "the disappointment and powerlessness of people in the current environment" (Lu et al., 2023, p. 3). Thus, from our perspective QQ includes all three facets, attitude (limited commitment and motivation), behaviour (working the bare minimum), and emotion (disappointment and powerlessness). While most definitions not necessarily include all of the three facets, as outlined by Armstrong & Pfandler (2024), all agree on the outcome, that employees are less productive and no longer volunteer for additional tasks (Anand et al., 2023)..

Since QQ went viral (Galanis, Katsiroumpa, Vraka, Siskou, et al., 2023; Hamouche et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2022), market and opinion research institutes such as Gallup (Harter, 2022) or news websites such as the BBC (Christian, 2022), Bloomberg (Constantz, 2022), Forbes (Hart, 2022), or The Guardian (Tapper,

2022) have been quick to adopt the term QQ as a social phenomenon (Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022). Interestingly, the process of employee resignation and turning away from organizations has been studied for some time (Klotz & Zimmerman, 2015). However, different terms have been used to describe it, such as disengagement, neglect, or withdrawal (Ng & Stanton, 2023). The origin of QQ is said to date back more than 10 years, to when economist Mark Boldger first coined the term (Formica & Sfodera, 2022).

The theoretical and empirical studies cited above consider QQ to be a precursor to turnover intention. At the same time, QQ is related to dissatisfaction, disengagement, detachment, withdrawal, negative extra-role behaviour, cynicism, depersonalization and negative work-life balance. In the next subsection, we briefly address these interlinkages.

2.2 TURNOVER INTENTION AS A CONSEQUENCE OF QQ

Turnover was initially defined as the ratio of employees who left an organization in a specific period of time (Price, 1977) and later shifted to a definition including the movement within organizational boundaries (Price, 2001). Conversely, QQ does not necessarily mean that employees leave a company, but initial evidence suggests that higher levels of QQ are associated with higher levels of turnover intention (Galanis, Moisoglou, et al., 2023). Thus, QQ is considered to be a precursor of turnover intention (Galanis, Katsiroumpa, Vraka, Siskou, et al., 2023), or in other words turnover intention can be seen as a result of QQ (Pevec, 2023). For example, Galanis, Katsiroumpa, Vraka, Siskou, et al. (2023) find empirical support for a high correlation between QQ and turnover intention. Thus, turnover intention is used as a dependent variable (Anand et al., 2023). Interestingly, drawing back on the "great resignation" as the root cause of QQ (Serenko, 2023), turnover intention is also one of the core outcomes driven by the increased need for meaningful work (Xu et al., 2023), as well as the toxic organizational cultures exacerbated circumstances that have remained unresolved (Robertson, 2021).

2.3 CONSIDERED ANTECEDENTS OF QQ

(Dis-)Satisfaction is a widely researched topic with numerous detailed definitions. The most common of these refers to it as an "emotional-affective response to a job or specific aspects of a job" (Spector, 1985). A widespread workforce dissatisfaction is said to be one of the causes of QQ (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). While dissatisfaction is discussed as a reason for QQ (Hamouche et al., 2023), it is also mentioned to have an impact on QQ (Pevec, 2023). Initial studies have looked at dissatisfaction as a correlate of QQ (Liu-Lastres et al., 2024), or as a part of QQ (Esen, 2023). Latest studies seem to prove that high levels of QQ are associated with low levels of job satisfaction (Galanis, Katsiroumpa, Vraka, Konstantakopoulou, et al., 2023).

Disengagement is defined as the "as the uncoupling of selves from work roles" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694) and discussed as an overarching concept, that represents "a defence mechanism to calibrate … for dealing with both internal ambivalences and external conditions" (Pevec, 2023). It is further argued that withdrawal is the behavioural disengagement and detachment is the mental disengagement (Afrahi et al., 2022). Thus, it can be concluded all three concepts are, at the very least, very closely related or do form one construct. Disengagement is said to be one reason for QQ (Hamouche et al., 2023), and it is also described as one of the key factors influencing it (Pevec, 2023). The Gallup report, details disengagement as one of the major characteristic of quiet quitters (Harter, 2022), consequently some researchers maintain QQ to involve disengagement (Anand et al., 2023). Others even define becoming disengaged as quietly quitting (Richardson, 2023) or that quiet quitters are disengaged (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). Currently, none of the reported studies deals with the impact of disengagement.

Extra-role behaviour is defined as an "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system" (Organ, 1988, p. 4). This was initially close to the understanding of organizational citizenship behaviour, but has since been redefined along the lines of contextual performance (Organ, 1997). As the outlined definitions of QQ emphasize employees only doing the expected work and not going above and beyond, or perform extra duties (Scheyett, 2022), one could summarize QQ as a 'negative' form of extra-role behaviour (Hamouche et al., 2023).

Cynicism, originally labelled depersonalization, is one of the three dimensions of burnout, along with exhaustion and ineffectiveness, and lack of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Cynicism and detachment from the job are used interchangeably and defined as "negative or inappropriate attitudes, detached concern, irritability, loss of idealism, and withdrawal" (Maslach & Leiter, 2017, p. 37). It is important to consider this concept, as two parts of the definition cover constructs that have already been introduced, namely detachment and withdrawal. Unlike cynicism, QQ does not necessarily mean indifference or cold behaviour toward job requirements and peers (Hamouche et al., 2023). Initial studies show only low correlations [.3-.38] between QQ and work-related, personal, and client-related burnout (Galanis, Katsiroumpa, Vraka, Konstantakopoulou, et al., 2023). Nevertheless, due to the definitional overlap, we decided to keep cynicism in our study.

Work-Life balance is defined via the concept of work-family conflict, that can be understood as an "inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). If both roles are balanced, there is no conflicting situation. QQ is said to be related to the individual desire for a work-life balance (Hamouche et al., 2023), and especially the younger generations' perception of it (Scheyett, 2022). Moreover, it is often positioned as one of the main drivers of QQ, particularly triggered by the pandemic crisis (Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022), or increased focus on personal well-being (Anand et al., 2023).

2.4 QQ AND GENERATIONAL EFFECTS

As Alwin and McCammon pointed out, generational differences in the workplace extend beyond simple age-based distinctions and reflect deeper mechanisms through which social, technological, and organizational change unfolds over time. Rather than serving merely as demographic categories, generations function as dynamic agents that shape and are shaped by evolving work norms, institutional structures, and cultural expectations. Each generational cohort embodies distinct historical experiences and socialization patterns that influence its orientation toward work, authority, and collaboration (Alwin & McCammon, 2003)(Alwin & McCammon, 2003). As cohorts gain seniority and managerial influence, they modify workplace structures and norms to reflect their generational priorities. Research on generational differences with regard to workplace behavior has long been a popular topic (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Mannheim (Mannheim, 1952) suggested that generational differences occur in people's attitudes and values which are a consequence of different macro-economic and societal influences. The current working generations of interest cover GenX (1961-1980), GenY (1981-1994), and GenZ (1995-2012) (Gurunathan & Lakshmi, 2023). While there is a continuous debate regarding the existence of generational differences (Jorgensen, 2003; Smola & Sutton, 2002), there is evidence supporting measurable differences with regard to commitment, and turnover intention (e.g. Benson & Brown, 2011).

Thus it is essential for modern companies to understand the current needs and characteristics of the youngest generation Z (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021), as well as other generations. For example, it has been advocated that GenZ has "more tendency to quiet quitting" (Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022, p. 286) than others. Furthermore, it has been argued that (dis-)satisfaction is not only a driver for Millennials or GenZ, but also for older employees (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). Interestingly, past studies have been rather descriptive and further research is needed to investigate mediators and moderators in the relationship between generation and work-related variables (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

2.5 FINAL RESEARCH MODEL

Following the theoretical discussion above, we summarize our research model via five hypotheses with QQ as our central construct. We position the concept of turnover intention as a possible follow-up effect of QQ, and use it as the main dependent variable for this study.

Our set of hypotheses address the interplay of previously identified constructs, QQ and turnover intention:

H1: QQ mediates the linkage between dissatisfaction and turnover intention.
H2: QQ mediates the relationship between disengagement and turnover intention.
H3: QQ mediates the relationship between negative extra-role behaviour and turnover intention.
H4: QQ mediates the relationship between cynicism / depersonalization and turnover intention.

H5: QQ mediates the relationship between negative work-life balance and turnover intention.

As all discussed constructs in our research model are used as antecedents, we tested a multiple mediation model: First, we analysed the direct effect of QQ on turnover (b) as well as the direct effect of the discussed antecedents of QQ on turnover (c1 to c5). Second, we study the impact of all considered antecedents on QQ (a1 to a5). Third, we compared the direct effects of the considered antecedents (c1 to c5) with their indirect effects via QQ (a1 to a5 & b). Our final research model combines the outlined perspectives in a multiple mediation-regression model, as shown in figure 1.

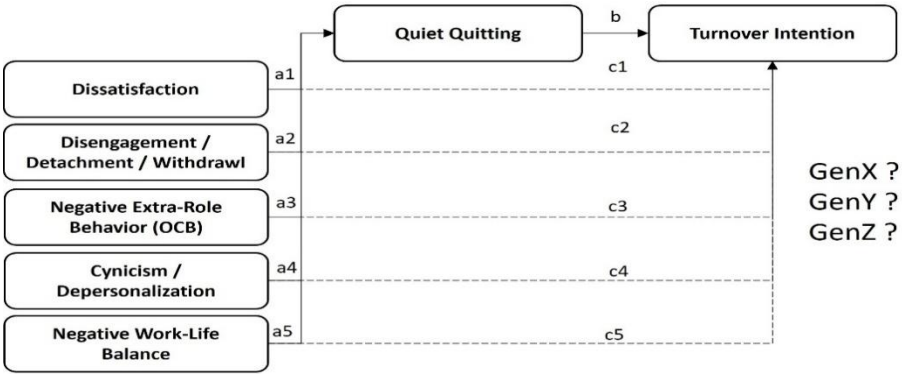

Fig 1. Final Research Model

Source: Designed by authors

However, as discussed above, all hypotheses of our final model will also be tested across the different generations X, Y, and Z.

3 METHOD

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

In line with the purpose of this paper to test the previously developed hypotheses and gather new data with regard to different generations' perceptions of QQ, a quantitative approach was selected (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). This enables the measurement of relationships numerically and to assess their significance objectively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). More specifically, this study follows a cross-sectional research strategy where primary empirical quantitative data is collected via an online survey (Anderson & Fontinha, 2024).

3.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Our target population are urban and suburban employees of the capital city of Berlin, Germany. According to the "German Census 2022", the differentiation of age groups is not in line with the definition of generations provided above, thus we needed to roughly divide one age group (40-49) by two to better match the GenX (1961-1980 = age of 64-45; 734k employees), GenY (1981-1994 = age of 44-31; 660k employees), and GenZ (1995-2012 = age of 30-13, 734k employees). This makes a total of 1,732 mil. employees.

The sample was collected among urban and suburban employees located in the capital city of Berlin, Germany. We used a convenience-based snowball sampling approach (Parker et al., 2020) with a seed of undergraduate students reaching N=2,193. Age statistics showed a good allocation of participants between generations X (N_x=452), Y (N_y=670) and Z (N_z=1071). Gender statistics confirmed an almost equal distribution between women (N_f=1,115) and men (N_m=1,040), with a small portion of diverse (N_d=26). We only considered full-time employees (N_ft=1,489), and thus excluded workers in part-time employment (N_pt=320), as well as those that did not finalize the survey. This resulted in a final sample size of n = 1,225, with a nearly homogenous distribution across the GenX (n_x = 362), GenY (n_y = 395), and GenZ (n_z = 468). Applying the Krejcie and Morgan Tables (KMT), with $n \geq 384$, one is able to cover a population of one million and more, appropriate for the estimated employees of 1,732 mil. from the "German Census 2022".

3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND DATA PROTECTION

Informed consent was provided via the introductory page of our online study. Participants were informed about the content and aim of the study as well as the responsible research team. The data was directly collected, anonymised and only general socio-demographical data was gathered. Participants had the chance to pause or leave the survey at any time and respondents with any missing values were excluded from the data analysis procedure. The server and software used were provided by SoSciSurvey which is located in Germany. Thus, all data protection regulations and security protocols were followed and are in line with the German regulations. Data was downloaded and deleted on the server; responses are stored only with numeric IDs in a CSV format.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND MEASURES

QQ is our core construct that has not yet been extensively researched. Due to the relative novelty of its measurement, at the time of data collection in 2023 we identified two measures that are both in need of further validation. Galanis, Katsiroumpa et al. (2023) used a sample of employees in the public and private sector in Greece aged 18 and older to validate the Quiet Quitting Scale (QQS) a QQ scale (n=922). The second study by Anand et al. (2023) also developed and validated a Quiet Quitting Intention scale (QQI, Anand et al., 2023) using alumni from a highly ranked university in India (n=350). We decided to use the QQI measurement scale (Anand et al., 2023), which reported good performance indicators (alpha: 0.829, factor loadings: 0.5 to 0. 858 and AVG 0.722, hetero-trait/mono-trait ratios: 0.138 to 0.683). The eight items cover aspects such as "I feel there is a lack of passion and enthusiasm in me to work above and beyond" or "I am doing the bare minimum work to avoid being fired", and are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1= never/completely disagree to 5= very often/completely agree).

Turnover intention is the main dependent variable in our study. There are several established measures, which vary considerably in length. For example, one such measure comprises of a single item (Grover & Crooker, 1995), while others entail 15 items (Su, 2021). Given that our study addresses a number of related constructs, we selected a medium-sized measure comprising five items (W. G. Kim et al., 2005). The latter showed good factor loadings (0.75-0.77), and reliability statistics in its pilot study (alpha: .865). The items cover questions such as "I do not enjoy this job and have been searching for other positions" or "I hope that I can find another job in the same industry".

(Dis-)Satisfaction has received a lot of scholarly attention and thus entails a number of different scales that stem from different approaches, such as facet-based and adjective-focused JDI (P. C. Smith et al., 1969), or facet-based and agreement-focused JSS (Spector, 1985), or a very short general job satisfaction measures such as JGS (Ironson et al., 1989), or GSS (W. G. Kim et al., 2005). We decided to select a short version with no more than five items that showed good factor loadings (0.54-0.87), alpha scores have not been reported. Sample items include "I feel fairly-well satisfied with my present job" or "I find real enjoyment in my work".

As *(dis-)engagement* is a facet of burnout, we considered the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI, Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI, Maslach et al., 1996). As the MBI is rather long (22 items), we decided to go for the OLBI with 16 items, eight per subscale). It is focused on exhaustion and disengagement with good alpha statistics (0.87 and 0.81), with the following sample item "It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way").

The concept of ***(negative) extra-role behaviour*** was introduced as a significant component of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) construct. There are several measures of OCB (Farh et al., 1997; Podsakoff et al., 1990; C. A. Smith et al., 1983) that show overlapping artefacts with counterproductive work behaviour (Spector et al., 2010). Thus, we decided to use a shortened 10-item version of an OCB checklist that tries to avoid overlapping (S. Fox et al., 2012) with good alpha statistics (0.84). Sample items include "Helped co-worker learn new skills or shared job knowledge" or "Volunteered for extra work assignments". In accordance with the theoretical discussion, the coefficients are anticipated to exhibit a negative value.

Cynicism and depersonalization are equivalent terms for the same subscale of the burnout construct. Thus, we considered the OLBI (OLBI, Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005) and MBI (MBI, Maslach et al., 1996). While the OLBI is focuses solely on exhaustion and disengagement, the MBI addresses burnout, depersonalization and personal achievement. Thus, we decided to use the shortened depersonalization subscale of the MBI (Poghosyan et al., 2009), which showed good alpha statistics (0.73) and factor loadings (Forné & Yuguero, 2022). Sample items include "I have become more insensitive to people since I've been working" and "I really don't care about what happens to some of my clients".

(Negative) work-life balance can be approached positively by focusing on the balance (Hayman, 2005), or negatively by focusing on the work-family conflict (Haslam et al., 2015). As the former is a 15 item-version and the QQ focuses on the negative side of the construct, we decided to go for the latter. It differentiates between the work-to-family and family-to-work subscales, both consisting of five items each. Haslam et al. (2015) reported good tau-equivalence statistics (0.70) and factor loadings (0.56-0.92). Sample items include "There is no time left at the end of the day to do the things I'd like at home" and "If I did not have a family, I'd be a better employee".

In sum, the total number of items is 51, covering seven variables. The suggested measures have been mostly rated via a 5-point or 7-point Likert scale, we thus applied the shorter 5-point scale of one (strongly agree) to five (strongly disagree) across all measures.

3.5 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

First, we conducted reliability analysis with Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA, Hair et al., 2014). Thresholds for alpha values are typically set between 0.5 and 0.6 for early research scales and between 0.6 and 0.8 for basic research tools. The minimal estimate of tolerance is generally accepted to be 0.9 (Streiner, 2003). CFA must consider Chi-Square statistics (X^2, df, p), standardized loadings of at least 0.5, and ideally higher than 0.7. Kline (2005) suggests SRMR below 0.1 and RMSEA between 1.0 and 0.08 for marginal fit. The acceptable RMSEA range is 0.08-0.05, with 0.05 considered good (Fabrigar et al., 1999). For publication, the acceptable range is below 0.06 (Xia & Yang, 2019) and TLI/CFI should be above 0.9 (Hair et al., 2014; Kline, 2005). With regard to the factor loadings, we additionally considered achieving a minimum of three items per scale. In the case of two items per scale, the items must be highly correlated with each other ($r > 0.70$) and fairly uncorrelated with other items (Yong & Pearce, 2013). Furthermore, single-item scales may be sufficient in case the construct is narrowly defined and the item possesses a high face validity (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007).

Second, we analysed the direct correlational effects among the constructs to check for multicollinearity. The Pearson r correlation coefficient is classified as weak when its value is between 0 and 0.3, moderate if > 0.3 and 0.6, and strong when its value exceeds 0.6 (Dancey & Reidy, 2007). We expected significant correlations (in the range of weak to strong) among all constructs and turnover intention. However, we anticipated significant weak (maximum moderate) among the independent variables. Additionally, the VIF statistics were examined with a target value of less than one, indicating no correlation, or a value between one and five, which represents a weak to moderate correlation (Shrestha, 2020).

Third, to analyse the outlined interdependencies, we undertook multiple mediation analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM, Hair et al., 2014) in R (J. Fox, 2006). While the majority of the model fit indicator thresholds are aligned with those utilized in CFA, it is recommended that the TLI/CFI (Hair et al., 2014) and (A)GFI (Byrne, 1994) be above 0.95 to ensure that false large-scale models are not accepted as true. The individual mediation effects of QQ were set up in a structural equation model, which was then applied to the full sample and to the different generational subsamples

4 RESULTS

4.1 SCALE RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ASSESSMENT

Cronbach's alpha statistics revealed, that none of the seven scales fall below the threshold of 0.5. (Dis)Satisfaction scale did however go beyond the threshold of 0.9, indicating that too many items were used: Thus, we removed the items that decreasing the level and subsequently allow the alpha levels to fall

below the recommended threshold. Table one shows the alpha levels before and after the item removal, as well as the final number of items for CFA. The item content of the QQ scale was revised by subject-matter experts, resulting in a reduction of the original 8-item scale to four items in total. This modification did not impact the alpha score, which remained within an acceptable range.

Table 1. Alpha Statistics

Variables	Role	raw.alpha	std.alpha	G6.alpha	Items
Quiet Quitting	MV	(0.799) 0.705	(0.802) 0.702	(0.797) 0.658	(8) 4
Turnover Intention	DV	0.817	0.817	0.822	5
(Dis-)Satisfaction	IV	(0.916) 0.880	(0.916) 0.881	(0.910) 0.867	(5) 4
Disengagement / Detachment / Withdrawal	IV	0.807	0.811	0.819	8
(Negative) Extra-Role Behavior	IV	0.829	0.832	0.848	10
Cynicism / Depersonalization	IV	0.806	0.806	0.779	5
(Negative) Work-Life Balance	IV	0.885	0.885	0.912	10

Note: DV = dependent variable, MV = mediating variable, IV = independent variable; values in brackets are alpha levels before item reduction

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The CFA resulted in a further item reduction, which was required for the optimization of standardized factor loadings. After the first round of analysis (with reliability-adapted scales from Table 1), we achieved significant Chi-Square statistics (X^2: 6,516.37, df: 968, p: < 0.000), but inadequate model statistics that failed to meet the minimum requirements (SRMR < 0.1: 0.077, RMSEA < 0.06: 0.072 acceptable but not publishable, CFI/TLI > 0.9: 0.773/0.758). All items with a factor loading below 0.7 were then excluded, with the stipulation that at least three items be retained for each scale. This resulted in QQ, turnover intention, disengagement, and depersonalization exhibiting one item below 0.7 but above 0.5. After the second round of analysis, we achieved significant Chi-Square statistics (X^2: 782.84, df: 188, p: < 0.000) and better model statistics that exceeded the minimum requirements (SRMR < 0.1: 0.049, RMSEA < 0.06: 0.052 acceptable and publishable, CFI/TLI > 0.9: 0.956/0.946).

In order to be able to conduct SEM-based mediation analysis in R, we had to further increase the model statistics, particularly TLI and (A)GFI. We did so by checking face validity of items loadings between 0.5 and 0.7. The QQ scale contained one item below the ideal factor loading, which focused on the lack of learning and growth opportunities, while the remaining items were addressing passion, enthusiasm and the lack of care. Thus, we excluded that item. The same was done for turnover intention, because it included two items addressing the intention to quit, while the third item with the lowest scoring solely addressed the hope of finding a new job. Thus, we excluded that item as well. Disengagement included two items addressing the emotional connection to work, while the item with the lowest scoring only addressed talking about work. Thus, that item was excluded. Finally, for depersonalization two items addressed a general attitude towards work and people, while the third item with lowest scoring specifically addressed colleagues. Thus, it was excluded as well. After a careful elimination of all items with the lowest scoring, the CFA statistics were convincing with significant Chi-Square (X^2: 305.16, df: 114, p: < 0.000), good model statistics (SRMR < 0.1: 0.032, RMSEA < 0.06: 0.038 good and publishable, CFI/TLI > 0.9: 0.984/0.978) and requirements for SEM were also met ((A)GFI > 0.95: (0.958) 0.972). The standardized items loadings are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. CFA Statistics

Variables & Items	Role	raw.alpha
Quiet Quitting		
Item6	0.646	0.000
Item7	0.824	0.000
Turnover Intention		
Item1	0.797	0.000
Item2	0.869	0.000
(Dis-)Satisfaction		

Item3	0.900	0.000
Item4	0.785	0.000
Item5	0.910	0.000
Disengagement / Detachment / Withdrawal		
Item1_r	0.776	0.000
Item4_r	0.8851	0.000
(Negative) Extra-Role Behaviour		
Item1	0.777	0.000
Item2	0.870	0.000
Item3	0.712	0.000
Cynicism / Depersonalization		
Item2	0.735	0.000
Item3	0.880	0.000
(Negative) Work-Life Balance		
Item1	0.846	0.000
Item2	0.825	0.000
Item3	0.924	0.000
Item4	0.819	0.000

Source: Authors' own elaboration

4.2 TESTING FOR MULTICOLLINEARITY

As evident from Table 3, there are significant correlations between all our constructs and turnover intention, ranging from weak ((negative) extra-role behaviour) to moderate (rest). Bearing in mind that turnover intention is the main dependent variable, this interdependence has been expected.

Table 3. Multicollinearity Statistics

Variables	Role	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Quiet Quitting	MV						
2. Turnover Intention	DV	0.40*					
3. (Dis-)Satisfaction	IV	-0.49*	-0.58*				
4. Disengagement / Detachment / Withdrawal	IV	0.45*	0.53*	-0.68*			
5. (Negative) Extra-Role Behaviour	IV	-0.17*	-0.13*	0.17*	-0.19*		
6. Cynicism / Depersonalization	IV	0.33*	0.35*	-0.28*	0.26*	0.00	
7. (Negative) Work-Life Balance	IV	0.24*	0.32*	-0.23*	0.23*	0.02	0.32*

*Note: * $p < 0.001$.*
Source: Authors' own elaboration

Additionally, the intercorrelation between the independent variables is mostly significant between (varying from weak to moderate), as well as insignificant in places (e.g. between depersonalization / work-family conflict and (negative) extra-role behaviour). A significant and strong correlation is observed between disengagement and (dis-)/satisfaction. This finding aligns with the conclusions of the Gallup report, which indicates a decline in engagement and satisfaction among younger millennials (aged under 35) and GenZ employees (Harter, 2022). The VIF statistics among all independent variables (set against QQ and turnover intention) also support that there is no multicollinearity at hand. Correlations are only within the range of weak to moderate (max. 1.914 min. 1.047).

4.3 TESTING THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF QQ

While it is possible to conduct a multi-mediation model analysis with SEM package in R, it lacks the possibility of testing the same mediator with different indirect loadings. Thus, we conducted separate

mediation analyses with the SEM package. The results for the full dataset and the three generations are summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Standardized Mediation Statistics of QQ on Turnover Intention

Variables & Indicators	Total Effects	GenX Effects	GenY Effects	GenZ Effects
Satisfaction				
Effect	bms	nm	pm	nm
X^2 / df (p)	21.56 / 11 (0.028)	13.21 / 11 (0.000)	13.35 / 11 (0.000)	24.25 / 11 (0.000)
CFI / TLI	0.998 / 0.995	0.998 / 0.997	0.998 / 0.997	0.992 / 0.984
SRMR / RMSE	0.013 / 0.028	0.016 / 0.024	0.015 / 0.023	0.024 / 0.051
Direct c (p)	-0.576 (0.000)	-0.567 (0.000)	-0.485 (0.000)	-0.662 (0.000)
Indirect ab (p)	-0.106 (0.000)	-0.074 (0.078)	-0.206 (0.000)	-0.021 (0.914)
Disengagement				
Effect	bms	bms	bms	bms
X^2 / df (p)	6.59 / 6 (0.361)	2.18 / 6 (0.902)	15.017 / 6 (0.020)	11.13 / 6 (0.085)
CFI / TLI	1.000 / 0.999	1.000 /1.014	0.990 / 0.974	0.995 / 0.987
SRMR / RMSE	0.008 / 0.009	0.008 / 0.000	0.017 / 0.062	0.021 / 0.043
Direct c (p)	0.522 (0.000)	0.608 (0.000)	0.398 (0.000)	0.642 (0.000)
Indirect ab (p)	0.129 (0.000)	0.057 (0.230)	0.243 (0.000)	0.029 (0.458)
Neg. Extra Role Behav.				
Effect	fm	bms	bms	fm
X^2 / df (p)	33.74/11 (0.000)	3.94 / 11 (0.972)	19.16 / 11 (0.058)	30.32 / 11 (0.001)
CFI / TLI	0.992 / 0.985	1.000 / 1.016	0.990 / 0.981	0.982 / 0.966
SRMR / RMSE	0.028 / 0.042	0.014 / 0.000	0.044 / 0.032	0.042 / 0.062
Direct c (p)	0.038 (0.265)	0.149 (0.016)	-0.143 (0.018)	0.050 (0.353)
Indirect ab (p)	0.122 (0.000)	0.081 (0.012)	0.177 (0.000)	0.078 (0.007)
Depersonalization				
Effect	pm	bms	bms	fm
X^2 / df (p)	19.41 / 6 (0.004)	7.67 / 6 (0.263)	13.23 / 6 (0.039)	10.38 / 15 (0.000)
CFI / TLI	0.994 / 0.985	0.997 / 0.994	0.991 / 0.977	0.994 / 0.986
SRMR / RMSE	0.016 / 0.043	0.020 / 0.028	0.018 / 0.056	0.023 / 0.040
Direct c (p)	0.248 (0.000)	0.241 (0.002)	0.345 (0.000)	0.134 (0.016)
Indirect ab (p)	0.187 (0.000)	0.174 (0.000)	0.245 (0.000)	0.122 (0.000)
Neg. Work-Life Balance				
Effect	pm	pm	fpm	pm
X^2 / df (p)	68.06 / 17 (0.000)	33.47 / 17 (0.010)	35.37 / 17 (0.006)	38.01 / 17 (0.002)
CFI / TLI	0.990 / 0.983	0.989 / 0.982	0.989 / 0.982	0.988 / 0.980
SRMR / RMSE	0.027 / 0.050	0.032 / 0.053	0.030 / 0.053	0.027 / 0.052
Direct c (p)	0.218 (0.000)	0.275 (0.000)	0.204 (0.001)	0.184 (0.001)
Indirect ab (p)	0.135 (0.000)	0.090 (0.005)	0.228 (0.000)	0.095 (0.001)

Note: favourable partial mediation (fpm): indirect effect > direct effect; partial mediation (pm): direct effect > indirect effect; full mediation (fm): only indirect effect available; no mediation (nm): only direct effect available; bad model statistics (bms): either p > 0.01 or CFI/TLI below 0.95.

Source: Authors' own elaboration

By looking at the results of Table 4, we can first conclude that when looking at the full dataset, there are two occasions where QQ has no mediation effect due to poor model statistics. There is also evidence for one full mediation with only significant indirect effects, as well as two partial mediations (i.e., the direct effect is greater than the indirect effect). Thus, for the full dataset, hypotheses 3, 4 and 5 are accepted. A narrower interpretation of the results means that only a full mediation (fm) can be accepted as proof for the mediating role of QQ. Thus, we can only accept hypothesis 3, which stipulated that QQ mediates the relationship between (negative) extra-role behaviour and turnover intention can be accepted.

In case of the generational differentiation, hypothesis 5 can be accepted for GenX, hypothesis 1 and 5 can be accepted for GenY, and hypothesis 3, 4, and 5 can be accepted for GenZ. Again, when applying a narrower interpretation of the results only accepting a full mediation (fm) as a proof for our hypotheses, only two can be accepted, namely hypotheses 3 and 4 for the GenZ. This means, that QQ only shows its full mediation role for the relationship between (negative) extra-role behaviour and turnover intention (same as for the full dataset), as well as for the relationship between depersonalization and turnover intention but only for GenZ.

5 DISCUSSION

The three main objectives of this study were to further investigate the link between QQ and turnover, the mediating role of QQ on turnover intention link, as well as the generation-specific effect of QQ. Additionally, we are able to contribute to the calls surrounding the validation and reliability of the QQ scales applied.

Out of the five constructs, we found empirical support for four having a generation-specific impact on turnover intention as mediated by QQ. These constructs are dissatisfaction (for GenY), (negative) extra-role behaviour (for GenZ), depersonalization (for GenZ) as well as negative work-life balance (for all generations). Thus, all generations show a linkage to QQ, at least withregard to work-life balance, but GenZ has the broadest impact (extra-role behaviour, depersonalization, and work-life balance). Interestingly, while our multicollinearity tests shows support for the message of the Gallup survey (Harter, 2022), that engagement and satisfaction decrease simultaneously (we found a significant positive high correlation), our mediation analysis showed that it is only valid for GenY. (Dis-)Satisfaction shows only a partial mediation effect for GenY, while disengagement shows no mediation effects due to bad model statistics. More important than those two facets were (negative) extra-role behaviour, depersonalization, and negative work-life balance.Third, due to our sample limitations, our findings call for further studies focusing specifically on QQ with specific regard to GenZ (Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022), as well as more general studies of generational differences (Hamouche et al., 2023). Of the different generations in our capital sample, eight out of 15 cases show significant results with QQ as a mediator for turnover intention, three of them with a full mediation (negative extra-role behaviour for all generations; negative extra-role behaviour and depersonalization for GenZ) and four of them with a partial mediation (satisfaction for GenY; depersonalization and negative work-life balance for all generations; negative work-life balance for GenX) and one with favourable partial mediation (negative work-life balance for GenY). Our tested hypotheses tested show that QQ indeed plays a mediating role for GenZ in case of three constructs, one of which is depersonalization. Current evidence on the generational differences of depersonalization is inconclusive, with some studies reporting that the average depersonalization of GenX is lower than in GenY (Sinha & Sahai, 2020), while others other find that Gen X experiences the highest levels of depersonalization X, followed by GenZ and then GenY (Meechan & Wonglorsaichon, 2024). The results of our study support the latter, as our effect sizes reproduced the outlined order.

With regard to concerns about the scales used to measure QQ, our study shows that disengagement has no direct nor an indirect effect for any generation. Therefore, our results contradict the QQ construct definition and QQS measurement scale developed by (Galanis, Katsiroumpa, Vraka, Siskou, et al., 2023; Galanis, Moisoglou, et al., 2023). This comes down to the fact that Galanis et al. (2023) measured QQ in terms of disengagement / detachment which was covered by four specific items in their study. Additionally, for our German capital sample at least, the QQI scale by Anand et al. (2023) must be narrowed down to four items after Cronbach's alpha analysis and to two items following the confirmatory factor analysis. These two items clearly cover the "extra mile" of going to meetings and the enthusiasm to work above and beyond. Although using only two items may be questionable, we remind the reader that a high inter-correlation and a low correlation with other items supports the use of the shortened scale.

6 CONCLUSION & LIMITATIONS

In conclusion, we wish to propose two main strategies for managerial action. First, a (sustainable) strategic human resource management (HRM) approach that considersgenerational diversity (Amayah & Gedro, 2014; Vraňaková et al., 2021), must control for (negative) extra-role behaviour, depersonalization and negative work-family balance with regard to GenZ (Amayah & Gedro, 2014; Vraňaková et al., 2021), In this way, HR managers can measure the factors influencing QQ and detect this phenomenon among the younger generation early. Well-chosen HR initiatives can keepturnover intention at a low level. Second, a more general strategic HRM approach requirescontrolling four of the five indicators. However, HR initiatives that address these indicators will have only a small impact on managing QQ, as the

mediating effect is in most cases smaller than the direct effect on turnover intention. This would result in higher costs associated with change management efforts, general HR initiatives, and training and development.

In terms of our limitations, we would like to highlight three in particular, which we hope will stimulate further research. First, our sample is limited to the German capital city and its suburbs. While we have exceeded the KMT's requirement for generalizability for a population size greater than one million, we cannot generalize for all cities, nor for Germany as a whole in more rural areas. Thus, we suggest that further comparative research be conducted, and that our results be compared with those from other large and smaller cities, as well as with a stratified sample across Germany. Certainly, we have to acknowledge that the cultural context of Berlin may influence generational attitudes toward work and turnover intentions, and that cultural norms could shape how QQ manifests across settings. We therefore suggest our results to be interpreted with caution when considering cultural transferability, and we see this as an important avenue for future comparative research. Second, our study is based on medium sized (average of 408) subsamples across the three target generations within a larger sample (n=1,225). Although, one might question the representativeness of such small samples, if one considers the KMT's claim of 384 for a population of more than one million, at least for the capital, the generalizability seems reasonable. Nevertheless, we call for studies with larger generational subsamples to cross-check our results. Third, following the reliability analysis and CFA, most of our scales consisted of just two or three items.. Although this procedure is scientifically supported under certain circumstances, we call for future research to use larger scales for our selected constructs, ensuring that more than three items remain after item reduction.

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