

Quiet Quitting and Work Attitude of Construction Firms in Port Harcourt

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the relationship between quiet quitting and work attitude among employees of construction firms in Port Harcourt. Quiet quitting, conceptualized through minimal role performance and psychological disengagement, represents a behavioral and psychological withdrawal from work beyond formal duties. Work attitude, measured through job satisfaction and organizational commitment, reflects employees' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral disposition toward their roles and the organization. The study adopted a quantitative research design, employing structured questionnaires administered to a purposive sample of 150 employees across ten construction firms. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) to test four hypotheses. Findings reveal that both minimal role performance and psychological disengagement are significantly negatively correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Specifically, employees exhibiting quiet quitting behaviors report lower satisfaction and weaker attachment to their organizations. The study concludes that quiet quitting adversely affects work attitude, which may reduce productivity, teamwork, and project outcomes in construction firms. Recommendations include enhancing recognition systems, fostering psychological engagement, improving work resources, strengthening communication, promoting work-life balance, and monitoring employee attitudes to mitigate disengagement.

KEYWORDS: Quiet quitting, minimal role performance, psychological disengagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work attitude, construction firms.

INTRODUCTION

The construction industry plays a strategic role in the economic development and infrastructural transformation of Nigeria. In cities such as Port Harcourt, construction firms are central to urban expansion, oil and gas-related infrastructure, housing development, road construction, and public sector projects. Despite its importance, the industry continues to face significant human resource challenges, including low productivity, safety violations, project delays, labour turnover, and declining employee morale. While these challenges have traditionally been attributed to technical, financial, or regulatory factors, growing attention is now being directed toward behavioral and attitudinal issues within the workforce particularly the emerging phenomenon of quiet quitting. Quiet quitting, defined as employees' conscious decision to restrict their performance strictly to formal job requirements while withdrawing from discretionary effort, has become a prominent organizational concern globally (Harter, 2022; Zenger & Folkman, 2022). Although not equivalent to resignation, quiet quitting represents psychological disengagement and minimal commitment to organizational goals. Employees who engage in quiet quitting are physically present but emotionally detached, contributing only the bare minimum required to retain employment. This behavior undermines organizational citizenship, innovation, teamwork, and overall performance (Organ, 1988; Robbins & Judge, 2019). In labour-intensive industries such as construction, where collaboration, safety compliance, and extra-role initiative are critical, and such disengagement can have serious operational consequences.

Construction projects typically require workers to go beyond rigid job descriptions cooperating across teams, adapting to dynamic site conditions, ensuring safety vigilance, and responding proactively to unexpected challenges. When employees limit their contributions to minimum specifications, the implications may include reduced productivity, increased workplace accidents, poor workmanship, and delayed project completion. Studies have shown that employee attitudes significantly influence safety behavior and project outcomes in construction environments (Hinze, Thurman, & Wehle, 2013; Agyekum, Simons, & Botchway, 2019). However, there is limited empirical evidence examining how quiet quitting specifically manifests within Nigerian construction firms and how it relates to underlying work attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and engagement. In Port Harcourt, construction firms operate within a high-pressure environment characterized by tight deadlines, cost fluctuations, contractual obligations, and exposure

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to occupational hazards. Workers often experience physically demanding tasks, irregular payment structures, limited career advancement opportunities, and inconsistent welfare provisions. According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, high job demands combined with insufficient organizational resources contribute to burnout and disengagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). When employees perceive that their efforts are not matched with adequate recognition, compensation, or support, they may psychologically withdraw as a coping mechanism. This withdrawal may take the form of quiet quitting.

Despite the growing global discourse on quiet quitting, there is a paucity of empirical studies examining the phenomenon within Nigeria's construction sector, particularly in Port Harcourt. Most existing Nigerian studies on employee attitudes have focused on sectors such as banking, healthcare, or public administration, with minimal attention given to construction firms. Additionally, research has largely examined traditional constructs such as job satisfaction or organizational commitment independently, without explicitly linking them to quiet quitting behaviors. This gap in literature limits understanding of how subtle forms of disengagement may be affecting productivity, safety compliance, teamwork, and project delivery in construction firms in Port Harcourt. Moreover, management practices within some construction firms may still emphasize technical efficiency and cost control over employee well-being and attitudinal management. Insufficient attention to employee voice, recognition systems, participatory decision-making, and motivational incentives may inadvertently encourage minimal performance behavior. Without empirical evidence clarifying the relationship between quiet quitting and work attitude, managers may misinterpret declining productivity as mere incompetence or laziness rather than symptoms of deeper attitudinal dissatisfaction.

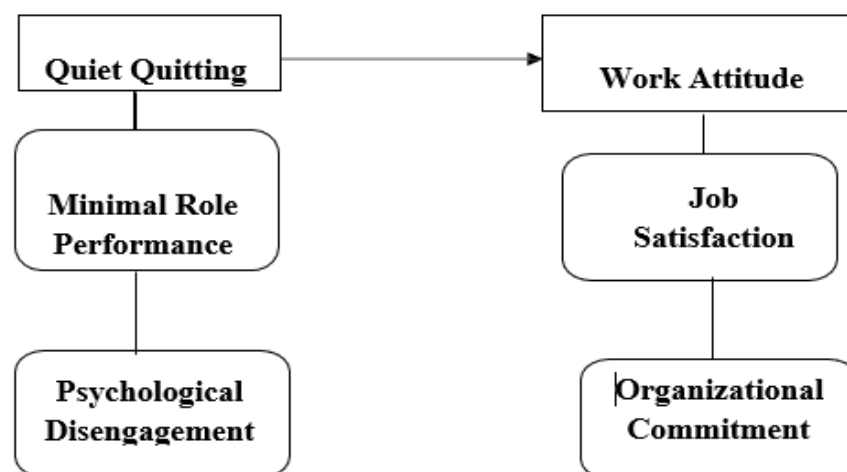
Therefore, the central problem of this study lies in the insufficient understanding of how quiet quitting influences and is influenced by the work attitudes of employees in construction firms in Port Harcourt. There is a need to investigate whether negative work attitudes, such as low job satisfaction, weak organizational commitment, and poor engagement are contributing to quiet quitting behaviors, and how these behaviors, in turn, affect organizational outcomes within the construction industry. Addressing this problem is essential for developing evidence-based strategies that enhance employee engagement, strengthen commitment, improve safety performance, and ensure timely and quality project delivery in Port Harcourt's construction firms.

The broad purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between quiet quitting and work attitude of construction firms in Port Harcourt. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Examine the relationship between minimal role performance and job satisfaction among employees of construction firms in Port Harcourt.
- ii. Determine the relationship between minimal role performance and organizational commitment among employees of construction firms in Port Harcourt.
- iii. Assess the relationship between psychological disengagement and job satisfaction among employees of construction firms in Port Harcourt.
- iv. Investigate the relationship between psychological disengagement and organizational commitment among employees of construction firms in Port Harcourt.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework



Source: Harter, J. (2022); Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016); Mueller (2012)

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Quiet Quitting

Quiet quitting is an emerging workplace phenomenon describing employees who remain formally employed but deliberately restrict their work effort to the minimum requirements outlined in their job descriptions. Although the term gained widespread popularity in 2022 through discussions on TikTok, the behavioral foundation of quiet quitting has long been discussed in organizational behaviour literature under concepts such as work withdrawal, disengagement, reduced organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), and psychological detachment (Harter, 2022; Organ, 1988). Quiet quitting does not imply resignation; rather, it reflects a psychological shift in which employees disengage emotionally and cognitively from work while maintaining physical presence in the organisation. Scholars describe quiet quitting as a form of behavioural withdrawal characterized by reduced discretionary effort, limited initiative, and avoidance of tasks beyond formal responsibilities (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Employees who engage in quiet quitting perform assigned duties adequately enough to avoid disciplinary action but withdraw from extra-role behaviours such as volunteering for additional assignments, mentoring colleagues, or contributing innovative ideas. Organ (1988) emphasized that extra-role behaviours significantly enhance organisational effectiveness; therefore, the absence of such behaviours may undermine teamwork and productivity even if formal performance standards are met. Empirical evidence suggests that quiet quitting is closely associated with low engagement levels. Engagement, defined as vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006), is the direct opposite of disengagement. When engagement declines, employees may psychologically distance themselves from organizational goals. Harter (2022) reported that a significant proportion of employees globally exhibit signs of disengagement, which may manifest as reduced initiative and minimal participation in organizational activities.

Minimal Role Performance

Minimal role performance refers to a situation in which employees deliberately restrict their work behavior strictly to the duties formally prescribed in their job descriptions, avoiding discretionary or extra-role activities that contribute to organizational effectiveness. Within organizational behavior literature, this concept is closely linked to the distinction between in-role and extra-role performance. In-role performance involves fulfilling officially assigned responsibilities, while extra-role performance includes voluntary behaviors that support colleagues, improve processes, and enhance organizational climate (Organ, 1988; Robbins & Judge, 2019). When employees withdraw from extra-role behaviors and limit themselves to core tasks only, minimal role performance becomes evident. The foundation of minimal role performance can be traced to research on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Organ (1988) defined OCB as discretionary behavior not formally rewarded but essential for organizational effectiveness. Examples include helping co-workers, showing initiative, and voluntarily attending non-mandatory meetings. When such behaviors decline, employees are not necessarily violating rules, but they are withholding effort beyond the minimum requirement. This behavioral withdrawal aligns with contemporary discussions of quiet quitting, where employees intentionally avoid additional effort beyond contractual obligations (Harter, 2022). Empirical studies have shown that reduced extra-role behavior negatively affects team performance, safety compliance, and project success, particularly in project-based industries (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000)..

Psychological Disengagement: Psychological disengagement refers to the emotional and cognitive withdrawal of employees from their work roles and organizational goals. Unlike physical withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism or turnover, psychological disengagement occurs internally, often manifesting as reduced enthusiasm, diminished sense of purpose, and low involvement in work activities. It is closely associated with the opposite of employee engagement, which Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) describe as a positive, fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. When employees are psychologically disengaged, they lack vigor (energy and resilience), dedication (enthusiasm and pride), and absorption (full concentration in tasks). Maslach and Leiter (2016) link disengagement to burnout, describing it as a state of emotional exhaustion and cynicism toward work. Burnout develops when chronic workplace stress is not successfully managed, leading employees to detach psychologically as a coping mechanism. Hirschman's (1970) Exit-Voice-Loyalty framework provides additional insight into psychological disengagement. When employees are dissatisfied but unable or unwilling to leave the organization (exit), and when they perceive that expressing concerns (voice) may not yield results, they may reduce loyalty through psychological withdrawal. This behaviour aligns with quiet quitting, where employees remain employed but emotionally detached.

Work Attitude

Work attitude is a central concept in organizational behavior, referring to the evaluative dispositions employees hold toward their jobs, organizations, and work-related roles. It encompasses beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies that influence how employees engage with their tasks, supervisors, colleagues, and organizational objectives (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Work attitude is multidimensional, commonly operationalized through measures such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work engagement. It is a critical predictor of employee behavior, including productivity, discretionary effort, compliance with rules, and

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retention. Empirical studies link work attitude directly to performance outcomes. Robbins and Judge (2019) note that employees with positive attitudes are more productive, show higher safety compliance, and engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, whereas negative attitudes correlate with absenteeism, turnover intention, and counterproductive work behavior. In construction, teamwork, safety adherence, and quality of output are particularly sensitive to employees' work attitudes. For example, Hinze, Thurman, and Wehle (2013) report that safety compliance in construction sites is strongly influenced by employees' commitment and job satisfaction. Similarly, Agyekum et al. (2019) observe that construction workers' willingness to collaborate and adhere to project standards depends significantly on their perception of organizational support and satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the positive emotional state resulting from an employee's appraisal of their job experiences (Locke, 1976). It represents how employees feel about various aspects of their work, including compensation, supervision, promotion opportunities, working conditions, and co-worker relationships. Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) describe job satisfaction as one of the most extensively studied job attitudes due to its strong relationship with performance, turnover intentions, and organizational commitment. Empirical evidence consistently links job satisfaction with performance outcomes. Higher job satisfaction predicts increased productivity, stronger commitment, and lower absenteeism (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Conversely, dissatisfaction often precedes withdrawal behaviors, including minimal effort and psychological disengagement.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to the psychological attachment and loyalty employees feel toward their organization. Meyer and Allen (1997) conceptualized commitment as comprising three components: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (perceived cost of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation to remain). Among these, affective commitment is most strongly associated with positive work behaviors. Organizational commitment influences employees' willingness to exert effort beyond formal job requirements. Highly committed employees are more likely to engage in OCB and support organizational goals (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002). Conversely, low commitment may lead to minimal role performance and psychological disengagement. Empirical studies show that organizational commitment reduces turnover intentions and enhances job performance (Meyer et al., 2002). In construction firms, committed employees are more likely to comply with safety regulations, collaborate effectively, and remain with the firm through project cycles.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Empirical studies on quiet quitting and work attitude have highlighted the growing significance of employee disengagement in contemporary organizational settings, particularly in labor-intensive sectors such as construction. While the term "quiet quitting" has gained recent popularity, research in organizational behavior and human resource management has long explored similar concepts, including work withdrawal, minimal effort, and psychological disengagement, linking them to outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Harter (2022) using Gallup workplace data revealed that a substantial proportion of employees globally exhibit disengagement behaviors, including performing only minimal duties and withdrawing from extra-role responsibilities. The study found that such disengagement correlates negatively with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Harter further noted that workplaces with low recognition, high workload, and inadequate support systems are particularly prone to quiet quitting behaviors, which mirrors the dynamics observed in construction firms where work is physically demanding and tightly scheduled.

Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) examined the relationship between work engagement, burnout, and job outcomes in service and industrial sectors. Their findings indicated that employees who are psychologically disengaged exhibit lower levels of job satisfaction and commitment, consistent with the theoretical foundations of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model. Specifically, when job demands are high and resources insufficient, employees may consciously limit effort to protect their well-being, reflecting behaviors analogous to quiet quitting.

Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) studied the impact of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and work attitudes on performance outcomes. Their findings indicated that employees' willingness to engage in extra-role behaviors significantly influences organizational effectiveness. Conversely, the absence of such behaviors often a consequence of minimal role performance negatively affects team collaboration, project outcomes, and employee satisfaction. This has direct relevance to construction projects in Port Harcourt, where teamwork and adherence to quality standards are critical.

Agyekum, Simons, and Botchway (2019) studied construction workers' attitudes in Ghana and reported that disengaged employees often demonstrate low loyalty and minimal investment in organizational objectives. Their findings indicate that low job satisfaction and weak organizational commitment lead to subtle withdrawal behaviors, including performing only assigned tasks and avoiding proactive

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contributions. This mirrors the concept of quiet quitting, suggesting that the phenomenon is not generationally restricted but contextually influenced by work conditions and management practices.

Furthermore, research by Maslach and Leiter (2016) highlighted that burnout, a major antecedent of psychological disengagement, is strongly associated with negative work attitudes. Employees experiencing emotional exhaustion or depersonalization report lower job satisfaction and commitment, which can manifest as quiet quitting. In high-demand sectors like construction, chronic stress and lack of recognition may encourage employees to disengage from cognitive and emotional involvement while maintaining minimal physical presence.

Herzberg's (1966) Two-Factor Theory and empirical studies supporting it suggest that recognition, career advancement, and meaningful work act as motivators that improve job satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, organizational interventions such as participatory decision-making, supportive supervision, and employee development programs have been empirically shown to reduce disengagement and improve performance outcomes (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between quiet quitting and work attitude among employees of construction firms in Port Harcourt. The target population comprises of selected employees of registered construction firms operating in Port Harcourt. The sample size was determined using a purposive sampling technique to ensure representation of employees with at least one year of continuous service, as these individuals are more likely to have developed meaningful attitudes toward their work and the organization. A total of 150 respondents were targeted across ten selected construction firms in Port Harcourt. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review by lecturers in organizational behavior and construction management to confirm content relevance and clarity. Reliability was tested using a pilot study involving 20 employees from construction firms not included in the main study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all construct exceeded 0.7, indicating acceptable internal consistency and reliability for quantitative analysis. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was employed to test the hypotheses and examine the strength and direction of relationships.

RESULTS

H01: Relationship between Minimal Role Performance and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Minimal Role Performance	Job Satisfaction
Minimal Role Performance	1	-.452**
Job Satisfaction	-.452**	1

The correlation coefficient between **minimal role performance** and **job satisfaction** is $r = -0.452$, indicating a moderate negative relationship. The negative sign shows that as employees restrict their effort to minimum job requirements; their job satisfaction tends to decrease. Since $p < 0.01$, this relationship is statistically significant.

H02: Relationship between Minimal Role Performance and Organizational Commitment

Variables	Minimal Role Performance	Organizational Commitment
Minimal Role Performance	1	-.391**
Organisational Commitment	-.391**	1

The correlation coefficient $r = -0.391$ shows a moderate negative relationship between minimal role performance and organizational commitment. The negative relationship implies that employees who restrict their performance to minimum requirements tend to exhibit lower commitment to the organization. The p-value indicates statistical significance.

H03: Relationship between Psychological Disengagement and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Psychological Disengagement	Job Satisfaction
Psychological Disengagement	1	-.503**

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Job Satisfaction	-.503**	1
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The correlation coefficient $r = -0.503$ indicates a moderate-to-strong negative relationship between psychological disengagement and job satisfaction. This suggests that employees who are emotionally and cognitively detached from their work report significantly lower job satisfaction. The p-value confirms that this relationship is statistically significant. Psychological disengagement significantly reduces job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of emotional and cognitive investment in enhancing positive work attitudes.

H04: Relationship between Psychological Disengagement and Organizational Commitment

Variables	Psychological Disengagement	Organizational Commitment
Psychological Disengagement	1	-.468**
Organizational Commitment	-.468**	1

The correlation coefficient $r = -0.468$ shows a moderate negative relationship between psychological disengagement and organisational commitment. This implies that employees who are psychologically detached from their work are less loyal and committed to the organisation. The relationship is statistically significant.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between quiet quitting and work attitude among employees of construction firms in Port Harcourt. Specifically, the study examined how the dimensions of quiet quitting minimal role performance and psychological disengagement affect employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The results from the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) analysis offer empirical evidence supporting significant negative relationships between these variables.

Minimal Role Performance and Job Satisfaction

The analysis revealed a **moderate negative relationship** ($r = -0.452$, $p < 0.01$) between minimal role performance and job satisfaction. This finding suggests that employees who restrict their work strictly to formal duties without engaging in extra-role behaviours tend to report lower satisfaction with their jobs. This aligns with the conceptual understanding of quiet quitting, which posits that limiting effort beyond minimum requirements reflects underlying dissatisfaction or disengagement (Harter, 2022; Organ, 1988). In construction firms, where teamwork, initiative, and proactive problem-solving are crucial for successful project completion, employees' deliberate withdrawal from additional effort likely diminishes their sense of accomplishment and perceived value within the organisation. The result supports Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which distinguishes between hygiene factors (basic conditions such as salary and safety) and motivators (recognition, achievement). Employees who perceive that their contributions are undervalued may satisfy only the basic requirements of the job, reducing motivation and job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966). In Port Harcourt's construction sector, delays in project recognition, limited career advancement, and inconsistent supervision may exacerbate this trend, prompting employees to adopt minimal role performance as a coping mechanism.

Minimal Role Performance and Organizational Commitment

A moderate negative relationship ($r = -0.391$, $p < 0.01$) was also observed between minimal role performance and organizational commitment. Employees who limit their contribution to minimum job requirements exhibit lower loyalty, attachment, and willingness to support organizational goals. This finding resonates with Meyer and Allen's (1997) conceptualization of commitment, where affective commitment, emotional attachment to the organization is critical in motivating discretionary effort. The Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) provides a theoretical explanation: when employees perceive inequity or lack of reciprocation from their employer, they are less likely to invest emotionally in the organization. For construction firms in Port Harcourt, minimal role performance could signify a subtle response to perceived organizational shortcomings, such as inadequate welfare provisions, irregular payment, or limited professional development opportunities. Consequently, employees remain physically present but emotionally detached, undermining organizational cohesion and long-term commitment.

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Psychological Disengagement and Job Satisfaction

The correlation between psychological disengagement and job satisfaction was moderate-to-strong negative ($r = -0.503$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that employees who are emotionally and cognitively detached from their work experience significantly lower satisfaction. This supports the notion that quiet quitting encompasses not only behavioral withdrawal but also internal psychological withdrawal (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). In construction settings, where employees face physically demanding tasks, tight deadlines, and exposure to occupational hazards, psychological disengagement may arise as a protective response to stress and burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Employees who feel emotionally exhausted or undervalued may withdraw mentally from their roles, which reduces their enjoyment of work and overall satisfaction. The finding underscores the importance of addressing emotional well-being and work environment factors to enhance job satisfaction in construction firms.

Psychological Disengagement and Organizational Commitment

Finally, a moderate negative relationship ($r = -0.468$, $p < 0.01$) was found between psychological disengagement and organizational commitment. Employees who are psychologically detached exhibit lower loyalty, reduced willingness to contribute beyond formal duties, and diminished identification with organizational goals. This aligns with Hirschman's (1970) Exit-Voice-Loyalty framework, in which disengagement represents a passive form of withdrawal when employees feel voicing concerns is ineffective, yet leaving the organization is not feasible. The result indicates that psychological disengagement in construction firms can erode commitment, potentially affecting team collaboration, safety compliance, and project performance. It further highlights the interplay between employee attitudes and behavioral outcomes; disengaged employees not only perform minimally but also demonstrate weakened attachment to the organization.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between quiet quitting and work attitude among employees of construction firms in Port Harcourt, focusing on minimal role performance and psychological disengagement as dimensions of quiet quitting and job satisfaction and organizational commitment as measures of work attitude. The study found that both dimensions of quiet quitting are significantly negatively related to work attitude measures. Specifically, employees who limit their efforts to formal job duties (minimal role performance) or emotionally and cognitively detach from work (psychological disengagement) demonstrate lower job satisfaction and weaker organizational commitment. These findings support the theoretical frameworks of Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands Resources (JDR) model, which posit that perceived inequity, inadequate resources, and high job demands lead to reduced discretionary effort and withdrawal behaviors. Quiet quitting, therefore, is not merely a behavioral anomaly but a response to workplace stressors, unmet expectations, and insufficient recognition. In practical terms, the study underscores that quiet quitting can have serious consequences for construction firms. Reduced discretionary effort and disengagement may compromise teamwork, project efficiency, and safety compliance, and overall organizational performance. Moreover, low job satisfaction and weak commitment can increase turnover intentions, absenteeism, and subtle disengagement behaviors, which may remain unnoticed until they affect productivity and project outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Construction firms should implement formal and informal recognition programmes to acknowledge employees' efforts beyond minimum requirements. This could include performance-based incentives, employee-of-the-month awards, or public appreciation for extra-role contributions.
- ii. Management should priorities strategies that increase employees' emotional and cognitive attachment to work. This may include participatory decision-making, involving employees in project planning, providing challenging yet achievable tasks, and offering regular feedback.
- iii. Firms should address job stressors by ensuring safe working conditions, equitable workload distribution, and access to necessary tools and resources.
- iv. Open communication channels between management and employees can help employees voice concerns and receive support, reducing feelings of neglect or undervaluation.

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