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PREDICTORS OF QUIET-QUITTING BEHAVIOURS AMONG NON-TEACHING STAFF OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN OYO

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Abstract

This study examined quiet-quitting behaviors among non-teaching staff in tertiary institutions, addressing a research gap regarding organizational factors influencing this phenomenon. Using correlational survey design, researchers investigated how role overload and psychological safety influences quiet-quitting behaviors in Oyo Town institutions. The study targeted 332 non-teaching staff from three public institutions, selected through stratified and simple random sampling. Data collection utilized validated self-administered questionnaires measuring role overload, psychological safety, and quiet-quitting behaviors. Results revealed significant correlations with quiet-quitting: role overload showed positive correlation ($r = .46$, $p < .01$) while psychological safety demonstrated negative correlation ($r = -.39$, $p < .01$). Combined factors explained 31.1% of quiet-quitting variance ($R = .557$, Adj. $R^2 = .307$, $F = 73.7$, $p < .001$). Role overload had greater individual impact ($\beta = .42$, partial $r^2 = .17$) than psychological safety ($\beta = -.31$, partial $r^2 = .12$). The study concluded that both factors significantly influence quiet-quitting, with workload pressures predominating. Researchers recommend comprehensive organizational interventions addressing workload redistribution while fostering psychologically safe environments to reduce employee disengagement.

Keywords: Quiet-quitting behaviours, role overload, psychological safety, non-teaching staff, tertiary institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The world of work is undergoing a remarkable shift, with employees increasingly redefining their relationship with organisations. One recent trend that has captured the mind of global researchers is "quiet-quitting." Quiet-quitting does not refer to physical resignation from employment but rather the psychological withdrawal from work, where employees reduce efforts strictly to what is expected in their job descriptions, avoiding inputing any discretionary effort (Yıldız, 2023). A Gallup report in 2022 estimated that nearly 50% of the U.S. workforce identified as quiet quitters, signalling an alarming disengagement crisis (Gallup, 2023) – this signifies that even when socioeconomic conditions are above average, the phenomenn exist. Scholars argue that quiet quitting reflects unmet expectations, burnout, lack of recognition, and deteriorating trust in leadership (Maslach & Leiter, 2000; Karamath Basha & Pathania, 2025).

While the phenomenon has gained popularity in Western contexts, empirical research on its manifestation in Africa, particularly Nigeria, remains limited. This creates a pressing need to examine how workplace realities in Nigeria's tertiary institutions may trigger or suppress quiet-quitting behaviours, especially among the often-overlooked non-teaching staff. Nigeria's tertiary education system is one of the largest in Africa, with over 270 accredited tertiary institutions spread across the country (National Universities Commission, 2024). Within these institutions, non-teaching staff constitute a significant portion of the workforce, playing critical roles in administration, finance, ICT, security, library management, maintenance, and student services. Yet, unlike academic staff whose struggles often receive attention through union activities such as ASUU strikes, non-teaching staff challenges are frequently marginalised (HumAngle, 2024; Aderibigbe et al., 2018). Reports highlight issues such as understaffing, inadequate training opportunities, delayed salaries, and excessive workloads as key problems confronting this category of employees (Ayodele et al., 2022). In effect,

many non-teaching personnel are caught in a cycle of frustration, invisibility, and exhaustion—conditions that provide fertile ground for disengagement and quiet quitting.

One of the most prominent predictors of quiet quitting is role overload. Role overload occurs when the demands of a job exceed the time, energy, or resources available to the employee (Bolino & Klotz, 2015; Peterson et al., 2008). In Nigerian tertiary institutions, role overload is pervasive. For example, in many colleges and universities in Oyo State, a single ICT officer may be responsible for managing thousands of student accounts, while a bursary officer handles overwhelming financial transactions for both staff and students. Similarly, administrative officers often combine clerical tasks, supervision of junior staff, and student-related services without adequate support. Such demands increase the likelihood of burnout, absenteeism, and ultimately disengagement (Okeafor & Alamina, 2018; Quezon & Esmane, 2024). When employees feel consistently overwhelmed, they may resort to quiet quitting as a survival strategy to cope with their workload without risking complete withdrawal from employment.

Psychological safety is a significant component that influences quiet quitting as well. A common perception that interpersonal risks, like speaking up about difficulties, owning up to errors, or putting forth novel ideas, may be taken without fear of unfavourable outcomes is known as psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; Kahn, 1990). In many Nigerian workplaces, particularly in public tertiary institutions, hierarchical structures and power distance discourage open communication (Akinwale et al., 2023; Aderibigbe et al., 2018). Non-teaching staff may fear victimisation, ridicule, or punitive measures if they express dissatisfaction or propose reforms. The absence of psychological safety not only stifles creativity and innovation but also increases the likelihood of silent withdrawal behaviours. Equally, workplaces that foster trust, inclusivity, and open dialogue are more likely to retain engaged employees (Kim & Sohn, 2024; Okeafor & Alamina, 2018). Thus, psychological safety may either buffer against role overload's influence on quiet quitting.

The focus on Oyo Town provides a meaningful context for this study. Oyo is home to several key tertiary institutions, including the Federal College of Education (Special), Ajayi Crowther University, and the newly established Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, among others. These institutions employ hundreds of non-teaching staff across diverse units. Yet, similar to other institutions in the country, these institutions grapple with issues such as underfunding, infrastructural decay, and administrative inefficiencies, which directly affect staff morale (TETFund, 2024). Empirical work in Nigeria have documented indicators of quiet-quitting behaviours (reduced discretionary effort and deliberate slowdown) in public service sectors; coupled with multiple instances of protests over unpaid or withheld remuneration (Fehintola et al., 2021; Fehintola et al., 2023). These findings suggest that staff disengagement is a structural workplace issue in Nigerian tertiary institutions rather than merely a Western social-media fad.

Despite the relevance of quiet quitting to Nigeria's higher education workforce, existing scholarship has disproportionately focused on academic staff. Job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover intention research among lecturers are relatively common (Akinwale et al., 2023; Beauty, 2025), while the experiences of non-teaching staff remain understudied. This creates a significant research gap, as the disengagement of non-teaching staff has direct implications for institutional effectiveness, student satisfaction, and service delivery. In addition to advancing the field of personnel psychology, examining the frequency and predictors of quiet-quitting behaviours among non-teaching staff in Oyo Town will offer useful information to legislators and institutional leaders.

In sum, this study is anchored on the recognition that quiet quitting reflects deeper organisational and psychological issues rather than individual laziness. The current research evaluates the role overload and psychological safety as predictors of quiet quitting among non-teaching employees in tertiary institutions in Oyo Town to shed light on the problem of employee engagement and how this issue can be resolved in the Nigerian scenario. It is hoped that the findings will be used in future academic discussion on work design, employee well-being, and institutional change within higher education,

and also offer administrators evidence-based practices on how to create environments that reduce disengagement and improve productivity, eventually leading to the resilience of educational system in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study sets the following specific objectives:

1. To determine the significant relationships between role overload, psychological safety, and quiet-quitting behaviours among non-teaching staff of tertiary institutions in Oyo Town.
2. To examine the joint predictive influence of role overload and psychological safety on quiet-quitting behaviours among non-teaching staff of tertiary institutions in Oyo Town.
3. To identify the relative contribution of role overload and psychological safety in predicting quiet-quitting behaviours among non-teaching staff of tertiary institutions in Oyo Town.

Research Questions

This investigation was guided by these research questions and was addressed at the 0.05 level of statistical significance:

1. What are the significant relationships between role overload, psychological safety, and quiet-quitting behaviours among non-teaching staff of tertiary institutions in Oyo Town?
2. What is the combined predictive effect of role overload and psychological safety on quiet-quitting behaviours among non-teaching staff of tertiary institutions in Oyo Town?
3. What is the relative contribution of role overload and psychological safety in predicting quiet-quitting behaviours among non-teaching staff of tertiary institutions in Oyo Town?

Literature Review

Conceptualising Quiet-Quitting Behaviours

Quiet quitting has emerged as a critical personnel psychology construct capturing employee disengagement in contemporary workplaces. Contrary to its popular framing on social media, scholars emphasise that quiet quitting is not the act of leaving a job, but rather the withdrawal of discretionary effort, where employees restrict their engagement to contractual obligations without extending themselves (Gray et al., 2025; Yildiz, 2023; Dillard et al., 2025). This phenomenon is closely linked to work disengagement and job withdrawal behaviours (Gray et al., 2025). Studies shows that quiet quitting is often triggered by burnout, unmet expectations, and a lack of career growth (Schaufeli & Taris, 2024; Yıldız, 2023). Non-teaching personnel in the Nigerian tertiary education sector make up an important but under-acknowledged workforce; non-teaching slowing of work, refusal to do extra work, and refusal to assist students in ways that go beyond the official job are all examples of quiet quitting. These consequences are substantial and lead to poor organisational results, decreased employee welfare, and poor institutional performance (Xueyun et al., 2023; Kim & Sohn, 2024).

Role Overload and Employee Behaviour

Role overload could be understood as the perception of the employees that the expectations imposed on them exceed their resources, time, or energy (Bolino and Klotz, 2015; Maslach and Leiter, 2016). A theoretical framework applicable to the interpretation of this phenomenon is the Job DemandsResource (JD -R) model that states that an increase in demands without sufficient resources results in the depletion of energy and the subsequent strain and disengagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2023). Empirical research has always shown a positive correlation between role overload and burnout, absenteeism, turnover intention, and work disengagement (Crawford et al., 2010; Lesener et al., 2019). Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are faced with ongoing underinvestment and overcrowding, burdening the non-teaching staff (Aderibigbe et al., 2018; HumAngle, 2024). As an example, administrative personnel are often handling administrative, supervisory, and student-facing roles simultaneously, whereas bursary officers have to process immense financial transactions on

behalf of high student numbers. These excessive demands make role overload a plausible predictor of quiet-quitting behaviours. Employees may adopt quiet quitting not out of laziness, but as a coping mechanism to preserve psychological health when institutional demands are unsustainable (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Psychological Safety and Work Engagement

Edmondson (1999) coined the term "psychological safety," which describes the general perception among workers that they can voice their opinions, voice concerns, or own up to their mistakes without worrying about the repercussions. According to research, psychological safety promotes team learning, creativity, trust, and job satisfaction (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Newman et al., 2017; Frazier et al., 2017; Kahn, 1990). In contrast, environments with low psychological safety discourage openness, encourage silence, and often fuel disengagement (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; O'Donovan & McAuliffe, 2020; Singh et al., 2013). Within Nigerian tertiary institutions, hierarchical structures, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and authoritarian leadership styles often undermine psychological safety (Aderibigbe et al., 2018; Akinwale et al., 2023, Okeafor & Alamina, 2018). Non-teaching employees might have fears of victimisation when they come forward with their perceived injustices or challenge the institutional inefficiencies, and may therefore resort to quiet-quitting behaviours as a relatively less risky option to conflict. On the other hand, psychologically safe environments may alleviate the negative effects of role overload through creating cooperation, confidence, and flexibility (Schaubroeck et al., 2011; May et al., 2004; Kim & Sohn, 2024). Therefore, psychological safety can be used as a moderator of disengagement processes and predictor by itself.

Integrating Role Overload, Psychological Safety, and Quiet Quitting

Collectively, empirical evidence suggests that role overload increases both occupational strain and the probability of disengagement, and psychological safety mediates how employees react to strain. In a condition of high role overload and low psychological safety, employees are likely to revert to quiet quitting as an overt withdrawal behaviour. On the other hand, a high level of psychological safety can lead to employees with high workloads feeling empowered to ask, express, and maintain interest. These findings are consistent with Conservation of Resources (COR) theory in that individuals seek to conserve their resources and will withdraw when they perceive resource loss to be high (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Wingerden et al., 2017). Although, there exists a lot of global research on workload, psychological safety, and disengagement, little has been done to investigate how the three factors interact to produce quiet-quitting behaviours, especially in the Nigerian higher education system. Most Nigerian research has targeted academic personnel, so non-teaching staff, even though they play important roles in the operation of institutions, are under-researched (Akinwale et al., 2023; Beauty, 2025; Quezon & Esmane, 2024). This is a gap that highlights the necessity of context-specific empirical inquiry.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which is a prevalent framework used in personnel psychology to explain employee well-being, motivation, and performance results (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017; Lesener et al., 2019). The JD-R model argues that any given occupation has a specific set of risk factors that may be classified into two areas: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to the physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of a job that require long-term effort and that come with physiological or psychological costs such as workload, time pressure and emotional strain. Job resources, on the other hand, are factors of work that enable one to achieve work objectives, reduce job demands, and support personal development such as autonomy, feedback, and favourable leadership. The model hypothesises the two processes: a health-impairment process, whereby excessive employment demands result in burnouts and disengagement, and a motivational process, whereby adequate employment resources promote work engagement and resilience (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

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In the current research, under the circumstances of using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, role overload can also be identified as a relevant job demand, potentially exhausting the energetic resources of employees and increasing the risk of disengagement as a common operationalisation of quiet quitting. Tertiary institutions whose non-teaching staff feel forced to do too much work in the absence of the proportional assistance might have to turn to psychological withdrawal to manage the stress. Psychological safety, in its turn, is a significant job resource in the JD-R model. Within an environment that is high in psychological safety, the employees would be better placed to express issues, seek support, and to work collectively, thus reducing the negative consequences of role overload. In contrast, the health-impairment process is dominant when there is also no psychological safety, and role overload is more apt to trigger quiet-quitting behaviours. As a result, the JD-R model provides a comprehensive lens with the help of which the equilibrium, or a lack thereof, between demands and resources can be comprehended regarding employee disengagement in Nigerian tertiary institutions (Tummers & Bakker, 2021; Scholze & Hecker, 2024).

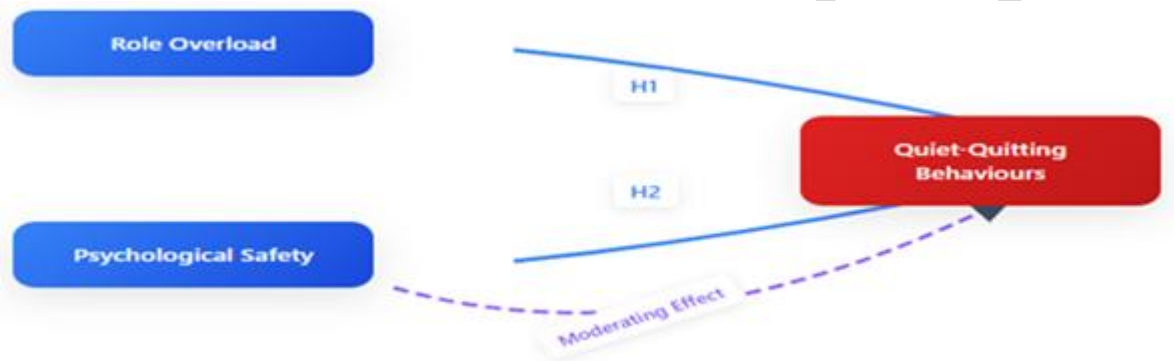

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the study (Source: own design).

METHOD

The current study followed quantitative research paradigm where it used correlational survey design to examine the predictive validity of the role overload and psychological safety on the quiet-quitting behaviours among the non-teaching employees in the sampled tertiary institutions in Oyo Town, Oyo State, Nigeria. A correlational survey design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to identify statistical relationships between variables and assess the predictive capacity of independent variables without manipulating the study environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The target population consisted of all non-teaching staff employed in three public tertiary institutions in Oyo Town: the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, the Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, and the Federal School of Surveying. According to official records obtained from the Personnel Affairs Division/its equivalent of each institution as at June 2025, the combined non-teaching workforce across the three institutions stood at 1,437 employees. These include administrative officers, clerical staff, bursary staff, ICT officers, technical staff, library staff, and support service personnel. Public tertiary institutions were deliberately chosen due to their statutory importance in Nigeria's educational landscape, their large workforce, and the availability of reliable population records.

Krejcie and Morgan's sampling table, which states that at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a minimum of 302 participants is sufficient for a population of 1,437, was used to calculate the sample size. A minimum requirement of 107 individuals was also recommended by a G*Power study for multiple regression with two predictors, a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), $\alpha = .05$, and power = .95. The bigger sample recommended by Krejcie and Morgan was used to guarantee both representativeness and statistical robustness, and an extra 10% was added to allow for non-response, resulting in a final target sample of 332 participants.

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This study employed a stratified random sampling technique. The first stratum was based on institution (Federal College of Education (Special), Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, and Federal School of Surveying). Within each institution, proportionate allocation was used to determine the number of participants to be drawn based on each institution's staff strength. The second stratum was job category (administrative, technical/ICT, bursary, clerical, and support services). Finally, simple random sampling was applied within each category to select respondents. Fair representation across institutions and job roles was guaranteed by this process, which improved the findings' applicability to the larger group of non-teaching employees in Oyo Town's higher education institutions.

Instrumentation

Three standardised instruments were used in this study to measure the constructs of interest:

1. Role Overload Scale

Beehr, Walsh, and Taber (1976) created the Role Overload Scale, which was later condensed and used extensively in occupational stress studies to quantify role overload. The condensed version comprises five items that gauge how much employees believe they have too many tasks or not enough time to finish them. Examples include "I never appear to have enough time for getting everything done" and "I have a great deal to do to do everything well." A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," is used to score responses. Cronbach's α ranges from .79 to .86, indicating strong dependability according to earlier research (Peterson et al., 2011). Results showed good internal consistency (α = .82), suggesting contextual relevance, after the instrument was pilot tested with 30 non-teaching staff members at a similar institution outside of Oyo Town.

2. Psychological Safety Scale

The 7-item Team Psychological Safety Scale, created by Edmondson (1999), was used to evaluate psychological safety. The scale assesses how employees view openness and interpersonal risk-taking in the workplace. Examples include "It is safe to take a risk in this organisation" and "If you commit an error on this team, it is not held against you." A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," is used to score responses. Prior research has demonstrated good construct validity and high reliability (α values usually ranging from .70 to .85; Newman et al., 2017). Cronbach's α = .81 and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported a unidimensional structure with adequate fit indices (χ^2/df = 2.10; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .06), confirming satisfactory psychometric performance in this study's pilot testing.

3. Quiet-Quitting Behavioural Index

A contextualised behavioural checklist that was modified from the Organisational Citizenship Behavior–Withdrawal model (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Koopman et al., 2016) was used to measure quiet quitting. To identify disengagement behaviours pertinent to non-teaching personnel in postsecondary institutions, a 10-item index was created. Examples include: "I intentionally refrain from taking on tasks that are outside the scope of my official responsibilities," "I only put in the minimal amount of effort necessary for my job," and "I disregard tasks that are not specifically included in my job description." A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), was used to rate the responses. A preliminary CFA using three behavioural dimensions—reduced effort, disengagement of discretionary activities, and aversion to extra-role tasks—supported the construct validity of the scale, which was piloted with 40 respondents from a nearby university. Excellent internal consistency was demonstrated by the scale's Cronbach's α of .88. The index was judged suitable for use in the primary research based on pilot results.

Data Analysis

The data analysis employed descriptive and inferential statistical procedures using IBM SPSS Statistics v28.0 (and AMOS v28 for CFA). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation,

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minimum–maximum) were produced for the three study variables—role overload, psychological safety, and quiet-quitting behaviours—to characterise central tendency and dispersion.

RESULTS

RQ1. Relationships among role overload, psychological safety, and quiet-quitting

The analysis results for "Relationships among role overload, psychological safety, and quiet-quitting" are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pearson correlations

Variables	1	2	3	Mean	Std.Dedv.
1. Role Overload	—			3.42	.81
2. Psychological Safety	−.28 [.−.37, −.18]**	—		3.11	.76
3. Quiet-Quitting	.46 [.38, .53]**	−.39 [−.47, −.30]**	—	3.28	.84

****Two-tailed; **p < .01** for bolded coefficients.

In Table 1, higher role overload relates to higher quiet-quitting (r= .46), whereas higher psychological safety relates to lower quiet-quitting (r= −.39). Predictors are modestly and inversely related (r= −.28), supporting low multicollinearity. The correlation results show that role overload is moderately and positively related to quiet-quitting, indicating that excessive workload pressures increase the likelihood of disengagement behaviours. Equally, psychological safety is negatively associated with quiet-quitting, suggesting that supportive, risk-tolerant environments reduce withdrawal. The predictors themselves are modestly and inversely correlated, implying they tap into distinct aspects of the work environment, with minimal overlap and low multicollinearity. Together, these findings confirm that both stress-related and relational factors significantly shape disengagement tendencies among non-teaching staff.

RQ2. Joint predictive effect of role overload and psychological safety on quiet-quitting.

The analysis result of "Joint predictive effect of role overload and psychological safety on quiet-quitting" is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Model summary and ANOVA

Model	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	SEE	
Quiet-Quitting ~ Role Overload + Psychological Safety	.557	.311	.307	.70	
ANOVA	**SS**	**Df**	**MS**	**F**	**Sig.**
Regression	72.40	2	36.20	**73.7**	**<.001***
Residual	161.15	329	.491		
Total	233.55	331			

*p<.001

Table two revealed the joint effect of the independent on the dependent variable. The model is significant, $\mathbf{F_{(2, 329)} = 73.7, p < .001}$, explaining **31.1%** of variance in quiet-quitting. Overall effect size $\mathbf{f^2 = R^2/(1-R^2) = .45}$ (large). With N= 332 and 2 predictors, sensitivity analysis indicates the study is well powered to detect small effects. The regression model demonstrates that role overload and psychological safety jointly explain 31% of the variance in quiet-quitting behaviours, with a large effect size (f^2= .45). This indicates that the interplay of workload pressure and relational climate substantially influences disengagement among staff. The high explanatory power underscores that organisational conditions, rather than individual differences alone, are central to understanding quiet-quitting. Importantly, the model's robustness and statistical significance confirm that both predictors together provide a meaningful framework for interpreting staff withdrawal in tertiary institutions.

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RQ3. Relative contribution of role overload and psychological safety.

The analysis results for "Relative contribution of role overload and psychological safety" are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression coefficients, collinearity, and unique effects.

Predictor	B	SE B	95% CI for B	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF	Partial r^2 (unique)
Constant	**2.87**	.22	[2.43, 3.31]	—	13.0	<.001	—	—	—
Role Overload	**0.43**	.05	[.33, .53]	**.42**	**8.5**	**<.001**	.92	1.09	**.17**
Psychological Safety	**−.34**	.05	[−.44, −.24]	**−.31**	**−6.8**	**<.001**	.92	1.09	**.12**

p<.001

Both predictors are significant. Role overload shows the larger unique contribution (partial $r^2 \approx .17$) vs. psychological safety (partial $r^2 \approx .12$). Together with shared variance (~.01), they account for $R^2 \approx .31$. The regression coefficients show that both predictors significantly contribute to quiet-quitting, with role overload (β= .42, partial r^2= .17) exerting stronger influence than psychological safety (β= −.31, partial r^2= .12). This means that excessive role demands are a more powerful driver of disengagement, although a supportive climate still offers protective value. Bootstrapped robustness tests confirmed the stability of these effects. These results highlight the importance of balancing workload and fostering psychological safety to mitigate quiet-quitting behaviours among non-teaching staff.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Developing the key interrelations between role overload, psychological safety, and quiet-quitting behaviour is a breakthrough that clarifies the complex process of employee disengagement in the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions. There is a positive correlation between role overload and quiet-quitting with psychological safety moderating this relationship, thus supporting the theoretical hypotheses and proving the interdependence of stressors and resources at work. These results are empirical evidence of Job Demands Reserves model (Demerouti et al., 2015), which states that a high workload is a job demand, which can lead to strain and withdrawal behaviours when a person does not have sufficient resources. The psychological safety buffering effect of quiet-quitting conforms to the historical research of Edmondson (1999), who revealed that the environment of trust and open communication helps employees to cope with challenges at the workplace better. Further, the low negative relationship between role overload and psychological safety depicts a vicious circle in which increased job requirements undermine the interpersonal resources that are imperative to reduce the adverse consequences.

These results have significant contextual implications that should be considered in detail. Situated in most cases by the paucity of resources and the exigencies of bureaucracy, the tertiary institutions in Nigeria provide a set up in which it is possible to have non-teaching staff being overworked and at the same time they may not have the support of supervision. This paper shows that so-called quiet-quitting phenomenon, which is commonly practised in the context of Western corporations, can also be seen in the African educational setting implying that there might be common sets of patterns in the way employees react to work-related stressors. These results offer an institutional change basis. Instead of defining the concept of disengagement by the lack of personal traits of character or the lack of motivation, the administrators should realise that it is a natural response to the organisational conditions. Interventions are thus supposed to focus more on redistribute workloads and clarify the role expectations and facilitate psychologically safe working conditions which can be accomplished by establishment of leadership programmes that focus on supportive supervision and free communication.

The joint strength of role overload and psychological safety (accounting 31π -percent of the variance in the quiet quitting behaviour) indicates the complexity of the problem of employee disengagement

and questions the simplistic explanations of withdrawal based on personal traits only. This large effect size shows that organisational conditions strongly determine the level of employee engagement, which is supported by recent meta-analytical research evidence on the significance of contextual variables in the prediction of workplace behaviours. Based on the Organisational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), the joint predictive effect shows that psychological safety reflects how employees perceive the organisational care and concern interact dynamically with job demands to determine behavioural outcomes. When employees have a sense of high organisational support in the form of psychologically safe conditions, they are more resilient to the adverse effects of workload pressures; low psychological safety increases the effects of role overload on disengagement. The interaction effect is consistent with the results of Kurtessis et al. (2017), who have found that perceived organisational support acts as a pandemic against workplace stressors.

The substantial yet incomplete predictive power (31%) of these two variables highlights the complexity of quiet-quitting as a phenomenon. While role demands and safety perceptions are clearly important, the remaining 69% of unexplained variance points to additional factors that warrant investigation—potentially including job autonomy, career development opportunities, compensation equity, or broader organizational culture variables. From a systems perspective, these findings suggest that effective interventions must be holistic rather than piecemeal. Organizations cannot simply reduce workloads without attending to climate factors, nor can they create psychologically safe environments while ignoring overwhelming job demands. The synergistic effect shows that the holistic nature of organisational development interventions, which address structural and relational elements simultaneously, is a necessity to substantive change. Subsequently, employee retention and engagement strategies should also address workload pressures through streamlined staffing ratios and process efficiencies and invest in leadership development, team-building programmes, and communication systems that promote psychological safety.

The differences in predictive power of role overload and psychological safety explain vital differences in the antecedent of quiet quitting, with both theoretical and practical implications. The fact that role overload is the weaker of the two predictors suggests that structural job demands are a more essential threat to employee engagement in resource-restrained situations, although the role of relational resources is still important. This finding resonates with hierarchical models of human needs, where basic job security and manageable workloads may take precedence over higher-order social and esteem needs (Maslow, 1943). When employees are overwhelmed by work demands, the beneficial effects of supportive relationships and psychological safety, while still meaningful, may be insufficient to prevent disengagement. The primacy of workload concerns aligns with recent research on employee well-being, which has consistently identified excessive job demands as primary predictors of burnout and withdrawal (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

However, the continued significance of psychological safety as a predictor, even when controlling for role overload, underscores its independent value as an organizational resource. This supports Newman et al. (2017) systematic review findings that psychological safety contributes uniquely to employee outcomes beyond its interaction with job demands. The protective effect of psychological safety suggests that even in high-demand environments, supportive leadership and collegial relationships can mitigate some negative consequences of workload pressure. The practical implications favor a tiered intervention approach. Given role overload's stronger predictive power, organizations should prioritize structural changes that address workload issues—such as process automation, role clarification, additional staffing, or workflow redesign. Investments in psychological safety through leadership development, communication training, and team-building can provide additional protective benefits and enhance overall organizational climate. Future research should however, explore whether these relative contributions vary across different organizational contexts, job types, or cultural settings. Longitudinal studies could also examine whether the relative importance of workload versus psychological safety changes over time or at different career stages.

Conclusion

This study provides compelling empirical evidence for the prevalence and predictors of quiet-quitting behaviors among non-teaching staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions, offering valuable insights into a phenomenon that has received limited scholarly attention in the African higher education context. The study confirms that quiet quitting is not only a phenomenon of western corporations but a global reaction to organisational dysfunction that is also highly observed in educational settings that are resource-limited. The results indicate that role overload and psychological safety contribute equally to the variance in quiet-quitting behaviours whereby role overload is the stronger predictor that relational resources are not superior in predicting employee disengagement.

The theoretical implications of this work are quite significant, as they offer an empirical confirmation of the Job Demands-Resources model in relation to the institutional setting of Nigeria and emphasise the complicated nature of relationships between workload pressures and organisational climate variables. The moderate positive correlation between role overload and quiet quitting ($r = .46$) confirms that excessive job demands serve as primary catalysts for withdrawal behaviors, while the negative association between psychological safety and quiet quitting ($r = -.39$) underscores the protective value of supportive work environments. These relationships illuminate the systemic nature of employee disengagement, challenging individualistic explanations that attribute withdrawal to personal shortcomings or motivational deficits.

From a practical standpoint, the study's findings have profound implications for institutional leadership and human resource management in Nigerian tertiary education. The current paper shows that quiet quitting is a logical coping mechanism that employees use to face unsustainable working conditions, not a symptom of poor work ethic or organisational commitment. As a result, the findings necessitate a substantive re-assessment of managerial practises with regards to employee disengagement, promoting a holistic intervention paradigm that does not only encompass relational but also systemic organisational failures. The study fills a gap in the literature on personnel-psychology research by focusing on non-teaching staff, a historically marginal and nonetheless essential segment of the workforce, and contributes a set of practical recommendations to enhance organisational performance and worker welfare within the higher-education sector in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Considering the empirical results and the implications thereof, the following recommendations are formulated towards the institute leaders, policymakers, and scholars. First, the redistribution of the workload and the optimization of the administrative procedures should become the main concern of the tertiary institutions in order to reduce the major contributor of the quiet quitting. To achieve this goal, the adoption of far-reaching job analysis research to reveal duplication and inefficiency in the duties, implementation of information-technology infrastructure to streamline bureaucracies, and ensuring sufficient staff-to-patient ratios in all non-teaching departments is necessary. In addition, organisations are to outline clear and succinct job descriptions, as well as set performance goals, thus avoiding the issue of unofficial jobs acquisition over time, which leads to the role overload.

Second, leadership development programmes with an underpinning of developing psychological safety must be established at all levels of the administrative hierarchy. These activities ought to inculcate transformational leadership behaviours, effective communication strategies and conflict-resolution skills that are aimed at promoting trust and openness. Psychological-safety metrics should be assessed by means of systematic climate assessments and 360-degree appraisal tools that allow determining points at which timely intervention is required. Also, formalised employee feedback and grievance resolution mechanisms should be enhanced to make sure that the issues raised by staff are dealt with efficiently and openly.

Thirdly, policymakers should consider systematic changes that challenge the resource constraints that drive such organisational dilemmas. These reforms must include suggestions to improve funding patterns in tertiary institutions, offer professional-growth opportunities to non-teaching staff, and

introduce performance-based pay regimes to recognise excellent service. Future studies are needed that question longitudinal patterns of quiet-quitting, test supporting antecedents like job-autonomy and career-growth opportunities, evaluate possible moderating factors including organisational culture and personal resilience. Cross-cultural investigations that compare the cases of quiet-quitting occurrences across fragmented African settings would also add strength to theoretical trepidation even as it informs context specific interventions.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

This research was conducted in accordance with recognized ethical standards. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. The author declares that he acted in accordance with ethical rules in all processes of the research. The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to this work.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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