

The Impact of Authentic Leadership on Quiet Quitting: Mediating Role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing awareness of quiet quitting, empirical research on how leadership styles mitigate it remains limited. Specifically, there is a substantial lack of research on the mechanisms through which authentic leadership influences quiet quitting, particularly from the perspective of organizational citizenship behavior. This study investigates how authentic leadership (AL) influences quiet quitting (QQ) through the mediating role of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design. Survey data was collected from 211 employees across various sectors in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The results indicated a negative association of AL with QQ behavior, whereas a positive effect on OCB. Furthermore, the findings suggest that OCB plays a full mediating role in the relationship between AL and QQ. This study integrates the literature on organizational

behavior, employee engagement, and leadership theory to propose a novel theoretical framework based on Herzberg's dual-factor theory and Social Exchange Theory (SET). The findings have significant implications for promoting favorable employee attitudes and mitigating the risks of QQ tendencies. It also provides helpful guidance for developing tools and metrics to evaluate AL, QQ, and OCB.

Keywords: Authentic leadership, Quiet quitting, Organizational citizenship behavior, Social Exchange Theory (SET), Herzberg's dual-factor theory

INTRODUCTION

Today's business world is characterized by three major events that have directly impacted the global business outlook. First, the fourth industrial revolution began, alongside massive technological breakthroughs. The COVID-19 pandemic is in second place, followed by the geopolitical landscape in third place. These scenarios have profoundly impacted employees and organizations worldwide, ushering in an era of uncertainty (Pevac, 2023). Together, these forces have contributed to widespread employee disengagement, well-being concerns, declining motivation, and increased organizational instability, which is reflected in phenomena such as "Quiet Quitting". This context is further supported by recent findings, including Gallup's study, which shows a worrying global trend of sadness over the past ten years, with more workers reporting being permanently unhappy at work (Clifton, 2022). According to the Economic Policy Institute (2023), from 1979 to 2022, net productivity rose 64.7%, while the hourly pay of typical workers grew far more slowly, increasing only 14.8% over four decades (after adjusting for inflation). This reveals that productivity has grown 4.4 times faster than pay, widening the gap between productivity and workers' compensation. Further, the study has shown a clear drop in employee engagement levels across all generations in the United States, which causes a detrimental impact on organizations. For example, Gen Z and younger millennials reported particularly low levels of engagement, at just 31% in the first quarter of 2022 (Clifton, 2022). Moreover, US labor output fell the most in 2022 compared to the previous 74 years (Labor Productivity, 2022).

These dual macroeconomic and emotional challenges have affected employee engagement, leading to phenomena like 'Great Resignation' (GR) and Quiet Quitting (QQ). Employees who remain in their jobs but emotionally disengage are known as Quiet Quitters (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023; Ito, 2022). Given that GR and QQ are legacies of COVID-19, companies must understand and address employee needs. This urgency, coupled with a broader historical context of distrust in institutions, highlights the critical need for leaders who can restore trust and hope. This role is well-suited for authentic leadership (AL), which has emerged as a promising solution, promoting trust,

openness, and positive workplace relationships (Lemoine et al., 2019; Luthans et al., 2013). Authentic leaders are highly self-aware, transparent, value-oriented, and balanced in their leadership styles and decision-making (Winton et al., 2022). AL, distinct from ethical and transformational leadership, is known for enhancing employee behavior and attitudes, including corporate responsibility and work motivation (Gardner et al., 2011; Al Qur'an, 2024). With its emphasis on self-awareness, relational transparency, and balanced information processing, AL is crucial in today's complex business environment (Lemoine et al., 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

The phenomenon of QQ demands urgent attention from management to deploy effective interventions, thereby averting potential setbacks to the organization. Despite widespread awareness, numerous companies remain ill-prepared to address QQ (Hare, 2022). Leaders grapple with understanding the increasing prevalence of quiet quitters observable in diverse sectors, including finance, social work, and academia (Morrison-Beedy, 2022). Frequently, the root cause of QQ lies in an organization's inability to establish significant relationships with its employees. While leaders grapple with mitigating QQ, fostering positive employee behaviors is crucial. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), defined as voluntary tasks beyond job descriptions, is vital for business growth and can serve as a counterpoint to QQ tendencies (Ukkas et al., 2019). Accordingly, this study aims to explore *the association between AL and QQ behavior, focusing on the mediating role of OCB*, thereby addressing the gap in understanding how AL influences QQ behavior through OCB.

This study investigates the influence of AL on QQ among employees across diverse sectors and positions within the United Arab Emirates (UAE), emphasizing the mediating role of OCB. Given the UAE's multicultural workforce and competitive talent market, understanding AL's impact on QQ is vital for enhancing engagement and retention. By examining cultural complexities that affect leadership styles, the research aims to provide practical strategies for managing QQ behavior and fostering positive work relationships, thereby improving organizational performance and leadership development. Drawing on Herzberg's Dual-Factor theory and social exchange theory, this study employs a quantitative methodology to explore the relationships among AL, OCB, and QQ, thus addressing gaps in existing literature. Herzberg's Dual-Factor theory, for instance, offers a framework for understanding how various workplace elements affect employee engagement and satisfaction, both of which are crucial in the context of quiet quitting. On the other hand, social exchange theory clarifies how AL affects workers' behavior, particularly with respect to QQ and OCB.

By applying statistical methods to 211 employee survey responses across various sectors in the UAE, we found a negative association between AL and QQ behavior. In contrast, AL had a positive effect on OCB. Furthermore, the findings have confirmed

OCB's mediating role and demonstrated how AL can mitigate QQ behaviors. Ultimately, the study findings seek to cultivate a committed and engaged workforce, boosting organizational productivity and success. By bridging the gap between academic research and practical application, it empowers leaders and organizations to make strategic decisions that prioritize employee well-being, engagement, and retention amid evolving workplace dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Authentic Leadership (AL)

According to Avolio et al. (2004), authentic leadership (AL) is characterized by awareness of thoughts, deeds, knowledge, moral convictions, values, and positive traits in relation to the environment. Authentic leaders exhibit high moral standards, self-assurance, optimism, hope, and perseverance. Authentic leaders, with high self-awareness and moral clarity, are positioned to motivate others, inspiring heightened levels of positive behavior and engagement (Winton et al., 2022; Avolio et al., 2004). Researchers have proposed many 'positive leadership theories', including servant leadership, charismatic leadership, empowerment leadership, authoritative leadership, transformational leadership, and AL (Al Zaabi et al., 2025; Kumar et al., 2025; Li et al., 2017; Karkoulian, 2015). Gardner et al. (2005) conducted a comparative analysis of AL with other positive theories, such as behavioral theory, spiritual leadership, transformational theory, self-concept-based theory, and servant leadership. The examination identified shared characteristics, emphasizing positive ethical perspectives, leaders' introspection, internalized self-regulation, positive leadership demonstration, support for self-determination, and promotion of followers' self-awareness values. This shows AL aligns with other leadership styles. Authentic leaders prioritize followers' well-being, exhibiting honesty and transparency, which enhances trust, loyalty, and efficiency (Sigaeva et al., 2022). This creates an environment of respect and equity, promoting positive mental well-being and harmonious relationships (Kurian & Nafukho, 2022).

Moreover, Farid et al. (2020) argue that trust among employees is key to overcoming challenges, building resilience, and reducing insecurity. Brown et al. (2020) argue that AL creates trust among employees. Respect and trust characterize high-quality social relationships, which AL nurtures. Thus, AL is recognized as effective leadership because it makes employees believe their bosses will assist them. This leadership style motivates followers to demonstrate increased good conduct (Avolio et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2023). AL influences employee attitudes and actions, encouraging respect, fairness, trust, psychological capability, and harmonious relationships (Kurian & Nafukho, 2022).

Quiet Quitting (QQ)

Quiet quitting (QQ) is characterized as employees "mentally and emotionally disengaging or checking out from their job, performing only the essential tasks in their daily work routine" (Bakotić, 2023, p. 38). It represents a form of employee withdrawal characterized by dissatisfaction with workplace issues (e.g., anger, anxiety, stress, lack of support, workload) and low work engagement (Afrahi et al., 2022). The movement of QQ serves as a form of communication from employees to employers, signaling an unhealthy workplace environment that requires change (Ellis & Yang, 2022). According to Nordgren and Björs (2023), QQ refers to the "phenomenon of disengaging from work, performing only the minimum required tasks, and avoiding additional responsibilities or initiatives" (p. 12). QQ services pose a roadblock to organizational excellence and are an emergent trend among the young workforce (Liu-Lastres et al., 2024). QQ is a relatively new area for research and empirical investigation for management scholars.

Galanis et al. (2023) proposed a three-factor model for workplace behavior: 1) detachment involving emotional distance from work-related concerns; 2) lack of motivation encompassing internal drive and external work incentives; and 3) lack of initiative referring to employees' willingness to exceed supervisors' expectations and regular duties. While QQ has gained attention as a recent phenomenon, the conceptualization remains new. QQ has been defined in organizational behavior using several terms, even before COVID-19, such as disengagement, withdrawal behavior, and job neglect. Disengagement, as defined by Afrahi et al. (2022) involves "distancing oneself emotionally, cognitively, or physically from work", aligning with QQ. Withdrawal behavior, as defined by Rosse and Hulin (1985), involves "employees deliberately creating psychological or physical distance from the workplace, to avoid tasks, the organization, or the work environment". Job neglect is conceptualized as "behaviors like withholding effort and diminishing involvement in work-related tasks" (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). These behaviors are seen as a response to job dissatisfaction, reflecting limited involvement.

QQ has emerged as a distinct form of employee disengagement. QQ contrasts with active disengagement, where employees withdraw and express dissatisfaction through negative behaviors, such as voicing complaints or undermining team morale (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). The motivations behind quiet quitting differ from those behind other forms of disengagement (Ellera et al., 2023). Although the link between QQ and established constructs such as disengagement, withdrawal behavior, and job neglect (Bennett & Robinson, 2000) is acknowledged, no research has empirically examined

whether QQ is a unique phenomenon or just a rebranding of persistent workplace behaviors.

Beyond its conceptualization, the surge in QQ can be attributed to societal shifts. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced challenges like uncertainty about the future, fear of infection, loss of loved ones, diminished freedom, and loneliness (Deep et al., 2025; Siddique et al., 2024; Sharma et al., 2022). These factors contributed to diminished life meaning and emptiness (De Jong et al., 2020), prompting awareness of emotional health and mental health, and personal physical (Afrahi et al., 2022). This realization inspired the concept that 'work should not be at the center of life'. Consequently, individuals may reassess the meaning of their lives and prioritize fulfilling activities over work. QQ behavior may address these challenges and lead them to a meaningful life.

Employees are often expected to take on tasks beyond their job descriptions, and if some adopt QQ behavior, it can disrupt organizations and burden others. Many managers believe firing these workers is best (Klotz & Bolino, 2022). Quiet quitters resist giving their all or working extra hours, and they avoid talking about additional unpaid tasks (Hart, 2022). This phenomenon, driven by work-life balance and rejection of hustle culture, highlights the need for businesses to reevaluate procedures to align with evolving employee needs (Esteveny, 2022). QQ, as identified by Aydin and Azizoglu (2022), is linked to hustle culture, which glorifies excessive work and emphasizes productivity, but harms mental health and leads to employee turnover.

Similarly, Formica and Sfodera (2022) identified three factors contributing to employee dissatisfaction: employees quietly quit when needs are not met, when values do not align with the organization, and when there is to a lack of shared purpose. Furthermore, Mahand and Caldwell (2023) point out a less-discussed cause: broken brand promises. Nimmi et al. (2024) attribute QQ to personal reasons (irreconcilable work-family conflicts), organizational politics (policies-practices), and people dynamics, including peer behavior and toxic cultures. Companies' failure to fulfill promises regarding employee well-being, flexibility, and meaningful work can contribute to QQ. The discrepancy between employer commitments and actual workplace atmosphere causes workers to lose motivation and feel powerless, resulting in openly quitting or quietly disengaging (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). The phenomena illustrate workers' valuing of a balance between professional and personal lives and safeguarding their health (Aydin & Azizoglu, 2022). Thus, the primary cause for commitment loss is managers' failure to effectively engage and motivate workers (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). The literature suggests an inherent dichotomy between quiet quitting behaviors and organizational interests, making it relevant to research.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) plays an important role in employee behavior, which impacts company performance and profitability. According to Organ et al. (2006), OCB refers to employee voluntary actions that enhance organizational performance but aren't specifically recognized or rewarded. These include offering support to coworkers, being diligent, and participating in extracurricular organizational activities. Studies have shown the benefits of OCB. According to Azila-Gbettor et al. (2020), OCBs ensure consumer happiness and loyalty and enhance organizational performance. Higher levels of organizational competitiveness are linked to positive workplace behaviors, such as OCB (Takeuchi et al., 2015). Organ et al. (2006) state that while OCB is optional, it is essential to increasing an organization's efficacy and efficiency. This includes duties that improve overall effectiveness, such as being conscientious and offering interpersonal assistance (Organ et al., 2006). Therefore, participating in OCB positively impacts organizational and individual performance. This emphasizes the importance of supporting such behavior (Podsakoff et al., 2019). Individual, organizational, and environmental variables have been linked to OCB in studies (Ahmad & Zafar, 2018).

To encourage OCB among employees, effective leadership is crucial. Various leadership styles, including ethical, modest, transformational, transactional, charismatic, and servant, have been positively associated with OCB (Kebede & Demeke, 2017; Al Qur'an, 2012). When managers offer support and nurturing connections with subordinates, trust is cultivated, resulting in employees' moral obligation to engage in OCB (Runhaar et al., 2013). Organizations cannot thrive without employees who exhibit positive OCB (Worku & Debela, 2024; Ribeiro et al., 2022; Organ, 1988). OCB encompasses actions beyond formal job obligations and supports organizational effectiveness by involving efforts that go beyond the minimum necessary measures (Mundung, 2021).

An employee who engages in OCB takes on extra responsibilities for the benefit of the company and colleagues. Managers value OCB, but it cannot be forced on employees (Organ et al., 2006). According to Ribeiro et al. (2022), OCB is internally motivated by an employee's desire for belonging and accomplishment. OCB encompasses five key dimensions (Organ et al., 2006): a) altruism involves helping colleagues with work-related issues; b) conscientiousness is shown through following rules and working beyond requirements; c) sportsmanship means maintaining positivity without complaints; d) courtesy involves improving communication to prevent issues; and e) civic virtue contributes to organizational welfare. There is debate about whether OCB should be promoted or left voluntary, as pressure for discretionary effort could lead to exploitation (Worku & Debela, 2024). Analyzing these variations may provide an objective assessment of OCB's organizational impact.

Hypotheses Development

Authentic Leadership (AL) and Quiet Quitting (QQ)

Authentic Leadership (AL) is characterized by transparency, self-awareness, and the promotion of positive relationships (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Leaders practicing authenticity build trust and foster a constructive work environment (Ahmed, 2024), which is linked to improved employee well-being (Walumbwa et al., 2010). AL promotes open communication, reduces ambiguity (Gelaidan et al., 2024), and aligns values with organizational goals, creating purpose (Gardner et al., 2011). AL builds trust, positive emotions, and optimism, enhancing organizational commitment and promoting self-development among followers (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Joaquim et al., 2023), potentially mitigating Quiet Quitting (QQ) behavior. This highlights AL's role in creating positive organizational culture and employee well-being, suggesting a negative correlation with QQ.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) suggests that social behavior is driven by individuals' assessment of the benefits and costs of relationships. Authentic leaders who practice authenticity foster mutual respect and trust, leading to positive reciprocal behaviors from employees. When employees perceive leaders as transparent and supportive, they feel valued and reciprocate with increased engagement, thereby reducing QQ behavior (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory, which distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators, supports this notion. AL enhances both hygiene factors (creating a fair work environment) and motivators (fostering a sense of purpose and growth). This dual impact prevents dissatisfaction while promoting job satisfaction and engagement. Therefore, AL's emphasis on meaningful work, recognition, and development aligns with Herzberg's motivators, contributing to employee well-being and reducing QQ and passive withdrawal at work.

A variety of positive outcomes for workers have been associated with AL, including greater job satisfaction (Laschinger et al., 2012), increased work engagement (Sigaeva et al., 2022), decreased emotional exhaustion (Ahmed & Muchiri, 2014), higher affective commitment (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), and the creation of a fair work environment (Farid *et al.*, 2020). Based on the discussion above, we suggest that AL is associated with workers' bad QQ behavior. Accordingly, we propose that AL is negatively correlated with QQ behavior among employees. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Authentic Leadership (AL) exhibits a negative correlation with Quiet Quitting (QQ).

Authentic Leadership (AL) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Leadership is the ability to influence and guide individuals in implement changes that help organizations achieve objectives (Kharisma & Satrya, 2022). Similarly, Gelaidan et al. (2024) argue that leaders must inspire individuals to undertake tasks that support organizational goals and follow directives. Among leadership styles, Authentic Leadership (AL) significantly impacts Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Scholars have highlighted AL's crucial role in fostering OCBs (Organ et al., 2006). By fostering an equitable work environment, AL encourages behaviors that enhance the well-being of both colleague and organization (Qiu et al., 2019), thereby promoting employees' OCBs (Ramalu & Janadari, 2020). AL has gained attention for its effects on employee job performance and well-being (Mundung, 2021; Laschinger et al., 2012). Alam et al. (2021) demonstrated that positive supervisors enhance commitment and employee engagement, using Social Exchange Theory (SET) as the framework. Similarly, Jun et al. (2025) found that a strong perception of AL fosters OCB among followers, particularly when perceived organizational support is used through SET. Research consistently links perceived authenticity in leadership with increased satisfaction, organizational commitment, and OCB engagement (Sigaeva et al., 2022; Gardner et al., 2011; Gardner et al., 2005).

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between AL and OCB, proposing mechanisms such as support for self-determination, positive modeling, emotional contagion, and trust-building (Farid et al., 2020; Laschinger et al., 2012). AL is perceived as embodying honest and transparent role models, which helps create a positive work environment that fosters trust, commitment, and subsequently, OCB (Avolio et al., 2004). Research indicates that under AL, employees are more engaged in OCB due to an open and fair environment (Gardner et al., 2005). Support from authentic leaders acts as an extrinsic motivational factor positively associated with OCB and other desirable work behaviors (Kurian & Nafukho, 2022). Recent reviews have shown that AL positively influences employee behaviors and attitudes, including OCB, work engagement, and job performance (Lemoine et al., 2019; Gardner et al., 2011). AL has the potential to ignite employees' job passion by fostering an internalized moral perspective and relational transparency (Luu, 2024). Passionate employees demonstrate commitment to their tasks and are more inclined to exhibit OCBs (Gardner et al., 2011). Therefore, AL may play a role in fostering work passion and enhancing OCBs.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) states that positive exchanges fostered by AL enhance employee reciprocity and commitment. AL creates a transparent and supportive environment that promotes trust and respect, encouraging employees to engage in OCB as a form of reciprocity. Herzberg's Dual-Factor theory supports this by showing AL addresses hygiene factors (e.g., fairness and transparency) and motivators (e.g., sense of purpose and growth). By enhancing these factors, AL prevents

job dissatisfaction while promoting satisfaction and engagement. Despite controlling the organizational environment, AL remains a strong predictor of both self-reported OCB and supervisor-assessed work performance (Joo & Jo, 2017). The following hypothesis is advanced considering this line of reasoning:

H2: There is a positive correlation between Authentic Leadership (AL) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and Quiet Quitting (QQ)

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to voluntary actions that go beyond typical job duties and serve as a defense against counterproductive work behaviors, such as Quiet Quitting (QQ) (Organ et al., 2006). OCB enhances job satisfaction and purpose while reducing apathy (Podsakoff et al., 2019). It shows heightened commitment and contributes to a positive work environment (Klotz & Bolino, 2022). In supportive environments, OCB can reduce QQ's attractiveness as a stress-coping method (Organ et al., 2006). Aydin and Azizoglu (2022) found a direct link between OCB and well-being. OCB acts as protection against negative outcomes for those who might turn to QQ. However, OCB alone may not sustain employee performance, especially with heavy workloads, poor well-being, or unfavorable organizational cultures (Ochis, 2024; Setia et al., 2024; Joshi et al., 2011). Ochis (2024) identified this issue as a concern among GenZ employees. Reduced OCB can lead to psychological disengagement, detachment from work, decreased effort, and indirect contribution to QQ.

According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), employees who engage in OCB perceive their work environment as supportive and reciprocal, enhancing job satisfaction and reducing the likelihood of QQ. Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory supports this by showing OCB improves hygiene factors and motivators. The alignment of SET and Herzberg's Theory suggests that OCB, supported by a favorable work environment, reduces QQ behaviors by promoting satisfaction and a sense of purpose. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a negative association between Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and Quiet Quitting (QQ).

Mediation Effect of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Research by Azila-Gbettor et al. (2020), Ahmad and Zafar (2018), and Takeuchi et al. (2015) consistently highlights the pivotal role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) in shaping various organizational outcomes. The core premise is that

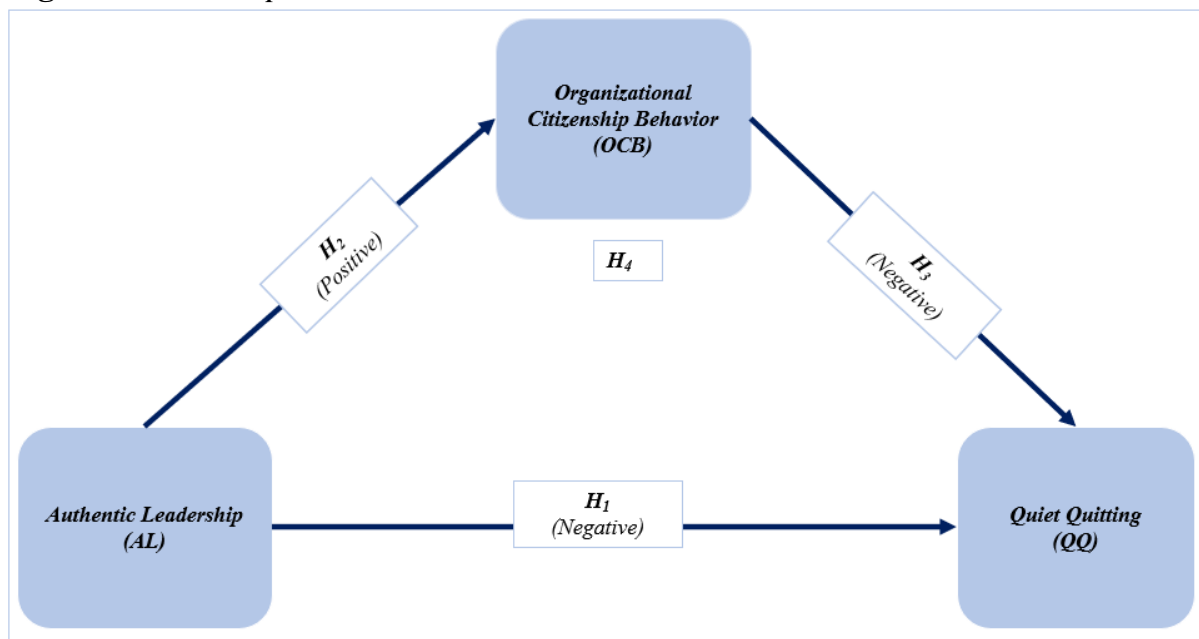
OCB acts as a mediator between leadership styles and desired outcomes, though specifics and influencing factors may differ across studies. Authentic Leadership (AL), marked by transparency, ethical conduct, and genuine concern for employees, is believed to affect employees' attitudes towards Quiet Quitting (QQ), with OCB serving as an intermediary. Jiang and Shen (2023) provide empirical evidence supporting the notion that AL can boost employee satisfaction and reduce withdrawal behaviors, with relationship building, organizational communication, and engagement acting as facilitators, thereby emphasizing OCB as a significant factor in this dynamic.

The mediation effect is explained through Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory. SET suggests that authentic leaders cultivate a positive communication climate, thereby increasing OCB among employees and reducing the likelihood of QQ behavior. Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory posits that AL influences motivators such as recognition, responsibility, and personal growth by offering meaningful work, opportunities for advancement, and a supportive work environment. Consequently, OCB is enhanced, and the propensity for QQ behavior diminishes. The significance of OCB in organizational behavior is well recognized for its substantial impact on company performance and effectiveness (Podsakoff et al., 2019). Maamari and Saheb (2018) found that leadership style has a significant impact on employee job performance in a supportive organizational setting characterized by acceptance, adaptation, and diversity in the Middle East.

In this study, the mediation effect is defined as the reduction in the regression coefficient of AL on QQ when OCB is included. As employees engage more in OCB, their perception of AL improves, leading to a decrease in QQ behavior. Thus, the study suggests that by fostering a positive exchange environment and enhancing motivators through AL practices, employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of OCB, thereby reducing the tendency for QQ. Ultimately, this leads to higher employee engagement, better performance, and greater organizational effectiveness. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) acts as a mediator in the relationship between Authentic Leadership (AL) and Quiet Quitting (QQ).

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model designed for this study.

Figure 1 A Conceptual Model

Source: The Authors

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Sample Design

QQ behavior affects a wide range of industries worldwide, including business, healthcare, education, and nonprofit institutions. To get a more detailed knowledge of this phenomenon, with a population size of 1200 firms as per the Ministry of Economy (MOEC) Licensed Companies (Ministry of Economy, 2018), we carried out a cross-sectional quantitative survey including individuals from diverse sectors, industries, and occupations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The research employed a convenience sampling approach to collect data from participants who were easily accessible and willing to participate (Haleem et al., 2024). The objective of using a diverse sample methodology was to ensure that the study results would be relevant and transferable to a broad spectrum of firms engaged in multiple professions and sectors (Nasaj et al., 2025; Kumar et al., 2023). This is crucial because the topic under investigation is of great importance to the entire workforce, regardless of occupational domain. The UAE is known for its diverse workforce; therefore, it offers us a unique opportunity to investigate how AL affects QQ.

The data were gathered using a Google Form questionnaire that used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The online survey questionnaire was administered over three months, from February to April 2024. The survey questionnaire was administered to employees of private and publicly listed firms in the UAE. A total of 286 responses were collected, yielding a response rate of approximately 23.8%, of these, 211 were deemed usable for analysis.

Measurement

All scales used in this study were based on previously developed and validated measures, as shown in Appendix A. Authentic Leadership (AL) was assessed using the Authentic Leadership Inventory developed by Neider and Schriesheim (2011). This inventory captures followers' perceptions across 14 items: leader self-awareness (3 items), balanced processing (4 items), relational transparency (3 items), and internalized moral perspective (4 items). Then, we assessed employees' Quiet Quitting (QQ) using the Quiet Quitting Scale (QQS) developed by Galanis et al. (2023). The QQS comprises 9 items: lack of motivation (2 items), detachment (4 items), and lack of initiative (3 items). To control for response bias and ensure careful consideration of each item, items 1, 2, and 8 were reverse-scored for QQ. Finally, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) was operationalized using a scale developed by Podsakoff et al. (1990). This scale includes a five-factor model with 24 items, measuring altruism (5 items), conscientiousness (5 items), sportsmanship (5 items), courtesy (5 items), and civic virtue (4 items). To control response bias and ensure careful consideration of each item, items 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 were reverse-coded for OCB. In line with previous studies, demographic variables including gender, age, education, sector, industry sector, job level, experience, and the total number of employees in the organization were controlled for to mitigate alternative explanations (Kumar et al., 2023).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis for this study was conducted using quantitative techniques. The data was initially screened and prepared for analysis. All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Software Version 29.0.2.0 (20). Accordingly, the study included a range of statistical methods, including descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and simple mediation analysis. The measurement model evaluates construct scales using factor loadings, construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (Nunnally, 1978; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Convergent validity is confirmed by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), with AVE values above 0.50 indicating support for convergent validity (refer to Appendix B for results).

Bootstrapping, a method involving random sampling with replacement, is used to compute desired statistics in each resample (Preacher et al., 2007). In mediation analysis, the extent to which the predictor's effect on an outcome is transmitted through a mediator is assessed by examining the indirect effect, that is, the portion of the effect conveyed through the mediator. This method is proposed as an alternative to the Sobel test for mediation, generating a bias-corrected confidence interval (CI), often a 95% CI.

SPSS Hayes PROCESS macro-regression analysis (v4.2) using bootstrapping was employed to test the indirect effect (Hayes, 2012) to confirm hypothesis H4.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of demographic data within the sample population. Most participants identified as male (83.4%), with a smaller proportion identifying as female (15.2%). Most participants worked in the private sector (85.3%), with most firms operating in the Energy sector (60.2%). Participants were primarily in Senior (45.5%) or Lead/Manager (38.4%) positions. Professional experience varied, with the highest proportion having 11 – 20 Years of experience (46.0%). Firms varied in size, with the highest proportion having between 250 and 1000 employees (37.0%).

Table 1 *Distribution of Demographic Variables*

No.	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)	
01	Gender	Male	176	83.4
		Female	32	15.2
		Prefer not to disclose	3	1.4
02	Age Range	Below 30 Years	33	15.6
		30 – 44 years	122	57.8
		45 - 64 years	56	26.5
03	Education	High School/Diploma	24	11.4
		Bachelor	121	57.3
		Master	63	29.9
		Doctorate (PhD) or Higher	3	1.4
04	Sector	Public	31	14.7
		Private	180	85.3
05	Sector in which the Firm Operates	Energy	127	60.2
		Industrials	12	5.7
		Real Estate	7	3.3
		Health Care	6	2.8
		Information Technology	15	7.1
06	Job Level	Others	44	20.9
		Trainee/ Intermediate	27	12.8
		Senior	96	45.5
		Lead/ Manager	81	38.4
07	Professional Experience	Director and Above	7	3.3
		Below 5 Years	23	10.9
		5 – 10 Years	35	16.6
		11 – 20 Years	97	46.0
08	Employees, there are in your Firm	21 Years and Above	56	26.5
		Below 250	40	19.0
		Between 250 and 1000	78	37.0
		Between 1000 and 10,000	44	20.9
		More than 10,000	49	23.2

Note: N=211

Reliability Analysis

Reliability is the measure of the internal consistency of the constructs in the study. Cronbach's alpha quantifies the degree of internal consistency among the items within a scale. A construct is reliable if the Alpha (α) value is greater than 0.70 (Hair et. al.

2013). The results indicated that the Authentic Leadership Scale, consisting of 14 items ($\alpha = 0.95$), and the Quiet Quitting Scale, consisting of 9 items ($\alpha = 0.71$), demonstrated satisfactory reliability. Likewise, the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale, which comprised 24 items, was also found to be reliable ($\alpha = 0.87$). The reliability results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2 *Reliability Statistics*

Constructs	No. of Items	Alpha (α)
Authentic Leadership	14	0.95
Quiet Quitting	9	0.71
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	24	0.87

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analyses, using Pearson's correlation coefficients, were performed to investigate the relationships among the study variables. Sekaran (2000) classified correlation coefficients (r) ranging from 0.10 to 0.29 as weak, 0.30 to 0.49 as moderate, and 0.50 to 1.0 as strong, thereby providing a basis for interpreting the magnitude and direction of relationships between AL, QQ, OCB, and other variables. The study's results supported the hypotheses. A significant negative correlation was found between AL and QQ ($r = -0.21$, $p < 0.01$), indicating higher AL levels were associated with lower QQ levels (H1 supported); a significant positive correlation emerged between AL and OCB ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting higher AL levels were related to higher OCB levels (H2 supported); and a significant negative correlation was found between QQ and OCB ($r = -0.44$, $p < 0.001$), indicating higher QQ levels were associated with lower OCB levels (H3 supported). These findings suggest that AL positively influences OCB while negatively influencing QQ behavior". See Table 3 for a summary of the correlation results.

Table 3 *The Standard Deviations, Means, and the Bilateral Linear Correlation Coefficients of Continuous Study Variables*

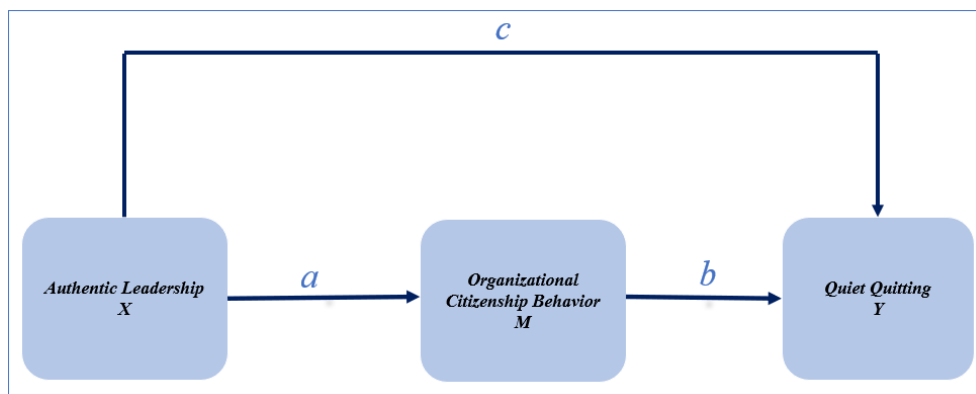
Variable Name	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1 Authentic Leadership	3.81	0.82	1		
2 Quiet Quitting	2.36	0.62	-0.21**	1	
3 Organizational Citizenship Behavior	4.02	0.49	0.37**	-0.44**	1

Note: $N=211$, ** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed); SD = Standard Deviation

Simple Mediation Analysis (SMA)

To examine the proposed mediating role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) between Authentic Leadership (AL) and Quiet Quitting (QQ), a Simple Mediation Analysis (SMA) was performed. SPSS Hayes PROCESS macro-regression analysis (v4.2) bootstrapping was undertaken to test the indirect effect. Accordingly, a total of 5000 bootstrap samples with 95% Confidence Interval (CI) were used to estimate the direct effect and mediation effect of the study variables. A series of regression analyses was conducted to examine SMA, following the procedure suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). Figure 2 illustrates the study's simple mediation model, in which path a represents the effect of X on the mediator and path b represents the effect of the mediator on Y. The indirect effect refers to the effect of X on Y mediated by the variable and was assessed using the four-step approach proposed by Baron & Kenny (1986). Figure 3 presents the four-step procedures for testing SMA.

Figure 2 Simple Mediation Model



Source: The Authors

Figure 3 Four-Step Procedure for Conducting Simple Mediation Analysis

STEP	ANALYSIS	VISUAL DESCRIPTION
STEP 1	Perform a simple regression analysis with X predicting Y to test for path c alone	
STEP 2	Perform a simple regression analysis with X predicting M to test for path a	
STEP 3	Perform a simple regression analysis with M predicting Y to test for path b alone	
STEP 4	Perform a multiple regression analysis with X and M predicting Y	

Source: Adapted from Baron and Kenny (1986)

Based on the SPSS Hayes PROCESS output, the SMA results are as follows. The results of the regression analysis revealed a significant relationship between Authentic Leadership (AL) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), as indicated by the model summary, with OCB as the outcome variable and an R-squared value of 0.14. The regression coefficient for AL was positive and significant ($b = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that for every one-unit increase in AL, there was a corresponding increase in OCB. Additionally, the model summary for the outcome variable of QQ showed a significant relationship between AL and QQ, with an R-squared value of 0.19 ($b = -0.16$, $p = .002$, $\text{BootSE} = 0.04$, $\text{BootLLCI} = -0.20$, $\text{BootULCI} = -0.06$). However, the direct effect of AL on QQ in the presence of the OCB as mediator was nonsignificant ($b = -0.04$, $p = 0.40$, $t = -0.85$), suggesting that OCB fully mediates the association between AL and QQ. This result supports hypothesis H4 (refer to Table 4 for a summary of the mediation analysis).

Table 4 Mediation Analysis

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t-Statistics (Direct)	Conclusion
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
AL->OCB->QQ	-0.16	-0.04	-0.12			-0.85	Fully Mediated
	(-0.01)**	(-0.40)		-0.20	-0.06		

Note (s):

1. The confidence level for all confidence intervals in the output was set at 95.00%.
2. A total of 5000 bootstrap samples were used for generating percentile bootstrap confidence intervals.
3. ** The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).
4. AL is Authentic Leadership; OCB is Organizational Citizenship Behavior; QQ is Quiet Quitting

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study draws on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Herzberg's Dual-Factor theory to provide comprehensive insights into how Authentic Leadership (AL) influences Quiet Quitting (QQ), with the mediating role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). The findings align with Social Exchange Theory and Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory. Authentic leaders create fair, trusting relationships (SET) that promote reciprocity through OCB, while simultaneously fulfilling

motivational needs (Herzberg), thereby reducing the likelihood of quiet quitting. Overall, both theories contribute to understanding how AL influences employees' behavior and attitudes, ultimately affecting organizational outcomes like QQ.

The findings further suggest that AL is negatively related to QQ and that OCB is likewise negatively related to QQ. Conversely, a positive relationship was observed between AL and OCB. These become increasingly significant given the demographics of respondents in this study, most of whom are in managerial and senior leadership roles with high levels of education and extensive work experience. This augurs well for the purpose and long-term implications of this research, as it indicates belief in the AL's transformative power among these senior professionals. Moreover, the findings indicated that full mediation by OCB in the relationship between AL and QQ. The results demonstrate that the proposed hypotheses indicating relationships among constructs are empirically established, implying that the study findings in a multicultural, diverse workforce context are consistent with the literature-based arguments. This underscored the need for, and belief in, the AL's power to steer organizations away from QQ, with OCB as a pillar of support. The results indicate that AL has a more significant favorable impact on OCB. The findings indicated that AL may significantly reduce QQ behavior and enhance OCB among workers, hence fostering a highly productive and inventive work environment.

The correlation between leadership and workers' behavior, marked by demonstrating a positive AL's role model, trust, granting authority, and recognition, forecasts favorable OCB, such as increased dedication, contentment, and reduced QQ. The findings indicated that workers are more likely to exhibit OCB when their leaders demonstrate effective work practices, support their colleagues, provide guidance, and help them overcome challenges. Furthermore, leaders may foster employee engagement and loyalty by effectively conveying a positive vision for the firm and its workers, commending outstanding work, and providing incentives for accomplishments. By providing positive cues in the organizational environment such as morality, transparency, and inclusiveness, authentic leaders can make employees feel valued, engaged, and empowered- irrespective of their backgrounds.

Both the SET and Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory provide insight into how AL affects employee behavior and attitudes, which, in turn, affect organizational outcomes such as QQ. The research highlights the crucial influence of AL in shaping employee behavior and attitudes, leading to favorable organizational results. Leaders can mitigate QQ behavior and promote a culture of high commitment, contentment, and engagement among workers by creating an atmosphere of trust, support, and appreciation. One of the tools that authentic leaders can practically adopt is to use their high self-awareness, inclusive values, and cultural background to understand better their employees' diverse

values, traditions, and workplace expectations. Furthermore, their own development of cultural intelligence and use of intercultural communication to build connections with people can mitigate managerial and employee QQ behaviors.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the critical role of AL in mitigating QQ behavior among employees, with OCB serving as a mediating role. By fostering OCB, the AL style not only diminishes QQ but also cultivates a positive work environment conducive to organizational success. The study concludes that AL, characterized by internalized moral perspective, self-awareness, relational transparency, and balanced processing, is an effective leadership style that can effectively reduce employees' propensity for QQ, ultimately enhancing organizational productivity. Notably, the study reveals that AL not only directly mitigates QQ but also fosters OCB among employees. As a result, the probability of QQ behavior is even lower as OCB increases. Our research shows that leaders who possess AL traits are more likely to positively influence their staff members' attitudes and behaviors, which in turn fosters a more engaged and enthusiastic workforce.

The prime contribution of the current study is three-fold: First, the findings demonstrate that AL principles reduce employee QQ inclinations, and leaders must foster OCB to reduce employee disengagement and passivity. The proposed conceptual framework is distinctive and contributes to the literature on human resources management, leadership, and organization behavior. Accordingly, the human resources strategies and policies should align with the concepts of AL and OCB to manage QQ. Second, the study has extended the application of social exchange theory (SET) and Herzberg's dual-factor theory as part of behavioral theory to real-world organizational dynamics in a geographically diverse, multicultural work environment, specifically in the emerging field of QQ behavior. The research illuminates the phenomenon of QQ and fills gaps in the sparse literature on QQ. Finally, the findings have contributed to the empirical settings of the UAE. AL-focused leadership development boosts staff engagement, dedication, and productivity, whereas OCB promotion as a strategic objective boosts organizational efficiency and prevents QQ. Thus, a blend of AL and OCB approaches used by UAE managers can be an effective tool in managing QQ behaviors in the workforce.

Practically, organizations can leverage the study's findings to enhance employee well-being and motivation by developing management policies that promote AL. Allocating resources to leadership development programs that cultivate AL attributes, such as through training and mentorship, can be particularly beneficial. Additionally, by examining employees across diverse industries and positions in the UAE, this study underscores the importance of tailoring AL initiatives to the local cultural and institutional context, offering valuable guidance for both researchers and organizations.

Understanding how AL fosters OCB can inform human resource and management strategies. Building authentic partnerships with organizational stakeholders and other functions can enhance perceptions of trust, fairness, lack of bias, ethical decision-making, and create a psychologically safe workplace environment. Incorporating these into organizational policies and practices and implementing them consistently can go a long way toward cultivating OCB and curtailing QQ tendencies. In practice, organizations could institute diverse recruitment panels that encourage inclusivity and communicate this message to external stakeholders through job advertisements that signal ethical practices, recognize and respect diversity, uphold objectivity, and freedom from bias. Organizations can encourage OCB through acknowledgment, incentives, and an inclusive and morally sound workplace. Furthermore, our study provides insights into emerging tools and metrics to measure AL, QQ, and OCB, enabling organizations to conduct formative assessments and identify areas for improvement. Our study's findings may be invaluable for leadership and appointment decisions, as companies might prefer candidates who possess AL qualities. Organizations in the UAE may boost employee engagement and performance across numerous industries and roles by aggressively recruiting leaders who could create a positive work environment.

Our investigation, like any other scientific research project, has inherent limitations that provide possibilities for further investigation. The cross-sectional method of the investigation provides a static depiction of the interactions at a single point in time. However, it may not accurately capture their dynamic nature over an extended period. To strengthen causal relationships, future studies might adopt longitudinal or experimental techniques to track the development of these correlations over time. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies may provide more insights into the relationships among AL, QQ, and OCB. Future research might consider including other controlling variables related to organizational culture (such as shared values, beliefs, and practices) and job characteristics (such as job content, complexity, and autonomy). While this study focused on authentic leadership, employee behavior may also be influenced by other leadership styles, such as transformational or transactional. Controlling these styles can help clarify the unique contributions of authentic leadership to OCB and quiet quitting. Furthermore, future research might consider including additional mediating/moderating variables to analyze specific mechanisms by which AL impacts QQ, such as organizational norms, policies, or interpersonal interactions. Future research may also examine other theories that explain employee disengagement, such as the psychological contract theory or the job demands-resources theory, which provide insightful perspectives on employee behavior. Finally, the investigation was undertaken from the perspective of the UAE. More generalizable insights may emerge

from future studies that test the relevance of the results in other cultural or geographical contexts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Measurement Items and Standard Factor Loadings Authentic Leadership (AL)^a

Item No.	Item Description	Standard factor loading
AL1	My leader clearly states what he/she means.	0.77
AL2	My leader shows consistency between his/her beliefs and actions.	0.83
AL3	My leader asks for ideas that challenge his/her core beliefs.	0.81
AL4	My leader describes accurately the way others view his/her abilities.	0.81
AL5	My leader uses his/her core beliefs to make decisions.	0.74
AL6	My leader carefully listens to alternative perspectives before reaching a conclusion.	0.83
AL7	My leader shows that he/she understands his/her strengths and weaknesses.	0.81
AL8	My leader openly shares information with others.	0.77
AL9	My leader resists pressure to do things contrary to his/her beliefs.	0.57
AL10	My leader objectively analyzes relevant data before making a decision.	0.88
AL11	My leader is aware of the impact he/she has on others.	0.76
AL12	My leader expresses his/her ideas and thoughts clearly.	0.88
AL13	My leader is guided by internal moral standards.	0.82
AL14	My leader encourages others to voice opposing viewpoints.	0.8

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)^b

Item No.	Item Description	Standard factor loading
OCB1	Helps others who have been absent.	0.51
OCB2	Helps others who have heavy workloads.	0.66
OCB3	Helps orient new people even when it is not required.	0.52
OCB4	Willingly helps others with work-related problems.	0.67
OCB5	Is always ready to lend a helping hand.	0.73
OCB6	Attendance at work is above the norm.	0.51
OCB7	Does not take extra breaks.	0.59
OCB8	Obeys company rules even when not observed.	0.72
OCB9	Is one of my most conscientious employees.	0.61
OCB10	Believes in giving an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.	0.69
OCB11 (R)	Complains excessively about trivial matters.	0.84
OCB12 (R)	Focuses on the negative rather than the positive.	0.82
OCB13 (R)	Makes "mountains out of molehills."	0.85
OCB14 (R)	Always finds fault with what the organization is doing.	0.81
OCB15 (R)	Frequently needs extra attention ("squeaky wheel").	0.74
OCB16	Takes steps to prevent problems with coworkers.	0.6
OCB17	Is mindful of how his/her behavior affects others' work.	0.74
OCB18	Does not abuse the rights of others.	0.7
OCB19	Avoids creating problems for coworkers.	0.64
OCB20	Considers the impact of his/her actions on coworkers.	0.78
OCB21	Attends non-mandatory but important meetings.	0.58
OCB22	Attends optional functions that support the company image.	0.55
OCB23	Keeps up with changes in the organization.	0.66
OCB24	Reads and stays updated with organizational announcements.	0.63

Note: (R): Reverse Coding.

Quiet Quitting (QQ)^c

Item No.	Item Description	Standard factor loading
QQ1 (R)	I find meaning in my job.	0.88
QQ2 (R)	I feel inspired when I work.	0.86
QQ3	I do the minimum required without going above and beyond.	0.65
QQ4	If a colleague can do some of my tasks, I let them do it.	0.64
QQ5	I avoid expressing ideas to prevent receiving extra tasks.	0.85
QQ6	I avoid expressing ideas because I believe conditions will not change.	0.72
QQ7	I take as many breaks as I can.	0.65
QQ8 (R)	I often take initiative at work.	0.59
QQ9	I sometimes pretend to be working to avoid further tasks.	0.73

Note: ^{a,b,c} Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. (R): Reverse Coding.

Appendix B: Summary of Reliability and Validity Statistics

Construct	Cronbach's alpha ^d	Composite reliability (CR) $\geq 0.6^e$	Average variance extracted. (AVE) $\geq 0.5^f$
Authentic Leadership ^a (AL)	0.95	0.93	0.67
Quiet Quitting ^c (QQ)	0.71	0.72	0.51
Organizational Citizenship Behavior ^b (OCB)	0.87	0.86	0.57

Note: ^{a,b,c} Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. ^d Reliability threshold $\alpha \geq 0.70$ recommended by Nunnally (1978); Composite Reliability (CR) threshold ≥ 0.70 recommended by ^eBagozzi and Yi (1988); ^f Average Variance Extracted (AVE) threshold ≥ 0.50 recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). All the coefficients satisfy these set levels.