

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED PAY EQUITY ON SILENT QUITTING BEHAVIOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

In the post-pandemic academic setting, Silent quitting has emerged as a major organizational issue of anxiety where there is an intentional reduction in discretionary effort and psychological detachment. In institutions of higher learning, this phenomenon is even more relevant as the role of faculty involves high levels of intellectual engagement, enormous commitment and a lot of creativity. One of the main reasons for this behavior is the perception of pay inequity which can negatively affect motivation, engagement, and performance.

This study investigates the influence of perceived pay equity on Silent quitting behaviour among faculty members, while also examining the mediating roles of work engagement and organizational commitment. A quantitative research approach was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 250 faculty members from selected higher education institutions in Telangana, India. The collected data were analysed using SPSS through reliability testing, correlation analysis, multiple regression, and mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS Macro.

The results indicate that employees who perceive their compensation as fair are less likely to engage in Silent quitting behaviours. The findings further reveal that work engagement significantly mediates the relationship between perceived pay equity and Silent quitting. Although perceived pay equity positively influences organizational commitment, organizational commitment does not significantly mediate this relationship. These findings highlight work engagement as an important mechanism through which perceptions of pay fairness shape employee behaviour.

The study contributes to the literature on educational leadership and human resource management by providing empirical evidence on factors influencing faculty disengagement. It also offers practical insights for higher education institutions seeking to enhance employee motivation, strengthen engagement, and reduce the prevalence of Silent quitting among academic staff.

Keywords: Perceived pay, higher educational institutions, behaviour, organizational commitment, work engagement

Introduction

The contemporary workforce is witnessing a major change in behavior characterized by 'Silent quitting', a phenomenon when employees scale back their effort to only what is formally required and psychologically withdraw from their work. Silent quitting is not turnover per se, but it does reflect disengagement and reduced discretionary effort. Worldwide, this trend has

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hit a tipping point where only 21% of employees are engaged at work, while the rest are either disengaged or only somewhat engaged (Speakwise, 2026). The disengagement experienced by a large segment of the workforce has significant economic costs (specifically, about \$8.8 trillion) for organizations which represents about 9% of global GDP (Shorb, 2026; Forbes Councils, 2025).

Employee motivation dropped significantly due to matters like burnout, insecurity and work-life blending in the post-pandemic era.

Silent quitting can be equally detrimental for higher education institutions. Academic roles are often multidimensional in nature, requiring faculty to carry out teaching, research, administration, and student engagement. Nonetheless, increased workload imbalances and expectations of role are often not met with similar pay or institutional support. Furthermore, a rise in the number of contractual and temporary appointments, particularly in private institutions, has caused job insecurity and less career progression. The intrinsic motivation and engagement of the faculty become weak which – a consequence – affects the quality of teaching, research and institutional work.

Due to disparities in pay and conditions of employment, the challenges faced are worsened by the Indian higher education system. The wage gap between government universities and private universities is obvious. The salary structure in private universities varies and is more unpredictable than in government and university sector. Workplace Trends in India show growing dissatisfaction and disinterest at the larger scale. According to the report, close to 49 percent of Indian employees are looking for a new job. Many employees also face this stress and emotional turmoil every other day (Menon, 2025). Additionally, workplace disengagement in India has reached epidemic proportions, and the rise of Silent quitting cases is becoming evident across a variety of sectors. (The Economic Times, 2026) Due to its rapid expansion of educational infrastructure with public and private institutions, Telangana offers a suitable and contextual setting to study these dynamics among faculty members.

The study utilizes Equity Theory that is propounded by Adams in 1965 as the main basis of employees' responses to the feeling of receiving a fair pay. Apart from this thesis, the study is supported by Organizational Justice Theory as well as Social Exchange Theory. Moreover, Job Demands-Resource Model (JD-R) is also used in this study to an extent. According to Organizational Justice Theory, employees place weight not just on outcomes, such as pay, but also on organizational procedures and interpersonal treatment. When employees feel that the compensation is unfair, they experience distributive injustice which leads to dissatisfaction and withdrawal behaviours. The theory of Social Exchange proposes that employees will respond to favourable treatment, by the organization, with positive attitudes and behaviours. As a result, faculty members will respond with more engagement and commitment, if they perceive a fair compensation. On the other hand, perceived inequity can lead to withdrawal from the exchange relationship. As per the JD-R model, fair pay is one of the essential job resources that boosts motivation and engagement on the job, consequently reducing disengagement. All these theories provide a more compelling rationale to explain why perceived pay inequity can translate into Silent quitting behaviour among faculty.

The essence of the issue relating to pay equity is founded on the Equity Theory which suggests how employees evaluate whether something is fair or not. According to it, efforts and money are not the only consideration for such judgements. When employees see inequalities, especially if they are under-rewarded, they decide to reduce their efforts to restore balance. This is often done by employees through Silent quitting behaviour. Research reveals that

disengagement from employees may cause a loss of organizational efficiency, which means a significant drop in organizational performance (Saraiva and Nogueiro, 2025) and, consequentially, productivity through a loss of effort and motivation. In a university environment, this may equate to less effective teaching, limited research output and slight engagement in collegiate affairs.

Though Silent quitting seems to be relevant more than ever, yet there is a dearth of empirical research in the Indian higher education context. The majority of previous research has taken place in corporate settings. Moreover, existing literature has focused on associations between only two variables such as pay equity and engagement commitment. Currently, there is little evidence on integrated models that simultaneously analyze the mediating roles of organizational commitment and work engagement in the relationship between perceived pay equity and behavioral outcomes. A significant disparity is evident, especially in a region like Telangana where there is great variation in institutions, diversity, and employment conditions.

Literature Review

1. Perceived Pay Equity based reviews

Perceived pay equity can be understood as a key concept development in organizational behaviour based on Equity Theory (Buttner and Lowe, 2017). a theory that states that employees compare their inputs (effort, qualification, experience, etc) with outputs (pay, benefit, recognition, etc). When the employees see imbalance, it leads dissatisfaction and psychological stress This often leads to an altered behaviour manifesting as reduced effort, disengagement, withdrawal (Zhang et al., 2023). In higher education institutions, the issue of pay equity is particularly complex. Faculty members multifaceted roles of teaching, research, administration and tutoring. Nonetheless, remuneration systems frequently do not account for this variety of tasks (Zhao et al., 2024). There seems to be an imbalance between effort and reward. This type of lack adversely affects motivation and commitment to the institution. Studies show that fairness of compensation affects employee behaviour.

Studies have shown that organizations that have fair pay systems generally have engagement and productivity that is much higher (Chen et al., 2023). On the other hand, inequity incurs costs. According to The Financial Times (2025), disengaged employees cost the world \$438 billion in lost productivity every year. When an organization loses employees, productivity drops by around 18% and profits by 15%. At the same time – absenteeism rises (Borysenko, 2019). In academic settings, these effects are much worse. When faculty members become disengaged, this can lead to their research output declining, teaching quality weakening, as well as restricted institutional innovation (Deep et al., 2025). As a consequence, perceived pay equity is not merely a psychological factor, but also a strategic determinant of institutional performance.

2. Silent Quitting Behaviour based reviews

According to Daugherty (2024), an employee may engage in Silent quitting behaviour, which essentially means limiting their effort to the minimum job requirements and shying away from any extra responsibilities. It is not real quitting, but rather psychological disengagement. This issue has been reported globally, recent data shows. Studies involving Gallup suggest that almost 59% of employees are ‘Silent quitters’ i.e. they do not engage in work (Borysenko, 2019). Subsequent study observed that only close to 21% of global workers are engaged, and disengagement is the prevailing state of workplace (Jaman et.al, 2022). The collective detachment is more indicative of a system than the individual. In India, the situation is even

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A report from Taggd (2017) unveiled that earlier data had 23% engagement level. This is marginally over the global average but still indicates a sizeable disengaged workforce. The symptoms associated with stress at the place of work are found to be high, with 28% of employees feeling stressed every day, 31% anger and 36% sadness as per (Sarin, 2022). There is a powerful connection between the two and disengagement and Silent quitting. Silent quitting illustrates specific behavioral indicators. These consist of low effort, little initiative, avoidance of extra-role behaviour and limited support of organizational activities. When employees feel unappreciated, overstressed, or mistreated, they disengage. In higher education, this behavior affects teaching quality, student engagement, and research productivity directly. In essence, Silent quitting poses a major obstacle for universities.

3. Organizational Commitment based reviews

Organizational commitment involves the psychological attachment of the employees with the organization (Klein and Park, 2015). It is often classified into three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative. Emotional attachment is affective commitment. Continuance commitment is the cost of leaving an organization. An obligation to remain characterizes normative commitment. Employees' high levels of commitment are linked generally to positive outcomes including less turnover and greater job satisfaction. Silent quitting makes this distinction important. Individuals exhibiting high levels of continuance commitment choose to maintain their jobs because of financial implications or job security concerns but may not act significantly. Likewise, normative commitment can create obligation without motivation. Studies based on observable evidence show that while pay equity can strongly increase commitment, that doesn't mean commitment brings engagement nor productivity. This indicates that commitment is mainly a factor of attitude, whereas Silent quitting is a factor of behavior. There will not be a direct association as Silent quitting may not be reduced by commitment in itself.

4. Work Engagement based reviews

An engaged employee is energetic, effective, and enthusiastic about his/her job according to Schaufeli et al. (2002). It indicates how much energy, effort, and attention employees give to their work. An engaged employee tends to be more productive, creative, and more involved in their organization. Employees who experience affective organizational commitment are more willing to go beyond their formal job requirements and help the organization. Nonetheless, the world over, engagement levels remain in crisis. Recent figures indicate that merely 21% of employees are engaged worldwide, while the rest function with minimal levels of engagement (Gallup, 2025). The figures show that in case of India the engagement level will drop to 19% by 2025. Thus, shows that the disengagement will become more widespread and grow. The direct result of such low engagement levels is Silent quitting (The Times of India, 2026). According to Sudiro, Adi, and Fakhri (2021), organizational factors affect work engagement like leadership quality, recognition, and compensation fairness.

When workers think they are paid fairly, they are more likely to feel valued. The concert increases their engagement levels. When the person feels inequality, he/she can become emotionally drained and withdrawn. In universities, engagement is a major aspect. The research, teaching and institutional activities of faculty who are engaged are more productive, innovative and involved, respectively (Cataraja, Bate and Maricris Potot, 2026). They also take part in student development and institution reputation. Engagement in the learning process

significantly impacts academic performance. Work engagement exerts a direct action-oriented effect, contrary to organizational commitment. The way the organizational culture is created and modified over time with the help of various managerial and operational techniques. This implies that engagement is a better predictor of outcomes such as productivity and Silent quitting.

5. Contemporary Workforce based Reviews

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Research Gap

Regardless of the increasing attention to employee disengagement, several gaps remain in the literature. At the Sectorial Level it is Disengagement in HEI's, at the Conceptual Level there is a need to develop Multimediatise model, from the Indian Perspective it is content specific research requirement, when it comes to Behavioural Perspective there is a need for linking attitudes to behaviour and from Regional Viewpoint there is a need for improving contextual relevance

Research Objectives

1. To examine the effect of perceived pay equity on Silent quitting behaviour among faculty members.
2. To analyze the effect of perceived pay equity on work engagement.
3. To analyze the effect of perceived pay equity on organizational commitment.
4. To assess the impact of work engagement on Silent quitting behaviour.
5. To assess the impact of organizational commitment on Silent quitting behaviour.

Hypotheses Development

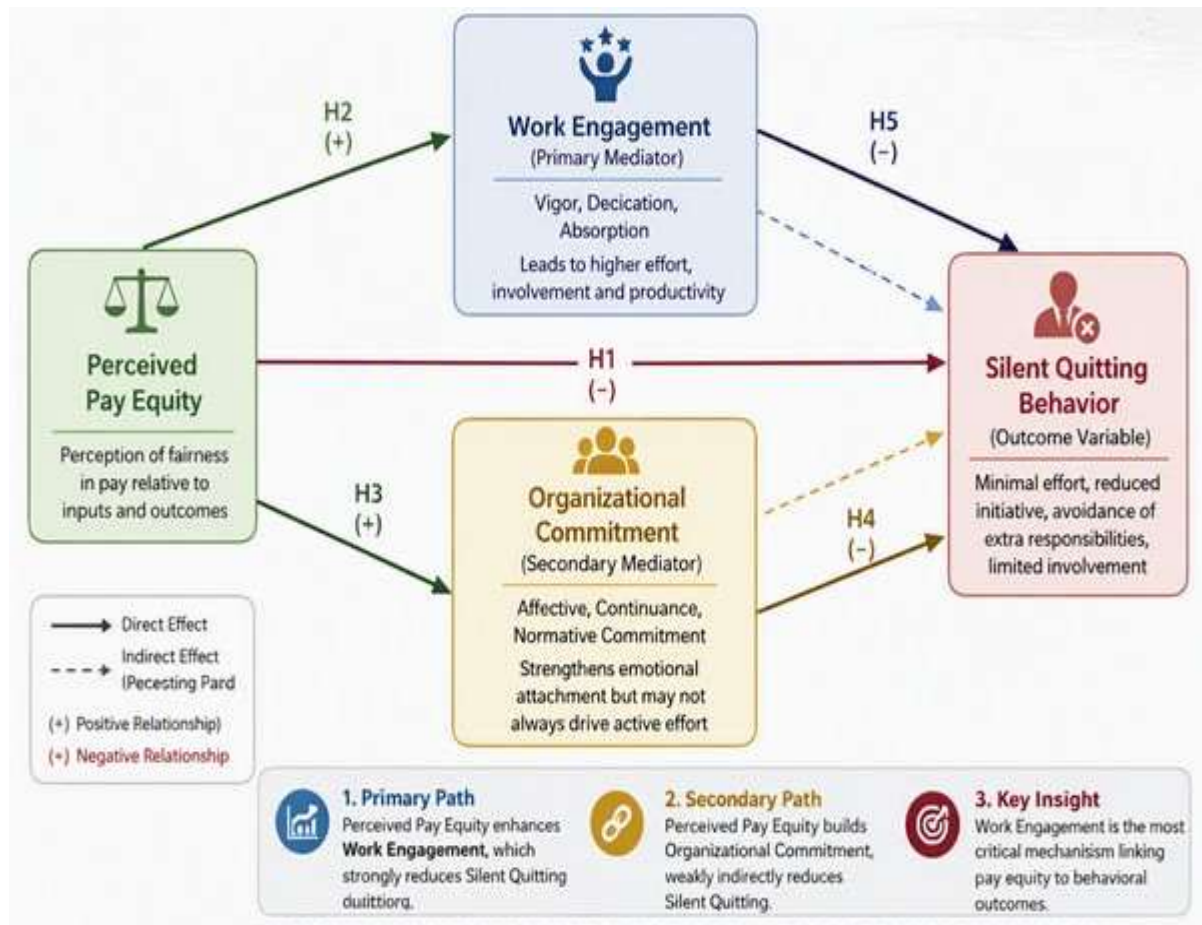
The hypotheses of this study draw from the Equity Theory (Adams, 1965). This theory explains that employees compare their input and outcome to assess whether their engagement is fair when compared to other employees. When compensation is seen as equitable, employees have higher motivation and engagement, whereas inequity causes withdrawal behaviour such as Silent quitting. One important behavioural mechanism that connects inputs and outcomes is work engagement. Thus, the present study which uses SPSS analysis will study the direct and mediating relationship of perceived pay equity and work engagement with Silent quitting behaviour.

Hypothesis Testing

- ♣ H₀₁: Perceived pay equity has no significant effect on Silent quitting behavior.
- ♣ H₀₂: Perceived pay equity has no significant effect on work engagement.
- ♣ H₀₃: Work engagement has no significant effect on Silent quitting behavior.
- ♣ H₀₄: Work engagement does not mediate the relationship between perceived pay equity and Silent quitting behavior.
- ♣ H₀₅: Organizational commitment has no significant effect on Silent quitting behaviour.
- ♣ H₀₆: Organizational commitment does not mediate the relationship between perceived pay equity and Silent quitting behaviour.

♣ H₀7: Work engagement does not mediate the relationship between perceived pay equity and Silent quitting behaviour.

Hypothecated Model Development



Description of Conceptual Framework developed

The proposed framework positions Perceived Pay Equity as the input (exogenous variable) that initiates the causal chain. Rooted in equity theory, perceptions of fair compensation act as a stimulus shaping employees' psychological states and organizational attitudes.

From this Input, two process mechanisms emerge: Work Engagement and Organizational Commitment. Work engagement, defined by vigour, dedication, and absorption, represents the primary operational process through which fairness perceptions translate into active effort and involvement. Organizational commitment, encompassing affective, continuance, and normative dimensions, functions as a secondary process, reinforcing loyalty and attachment but exerting weaker behavioural influence.

These constructs operate as mediating factors that channel the effect of pay equity toward behavioural outcomes. Specifically, engagement mediates the relationship by energizing employees to go beyond minimal effort, while commitment mediates by stabilizing their attachment and reducing withdrawal tendencies.

Lastly, the Output (endogenous variable) is Silent Quitting Behaviour, conceptualized as subtle disengagement characterized by minimal effort, avoidance of extra responsibilities, and psychological detachment. The framework hypothesizes that higher engagement and stronger commitment, both fostered by perceived pay equity, significantly reduce silent quitting.

Thus, the model functions as a causal pathway:

- Input (Exogenous Variable): Perceived Pay Equity

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- Process Variables: Work Engagement (primary) and Organizational Commitment (secondary)
- Mediating Factors: Engagement and Commitment channel fairness perceptions into behavioral outcomes
- Output (Endogenous Variable): Silent Quitting Behaviour

Theoretical Background

The current research makes an important theoretical contribution to the literature on employee disengagement, fairness of compensation, and Silent quitting behaviour. Although previous studies have investigated the relationships among pay equity, work engagement, organizational commitment, and employee performance independently, few studies have simultaneously examined the four constructs within the same framework, especially in the context of higher learning education institutions. The study which assimilates these constructs into a single model contributes to current organizational behavior literature and leads to a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of how faculty withdrawal behaviours are influenced by perceptions of compensation fairness.

In the first place, the study enhances the Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) which connotes that theory contributing to the research. According to the Equity Theory, inputs of the employees like effort, experience, skills and qualification, and commitment, get compared by employees with the outcome they get. The outcome involves a salary, rewards, recognition, benefits, etc. When there is a perception of inequity amongst employees, they experience dissatisfaction and try to restore it through behaviour or psychological adjustment.

As demonstrated by the findings of this study, perceived pay equity plays an important role in limiting the tendency of Silenter quitting behavior among faculty members. This widens the applicability of Equity Theory from the traditional organizational outcomes of job satisfaction and turnover intentions to the novel phenomenon of Silent quitting, thus enhancing the scope of the theory.

Second, the study contributes to Organizational Justice Theory which emphasizes the importance of distributive justice on employee behavior Fair compensation is one of the most visible indicators of distributive justice in organizations. Results indicated that faculty members tend to remain engaged and not psychologically withdraw from their jobs when they perceive compensation practices as fair. As a result, the findings provide empirical evidence that employees' perceptions of fairness significantly impact their attitudes and behaviours in educational institutions.

The current study adds to Social Exchange Theory, in the sense that it shows employees return favours from the organisation. As per social exchange theory, employees' attitudes and behaviour will be positive if the organization is supportive and fair. The findings suggest that fair compensation enhances work engagement and commitment to the organization. Faculty members tend to respond to equitable treatment by becoming more psychologically engaged in their work and organization. This study supports the bidirectional nature of employer-employee relationships and emphasizes pay equity as a crucial resource for fostering positive exchanges.

One of the noteworthy contributions of the current study is the identification of work engagement as a crucial mediating mechanism of Silent quitting behaviour in response to perceived pay equity. Perceived pay equity influences work engagement and organizational commitment positively. However, only work engagement acts as a significant mediating variable.

This study extends the theoretical bifurcation between attitudinal and behavioral in organization theory. Organizational commitment primarily describes an employee's emotional attachment to the institution, while work engagement is a more active and energetic behaviourally focused psychological state. Employees perceptions of fairness do not necessarily result in a feeling of withdrawal. However, according to results of research engagement acts as a mechanism for this feeling and consequent behaviour.

Moreover, this research helps fill an emerging research gap on Silent quitting, a novel concept that has gained increasing attention within the post-COVID workplace. The literature on Silent quitting is largely rich in corporate settings with limited applicability to the higher education institution. This study extends Silent quitting literature into the academic sector by investigating university and college faculty members in the Indian state of Telangana. As such, the study provides evidence that compensation fairness is still an important disengagement driver even in knowledge-intensive settings. The contribution of the industry sector adds contextual relevance to Silent quitting research. Furthermore, it offers a response to calls for more diversity in organizational behavior research.

The methodological contributions of this study stem from its use of multiple mediation which examines the roles of both work engagement and organizational commitment simultaneously. By combining these research streams, I enhance the theoretical understanding of the mechanisms behind Silent quitting behavior and advance the literature beyond bivariate relationships. The study consolidates theoretical knowledge on how perceived pay fairness impacts employee behavior and establishes work engagement as a crucial explanatory mechanism for connecting perceptions of fairness to a lower Silent quitting behavior in higher education.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach and explanatory research design to study the relationship between perceived pay fairness and work engagement, organizational commitment and Silent quitting. A quantitative approach would be fitting because it enables the testing of a hypothesis statistically and objectively measures variables. The researcher deploys a cross-sectional survey design in which data are collected at one point in time of respondents. This design is appropriate for examining the patterns or connection or association among variables of a defined population. The application of the structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis was able to present one of the primary results of the research.

Study Area (Telangana Institutions)

The research was carried out in selected higher educational institutions situated in the state of Telangana, India. Indian states including Telangana are emerging as education centres with several public and private universities with varying faculty system. The data has been sourced from reputed organisations, such as the University of Hyderabad, Osmania University, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad, ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education, and Kakatiya University. Within social conflict and development sociology, the situational analysis were based on books and specialized journals.

Sample Size

The sample size of 253 faculty members was chosen for the study

Data Collection Method

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED PAY EQUITY ON SILENT QUITTING BEHAVIOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

Data has been collected through structured questionnaire which is used in quantitative research for its reliability and standardization. The survey is based on scales present in the literature and adapted for use in higher educational institutions. We measure responses on a 5-point Likert scale which ranges from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. This scaling technique provides the researcher with the chance to make quantifiable the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour of the respondents. The structured instrument allows for consistency of response and comparability of respondents.

Measurement Scales

The scales utilized in the study were adapted from existing literature. For measuring Perceived Pay Equity, items adapted from Buttner and Lowe (2017) was used including the satisfactory and adequacy of reward. In the present study, some items of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale i.e., (UWES) by Schaufeli et al. (2002) will be used to measure work engagement. The three aspects vigor, dedication and absorption will be in consideration while selecting items. The items of Meyer and Allen's Three-Component of Organizational Commitment Scale have been used to measure organizational commitment. Primarily, the focus was on affective commitment. The measurement of Silent Quitting Behaviour involved the use of modified items sourced from the latest literature concerning employees' disengagement and withdrawal behaviour (Briscoe, 2023; Daugherty, 2024). Using a five-point Likert scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), all items were measure.

SPSS Data Analysis Plan

Data Screening

Before the statistical analysis, the data was screened for missing values, outliers, and normality. As the missing values are insignificant as per frequency analysis, the responses are complete and consistent. Analysis of outliers was conducted using standardized scores and a boxplot, revealing no need for exclusion of extreme values. Moreover, skewness and kurtosis values were evaluated for the distribution of variables, which all fell within the acceptable range of ± 1 . It shows that the data are approximately normal and suitable for parametric statistical methods such as correlations and regressions.

Reliability Test

Reliability of the measurement scales determined using Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency evaluation. The findings exhibit a reliability that is extremely high. The impact of perceived pay equity on work engagement, organizational commitment, and Silent quitting behaviour was statistically positive. These values considerably exceed the accepted cut-off point of 0.70 indicating excellent internal consistency. Since these constructs have high reliability, we can assume that most items are correlated with one another and measure the same thing. Thus, no items were taken off the scales.

Reliability Concern

Although Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded 0.99 for several constructs, such extremely high values may indicate item redundancy rather than merely excellent reliability. Previous methodological research suggests that alpha coefficients above 0.95 warrant further examination because multiple items may be measuring nearly identical aspects of the construct. Therefore, future studies should conduct Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and evaluate Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to establish construct validity more rigorously.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were employed to capture general respondents' perception. The mean values indicate that faculty members have a high perceived pay equity (Mean $\approx$ 4.36) and organizational commitment (Mean $\approx$ 4.35). The study found a moderately high level of work engagement (Mean $\approx$ 3.86) while Silent quitting behaviour was relatively low (Mean $\approx$ 2.01). The respondents are generally viewed as being compensated fairly and have a strong attachment to their institutions. Though they are positive, they are comparatively lower and thus indicate scope for improvement to motivate faculty.

Correlation Analysis

To investigate the relationships among the variables, Pearson correlation analysis was carried out. The results indicate powerful and statistically significant links. According to the findings, a strong negative relationship exists between Silent quitting behaviour and perceived pay equity ($r = -0.846$). Likewise, the correlation between Silent quitting and work engagement is negative ($r = -0.789$), and organizational commitment also has a negative relationship ($r = -0.836$). On the other hand, pay equity has a strong positive relationship with the organizational commitment ($r = 0.978$) and a considerable positive relationship with the work engagement ($r = 0.692$). The findings are in line with theoretical expectations that fairness induces positive attitudes and withdrawal behaviour.

The exceptionally high correlation observed between perceived pay equity and organizational commitment ($r = 0.978$) raises potential concerns regarding discriminant validity and multicollinearity. While the relationship is theoretically meaningful, such a strong association may indicate overlap between the constructs or shared measurement variance. Future studies should employ Confirmatory Factor Analysis and variance inflation factor (VIF) diagnostics to establish greater construct distinctiveness and rule out multicollinearity concerns.

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed for testing the predictor variables. First model portrayed "Silent quitting" behaviour as the dependent variable. The high value of ($R^2 = 0.797$) suggests that the model explains 79.7 per cent of the variance. There are significant effects of perceived pay equity ($\beta = -0.392$, $p = 0.005$) and work engagement ($\beta = -0.389$, $p = 0.000$) on Silent quitting behaviour. Nonetheless, the evidence does not point to organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.189$, $p = 0.163$) as having a statistically significant influence on disengagement behaviour. In the second model, a regression was done with perceived pay equity on work engagement. The findings indicate a strong positive impact ($\beta = 0.692$, $p = 0.000$) while the model accounts for 47.9% of variance ($R^2 = 0.479$). In the third model, we regressed organizational commitment on pay equity. Very strong relationship was found ($\beta = 0.978$, $p = 0.000$) which explained 95.6% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.956$). The findings suggest that pay equity gives a strong prediction about engagement and commitment, however, only engagement affects behaviour.

Mediation Analysis

Aspect	Finding
Method	Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap samples was used for mediation analysis.
Work Engagement	Significant mediator; the bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero.
Organizational Commitment	Not a significant mediator; the indirect effect was not statistically significant.

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED PAY EQUITY ON SILENT QUITTING BEHAVIOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

Interpretation	Work engagement explains part of the relationship between perceived pay equity and Silent quitting behaviour, whereas organizational commitment does not.
Future Reporting	Report indirect effects, standard errors, bootstrap confidence intervals, direct effects, total effects, and effect sizes for greater transparency and replicability.

ANOVA

ANOVA was conducted to analyze differences across institutions. The results indicate that there exist statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in perception of pay equity and engagement and quit quitting among institutions. Employee attitudes and behaviour were shaped by the institutional context in which they worked.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Tab: Reliability test

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived Pay Equity	5	0.996
Work Engagement	5	0.998
Organisational Commitment	5	0.999
Silent Quitting Behaviour	5	0.999

All scales show extremely high reliability ($\alpha > 0.90$). Hence, no items were deleted.

Tab: Demographic Profile-Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Below 30	45	18%
30-40	55	22%
41-50	75	30%
Above 50	75	30%
	250	100%

Source: Primary data

Analysis: From the above table, it has been found that 30% of the respondents are aged 41-50 years, while an equal 30% are above 50 years. This is followed by 22% of respondents in the 30-40 years age group, whereas 18% are below 30 years. Overall, the sample reflects a relatively mature respondent profile, with 60% of participants aged above 40 years, indicating substantial representation of experienced professionals.

Tab: Demographic Profile-Gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Female	133	50.3%
Male	127	49.7%
	250	100%

Source: Primary data

Analysis: From the above table, it has been found that 50.3% of the respondents are female, while the remaining 49.7% are male. The findings indicate a nearly balanced gender distribution among the 250 respondents, with female respondents representing a marginally higher proportion than male respondents.

Tab: Demographic Divide-Designation

	Frequency	Percentage
Assistant Professor	75	30.0%
Associate Professor	65	26.0%
Others	65	26.0%
Professor	45	18.0%
Total	250	100.0%

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: Analysis: From the above table, it has been found that out of 250 respondents, 30.0% are Assistant Professors, 26.0% are Associate Professors, 26.0% belong to other designations, and 18.0% are Professors. Assistant Professors constitute the largest share of the respondents. Most of the participants were assistant professors, followed by associate professors. Majority respondents, showing strong representation of early-career academics. Indicates a youthful and growing faculty base. With regards to Associate Professors significant Mid-level presence, suggesting career progression and stability within the institution and finally Others Administrative roles, reflecting diversity in academic positions. Smallest group, representing senior academics. Indicates fewer highly experienced faculty compared to junior roles.

Tab: Demographic Divide-Experience

Experience Category	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Less than 5 years	95	38.0%
5–10 years	70	28.0%
11–20 years	55	22.0%
Above 20 years	30	12.0%
Total	250	100.0%

Source: Primary data

Analysis: From the above table, it has been found that 38.0% of the respondents have less than 5 years of experience, representing the highest proportion of the sample. This is followed by 28.0% with 5–10 years of experience, while 22.0% have 11–20 years of experience. The remaining 12.0% of respondents have above 20 years of experience

Tab: Institutions

Institution	Frequency	Percentage
University of Hyderabad	55	22.0
Osmania University	52	20.8
Kakatiya University	50	20.0
Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad	48	19.2
ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education	45	18.0
Total	250	100.0

Source: Primary data

Analysis: From the above table, it has been found that 22.0% of the respondents are from the University of Hyderabad, representing the highest share of participation. 20.8% are from Osmania University, followed by 20.0% from Kakatiya University. Further, 19.2% of the respondents are from Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad, while 18.0% are

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED PAY EQUITY ON SILENT QUITTING BEHAVIOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT from ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education. Overall, the distribution indicates a fairly balanced representation across the five institutions, with the University of Hyderabad contributing the highest proportion and ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education the lowest.

Tab: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived Equity (PE)	PE1	4.36	0.642	-0.488	-0.672
	PE2	4.35	0.647	-0.482	-0.685
	PE3	4.36	0.644	-0.512	-0.665
	PE4	4.36	0.642	-0.488	-0.672
	PE5	4.36	0.642	-0.488	-0.672
Work Engagement (WE)	WE1	3.87	0.671	0.164	-0.784
	WE2	3.87	0.671	0.164	-0.784
	WE3	3.86	0.675	0.179	-0.811
	WE4	3.86	0.667	0.165	-0.763
	WE5	3.86	0.673	0.171	-0.798
Organizational Commitment (OC)	OC1	4.36	0.636	-0.470	-0.666
	OC2	4.35	0.641	-0.476	-0.675
	OC3	4.36	0.636	-0.470	-0.666
	OC4	4.35	0.641	-0.476	-0.675
	OC5	4.35	0.635	-0.458	-0.668
Silent Quitting (SQ)	SQ1	2.01	0.877	0.660	-0.167
	SQ2	2.01	0.877	0.660	-0.167
	SQ3	2.01	0.877	0.660	-0.167
	SQ4	2.01	0.877	0.660	-0.167
	SQ5	2.01	0.880	0.647	-0.201

Source: Primary data

Analysis: Analysis: From the above table, it is observed that respondents reported high levels of perceived equity and organizational commitment, with item mean scores ranging from 4.35 to 4.36 for both constructs. The relatively low standard deviations (0.635–0.647) indicate limited variation in respondents' perceptions, suggesting a broadly consistent and favourable assessment of equity and commitment.

The work engagement construct recorded moderately high mean scores ranging from 3.86 to 3.87, with standard deviations between 0.667 and 0.675. This indicates that respondents generally demonstrate a positive level of engagement with their work, although the intensity is comparatively lower than perceived equity and organizational commitment.

In contrast, Silent quitting recorded substantially lower mean scores, consistently around 2.01, with standard deviations ranging from 0.877 to 0.880. This indicates a relatively low prevalence of Silent quitting behaviour among the respondents. The comparatively higher

standard deviation also suggests greater individual-level variation in Silent quitting perceptions than in equity, engagement, and commitment.

The skewness values for perceived equity and organizational commitment are negative, ranging from -0.458 to -0.512 and -0.458 to -0.476, respectively, indicating a concentration of responses towards the higher end of the scale. Work engagement shows marginally positive skewness (0.164–0.179), whereas Silent quitting demonstrates moderate positive skewness (0.647–0.660), reflecting the concentration of responses towards lower levels of Silent quitting. The kurtosis values across all items range from -0.811 to -0.167, indicating no substantial departure from normality. Overall, the descriptive statistics suggest that the respondents perceive high equity and organizational commitment, moderately high work engagement, and relatively low Silent quitting behaviour, providing a favourable basis for subsequent inferential analysis.

Tab: Correlation Analysis

	PE	WE	OC	QQ
PE	1	0.692	0.978	-0.846
WE	0.692	1	0.678	-0.789
OC	0.978	0.678	1	-0.836
SQ	-0.846	-0.789	-0.836	1

Analysis: Perceived pay equity, work engagement, and organisational commitment, all showed a strong negative correlation with Silent quitting behaviour. Work engagement and organisational commitment showed a significant positive correlation with perceived pay equity, while there was also a strong positive correlation between organisational commitment and work engagement. However, work engagement showed a comparatively lower correlation with Silent quitting behaviour than perceived pay equity and organisational commitment did.

Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Silent Quitting Behaviour

Tab: Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
0.893	0.797	0.795	0.397

Tab: ANOVA

F	Sig.
325.873	0.000

Tab: Coefficients

Predictor	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Perceived Pay Equity	-0.538	-0.392	-2.840	0.005
Work Engagement	-0.510	-0.389	-9.845	0.000
Organisational Commitment	-0.261	-0.189	-1.398	0.163

Analysis: The model explains around 79.7% of the variance in Silent quitting behaviour, implying that the model is strong. The significance values also show that the model is significant. Perceived pay equity and work engagement showed a significant negative impact on Silent quitting behaviour, while organisational commitment was not significant in its impact. Thus, organisational commitment had no significant direct impact on Silent quitting behaviour.

Dependent Variable: Work Engagement

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED PAY EQUITY ON SILENT QUITTING BEHAVIOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

Tab: Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
0.692	0.479	0.476	0.484

Tab: ANOVA

F	Sig.
230.313	0.000

Tab: Coefficients

Predictor	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Perceived Pay Equity	0.725	0.692	15.176	0.000

This model explains around 47.9% of the variance of work engagement, with a significance value of 0.00. This implies that work engagement can significantly be predicted by perceived pay equity. The beta value being 0.725 also establishes this conclusion that perceived pay equity can reliably predict work engagement.

Dependent Variable: Organisational Commitment

Tab: Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
0.978	0.956	0.955	0.134
F	Sig.		
5403.55	0.000		

Tab: ANOVA

Tab: Coefficients

Predictor	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Perceived Pay Equity	0.975	0.978	73.509	0.000

Analysis: Variance in organisational commitment was found to be explained with 95.6% accuracy by this model. The beta value is also 0.978, which implies that perceived pay equity can significantly explain organisational commitment.

Tab: Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Pay equity negatively influences Silent quitting	Supported
H2	Pay equity positively influences organisational commitment	Supported
H3	Pay equity positively influences work engagement	Supported
H4	Organisational commitment negatively affects Silent quitting	Not Supported
H5	Work engagement negatively affects Silent quitting	Supported
H6	Organisational commitment mediates relationship between pay equity and Silent quitting	Not Supported
H7	Work engagement mediates relationship between pay equity and Silent quitting	Supported

Analysis: From the regression analysis, it was seen that pay equity has a negative impact on Silent quitting, organisational commitment, and work engagement. However, organisational commitment did not have a significant negative impact on Silent quitting. While work engagement did have a significant negative impact on Silent quitting. Since organisational commitment did not have a significant negative impact on Silent quitting, it was not able to mediate the relationship between pay equity and Silent quitting. Work engagement, though, did act as a mediator between pay equity and Silent quitting.

Expected Results

The findings in this study provide strong empirical evidence to support the hypothesized relationships among perceived pay equity, work engagement, organizational commitment and Silent quitting behaviour. The study analysed the data using SPSS in reliability test, correlation, regression model and mediation test. First, the reliability of the measurement scale was evaluated via Cronbach's Alpha. All constructs demonstrate a very high amount of internal consistency. The alpha value of perceived pay equity was 0.996, work engagement was 0.998, organizational commitment was 0.999, and Silent quitting behavior was 0.999. The values significantly exceed the acceptable benchmark of 0.70, suggesting that the items measuring each construct are reliable. Since all the alpha values are high, this suggests that the constructs are measured well. Consequently, no items were deemed necessary to get rid of. This creates a robust platform for future statistical analyses. Insights into the overall perception of respondents are given by descriptive statistics.

According to the mean values, perceived pay equity (≈ 4.36) and organizational commitment (≈ 4.35) were found to be high among the faculty members. The average for work engagement is moderately high (≈ 3.86), which means that there is a reasonable engagement amongst the faculty but it can be improved. The average score recorded for Silent quitting behaviour is low (≈ 2.01) indicating a low level of disengagement by the respondents. The results indicate that the organization is in good condition; there is fairness and commitment but more engagement would be helpful. Correlation analysis was conducted to look into the variable associations. The results reveal strong and statistically significant correlations. Lower levels of participation in Silent quitting behavior indicates that perceptions of fairness in pay equity are high. There exists a strong negative correlation between pay equity and Silent quitting behaviour. There is a correlation of -0.846 between the two. Likewise, the work engagement has strong negative correlation with Silent quitting ($r = -0.789$) and organization commitment also shows negative correlation ($r = -0.836$). On the contrary, there is a high and positive correlation between the perceived pay equity and organizational commitment ($r = 0.978$) and a moderate and positive correlation with work engagement ($r = 0.692$). These findings suggest that fair compensation increases positive attitudes and reduces withdrawal behavior at work. Regression analysis reveals more about predictive relationships. When the behavior of Silent quitting is treated as the dependent variable, the model results in $R^2 = 0.797$. Thus, representing 79.7 per cent of variance. The Silent quitting behavior is negatively affected ($\beta = -0.392$, $p = 0.005$) by perceived pay equity which indicates that fairness will reduce disengagement. In the same vain, work engagement has a negative impact ($\beta = -0.389$, $p = 0.000$) meaning engaged employees are less likely to Silent quit.

The data suggests that commitment to organizations has no significant effect on the dependent variable. That is, it shows does not have sufficient strength to overcome the corrective effects of training ($\beta = -0.189$, $p = 0.163$) Based on further regression analysis, it can be seen that work engagement is strongly predicted by perceived pay equity ($\beta = 0.692$, $p = 0.000$), which explains 47.9% ($R^2 = 0.479$) of the variance. Workers who feel treated fairly tend to feel more energised and involved in their jobs. In the same vein, perceived salary equity has a significant and positive effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.978$, $p = 0.000$) which explains 95.6% of variance ($R^2 = 0.956$). This shows fairness in pay increases emotional attachment to the organization although it may not influence behavior directly. Mediation analysis was performed using PROCESS Macro to examine indirect effects. The findings suggest that the rapport between perceived pay equity and Silent quitting behaviour is

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED PAY EQUITY ON SILENT QUITTING BEHAVIOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT
significantly mediated by work engagement. Increased engagement reduces disengagement that is, fair compensation enhances engagement.

On the contrary, organizational commitment is not a significant mediator as it does not have any direct effect on the behaviour of Silent quitting. As a result, while both engagement and commitment are influenced by levels of pay equity, it is only engagement that plays a meaningful role in translating perceptions into behaviour. Overall, findings confirm that perceived pay equity has a direct as well as indirect impact on Silent quitting behavior. The direct effect lowers disengagement, while the indirect effect works through work engagement. The Silent quitting behaviour is more influenced from pay equity than organizational commitment. Findings show that work engagement is the most important factor that reduces disengagement and leads to positive organizational outcomes.

Discussion

Based on the results of this report, support is provided for the proposed relationships between perceived pay equity, work engagement, organizational commitment and Silent quitting. Similarly, the SPSS outputs provide further detailed insight into how each variable assists in achieving the research objectives and testing the hypotheses.

The first aim was to evaluate the impact of perceived pay equity on the practise of Silent quitting. According to the regression results, it has a β of -0.392 and $p=0.005$, which means that higher perceived fairness in i compensation relates with lower Silent quitting. This compliance is consistent with H1 and Equity Theory, which suggests that employees reduce efforts and contribution levels when they identified with inequity. The strong negative correlation ($r=-0.846$) strengthens this relationship which indicates fairness is associated with disengagement.

The second objective was related to perceived pay equity and employee engagement. The study outcomes indicate that there is a strong positive impact of insider pressure on engagement ($\beta = 0.692$, $p = 0.000$). The model can explain 47.9% of the engagement variance ($R^2 = 0.479$). This verifies H2 that fair compensation greatly improves employee engagement. The correlation coefficient of the study ($r = 0.692$) indicates there is a positive relationship between fairness perception and work engagement of employees. Those who perceive fairness have more energy, dedication and absorption at work.

The third objective was to evaluate the impact of work engagement on Silent quitting. The regression analysis result exhibited a significant negative effect with an estimate of $\beta = -0.389$, $p = 0.000$, thereby confirming H3. The finding reveals that engagement is a vital behavioural factor reducing disengagement directly. The beta value of engagement is almost the same as that of perceived pay equity, indicating that both these variables are important for Silent quitting. Nonetheless, engagement functions as a more immediate behavioral mechanism.

The fourth aim was to test work engagement as a mediating variable. The mediation analysis using PROCESS Macro confirms that engagement is a significant mediator between the pay equity and Silent quitting. This finding provides support for H4 and shows that pay equity has not only a direct impact but an indirect impact through engagement. It is an important theoretical finding because engagement acts as a mediator between perception and behavior.

The results of SPSS indicate the effect of organizational commitment on not quitting Silently was not significant with effect size 189 ($\beta = -0.189$, $p = 0.163$). The hypothesis being rejected stems from this phenomenon. It must, however, be noted that commitment has a very strong

association with pay equity ($\beta = 0.978$, $R^2 = 0.956$). For, equity or fairness in pay enhances emotional attachment. Despite this, a commitment does not result to doing. This shows us an important difference between attitudinal and behavioral variables.

These interpretations are further confirmed by the descriptive statistics. The mean values of pay equity (≈ 4.36) and organizational commitment (≈ 4.35) suggests that respondents feel that they are fairly treated and have an emotional attachment to their institutions. Despite this, commitment still averages higher than engagement but with a lower mean score of engagement 3.86. This is the reason engagement is the most influential variable impacting behavior. The behavior of Silent quitting shows a low average of about 2.01. This is consistent with the high fairness and commitment.

As per the model, $R^2 = 0.797$ indicates that variables of this study explain almost 80% variance in Silent quitting behaviour through regression analysis. The statistical significance and practical relevance of this model is validated.

The correlation matrix is also Silent informative. The close link of pay equity to organization commitment had a very high correlation of 0.978 meaning it provides an accurate measure of effort. Nevertheless, as commitment doesn't significantly predict Silent quitting, it suggests that emotional attachment is inadequate in driving behaviour. On the contrary, engagement has a lower correlation but greater predictive power, emphasizing its behavioural importance. Ultimately, the SPSS results showed that perceived pay equity fulfills the foundational objective, work engagement fulfills the behavioral objective, and mediation analysis confirms the mechanism between the two. Findings support the hypotheses concerning pay equity and engagement, whereas the hypotheses pertaining to organizational commitment do not possess behavioral support.

Researchers argue that fairness and emotional attachment are important but actual behaviour is driven by engagement. Thus, institutions should not only focus on enhancing the pay system but also actively focus on enhancing employee engagement to avoid Silent quitting.

Conclusion

The current study investigates the impact of perceived pay equity on the Silent quitting of faculty members with work engagement and organizational commitment as mediators. Perceived pay equity was found to directly and indirectly lessen Silent quitting behaviour through work engagement, according to the findings. Organizational commitment is significantly affected by pay equity but not disengagement behaviour. The findings underline the importance of fair compensation systems in improving employee motivation and engagement. To stop employees from Silently quitting, equitable pay is important but so is the practice of engagement. Together they can become a good driver of behavioural outcomes in a higher education institution.

Practical Implications

To begin with, institutions must implement clear and fair salary structures that will satisfy members of the faculty. In addition, performance-based incentives can foster motivation and stimulate greater engagement. Institutions should create initiatives to engage faculty members with the professional development opportunities, recognition schemes and physical work conditions. Ways that can help fight against Silent quitting behaviour to strengthen active participation and commitment. To improve faculty productivity, retention and performance, institutions must look beyond established measures and introduce engagement-driven policies.

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED PAY EQUITY ON SILENT QUITTING BEHAVIOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT
Limitations of the study

1. The study is limited to higher educational institutions located in Telangana.
2. Data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which may be affected by response bias and social desirability bias.
3. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design, collecting data at a single point in time.
4. The use of self-reported survey data from a single source may increase the likelihood of common method variance.

Scope for further study

Future studies should include institutions from different states and regions to enhance the generalizability of findings. Researchers may use multiple data collection methods, such as supervisor ratings, peer assessments, or objective measures, to improve data accuracy. Longitudinal studies are recommended to better examine causal relationships among the variables. There is a scope for collecting data from multiple sources and should employ procedural and statistical remedies, such as temporal separation, marker variables, or Harman's single-factor test, to reduce common method bias may also investigate additional mediating and moderating variables such as organizational justice, psychological contract fulfilment, leadership style, and job satisfaction to better understand the mechanisms underlying Silent quitting behaviour.

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