

Quiet Quitting: A Case Study of Silent Withdrawal Among University Lecturers

Quiet Quitting: Studi Kasus Penarikan Diri Secara Diam-diam di Kalangan Dosen Universitas

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi fenomena quiet quitting di kalangan dosen universitas dalam konteks pelaksanaan Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi melalui perspektif Social Exchange Theory. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus yang melibatkan sepuluh dosen tetap dari perguruan tinggi Muhammadiyah dan Aisyiyah. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis konten kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa beban mengajar yang dominan, tuntutan peran ganda, serta tanggung jawab administratif dan personal menyebabkan ketidakseimbangan pelaksanaan Tri Dharma, terutama berkurangnya keterlibatan dosen dalam penelitian dan pengabdian kepada masyarakat. Kondisi tersebut diperkuat oleh keterbatasan dukungan institusional, sehingga dosen cenderung menerapkan strategi penyesuaian seperti menetapkan batasan kerja, memprioritaskan tugas, dan mengandalkan dukungan kolegal untuk mempertahankan kesejahteraan psikologis. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa quiet quitting pada dosen tidak dimaknai sebagai penolakan terhadap pekerjaan, melainkan sebagai bentuk penarikan diri secara selektif dari aktivitas yang bersifat di luar kewajiban utama akibat ketidakseimbangan antara tuntutan kerja dan dukungan organisasi. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa fenomena quiet quitting dipengaruhi oleh interaksi antara beban kerja, konflik peran, dan kualitas hubungan timbal balik antara dosen dan institusi. Oleh karena itu, perguruan tinggi perlu mengembangkan sistem pengelolaan beban kerja yang lebih proporsional serta memperkuat dukungan organisasi untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan dan kesejahteraan dosen.

Kata Kunci: Quiet Quitting; Keterlibatan Dosen; Beban Kerja; Konflik Peran; Dukungan Institusional.

Abstract

This study aims to explore the phenomenon of quiet quitting among university lecturers in the context of implementing the Tri Dharma of Higher Education through the lens of Social Exchange Theory. A qualitative case study approach was employed involving ten permanent lecturers from Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah higher education institutions. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings indicate that teaching-centered workloads, multiple role demands, and administrative and personal responsibilities create an imbalance in the implementation of the Tri Dharma, particularly by reducing lecturers' engagement in research and community service. These conditions are further exacerbated by limited institutional support, leading lecturers to adopt coping strategies such as setting work boundaries, prioritizing tasks, and relying on collegial support to maintain their psychological well-being. The findings suggest that quiet quitting among lecturers should not be interpreted as a refusal to work, but rather as a form of selective withdrawal from discretionary activities beyond core teaching responsibilities due to an imbalance between job demands and organizational support. This study highlights that quiet quitting is shaped by the interaction of workload, role conflict, and the quality of reciprocal relationships between lecturers and their institutions. Therefore, higher education institutions should develop more balanced workload management systems and strengthen organizational support to enhance lecturers' engagement and well-being.

Keywords: Quiet quitting; lecturer engagement; workload; role conflict; institutional support.

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INTRODUCTION

Universities, as institutions operating in the field of educational services, are highly dependent on the engagement of lecturers, as their role is crucial in enhancing organizational performance and academic quality (Lu et al., 2023). Employee engagement has been widely recognized as a primary predictor of individual performance, even surpassing other organizational variables (Cropanzano et al., 2017). It is defined as a positive, work-related psychological state characterized by the intensity and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy devoted to work (Clifton, 2023). In this regard, engagement is not merely an

attitude but a dynamic condition reflecting how individuals invest their physical, cognitive, and emotional resources in their professional roles (Boy & Sürmeli, 2023). Employees with high levels of engagement tend to mobilize their personal resources effectively, thereby contributing significantly to organizational outcomes, including productivity, innovation, and long-term sustainability (Baumann & Sander, 2021). In the context of Social Exchange Theory (SET), this investment of effort represents the “contribution” side of an exchange relationship between lecturers and the institution, where employees expect reciprocal returns in the form of recognition, fairness, and organizational support (Aulia et al., 2021).

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Based on Gallup Q12 items; see "Appendix 3: Support Information" for item wording

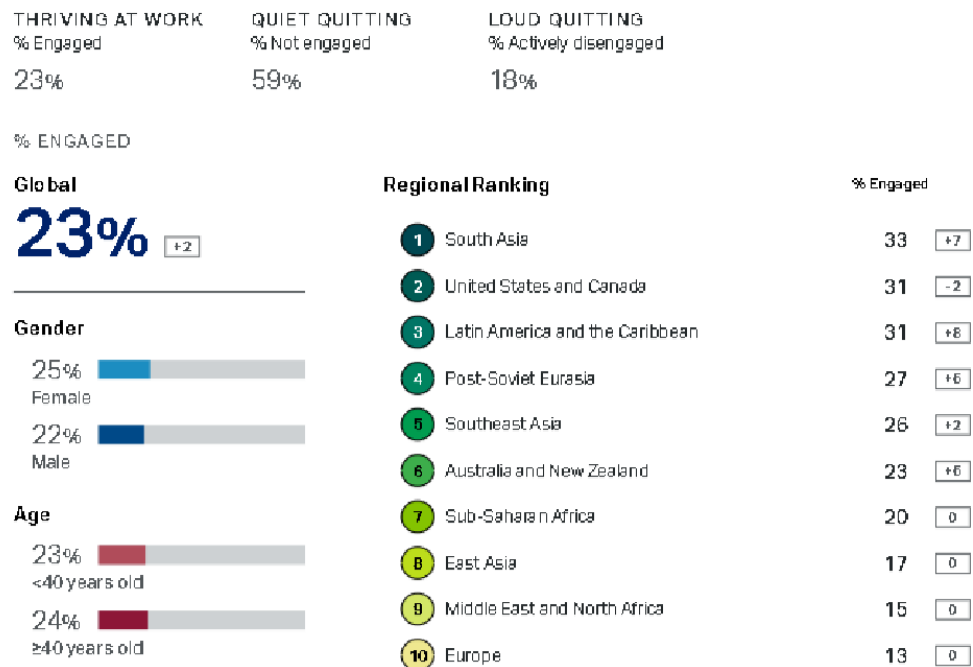


Figure 1. Employee Engagement Survey in the world

Within higher education, lecturer engagement is particularly critical for the successful implementation of the tri dharma of higher education, encompassing teaching, research, and community service (Ardiansyah et al., 2020). Ideally, these responsibilities are distributed in a balanced manner, as they collectively shape institutional quality and academic reputation (Yu & Kaur, 2024). From a SET perspective, lecturers' sustained engagement in these three domains is conditioned by their perception that institutional rewards both extrinsic are fair and proportionate to their contributions. When this perceived reciprocity is maintained, lecturers are more likely to continue investing high levels of effort across all tri dharma components (Chong et al., 2025). Indicators of this condition can be observed in the relatively low number of lecturers holding doctoral degrees and professorships, the limited certification achievements, and

the insufficient number of scientific publications in reputable national and international journals (Schwerin et al., 2021). In addition to academic responsibilities, lecturers are also burdened with various administrative duties, including accreditation processes, curriculum development, and institutional reporting, which further increase their workload and reduce the time available for scholarly activities (Heslop et al., 2017). As a result, lecturers often experience difficulties in maintaining a balanced distribution of effort across their professional responsibilities (Penman & Ellis, 2012).

Empirical evidence indicates that lecturer engagement is often suboptimal (Walter & Butler, 2013). Many lecturers disproportionately allocate time to teaching while neglecting research and community service, or vice versa, leading to an imbalance in fulfilling tri dharma responsibilities (Zhao et al., 2023). This imbalance reflects not

only individual preferences but also structural constraints such as excessive workload, administrative burdens, and limited institutional support (Hasnine et al., 2023). From the SET lens, such conditions signal a disruption in the reciprocity process: lecturers perceive that their increasing contributions are not matched by equivalent institutional returns, particularly in terms of fair workload distribution, research support, and career advancement opportunities. Consequently, this perceived inequity may reduce their willingness to sustain high levels of discretionary effort (Hoban et al., 2015). Over time, these conditions led to emotional exhaustion and decreased motivation, prompting some lecturers to adopt coping strategies aimed at preserving their mental well-being (Zhou et al., 2025). One such strategy is the phenomenon widely known as quiet quitting, which refers to a condition in which employees limit their work to the minimum requirements of their job descriptions, without additional effort or emotional involvement.

The post-COVID-19 transformation of academic work has further intensified this imbalance (Debs & Martani, 2023). The rapid shift to digital learning increased workload complexity while simultaneously blurring the boundaries between professional and personal life (Rys, 2010). In SET terms, the expansion of demands without a proportional increase in institutional support or resources weakens the perceived quality of exchange relationships. As lecturers experience diminishing returns on their efforts, such as limited recognition, inadequate technological support, and intensified role overload, they may begin to recalibrate their level of contribution as a form of psychological self-regulation (Ting & Wan Ahmad, 2022). Over time, this recalibration may manifest as quiet quitting, understood as the deliberate reduction of work effort to minimum role requirements without formal resignation (Abraham et al., 2025). While often framed as disengagement, quiet quitting can be theoretically interpreted within SET as a form of negative reciprocity, where employees respond to perceived violations of exchange balance by withdrawing discretionary effort rather than exiting the organization (Clifton, 2023).

The emergence of quiet quitting has gained significant attention in academic and public discourse (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Some scholars interpret it as a detrimental form of disengagement, while others view it as a rational coping response to chronic workload pressure and weakened work-life balance (Reilly et al., 2014). Within SET, these interpretations are not mutually exclusive but represent different points along a continuum of exchange deterioration. When perceived reciprocity remains moderately intact, employees may still maintain engagement; however, when perceived imbalance becomes persistent, withdrawal of effort becomes more likely as a protective mechanism to restore psychological equilibrium (Bhana & Suknunan, 2021). Although SET has been widely

used to explain employee engagement, job satisfaction, and turnover intention (Ancell, 2013).

Furthermore, existing research on quiet quitting has predominantly focused on general employee populations and has rarely addressed the unique characteristics of academic work, especially the tri dharma responsibilities that distinguish lecturers from other professions (Lin & Chen, 2024). The imbalance in fulfilling these responsibilities, combined with institutional constraints and increasing workload, may create a distinctive context in which quiet quitting emerges among lecturers (Ravet, 2007). In addition, previous studies have not sufficiently explored how organizational factors, such as perceived support, fairness, and workload distribution, interact to influence lecturers' decisions to disengage from certain aspects of their work (Rombert & Lourenço, 2025). This indicates a significant gap in the literature, particularly in understanding the antecedents of quiet quitting from a theoretical and contextual perspective.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining quiet quitting behavior among lecturers through the lens of Social Exchange Theory, with particular attention to the imbalance in tridharma responsibilities and the role of institutional support (Elder et al., 2011). By focusing on the higher education context, this research not only contributes to the development of theoretical understanding regarding quiet quitting but also provides practical insights for university management in designing policies and strategies to enhance lecturer engagement and performance. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of quiet quitting, Social Exchange Theory, and the Tri Dharma framework, offering a more comprehensive and context-specific explanation of disengagement behavior in academic institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore the phenomenon of quiet quitting among lecturers in Muhammadiyah Aisyiyah higher education institutions. The case study approach was chosen to enable an in-depth understanding of lecturers' experiences within their real-life context, particularly in relation to the complexity of tri dharma responsibilities. Prior to data collection, this research obtained ethical clearance from the National Research and Innovation Agency. The participants consisted of ten permanent lecturers selected through purposive sampling, based on their relevance to the research objectives and their experience in academic work. The inclusion criteria required participants to have at least one year of teaching experience, with overall work experience ranging from 1 to 15 years, allowing for diverse perspectives across different career stages.

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face. An interview guide was developed to explore key aspects such as indications of

quiet quitting behavior, workload distribution, perceptions of institutional support, and strategies used by lecturers to manage their responsibilities. The semi-structured format provided flexibility for participants to express their experiences in detail while ensuring consistency across interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 40 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy. All interviews were then transcribed verbatim to prepare the data for analysis.

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The process began with repeated reading of the transcripts to achieve data familiarization, followed by open coding to identify meaningful units relevant to the research objectives. These codes were then grouped into categories

through axial coding to uncover patterns and relationships, which were subsequently developed into broader themes representing the dimensions of quiet quitting behavior. This analytical approach not only categorizes textual data but also interprets the underlying meanings within participants' responses (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were applied, including data triangulation across participants, member checking to validate interpretations, and a reflective approach by the researchers to minimize bias and maintain analytical rigor.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants (N=10)

Category	Sub category	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	4	40
	Female	6	60
Educational Qualifications	Master	9	90
	Doctor	1	10
Marital status	Single	0	0
	Married	10	100
Years of service (year)	1-5	7	70
	6-10	2	20
	10 - 15	1	10
University	UM Sby	9	90
	UM Sampit	1	10

The demographic profile of the participants shows that the majority were female lecturers (60%), while male lecturers accounted for 40% of the sample. In terms of educational qualifications, most participants held a master's degree (90%), with only a small proportion possessing a doctoral degree (10%). All participants were married, indicating that none of them were single at the time of the study. Regarding years of service, the majority of lecturers had relatively early career experience, with 70% having

worked for 1–5 years, followed by 20% with 6–10 years of experience, and 10% with 10–15 years. In terms of institutional affiliation, most participants were from UM Sby (90%), while only one participant (10%) was from UM Sampit. Overall, the sample reflects a dominance of early-career, master's degree holders, predominantly female, and largely concentrated within a single institution.

Theme 1. Teaching Workload Dominates Academic Responsibilities Subtheme 1.1. Teaching as the Central Academic Responsibility

Across participants, teaching emerged as the most dominant and time-consuming aspect of academic work. Regardless of career stage, lecturers consistently described teaching as the activity that structured their daily routines and determined how they allocated their professional resources. Although the Tri Dharma of Higher Education requires lecturers to engage in teaching, research, and community service in a balanced manner, participants reported that teaching responsibilities frequently overshadowed the other two domains. Consequently, research and

Teaching as the Primary Academic Responsibility

community service were often postponed, minimized, or treated as secondary priorities.

Representative quotations illustrate this experience:

"Most of my time is spent on teaching, especially when students have difficulty understanding the material." (P3)

"Teaching takes most of my time and attention right now." (P6)

"Right now, my main focus is on teaching because that is my primary responsibility." (P5)

“My teaching load is quite heavy, around 18 credits, and I am also involved in organizing institutional activities.” (P4)

The dominance of teaching responsibilities reflects more than a simple preference for instructional activities. Participants viewed teaching as an immediate obligation that directly affected students and institutional performance, making it difficult to postpone or reduce. Unlike research and community service, which often provide greater flexibility regarding timing and implementation, teaching requires continuous interaction, preparation, assessment, and responsiveness to student needs. As a result, lecturers tended to prioritize teaching whenever competing demands emerged.

This finding suggests the existence of a structural imbalance within academic work. While universities formally emphasize the equal importance of all Tri Dharma responsibilities, participants perceived teaching as the most visible and urgent obligation. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (SET), lecturers may allocate their effort toward activities that are most strongly expected and monitored by the institution. Consequently, discretionary efforts directed toward research and community engagement become increasingly vulnerable to reduction when lecturers face excessive workload or limited institutional support.

Subtheme 1.2. Teaching Preparation as a Hidden Source of Workload

Participants emphasized that the burden associated with teaching extended far beyond classroom instruction. A substantial portion of their workload consisted of invisible or less recognized activities, including preparing course materials, developing lesson plans, designing assessments, updating syllabi, learning new subject content, and responding to student inquiries. These activities consumed significant amounts of time and cognitive energy, particularly among early-career lecturers who were still developing teaching competence and confidence.

Representative quotations include:

“Being a lecturer is quite challenging, especially when I have to teach new subjects that require more preparation time.” (P2)

“Preparing teaching materials takes a lot of time, so it becomes my main priority.” (P8)

“As a new lecturer, I still have a lot to learn, especially in preparing courses and developing the syllabus.” (P6)

“Teaching is quite challenging for me, especially when I have to prepare courses and teach independently.” (P7)

The findings reveal that teaching preparation is often experienced as a continuous learning process rather than a routine task. Participants described the need to regularly revise learning

materials, adapt instructional strategies, and ensure that course content remained relevant and understandable for students. These demands were intensified when lecturers were assigned unfamiliar subjects, requiring additional time for self-learning and content mastery before entering the classroom.

Furthermore, participants noted that teaching workload frequently extended beyond formal working hours. Course preparation, grading assignments, and responding to students often occurred during evenings or weekends. This situation contributed to a blurring of boundaries between professional and personal life, particularly among younger lecturers who felt pressure to demonstrate competence and commitment. As a result, the actual workload experienced by lecturers was substantially greater than what was reflected in official teaching credits.

From an analytical perspective, these findings highlight the importance of recognizing invisible academic labor. Institutional workload calculations often focus on measurable teaching hours while overlooking the substantial preparatory work required to deliver quality instruction. This discrepancy may contribute to perceptions of inequity, where lecturers feel that their efforts are insufficiently recognized by the institution. According to SET, such perceptions can gradually weaken reciprocity relationships and reduce motivation to engage in activities beyond formal obligations.

Subtheme 1.3. Reduced Engagement in Research and Community Service

As teaching responsibilities expanded, participants reported progressively reducing their involvement in research and community service activities. While most lecturers acknowledged the importance of fulfilling all components of the Tri Dharma, they frequently perceived research and community engagement as responsibilities that could be delayed when confronted with competing demands. This pattern was observed across both junior and senior lecturers, although the underlying reasons varied depending on career stage and personal circumstances.

Representative quotations include:

“Because of that, I have not prioritized research and community service yet.” (P6)

“Research is less appealing and more difficult to carry out independently.” (P3)

“At present, my main focus is teaching.” (P5)

“Balancing teaching, research, and community service effectively requires more time and experience.” (P9)

Participants described research as an activity requiring sustained concentration, collaboration, and long-term planning, resources that were often unavailable after fulfilling teaching responsibilities. Similarly, community service activities were frequently viewed as additional commitments requiring substantial preparation and coordination. Given limited time and energy, lecturers tended to prioritize activities perceived as most urgent, namely teaching-related tasks.

Importantly, the findings do not suggest that lecturers intentionally rejected research or community service responsibilities. Rather, their reduced engagement appears to represent a pragmatic adaptation to workload pressures. Participants often expressed aspirations to become more active in research and community engagement in the future but felt constrained by their current circumstances. This indicates that disengagement was gradual and selective rather than absolute.

From the perspective of quiet quitting, these findings are particularly significant. Quiet quitting is often characterized not by formal withdrawal from employment but by a reduction in discretionary effort beyond minimum job requirements. The participants in this study continued to fulfill their teaching obligations and remained committed to their professional roles. However, they simultaneously reduced their involvement in activities that required additional investment of time, energy, and emotional resources. This pattern reflects what may be described as selective withdrawal, where lecturers strategically concentrate effort on essential responsibilities while limiting engagement in tasks perceived as less immediately necessary.

Viewed through the lens of Social Exchange Theory, this behavior can be interpreted as a response to perceived imbalances between contributions and organizational support. When lecturers experience increasing demands without corresponding resources, recognition, or support, they may recalibrate their level of effort to protect personal well-being and maintain manageable workloads. Consequently, reduced participation in research and community service becomes not merely a matter of time management but a behavioral manifestation of changing exchange relationships between lecturers and their institutions.

DISCUSSION

Teaching-Centered Workload and Time Management Challenges

The growing body of literature on quiet quitting demonstrates that disengagement among lecturers cannot be understood solely as an individual motivational problem. Rather, it should be viewed as a complex organizational phenomenon embedded within the structure of academic work and the broader institutional environment of higher education (Chakma & Sultana, 2024). In contrast to popular narratives that portray quiet quitting as a decline in work ethic, the present study suggests that reduced discretionary effort is often rooted in structural conditions that shape how lecturers allocate their limited resources of time, energy, and attention (Kwan et al., 2019). Within contemporary higher education institutions, academic work has become increasingly complex and multidimensional. Universities no longer expect lecturers merely to teach but also to generate research outputs, engage with communities, contribute to institutional governance, and participate in various administrative activities (Sevnanayan & Maphoto, 2024). These expanding expectations have transformed academic work into a profession characterized by competing demands and multiple performance indicators. Consequently, lecturers are required to continuously negotiate priorities among responsibilities that often exceed their available

resources (Hasrin et al., 2026). This situation can be understood through the lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET), which argues that employment relationships are built upon reciprocal exchanges between individuals and organizations (Kurniawati & Wijayadne, 2026).

Employees invest effort, commitment, and expertise with the expectation that organizations will provide appropriate returns, including support, recognition, fairness, and opportunities for development (Lu et al., 2023). The sustainability of employee engagement therefore depends on the perceived balance between contributions and rewards (Lu et al., 2023). When the exchange relationship is perceived as balanced, employees are more likely to demonstrate behaviors that extend beyond formal job requirements (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Such behaviors include initiative-taking, organizational citizenship, innovation, and voluntary participation in institutional activities. These discretionary efforts are particularly important within universities because many academic contributions occur outside formally prescribed responsibilities (Clifton, 2023). Research collaboration, mentoring students, and community engagement often rely on personal commitment rather than direct supervision.

However, when individuals perceive that their contributions exceed the rewards or support they receive, the quality of the exchange relationship begins to deteriorate. Under such conditions, employees may gradually reduce their investment of discretionary effort (Boy & Sürmeli, 2023). This adjustment does not necessarily involve withdrawal from employment but rather a recalibration of effort designed to restore perceived balance (Baumann & Sander, 2021). Quiet quitting can therefore be interpreted as a behavioral response to exchange imbalance rather than merely a manifestation of low motivation (Aulia et al., 2021).

This interpretation is particularly relevant within higher education, where performance expectations continue to expand while institutional resources often remain constrained (Aliyyah et al., 2021). This indicates that teaching demands are institutional in nature and not solely a reflection of personal time management capacity. Furthermore, teaching responsibilities are often intensified by the diversity of student needs (Ardiansyah et al., 2020). The increasing emphasis on accountability, accreditation, publication productivity, and performance metrics has intensified pressure on lecturers (Yu & Kaur, 2024). As academic roles become more demanding, lecturers may find themselves investing substantial effort without experiencing a corresponding increase in organizational support or recognition (Chong et al., 2025).

The growing managerialization of higher education has further reinforced these pressures. Universities increasingly adopt performance-management systems derived from corporate environments, emphasizing measurable outcomes and productivity indicators (Schwerin et al., 2021). While such systems may improve accountability, they can also contribute to perceptions that academic

contributions are valued primarily through quantifiable outputs (Heslop et al., 2017). As a consequence, lecturers frequently experience difficulty in maintaining a balanced allocation of time across tri dharma obligations (Penman & Ellis, 2012). This shift risks reducing the intrinsic meaning of academic work and weakening employees' emotional attachment to their institutions (Walter & Butler, 2013).

From this perspective, quiet quitting may emerge as a rational adaptation to changing organizational expectations (Zhao et al., 2023). Rather than rejecting their profession, lecturers may selectively limit their involvement in activities that require additional effort beyond their contractual obligations (Hasnine et al., 2023). Such behavior reflects an attempt to preserve personal resources in environments characterized by increasing demands and limited reciprocity (Hoban et al., 2015). Another important issue concerns the structural imbalance among the three pillars of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education (Zhou et al., 2025). Academic roles are frequently organized in ways that create competition among these responsibilities rather than integration between them.

This imbalance has important implications for professional identity. Historically, academic identity has been built upon the integration of teaching, research, and service. dimension becomes disproportionately dominant, lecturers may experience difficulties maintaining a coherent sense of professional purpose. Over time, this fragmentation can contribute to disengagement and reduce commitment to broader institutional goals (Debs & Martani, 2023). Within academic environments, job demands are particularly complex because they involve not only workload quantity but also cognitive and emotional labor (Rys, 2010). Teaching requires continuous interaction with students, responsiveness to diverse learning needs, and ongoing adaptation of instructional strategies (Ting & Wan Ahmad, 2022).

Research demands creativity, concentration, and persistence. Community engagement requires relationship building and external collaboration. The cumulative effect of these responsibilities can create significant strain when not accompanied by adequate institutional resources (Abraham et al., 2025). Such expectations can create chronic role overload, where the volume of responsibilities exceeds individuals' perceived capacity to perform them effectively. Under these circumstances, lecturers are forced to make strategic decisions regarding where to invest their effort (Willmot & Bamforth, 2010). Role conflict becomes particularly salient when responsibilities compete for the same limited resources (Reilly et al., 2014).

Academic professionals often occupy multiple roles simultaneously, including educator, researcher, mentor, administrator, organizational member, and family member (Bhana & Suknunan, 2021). Each role carries distinct expectations and obligations that may not always be compatible. The resulting tensions can create psychological strain and reduce overall work engagement (Lin & Chen, 2024). Each role carries distinct expectations and obligations

that may not always be compatible. The resulting tensions can create psychological strain and reduce overall work engagement (Ravet, 2007).

Rather than abandoning their professional responsibilities entirely, lecturers may reduce participation in activities perceived as nonessential in order to cope with competing demands (Rombert & Lourenço, 2025). The discussion of quiet quitting must also consider the concept of conservation of resources. According to resource-based perspectives, individuals seek to protect and preserve valuable resources such as time, energy, emotional capacity, and health (Elder et al., 2011). When these resources are threatened or depleted, individuals become motivated to minimize further losses (Chakma & Sultana, 2024). Quiet quitting can therefore be interpreted as a protective mechanism aimed at conserving limited personal resources.

This perspective challenges narratives that portray quiet quitting as laziness or lack of commitment (Kwan et al., 2019). It suggests that reduced discretionary effort may represent an adaptive response to unsustainable work conditions (Sevnarayan & Maphoto, 2024). The role of institutional support is central to understanding these dynamics (Hasrin et al., 2026). Participants report experiencing both positive emotions, such as satisfaction and commitment, and negative emotions, including stress, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion (Kurniawati & Wijayadne, 2026). Organizational support theory suggests that employees develop beliefs regarding the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Fadillah Malik Arizon et al., 2019).

When employees perceive strong organizational support, they are more likely to reciprocate with increased commitment and engagement (Noor et al., 2022). Perceived organizational support is especially important in academic settings because much academic work involves uncertainty and autonomy (Zaini et al., 2025).

Lecturers often rely on institutional support to access resources, professional development opportunities, mentoring relationships, and administrative assistance. These forms of support help employees manage complex responsibilities and maintain engagement despite demanding workloads (Alya et al., 2024). Recognition represents another important aspect of reciprocity within Social Exchange Theory (Adriansyah et al., 2024). Employees are more likely to remain engaged when they believe their efforts are acknowledged and valued. Recognition not only validates contributions but also reinforces employees' sense of belonging and professional significance (Lu et al., 2023). In academic contexts, recognition may take various forms, including career advancement opportunities, research support, leadership appreciation, and peer respect.

The absence of recognition can be particularly problematic because academic work often requires substantial invisible labor (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Activities such as mentoring students, preparing instructional materials, and providing emotional support are essential to educational quality yet frequently overlooked in formal

evaluation systems (Boy & Sürmeli, 2023). When these contributions remain unrecognized, lecturers may perceive that their efforts are not adequately reciprocated. Clear channels of coordination help lecturers manage responsibilities more efficiently and reduce uncertainty in task execution (Aulia et al., 2021).

Organizational justice literature demonstrates that employees evaluate not only outcomes but also the processes through which decisions are made (Aliyyah et al., 2021). Fairness in workload distribution, promotion systems, performance evaluation, and resource allocation significantly influences employee attitudes and behaviors (Ardiansyah et al., 2020). Perceived injustice can erode trust and encourage withdrawal behaviors. Within academic institutions, disparities in workload allocation or access to opportunities may create perceptions that organizational exchanges are unequal (Yu & Kaur, 2024). Such perceptions can gradually reduce employees' willingness to invest effort beyond minimum expectations.

An additional consideration involves career stage differences. Early-career lecturers often face unique challenges related to professional identity formation, competence development, and career uncertainty (Chong et al., 2025). These individuals may be particularly vulnerable to disengagement when institutional support systems are insufficient (Schwerin et al., 2021). Without adequate institutional guidance, early-career lecturers may experience uncertainty in their roles and reduced confidence in their academic abilities. These individuals may be particularly

vulnerable to disengagement when institutional support systems are insufficient (Handayani et al., 2024).

Boundary management can therefore be understood as both a coping strategy and a manifestation of quiet quitting (Lu et al., 2023). While establishing boundaries may protect well-being, it may also represent a reduction in discretionary effort when employees intentionally withdraw from activities previously performed voluntarily. The distinction between healthy boundary management and disengagement is therefore often nuanced rather than absolute (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

From an institutional perspective, the emergence of quiet quitting poses important challenges. Universities depend heavily on discretionary effort to sustain research productivity, community engagement, innovation, and organizational development (Boy & Sürmeli, 2023). When lecturers restrict their contributions to minimum requirements, institutions may experience declines in overall effectiveness even when formal performance indicators remain stable (Baumann & Sander, 2021).

Addressing quiet quitting therefore requires more than encouraging individual resilience or motivation. Interventions focused solely on personal coping strategies risk overlooking the structural conditions that contribute to disengagement (Aulia et al., 2021). Sustainable solutions must address workload distribution, organizational support, fairness perceptions, recognition systems, and opportunities for professional development (Aliyyah et al., 2021).

Table 2. Research gap

Research gap	Existing findings	Future research direction
Previous studies have not sufficiently examined lecturers' engagement and quiet quitting within the specific framework of the tri dharma of higher education, particularly regarding how workload imbalance, multiple role demands, and limited institutional support interact to shape disengagement behavior.	Previous studies have not sufficiently examined lecturers' engagement and quiet quitting within the specific framework of the tri dharma of higher education, particularly regarding how workload imbalance, multiple role demands, and limited institutional support interact to shape disengagement behavior.	Previous studies have not sufficiently examined lecturers' engagement and quiet quitting within the specific framework of the tri dharma of higher education, particularly regarding how workload imbalance, multiple role demands, and limited institutional support interact to shape disengagement behavior.

CONCLUSION

Lecturers' engagement in higher education is strongly influenced by a teaching-centered workload that creates an imbalance in the implementation of the tri dharma of higher education. This imbalance is further exacerbated by the complexity of lecturers' multiple roles, including academic, structural, organizational, and personal responsibilities, which collectively generate significant role conflict and work-life tension. In addition, limited institutional support forces lecturers to rely on individual coping strategies such as prioritization of tasks, boundary setting between work and personal life, and informal collegial assistance in order to manage their workload and sustain their performance. These findings indicate that lecturer engagement is not solely determined by individual

effort or motivation, but is also shaped by organizational structures and the availability of institutional support systems. Therefore, it is suggested that future research adopt a mixed-methods approach to further examine the relationship between workload distribution, institutional support, and lecturer engagement across different higher education contexts, with a particular focus on quantifying engagement levels. The study also implies that higher education institutions need to strengthen workload management systems and provide structured support mechanisms, such as mentoring programs and time management training, to reduce role conflict, improve work-life balance, and enhance lecturers' overall engagement and well-being.

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ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study received ethical approval from the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) prior to data collection. All procedures involving human participants were conducted in accordance with relevant ethical guidelines and regulations. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in the study, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The qualitative data supporting the findings of this study consist of interview transcripts and research materials collected from participants. Due to confidentiality and ethical considerations, the raw interview data are not publicly available. However, anonymized data and additional information related to the study may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request and subject to ethical approval requirements.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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