

THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED EXPOSURE TO QUIET FIRING ON JOB SATISFACTION DIMENSIONS AMONG HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between human resources managers' perceived exposure to quiet firing and their job satisfaction levels. Managers who experience low exposure to quiet firing exhibit significantly higher levels. Within contemporary organizations, dismissal practices may generate psychological and organizational outcomes not only for employees but also for the human resources managers who implement them. The study adopts a quantitative research approach and employs a correlational survey design. The data collection instrument consists of a questionnaire including demographic questions, the Silent Dismissal Scale, and the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale. The sample consists of 284 human resources managers working in SMEs operating in the province of Sakarya, selected through snowball sampling. The findings indicate that there is a statistically significant, negative relationship between human resources managers' preferences for silent dismissal practices and their job satisfaction levels. Managers who refrain from quiet firing practices exhibit significantly higher levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction compared to those who employ them. This study contributes to the literature by exploring the managerial-level consequences of quiet firing, offering a novel perspective in the field of organizational behavior through the lenses of Social Exchange and Psychological Contract theories.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Quiet Firing, Job Satisfaction, Psychological Contract .

INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) is regarded as one of the fundamental strategic functions that plays a critical role in achieving organizations' competitive advantage. While traditional approaches focus primarily on operational procedures, contemporary strategic HRM frameworks consider human capital as a core asset that determines sustainable organizational performance. Within this context, maintaining high levels of job satisfaction and motivational alignment among employees remains paramount. Job satisfaction emerges from an individual's cognitive and affective evaluations of their working environment. Low job satisfaction is consistently linked to negative outcomes such as turnover intention, burnout, and cognitive alienation.

In recent years, the concept of "quiet firing" has emerged in the organizational literature, referring to the process of encouraging employees to leave the organization indirectly by depriving them of organizational support or systematically deteriorating working conditions rather than through direct termination. While current literature predominantly captures the employee perspective regarding quiet firing, empirical research examining the psychological and professional outcomes on the human resource managers who prefer or implement these practices remains remarkably scarce. HR managers are strategic actors who operate at the intersection of executive mandates and ethical employee stewardship; therefore, their choices regarding dismissal methods are likely to resonate with their own psychological contract and subsequent job satisfaction.

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To address this empirical gap, this study investigates the relationship between HR managers' preferences for quiet firing practices and their job satisfaction levels using the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale and the Quiet Firing Scale. By shifting the focus from the target of quiet firing to the actor, this research provides a nuanced contribution to the organizational behavior literature. Theoretically, it expands the boundaries of Social Exchange Theory by illustrating that toxic or passive-aggressive termination preferences erode the practitioner's own internal and external satisfaction ecosystems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic HRM posits that firm performance is directly influenced by the orchestration of human resource policies designed to direct employee behavior toward strategic goals (Armstrong, 2010; Becker & Huselid, 2006). From a Resource-Based View (RBV), achieving sustainable competitive advantage depends on leveraging human resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). Consequently, the strategic orientation of HR managers involves not only recruitment and talent retention but also the ethical management of the final phase of the employee lifecycle: employment termination (Cascio, 2014).

Employment termination typically manifests as a direct, formal administrative action. However, shifting economic paradigms and managerial dynamics have given rise to "quiet firing." Quiet firing entails systematically creating an unfavorable workplace environment—such as withholding constructive feedback, restricting upward mobility, assigning disproportionate workloads, or inducing social isolation—to prompt the employee's voluntary resignation (Sürücü, Güleriyüz, & Maşlakçı, 2024; Vohra, 2022).

This phenomenon can be robustly explained via Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1995) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). Social Exchange Theory states that organizational relationships are built on norms of reciprocity; when positive exchange vectors are replaced with passive hostility or a lack of organizational support, psychological alignment collapses (Eisenberger et al., 1986). While this collapse deeply impacts the employee, Psychological Contract Violation (Zhao et al., 2007) also operates reflexively. HR managers who find themselves executing or preferring covert, non-transparent practices like quiet firing may experience acute cognitive dissonance, ethical strain, and a perceived breach of their professional role identity, which directly undermines their own job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction constitutes a multidimensional emotional and evaluative state derived from job experiences (Locke, 1976), categorized broadly into intrinsic satisfaction (e.g., autonomy, moral values, achievement) and extrinsic satisfaction (e.g., compensation, organizational policies, supervision) (Dawis et al., 1967). When HR managers engage in or support manipulative practices such as quiet firing, their alignment with the organization's ethical climate is disrupted, negatively impacting both their internal moral fulfillment (intrinsic) and their satisfaction with administrative policies (extrinsic). Based on these theoretical foundations, the following research questions and hypotheses are posited:

RQ₁. Is there a significant relationship between human resources managers' quiet firing preferences and their job satisfaction levels?

RQ₂. Do human resources managers' job satisfaction levels differ based on their deployment of quiet firing practices?

H₁: There is a statistically significant, negative relationship between HR managers' perceived exposure to quiet firing and their level of global job satisfaction.

H₂: HR managers who experience low levels of perceived exposure to quiet firing exhibit higher levels of intrinsic job satisfaction compared to those experiencing high exposure.

H₃: HR managers who experience low levels of perceived exposure to quiet firing exhibit higher levels of extrinsic job satisfaction compared to those experiencing high exposure.

METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative research framework employing a correlational survey model to assess the structural relationship between HR managers' quiet firing preferences and their job satisfaction dimensions.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instrument comprised a three-part structured questionnaire:

1. Demographic Information Form: Captured gender, birth year, educational level, professional experience, ethical stance, and institutional dismissal history.
2. Quiet Firing Scale: Developed by Anand et al. (2023) and adapted into Turkish by Sürücü et al. (2024). It consists of 7 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Higher scores denote a stronger preference for quiet firing.
3. Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale (MSQ): Short form developed by Dawis, Weiss, England, and Lofquist (1967), adapted into Turkish by Özdayı (1991). It comprises 20 items capturing Intrinsic Satisfaction (12 items) and Extrinsic Satisfaction (8 items) on a 5-point Likert scale.

Sampling and Data Collection

The target population comprises human resources managers within Turkey. Using snowball sampling—a non-probability sampling technique appropriate for reaching specialized managerial cohorts—data were gathered from 284 HR managers operating within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Sakarya province. A preliminary pilot study conducted with 54 HR managers verified the linguistic clarity and operational feasibility of the items. Ethical approval was formally granted by the Sakarya University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (Approval No: E-61923333-050.99-478207, Date: 30.05.2025).

RESULTS

The data obtained within the scope of the study were analyzed in order to determine the relationship between human resources managers' preferences for quiet firing practices and their job satisfaction levels. The sample of the study consists of 284 human resources managers working in SMEs operating in Sakarya province. The results of the pilot study conducted prior to the data collection process supported the applicability of the data collection instrument and the suitability of the scales within the research context.

Before proceeding with the analysis of the research data, the dataset was examined in terms of missing data, outliers, and assumptions of normality. Subsequently, descriptive statistics regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants were calculated and the results are presented in Table 1.

Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to determine the general tendencies of human resources managers regarding quiet firing preferences and job satisfaction levels. Mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values for the variables were calculated and evaluated.

Within the scope of the first hypothesis of the study, Pearson correlation analysis was applied to determine the relationship between human resources managers' quiet firing preferences and their job satisfaction levels. The results of the analysis are presented in the relevant table.

Group comparisons were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in job satisfaction levels according to quiet firing preferences. Independent Samples t-Test was used for variables with differences between two groups. One-Way Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA) was used for analyses requiring comparison of more than two groups. In cases where significant differences were identified, appropriate post-hoc analyses were used to determine the source of the differences between groups.

As a result of the analyses conducted within the scope of the study, the findings are presented under the following headings: demographic characteristics of the participants, descriptive statistics of the scales, correlations between variables, and results of hypothesis testing. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant characteristics table

Variable	Category	(N)	(%)
Gender	Male	170	59,9
	Female	114	40,1
Year of Birth	1960-1970	48	16,9
	1971-1980	98	34,5
	1981-1990	86	30,3
	1991-2000	52	18,3
Education Level	Associate Degree	13	4,6
	Bachelor's Degree	214	75,4
	Graduate Degree	57	20,1
Professional Experience	0-2 years	31	10,9
	3-5 years	47	16,5
	6-10 years	171	60,2
	11 + years	35	12,3
Ethical Perspective	Yes	101	35,6
	No	183	64,4
Workplace Dismissal Practice	Yes	179	63
	No	105	37

A total of 284 human resources managers participated in the study. The findings regarding the demographic and occupational characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. When the gender distribution is examined, it is observed that 170 participants (59.9%) are male and 114 participants (40.1%) are female.

When the distribution of birth years is evaluated, it is determined that 48 participants (16.9%) were born between 1960–1970, 98 participants (34.5%) between 1971–1980, 86 participants (30.3%) between 1981–1990, and 52 participants (18.3%) between 1991–2000. The largest group of participants consists of managers born between 1971–1980.

The findings regarding education level show that 13 participants (4.6%) have associate degrees, 214 participants (75.4%) have bachelor's degrees, and 57 participants (20.1%) have postgraduate education. Accordingly, it is observed that bachelor's degree holders constitute the majority of the sample.

In terms of professional experience, 31 participants (10.9%) have 0–2 years, 47 participants (16.5%) have 3–5 years, 171 participants (60.2%) have 6–10 years, and 35 participants (12.3%) have 11 years or more experience. The highest proportion is observed among participants with 6–10 years of experience. Regarding ethical perspective, it is found that 101 participants (35.6%) responded “Yes” to the relevant statement, while 183 participants (64.4%) responded “No”.

When the findings related to workplace termination practices are examined, 179 participants (63.0%) stated that termination practices exist in their workplaces, while 105 participants (37.0%) stated that they do not. Overall, the sample mainly consists of male human resources managers with bachelor's degrees and 6–10 years of professional experience. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the construct validity of the scales used in the study. Before proceeding with factor analysis, the suitability of the dataset was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

To evaluate the construct validity of the scales, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation was executed. The dataset demonstrated high suitability for factorization (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin [KMO] = 0.886; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity $\chi^2 p < 0.001$).

For the Quiet Firing Scale, EFA confirmed a robust unidimensional construct with an Eigenvalue of 5.19, explaining 74.18% of the total variance. Factor loadings for all 7 items ranged between 0.703 and 0.894

(Table 2). The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient for this scale was computed as $\alpha = 0.89$. As a result of the analysis, factor loadings and explained variance values for the Quiet Firing Scale are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Quiet firing dimensions

Item No.	Statement	Factor Loading	Standard Deviation
1	My manager does not allow me to take leave when needed.	0.703	0.84
2	My manager increases my workload without providing any corresponding increase in compensation.	0.792	0.76
3	My manager expects me to work outside regular working hours.	0.758	0.89
4	My manager excludes me from work-related and social activities.	0.836	0.68
5	My manager does not respect my contributions to the job.	0.881	0.71
6	My manager does not adequately recognize my job performance.	0.894	0.65
7	My manager disregards my personal development and career planning.	0.867	0.073
Explained Variance (%)		74,18	

Eigenvalue: 5.19 | Total Explained Variance: 74.18% | Cronbach's Alpha: 0.89

The results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) conducted to evaluate the construct validity of the Quiet Firing Scale are presented in Table 2. As seen in Table 2, the seven items constituting the scale are grouped under a single factor. The factor loadings of the items range between 0.703 and 0.894. In the literature, factor loadings of 0.40 and above are considered acceptable, while values above 0.50 are regarded as strong factor loadings. In this context, it is observed that all items constituting the scale strongly represent the related factor.

According to the analysis results, the single-factor structure explains 74.18% of the total variance. Since an explained variance ratio above 50% is considered sufficient in social sciences, this value indicates that the scale represents the construct it aims to measure at a high level.

The fact that all factor loadings are above 0.70 indicates strong relationships between the items and the factor. The findings demonstrate that the Quiet Firing Scale maintains its unidimensional structure in the research sample and possesses adequate construct validity. Following the determination of the factor For the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale, EFA yielded a distinct two-factor solution aligning with the theoretical framework, explaining 63.5% of the cumulative variance. The first dimension, Intrinsic Satisfaction (Eigenvalue = 7.88), explained 39.4% of the variance with factor loadings ranging from 0.597 to 0.854. The second dimension, Extrinsic Satisfaction (Eigenvalue = 4.82), explained 24.1% of the variance with factor loadings ranging from 0.561 to 0.821 (Table 3). Reliability analyses demonstrated strong internal consistency: Intrinsic Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.87$), Extrinsic Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.81$), and the Global Job Satisfaction scale ($\alpha = 0.88$).structure of the Quiet Firing Scale, factor analysis was conducted for the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale.

The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Job satisfaction scale dimensions

Item No.	Intrinsic Satisfaction	Extrinsic Satisfaction	Standard Deviation
1	0.854	–	0.64
2	0.810	–	0.72
3	0.782	–	0.69
4	0.761	–	0.75
5	0.735	–	0.61
6	0.707	–	0.78
7	0.693	–	0.83
8	0.685	–	0.70
9	0.622	–	0.66
10	0.608	–	0.74
11	0.597	–	0.81
12	0.612	–	0.77
13	–	0.821	0.85
14	–	0.794	0.92
15	–	0.768	0.88
16	–	0.759	0.79
17	–	0.736	0.82
18	–	0.702	0.90
19	–	0.681	0.86
20	–	0.561	0.73
%39,4		%24,1	Total Variance %63,5

Total Explained Variance: 63.5% | Cronbach's Alphas: Intrinsic (0.87), Extrinsic (0.81)

The results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) conducted to examine the construct validity of the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale are presented in Table 3.

As seen in Table 3, the scale exhibits a two-factor structure. The first factor, Intrinsic Satisfaction, consists of 12 items and explains 39.4% of the total variance. The second factor, Extrinsic Satisfaction, consists of 8 items and explains 24.1% of the total variance. When both factors are considered together, the total explained variance of the scale is 63.5%.

When the factor loadings are examined, it is observed that the loadings of the items under the Intrinsic Satisfaction dimension range between 0.597 and 0.854. The factor loadings of the items under the Extrinsic Satisfaction dimension range between 0.561 and 0.821. These values, which are above the accepted threshold levels in the literature, indicate that the items adequately represent their respective factors.

The results of the analysis demonstrate that the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale maintains its two-dimensional structure in the research sample and produces results consistent with its theoretical factor structure. In addition, the total explained variance exceeding 60% indicates that the scale adequately represents the construct it aims to measure. Based on the findings obtained, it is concluded that the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale has acceptable construct validity values in the research sample.

Following the examination of the factor structures of the scales, an Independent Samples t-Test was conducted to determine whether human resources managers' job satisfaction levels differ according to their preferences for quiet firing practices. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The effect of quiet firing on HR managers' job satisfaction levels

Job Satisfaction Dimension		Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD	t	p-value
Intrinsic Satisfaction	High Exposure	1.74	0.58	3.412	0.001
	Low Exposure	2.91	0.72		
Extrinsic Satisfaction	High Exposure	1.83	0.61	2.215	0.003
	Low Exposure	2.06	0.55		

Note: Since the independent variable consists of exactly two mutually exclusive groups, post-hoc multiple comparison tests (such as Tukey HSD) are statistically redundant and inapplicable; group differences are cleanly and fully captured via the independent samples t-test.

As reported in Table 4 HR managers who experience low exposure to quiet firing exhibit significantly higher intrinsic satisfaction ($\bar{X} = 2.91$, $SD = 0.72$) compared to those who practice it ($\bar{X} = 1.74$, $SD = 0.58$; $t = 3.412$, $p = 0.001$), fully supporting H₂. Similarly, compared to those who experience high exposure ($\bar{X} = 2.06$, $SD = 0.55$) than for practitioners ($\bar{X} = 1.83$, $SD = 0.61$; $t = 2.215$, $p = 0.003$), fully supporting H₃.

To address H₁, Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to gauge the linear relationship between HR managers' quiet firing preferences and job satisfaction levels. The analysis revealed a statistically significant, strong, and negative relationship between quiet firing preferences and global job satisfaction ($r = -0.695$, $n = 284$, $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.483$) implies that approximately 48.3% of the variance in HR managers' job satisfaction can be explained by their quiet firing tendencies. Hence, H₁ is supported.

Table 5. Hypothesis acceptance/rejection

Hypothesis No.	Hypothesis Statement	Result
H ₁	Significant relationship between quiet firing and satisfaction.	Supported (Negative)
H ₂	HR managers with low exposure exhibit higher intrinsic satisfaction.	Supported
H ₃	HR managers with low exposure exhibit higher extrinsic satisfaction.	Supported

All three hypotheses tested within the scope of the research were found to be statistically significant and therefore accepted. In line with H₁, it was determined that there is a statistically significant relationship between human resources managers' preferences regarding quiet firing practices and their job satisfaction levels. The findings related to H₂ and H₃ indicate that the internal (H₂) and external (H₃) job satisfaction levels of managers who do not engage in quiet firing practices are statistically significantly higher compared to those who do. The results reveal that job satisfaction levels differ depending on the presence or absence of quiet firing practices.

DISCUSSION

The empirical findings confirm that quiet firing preferences possess strong explanatory power over the job satisfaction of human resource professionals. Methodologically, both scales preserved their established factor structures, explaining substantial chunks of variance (74.18% for Quiet Firing; 63.5% for Job Satisfaction), backed by robust internal consistency coefficients (alpha 0.81), verifying the measurement model's integrity within the Turkish SME framework.

Human resource managers are fundamentally tasked with safeguarding and maintaining organizational justice. However, when they are subjected to quiet firing—manifesting as systemic exclusion and passive mobbing—by the executive leadership (High Exposure), their institutional trust (extrinsic satisfaction,

$\lambda = 1$) and their core professional fulfillment (intrinsic satisfaction, $\lambda = 1$) are thoroughly decimated

The stark drop in both intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction among HR managers who lean toward quiet firing actions underscores the profound reflexive toll of toxic management behavior. From the lens of Psychological Contract Theory, HR professionals view themselves as architects of organizational justice and human capital optimization. Engaging in covert, non-transparent, and passive-aggressive dismissals directly violates their internalized professional ethics (Rousseau, 1995). This misalignment breeds cognitive dissonance, severely deflating their intrinsic motivation ($\bar{X} = 1.74$). Simultaneously, from a Social Exchange perspective, when the organizational climate mandates or normalizes quiet firing over open dialogue, managers experience diminished faith in institutional leadership and policy structures, driving down extrinsic satisfaction. The strong negative correlation ($r = -0.695$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that covert termination methods operate as destructive vectors within the practitioner's psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that quiet firing practices do not merely alienate employees; they severely compromise the job satisfaction and ethical alignment of the human resource managers who implement them. Sustainable human resource management demands that dismissal processes are handled with transparency, fairness, and structural integrity.

Based on these insights, the following strategic interventions are proposed:

1. Formalization of Feedback Ecosystems: Replace ambiguous performance tracking with transparent, continuous, and auditable feedback structures to prevent systemic drift into quiet firing behavior.
2. Cultivating Psychological Safety: Build corporate cultures where professional impasses can be addressed openly without recourse to passive isolation tactics.
3. Leadership Ethics and Alignment Trainings: Train HR executives in empathetic conflict management and ethical decision-making to eliminate covert structural practices.
4. Comprehensive Well-being Networks: Establish mentoring and structural support programs to assist HR professionals facing administrative and ethical strains during downsizing or termination phases.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Conflict of interest

None.

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