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Work-life imbalance, burning out, feeling down, I will quit, but quietly – the case of hospitality employees

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ABSTRACT

Given the long and irregular working hours and low wages in the hospitality sector, employees often experience poor well-being and suffer from burnout. Instead of leaving their jobs, these employees engage in quiet quitting, which negatively impacts organizations. This study investigates the relationships between role conflicts, employee well-being, burnout, and quiet quitting among hospitality employees. The study was undertaken at hotels with different star ratings in Portugal. Data were collected from both frontline and backstage employees from different departments at the survey hotels. Structural equation modeling with Mplus was performed to analyze the data. The results indicate that role conflicts affect well-being and increase burnout, leading to quiet quitting. Furthermore, well-being and burnout mediate the relationship between role conflicts and quiet quitting, suggesting indirect effects of role conflicts. Gender and age also significantly influence these relationships. This study contributes to positive psychology and burnout research by evaluating an integrative model of role conflicts, well-being, and job-related outcomes. The findings offer practical insights for hospitality organizations to improve employees' job attitudes and behaviors.

KEYWORDS

Hospitality management;
role conflict; well-being;
quiet quitting

摘要

鉴于酒店业的工作时间长、不规律、工资低，员工的幸福感往往很差，精疲力竭。这些员工非但没有离职，反而默默地辞职，这对组织产生了负面影响。本研究调查了酒店员工的角色冲突、员工幸福感、倦怠和安静辞职之间的关系。这项研究是在葡萄牙不同星级的酒店进行的。从调查酒店不同部门的一线和后台员工那里收集数据，使用Mplus进行结构方程建模以分析数据。结果表明，角色冲突会影响幸福感，增加倦怠，导致安静的辞职。此外，幸福感和倦怠在角色冲突和安静辞职之间起着中介作用，表明角色冲突的间接影响。性别和年龄也会显著影响这些关系。本研究通过评估角色冲突、幸福感和与工作相关的结果的综合模型，为积极心理学和倦怠研究做出了贡献。研究结果为酒店组织改善员工的工作态度和行为提供了实用的见解。

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Introduction

Burnout leads to significant physical, psychological, and occupational consequences (Salvagioni et al., 2017). Research in organizational contexts has shown that employee burnout is significantly related to poor performance and high turnover (e.g., Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Rahim & Cosby, 2016; Willard-Grace et al., 2019). Given the post-COVID volatile job market, employees who suffer burnout tend to stay in their jobs but engage in quiet quitting. This phenomenon, where employees do not formally resign but limit their work effort to the minimum required, has become more prevalent since the COVID-19 pandemic (Galanis et al., 2023; Hamouche et al., 2023). Research suggests that COVID-19 made quiet quitting particularly relevant as employees reconsidered their relationship to work during lockdowns, realizing they “should work to live, not live to work” (Serenko, 2024, p. 33). While research on quiet quitting is increasing, it remains limited.

Quiet quitting has become increasingly common, with nearly half of U.S. employees, for instance, identified as quiet quitters (Harter, 2022). It is especially prevalent in the hospitality industry due to low wages and fast-paced working environments (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Kalargyrou et al., 2023; Wu & Wei, 2024). The hospitality industry is also known for long working hours, part-time jobs, and low job security, which can lead to quiet quitting (Prentice et al., 2013).

Employees in the hospitality industry commonly experience inter-role conflicts, due to atypical work hours (O'Neill & Follmer, 2020). These conflicts, particularly work-family conflicts (WFCs) and work-leisure conflicts (WLCs) (Kossek & Lee, 2017), negatively affect employees' well-being, leading to stress, depression, exhaustion, lower satisfaction with family, and burnout (Kocalevent et al., 2020; Kossek & Lee, 2017; O'Neill & Follmer, 2020). Research has shown that quiet quitting can serve as a defense mechanism to improve their well-being and prevent employees from burnout (Anand et al., 2024; Galanis et al., 2023). This suggests a potential indirect association between inter-role conflicts and quiet quitting through well-being and burnout. In other words, employees can use quiet quitting as a coping mechanism to protect their well-being and prevent further burnout or potentially recover from ongoing burnout.

Quiet quitting has several negative consequences for organizations. Quiet quitters are more likely to disengage from the workplace (Bérubé et al., 2022), which is problematic because disengaged employees are less productive, less profitable, and less healthy than engaged employees (Wollard, 2011). Furthermore, quiet quitting leads to lower quality of work, increased absenteeism, decreased job passion, reduced work commitment, and negatively affects team morale (Anand et al., 2024). Although the concept is nascent, research has identified several organizational factors contributing to quiet quitting, such as workplace bullying, perceived organizational injustice, poor leadership, excessive workload, and toxic work culture (Arar et al., 2023). Employees may also engage in quiet quitting due to burnout, lack of motivation, poor relationships with supervisors, and a desire to achieve better work-life balance.

Very few studies have examined the interconnections between inter-role conflicts, well-being, burnout, and quiet quitting behaviors, although the impact of role conflict on burnout and well-being has been extensively discussed in the relevant literature. This study sheds light on the unique aspects of these connections within the hospitality industry, specifically in terms of the influence of WFC and WLC, emotional well-being, and burnout

on quiet quitting. In particular, the study examines the connections between these factors among hospitality employees who experience shift work, limited benefits, limited opportunities to advance, and working environments that fail to promote a sense of belonging and connectivity among employees and the organization. This research can help companies understand the relationship between inter-role conflicts and well-being consequences, and the adoption of counterproductive workplace behaviors such as quiet quitting, thus highlighting the importance of ensuring work-life balance and promoting well-being practices among employees. The structure of this paper is as follows: literature review and hypotheses development, methodology, results, and a conclusion with discussion, and implications of this study.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Inter-role conflicts and well-being

Inter-role conflicts often refer to work-family conflict (WFC) and work-leisure conflict (WLC), which are domain-specific (Smoktunowicz et al., 2017). WFC refers to the imbalance between work and family life (Greenhaus et al., 2012, p. 65), and occurs when the demands of work and family roles conflict with each other (Byron, 2005). For instance, long working hours or business trips can make it difficult for an individual to fulfill daily family needs (Kossek & Lee, 2017). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identified four types of WFCs: a) time-based conflicts (e.g., coming home late), b) energy-based conflicts (e.g., coming home tired), c) strain-based conflicts (e.g., coming home cranky), and d) behavior-based conflicts (e.g., coming home in work mode). Additionally, WFC includes two types of interference: work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW). WIF occurs when work demands compromise family quality time, such as taking calls at home. FIW occurs when family demands interfere with work responsibilities, such as leaving work early to attend to family needs. Both types of interference can generate conflict between the two domains (Yucel & Borgmann, 2022). WLC refers to conflicts where work interferes with an employee's leisure needs (Tsaur & Yen, 2018). This type of conflict is especially common within the hospitality industry, where employees often face long workdays and atypical schedules, resulting in insufficient resources and energy for leisure activities (Tsaur & Yen, 2018).

Since both WFC and WLF are related to conflicts in key areas of people's lives, they are likely to contribute to individuals' well-being. Well-being encompasses several specific terms, such as psychological well-being, mental well-being, and subjective well-being (SWB) (Vada et al., 2020). SWB refers to emotional (positive and negative affect), evaluative, and cognitive well-being (overall life satisfaction) (Diener, 1984; Sakellariou, 2023), including three components: life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood, often referred to as happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Emotional well-being (EWB) opts for the purpose of this study.

EWB refers to an individual's capacity to generate positive thoughts and to cope with adversity and stress (Petcu et al., 2023). Larsen (2009) considered that EWB is a composite of positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) that represents an individual's emotional "status quo" at a given moment. Given the nature of emotions, a person's affect (i.e., their feelings and emotions) has a momentary characterization. PA entails emotions like

happiness, contentment, and joy (Sim & Diener, 2018), and includes outcomes such as confidence, optimism, energy, and prosocial behavior (Lyubomirsky & Dickerhoof, 2005). NA includes emotions like sadness, anger, and fear (Sim & Diener, 2018), with similarly negative outcomes of no confidence, pessimism, low energy, and antisocial behavior. Studies show that negative emotions are usually more durable than positive ones. Because negative information produces stronger affective responses, people tend to recall and value negative information over positive information (Larsen, 2009).

WFC and WLC experiences are likely to affect employees' emotional well-being. In general, the incompatibility of demands in both areas (work and life) increases the likelihood of facing resource depletion, weakened well-being (Dishon-Berkovits et al., 2024), diminished life satisfaction, and negative emotions (Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). Studies have also shown that when employees must prioritize work over personal life, their well-being suffers (Hamilton et al., 2021). Moreover, a longitudinal study showed that higher work-life imbalance causes a greater number of depressive symptoms (Lee et al., 2021).

Hospitality employees typically have long and irregular working hours and short holidays (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). Thus, employees who work longer hours have reduced time to spend on socialization, relaxation, and leisure, negatively affecting their well-being (Hamilton et al., 2021; Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). Moreover, hospitality employees often provide services to customers on their holidays, which can increase their frustration, emotional stress, and disengagement, especially when their own leisure time is not assured due to work-life imbalance (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). The lack of leisure also affects psychological well-being (Lin et al., 2014). Therefore, it is plausible that WFC and WLC both have significant connections to employees' well-being. In this regard, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Work-family conflict is significantly related to employees' well-being.

H2: Work-leisure conflict is significantly related to employees' well-being.

Inter-role conflicts and burnout

Research suggests that inter-role conflicts, such as WFC and WLC, can increase the risk of burnout. Burnout results from chronic work-related stress and includes three dimensions: a) energy exhaustion, b) increased mental distance from work, and c) negative feelings toward work. Burnout can be described as a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion (Abubakar et al., 2022); a chronic and ongoing reaction caused by a negative response to strain (Demerouti et al., 2002); and an erosion of a positive psychological state (Hakanen et al., 2011). Employees with burnout typically experience demotivation, conflict, and stress (Abubakar et al., 2022). Burnout develops over time and cannot be immediately resolved through quick changes, such as changing tasks or having a break (Demerouti et al., 2002).

WLC increases the chance of burnout, negatively impacts leisure participation, and reduces well-being (Lin et al., 2014). Similarly, WLC can lead to burnout, resulting in intentions to leave the workplace (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). In terms of WFC, a study by Dyrbye et al. (2014) found that WFCs are major contributors to burnout. Both WFC and FIW increase burnout rates, and this relationship is stronger for WFC. As Rupert et al. (2009) stated, "work

demands are related to increased work – family interference, which relates to a poorer sense of well-being and more burnout at work” (p. 55). Research has also shown that people experiencing WFC are more likely to suffer from burnout than those with better work-life balance (Shields & Chen, 2021). Thus, the following hypotheses are presented:

H3: WFC is positively and significantly related to burnout.

H4: WLC is positively and significantly related to burnout.

Well-being, burnout, and quiet quitting

Quiet quitting is a mind-set whereby employees decide to deliberately limit their efforts to only fulfilling the minimum requirements of their job, also known as silent disengagement (Johar et al., 2023). Focused only on essential work-related tasks, quiet quitters avoid extra duties and refrain from going “above and beyond” (Hamouche et al., 2023). Since quiet quitters exert only the minimum effort to perform their jobs, they refuse extra activities such as staying late, showing up early, or attending non-mandatory meetings. Quiet quitters are likely to show decreased productivity, miss deadlines, and avoid social interaction at work (Molchan & Clore, 2023). Quiet quitters also show low psychological commitment and re-prioritize their efforts according to their values, seeking more autonomy, independence, and flexibility to better balance their time between work and leisure. Boy and Sümerli (2023) identified key signs of quiet quitting, including saying no to tasks beyond the traditional job description, not working outside of duty periods, leaving work on time, and showing reluctance to work. By doing so, employees can maintain their employment status and prioritize their well-being and work-life balance. Thus, quiet quitting represents an alternative to resigning, and employees may choose to engage in it as a protective way to avoid the confrontation and difficult conversations that are usually involved in resignation processes (Molchan & Clore, 2023).

Employees may engage in quiet quitting due to the poor well-being they experience within their work environment. For example, some employees engage in quiet quitting due to anxiety, fatigue, burnout, and stress. Studies have also shown that employees engage in quiet quitting to establish a psychological distance from the workplace and prioritize and improve their well-being and mental health (Johar et al., 2023). Scholars have implied that quiet quitting is the quiet rebellion of a tired, overworked, overwhelmed, and burned-out workforce in need of more suitable work conditions that align with personal values and purpose (Molchan & Clore, 2023). In relation to well-being, employees may also engage in quiet quitting to avoid burnout. Due to high work stress and emotional exhaustion, employees may choose to avoid sources of work stress to protect their well-being (Hamouche et al., 2023). Emotional exhaustion will lead to disengagement and depersonalization, motivating quiet quitting attitudes (Boy & Sümerli, 2023). Quiet quitting protects employees from burnout (Aydin & Azizoğlu, 2022). Burnout experiences are one of the key motivators to engage in quiet quitting (Johar et al., 2023). Galanis et al. (2023) showed that the higher the levels of burnout, the higher the levels of quiet quitting. Therefore, the following hypotheses are offered:

H5: Employee well-being is significantly related to quiet quitting.

H6: Employee burnout is significantly and positively related to quiet quitting.

Building on the hypotheses that WFC and WLC are shown to significantly influence employee well-being and increase the chances of burnout, which in turn affects quiet quitting, it is plausible to hypothesize that these factors mediate the relationship between inter-role conflicts and quiet quitting. When employees are in a positive mood and have less burnout, they are less likely to engage in quiet quitting. Research (e.g., Fogaça & Junior, 2016; Salas-Vallina et al., 2020) has shown that happy employees tend to be more productive. The role-conflict-induced burnout leads to poor performance and productivity (Leitão et al., 2021; Luria et al., 2014). Quiet quitting may become a means of protecting their well-being and preventing burnout. Thus, the following hypotheses are presented:

H7. Employee well-being has a significant mediation effect on the relationship between a) WFC and quiet quitting, and b) WLC and quiet quitting.

H8: Employee burnout has a significant mediation effect on the relationship between a) WFC and quiet quitting, and b) WLC and quiet quitting.

The research model is shown in Figure 1.

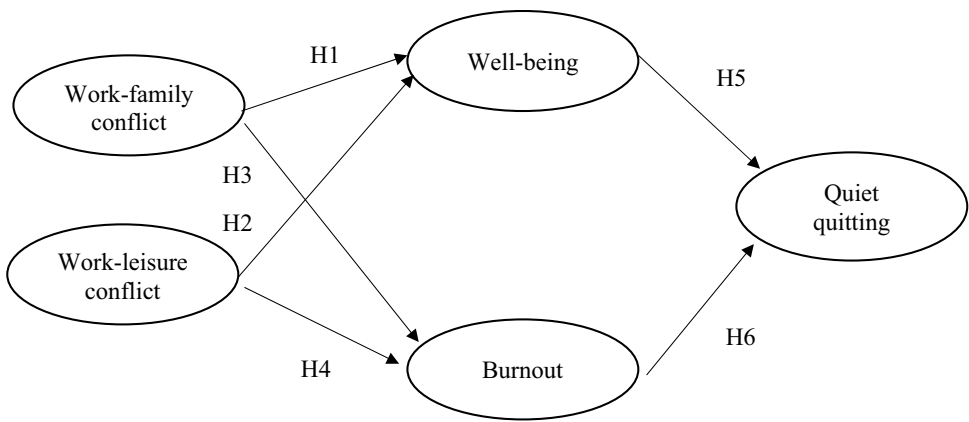


Figure 1. Research model.

Methodology

Participants and procedures

The study was conducted between August and October 2023 via an online questionnaire administered to employees in 4- and 5-star hotels in the Porto and North of Portugal region. This option was to ensure that the survey hotels had similar human resource practice. To obtain a representative sample, hospitality workers from diverse sections (e.g., reception, front office, management, spa, housekeeping) and positions were invited to participate, with the assistance and support of their line managers and human resource staff. Two screening

questions were included to ensure that respondents were above 18 years old and had completed their probationary period.

To reduce the non-completion rate, the survey was designed to prevent previewing and skipping questions following Baltar and Brunet's (2012) procedure. The survey was distributed through employee e-mails with the consent of their human resource managers. A specific consent question was presented to meet legal and ethical norms such as GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). After three months of data collection, 175 usable responses from 200 surveys were generated for data analysis. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1. The majority of respondents were female (57.1%). About 35.4% of respondents were from the age group of 26–35 years old. More than half of respondents had university degrees or higher (49.7% with a bachelor's degree and 6.8% with a post-graduate degree).

Measures

The measures for the study constructs were adapted from existing scales using a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 indicating strongly disagree to 5 indicating strongly agree). The questionnaire included three sections: 1) general and socio-demographic data to ascertain the profile of the respondents (gender, age, education level, marital status, children, working years in hospitality, current company star classification, working department/sector, working county, and residence county); and (2) items measuring WFC, WLC, emotional well-being, burnout, and quiet quitting; and (3) instructions explaining the research aims and objectives to the respondents. A pilot test commenced with a dozen hospitality workers to ensure the clarity of the survey questionnaire and reasonable response times. As a result of this testing, some items have been reworded for clarity.

The Work and Family Conflict Scale WAFCS was adapted from Haslam et al. (2015) due to its proven internal consistency, construct validity, concurrent validity, and predictive validity (Haslam et al., 2015). The Work-Leisure Conflict WLC scale was adapted from Anderson et al. (2002), Burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach, 1998), which assesses three dimensions of burnout: exhaustion (7 items), personal achievement (8 items), and depersonalization (7 items). The Quiet Quitting Scale (QQS) was adapted from Galanis et al. (2023), which has demonstrated good validity, excellent reliability, and robust psychometric properties.

Common method bias

As a cross-sectional survey was conducted in this study, common method bias (CMB) was assessed to minimize the sample errors, in accordance with the procedure suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, Harmon's single-factor analysis generated 12 factors, with the first factor accounting for 35.80% of the total variance. Second, a one-method factor procedure was performed by including all items and calculating the variance explained by the focal factor versus that explained by the method factor for each item. The results showed that the average variance explained by focal factors was 0.60, while the average variance explained by the method factor was 0.03, resulting in a ratio of 19:1. Therefore, CMB was unlikely to be a genuine issue in our data.

Table 1. Participants' demographic information.

| Category | Participants (%) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Gender | |
| Women | 57.1 |
| Men | 42.9 |
| Age | 32.75 (SD: 11.19) |
| Education | |
| Basic education (9th grade) | 1.7 |
| High school (12th grade) | 10.9 |
| Vocational course (9th grade) | 24.0 |
| Vocational course (12th grade) | 0.6 |
| Specialist | 0.6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 49.7 |
| Post-graduation | 1.1 |
| Master's degree | 5.7 |
| Marital status | |
| Married | 33.7 |
| Single | 65.1 |
| Divorced | 1.1 |
| Hotel Star | |
| 4 stars | 52.0 |
| 5 stars | 48.0 |
| Department | |
| Back Office | 1.14 |
| Business Intelligence | 1.14 |
| Commercial Department | 2.29 |
| Economat | 0.57 |
| Enotourism | 0.57 |
| Events | 4.57 |
| F&B | 20.57 |
| Financial Department | 0.571 |
| Housekeeping | 3.42 |
| Lodging | 0.57 |
| Maintenance | 2.28 |
| Manager | 17.14 |
| Managerial control | 0.57 |
| Museum | 0.57 |
| Reception/Front Office | 34.28 |
| Revenue | 0.57 |
| RH | 1.142 |
| Sales | 0.57 |
| Spa | 7.42 |
| Work years | 9.26 (SD: 9.55) |
| Tenure | 5.50 (SD: 7.20) |

Results

Measurement model

Confirmatory factor analyses were performed with *Mplus* (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) prior to testing the hypotheses. The model fit indices were acceptable ($\chi^2 = 3286.209$, $df = 1624$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.91; TLI = 0.90, RMSEA = .08). The results, as shown in Table 2, indicated that all loadings were above 0.60. Further, composite reliabilities (CRs) were above 0.70, and the average variance extracted (AVE) values were above 0.50, supporting convergent validity. Additionally, the squared root of AVEs for each construct was higher than the correlations between that construct and all others, supporting discriminant validity (Table 3). As burnout has three dimensions, the factor structure was assessed prior to hypothesis testing. Burnout as a second-order factor presents acceptable model fit indices: $\chi^2 = 373.11$, d.f. = 117; CFI = 0.91; TLI = 0.90. The path coefficients

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, loadings, reliabilities, and AVEs for the items.

| Item | Mean | SD | Loading | CR | AVE |
|--|------|------|---------|------|------|
| <i>Work-family conflict</i> | | | | 0.89 | 0.62 |
| My work prevents me spending sufficient quality time with my family. | 3.80 | 1.09 | 0.81 | | |
| There is no time left at the end of the day to do the things I'd like at home. | 3.49 | 1.23 | 0.70 | | |
| My family misses out because of my work commitments. | 3.79 | 1.08 | 0.81 | | |
| My work has a negative impact on my family life. | 2.89 | 1.35 | 0.86 | | |
| Working often makes me irritable or short tempered at home. | 2.83 | 1.35 | 0.73 | | |
| <i>Work-leisure conflict</i> | | | | 0.92 | 0.70 |
| I do not have enough time for leisure activities because of my job. | 3.57 | 1.19 | 0.89 | | |
| I do not have enough time to participate in leisure activities with my family/friends because of my job. | 3.65 | 1.22 | 0.84 | | |
| I do not have energy to participate in leisure activities because of my job. | 3.44 | 1.27 | 0.80 | | |
| I am not able to participate in leisure activities because of my job. | 3.22 | 1.30 | 0.88 | | |
| I have never been in a suitable frame of mind to participate in leisure activities because of my job. | 2.93 | 1.41 | 0.78 | | |
| <i>Burnout – Exhaustion</i> | | | | 0.94 | 0.67 |
| I feel emotional drained by my work. | 2.81 | 1.31 | 0.84 | | |
| Working with people all day long requires a great deal of effort. | 2.69 | 1.31 | 0.76 | | |
| I feel like my work is breaking me down. | 2.30 | 1.31 | 0.84 | | |
| I feel frustrated by my work. | 2.50 | 1.32 | 0.85 | | |
| I feel I work too hard at my job. | 3.01 | 1.35 | 0.80 | | |
| It stresses me too much to work in direct contact with people. | 2.74 | 1.29 | 0.76 | | |
| I feel like I'm at the end of my rope. | 2.25 | 1.30 | 0.88 | | |
| <i>Burnout – Personal achievement</i> | | | | 0.80 | 0.58 |
| I accomplish many worthwhile things in this job (reversed). | 4.15 | 1.07 | 0.72 | | |
| I feel full of energy (reversed). | 4.79 | 1.00 | 0.73 | | |
| I feel refreshed when I have been close to my patients/clients at work (reversed). | 4.61 | 1.03 | 0.82 | | |
| <i>Burnout – depersonalization</i> | | | | 0.88 | 0.52 |
| I feel I look after certain clients impersonally, as if they are objects. | 1.95 | 1.13 | 0.61 | | |
| I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day at work. | 2.74 | 1.23 | 0.78 | | |
| I have the impression that my patients/clients make me responsible for some of their problems | 2.34 | 1.31 | 0.62 | | |
| I am at the end of my patience at the end of my work day | 2.90 | 1.34 | 0.78 | | |
| I really don't care about what happens to some of my patients/clients | 2.11 | 1.16 | 0.70 | | |
| I have become more insensitive to people since I've been working | 2.18 | 1.29 | 0.79 | | |
| I'm afraid that this job is making me uncaring | 1.87 | 1.13 | 0.74 | | |
| <i>Positive affective well-being</i> | | | | 0.95 | 0.58 |
| Comfortable | 3.58 | 0.79 | 0.79 | | |
| Happy | 3.54 | 0.76 | 0.80 | | |
| Relaxed | 2.86 | 0.84 | 0.64 | | |
| At ease | 3.21 | 0.88 | 0.80 | | |
| Enthusiastic | 3.58 | 0.81 | 0.80 | | |
| Pleased | 3.46 | 0.86 | 0.83 | | |
| Cheerful | 3.34 | 0.93 | 0.86 | | |
| Motivated | 3.20 | 1.02 | 0.76 | | |
| Optimistic | 3.39 | 1.07 | 0.81 | | |
| Optimistic | 3.50 | 0.86 | 0.73 | | |
| Calm | 3.35 | 0.90 | 0.70 | | |
| Full of energy | 2.94 | 0.93 | 0.74 | | |
| Patient | 3.27 | 0.88 | 0.66 | | |
| Placid | 3.20 | 0.91 | 0.67 | | |
| <i>Negative affective well-being</i> | | | | 0.93 | 0.51 |
| Anxious | 3.09 | 0.95 | 0.69 | | |
| Depressed | 2.22 | 1.04 | 0.76 | | |
| Gloomy | 2.42 | 0.97 | 0.76 | | |
| Miserable | 1.66 | 0.88 | 0.71 | | |
| Tense | 2.97 | 0.98 | 0.71 | | |
| Bored | 2.56 | 0.99 | 0.72 | | |
| Tired | 3.52 | 0.93 | 0.70 | | |
| Sleepy | 2.98 | 1.03 | 0.66 | | |
| Sluggish | 2.74 | 1.12 | 0.74 | | |
| Aggressive | 1.74 | 0.95 | 0.63 | | |

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

| Item | Mean | SD | Loading | CR | AVE |
|---|------|------|---------|------|------|
| Fatigued | 2.83 | 1.12 | 0.75 | | |
| Angry | 2.48 | 0.96 | 0.73 | | |
| Annoyed | 2.38 | 1.02 | 0.72 | | |
| <i>Quiet quitting</i> | | | | 0.85 | 0.53 |
| I do the basic or minimum amount of work without going above and beyond. | 4.49 | 1.20 | 0.80 | | |
| If a colleague can do some of my work, then I let him/her do it. | 4.58 | 1.18 | 0.77 | | |
| I don't express opinions and ideas about my work because I am afraid that the manager assigns me more tasks. | 1.77 | 1.07 | 0.68 | | |
| I don't express opinions and ideas about my work because I think that working conditions are not going to change. | 2.30 | 1.40 | 0.73 | | |
| I feel inspired when I work (reversed). | 1.59 | 0.88 | 0.65 | | |

Table 3. Constructs' correlations and the squared root of AVEs (on diagonal).

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 WFC | 0.78 | | | | | | | |
| 2 WLC | 0.69** | 0.84 | | | | | | |
| 3 Positive affective well-being | -0.42** | -0.44** | 0.76 | | | | | |
| 4 Negative affective well-being | 0.62** | 0.57** | -0.55** | 0.71 | | | | |
| 5 Burnout – Exhaustion | 0.68** | 0.68** | -0.50** | 0.76** | 0.82 | | | |
| 6 Burnout – Personal achievement | 0.27** | 0.29** | -0.55** | 0.39** | 0.39** | 0.76 | | |
| 7 Burnout – depersonalization | 0.41** | 0.54** | -0.36** | 0.58** | 0.70** | 0.26** | 0.72 | |
| 8 Quiet quitting | 0.36** | 0.40** | 0.50** | 0.50** | 0.52** | 0.46** | 0.49** | 0.73 |

** $p < 0.01$.

between the indicators and their respective first-order factors were significant at the 0.05 level. These results support exhaustion, personal achievement, and depersonalization as dimensions of burnout.

Hypothesis testing

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted with *Mplus* to test the hypotheses. Demographic variables (gender, age, work years, and tenure) were used as control variables to reduce confounding effects, as the literature shows that these factors may influence the variables of interest (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). To minimize the confounding effects of personal factors, the respondents' demographic variables, such as age, gender, and tenure, functioned as control variables. The results show that age and gender had significant effects on well-being and burnout. Testing Hypothesis 1 and 2 revealed that both WFC ($\beta = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$, $\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$) and WLC ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$) were significantly related to positive and negative affective well-being. Therefore, both H1 and H2 were supported. However, testing of H3 and 4 showed that only WFC was positively related to emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), while WLC was related to both emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$) and depersonalization ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H3 and H4 were partially supported. Testing of H5 and H6 showed that positive well-being ($\beta = -0.28$, $p < 0.001$) had a negative effect on quiet quitting, while personal achievement ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$) and depersonalization ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$) had positive effects on quiet quitting. Surprisingly, negative well-being and emotional exhaustion did not have significant effects on quiet quitting. Therefore, H5 and H6 were partially supported. The results are summarized in

Table 4. The Hayes PROCESS SPSS macro enabled examination of the mediation roles of well-being and burnout in H7-H8. The results, shown in **Table 5**, support many of the mediating effects of positive affective well-being and burnout, partially supporting H7 and H8.

Post hoc analysis

Given that age and gender significantly influenced employee well-being, a post-hoc analysis assessed how the proposed relationships vary across different age and gender groups. Furthermore, a multi-group analysis divided the respondents into two age groups: below and above age 30 based on the median value of the age group, and two gender groups: male and female. The results showed that WFC had a negative effect on positive affective well-being for those between 18 and 30, while WLC had a negative effect for those above 30. Additionally, WLC did not have a significant effect on negative well-being for those above 30 but did have a positive effect on depersonalization. Positive well-being, personal achievement, and depersonalization had significant effects on quiet quitting for those between 18 and 30.

For gender differences, the effects of WFC and WLC on positive well-being were significant for females but not for males. The effect of WLC on negative well-being was

Table 4. Hypotheses testing.

| Variable | P-well-being | N-well-being | Exhaustion | Achievement | Depersonalization | Quiet quitting |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| WFC | −0.27** | 0.46*** | 0.42*** | 0.17 | 0.11 | −0.28** |
| WLC | −0.21* | 0.21* | 0.37*** | 0.12 | 0.42*** | 0.06 |
| | | | | | | Exhaustion 0.10 |
| | | | | | | Achievement 0.17* |
| | | | | | | Depersonalization 0.24** |
| Gender | 0.14* | −0.12 | −0.09 | 0.03 | −0.01 | Gender 0.000 |
| Age | 0.20 | −0.05 | −0.07 | −0.30* | −0.20 | Age −0.01 |
| Work years | −0.13 | −0.02 | 0.04 | −0.001 | 0.15 | work years −0.06 |
| Tenure | 0.03 | 0.02 | 0.07 | 0.01 | 0.01 | Tenure −0.07 |
| Marital status | −0.06 | 0.12 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.11 | Marital status −0.09 |
| R ² | 0.27 | 0.46 | 0.56 | 0.18 | 0.32 | R ² 0.45 |

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5. Mediating effects.

| Independent variable | Mediator | Dependent variable | Indirect effect | 95% confidence interval | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------|
| | | | | Lower | Upper |
| WFC | Positive affective well-being | Quiet quitting | 0.09 | 0.03 | 0.17 |
| | Negative affective well-being | | 0.04 | −0.06 | 0.15 |
| | Exhaustion | | 0.05 | −0.07 | 0.17 |
| | Personal achievement | | 0.04 | 0.004 | 0.09 |
| | Depersonalization | | 0.07 | 0.02 | 0.15 |
| WLC | Positive affective well-being | Quiet quitting | 0.08 | 0.03 | 0.15 |
| | Negative affective well-being | | 0.03 | −0.05 | 0.12 |
| | Exhaustion | | 0.04 | −0.06 | 0.14 |
| | Personal achievement | | 0.04 | 0.005 | 0.09 |
| | Depersonalization | | 0.08 | 0.02 | 0.16 |

not significant for males. Only WFC had a significant effect on personal achievement for females. The detailed results are presented in [Tables 6 and 7](#).

Discussion

Employees' quiet quitting has increasingly become a prominent issue in the work setting. The lack of work-life balance, combined with high job demands, results in employee burnout and poor well-being. Rather than leaving their jobs, employees engage in quiet quitting. This study proposes and examines the relationships between inter-role conflict, including work-life and work-leisure conflicts, emotional well-being, burnout, and quiet quitting, specifically within the hospitality industry. The results confirmed most of the proposed relationships ([Table 8](#)). A detailed discussion of the findings is as follows.

The impact of inter-role conflicts on employee well-being and burnout (H1, 2, 3, and 4)

The study shows that both WFC and WLC are significantly related to positive and negative well-being, as in H1 and 2. The effect on negative well-being is larger in the case of WFC. This result is plausible, as most hospitality employees struggle with work-family balance due to long, irregular working hours, often including weekends and public holidays. These results align with the literature, which suggests that WLC endangers overall well-being, affecting psychological safety and well-being (Hamilton et al., 2021), increasing stress and burnout, and having harmful effects on life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Kossek & Lee, 2017). This is particularly true for hospitality workers as they deal with long, atypical working hours, resulting in reduced time to spend on socialization and leisure, which harms their overall well-being (Hamilton et al., 2021; Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). Reduced leisure time generates a sense of fatigue and emotional stress (Tsaour & Yen, 2018).

The study in testing H3 and 4 also shows that inner-role conflicts are significantly related to emotional exhaustion (one dimension of burnout) but not to personal achievement. Only WLC is significantly related to depersonalization. These findings are plausible to some degree: conflict can trigger negative emotions, eventually leading to emotional exhaustion. Lack of leisure can lead to depersonalization. The incompatibility of demands in both areas (work and life) increases the likelihood of facing resource depletion, one of the causes of burnout (Dishon-Berkovits et al., 2024), which can severely reduce the quality of life and have negative effects on family and work life. An elevated level of burnout results in difficulties fulfilling family duties, affecting relationships with family and friends. Previous studies have suggested that work-life conflicts contribute to burnout (Dyrbye et al., 2014; Shields & Chen, 2021). Mete et al. (2014) found that work-family conflicts and family-work conflicts both contribute to burnout. The non-significant relationship between role conflict and personal achievement can be construed as that work-life imbalance triggers emotional reactions as shown in H1 and 2, and partially H3 and 4, but not task efficiency or career achievement. Personal achievement is more associated with environmental and motivational factors, as shown in Zhang et al. (2021).

Table 6. The moderating effect of age.

| | P-well-being | | | N-well-being | | | Exhaustion | | | Achievement | | | Depersonalization | | | Quiet quitting | | |
|----------------|--------------|-------|--|--------------|---------|--|------------|--------|--|-------------|-------|--|-------------------|-------|--|----------------|-------|--|
| | 18-30 | >30 | | 18-30 | >30 | | 18-30 | >30 | | 18-30 | >30 | | 18-30 | >30 | | 18-30 | >30 | |
| WFC | -0.31* | -0.24 | | 0.44*** | 0.52*** | | 0.47*** | 0.37** | | 0.08 | 0.31* | | 0.17 | 0.06 | | -0.36** | -0.24 | |
| WLC | -0.18 | -0.23 | | 0.30* | 0.08 | | 0.41*** | 0.32* | | 0.15 | 0.05 | | 0.46*** | 0.36* | | 0.20 | -0.06 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | -0.04 | 0.29 | |
| Gender | 0.12 | 0.14 | | -0.01 | -0.23* | | -0.03 | -0.17 | | 0.07 | 0.001 | | 0.05 | -0.02 | | 0.18 | 0.10 | |
| Work years | -0.11 | -0.15 | | -0.001 | 0.05 | | -0.08 | 0.11 | | 0.01 | 0.04 | | 0.17 | 0.13 | | 0.28* | 0.29* | |
| tenure | -0.17 | 0.06 | | 0.15 | 0.02 | | 0.12 | 0.06 | | 0.00 | 0.03 | | 0.04 | 0.04 | | -0.06 | 0.004 | |
| Marital status | 0.03 | -0.16 | | -0.04 | 0.24** | | 0.03 | 0.06 | | -0.09 | 0.09 | | -0.03 | 0.21 | | -0.34** | -0.01 | |
| R ² | 0.24 | 0.36 | | 0.46 | 0.53 | | 0.66 | 0.49 | | 0.05 | 0.24 | | 0.39 | 0.28 | | 0.04 | -0.18 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | -0.01 | -0.16 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.48 | 0.48 | |

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 7. The moderating effect of gender.

| | <i>p</i> - well-being | | <i>N</i> - well-being | | Exhaustion | | Achievement | | Depersonalization | | Quiet quitting | |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|------------|---------|-------------|--------|-------------------|---------|----------------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| WFC | -0.21 | -0.37** | 0.52*** | 0.44*** | 0.45*** | 0.40*** | 0.05 | 0.26* | 0.10 | 0.11 | -0.40** | -0.24* |
| WLC | -0.17 | -0.26* | 0.15 | 0.27* | 0.35*** | 0.40*** | 0.06 | 0.18 | 0.41** | 0.44*** | 0.26 | 0.02 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | -0.003 | 0.01 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | 0.06 | 0.21* |
| | | | | | | | | | | | 0.14 | 0.36** |
| Age | 0.33 | 0.10 | -0.12 | 0.02 | -0.19 | -0.02 | -0.57* | -0.18 | -0.11 | -0.24* | -0.32 | 0.10 |
| Work years | -0.28 | 0.003 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 0.11 | -0.03 | 0.23 | -0.24 | 0.09 | 0.15 | 0.05 | -0.05 |
| Tenure | 0.01 | 0.05 | 0.09 | -0.11 | 0.04 | 0.12 | 0.01 | 0.13 | -0.06 | 0.08 | -0.08 | -0.08 |
| Marital status | -0.12 | 0.04 | 0.23* | 0.002 | 0.03 | 0.04 | -0.10 | 0.05 | 0.07 | 0.16 | -0.32** | -0.02 |
| R ² | 0.20 | 0.38 | 0.48 | 0.45 | 0.56 | 0.56 | 0.14 | 0.29 | 0.27 | 0.39 | 0.54 | 0.43 |

p* < 0.05, *p* < 0.01, ****p* < 0.001.

Table 8. Summaries of hypotheses testing.

| Hypotheses | Supported? |
|---|--|
| H1: WFC is significantly related to employees' well-being. | Yes |
| H2: WLC is significantly related to employees' well-being. | Yes |
| H3: WFC is positively and significantly related to burnout. | Partial (in exhaustion) |
| H4: WLC is positively and significantly related to burnout. | Partial (in exhaustion and depersonalization) |
| H5: Employee well-being is significantly related to quiet quitting. | Partial (in positive well-being) |
| H6: Employee burnout is positively and significantly related to quiet quitting. | Partial (in achievement and depersonalization) |
| H7: Employee well-being has a significant mediation effect on the relationship between a) WFC and quiet quitting, and b) WLC and quiet quitting. | Partial (in positive well-being) |
| H8: Employee burnout has a significant mediation effect on the relationship between a) WFC and quiet quitting, and b) WLC and quiet quitting. | Partial (in achievement and depersonalization) |

The mediating roles of well-being and burnout on quiet quitting

The results show that both well-being (H7) and burnout (H8) were significantly related to quiet quitting. Employees experiencing negative affective well-being, marked by stress and predominance of negative affect, seek improved well-being and mental health through quiet quitting. Negative emotional well-being may instigate withdrawal behaviors as a protective mechanism to avoid resource loss or harm. Conversely, when there is a predominance of positive affect, individuals show a great capacity for building skills, gathering resources, and fighting for their desired outcomes to overcome adversity and thrive.

Similarly, as with work-life balance deprivation, burnout prevalence is identified as an antecedent of quiet quitting. Cynicism and depersonalization behaviors are common among quiet quitters, as they reveal a detached attitude and cold behavior. Emotional exhaustion can lead to disengagement and depersonalization, motivating quiet quitting. Burnout fosters withdrawal behaviors, known as “inner resignation” (Maslach & Banks, 2017). Employees who use quiet quitting to protect their well-being may choose to deliberately disconnect from the job role to improve their well-being, avoid burnout, or because they are already suffering from burnout.

The establishment of the mediation relationships indicates that quiet quitting is related to employee well-being and burnout but is indirectly affected by work-life and work-leisure conflicts. Employees who experience these inter-role conflicts may become emotionally exhausted and have poor well-being. Instead of leaving their jobs, they quietly quit.

The roles of age and gender

The study's post-hoc analysis shows that age and gender significantly affect well-being and burnout. Younger employees' positive well-being is more affected by WFC, whereas older employees tend to feel more impact of WLC. A majority of the older group are married with children, making it plausible that they struggle to find leisure time for themselves. Inter-role conflicts tend to induce emotional exhaustion and negative effects for both age groups. However, WLC has a substantial effect on depersonalization. These findings indicate that hospitality employees endeavor to fulfill family and professional duties but struggle to find leisure time for themselves, affecting their well-being and leading to burnout. Nonetheless, the younger group is more prone to quietly quit.

In terms of gender, females tend to be more affected by inter-role conflicts and quietly quit more frequently. This finding is consistent with prior studies (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Kinnunen et al., 2004). Women experience more WFC than men because they often invest more effort in domestic work and parenting. WFC is more detrimental to women's well-being and plays a larger role in diminishing women's well-being compared to men's, consistent with Lai et al. (2020). This study also shows that both males and females suffer emotional exhaustion from these conflicts. Prior research indicates that females are more prone to suffer burnout resulting from their role conflicts (e.g., Rubino et al., 2013). The finding of this study provides a fresh perspective on gender theory.

Implications

Work-life imbalance has increasingly become a phenomenon affecting employee well-being and job behaviors. High job demands result in heightened stress, which endangers employees' well-being, particularly in the hospitality sector (see Prentice et al., 2013). Instead of leaving their jobs, these employees stay but quietly quit, which can be detrimental to the business. The study draws on this observation and examines how role conflicts affect employee well-being, burnout, and quiet quitting. This investigation has a range of theoretical contributions and practical implications.

Theoretical implications

Whilst most research has examined the impact of role conflicts on employee burnout and well-being, this study extends the link to include quiet quitting as the alternative outcome. This study provides insights into the antecedents of employees' quiet quitting. While inter-role conflicts and employee well-being are prevalent in the relevant literature, prior research has primarily focused on their influence on employee commitment and turnover intention. This study is one of the first to examine their relationships with quiet quitting, contributing to organizational behavior literature by providing insights into the precursors of quiet quitting.

The study offers nuanced findings in well-being research. Role conflicts have different effects on positive and negative well-being. The findings indicate that conflicts have more substantial effects on negative well-being, suggesting that minimizing role conflicts may not generate positive well-being. However, increasing role conflicts is more likely to result in negative well-being. To capture a comprehensive view of individual well-being, both dimensions should be considered in future investigations.

The study contributes to burnout research by examining its mediating effect on the relationship between role conflicts and quiet quitting. Novel findings reveal that not all three dimensions of burnout have significant effects on the propensity for quiet quitting. Although employees tend to be emotionally exhausted due to their role conflicts, only personal achievement and depersonalization lead to quiet quitting. Prior research (e.g., Green et al., 2013; Houkes et al., 2001; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998) on burnout tend to focus on emotional exhaustion to explain employee performance and behaviors such as turnover intention. This finding of a non-significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and quiet quitting suggests that researchers adopt a holistic view of burnout to fully understand employee job attitudes and behaviors.

The significant effects exerted by gender and age indicate that demographic characteristics may play an important role in well-being and burnout research. Gender stereotypes need mitigation, as the study shows that both males and females can be affected by role conflicts and suffer emotional exhaustion. Similarly, both younger and older employees exhibit similar patterns of well-being and burnout. Future research must delve deeper into the influence of different demographics on the quiet quitting phenomenon.

Practical implications

The study findings highlight the peculiarities of hospitality workers regarding role conflicts, emotional well-being, and burnout. Several risk factors characterize the hospitality sector: shift work, poor benefits, limited opportunities, and working environments that hinder a sense of belonging and connection between employees and the organization. This weak bond facilitates counterproductive work behaviors like quiet quitting. This study provides insights into how lack of work-life balance and role conflicts affect emotional well-being, burnout, and quiet quitting.

The finding of a significant relationship between positive affective well-being and quiet quitting indicates that management should undertake appropriate measures to introduce measures to improve employee well-being. Given that WFC and WLC are negatively related to positive well-being, managers should provide support to mitigate family and leisure conflict. The non-significant relationship between negative affective well-being and quiet quitting is rather novel. Intuitively, negative well-being would lead to quiet quitting. Consistently, emotional exhaustion is not related to quiet quitting. Nonetheless, personal achievement and depersonalization are. These findings provide management guidance on where to minimize employee quiet quitting. Rather than focusing on their emotions, identifying means to facilitate their personal achievement and minimize their sense of depersonalization would be conducive to reducing quiet quitting. Research (e.g., Zhang et al., 2021) has shown that social, environmental, and personal motivational factors account for individual achievements. Management should provide a positive environment for employee learning and growth.

Through these results, companies can better understand the relationship between role conflicts, well-being consequences, and counterproductive behaviors like quiet quitting. Promoting work-life balance and well-being practices for employees is an essential takeaway of this research. Furthermore, this study raises awareness of HRM peculiarities in hospitality. Employers are guided to invest in practices fostering better work-life balance and well-being, compensating employees for the industry's demands.

Companies should adopt supportive measures to understand employees' needs, satisfaction drivers, and their relationship with well-being and productivity outcomes. Improving internal communications, providing psychological support, and promoting well-being techniques (such as mindfulness, yoga, meditation, and emotional intelligence training) can help to prevent endangered well-being. Endangered well-being can lead to decreased productivity and counterproductive work behaviors. These measures foster a stronger bond and a higher sense of belonging within the organization. Creating a family-friendly culture based on work-life balance practices, combined with effective internal marketing and a sustainable positive work

environment, has been proven to bring several benefits to individuals' general well-being. These practices positively impact employees' job roles and work-related outcomes.

Limitations and future study

The study acknowledges several limitations. First, the data were collected in one country, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Including different industries and investigating cultural differences could provide deeper insights into whether the adoption of quiet quitting varies by country and socio-economic context. Second, the sample size was small due to the difficulty of reaching the target respondents. A larger sample would enable more robust statistical analysis and more comprehensive findings. Future research should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the reliability and validity of the results. Third, the cross-sectional design is not ideal for establishing causality. This design can hinder the ability to predict the relationships between the study variables. Conducting longitudinal studies would help validate the findings and provide a clearer understanding of how these relationships evolve over time. Finally, including other personal (e.g., personality, emotional intelligence) and organizational factors (e.g., leadership, organizational culture) as antecedents and mediators in the proposed model may provide more insightful information on employee quiet quitting. Future research should endeavor to expand the current model.

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