



Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Management [ADE], with  
International Concentration (E-4), ICADE

# The “Quiet-Quitting” Epidemic: A sociological study on the dissatisfactory relationships between employees and managers

Final Bachelor's Thesis

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## **Abstract**

Pop Culture's newest word, "Quiet Quitting" has received an increasing amount of attention from news outlets and social media in the past 6 months. However, very little is known about the long-term effects of quiet quitting for employees and businesses alike. Because employees are primary stakeholders who directly contribute to the success of the company, understanding employee reactions to quiet quitting may help answer lingering questions concerning the root causes behind its epidemic-like spread as well as illuminate some of the responsibilities managers and senior executives hold in halting it. To accomplish this, this study will provide a brief history of work culture in the US, detail the economical benefits of employee satisfaction, and highlight the importance of hiring and training the right manager. The study will also utilize a self-administered questionnaire that assesses participants' beliefs on different satisfiers/motivators and management behaviors. Lastly, the study will identify distinct and concrete methods managers and companies can follow to correctly train the next generation and prevent widespread employee dissatisfaction. All with the intention that Quiet Quitting will become a thing of the past.

## **Keywords**

Quiet quitting, employee satisfaction/dissatisfaction, managers, workplace culture, meritocracy, work-to-rule, karoshi, "lying flat"

“Only when a situation becomes especially egregious does the world hear the truth about what actually transpires in the workplace? Hearing what’s taken place, people complain and vent their outrage. But seldom do I hear anyone saying they were surprised.” (Culbert, 2017 - Good people, bad managers)

## Introduction

Determined to rebuild Japan’s economy after World War II, former prime minister Shigeru Yoshida turned to major corporations to incentivize workers into devoting more time to their work (Canales, 2019). His plan evidently worked, and Japan became, and is still currently, the third-largest economy in the world. However, an unforeseen side effect was burdensome levels of stress and exhaustion that continue to plague Japanese white-collar employees. Nevertheless, the people were urged to “sacrifice for the country” to express their loyalty so that the country could advance (Canales, 2019). This generation is known as the generation that “owns,” and their nature of devotion and self-sacrifice was passed on to the next generation (Canales, 2019).



Source: Jaszczuk, “HIGH FASHION”

A 2016 report revealed that more than 20% of people in a survey of 10,000 Japanese workers said they worked at least 80 hours of overtime a month (Taya, 2021). A statistic that becomes extremely evident once night falls. Between 2008-2010, photographer Pawel Jaszczuk would cycle around Tokyo at night, photographing drunken businessmen, also known as “salarymen” in Japanese culture. He compiled the images into a book, “High Fashion,” published in 2018 . After putting in a long workday, it is customary for some salarymen in Japan to drink and socialize with their

colleagues. However, Jazczuk said that in Japan's deferential corporate culture, many workers could not turn down drinks when offered by higher-ups (Taya, 2021). After too many drinks, the salarymen will miss the last train home and have no choice but to sleep on the



Source: Jazczuk, "HIGH FASHION"

streets of the city's central district, Shibuya. Shibuya Meltdown refers to the multitude of exhausted men passed out on its streets (Taya, 2021). Jazczuk's photographs aim to capture the contrast between their sharp and often expensive suits against their undignified situations. He had never seen them wake up, but he heard that they simply get up and walk back to the office to start the new day (Jazczuk, 2018).



Source: Jazczuk, "HIGH FASHION"

He believed "These men are the victims of modern life in Japan" and are a product of their work culture (Jazczuk, 2018).

The more and more he shot, the more common the problem seemed to be. "The pictures show people who are used, who are overworked, stressed, and exhausted. Do we really want to end up like this?" (Jazczuk, 2018).

Surprisingly, Shibuya Meltdown is the lighter side of Japan's working culture. The culture of overwork can be so intense in Japan that salarymen have passed from strokes and heart failure due to overworking themselves. This phenomenon is called

“karoshi,” which translates to “death by overwork” (Widarahesty, 2020). In July 2013, a 31-year-old journalist named Miwa Sado passed from heart failure after logging 159 hours of overtime in one month (Widarahesty, 2020). In October 2017, her death was determined to be karoshi. When employees’ deaths are classified as karoshi, Japanese corporations are forced to pay a fine. After giving her metaphorical and physical life to the company, Sado’s employer only had to pay \$5,000 in fines (Widarahesty, 2020).

In 2019, approximately 1,949 work-related deaths and suicide attempts were recorded, all due to overwork (Widarahesty, 2020).

The Japanese government has taken some measures to increase the work-life balance. One of them is a Premium Friday plan launched in 2017 that would allow workers to leave at 3 pm on the last Friday of each month (Widarahesty, 2020). Nevertheless, it has seen little success. Many employees still feel guilty if they leave their workplace on time, especially if their boss is still in the office. A 28-year-old worker at a well-known automotive company in Japan said in an interview that “a Japanese first life priority is work” (Widarahesty, 2020). He admitted that the legacy of the previous generations that emphasized work was admirable, but it was challenging to emulate (Widarahesty, 2020). As he could not voice his opinions, he adhered to the inherited pattern of work culture, which is supported and ingrained into the Japanese community.

In March 2021, a survey of 13 first-year analysts and junior bankers at Goldman Sachs revealed “inhumane working conditions” (Ghosh, 2022). The survey reported very long work hours, pressures to meet deadlines, and abusive behavior from superiors. According to the survey, first-year analysts at Goldman worked an average of 95 hours weekly and slept only 5 hours each night (Ghosh, 2022). All respondents said they faced unrealistic deadlines, and a majority complained they had been shunned or ignored at meetings (Ghosh, 2022). A majority also claimed they had been the victims of workplace abuse, including shouting and swearing, and considered seeking counseling or therapy (Ghosh, 2022).

The survey's free-response part painted a grim picture of work at Goldman Sachs, stating, "There was a

On average, first year analysts are working over 95 hours per week and sleeping 5 hours per night	
Question	Mean
How many hours have you worked this week (ending 2.13.21)?	105 hours
How many hours have you worked per week on average since January?	98 hours
How many hours do you sleep on average per night?	5 hours
On average, what time do you sleep?	3am

Source: Guardian, "Group of Junior Bankers at Goldman Sachs claim 'inhumane' work conditions"

point where I was not eating, showering or doing anything else other than working from morning until after midnight," "The sleep deprivation, the treatment by senior bankers, the mental and physical stress ... I've been through foster care, and this is arguably worse" and even going so far as to say "being unemployed is less frightening to me than what my body might succumb to if I keep up this lifestyle" (Ghosh, 2022).

The response to this survey was mixed, with some depicting the conditions as a right of passage, stating that "young employees need to work long hours and take on a demanding workload for the chance to pull down millions of dollars as upper management eventually" (Levin, 2021). Despite the conditions revealed in the survey, the first-year analysts emphasized that they were not surprised by the expectation of long hours, but as one respondent stated, "I didn't come into this job expecting a 9 am-5 pm, but I also didn't expect consistent 9 am-5 am's either" (Levin, 2021).

According to a survey by [efinancialcareers.com](https://www.efinancialcareers.com), investment banking jobs were by far the most stressful within the banking and finance industry, primarily due to "the difficulty of the work coupled

with the sheer amount of it, particularly for analysts” (Tuttle & Butcher, 2018). In July 2013, Moritz moved to London for a summer internship with Bank of America Merrill Lynch that would pay him



## Select Analyst Quotes

INVESTMENT BANKING |  
DIVISION |

"The sleep deprivation, the treatment by senior bankers, the mental and physical stress... *I've been through foster care and this is arguably worse*"

"I can't sleep anymore because my *anxiety levels are through the roof*"

"My body *physically hurts all the time* and *mentally I'm in a really dark place*"

"Being unemployed is less frightening to me *than what my body might succumb to* if I keep up this lifestyle"

"There was a point where I was *not eating, showering or doing anything else* other than working from morning until after midnight"

"I didn't come into this job expecting a 9am-5pm's, but I also didn't expect *consistent 9am-5am's* either"

"What is not ok to me is 110-120 hours over the course of a week! The math is simple, that leaves 4 hours a day for eating, sleeping, showering, bathroom and general transition time. This is beyond the level of 'hard-working', *this is inhumane / abuse*"

Source: Guardian, "Group of Junior Bankers at Goldman Sachs claim 'inhumane' work conditions"

£6,000 (Day, 2013). It was a highly competitive role that only offered two positions in the investment banking division. Moritz had fought 1,500 other candidates to get the internship (Day, 2013). The hours were brutal. Working through the night was almost a rite of passage. In August, Moritz was nearing the end of his seven-week placement. The bank planned on offering him a £45,000 a year full-time position as an analyst once the internship ended (Day, 2013). However, Moritz was unaware of this and was keen to impress his supervisors on his last week. To do so, he worked three nights in a row. Over 72 hours, he got a taxi from the office to his flat at around 5 am each morning to shower briefly and return to his desk (Day, 2013). This exhausting ritual is known in banking circles as the “magic roundabout” because the taxi driver sometimes waits outside while an intern washes, puts on a new shirt, and re-emerges to work again (Day, 2013). On the fourth day, Moritz did not come to work. At work that day, his colleagues first

thought Moritz might have slept in and were willing to cut him some slack. As the day wore on, there was a growing sense of unease. In the evening, a fellow intern went to check on him. His body was discovered at around 8:30 pm (Day, 2013). Moritz had passed away from an epileptic seizure and was sprawled across the shower floor, the water still running. He was 21.

As evidenced by the grim and troubling cases mentioned previously in Japan and the US, it has become increasingly apparent that there is a systematic flaw in the 21st-century work culture. Resulting in overworked and burnt-out employees and, in the worst case, their abuse and death. Coupled with a post-pandemic world and fears of a never-ending cycle of recession and inflation, working adults and the job market are in a severe crisis. The US is reportedly amid a Great Resignation, with job dissatisfaction at an all-time high.

Source: Twitter



Source: Twitter

The US Department of Labor issued data in July 2022 confirming that although the job market continues to be full of ample job opportunities, there are still high levels of voluntary resignations (Collins, 2022). Even after two years since the pandemic's start, millions of workers leave their jobs each month. To further these statistics, a report released by Gallup, State of the Global Workplace: 2022, found that along with dissatisfaction, workers are experiencing

staggering rates of both disengagement and unhappiness. 60% of workers worldwide reported being

emotionally detached at work, and 19% as miserable (Gallup, 2023). Only 33% reported feeling engaged (Gallup, 2023). These results are even lower than 2020's during the height of the pandemic. In the US, 50% of workers reported feeling stressed at their jobs daily (Gallup, 2023). The most telling part of the report was that even if an employer were to change an employee's work schedule or location to increase their happiness, worker disengagement and stress levels actually rose with remote work and a reduced work week (Gallup, 2023).

With so much dissatisfaction and unhappiness in the global workforce, it is unsurprising that 50% of today's workforce has chosen to limit their commitment to their jobs (Collins, 2022). This has led to the manifestation and popularity of pop culture's newest word, "Quiet-Quitting." An informal term used to describe an employee who disengages from work and does just enough to meet the basic requirements of one's job description (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). Quiet quitting was first formalized by Mark Bolger (Buscaglia, 2022) to describe employees' minimal commitment to their work and is a new name for a behavior that has been around for quite some time. The act manifests as an employee's unwillingness to be an extra-mile performer (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). A silent protester's attempt to maintain personal work-life balance, health, and well-being in a high-pressure work environment (Harter, 2022). As opposed to quitting their jobs, quiet quitters reject the idea that their lives should be dominated by work. The quiet quitting movement can also be explained as a growing percentage of employees signaling to companies that the workplace environment is no longer healthy and needs to change (Ellis & Yang, 2022)

The idea of putting in just enough effort to not get fired without going above and beyond has a long history in the labor movement. "Work-to-rule" is a popular, effective, and legal method of industrial action (Lord, 2022). Unions would use work-to-rule to disrupt a company's operations by slowing operations during trade disputes. In 1938, the French railways were nationalized, and strikes

were forbidden (Lord, 2022). However, railway workers knew that French law required engineers to ensure the safety of any bridge the train passes (Lord, 2022). If any doubt remained after a personal examination, the engineer had to consult other train crew members (Lord, 2022). Work-to-rule is not just about minimizing workload; it can also be used to frustrate operations. In this case, workers called for every bridge to be inspected, consulting every crew, leading to none of the trains running on time (Lord, 2022).

In May 2021, the UK university college union took “action short of a strike” (University of Leicester UCU, 2021). Staff still carried out their jobs but interrupted the normal work operations through eight forms of action: 1) boycott of marking and assessing. 2) Not covering for absent or unavailable colleagues. 3) Not using the university’s online systems on a Friday. 4) Not rescheduling lectures, classes, appointments, meetings, or other tasks canceled due to industrial action. 5) Not engaging in meetings longer than 50 minutes. 6) Not sending emails before 9:00 am and after 5:00 pm. 7) Not volunteering ideas or additional tasks. 8) Not undertaking work beyond that contract (University of Leicester UCU, 2021). This demonstrated to the Board that the university could not function without staff routinely going above and beyond what their jobs require.

In China, many youths have decided to forgo working entirely. China’s harsh working environment consists of high costs of living, long working hours, and rising housing prices. In July 2022, the youth unemployment rate had reached approximately 20% (Yikilmaz, 2022). Adding economic hardships, increasing global competition, and a growing population to the list of problems has resulted in groups of youth who have lost their desire to work in this system. “Tang Ping” or “Lying flat” emerged as an advanced movement against a more hardworking and production-oriented society understanding in China (Yikilmaz, 2022). The following posts offer insight into this movement. An internet content creator, Wu Qiang, stated, “Chinese youngsters, or in general the working population,

have experienced huge social and political changes in the past nine years, [leading them to realize] that there is neither the possibility for initiating a revolution nor the freedom of expression. Under such a condition, lying down has become the only option” (Li, 2022). Another creator, Luo Huazhong, stated, “I haven’t been working for two years, I have just been hanging around, and I don’t see anything wrong with this. Pressures keep popping up...But we don’t have to abide by these (norms). I can live like Diogenes and sleep inside a wooden bucket, enjoying the sunshine. I can live like Heraclitus in a cave, thinking about the “logos.” Since this land has never had a school of thought that upholds human subjectivity, I can develop one on my own. Lying down is my movement. Only through lying flat can humans become the measure of all things” (Li, 2022). This situation in China has emerged as the silent scream of individuals against the expectations of the government.

All around the world, the concept of quiet quitting has been practiced by workers fighting to salve burnout, set healthy boundaries, build a sense of control, and help people prioritize what matters. However, quiet quitting is not a long-term solution. A systematic flaw in today’s business culture cannot be solved solely through the silent protests of millions of employees. The only way to enact profound change is to change the system that endorses and supports this treatment of workers. The first step is to discover and address the root cause of this epidemic. The second step is to listen to the affected populations and understand what they believe is needed to solve this issue. The third step is to create an actionable plan that uses the best training, communication, and guidance methods for Generation Z and employees everywhere. The fourth step is a call to action that requires every employee in the organizational supply chain to work together so that this epidemic may never occur again. Only then can one heal the systematic fault.

## Literature Review

### *Addressing the Quiet-Quitting Problem*

“Businesses looking to make an external social contribution should, paradoxically, look inside: improving workers’ job satisfaction could be the single most important thing they do” (Allas & Schaninger, 2020). The rise of Employee Dissatisfaction and Quiet Quitting in the workplace is not an ignorable epidemic. It has cost companies \$7.8 trillion in lost productivity, equal to 11% of global GDP (Collins, 2022). In comparison, business units with engaged workers had 23% higher profits and 147% higher earnings per share than those with dissatisfied workers (Collins, 2022). In a clever piece of research, academics studied how different weather patterns in different locations at different times affected employee productivity and sales. Results showed that call-center workers’ weekly sales increased by 25 percent when their happiness increased by one point on a scale of one to five (Bellet et al., 2019). The study also found that workers reported being less happy on days with inclement weather (Bellet et al., 2019). This allowed researchers to determine that the happiness of call-center workers caused the sales jump and not the reverse. Similarly, a large-scale meta-analysis found that business units with top-quartile employee engagement achieved operating-profit margins of one to four percentage points higher than those in the bottom quartile (Harter, Hayes, & Schmidt, 2003).

Regarding employee happiness, bosses and supervisors play a more prominent role than one might perceive. When employees were asked what their No.1 cause of dissatisfaction was in the workplace, 75 percent of survey participants said that their immediate boss was the most stressful aspect of their job (Allas & Schaninger, 2020). The crux of the quiet-quitting epidemic lies in endorsing intrinsic factors - how they are managed, coached, and treated. Teams with satisfied employees see significantly less turnover, absenteeism, and higher employee and customer loyalty rates (Collins, 2022).

This helps them achieve more significant economies of experience but also reduces the cost of training and human resource issues that arise in a conflicted setting (EL Nabawy Saleh Dewydar, 2015). While disengaged workers are the most likely to change employers, it takes more than a 20% pay raise to lure most employees away from a quality manager that leaves them engaged and satisfied (Collins, 2022). In this way, well-being at work is critical to both employees and managers.

Multiple scholars have supported this claim by studying the connection between workplace happiness, workplace engagement, career satisfaction, and profitability with management behaviors, particularly associated with the degree to which managers demonstrate concern for employees at an individual level. Recent research has shown that managers with high Emotional Intelligence (EI) produce positive work attitudes and altruistic behaviors (Carmeli, 2003) and that their employees enjoy higher job satisfaction and performance (Wong & Law, 2002). Additionally, managers with high EI can better facilitate the performance of their employees by managing employees' emotions and fostering more creativity, resilience, and confidence that enables employees to act (Fredrickson, 2003).

Despite countless scholars and researchers supporting the claim that Managers hold a great deal of influence over the satisfaction of their employees, why are there such high rates of quiet-quitting, burnout, and layoffs? Why is there less push for better management training? At what point did the goals of companies and industries change to allow this epidemic to spread?

### *Contextualization of the 1960s-1980s*

In 1968, American psychologist Frederick Irving Herzberg developed the two-factor theory (Herzberg, 2023). Upon publishing his theory in Harvard Business Review, it quickly became the most requested article (Herzberg, 2023). Herzberg's theory was created to understand the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for an employee and their workplace. After countless interviews with

employees about what made them “feel good and bad” about their jobs, Herzberg developed his theory. He concluded that two sets of factors influence motivation levels by either enhancing or hindering it: Hygiene/Affective and Motivators/Satisfiers (Herzberg, 1959). Hygiene factors are extrinsic to the work itself and cause dissatisfaction in the workplace. According to Herzberg, these factors do not motivate employees, but when they are missing or inadequate, they can cause serious dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). Examples included compensation, job security, and quality of leadership. Motivators or Satisfiers are intrinsic to the work itself and increase employee satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). They encourage employees to stay and grow in a role. Examples include achievement, opportunities for advancement, and responsibility. Ultimately, he believed, “The key to motivation is not to give people what they want, but to help them identify and achieve their goals” (Herzberg, 1959)

In 1969, Edwin Locke wrote one of organizational psychology’s most accepted job satisfaction definitions. He stated that job satisfaction could be defined as the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values (Locke, 1969). Upon analyzing several of the keywords “emotional state,” “appraisal,” “achievement,” and “values,” it can be derived from this definition that “job satisfaction” is a highly subjective matter (Locke, 1969). Ultimately, the definition states that job satisfaction is an attitude toward work. This attitude could be broken down into three main components: cognition, affection, and behavior that seek to please the logical (working conditions, development opportunities) and emotional (feelings, happiness) parts of the employee’s brain (Locke, 1969). More importantly, Locke wanted to stress that “job satisfaction is not just a luxury or a nice-to-have, but rather a fundamental aspect of human well-being and flourishing” (Locke, 1969). Managers and supervisors can create a committed and loyal workforce by understanding an organization’s most vital resource. Company success starts and ends with Employee satisfaction.

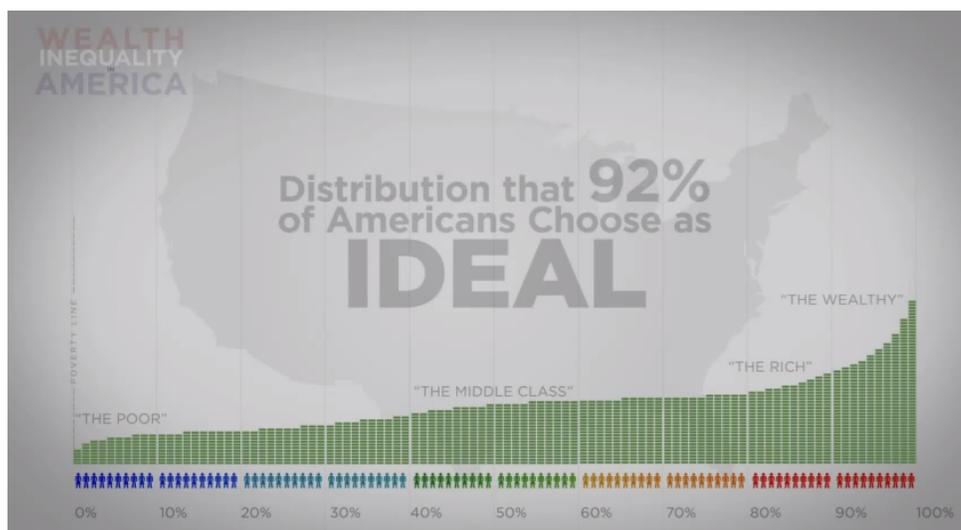
Also, in 1969, Smith, Kendall, and Hulin developed one of the most widely used and well-validated questionnaires designed to measure job satisfaction. The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) consists of 72 items assessing five facets of job satisfaction: work itself, pay, promotions, supervision, and coworkers (Castanheira, 2014). Each facet is assessed using 15 items, along with six additional items that assess overall satisfaction with the job. The JDI is typically administered as a self-report questionnaire, with respondents rating their level of satisfaction with each item on a five-point scale ranging from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied” (Castanheira, 2014). The responses are then scored and aggregated to provide an overall score for each facet of job satisfaction and an overall score for job satisfaction as a whole. He believed that the benefit of a self-report questionnaire was that “one thing that does emerge from the work satisfaction literature is that the worker’s evaluation of the work situation is more likely to depend on how he appraises the situation than on the situation itself” (Castanheira, 2014). His work was so reliable and valid across a wide range of settings and populations that the JDI remains one of the most widely used indicators of job satisfaction.

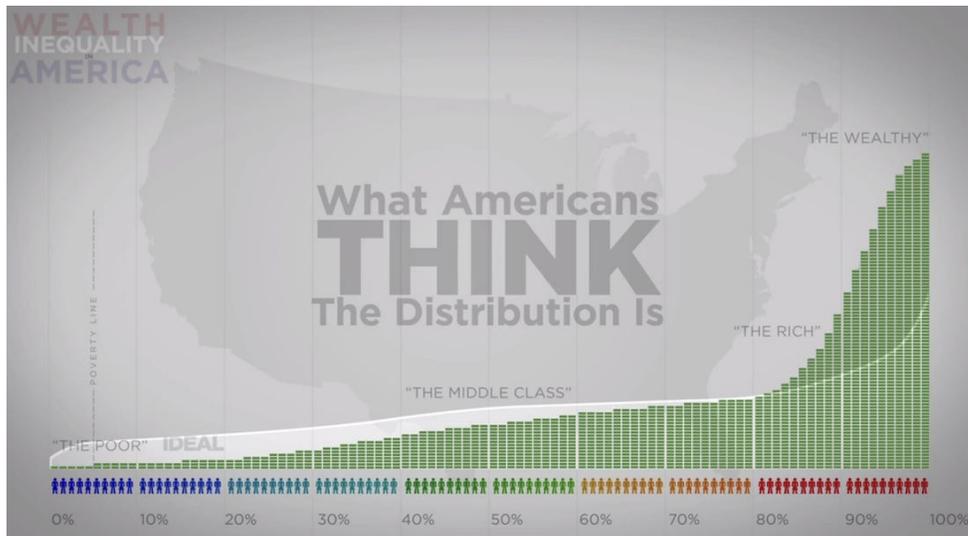
These three pieces of literature are amongst the most studied, researched, and meaningful measures of job satisfaction in organizational research. They have become the foundation and reasoning behind the different managerial leadership styles and prime examples of how managers should treat their employees. However, despite the countless hours these researchers dedicated to the discovery of employee happiness and job satisfaction, and even going as far as to say it is “not a luxury” but a necessity for a healthy and productive workforce, why are countries seeing reports of the highest levels of job dissatisfaction in decades? They fiercely believed that satisfied employees were the foundation and backbone of a profitable and successful organization, and without them, the organization would fail. Where did it all go wrong? When did managers forget about their most important capital? The answer first lies in the rise and fall of Meritocracy.

### *Rise and Fall of Meritocracy*

The term Meritocracy was first coined by British sociologist and politician Michael Dunlop Young in his book “The Rise of The Meritocracy” in 1958. He defined Meritocracy as a social system or governance model in which individuals are selected, promoted, and rewarded based on their demonstrated abilities, skills, and accomplishments rather than their social class or wealth (Young, 2011). In a meritocracy, people are judged on their merits and talents, and those who perform well are given opportunities to advance and succeed (Young, 2011). Meritocracy provides a fair and efficient way to identify and reward individuals most capable and qualified to perform specific roles or tasks. In the 1970s and 80s in the United States, this term, coupled with pre-existing cultural ideals like the “American Dream,” a strong manufacturing industry, a healthy middle class, well-paying jobs that required a high school diploma or less, and a period of economic growth and stability, created the perfect environment for the Baby Boomer generation. Meritocracy had instilled the idea that there was a direct correlation between an employee’s efforts and the opportunity for reward (Young, 2011). For many years, it allowed Baby Boomers to experience unprecedented growth in career success and upward social mobility. This social progress trend, unfortunately, did not produce the same results for later generations.

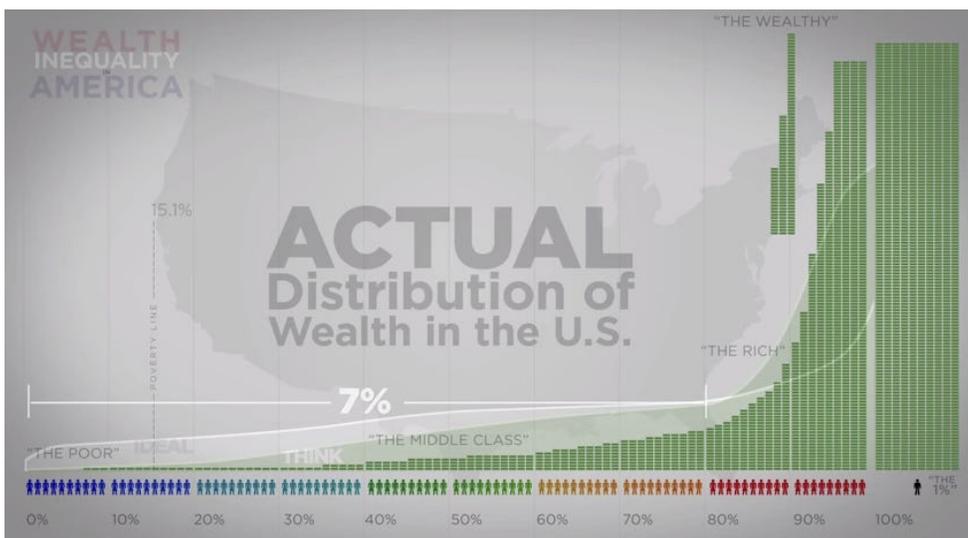
Source: Business Insider, “80% of Americans own an unbelievably small portion of the country's wealth”





Source: Business Insider, "80% of Americans own an unbelievably small portion of the country's wealth"

Taking on a macroeconomic perspective, the rates of absolute income mobility, the fraction of children who earn more than their parents, have fallen from approximately 90% for children born in 1940 to 50% for children born in 1980, with the most significant declines for families in the middle class (Chetty et al., 2017). Most of the decline in absolute mobility is driven by the growing unequal distribution of economic growth in recent decades rather than the slowdown in GDP growth rates (Chetty et al., 2017). Coincidentally, the majority of Americans severely underestimate the gap between



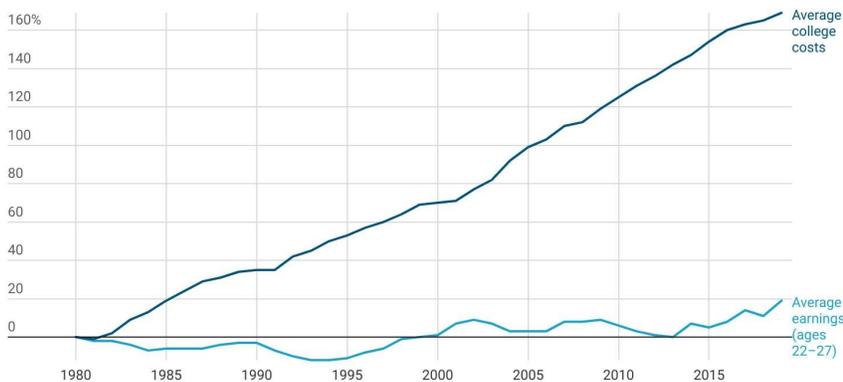
Source: Business Insider, "80% of Americans own an unbelievably small portion of the country's wealth"

the rich and the rest of the population. In a 2011 study, Harvard business professor Mike Norton and economist Dan Ariely asked over 5,000 Americans how they thought wealth was distributed in the US and the ideal distribution (Elkins, 2015). Most participants were far from understanding the extent of income inequality. In a shocking twist, the chart revealed that the bottom 80% of Americans have just 7% of the nation's wealth, while the top 1% owns 40% of the country's wealth (Elkins, 2015). A statistic supported by a report from the Economic Policy Institute showed that from the late 1970s to 2010, the top 1% of earners saw their incomes grow significantly faster than the rest of the population (Elkins, 2015). Meanwhile, wage growth for most American workers stagnated over the same period, with median hourly wages declining slightly (Chetty et al., 2017).

Additionally, suppose one considers other environmental factors, such as the switch from a manufacturing-dominated industry to a more service-based and technologically advanced industry, which requires more education and skills to succeed, and the exponentially rising college tuition rates (Hess, 2021). In that case, it is not surprising that social mobility has stagnated and inequality has

### Percent change in college costs and earnings for young workers

Since 1980, costs of college have steadily increased, while the earnings of adults ages 22 through 27 have increased much more slowly.



Note: The college costs used in this analysis include average undergraduate tuition and fees, room, and board at all institutions in constant 2018–19 dollars for academic years 1979–80 through 2018–19. Average earnings are inflation-adjusted to constant 2019 dollars.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), March Supplement, 1980–2019, and National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, Table 330.10, 2019. • Created with Datawrapper

Source: CNBC, “College costs have increased by 169% since 1980—but pay for young workers is up by just 19%: Georgetown report”

grown. Nevertheless, the fall of the meritocracy was not solely due to economic misfortunes but rather the failure of managers and supervisors. These people, whose sole responsibility was to foster growth and uplift their employees, failed the next generation of workers.

In the mid- to late-twentieth century,

many scholars had encouraged large corporations in the US to adopt a stakeholder management model through their work on employee satisfaction (Alcaniz et al., 2020). One that emphasized the importance of considering the interests of multiple stakeholders, including employees, customers, and local communities, in addition to shareholders. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, this model shifted toward a shareholder-centric model, prioritizing maximizing shareholder value (Alcaniz et al., 2020). A shift that was influenced by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which lowered the top corporate tax rate from 46% to 34% (Gordon & MacKie-Mason, 1990). The deregulatory agenda sought to reduce barriers to entry for businesses, increase competition, and reduce government intervention in the economy (Gordon & MacKie-Mason, 1990). It was also influenced by the ideas of economists such as Milton Friedman, who argued that the only social responsibility of a corporation is to increase its profits. Making it more profitable for companies to focus on short-term goals and shareholder returns over long-term development and sustainability. Which undoubtedly puts pressure on managers to prioritize short-term gains over the well-being and development of their teams.

“A toxic workplace culture can turn good managers into bad ones. It can encourage them to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their values and beliefs” (Culbert, 2017). The idea that people who take on managerial roles are not inherently toxic is a critical point in this thesis. The reason for contextualizing the 1960s - 1980s and 1990s-2023 is to understand how specific macroeconomic environments, governmental regulations and legislations, and generational gaps can change the morals and ethics of companies and managers over time. Changing them from companies who value all stakeholders in their operations and managers who valued enrichment and teamwork to cogs in a wheel designed only to perform a singular task: increasing profits for their company. This change has drastically affected employee satisfaction, resulting in high burnout, turnover, and, most importantly, quiet quitting. It is ultimately up to employers to acknowledge this change and find ways to attract new

talent and retain their current employees by working towards a culture of job satisfaction – and that begins with better management.

### *Fallacies of Corporate Culture*

The pandemic, globalization, technological developments, changes in the nature of work, and increasing expectations manifested the hustle culture. This changing business culture necessitates the employee to be constantly productive, efficient, and dynamic (Yikilmaz, 2022). Employees at many companies feel compelled by supervisory pressure to push themselves to meet extra-mile work expectations (Klotz & Bolino, 2022). Typically requiring them to take on projects beyond their job descriptions that demand working long hours and causing them to miss important social or family gatherings (Klotz & Bolino, 2022). However, the continuity of these expectations and the fact that the performance exhibited was not valued enough by the enterprises caused unemployment and future anxiety among the employees. Many employers have discounted the importance of individual employee feelings but have routinely expected their workers to be thankful for any opportunity given to them and to put in extra effort to succeed (Boogard, 2020). The message then becomes increasingly clear, “Profits are most important; employees are considered to be a means rather than a valued end; and the ‘new employment contract’ is that employees are largely on their own” (Karnes, 2009). Paving the way for employees to exhibit quiet quitting behavior.

An article by The Guardian in 2013 described the “macho culture” of investment banking, including long hours and a “face time” mentality that values time spent in the office over productivity. The article examines the culture of investment banking and the factors contributing to its reputation for long hours, high stress, and macho mentality. It notes that bankers are expected to work long hours to demonstrate their commitment to the bank and their clients, often at the expense of their personal lives.

In many companies, the idea that workers must arrive early and stay late to demonstrate their commitment to their employers and careers is an organizational expectation (Sturges & Guest, 2006). The industry becomes a weeding ground; if bankers do not break and continue working until they move up, they become addicted to the work and enjoy the fast-paced, high-pressure environment (Sturges & Guest, 2006). Organizational psychologist Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic supports this statement by suggesting that the employees who can withstand the harsh work environment and become leaders achieve their positions by being self-centered, overconfident, narcissistic, arrogant, manipulative, and risk-prone (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2023). They come out on the other side in a position of power and often feel a sense of entitlement to put others through the same ordeal. They depict the harsh conditions as “a right of passage” or a way of “demonstrating loyalty” and commitment to the company (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2023). The self-centered approach thus gets perpetuated by the hiring practices and performance evaluations of many organizations.

The investment banking industry is one of many industries with these organizational expectations. Supervisors and managers in an alarming number of companies lack empathy and compassion toward their employees – often ignoring signs of employee suffering and treating employees as commodities rather than as valued partners (Worline & Dutton, 2017). The loss of the importance of emotional intelligence in hiring managers creates a scarcity of role models to learn from within most organizations. Employees who work in “command and control” organizations frequently cite their companies’ toxic top-down organizational culture as a reason why they are dissatisfied with their leaders (Matos, O’Neill, & Lei, 2018). Employees in such organizations complain of systemic harassment, micromanagement, and abusive behavior and quickly become disengaged from their work (Matos, O’Neill, & Lei, 2018). Research shows that as these apathetic managers gain power, they cannot judge a situation accurately, particularly concerning how others perceive their actions (Useem, 2022). They also

lose some of their ability to empathize with people in positions of less relative power (Useem, 2022). To accomplish this, organizations can follow the experiments of psychologist Michael Kraus. In his experiments, Kraus managed to “re-anchor” powerful people’s sense of their own power by forcing them to rank themselves against people they perceive as even more powerful, such as billionaires and political leaders (Kraus & Torrez, 2020).

The power of corporate culture is often underestimated. It is the fundamental cause of how an organization operates and why management is disengaged from its employees. Corporate culture shapes behavior. It unconsciously tells employees what is and is not acceptable, and it often rewards behaviors that are unhealthy, self-serving, and unproductive (Culbert, 2017). Organizations that demonstrate care and compassion can create a consistent and rewarding experience for both managers and employees. The evidence suggests that those employees reciprocate with higher personal commitment (Hamill, 2019). The abundance of literature that defines a healthy workplace highlights two aspects that managers directly control: healthy work culture - providing workers with the context, guidance, tools, and autonomy to minimize frustration and make their jobs meaningful; and psychological safety, which is the absence of interpersonal fear as a driver of employee behavior (Nikolova & Cnossen, 2022). In such a culture of gratitude, appreciation, and compassion, employees will feel motivated and engaged, quality relationships will be strengthened and developed, and prosocial behavior that ultimately goes beyond the company’s walls will be the norm (Worline & Dutton, 2017).

### *Right Person for the Job*

Two of the most well-known and notable psychological experiments, the Milgram Shock Experiment and the Stanford Prison Experiment, became famous after studying the effects of power and authority on people. The Milgram shock experiment was a psychological study by Stanley Milgram in

1961 (Useem, 2022). The study was designed to investigate the willingness of participants to obey an authority figure, even when that authority figure instructed them to perform actions that they believed to be harmful or unethical (Useem, 2022). In the experiment, participants were asked to administer increasingly severe electric shocks to a “learner” who was actually an associate of the experimenter. The “teacher,” who was the actual participant, was instructed by the experimenter to continue administering the shocks, even when the “learner” expressed pain and distress. Many of the “teachers” in the study, despite hearing the cries of pain from the “learner” and feeling morally conflicted, continued to administer electric shocks (Useem, 2022). The Milgram shock experiment was meant to be a cautionary tale about the dangers of blindly following authority figures. It underscores the importance of ethical decision-making and the need to question authority when it conflicts with one’s values and morals. Modern-Day application of this experiment highlights the importance of ethical leadership and the potential risks of blindly following superiors’ orders. It challenges managers to speak up and question decisions that conflict with their values or could negatively affect others.

The second experiment, The Stanford Prison Experiment, was a psychological study conducted by Stanford University professor Philip Zimbardo in 1971. The study was designed to investigate the psychological effects of power and authority on individuals in a simulated prison environment (Brady & Logsdon, 1988). The experiment randomly assigned 24 male college students to either prisoner or guard. The prisoners were confined to a mock prison in the basement of the Stanford psychology building. At the same time, the guards were given no specific training and instructed to maintain order in the prison. The experiment was initially intended to last for two weeks but was terminated after only six days due to the abusive and degrading behavior of the guards toward the prisoners (Brady & Logsdon, 1988). The guards became increasingly authoritarian and abusive, while the prisoners began to experience severe emotional distress, and some even had to be removed from the study (Brady & Logsdon, 1988). Despite

criticisms from the participants and other researchers, the study revealed how individuals in positions of authority, such as the guards, could exhibit abusive and authoritarian behavior when given unchecked power. Modern-Day application of this experiment highlights the importance of proper training and development, accountability, and selecting the right person for the job. Managers primarily interested in gaining and maintaining power may be more interested in their own success than the success of their team or the organization.

The extreme realities of the two psychological experiments may not be a one-to-one replication of modern-day managerial susceptibility to power and authority. However, it demonstrates the need to invest in the training, hiring, and retaining of managers. When left unchecked, they can cause drastic effects on the company's work environment and employee satisfaction. The only defense against this problem is a good offense.

The first offensive step is eliminating the misconception that investing in employees and managers wastes the company's money. A company's most important decision is to whom they name the manager. Yet, Gallup finds that companies fail to choose the candidate with the right talent for the job 82% of the time (Beck & Harter, 2014). When Gallup asked US managers why they believed they were hired for their current role, they commonly cited their success in a previous non-managerial role or tenure in their company or field (Beck & Harter, 2014). Considering how most businesses make promotion decisions, this is not surprising. People who get ahead tend to be current high performers or appear most leader-like (Allas & Schaninger, 2020). They are more likely to be promoted when they exhibit self-confidence, build extensive networks, and quickly navigate organizational politics (Allas & Schaninger, 2020). However, these reasons do not consider whether the candidate has the right talent to thrive in the role. Research suggests that the most productive individuals typically have high technical skills and personal drive (Leighton, 2016). However, only 30 percent of them have the unique

combination of talent to become leaders that prioritize and support employee satisfaction (Leighton, 2016). In general, only one in 10 people possess the talent to manage (Beck & Harter, 2014). This 10%, when put in managerial roles, naturally engages team members and retains top performers, and sustains a high productivity culture. When companies get these decisions wrong, it is difficult to course correct. However, when businesses get it right, they gain a significant competitive advantage.

Senior leaders and executives can create change in this department by clearly articulating the workplace and corporate benefits while educating managers of their pivotal roles. Shaking up the corporate culture by redefining managers' roles and expectations, and emphasizing their essential role in fostering an enhanced workplace experience (Collins, 2022). They should also provide the training, tools, resources, and development managers need to meet those expectations (Basford & Schaninger, 2016). Additionally, senior leaders should create evaluation mechanisms to measure managers' ability to meet these expectations and indicate which areas need more coaching (Basford & Schaninger, 2016). By providing managers with support structures, burnout does not cascade through an organization. Executives who believe that their workforce is worthy of their long-term investment are willing to compensate them fairly, provide them with plenty of benefits that keep them safe and secure and will invest in their training and development.

Suppose employers want to address the root causes behind why quiet quitters are dissatisfied. In that case, they need to reexamine their commitment to understanding all workers, especially Generation Z and Millennial employees, and their motivation to work. Managers must ensure employees understand how their work contributes to the organization's larger purpose (Harter, 2022). Whenever people are engaged in meaningful work and are treated with dignity and respect, there is an exponentially higher probability that those employees will look forward to coming to work every day and will be more likely to go the extra mile in pursuit of organization objectives (Beer, 2009). Nonetheless, until organizations

are willing to change, the bleak prognosis is that quiet quitting will continue, and the potential of many of today's businesses will go unrealized.

## **Methodology**

Many works and articles discussed in the literature review indicated potentially positive or negative impacts on employee satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the workplace based on management behaviors. The data collection and thesis mission is to prove or dispute any correlation between management behaviors and Employee Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction among Generation Z and Millennial workers. The data collection consisted of a quantitative and qualitative survey to study numerical data and personal testimonies. The survey was broken down into 5 dataset sections. The first dataset revealed the demographic characteristics of the survey participants and contextualized the responses based on age, nationality, and work history for the following sections. The second dataset also revealed the demographic characteristics of the survey participants and contextualized the responses based on whether the recipients had quit a position due to being a manager, been a manager themselves, or had ever quiet-quit.

The third dataset questioned the participants' general view on workplace relationships to reveal trends in the preference of positive management relationships over other factors (pay, promotions, environment) to improve overall employee satisfaction. To accomplish this, each question started with "I feel most satisfied when..." and ended with a different satisfaction, such as pay, workplace culture, or meaningful work. Participants were then asked to answer the questions on a "strongly agree" scale to "strongly disagree." The fourth dataset questioned the participants' personal experiences with managers to reveal trends in the number of participants who either had positive or negative experiences with their

managers and how often the experiences occurred. To accomplish this, each question started with “How often does your manager...” and ended with positive or negative actions such as good communication, open feedback, or selfishness. Participants were then asked to answer the questions based on a scale of “always” to “never.”

The fifth and final dataset was an optional qualitative section that allowed the participants to cite, in their own words, the exact relationships they had with their managers and how they would like those relationships to be improved. This dataset was meant to provide more details and further contextualize the participant’s earlier responses in datasets three and four. These datasets attempted to prove/dispute the influence of management behaviors on employee satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

#### *Data collection, storage, cleaning, and analysis*

The five datasets all used the same method of collection - an online survey. The survey was created using the platform google forms, an extension of the google drive family. This chosen data collection method provided numerous benefits for the participants due to its familiarity among Generation Z and millennials and its user-friendly platform, interface, and navigation tools. Google Forms also has the benefit of quick online distribution and accessibility. The survey was self-administered and had three languages (English, Spanish, and French) options, which were pre-tested by fluent speakers to ensure translations were correct.

The chosen target population for the survey was a mix of mostly Generation Z students and workers due to the lack of research concerning this latest generation’s work motivations and workplace satisfaction sources. Most research concerning employee satisfaction has used Millennials or Generation X workers in their studies. Without any focus or research on Generation Z, it will be difficult for future managers and businesses to remain competitive or retain a loyal workforce. Additionally, due to the

upcoming generation change, we are seeing in the workforce, it has become increasingly important to study how to make these new workers motivated and satisfied and how managers play a role in accomplishing this task. Additionally, to fully contextualize Generation Z's responses, Millennials, and Generation X were invited to participate in the study and provide comparable data to analyze and differentiate.

May 2023 was used to distribute the survey and accumulate responses. A month was plenty of time to amass a baseline amount of responses that created significant results. This was also when students were near the end of or in the middle of obtaining summer internships - a key component of our research. The survey was distributed to several universities, including Universidad Pontificia Comillas, ESADE, Elon University, Wake Forest University, and Northeastern University. Participants were also more than encouraged to share the survey with friends in other universities. These specific universities are known for their high international student populations. They would allow the survey to gather as many diverse (nationality, culture, language, etc.) responses as possible to create a more globalized perspective.

After closing the survey at the end of May, the final response tally was 100. It was a reasonably straightforward process concerning cleaning and analyzing the data. Every response on a Google Form is automatically added to a corresponding Google Sheet, with the first row organized by the order of the questions and the first column organized by the order in which the responses were submitted. The first step in cleaning the data was eliminating either incomplete or unnecessary data, such as rows with only one or two answers submitted and the date and time of each response. The second step was separating the data into seven individual tables according to the seven demographic questions in the first and second datasets. The third step was labeling the tables using their respective demographic qualifier: "Age," "Nationality," "Gender," "Previous Work Location," "Previous Poor Management Relationship,"

and “Previous Management Position.” Once sorted, datasets three and four responses were inserted into the statistical program “Jamovi” for further analysis. Once inserted into Jamovi, the first step was labeling each variable using the question and demographic qualifier to differentiate them. The second step was assigning the measure type of variables in datasets three and four as “Ordinal” and ranking the response levels from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” and “always” to “never.” Once the data was assigned correctly and categorized, the third step was launching a Chi-Squared test of association for Independent Samples with a Contingency Table, using the demographics in datasets one and two as the independent variables and the questions in datasets three and four as dependent variables. All possible combinations of independent and dependent variables were analyzed.

For the fifth dataset, data cleaning and analyzing was more difficult due to its qualitative nature. The first step was separating the results of the first question into two individual tables according to the nature of their employee-manager relationship (positive or negative). The second step used the “=COUNTIF” function to find the frequency of specific keywords used to describe the relationships “Attentive, Motivational, Narcissistic, Toxic, etc.” The second question followed a similar procedure. The first step was creating a table labeled “Improving Manager Behavior.” The second step used the “=COUNTIF” function to find the frequency of specific keywords used to describe the type of actions, “more communication, transparency, etc.,” participants would like their managers to employ to improve their relationship and the workplace environment.

### *Data visualization*

As it applies to Data Visualization, the statistical program Jamovi was used to visualize the data. It is important to note that only data with significant values and differences were visualized. Due to the non-numerical data, the data had to be measured by frequency. As mentioned earlier, the frequency test

was a Chi-Squared association test for Independent Samples with a Contingency Table. Allowing for the most statistically significant analysis of the association between the independent and dependent variables while providing easy-to-read and simplified results. The test works by comparing the observed frequencies to the expected frequencies. The expected frequencies are automated values based on the null hypothesis (H0) that there is no relationship between the two categorical variables. The results are statistically insignificant if there is a slight difference between the observed and expected frequencies. However, if there is a significant difference, one can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis (H1). The alternative hypothesis concludes that there is a relationship between the two categorical variables. Knowing one variable's value helps predict the other variable's value.

In this analysis, the threshold between a small and large difference will be based on a confidence interval of 95% and a p-value of .05. The best visualization for the Chi-Squared test was a stacked bar plot whose x-axis represented the independent variable, whose y-axis measured the responses of the dependent variable based on a percentage of the total. The null hypothesis (H0) and alternative hypothesis (H1) changed depending on the variables used but stayed consistent in proving and disproving a relationship between the two.

## **Results:**

The present study aimed to investigate employees' perceptions regarding the influence of management behaviors on overall employee satisfaction/dissatisfaction. By conducting a survey and utilizing a chi-square test for association, the objective was to identify any significant associations between different generations, different genders, poor management relationships, and quiet-quitting and each employee's perceptions of their job satisfaction levels.

### Results I: Generational Differences

Several chi-square tests for association were drawn to test the significant associations between the participant's generation and their perceptions of different satisfiers and management behaviors on their overall job satisfaction. The null hypothesis (H0) was that the participant's age was independent of their assessment of different satisfiers in dataset three and management behaviors in dataset four. The alternative hypothesis (H1) was that the participant's age was not independent of their assessment of different satisfiers in dataset three and management behaviors in dataset four. Knowing the respondent's ages will help predict their response.

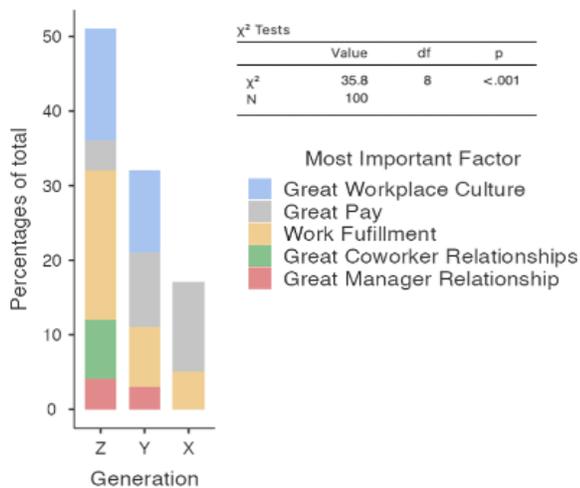


Figure 1: Which Factor is more important to your overall job satisfaction?

Upon looking at Figure 1, one can see that Generation Z and Y's perceptions of the most important job satisfiers were the most diversified, with a vast majority of Generation Z's responses being "Great Workplace Culture" and "Work Fulfillment." Generation Z was also the only generation to include "great coworker relationships" as an essential source of satisfaction. Generation Y and X valued "Great Pay" the most. The first chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between the

participant’s age and the factor that is most important to their overall satisfaction,  $\chi^2(df, N) = 35.8 (8, 100)$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . This indicated that the null hypothesis (H0) could be rejected for the alternative hypothesis (H1).

As it applies to the perceived frequency of positive actions by the participant’s managers, Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 demonstrated that Generation Z and Y had the most diversified results. Generation Z’s responses were the most positive, with higher overall percentages of “always,” “often,” and “sometimes.” Additionally, none of the Generation Z participants cited “never” as their response. In contrast, Generation Y was the only generation to choose “never” as a response, with nearly 50% of their participants choosing “never” and “rarely” in Figures 4 and 5. Generation X also had positive results that, except for Figure 3, did not include any response below “sometimes.” Thus, the second chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between the participant’s age and the perceived frequency of positive actions by the participant’s managers, Figure 2:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 30.6 (8, 100)$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Figure 3:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 19.8 (8, 100)$ ,  $p = 0.011$ , Figure 4:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 27.6 (8, 100)$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Figure 5:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 49.0 (8, 100)$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . This indicated that the null hypothesis (H0) could be rejected for the alternative hypothesis (H1).

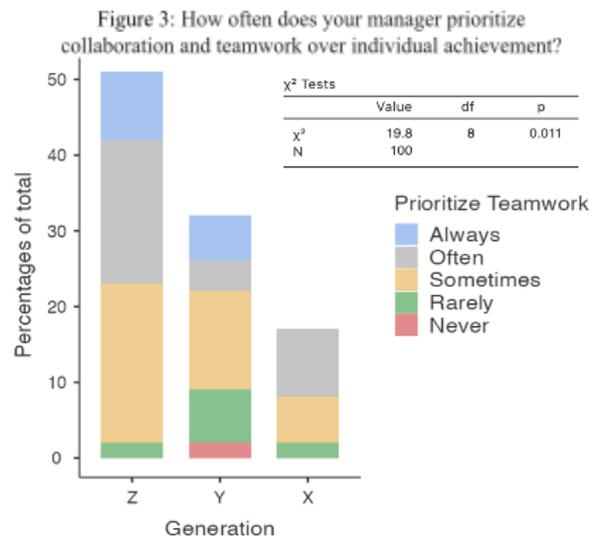
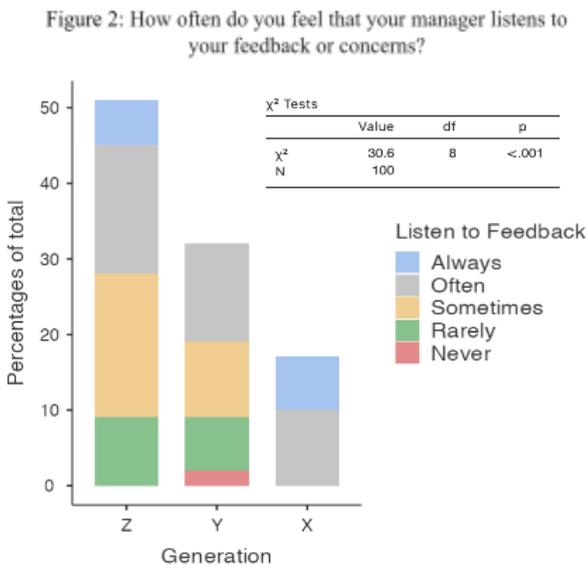


Figure 4: How often does your manager demonstrate openness, honesty, and transparency in their communication?

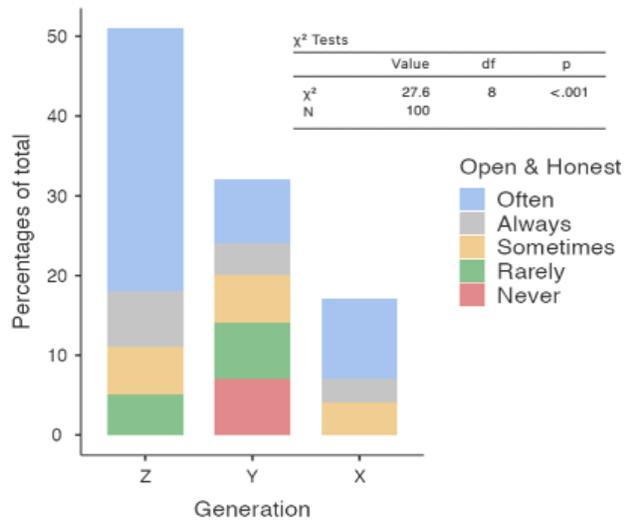
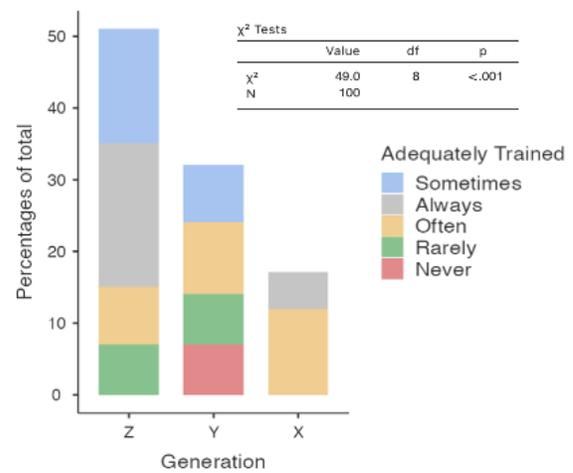


Figure 5: How often do you feel that your manager is adequately trained to handle their role?



As it applies to the perceived frequency of negative actions by the participant's managers, Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9 demonstrated that Generation Z and Y, once more, had the most diversified results. In contrast to the earlier figures, Generation Z's responses were very mixed, with Figures 6 and 8 showing higher percentages of "always," "often," and "sometimes" and Figures 7 and 9 showing higher percentages of "rarely" and "never." Generation Y also had very mixed results but stood alone in Figure 9 for being the only generation to have over 50% of their respondents choose "always," "often," and "sometimes." Whereas, Figure 7 had the most similar arrangement of percentages for Generations X, Y, and Z, with all three overwhelmingly choosing "rarely" and "never." This concludes that the third chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between the participant's age and the perceived frequency of negative actions by the participant's managers, Figure 6:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 25.5 (8, 100)$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , Figure 7:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 13.5 (8, 100)$ ,  $p = 0.036$ , Figure 8:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 35.6 (8, 100)$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,

Figure 9:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 49.5 (8, 100), p < 0.001$ . This indicated that the null hypothesis (H0) could be rejected for the alternative hypothesis (H1).

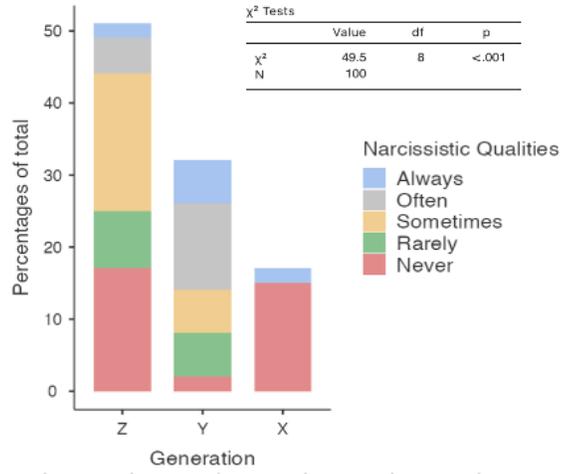
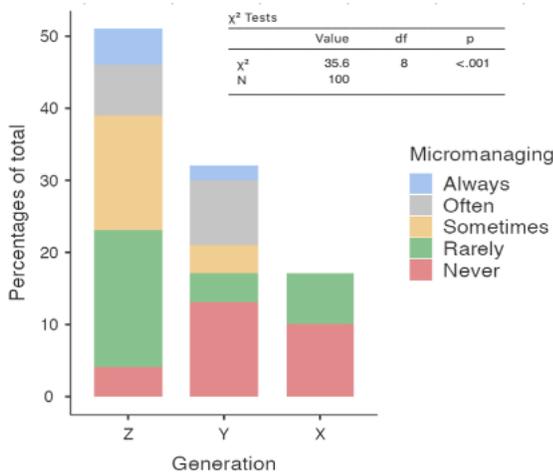
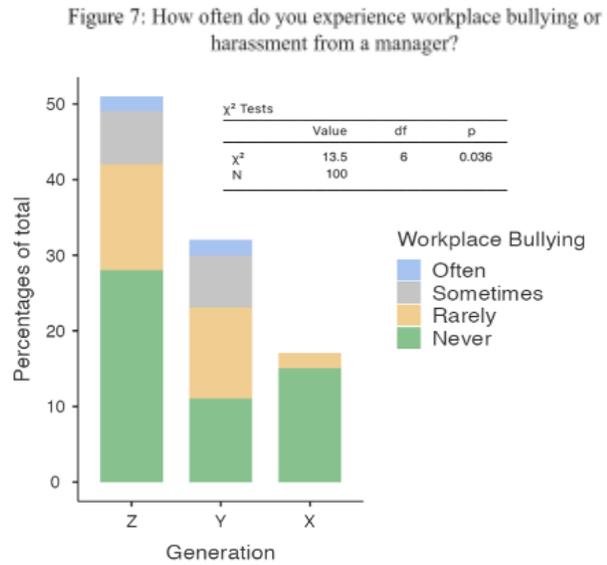
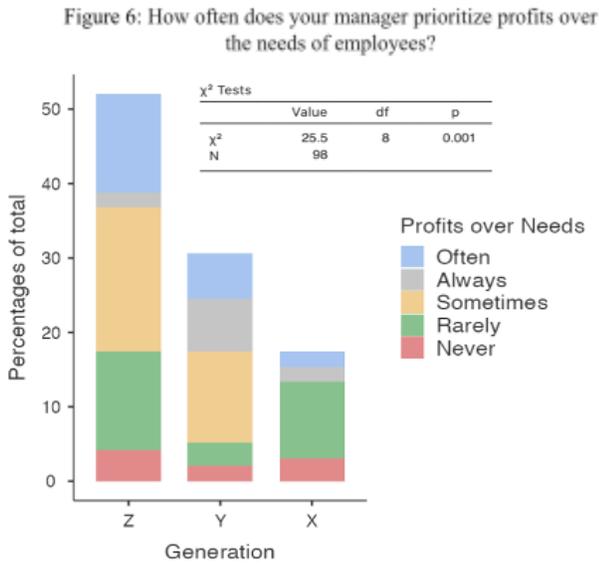


Figure 8: How often did your manager micromanage?

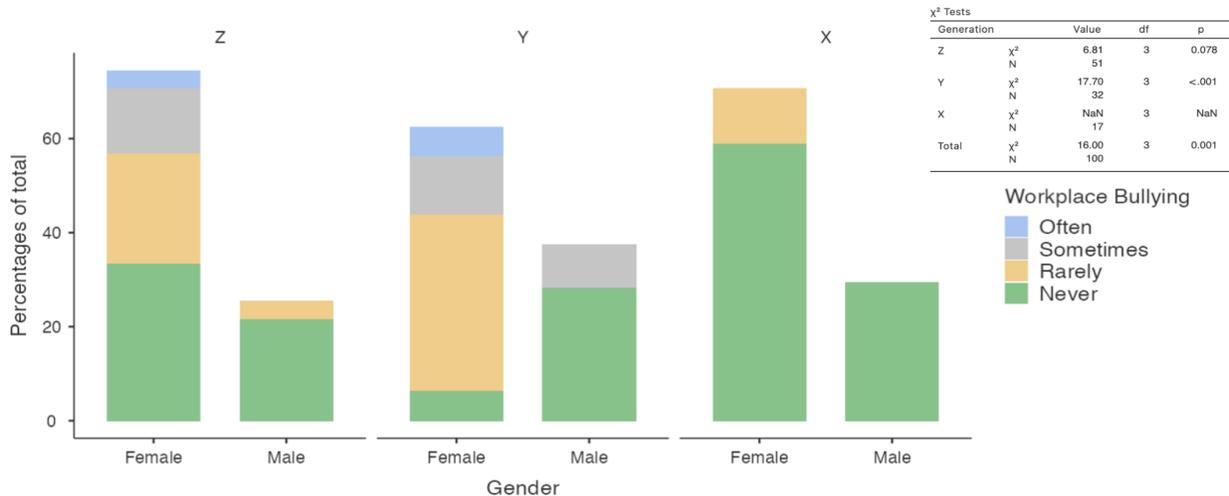
Figure 9: How often did you feel that you could've been replaced at any time?

*Results II: Gender Differences*

In Figures 10 and 11, the objective was to add gender as another independent variable to contextualize the results across generations further. As it applies to the perceived frequency of negative actions by the participant's managers, Figures 10 and 11 demonstrated that across Generations X, Y, and Z, women had the most diversified results. In Figure 10, Generation Z men and women had the most

significant difference in results. Over 50% of Generation Z women chose “always,” “often,” and “sometimes,” whereas 90% of Generation Z men chose “rarely” and “never.” Generation Y and X had very similar percentage arrangements across gender. Generation Y men and women both chose “often” and “sometimes” in vast quantities, directly contrasting Generation X men and women who both chose “never” in vast quantities. In Figure 11, Generation Y men and women had the most significant difference in results. 90% of Generation Y women chose “sometimes” and “rarely,” whereas 90% of Generation Y men chose “never.” Generation Z and X men and women were in immense agreement with their responses, citing “rarely” and “never” in vast quantities. This concludes that the fourth chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between the participant’s age and gender and the perceived frequency of negative actions by the participant’s managers, Figure 10:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 9.97 (4, 100)$ ,  $p = 0.041$ , Figure 11:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 16.00 (3, 100)$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) could be rejected for the alternative hypothesis (H1).

Figure 10: How often did your manager exhibit narcissistic qualities (lack of empathy and self-awareness, sense of entitlement, lack of respect)?



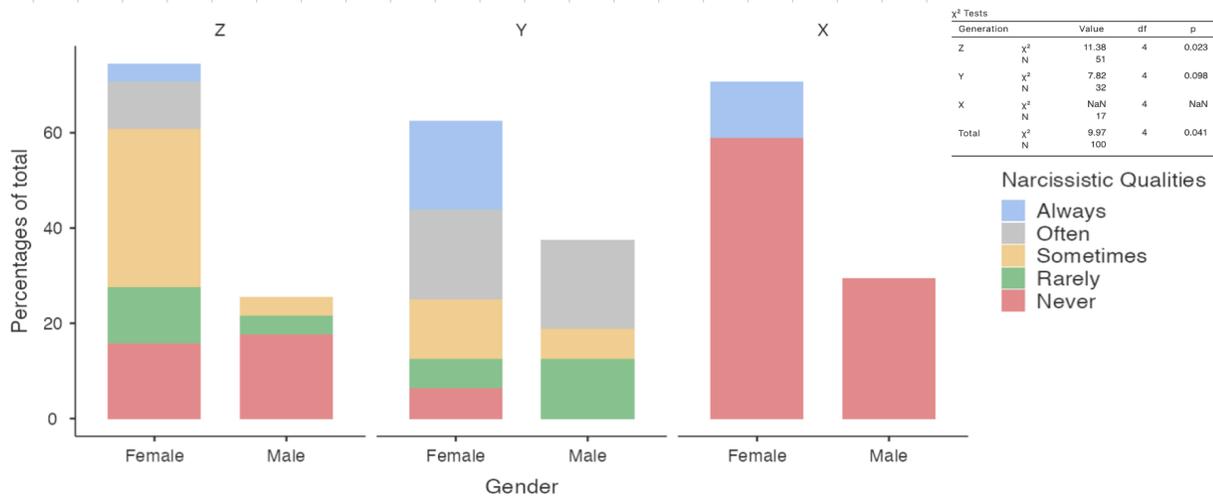


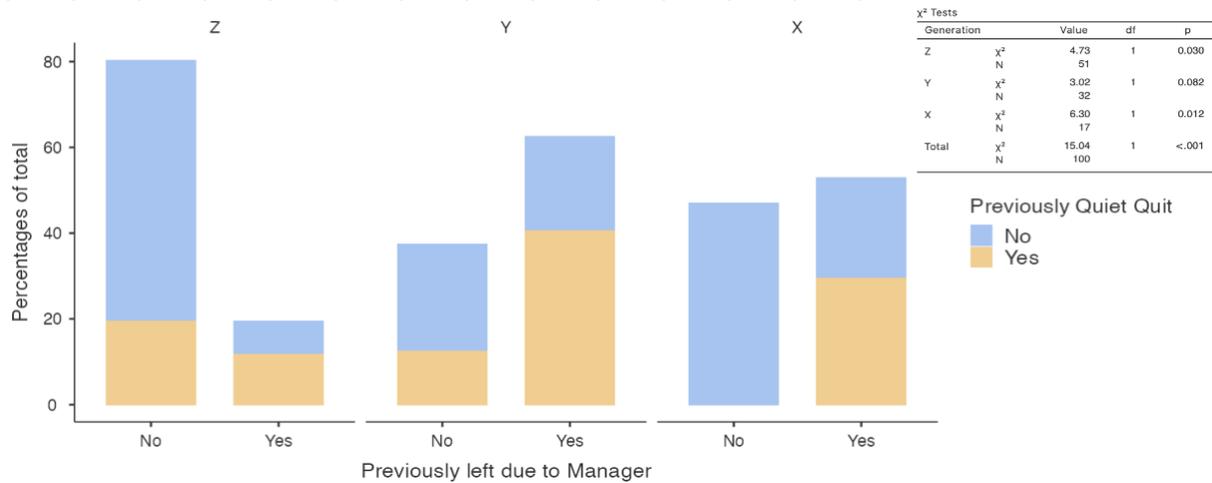
Figure 11: How often do you experience workplace bullying or harassment from a manager?

### Results III: Effects of Poor Management Relationships

In Figure 12, the objective was to layer “Previously left due to Manager” as another independent variable to further analyze the effects of poor management on an employee’s likelihood to quiet quit across generations. Figure 12 demonstrated that across Generations X, Y, and Z, participants who had previously left due to a poor relationship with their manager had higher percentages of participants who previously quiet quit from a position. Generation Z had the most significant difference in results, with 80% of participants saying “no” to previously leaving due to a manager. Of the 80% who said “no,” 75% of them had not previously quiet quit. Compared to Generation Z and X, Generation Y had the highest percentage of participants who said “yes” to previously leaving due to a manager, with 70% of them also stating they had previously quiet quit. Generation X had the most equal distribution of participants who had previously left due to a manager. Of the 45% of participants who stated they had not previously left due to a manager, 100% of them have never previously quiet quit. Meanwhile, of the 55% of participants who stated they had previously left due to a manager, 60% of them had previously quiet quit. This concludes that the fifth chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between the participant’s age, ability to leave due to a manager, and an employee’s likelihood to quiet quit, Figure

12:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 15.04 (1, 100), p < 0.001$ . Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) could be rejected for the alternative hypothesis (H1).

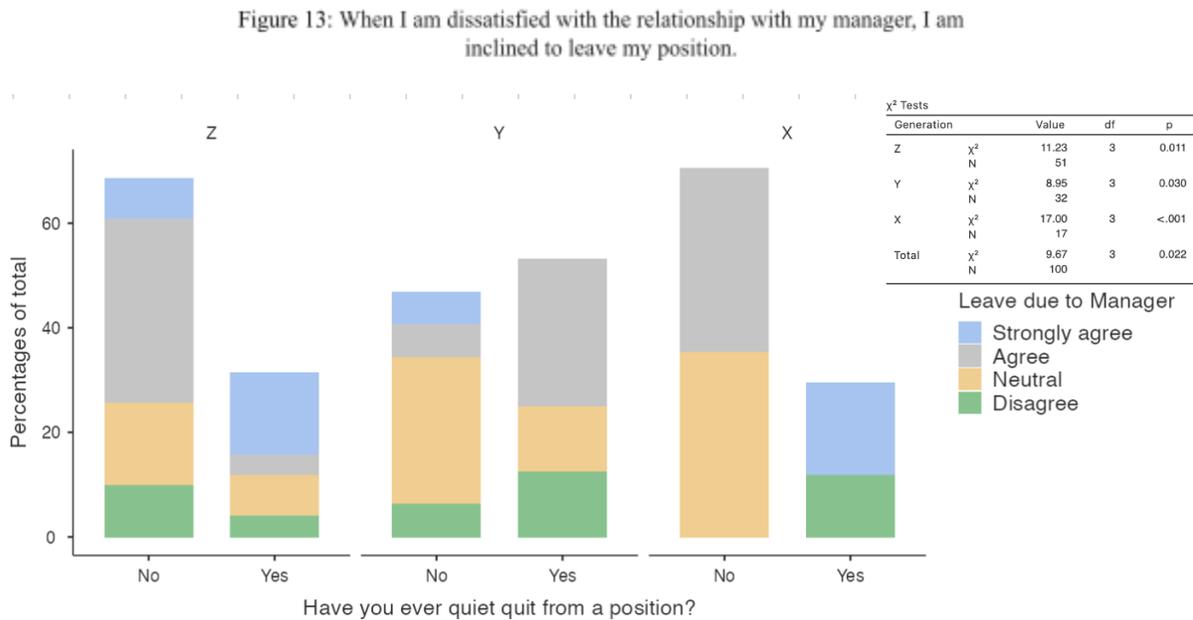
Figure 12: Have you ever quiet quit from a position?



*Results IV: Effects of Quiet Quitting*

In Figure 13, the objective was to layer “Will leave due to Manager” as another independent variable to further analyze the effects of quiet quitting on employees’ likelihood to leave due to their manager across generations. Figure 13 demonstrated that across Generations X, Y, and Z, participants who had previously quiet quit had higher percentages of participants who agreed to leave their position due to dissatisfaction with their manager relationship. Generation Z and X had the most significant differences in results, with 70% of Generation Z and Y participants stating they had not previously quiet quit. However, Of the 70% who said “no,” 50% of them stated they either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” they would leave if they were dissatisfied with their manager relationship. Compared to Generation Z and X, Generation Y had an equal distribution of participants who had and had not previously quiet quit. Of the 45% of participants who stated they had not previously quiet quit, surprisingly, 80% of them had

been “neutral” or “disagreed” that they would leave if they were dissatisfied with their manager relationship. One commonality is that across every generation, 50% of participants who stated they had previously quiet quit also “strongly agreed” or “agreed” they would leave if they were dissatisfied with their manager relationship. This concludes that the fifth chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between the participant’s age, ability to leave due to a manager, and an employee’s likelihood to quiet quit, Figure 13:  $\chi^2(df, N) = 9.67 (3, 100), p = 0.022$ . Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) could be rejected for the alternative hypothesis (H1).



*Results V: Personal Testimonies*

At the end of the survey, there was an optional qualitative section that allowed the participants to cite, in their own words, the exact relationships they had with their managers and how they would like those relationships to be improved. Due to the massive amount of quantitative data gleaned from datasets three and four, the free-response section humanized the survey results and allowed for more analysis beyond percentages. Utilizing first-hand accounts of specific positive and negative management

relationships would account for any criteria not mentioned and further contextualize the participant's earlier responses in datasets three and four.

There was an equal number of positive and negative manager relationships detailed, and the actions that led to that conclusion in the response section. However, the most popular reason why participants were satisfied or unsatisfied with the relationship with their manager all connected back to the level of control and guidance. A few participants who enjoyed their manager's level of control stated that "Her instructions on daily task were clear and organized, but often let us do things with freedom" and "They had no issues with me as long as I completed the work that needed to be done and got paid appropriately," and "Never acted like a superior and was down to earth and we shared the same goals." The consensus among these participants was that if they had the correct amount of controlled freedom to work as they chose, they were more than satisfied with their manager. In contrast, participants who were dissatisfied with their manager's level of control stated that "my boss was a micromanager and questioned every decision I made. She would bully me and pester even the minuscule decisions I made for my team", "I feel that she heard my concerns, but did not have the support of upper management to do anything about my concerns. When I expressed what was wrong with this position ....she made me look like I was in the wrong." "My boss is completely hands-off and expects employees to solve their own problems. When a problem is brought to his attention, he fails to address it in any meaningful way." In this case, these participants cited that the more managers "micromanaged" or were "hands-off" in their approach to control, the more dissatisfied participants became.

Meanwhile, the participants who enjoyed their manager's level of guidance stated that "I asked for feedback and received well and structured comments on what I did correctly or what I could improve on," "I felt like my manager had a genuine interest in helping develop my skills," "my manager always backed my coworkers and me up... he emphasized that asking for help is a virtue and not a weakness",

“My manager always offers support when needed. He would come out and help me with my job, even though that wasn’t part of his position/responsibility.” These participants were most satisfied when their manager took responsibility for guiding and developing the participant’s skills through feedback, support, and showing how to ask for help. On the flip side, participants who were dissatisfied with their manager’s level of guidance stated that “we were friendly, but I was offered no growth opportunity, did not do fulfilling work, there was no company culture,” “My manager oftentimes acted like a friend, I didn’t feel like I could learn a lot from her from a professional point of view...I sometimes felt like she was not qualified for a leadership position”, “They were often nowhere to be found and hard to get ahold of, which made my job frustrating and stressful. When they did appear in the office, they often wouldn’t listen to our complaints or feedback.” Conversely, for these participants, the complete lack of guidance from their managers caused much dissatisfaction.

## **Discussion**

The overall goal and mission of this data collection are to prove or dispute any correlation between management behaviors and Employee Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction among different generations. The chosen method of data collection was a survey that would allow for analysis of Generation Z against Generation Y and X. When it comes to discussing the results of the survey; the most crucial factor is understanding the links between the independent and dependent variables and what it means for Generation Z. By understanding how different demographic qualifiers, job satisfiers, and management behaviors can affect overall employee satisfaction, will provide a more definitive answer as to how companies and managers alike can be active participants in halting the quiet quitting epidemic. Even more so, how companies and managers can nurture the next generation and guide them into becoming hardworking, healthy, and satisfied workers. All with the hope that quiet quitting will become a thing of

the past.

The first section of the results was dedicated to measuring if there was a proven association between Generations X, Y, And Z and their perception of different job satisfiers. More specifically, which satisfiers become more or less important throughout the different cycles of the participant's career? In Figure 1, Generation Z was the only generation to place importance on the actual work environment - the culture, coworkers, and type of work. This can be explained by the unimportance of great pay as a motivator when other motivators like meaningful work and culture are satisfied. The Harvard Business Review reported that nine out of ten employees surveyed would accept a lower salary in exchange for more meaningful work (Anchor et al., 2018). Since Generations Y and X placed such high importance on great pay above all else, it can stand to reason that the other motivators have not been satisfied. This is further supported by the overall negative perceptions of Generation Y's managers in their capacity to listen to feedback, prioritize teamwork, and be open and adequately trained in Figures 2-5. While also claiming that their managers had always exhibited behaviors such as putting profit over needs, micromanaging them, and being narcissistic in Figures 6-9. In the free-response section, Generation Y was more likely to mention that their manager was either too "hands-off" and "not around" or "micromanaged" too much.

However, the most exciting observation of Figures 2-9 was that Generation Z's responses were relatively balanced, citing that their manager exhibited positive and negative behaviors in equal amounts. The specific management behaviors chosen for this survey were based on the most complained about and appraised behaviors reported in the literature review and were meant not to be mutually exclusive but could coexist simultaneously. Proving that a manager can excel in many areas but still have faults in others. This is because the relationship between managers and employees is collaborative and human. It is based on the idea that both employees and managers have the skills and knowledge to

trade and learn from one another (EL Nabawy Saleh Dewydar, 2015). For example, a good manager instills a sense of trust and confidence with a clear set of attainable goals. In such an environment, employees can feel empowered and often receive positive feedback from colleagues and managers. Then when things do not go well, they are more likely to raise issues and give feedback (Allas & Schaninger, 2020). A safe and collaborative environment for joint problem-solving generates innovation, a sense of achievement, and even higher levels of customer satisfaction (Allas & Schaninger, 2020). When comparing the results against both gender and generation, there is a far more interesting picture. Women across all three generations were far more likely to cite their manager exhibiting narcissistic behaviors and endorsing workplace bullying than men. Men were far more likely to cite that those behaviors never occurred. This stands to reason, considering women were far more likely than men to experience sexual and racial harassment in the workplace, and men are more likely to forget or not recognize their supervisor's abuse if they become successful in the industry (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2023).

People want to work to enrich themselves, learn, and have high-quality interactions. They want work to fulfill ambitions and come with good health they would like to preserve (Culbert, 2017). However, a lack of meaningful work and enrichment in the workplace becomes the leading cause of employee turnover (Bailey et al., 2019). The results of this survey indicate that the overall missing factor in addressing employee dissatisfaction lies in how much managers care. Furthermore, most studies have already demonstrated this by stating that the top drivers of employee engagement are when employees feel valued by management, there is an ease in two-way communication between management and employees, and management has a great interest in their employees' well-being and opportunity to grow (EL Nabawy Saleh Dewydar, 2015). However, for this to occur, managers must demonstrate how employees are integral to the company's goals and culture. They must communicate with employees about their organization's goals and strategies and invest in their professional development (Kruse,

2022). If employees feel uncertain about their place within the company or their managers are not committed to their long-term development, many top employees will quiet quit or leave the company altogether (Hom et al., 2019).

However, despite countless studies reinforcing the need for better care from management, Figures 12 and 13 demonstrate that there is a substantial number of Generation Y employees who feel tired of their current manager-employee relationship and are choosing to leave or quiet quit their position. When it comes to analyzing how each generation values their relationship with their manager and what they will do if those relationships turn sour is a crucial indicator of managerial influence in the workplace. In Figures 12 and 13, the overall consensus was that across Generations X, Y, and Z, participants who had previously quiet quit were more likely to have previously left or will leave their position due to dissatisfaction with their manager relationship. The association between manager dissatisfaction and quiet quitting is consistently strong across all generations; however, for Generation Z, there is a glimmer of hope in the high number of participants who still have not quiet quit or left a position due to a manager. There is agreement that they would, but it has yet to happen for most participants. For Generation Z, this epidemic has not drastically affected their population and can still be remedied.

The free-response portion of the survey explored two fundamental concepts - control and guidance. Each participant had their own interpretation of the correct amount of control and guidance needed in their workplace. However, the consensus was that a relationship would turn sour when too much or too little control or guidance was used. Participants who stated that their managers “micromanaged” or were “hands-off” labeled their relationship as terrible. Participants who felt the freedom to choose how and in which they worked all labeled their relationship as good. This is not a coincidence if one considers how damaging micromanaging can be. A micromanaging and

over-controlling manager is likely to develop a tarnished reputation and undermine employee morale (Cooper, 2020). But, progressive organizations that value developing employee autonomy and the opportunity to be creative have been linked to increased innovation, improved customer service, and long-term organizational success (Burcharth et al., 2017). As it applies to guidance, a similar situation occurred. Too little guidance was met with lots of disappointment and descriptions of quitting, whereas plenty of guidance was met with descriptions of flourishing and meaningful careers. The correlation between an organization's commitment to professional development and employees' job satisfaction has been identified as an essential factor for employee retention for decades (Kelly, 2022). Suppose managers do not provide employees with a path for professional growth and development. In that case, many employees will feel that their current position provides little opportunity for progression and is virtually a dead end (Kelly, 2022).

The power and influence that managers hold over satisfaction and dissatisfaction are expressed and demonstrated multiple times in the survey results and discussion. Generation Y is an example of what will happen to a generation when they are left feeling undervalued, unappreciated, and uninvested. At the same time, Generation X is an example of a generation that was treated well, respected, and has had successful careers. There is hope for Generation Z, as a vast majority of them have not yet decided to quiet quit and still believe that their managers can guide them into being successful employees. The time has come when managers and companies alike will have to decide whether or not the cause is worthy enough to invest in.

#### *Possible Limitations:*

As with the majority of studies, the design of this current study is subject to limitations. The first limitation concerns the method of data collection. After the survey was completed, there were a few

questions missing that would have better contextualized the responses. The first question is related to the student's university. Only the universities that consented for their students and faculty to participate in this study could take the survey. Is it possible that the sample size may only have been representative of a specific type of student and faculty, as there was no question that clarified which university the student attended? In an attempt to preserve anonymity for the student, a critical demographic was left out. The second question concerns the participant's and the manager's age. Public opinion surrounding quiet quitting does not favorably shed light on young professionals, and a key reason behind quiet quitting is due to a misunderstanding brought on by the difference in ages between the manager and the employee. A question that inquires if the manager's behavior towards the participant resulting from their age difference would have been a fascinating and vital factor to explore.

The second limitation deals with the idea of causation and correlation. Most surveys collect data on independent and dependent variables simultaneously, making it difficult to tell which came first or prove that causation exists. To confound this, most of the questions were centered around the participant's personal beliefs and whether they agreed or disagreed with statements. Additionally, Chi-Squared tests of association for Independent Samples with a Contingency Table were used to prove the associations. Either way, the participants answered as long as there was a statistically accurate p-value of at least .05 and a substantial difference between the expected and observed frequencies, then one can conclude that there is a proven relationship between the two categorical variables.

The third limitation concerns the final sample population. The final tally of the participants totaled 100. This sample size was sufficient in an undergraduate academic setting to obtain statistically accurate associations, but it would need to be more significant in a published journal or newspaper. A statistical estimation test would have been appropriate to ensure that a sample is representative of a large population. If the study were repeated, a larger time frame for survey responses and an estimation test

would be vital to acquire the best results.

The fourth limitation concerns the author's own bias and perspective. The author's young age may have influenced particular views on the arguments surrounding quiet quitting and the media's view of young people. The questions in the survey may have been unintentionally leading, or the results only supported the general hypothesis. Due to the strict selection and vetting process of the survey questions and arguments by faculty and advisors, there is a slim chance that any bias remains. Nevertheless, it is still important to note when analyzing the discussion and interpretation of the results.

## Conclusion

Throughout this research paper, several topics have been explored to explain and justify why quiet quitting has run rampant throughout the United States and Worldwide. The reason is that people are tired. Salarymen in Japan are tired of working until they fall asleep in the streets drunk or become victims of karoshi. Young professionals in finance are tired of working until they quit out of defeat or die alone in the shower. Professors in UK Universities are tired of working until they fall so behind in their work or they cause an all-out protest. Students in China are tired of working until they become the few who avoid youth unemployment or outrightly forgo the idea of working and "lie flat." People are tired of working until they have proven they are not lazy, or they become victims of overwork in this society.

SCIENCE ADVANCES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

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**SOCIAL SCIENCES**

# **Kids these days: Why the youth of today seem lacking**

**John Protzko\* and Jonathan W. Schooler**

The media habitually portrays young people in an overwhelmingly negative light. When examining the leading national daily newspapers and a selection of big regional titles in the first week of

### “NOBODY WANTS TO WORK ANY MORE!”

2022	According to a new survey released by TinyPulse, 1 in 5 executive leaders agree with this statement: “No one wants to work”. These same leaders cite a “lack of response to job
2014	What has happened to the work ethic in America? Nobody wants to work anymore. It has not always been that way. When I first started to work as a teenager, I saw people work hard.
2006	<b>like nobody wants to work anymore and when they do</b>
1999	“Nobody wants to work anymore,” Cecil said. “They all want to work in front of a computer and make lots of
1981	off this land last week. But they just fooled around. They didn’t want to work. Nobody wants to work anymore.
1979	“Nobody wants to work anymore.” — <b>disgusted businessman</b>
1969	<b>called “Nobody Wants to Work Anymore.”</b> Talking about un-
1952	<b>everybody was getting too darned lazy and nobody wants to work anymore. That’s the truth if I ever heard it.</b>
1940	<b>trouble is everybody is on relief or a pension — nobody wants to work anymore.”</b>
1937	ams counties are complaining that “Nobody wants to work anymore.” There is work, it is reported, for 15
1922	<b>it is because nobody wants to work any more unless they can</b>
1916	he answered, “the reason for food scarcity is that nobody wants to work as hard as they used to. I asked a
1905	<b>unreliable. None want to work for wages.</b>
1894	next winter? It is becoming apparent that nobody wants to work these hard times.

August, out of the stories dealing with young people and their activities, only 14% depicted a purely positive image, while 15%, mainly in the quality press, took a neutral tone (Wells, 2004). Most of the time, young people are called lazy, entitled, and all about themselves. But, is Generation Z lazy and entitled - Or are they just young? “Kids these days” is a catch-all phrase older generations have used to belittle the character of younger people for centuries. Researchers have argued that older people often project their current selves onto their past selves. “If you’re honest with yourself and you look at the way you were at that age, you have to say, ‘These kids are not that different.’ By doing this, older people unconsciously give the impression that today’s youth is somehow on the decline, no matter the decade they live in” (Linn, 2014).

The simple fact is that young professionals are more prone to making mistakes because they are still learning the skills it takes to be a good worker. It is unrealistic to expect young employees to walk into the workforce with the grit, determination, and strong will that older workers took years to learn.

Multiple studies have discussed this topic and quiet quitting at length to prove that workers are not lazy but just trying and fighting to salve burnout, set healthy boundaries, build a sense of control, and help prioritize what matters. However, quiet quitting is not a long-term solution. It is symptomatic of a systematic flaw in today's business culture that cannot be solved solely through the silent protests of millions of employees. The only way to enact profound change - is to transform the system that endorses and supports this treatment of workers.

The first step was to discover and address the root cause of this epidemic - Toxic Company Culture and Generational Gaps. Only then can Managers step in to be the leaders of change. Managers will need to see to their own training and development. They will need to read from the best works on employee satisfaction. They must reexamine their commitment to understanding all workers' motivation to work, especially Generation Z and Millennial employees. They must ensure employees understand how their work contributes to the organization's larger purpose. They must learn to keep people engaged, give meaningful work, and be treated with dignity and respect. They need to guarantee that employees will look forward to coming to work every day.

The hope is that this paper can shed light on this recent issue and be used to defend young working professionals everywhere. This problem must be addressed in enough time; it is a problem begging to be noticed and fixed. Nonetheless, until organizations are willing to change, the bleak prognosis is that quiet quitting will continue, and the potential of many of today's businesses will go unrealized. But, this does not have to be the case! There is hope for Generation Z. It is ultimately up to Managers and Senior Executives to acknowledge this systematic fault and work towards a culture of job satisfaction that is intrinsic to their organizational goals. The only defense against this problem is a good offense.

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## Annex

### Survey Questions

Section 1 of 6

## Final Thesis Questionnaire

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Online Informed Consent

You are invited to take part in a research survey concerning the effects of Management Behaviors on Employee Satisfaction and Quiet-Quitting.

There are 5 sections of this survey: Demographic Questions, Preliminary Questions, General View on Workplace Relationships, Personal Experience with Manager, & Personal testimony

This survey will provide the student with the necessary data they will need for their Final Thesis. Your participation in this online survey will require approximately 5-10 minutes. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and if you choose to be in the study you can withdraw at any time without adversely affecting any previous data. Once received, your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Any report of this research will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified.

If you have questions or want a copy or summary of this study's results, you can contact the student at the email address above. Please feel free to print a copy of this consent page to keep for your records.

Clicking the "Next" button below indicates your consent to participate in this survey.

Participation Consent \*

Next

## Section 2 of 6

## Demographic Questions



Description (optional)

How old are you? \*

- 16-18
- 19-22
- 23-26
- 27-30
- 30-35
- 35<

What is your nationality? \*

- American
- Spanish
- French
- English
- German
- Irish
- Other...

What is your gender? \*

- Female
- Male
- Non-Binary
- Prefer Not to Say
- Other...

## Section 3 of 6

Preliminary Questions



Description (optional)

Have you ever left a position due to a bad relationship with the manager? \*

 Yes No

Have you ever quiet quit from a position? \*

Definition: An informal term used to describe an employee who disengages from work but does just enough to meet the basic requirements of one's job description.

 Yes No

Have you ever been a manager yourself? \*

 Yes No

## Section 4 of 6

General View on workplace relationships



Please try to avoid choosing "Neutral"

I feel most satisfied in my job when I am paid well.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I feel most satisfied in my job when I get along well with my coworkers. \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I feel most satisfied in my job when I see clear opportunities to grow and motivated to do so. \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I feel most satisfied in my job when the work is fulfilling and stimulating. \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I feel most satisfied in my job when the workplace culture supports openness, trust, and honesty. \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I believe that my pay, possibility of promotion, relationship with my coworkers, fulfillment of my work, and workplace culture are dependent on the type of manager I have. \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Which Factor is more important to your overall job satisfaction? \*

- Great Pay
- Promotions
- Great Coworker Relationships
- Work Fulfillment
- Great Workplace Culture
- Great Manager Relationship

I get along better with managers who hold the same values as me. \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

When I am dissatisfied with the relationship with my manager, I am inclined to leave my position. \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

## Section 5 of 6

Personal Experience with Manager



Description (optional)

How often do you feel that your manager listens to your feedback or concerns? \*

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often does your manager prioritize collaboration and teamwork over individual achievement? \*

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often does your manager provide you with clear and specific feedback about your work? \*

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often does your manager demonstrate openness, honesty, and transparency in their communication? \*

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often do you feel that your manager is adequately trained to handle their role? \*

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often does your manager prioritize profits over the needs of employees?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often do you experience workplace bullying or harassment from a manager? \*

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often did your manager micromanage? \*

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often did you feel that you could've been replaced at any time? \*

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often did your manager exhibit narcissistic qualities (lack of empathy and self-awareness, sense of entitlement, lack of respect)? \*

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

## Section 6 of 6

## Personal testimony



Participation in this section is completely optional. If you have a moment, please answer the questions in as few or many words as you would like.

Can you describe the relationship you had with your manager in your last position?

- If you had a great relationship, can you describe the actions they employed that lead to your conclusion?
- If you had a bad relationship, can you describe the actions they employed that lead to your conclusion and what actions they could've done to improve the relationship?

Long answer text

.....

What actions could your manager do to greatly improve the work environment and relationships with employees?

Long answer text

.....