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When Silence Signals Exit: Quiet Quitting, Quiet Firing, and the Pathway to Turnover Intention

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ABSTRACT

Two hotly debated psychological disengagements from the employment relationship are quiet quitting (QQ) and quiet firing (QF) by the employee and employer, respectively. This study employs a mediated-moderation model that sees the effect of the QQ and the QF on the TI being mediated by Psychological Contract Breach (PCB), while the effect of QF on TI is moderated by Perceived Organizational Support (POS). The model was tested using a cross sectional survey of the 290 healthcare workers who were working permanently in public and private hospitals of Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan and Rawalpindi in Punjab, Pakistan and were administered by the two stage method of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) recommended by Hair et al. (2019) with grounded Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1989). The measure was found to have an acceptable reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. There was support for all eight hypothesized relationships. Both Quiet Firing ($\beta = 0.380$, $p < .001$) and Quiet Quitting ($\beta = 0.396$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted Psychological Contract Breach (H1, H2) and both also had significant direct effects on Turnover Intention net of PCB (H3, H4). Psychological Contract Breach significantly predicted Turnover Intention (H5, $\beta = 0.378$, $p < .001$) and partially mediated both the Quiet Firing-Turnover Intention and Quiet Quitting-Turnover Intention relationships (H6, H7; VAF = 57.2% and 55.6%, respectively). Perceived Organizational Support significantly and negatively moderated the Quiet Firing-Turnover Intention relationship (H8, $\beta = -0.180$, $p < .001$), consistent with a buffering rather than an accentuation pattern. The findings position Psychological Contract Breach as a joint mediating mechanism linking employee- and employer-driven silent disengagement to turnover intention, and identify Perceived Organizational Support as a boundary condition of practical relevance to Pakistan's resource-constrained healthcare sector. Theoretical and HRM implications for healthcare workforce retention are discussed.

Introduction

Quiet quitting (QQ) and quiet firing (QF) have emerged as two of the most widely discussed forms of psychological withdrawal from the employment relationship, the former initiated by employees and the latter by employers or supervisors (Anand et al., 2024; Gray et al., 2025). QQ refers to a conscious decision to only provide the bare essentials of a job description, while QF involves an unconscious form of marginalisation and exclusion from opportunities, withheld feedback, and undesirable task assignment that is designed to make an employee want to leave the job without actually terminating their employment (Anand et al., 2024). Both phenomena have garnered significant public and scholarly interest after the onset of COVID-19, but have been studied in isolation, and only in a few explanatory models (Gray et al., 2025; Herve & Oh, 2025). This gap is consequential because the mechanism by which QQ and QF work—women's perceptions that the organization has fulfilled its implicit and explicit expectations—is likely a shared one, and it has never been tested as two parallel antecedents in one structural model. This study aims to fill the gap by proposing and testing a mediated-moderation model in which PCB serves as a mediator between QQ and QFI, and between QF and TI, and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is a moderator between QF and TI. The model is based on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1989) that together contribute to understanding the process from perceived unreciprocated obligations to withdrawal and exit cognitions. The study took place in Pakistan's health care sector where there are acute staff shortages, hierarchical management structures, and limited resources that make it likely that employee and employer disengagement is increased (Gulzar et al., 2024; World Health Organization, 2022). Through a combined modelling of QQ and QF as parallel predictors of PCB and the use of POS as a boundary condition on the QF-TI path, the study provides an integrated model that explains how the silent aspect of disengagement is related to employees' intentions to leave.

Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Examine the relationship between Quiet Firing and Psychological Contract Breach.
2. Examine the relationship between Quiet Quitting and Psychological Contract Breach.
3. Assess the direct effects of Quiet Firing and Quiet Quitting on Turnover Intention.
4. Evaluate the mediating role of Psychological Contract Breach in the Quiet Firing/Quiet Quitting-Turnover Intention relationships.
5. Investigate the moderating role of Perceived Organizational Support in the Quiet Firing-Turnover Intention relationship among healthcare workers in Punjab, Pakistan.

Research Significance and Gaps

This study addresses four gaps in the literature. First, empirical work rarely models QQ and QF as parallel, simultaneous predictors within a single design; most studies isolate one construct from the other (Gray et al., 2025). Second, PCB has been treated mainly as an antecedent of QQ rather than as a mediator linking QQ/QF to TI, leaving this specific mediating pathway theoretically plausible but empirically untested (Gray et al., 2025; Nawangsari et al., 2025). Third, although POS is theoretically positioned as a boundary condition on breach-driven outcomes, evidence on its moderating role is mixed and has not been tested within this specific mediated-moderation structure (Gulzar et al., 2024; Park & Viswesvaran, 2026; Rogozinska-Pawelczyk & Gadomska-Lila, 2025). Lastly, even outside the West and East Asian context, the QQ-QF nexus has received little attention, and the existing literature suggests that both concepts are likely to be distinct and different in the South Asian context (Gulzar et al., 2024; Galanis et al., 2024). The study provides a new theoretical positioning for PCB and POS and practical implications for HRM retention strategy in a sector which is understaffed.

Literature Review

Definitional Foundations

Quiet Quitting

There isn't a universally accepted definition of a 'quiet quitter'. Anand et al. (2024) operationalized it as work disengagement, low organizational commitment and deliberate refusal of extra role behavior, and Serenko (2024, p. 27) defined it as a mindset of intentionally limiting activity to the pre-established job description, while Talukder and Prieto (2025) grounded it in Leader-Member Exchange and social exchange theory as a perceived imbalance in the employment exchange. Gray et al. (2025) also saw QQ as a limitation of effort to the extent of what is formally required, and Harris (2025, p. 565) highlighted the conscious control of a person's working life to complete contracted work but not offer extra work. Herve and Oh (2025) questioned the notion that QQ is only a post-pandemic phenomenon and found it to be related to a perceived loss of control in times of crisis, which aligns with the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989): withdrawal of discretionary effort to conserve psychological resources. Although the literature is converging on the behaviour of withdrawal within the role, there is still no common ground that spans across industry, culture and measures, and few cross-cultural or longitudinal replications (Patel et al., 2025).

Quiet Firing

The study of QF has been empirical in very few studies. Anand et al. (2024) described it as a deliberate attempt to condition employees into giving up on their jobs, which is not considered a regular management failure. Clinically, QF takes the form of not being included in meetings and networks, or developmental opportunities being denied, or having inappropriate tasks assigned or having feedback and recognition deliberately missed (Anand et al., 2024). Workplace conditions like remote and hybrid environments are believed to increase the likelihood of both committing and being exposed to QF behaviors as interpersonal cues that would otherwise trigger HR personnel to take action are less apparent (Anand et al., 2024). Since then, the scale was tested for validity and reliability amongst Turkish healthcare professionals (Karadas & Cevik, 2025) but there is still not much theory available on why organizations implement QF (apart from the cost avoidance aspects of formal termination), nor is there much theory available on how it relates to QQ.

Psychological Contract Breach

PCB is the employee's mental evaluation that the organization has not met its implicit or explicit (expressed) commitments (Rousseau, 1989; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). This appraisal is a subjective one, not a literal review of contractual terms, so it reflects the subjective nature of the concept of Unreciprocated Exchange that is at the heart of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). PCB is always tied to organizational cynicism, burnout, diminished affective commitment, and intention to turn down (Faizan et al., 2025; Liao et al., 2024). The joint relationship of procedural and interactional justice with the variance of PCB among Iranian clinical nurses was determined by 41% by Ebrahimzadeh et al. (2024) and De Clercq and Pereira (2024) revealed that PCB predicts plans to quit through a moderated mediation pathway. Gong et al. (2023) also showed that macro-level shocks can exacerbate perceptions of breaches, which helps to account for the increase in breach appraisals during and after the pandemic.

Gray et al. (2025) directly linked breach severity to QQ, proposing that the extent of unmet job-characteristic and promises of justice determines the extent of quiet-quitting behavior—a proposition central to the mediating role tested here.

Perceived Organizational Support

POS is defined as employees' general attitude that their work organization appreciates them, treats them well (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Organizational support theory suggests that high POS requires reciprocity in terms of commitment and engagement, whereas low POS is an indication of a low-level exchange relationship and withdrawal and turnover. Results about the use of POS as a boundary condition for breach-driven outcomes are mixed. Rogozinska-Pawelczyk and Gadomska-Lila (2025) identified that the relationship between participation constraints and breach perceptions is mediated by POS among 6751 public-sector employees in Poland with the help of PLS-SEM. Another meta-analysis by Galanis et al. (2024) found that a negative relationship between organizational support and turnover intention was also obtained in regard to nursing samples. On the other hand, Gulzar et al. (2024) and a Cambridge Core study of nurses (Park & Viswesvaran, 2026) found an accentuation effect among nurses with high

POS: when employee's relational expectations are higher, a subsequent breach felt like a more severe betrayal, magnifying its impact. This ambiguity in direction leads to the use of explicit interactions in the present study, instead of a buffering direction.

Turnover Intention

TI is the conscious and deliberate decision to no longer belong to the organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993), it is the closest cognitive predictor to actual voluntary turnover. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work-life balance have been consistently found in the literature as antecedents of TI, with contextual and demographic factors affecting the strength of the effects (Dhoopar et al., 2026), and Hur (2025) found similar results for U.S. federal employees. QQ and TI are conceptually different; QQ is a choice to stay, but a choice to leave takes a psychological form, while TI is a psychological preparation to leave (Lu et al., 2023). This separation suggests that QQ and QF can push TI in varying directions – QQ can push TI to walk away slow, QF can push TI to walk away under organizational pressure to walk away.

Relationships Among Variables and Hypothesis Development

QQ, QF, and Psychological Contract Breach

Gray et al. (2025) made the first direct connection between perceptions of breach and QQ: Perceptions of the unmet job characteristic and justice promises significantly predict the occurrence of quiet quitting. QF, by design, systematically breaches the psychological contract's implicit promises of fair treatment, development and inclusion and, accordingly, breach appraisals are theorised as being generated through the same mechanism as deliberate marginalisation. Nawangsari et al. (2025) investigated the path between disengagement and TI among 217 bank employees from the Generation Z in Indonesia, revealing that PCB was a catalyst, not simply a correlate, in disengagement to TI. On this basis:

H1: Quiet Firing has a significant positive relationship with Psychological Contract Breach.

H2: Quiet Quitting has a significant positive relationship with Psychological Contract Breach.

QQ, QF, and Turnover Intention

Because QQ and QF are theorized to operate through routes beyond breach appraisal alone—immediate dissatisfaction, exhaustion, or anticipatory exit cognition—both are expected to retain direct effects on TI net of PCB (Lu et al., 2023; Gün et al., 2025). Consistent with this reasoning:

H3: Quiet Firing has a significant positive relationship with Turnover Intention.

H4: Quiet Quitting has a significant positive relationship with Turnover Intention.

Psychological Contract Breach and Turnover Intention

PCB is among the most consistently supported predictors of TI in the organizational behavior literature. Yu and Hamid (2024) found that PCB fulfilment reduced TI among Chinese freelance workers via job satisfaction; Faizan et al. (2025) confirmed a similar job-satisfaction-mediated pathway. Pyhajarvi and Soderberg (2024) described the PCB-TI relationship among nurses as cumulative rather than linear—"the straw that broke the nurse's back"—while Park and Viswesvaran (2026) reported that nurses with the highest breach expectations also reported the highest TI. Accordingly:

H5: Psychological Contract Breach has a significant positive relationship with Turnover Intention.

Given the theoretical basis for PCB as the mechanism connecting QQ/QF to withdrawal, and the direct paths hypothesized above:

H6: Psychological Contract Breach significantly mediates the relationship between Quiet Firing and Turnover Intention.

H7: Psychological Contract Breach significantly mediates the relationship between Quiet Quitting and Turnover Intention.

The Moderating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

Two competing accounts describe how POS shapes breach-driven outcomes. The buffering hypothesis holds that high POS cushions employees against the negative consequences of breach, consistent with the reciprocity norm of organizational support theory (Rogozinska-Pawelczyk & Gadomska-Lila, 2025; Galanis et al., 2024). The accentuation hypothesis instead proposes that high-POS employees hold stronger relational expectations, so that a subsequent breach—and, by extension, deliberate marginalization through QF—is experienced as a sharper betrayal (Gulzar et al., 2024; Park & Viswesvaran, 2026; Farooqi et al., 2023). Because QF represents a particularly acute and targeted violation of support expectations, the present model tests POS as a moderator of the QF-TI path directly, allowing the data to adjudicate between the two competing accounts:

H8: *Perceived Organizational Support moderates the relationship between Quiet Firing and Turnover Intention.*

Critical Gaps and Theoretical Contribution

There are four gaps which can be justified for the present design. First, the parallel use of QQ and QF is not often modeled within the same design (Gray et al., 2025). Second, the relationship between PCB and QQ/QF is not always an antecedent-consequent relationship, but sometimes a mediating one, which is not yet empirically tested (Nawangarsi et al., 2025). Third, although some other literature neighbouring to the current study argues for accentuation (Gulzar et al., 2024; Rogozinska-Pawelczyk & Gadomska-Lila, 2025) and buffering (Mills et al., 1996; Maitatsine & Kumar, 2021) roles of POS in the same mediated relationship, the mediation analysis has not been investigated. Fourth, most of the evidence to date is cross-sectional and based on samples in the West and East Asian countries or Gen-Z, which has meant the nexus of QQ-QF has received little attention in South Asian health systems with acute workforce shortages and hierarchical systems (Gulzar et al., 2024; Galanis et al., 2024). In the light of these gaps, the present study aims to investigate and fill gaps by testing an integrated mediated-moderation model with healthcare workers in Punjab, Pakistan.

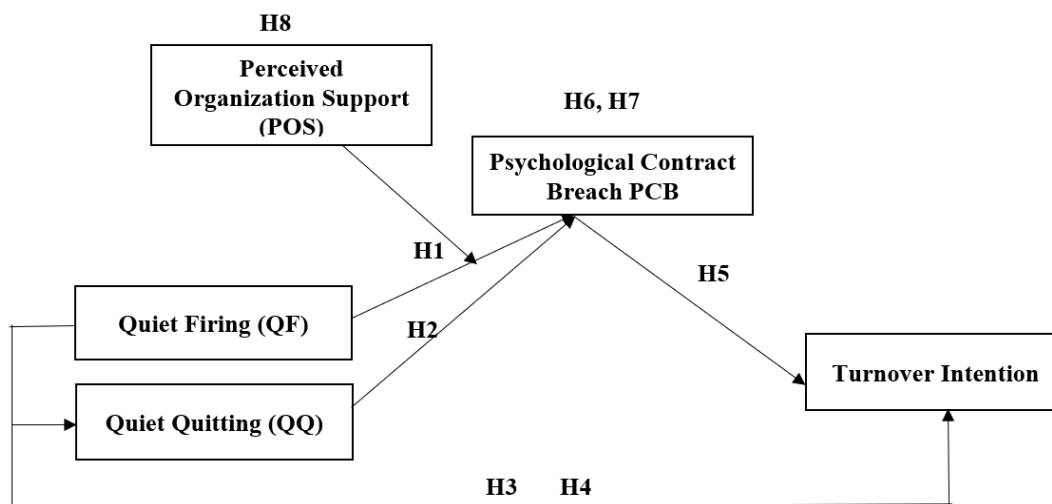


Figure 1. Hypothesized mediated-moderation model.

Research Methodology

Research Approach and Design

Following previous quantitative HRM studies in the healthcare industry in Pakistan (Gulzar et al., 2024), the study follows a paradigm of positivist and deductive and quantitative approach to test the hypotheses derived from Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1989; Morrison & Robinson, 1997), and Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986). A cross-sectional survey design was used because this study is based on the prevalence of variables measured at one cross section of time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and a longitudinal design would probably strengthen causal

inference; however, due to logistical requirements of repeated institutional access, a cross-sectional design is the norm in this literature (Gulzar et al., 2024).

Population and Sample

The target population included registered nurses, paramedical staff and allied health professionals working in public and private hospitals in the most populous province of Punjab, Pakistan, where the highest number of formal health care facilities are located (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023). To ensure that heterogeneity in HRM practices and psychological-contract expectations are captured, both sectors were sampled (Gulzar et al., 2024). The context of study was healthcare due to Pakistan's critical shortage of nurses (more than 200,000 short of the requirement across the country per World Health Organization, 2022) and because the workplace conditions in healthcare are particularly likely to lead to QQ and QF, as these conditions include isolation, limited career advancement, inequitable workloads, and low recognition within workplaces (Gulzar et al., 2024; Galanis et al., 2024). The accessible population was limited to staff who were permanently employed, and who had at least one year of tenure with the organization, because the perception of a psychological contract takes time to form (Rousseau, 1989; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). The sampling strategy and data collection process of this study will follow the steps outlined below: A stratified random sampling design was used to ensure proportional representation of the institutions, based on sector (public/private) and type of hospital (tertiary/secondary care). Systematic random sampling was used in each stratum on staff rosters provided by HR departments of participating institutions. Following the Hair et al. (2019) recommendation, the minimum sample size was determined as $10 \times$ the largest number of paths directed to each endogenous construct ($3 \text{ predictors} \times 10 = 30$) and the target sample size was set at 400 responses ($400 - 30 = 370$). Data were collected from 16 hospitals (including minimum two hospitals from the public and 2 private hospitals in each city) that had 200 or more beds, registered with the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC), and had formal permission from the hospital to collect data from them. The final sample analyzed was made up of 290 valid, permanent employees. It was a paper-structured, self-administered questionnaire, as there was limited access to digital devices during the shifts and the comparatively high response rate of paper survey in the institutional settings in Pakistan (Gulzar et al., 2024). The survey was administered by trained research assistants at the site and was completed anonymously and voluntarily, with completed questionnaires returned in sealed envelopes to minimize social desirability bias in an organizational hierarchy (Gulzar et al., 2024). Procedural remedies used to deal with common method bias were the same used by Podsakoff et al. (2003): physical separation of predictor and outcome item blocks, explicit assurance that there were no "right" answers and anonymous, sealed submission.

Measures

All constructs were measured with previously validated multi-item scales on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree (SD) to 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)), consistent with comparable Pakistani healthcare HRM studies (Gulzar et al., 2024; Faizan et al., 2025). Quiet Quitting was measured with Patel et al.'s (2025) nine-item multidimensional scale (effort restriction, citizenship withdrawal, boundary setting; $\alpha > .80$ in the validation sample). Quiet Firing was measured with Anand et al.'s (2024) eight-item scale, subsequently validated among Turkish healthcare professionals (Karadas & Cevik, 2025), capturing exclusion, withheld feedback, and undesirable task assignment. Psychological Contract Breach was measured with Robinson and Morrison's (2000) five-item scale, widely used in Pakistani nursing samples (Gulzar et al., 2024; $\alpha > .85$). Perceived Organizational Support was measured with the eight-item short form of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), previously used in Pakistani healthcare research (Gulzar et al., 2024). Turnover Intention was measured with Cammann et al.'s (1979) three-item scale, validated in healthcare samples by Hur (2025) and Dhoopar et al. (2026). A pilot test with 30 healthcare workers from institutions outside the main sample assessed item clarity and preliminary item-total correlations; items below .30 were reviewed prior to fielding.

Data Analysis and Results

Data Analysis Strategy

Data were screened and prepared in IBM SPSS 26 prior to hypothesis testing. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), implemented in SmartPLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2022), was used for hypothesis testing following the two-stage procedure recommended by Hair et al. (2019). PLS-SEM was selected over covariance-based SEM because the model combines a moderate sample size with a prediction-oriented research aim, conditions under which PLS-SEM is preferred (Hair et al., 2019), and because it is the dominant method in comparable Pakistani healthcare HRM research (Gulzar et al., 2024).

Sample Profile and Data Screening

The analyzed sample comprised 290 permanently employed healthcare workers meeting the eligibility criteria specified in Chapter 4 (≥ 1 -year tenure; public or private hospitals in Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, or Rawalpindi). No missing data, out-of-range values, or duplicate identifiers were detected. Respondents were predominantly nurses (55.2%), from public-sector (59.3%) and tertiary-care (67.6%) institutions, and female (56.9%); the modal age band was 30-39 years (36.6%), and organizational tenure was concentrated in the 1-3-year (32.1%) and 4-6-year (29.0%) bands (Table 1).

Table 1

Sample Demographic Profile (N = 290)

Variable	Category	n	%
Role	Nurse	160	55.2%
	Paramedical Staff	72	24.8%
	Allied Health Professional	58	20.0%
Sector	Public Sector Hospital	172	59.3%
	Private Sector Hospital	118	40.7%
Hospital Type	Tertiary Care Hospital	196	67.6%
	Secondary Care Hospital	94	32.4%
City	Lahore	103	35.5%
	Faisalabad	65	22.4%
	Multan	64	22.1%
	Rawalpindi	58	20.0%
Gender	Female	165	56.9%
	Male	115	39.7%
	Prefer not to say	10	3.4%
Age Group	22-29	90	31.0%
	30-39	106	36.6%
	40-49	70	24.1%
	50+	24	8.3%
Tenure	1-3 years	93	32.1%

	4-6 years	84	29.0%
	7-10 years	74	25.5%
	More than 10 years	39	13.4%
Employment Status	Permanent	290	100.0%

Note. N = 290.

Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Model Assessment

Construct-level means clustered near the scale midpoint (2.98-3.05 on a 5-point scale), and skewness (-0.06 to 0.04) and kurtosis (-0.70 to -0.64) values fell well within the ± 1 range generally considered acceptable for PLS-SEM (Table 2). All 33 indicator loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2019), ranging from 0.743 (QQ9) to 0.896 (TI2). Internal consistency reliability was confirmed for all five constructs (Cronbach's alpha = 0.871-0.929; composite reliability = 0.921-0.940), and convergent validity was supported by AVE values of 0.637-0.796, all above the 0.50 threshold (Table 3).

Table 2

Construct-Level Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Psychological Contract Breach (PCB)	2.99	1.10	-0.00	-0.64
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	2.98	1.11	-0.01	-0.69
Quiet Firing (QF)	3.05	1.09	-0.06	-0.64
Quiet Quitting (QQ)	3.05	1.11	-0.03	-0.70
Turnover Intention (TI)	3.00	1.09	0.04	-0.67

Note. Item-level responses on a 5-point Likert scale, averaged to the construct level.

Table 3

Measurement Model: Indicator Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Construct/Item	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Psychological Contract Breach (PCB)		0.893	0.921	0.701
PCB1	0.870			
PCB2	0.808			
PCB3	0.861			
PCB4	0.814			

PCB5	0.833			
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)		0.924	0.938	0.653
POS1	0.816			
POS2	0.828			
POS3	0.831			
POS4	0.770			
POS5	0.863			
POS6	0.783			
POS7	0.766			
POS8	0.804			
Quiet Firing (QF)		0.923	0.937	0.649
QF1	0.831			
QF2	0.825			
QF3	0.800			
QF4	0.773			
QF5	0.810			
QF6	0.805			
QF7	0.781			
QF8	0.819			
Quiet Quitting (QQ)		0.929	0.940	0.637
QQ1	0.812			
QQ2	0.805			
QQ3	0.837			
QQ4	0.777			
QQ5	0.773			
QQ6	0.842			

QQ7	0.793			
QQ8	0.799			
QQ9	0.743			
Turnover Intention (TI)		0.871	0.921	0.796
TI1	0.894			
TI2	0.896			
TI3	0.886			

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. All loadings exceed .70, all alpha/CR values exceed .70, and all AVE values exceed .50 (Hair et al., 2019).

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed via the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). For every construct, the square root of AVE on the diagonal exceeded its correlations with all other constructs (Table 4), and all HTMT values remained below the conservative 0.85 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015), with the highest observed value being 0.649 between PCB and TI (Table 5). Both criteria therefore support discriminant validity among the five constructs.

Table 4

Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	QQ	QF	PCB	POS	TI
QQ	0.798	0.337	0.524	-0.088	0.449
QF	0.337	0.806	0.514	-0.183	0.445
PCB	0.524	0.514	0.837	-0.097	0.573
POS	-0.088	-0.183	-0.097	0.808	-0.085
TI	0.449	0.445	0.573	-0.085	0.892

Note. Diagonal values (bold in typical presentation) are the square root of AVE for each construct.

Table 5

Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	QQ	QF	PCB	POS	TI
QQ	-	0.365	0.575	0.101	0.500
QF	-	-	0.566	0.198	0.497

PCB	-	-	-	0.107	0.649
POS	-	-	-	-	0.101
TI	-	-	-	-	-

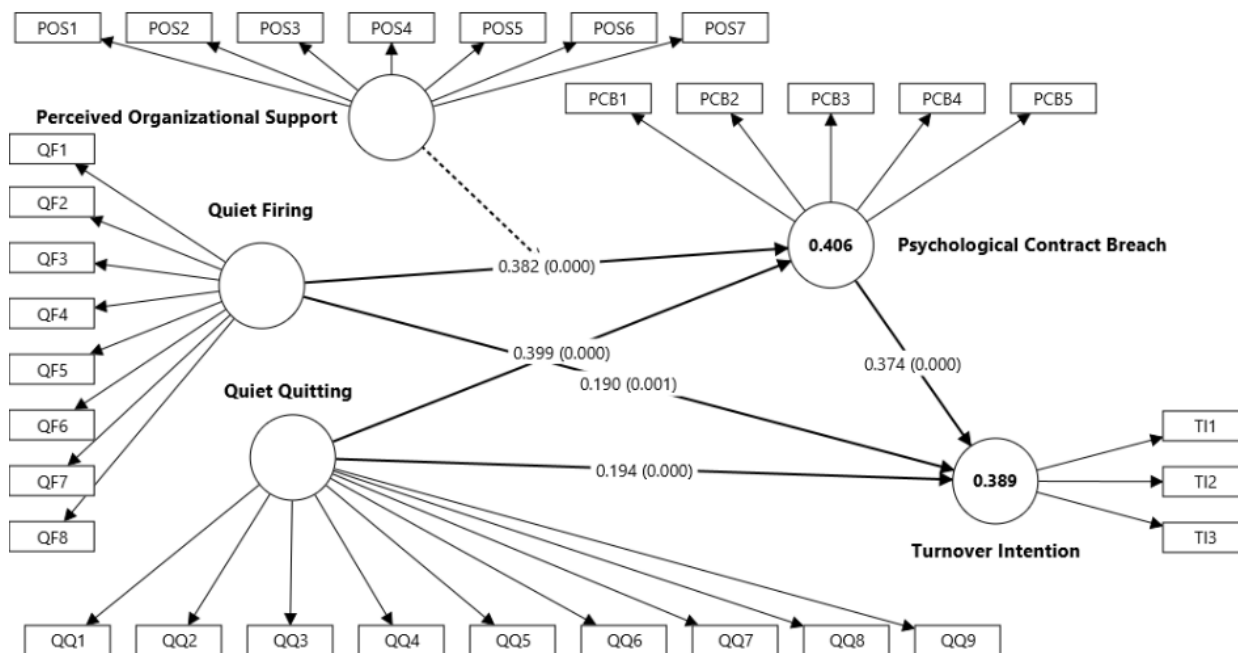
Note. All HTMT values fall below the conservative .85 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015).

Common Method Bias

Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003) was conducted on all indicators. The first unrotated factor accounted for 31.59% of total variance, well below the 50% threshold conventionally used as a warning sign, indicating that common method bias is unlikely to materially distort the observed relationships. This result complements the procedural remedies (temporal and psychological separation of predictor/outcome items, anonymity assurance, sealed-envelope submission) and the marker-variable technique described in Chapter 4.

Structural Model Assessment

Direct, interaction, and indirect effects were assessed via standardized path coefficients with bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (5,000 resamples). All hypothesized paths were statistically significant and in the expected direction (Figure 2, Table 6).



Quiet Firing was positively related to Psychological Contract Breach ($\beta = 0.380$, $t = 7.501$, $p < .001$; H1 supported), as was Quiet Quitting ($\beta = 0.396$, $t = 8.168$, $p < .001$; H2 supported). Quiet Firing ($\beta = 0.179$, $t = 3.170$, $p = .002$; H3 supported) and Quiet Quitting ($\beta = 0.195$, $t = 3.737$, $p < .001$; H4 supported) each retained significant direct effects on Turnover Intention net of Psychological Contract Breach. Psychological Contract Breach was, in turn, the strongest direct predictor of Turnover Intention ($\beta = 0.378$, $t = 6.375$, $p < .001$; H5 supported). The Quiet Firing $\times$ POS interaction term was significant and negative ($\beta = -0.180$, $t = -4.374$, $p < .001$; H8 supported), indicating a buffering pattern discussed further below.

Table 6*Structural Model: Direct and Interaction Effects*

Hyp.	Path	β	t	p	95% CI	Decision
H1	Quiet Firing -> Psychological Contract Breach	0.380	7.501	< .001	[0.281, 0.480]	Supported
H2	Quiet Quitting -> Psychological Contract Breach	0.396	8.168	< .001	[0.300, 0.489]	Supported
H3	Quiet Firing -> Turnover Intention (direct)	0.179	3.170	= .002	[0.068, 0.288]	Supported
H4	Quiet Quitting -> Turnover Intention (direct)	0.195	3.737	< .001	[0.096, 0.297]	Supported
H5	Psychological Contract Breach -> Turnover Intention	0.378	6.375	< .001	[0.259, 0.494]	Supported
H8	Quiet Firing x POS -> Turnover Intention (interaction)	-0.180	-4.374	< .001	[-0.262, -0.098]	Supported

Note. Bootstrapped output, 5,000 resamples; CI = bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence interval.

Explanatory and Predictive Power

The model explained a moderate share of variance in both endogenous constructs: $R^2 = .403$ for Psychological Contract Breach and $R^2 = .417$ for Turnover Intention, both closer to Hair et al.'s (2019) 0.33 ("moderate") benchmark than to the 0.19 or 0.67 benchmarks. Q^2 values obtained via blindfolding were 0.393 (PCB) and 0.396 (TI); both exceed zero, confirming the model's predictive relevance for both endogenous constructs (Table 7).

Table 7*Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)*

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Q^2 (blindfolding)
Psychological Contract Breach	0.403	0.393
Turnover Intention	0.417	0.396

Note. R^2 interpreted as weak (.19), moderate (.33), or substantial (.67); $Q^2 > 0$ indicates predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019).

Effect sizes (f^2) indicated that Quiet Firing ($f^2 = .215$) and Quiet Quitting ($f^2 = .232$) each exerted a medium-sized effect on Psychological Contract Breach, whereas the direct effects of Quiet Firing ($f^2 = .040$) and Quiet Quitting ($f^2 = .047$) on Turnover Intention, the effect of Psychological Contract Breach on Turnover Intention ($f^2 = .146$), and the QF $\times$ POS interaction ($f^2 = .056$) were each small in magnitude (Cohen, 1992; Table 8).

Table 8*Effect Sizes (f^2)*

Path	f^2	Interpretation
Quiet Firing -> Psychological Contract Breach	0.215	Medium
Quiet Quitting -> Psychological Contract Breach	0.232	Medium
Psychological Contract Breach -> Turnover Intention	0.146	Small
Quiet Firing -> Turnover Intention	0.040	Small
Quiet Quitting -> Turnover Intention	0.047	Small
Interaction (QF x POS) -> Turnover Intention	0.056	Small

Note. Benchmarks: .02 = small, .15 = medium, .35 = large (Cohen, 1992).

Moderation Analysis (H8): Perceived Organizational Support

H8 proposed that POS moderates the Quiet Firing-Turnover Intention relationship. The interaction term was significant and negative ($\beta = -0.180$, $p < .001$). Simple-slope analysis at ± 1 SD of POS (Dawson, 2014) showed that the positive effect of Quiet Firing on Turnover Intention was strongest at low POS (simple slope = 0.359), attenuated at mean POS (0.179), and effectively neutralized at high POS (-0.001; Table 9). This pattern is consistent with the buffering hypothesis (Rogozinska-Pawelczyk & Gadowska-Lila, 2025; Galanis et al., 2024) rather than the accentuation hypothesis reported in some nursing samples (Gulzar et al., 2024; Park & Viswesvaran, 2026): perceived organizational support weakens, rather than intensifies, the translation of quiet firing into turnover intention in this sample.

Table 9*Simple Slope Analysis: Quiet Firing -> Turnover Intention at Levels of POS*

Level of Perceived Organizational Support	Simple Slope
-1 SD (low POS)	0.359
Mean POS	0.179
+1 SD (high POS)	-0.001

Note. Simple slopes computed at ± 1 SD of the moderator, following Dawson (2014).

Mediation Analysis (H6, H7): Psychological Contract Breach

H6 and H7 proposed that PCB mediates the QF-TI and QQ-TI relationships, respectively. Both bootstrapped indirect effects excluded zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2018): Quiet Firing -> PCB -> Turnover Intention, $\beta = 0.239$, 95% CI [0.172, 0.314]; Quiet Quitting -> PCB -> Turnover Intention, $\beta = 0.244$, 95% CI [0.174, 0.321] (Table 10). Because the direct effects of both Quiet Firing (H3) and Quiet Quitting (H4) on Turnover Intention remained significant after PCB was entered, both mediation patterns are best classified as partial (complementary) mediation, with PCB accounting for 57.2% of the total effect of Quiet Firing on Turnover Intention (VAF) and 55.6% of the total effect of Quiet Quitting on Turnover Intention.

Table 10*Mediation Analysis: Indirect Effects of Psychological Contract Breach*

Effect	Estimate	95% CI	Decision
H6: Indirect effect, Quiet Firing (a x b)	0.239	[0.172, 0.314]	Significant
Direct effect, Quiet Firing (c')	0.179	-	Significant
Total effect, Quiet Firing (c)	0.418	-	-
VAF, Quiet Firing	57.2%	-	Partial mediation
H7: Indirect effect, Quiet Quitting (a x b)	0.244	[0.174, 0.321]	Significant
Direct effect, Quiet Quitting (c')	0.195	-	Significant
Total effect, Quiet Quitting (c)	0.438	-	-
VAF, Quiet Quitting	55.6%	-	Partial mediation

Note. Bootstrapped indirect effects, 5,000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2018). VAF = variance accounted for.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

All eight hypotheses were supported (Table 11). Quiet Firing and Quiet Quitting each significantly predicted Psychological Contract Breach (H1, H2) and Turnover Intention directly (H3, H4); Psychological Contract Breach significantly predicted Turnover Intention (H5) and partially mediated both the Quiet Firing-Turnover Intention and Quiet Quitting-Turnover Intention relationships (H6, H7); and Perceived Organizational Support significantly moderated the Quiet Firing-Turnover Intention relationship in a buffering direction (H8).

Table 11*Summary of Hypothesis Testing*

Hyp.	Statement	Result
H1	Quiet Firing has a significant positive relationship with Psychological Contract Breach.	Supported
H2	Quiet Quitting has a significant positive relationship with Psychological Contract Breach.	Supported
H3	Quiet Firing has a significant positive relationship with Turnover Intention.	Supported
H4	Quiet Quitting has a significant positive relationship with Turnover Intention.	Supported
H5	Psychological Contract Breach has a significant positive relationship with Turnover Intention.	Supported
H6	Psychological Contract Breach mediates the Quiet Firing-Turnover Intention relationship.	Supported (partial mediation)

H7	Psychological Contract Breach mediates the Quiet Quitting-Turnover Intention relationship.	Supported (partial mediation)
H8	Perceived Organizational Support moderates the Quiet Firing-Turnover Intention relationship.	Supported (buffering)

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion of Findings

This study examined whether Psychological Contract Breach (PCB) mediates the effects of Quiet Quitting (QQ) and Quiet Firing (QF) on Turnover Intention (TI) among healthcare workers in Punjab, Pakistan, and whether Perceived Organizational Support (POS) moderates the QF-TI relationship. All eight hypotheses were supported.

Both QF and QQ were significant positive predictors of PCB (H1, H2), indicating that employer-driven marginalization and employee-driven disengagement are each independently associated with employees' perception that the organization has failed to honor its obligations. This is consistent with the perception-based nature of psychological contracts described by Rousseau (1989) and with Gray et al.'s (2025) finding that unmet job-characteristic and justice promises predict quiet-quitting behavior; it extends that logic to show that QF operates through the same breach-appraisal mechanism. The comparatively larger effect of QQ on PCB ($\beta = 0.396$) relative to QF ($\beta = 0.380$) suggests that self-initiated disengagement may be at least as diagnostic of breach perceptions as employer-initiated marginalization, a nuance not previously reported in the literature.

However, after controlling for PCB (H3, H4), both QF and QQ still had direct effects on TI, and the mediation analysis further indicated that PCB partially, but not fully, mediated the relationships between QF and TI (H6, VAF = 57.2%) and between QQ and TI (H7, VAF = 55.6%). The pattern confirms the theoretical distinction between QQ as psychological withdrawal while still working and TI as a more advanced, exit-oriented stage of cognition (Lu et al., 2023): About half of the total effect of each of these constructs on TI goes through channels other than breach appraisal, such as accumulated exhaustion and anticipatory disengagement (Gün et al., 2025). The strength of the PCB-TI path ($\beta = 0.378$, H5) confirms that PCB is one of the strongest proximal variables related to TI in literature (Faizan et al., 2025; Yu & Hamid, 2024; Ebrahimzadeh et al., 2024). A significant negative QF $\times$ POS interaction (H8) suggests a buffering effect: the positive effect of QF was smaller at higher POS, and was not significant at the highest POS. This finding is consistent with the buffering evidence from the public-sector employees in Poland reported by Rogozinska-Pawelczyk and Gadomska-Lila (2025) and the accentuation pattern reported among nurses by Gulzar et al. (2024) and Park and Viswesvaran (2026), in which high-POS employees felt the effects of breach more strongly (Salahuddin et al., 2021). A possible reason for this difference is that the stressor for QF is less specific and more ambiguous, and therefore is less likely to be felt as a violation of relational expectations and more likely to be perceived as a resource to be drawn upon for coping with the stressor. This difference highlights the fact that the direction of the moderating effect of POS could vary depending on the type of stressor (acute vs. chronic and ambiguous) and samples and national context, which should be tested directly in future comparative research.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the study makes three contributions. Firstly, it is one of the earliest to examine QQ and QF as parallel predictors of PCB instead of separately, as explicitly stated by Gray et al. (2025), where they noted that this is an area that should be explored. Second, it extends the disengagement-to-departure sequence identified by Nawangsari et al. (2025) by placing PCB as a mediating mechanism between QQ/QF and TI, instead of just an antecedent of QQ. Third, the study extends organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) to the specific context of employer-driven marginalization by empirically testing POS as a moderator of the QF-TI relationship and finding a buffering instead of accentuating pattern, which also demonstrates that buffering/accentuation patterns do not, of course, hold true uniformly across stressor type or context as found in the adjacent nursing literature (Gulzar et al., 2024; Park & Viswesvaran, 2026). From a practical point of view, the study results indicate that both employee and employer disengagement can be measured, are actionable, and can predict perceptions of breach and turnover risk in the resource-limited healthcare industry in Pakistan. Given that PCB has the highest direct path to TI, interventions that are visible in the workplace that can directly contribute to the promise-keeping (i.e., communicating consistently about career growth, allocating resources

fairly, and tracking and rewarding performance equitably) should reap disproportionately large retention benefits. Healthcare administrators and nursing directors can help reduce the risk associated with turnover from quiet firing by boosting the explicit organisational support they provide staff, such as prompt responses to requests, appropriate staffing levels and regular recognition of frontline work, especially for those who may be at risk of being swept under the carpet, which buffers the relationship between quiet firing and staff turnover.

Limitations and Future Research

These findings come with a number of caveats. This cross-sectional, single-source design restricts causal inferences; longitudinal or multi-source designs (e.g., supervisor-rated QF) would support making directional inferences. Results may not be generalizable to other regions, sectors or countries due to the limited number of cities surveyed in one province. However, due to the nature of institutional access, the constraints involved do not allow for formal population-level generalizability, even though stratified sampling was conducted within participating hospitals. To replicate the buffering pattern of POS observed here, or to see if the accentuation pattern noted in other nursing samples (Gulzar et al., 2024; Park & Viswesvaran, 2026) appears under other conditions, future studies are needed with additional boundary conditions, such as supervisor support, organizational tenure, and contract type, as well as with non-healthcare and cross-national samples.

Conclusion

In this research, researchers tested a mediated-moderation model between Quiet Quitting and Quiet Firing with Psychological Contract Breach as a mediator and Perceived Organizational Support as a moderator between Quiet Firing and Turnover Intention among 290 HCWs in Punjab, Pakistan. The measurement model showed that the instruments used had good reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity, and all the eight hypothesized relationships were supported: Quiet Firing significantly predicted Psychological Contract Breach (H1); Quiet Quitting significantly predicted Psychological Contract Breach (H2); Psychological Contract Breach significantly predicted Turnover Intention (H5); Psychological Contract Breach partially mediated the relationship between Quiet Firing and Turnover Intention (H6); Psychological Contract Breach partially mediated the relationship between Quiet Quitting and Turnover Intention (H7); Perceived Organizational Support significantly buffered the Quiet Firing-Turnover Intention relationship (H8). These findings together suggest that silent, employee- and employer-driven withdrawal is a far from harmless organizational phenomenon and an antecedent of psychological contract breach and intention to leave that is measurable and occurs simultaneously, especially in the healthcare industry where resources are scarce in Pakistan. The study proposes an integrated theoretical framework of QQ and QF as parallel pathways to disengagement and proposes an evidence-based framework of HRM interventions for enhancing retention of the healthcare workforce, interventions that focus on promise-keeping and making the organization's support visible.

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