

Organizational Justice and Quiet Quitting among University Lecturers: The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

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ARTICLE INFO



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Keywords: Employee Engagement; Organizational Justice; Private Higher Education; Quiet Quitting; Social Exchange Theory

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.33096/jmb.v13i2.1699>

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effect of Organizational Justice on Quiet Quitting, while investigating the mediating role of Employee Engagement. A quantitative research design was employed using a survey of 175 lecturers from private universities. Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4. The findings indicate that organizational justice significantly enhances employee engagement and simultaneously reduces lecturers' tendency toward quiet quitting. Employee engagement also significantly decreases quiet quitting and partially mediates the relationship between organizational justice and quiet quitting, demonstrating that fair organizational practices influence lecturers' workplace behaviour both directly and indirectly through stronger psychological attachment to their work. The findings further suggest that strengthening organizational justice through transparent governance, equitable workload distribution, objective performance evaluation, and supportive organizational practices represents an effective strategy for enhancing lecturers' engagement and minimizing quiet quitting in private universities.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh keadilan organisasi terhadap quiet quitting, sekaligus menyelidiki peran mediasi keterikatan karyawan. Desain penelitian kuantitatif diterapkan melalui survei terhadap 175 dosen dari perguruan tinggi swasta. Data dianalisis menggunakan metode PLS-SEM dengan perangkat lunak SmartPLS 4. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keadilan organisasi secara signifikan meningkatkan keterikatan karyawan dan sekaligus mengurangi kecenderungan dosen untuk melakukan quiet quitting. Keterikatan karyawan juga terbukti secara signifikan menurunkan quiet quitting dan memediasi sebagian hubungan antara keadilan organisasi dan quiet quitting, hal ini menunjukkan bahwa praktik organisasi yang adil memengaruhi perilaku kerja dosen, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung melalui ikatan psikologis yang lebih kuat terhadap pekerjaan mereka. Lebih lanjut, temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa penguatan keadilan organisasi melalui tata kelola yang transparan, pembagian beban kerja yang merata, evaluasi kinerja yang objektif, serta praktik organisasi yang suportif merupakan strategi efektif untuk meningkatkan keterikatan dosen dan meminimalkan quiet quitting di perguruan tinggi swasta.



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INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are increasingly operating in a highly dynamic environment characterized by technological disruption, increasing accountability demands, global competition, and rising expectations regarding academic performance. Universities are expected to simultaneously deliver excellence in teaching, research productivity, community engagement, and institutional governance while maintaining the well-being and commitment of academic staff. Within this context, lecturers represent one of the most valuable strategic assets because their performance directly influences educational quality, student outcomes, institutional reputation, and long-term organizational sustainability. Consequently, understanding the factors that shape lecturers' attitudes and workplace behaviors has become a critical concern for higher education management scholars and practitioners (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Recent evidence indicates that employee disengagement has become a growing challenge across various organizational settings, including higher education institutions. Global reports suggest that

low employee engagement remains one of the most pressing organizational problems, generating substantial losses in productivity, innovation, and organizational effectiveness (Gallup, 2023). Employees who are psychologically detached from their work are less likely to contribute discretionary effort, demonstrate organizational citizenship behavior, or actively participate in organizational development initiatives (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Within universities, declining engagement may be particularly problematic because academic work inherently requires employees to perform numerous activities beyond formal job descriptions, including mentoring students, participating in committees, conducting research, publishing scientific work, and contributing to institutional development (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

In recent years, the phenomenon known as quiet quitting has emerged as a contemporary manifestation of employee disengagement. Quiet quitting refers to a condition in which employees intentionally restrict their efforts to the minimum requirements specified in their formal job descriptions and avoid additional responsibilities or discretionary contributions (Sitorus & Rachmawati, 2024). Unlike actual turnover, quiet quitting does not involve employees physically leaving their organizations; instead, employees remain within the organization while psychologically withdrawing from their work roles. This phenomenon has attracted significant academic and managerial attention because it often precedes declining productivity, reduced organizational commitment, lower job satisfaction, and weakened organizational performance (Sitorus & Rachmawati, 2024; Margaretha & Panggabean, 2025). Furthermore, quiet quitting has been associated with various forms of psychological withdrawal, including reduced work involvement, diminished initiative, and reluctance to engage in extra-role activities that are essential for organizational success (Sitorus & Rachmawati, 2024). The relevance of quiet quitting is particularly evident in higher education institutions where lecturers are expected to contribute beyond contractual obligations. Academic responsibilities increasingly extend beyond classroom teaching and encompass research publication, curriculum development, accreditation preparation, student supervision, community service activities, and institutional governance. As universities continue to face resource constraints and increasing performance pressures, lecturers may become vulnerable to psychological withdrawal and disengagement. The emergence of quiet quitting among lecturers may therefore have serious implications for institutional effectiveness because many academic activities depend heavily on voluntary participation and discretionary effort rather than strictly formal obligations (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006).

The relevance of quiet quitting becomes even more apparent in the context of private higher education institutions in Indonesia, where lecturers are increasingly confronted with expanding academic and institutional responsibilities. Beyond fulfilling the three core missions of higher education, lecturers are expected to produce scientific publications, complete Lecturer Workload Reports (BKD), pursue academic promotion, participate in accreditation activities, supervise students, and contribute to institutional governance. These growing responsibilities are not always accompanied by proportional organizational support, equitable workload distribution, or adequate financial rewards. A recent national survey reported that Indonesian lecturers work an average of 69.64 hours per week, substantially exceeding the standard 40-hour workweek, while approximately 76.5% undertake additional employment to supplement their income (Karso, 2025). Such conditions indicate a considerable imbalance between workload and lecturers' welfare, potentially weakening their psychological attachment to their institutions and increasing the likelihood of withdrawal behaviours, including quiet quitting.

This national phenomenon is also reflected in private universities in Makassar. Previous studies reported that lecturers face increasing job demands characterized by work overload, time pressure, and role ambiguity, with role ambiguity significantly affecting lecturer performance (Ainun, 2024).

Furthermore, research involving lecturers from private universities in Makassar demonstrated that increasing job demands contributed to burnout and intensified turnover intention, indicating that academic staff are increasingly exposed to organizational pressures that may weaken their psychological attachment to their institutions (Razak et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings suggest that the combination of escalating academic demands, limited organizational resources, and growing psychological pressure creates conditions conducive to the emergence of quiet quitting among lecturers.

From the perspective of organizational behavior, organizational justice has consistently been identified as one of the most influential predictors of employee attitudes and behaviors. Organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions regarding the fairness of organizational outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment, and information dissemination within the workplace (Colquitt, 2001). Extensive empirical evidence suggests that employees who perceive fairness in organizational practices tend to demonstrate stronger organizational commitment, higher job satisfaction, greater trust in management, and more positive workplace behaviors (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Colquitt et al., 2013). Conversely, perceptions of unfairness often trigger negative emotional reactions, dissatisfaction, withdrawal behavior, and reduced willingness to contribute beyond formal job requirements (Greenberg, 1990; Colquitt et al., 2013). Within higher education institutions, perceptions of organizational justice become increasingly important because academic employees are highly sensitive to issues related to workload distribution, promotion systems, research opportunities, performance evaluation, compensation, and decision-making transparency. Fair organizational practices create positive perceptions that lecturers are valued and respected by their institutions, thereby strengthening their psychological attachment to the organization. Several studies conducted in educational settings have demonstrated that organizational justice significantly influences positive work attitudes and employee engagement among academic staff (Eledora et al., 2024; Harahap et al., 2023). Research involving private university lecturers further revealed that organizational justice positively contributes to lecturer engagement and various desirable organizational outcomes (Harahap et al., 2023).

The mechanism through which organizational justice influences employee behavior can be explained through Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). Social Exchange Theory proposes that relationships between employees and organizations are built upon reciprocal exchanges of benefits and obligations. When employees perceive that they receive fair treatment, support, and respect from their organizations, they tend to reciprocate through positive attitudes and constructive behaviors. Conversely, when employees perceive inequity or unfairness, they may reduce their contributions as a form of negative reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Saks, 2006). In organizational settings, employee engagement is often viewed as a key manifestation of this reciprocal exchange process because employees who experience favorable organizational treatment are more likely to invest cognitive, emotional, and behavioral resources into their work roles (Saks, 2006; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Employee engagement has emerged as one of the most important constructs in contemporary human resource management literature. Employee engagement reflects a positive work-related psychological state characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, energy, and active involvement in work activities (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Numerous studies have demonstrated that engaged employees exhibit higher levels of performance, creativity, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior compared with less engaged employees (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). More importantly, recent empirical evidence suggests that employee engagement may function as a protective factor against withdrawal behaviors and disengagement-related outcomes (Eledora et al., 2024; Sitorus & Rachmawati, 2024). Therefore, employee engagement may serve as a critical psychological mechanism linking organizational justice and quiet quitting behavior.

Despite the growing body of literature on organizational justice and employee engagement, several important research gaps remain. First, most previous studies have examined organizational justice as an antecedent of positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Colquitt et al., 2013). Comparatively fewer studies have investigated its role in reducing contemporary forms of employee withdrawal behavior, particularly quiet quitting. Second, although quiet quitting has become an increasingly popular topic in organizational research, existing studies have primarily focused on job satisfaction, burnout, work-life conflict, leadership, and generational differences as explanatory factors (Margaretha & Panggabean, 2025; Kusumawati et al., 2025). The potential contribution of organizational justice as an antecedent of quiet quitting remains underexplored. Third, empirical evidence concerning the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between organizational justice and quiet quitting remains limited, particularly within higher education institutions. Previous studies generally investigated engagement as either an outcome variable or a predictor of performance-related outcomes rather than as a mediating mechanism explaining how organizational justice shapes employee withdrawal behavior (Eledora et al., 2024; Harahap et al., 2023). Finally, studies examining quiet quitting among lecturers in private universities remain scarce despite the strategic importance of private higher education institutions in Indonesia. This limitation suggests the need for additional empirical evidence capable of explaining the antecedents and mechanisms underlying quiet quitting behavior among academic staff.

Accordingly, this study contributes to the literature by extending the investigation of quiet quitting to lecturers at private universities in Indonesia, whose professional responsibilities differ substantially from those of employees in conventional organizational settings due to the integration of teaching, research, community service, student supervision, accreditation activities, and institutional governance. Beyond introducing a new empirical context, this study conceptualizes quiet quitting as a form of psychological withdrawal reflected in lecturers' reduced discretionary academic contributions. Furthermore, by drawing on Social Exchange Theory, this study explains how organizational justice discourages quiet quitting through the mediating role of employee engagement, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanism underlying withdrawal behaviour in private higher education institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW and HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical Foundation

Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides the theoretical foundation for explaining employees' attitudes and behaviors within organizations. Blau (1964) proposed that relationships between employees and organizations are built upon reciprocal exchanges, whereby favorable organizational treatment encourages employees to reciprocate through positive attitudes and constructive workplace behaviors. Unlike economic exchanges, social exchanges are based on trust, mutual respect, and long-term obligations, making employees' perceptions of organizational treatment a critical determinant of their behavioral responses (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Within organizational settings, SET has been widely adopted to explain how organizational practices influence employee engagement, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and withdrawal behavior (Saks, 2006; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Employees who perceive fairness and support from their organizations are more likely to develop stronger psychological attachment and voluntarily contribute beyond formal job requirements. Conversely, unfavorable organizational treatment weakens reciprocal relationships, resulting in lower engagement and greater psychological withdrawal. Therefore, Social Exchange Theory provides an appropriate

theoretical framework for explaining the relationships among organizational justice, employee engagement, and quiet quitting proposed in this study.

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice reflects employees' overall perceptions regarding the fairness of organizational policies, managerial decisions, interpersonal treatment, and organizational procedures (Greenberg, 1990; Colquitt, 2001). Fairness perceptions play a fundamental role in shaping employees' trust, motivation, commitment, and behavioral responses because they signal the extent to which organizations value employees' contributions (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Colquitt et al., 2001). Consequently, organizational justice has become one of the most influential organizational factors affecting employees' psychological and behavioral outcomes. Recent empirical studies consistently demonstrate that organizational justice contributes to higher employee engagement, stronger organizational commitment, improved job satisfaction, and greater organizational citizenship behavior across various organizational settings. Within higher education institutions, lecturers continuously evaluate fairness in workload allocation, promotion opportunities, performance evaluation, research support, and institutional decision-making. Fair organizational practices strengthen lecturers' confidence in university management and encourage greater involvement in academic responsibilities beyond formal teaching duties. Consequently, organizational justice is expected to become an important organizational resource capable of strengthening employee engagement while simultaneously reducing lecturers' tendency to engage in withdrawal behaviors.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement represents a positive psychological state characterized by employees' enthusiasm, dedication, and active involvement in work activities (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engaged employees willingly invest cognitive, emotional, and behavioral resources because they perceive meaningful relationships with their organizations. Consequently, employee engagement has consistently been recognized as one of the strongest predictors of employee performance, organizational commitment, innovative work behavior, and organizational effectiveness (Saks, 2006). Within higher education institutions, employee engagement plays a particularly important role because lecturers routinely perform numerous discretionary academic activities beyond formal contractual obligations. Engaged lecturers demonstrate greater willingness to conduct research, supervise students, participate in curriculum development, contribute to accreditation processes, and support institutional initiatives. Therefore, employee engagement is considered an important psychological mechanism through which organizational practices influence lecturers' workplace behavior.

Quiet Quitting

Quiet quitting has recently emerged as an important topic in organizational behavior literature, referring to employees' deliberate decision to limit their work contributions to minimum contractual requirements while avoiding discretionary work behaviors beyond their formal responsibilities (Sitorus & Rachmawati, 2024). Unlike turnover intention, quiet quitting does not involve employees leaving the organization but rather reflects a gradual process of psychological withdrawal characterized by declining work involvement, reduced initiative, and limited organizational participation. Recent studies indicate that quiet quitting is associated with declining employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, work-life imbalance, inadequate organizational support, and perceptions of organizational injustice (Margaretha & Panggabean, 2025). Although the phenomenon has attracted increasing scholarly attention, empirical evidence remains concentrated within business organizations, healthcare institutions, and public organizations, while studies examining quiet quitting among academic staff remain relatively limited. Considering that

lecturers are expected to perform various voluntary academic responsibilities beyond classroom teaching, understanding organizational factors capable of minimizing quiet quitting has become increasingly important for maintaining institutional effectiveness. In higher education, quiet quitting may be reflected in lecturers' reduced willingness to engage in discretionary academic activities, such as research collaboration, student supervision, accreditation tasks, committee participation, and community service, while continuing to fulfil their formal teaching responsibilities. This perspective highlights that quiet quitting among lecturers is more closely associated with declining voluntary academic contributions than with reduced completion of core teaching duties.

Hypothesis Development

Social Exchange Theory argues that employees reciprocate favorable organizational treatment through positive attitudes and constructive workplace behaviors (Blau, 1964). Organizational justice represents one of the most important organizational resources capable of strengthening employee engagement because fair organizational practices increase employees' trust, perceived organizational support, and emotional attachment toward their organizations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Numerous empirical studies consistently report that employees experiencing higher organizational justice demonstrate significantly stronger employee engagement across different organizational contexts. Within higher education institutions, fair treatment regarding workload allocation, promotion opportunities, institutional policies, and managerial decisions is expected to strengthen lecturers' willingness to actively participate in teaching, research, and other academic responsibilities. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed: **H1. Organizational justice positively affects employee engagement among private university lecturers.**

Employee engagement has consistently been recognized as a key determinant of employees' willingness to invest cognitive, emotional, and behavioral resources in their work (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Saks, 2006). Engaged employees demonstrate stronger organizational commitment, greater discretionary effort, and lower tendencies toward withdrawal behavior because they maintain meaningful psychological connections with their organizations. Conversely, employees experiencing low engagement often reduce their work involvement and gradually limit their contributions to activities explicitly required by their formal job descriptions. As quiet quitting fundamentally reflects employees' psychological withdrawal from discretionary work behaviors, lecturers with higher engagement are expected to exhibit lower quiet quitting tendencies. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed: **H2. Employee engagement negatively affects quiet quitting among private university lecturers.**

Organizational justice also directly influences employees' behavioral responses through their perceptions of fairness within organizational relationships. Employees who perceive fair treatment generally maintain stronger trust in organizational management, experience higher job satisfaction, and demonstrate greater willingness to contribute beyond contractual obligations (Colquitt, 2001; Cropanzano et al., 2007). In contrast, perceived injustice often encourages employees to reciprocate negatively by reducing organizational participation and discretionary effort. Within private universities, unfair treatment regarding workload, career advancement, performance appraisal, or institutional policies may gradually encourage lecturers to disengage from organizational activities and restrict their contributions to minimum responsibilities. Therefore, organizational justice is expected to directly reduce lecturers' quiet quitting behavior. **H3. Organizational justice negatively affects quiet quitting among private university lecturers.**

Beyond its direct influence, organizational justice is also expected to affect quiet quitting indirectly through employee engagement. Social Exchange Theory explains that employees evaluate organizational treatment before determining how much psychological, emotional, and behavioral effort they are willing to invest in their work (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Fair organizational practices strengthen employees' perceptions that the organization values their contributions, encouraging them to reciprocate through stronger engagement and greater commitment toward organizational objectives (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Consequently, organizational justice is unlikely to reduce quiet quitting solely through a direct relationship but also by increasing employee engagement. Previous empirical studies consistently demonstrate that organizational justice positively predicts employee engagement, whereas engaged employees exhibit lower withdrawal tendencies because they remain psychologically connected to their work and organizations (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Employees with stronger engagement willingly perform discretionary activities, actively participate in organizational initiatives, and contribute beyond minimum job requirements. Conversely, employees with lower engagement gradually reduce their work involvement and restrict their contributions to formal contractual responsibilities, reflecting the core characteristics of quiet quitting.

Within private higher education institutions, lecturers routinely undertake numerous responsibilities beyond classroom teaching, including conducting research, supervising students, participating in accreditation activities, engaging in community service, and contributing to institutional governance. These activities largely depend on lecturers' psychological attachment and willingness to provide discretionary effort rather than solely on formal contractual obligations. Therefore, lecturers who perceive fair organizational treatment are expected to develop stronger engagement, which subsequently reduces their tendency to engage in quiet quitting. Accordingly, employee engagement is proposed as the psychological mechanism explaining how organizational justice influences quiet quitting among private university lecturers. **H4. Employee engagement mediates the relationship between organizational justice and quiet quitting among private university lecturers.**

The proposed conceptual framework was developed by integrating the principles of Social Exchange Theory with previous empirical findings on organizational justice, employee engagement, and quiet quitting. The model synthesizes theoretical arguments and empirical evidence suggesting that organizational justice directly influences employee engagement and quiet quitting, while employee engagement serves as the underlying psychological mechanism linking organizational justice to quiet quitting. Accordingly, the conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 1.

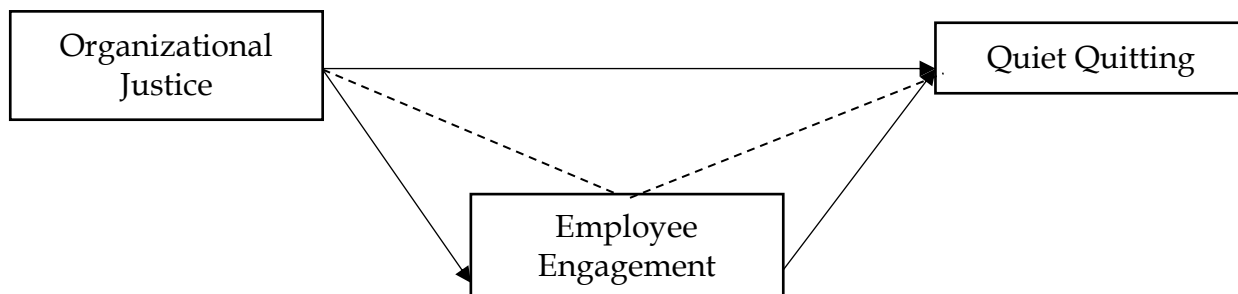


Figure 1 *Conceptual Research*

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design using a cross-sectional survey to examine the relationships among Organizational Justice, Employee Engagement, and Quiet Quitting among lecturers at private universities in Makassar, Indonesia. The study involved 175 permanent lecturers selected through purposive sampling from private universities holding institutional accreditation of Very Good. To ensure that respondents possessed sufficient organizational experience to evaluate organizational justice and workplace behaviour, only permanent lecturers who had completed at least five years of service and received a regular monthly salary from their institutions were included in the study. These criteria were established to ensure that respondents had experienced organizational policies, performance evaluation systems, workload allocation, compensation practices, and institutional governance over a sufficiently long period. Consequently, the respondents were considered capable of providing informed assessments regarding organizational justice, employee engagement, and quiet quitting. The sample size was considered adequate for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis (Hair et al., 2022). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from previously validated measurement instruments. Organizational justice was adapted from Colquitt (2001), employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002), while quiet quitting was adapted from recent empirical studies on quiet quitting behavior. Table 1 presents the measurement constructs, indicator codes, measurement items, and sources adopted in this study. All indicators were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Table 1 *Measurement of Research Constructs*

Construct	Code	Measurement Item	Source
Organizational Justice	OJ1	Organizational decisions are made fairly.	Colquitt (2001)
	OJ2	Organizational procedures are applied consistently.	
	OJ3	My workload is distributed fairly.	
	OJ4	My performance is evaluated fairly.	
	OJ5	Promotion and career advancement opportunities are provided fairly.	
	OJ6	My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.	
	OJ7	Organizational information is communicated honestly and transparently.	
	OJ8	Rewards and recognition are distributed fairly.	
Employee Engagement	EE1	I feel enthusiastic about my work.	Schaufeli et al. (2002)
	EE2	I feel energetic while carrying out my work.	
	EE3	I am proud of the work that I do.	
	EE4	I am fully dedicated to my work.	
	EE5	I remain persistent even when facing work-related difficulties.	
	EE6	I feel inspired while performing my job.	
	EE7	I become deeply absorbed in my work.	
	EE8	I am willing to exert extra effort to achieve institutional goals.	
	EE9	My work provides meaning and purpose in my professional life.	
Quiet Quitting	QQ1	I only perform tasks that are formally assigned to me.	Galanis et al. (2023)

QQ2	I avoid taking responsibilities beyond my formal job duties.
QQ3	I rarely volunteer for activities outside my assigned responsibilities.
QQ4	I limit my work effort to the minimum level expected by my institution.
QQ5	I have little motivation to exceed the performance expected of me.
QQ6	I prefer not to become involved in activities beyond my required duties.
QQ7	I reduce my initiative in contributing to institutional development activities.
QQ8	I feel less motivated to provide discretionary effort for my institution.
QQ9	I contribute only to the extent required by my formal responsibilities.

Source: compiled from various references

RESULT and DISCUSSION

Analysis Results

A total of 175 valid questionnaires were included in the final analysis. The sample size was considered adequate for PLS-SEM, which is suitable for exploratory models and does not require large sample sizes (Hair et al., 2022). All respondents were permanent lecturers employed at private universities in Makassar that held institutional accreditation of Very Good (Baik Sekali), as classified under the Indonesian higher education accreditation system. The respondents had a minimum of five years of teaching experience and received a regular monthly salary from their respective institutions. These inclusion criteria ensured that participants had sufficient organizational experience and long-term exposure to institutional governance, human resource management practices, workload allocation, performance evaluation systems, and organizational policies. Therefore, the respondents were considered capable of providing reliable and experience-based evaluations of organizational justice, employee engagement, and quiet quitting within the context of private higher education institutions in Makassar. The study involved lecturers from four private universities that met these criteria. However, the identities of the participating universities were not disclosed to preserve institutional confidentiality and protect participant anonymity, given the sensitive nature of organizational justice, employee engagement, and quiet quitting in the workplace. Participation was voluntary, and all responses were treated confidentially and used solely for academic research purposes. The sample allocation was initially determined proportionally according to the number of permanent lecturers at each participating university. However, the final number of valid responses varied across institutions because the response rates differed during data collection. Consequently, some universities contributed a larger number of valid questionnaires than others.

Regarding educational qualifications, the respondents were predominantly lecturers holding a master's degree (S2), comprising 123 respondents, while the remainder had completed doctoral (S3) education. In terms of academic rank, 145 respondents held the position of Lecturer (Lektor), indicating that the majority had progressed beyond the entry-level academic rank and possessed substantial experience in teaching, research, and community service activities. Furthermore, 117 respondents were female, making women the dominant group in the sample.

Following the description of the respondents' characteristics, the measurement model was evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of the research constructs before testing the proposed

structural relationships. Consistent with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2022), the evaluation focused on indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity to ensure that each construct was measured accurately and consistently. The results of the measurement model assessment are presented in the following tables.

Table 2 *Outer Loading Test*

Indicators	Employee Engagement	Organizational Justice	Quiet Quitting
EE1	0.792		
EE2	0.823		
EE3	0.787		
EE4	0.764		
EE5	0.779		
EE6	0.824		
EE7	0.802		
EE8	0.830		
EE9	0.821		
OJ1		0.751	
OJ2		0.758	
OJ3		0.716	
OJ4		0.739	
OJ5		0.790	
OJ6		0.752	
OJ7		0.770	
OJ8		0.756	
QQ1			0.772
QQ2			0.817
QQ3			0.830
QQ4			0.818
QQ5			0.789
QQ6			0.762
QQ7			0.811
QQ8			0.759
QQ9			0.794

Source: data processed by researchers 2026

Prior to examining the structural relationships among the proposed constructs, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure that all indicators adequately represented their respective latent constructs. The initial assessment focused on indicator reliability by examining the outer loading values. As presented in Table 2, all measurement items exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022), indicating that each indicator demonstrated satisfactory reliability in measuring its intended construct. Accordingly, all indicators were retained for further analysis without requiring item elimination. The outer loading values ranged from 0.716 to 0.830, indicating that the measurement model achieved an acceptable level of convergent validity. Although slight variations in loading values were observed across the indicators, all items satisfied the recommended criteria for PLS-SEM measurement assessment. These findings suggest that the measurement instruments adapted from previous studies maintained their psychometric properties when applied to the context of permanent lecturers at private universities in Makassar.

Following the confirmation of indicator reliability, further evaluation of the measurement model was undertaken to establish construct reliability and convergent validity. These assessments provide additional evidence regarding the internal consistency of the measurement instruments

and the extent to which the indicators adequately explain their respective latent constructs. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 *Construct Reliability and Validity*

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	(rho_a)	(rho_c)	(AVE)
Employee Engagement	0.931	0.931	0.942	0.644
Organizational Justice	0.892	0.893	0.913	0.569
Quiet Quitting	0.927	0.928	0.939	0.632

Source: data processed by researchers 2026

The reliability and convergent validity of the measurement model were evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As presented in Table 3, all constructs exceeded the recommended thresholds, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70 and AVE values above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2022). These results indicate satisfactory internal consistency reliability and convergent validity, confirming that all constructs were appropriate for subsequent discriminant validity and structural model assessments.

Table 4 *Discriminant Validity (HTMT)*

Construct	Employee Engagement	Organizational Justice	Quiet Quitting
Employee Engagement	-	-	-
Organizational Justice	0.858	-	-
Quiet Quitting	0.824	0.829	-

Source: data processed by researchers 2026

Discriminant validity was subsequently assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion. As presented in Table 4, all HTMT values ranged from 0.824 to 0.858, remaining below the recommended threshold of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2022). These findings indicate that Organizational Justice, Employee Engagement, and Quiet Quitting are conceptually related yet empirically distinct constructs. Following the confirmation of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to examine its explanatory power, predictive relevance, and overall model quality. The assessment included the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2_{predict}), effect size (f^2), Inner VIF, and SRMR, as recommended by Hair et al. (2022). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 *Structural Model Assessment*

Assessment	Construct/Relationship	Value
R^2	Employee Engagement	0.613
	Quiet Quitting	0.650
Q^2_{predict}	Employee Engagement	0.606
	Quiet Quitting	0.565
f^2	Organizational Justice → Employee Engagement	1.586
	Organizational Justice → Quiet Quitting	0.182
	Employee Engagement → Quiet Quitting	0.222
Inner VIF	Organizational Justice → Employee Engagement	1.000
	Organizational Justice → Quiet Quitting	1.000
	Employee Engagement → Quiet Quitting	1.000
Model Fit	SRMR	0,046

Source: data processed by researchers 2026

Following the satisfactory evaluation of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2_{predict}), effect size (f^2), Inner VIF, and SRMR. As presented in Table 6, the model demonstrated satisfactory explanatory and predictive capabilities. The R^2 values indicate that Organizational Justice explained 61.3% of the variance in Employee Engagement, while Organizational Justice and Employee Engagement jointly explained 65.0% of the variance in Quiet Quitting. Moreover, all Q^2_{predict} values were above zero, confirming adequate predictive relevance. The effect size analysis showed large to moderate effects among the proposed relationships, whereas all Inner VIF values were below the recommended threshold, indicating no collinearity issues. Finally, the SRMR value of 0.046 confirmed that the proposed model achieved a good model fit (Hair et al., 2022).

Therefore, each construct adequately captures its intended concept without substantial overlap, allowing the structural relationships examined in the subsequent analysis to be interpreted as genuine associations among different constructs rather than as artifacts of measurement redundancy. With the measurement model demonstrating satisfactory reliability and validity, the proposed structural model was subsequently evaluated through hypothesis testing. This analysis examined whether the empirical data supported the theoretical relationships proposed in this study, including the mediating role of Employee Engagement in the relationship between Organizational Justice and Quiet Quitting. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Hypothesis Testing

Path Relationship	(O)	(M)	(STDEV)	T statistics	P values	Decision
Employee Engagement -> Quiet Quitting	-0.448	-0.448	0.066	6.803	0.000	Approve
Organizational Justice -> Employee Engagement	0.783	0.785	0.022	35.602	0.000	Approve
Organizational Justice -> Quiet Quitting	-0.406	-0.407	0.067	6.067	0.000	Approve
Organizational Justice -> Employee Engagement -> Quiet Quitting	-0.351	-0.352	0.052	6.728	0.000	Approve

Source: data processed by researchers 2026

The findings of this study demonstrate that organizational justice is a fundamental determinant of lecturers' work attitudes and behavioural responses within private higher education institutions. The significant relationships identified in the proposed model indicate that lecturers who perceive fairness in organizational procedures, interpersonal treatment, workload distribution, and performance evaluation are more likely to develop stronger attachment to their institutions while exhibiting lower tendencies toward quiet quitting. These findings suggest that organizational justice should not merely be interpreted as compliance with organizational rules, but rather as a psychological resource that shapes lecturers' perceptions of institutional support and mutual commitment. Such a reciprocal relationship reflects the fundamental proposition of Social Exchange Theory, which argues that employees respond to favourable organizational treatment through positive attitudes and behaviours (Blau, 1964). Similar conclusions have been consistently reported in previous empirical studies demonstrating that organizational justice enhances employee engagement by strengthening trust, perceived organizational support, and leader-member relationships (Aggarwal et al., 2022; Eledora et al., 2024; Karatepe et al., 2023).

DISCUSSION

These findings further reinforce the growing body of literature suggesting that employee engagement represents one of the most important psychological mechanisms underlying positive workplace behaviour. Lecturers who remain cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally engaged

are more willing to contribute beyond formal job responsibilities because they perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with institutional objectives. Consequently, higher engagement reduces the tendency to psychologically withdraw from work, which has recently been conceptualized as quiet quitting. Recent empirical studies increasingly describe quiet quitting as a form of behavioural withdrawal emerging from declining psychological attachment, insufficient organizational appreciation, emotional exhaustion, and weakened relationships between employees and organizations rather than merely reflecting low work motivation (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Serenko, 2024; Kim & Sohn, 2024). The present findings support this perspective by demonstrating that lecturers with stronger work engagement are less likely to limit their contribution to minimum contractual obligations, thereby confirming that engagement serves as an important protective factor against quiet quitting.

Another important finding is that organizational justice continues to exert a direct influence on quiet quitting, even after employee engagement is incorporated into the structural model. This finding indicates that fair organizational practices influence lecturers' workplace behaviour through broader psychological processes beyond work engagement alone. Transparent decision-making, equitable workload allocation, objective performance evaluation, and respectful interpersonal treatment appear to strengthen lecturers' sense of belonging and organizational trust, thereby discouraging withdrawal behaviours. Previous empirical studies have similarly reported that organizational justice contributes to lower withdrawal intentions, stronger organizational commitment, and more constructive discretionary behaviours (Colquitt et al., 2013; Greenberg, 1990; Aggarwal et al., 2022). Within the context of private universities, these findings imply that fair organizational governance not only promotes engagement but also directly shapes lecturers' willingness to remain psychologically connected with their institutions.

One of the principal contributions of this study lies in confirming the partial mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between organizational justice and quiet quitting. The presence of partial mediation demonstrates that organizational justice reduces quiet quitting through two complementary mechanisms. First, fair organizational practices directly discourage lecturers from disengaging psychologically from their work. Second, organizational justice strengthens employee engagement, which subsequently reinforces lecturers' commitment to remain actively involved in academic activities. These findings extend previous empirical evidence by explaining how organizational justice is translated into positive behavioural outcomes through employees' psychological attachment to work. At the same time, the persistence of a significant direct effect indicates that employee engagement is not the only explanatory mechanism. Other organizational and psychological variables, including perceived organizational support, psychological safety, burnout, leadership quality, and work-life balance, may also contribute to explaining quiet quitting behaviour and therefore deserve further investigation in future research (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Margaretha & Panggabean, 2025).

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that reducing quiet quitting among lecturers should not rely exclusively on increasing organizational control or imposing higher performance expectations. Instead, university leaders should focus on developing a fair organizational climate characterized by transparent governance, equitable workload distribution, objective performance appraisal, participative decision-making, and meaningful recognition of lecturers' academic contributions. Such managerial practices are likely to strengthen lecturers' perceptions of organizational justice, cultivate stronger employee engagement, and ultimately reduce the tendency toward quiet quitting. Within Indonesian private universities, these findings emphasize that organizational justice and employee engagement should be regarded as complementary

strategic resources for sustaining lecturers' commitment, improving institutional effectiveness, and enhancing the long-term quality of higher education.

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATION

This study concludes that organizational justice strengthens employee engagement while directly reducing quiet quitting among lecturers at private universities. Furthermore, employee engagement partially mediates this relationship, indicating that fair organizational practices discourage psychological withdrawal both directly and indirectly through stronger work engagement. These findings extend Social Exchange Theory by demonstrating how organizational justice is translated into positive workplace behaviour through employee engagement within the context of Indonesian private higher education institutions.

From a practical perspective, university leaders should prioritize transparent governance, equitable workload distribution, objective performance evaluation, respectful interpersonal relationships, and meaningful recognition of lecturers' academic contributions to strengthen organizational justice and employee engagement while reducing quiet quitting. This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, the use of self-reported questionnaires, and purposive sampling involving lecturers from private universities in Makassar, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies are encouraged to employ longitudinal designs, involve broader higher education contexts, and examine additional organizational and psychological factors, such as perceived organizational support, psychological safety, leadership, burnout, and work-life balance, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of quiet quitting.

STATEMENT OF USE OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT to assist in improving clarity and readability of the text. The author reviewed and edited the output and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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