
The Emergence of the Phenomenon of „Quiet Quitting” among Teachers in Poland

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Abstract:

Purpose: The article presents the results of empirical research that showed the current diagnosis of the phenomenon of quiet quitting among teachers in Poland. It identifies the causes of quiet quitting among Polish teachers, in particular excessive workloads, stress, burnout, and the consequences of this phenomenon, such as reduced student engagement in the teaching-learning process and a decline in the quality of school work. The research showed ways to counteract the negative effects of quiet quitting suggested by the teachers surveyed.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study covered a group of 340 teachers working in various types of schools across Poland. All respondents had experience working as teachers. Women clearly dominated the study group. The study used a quantitative research strategy, a diagnostic survey method and an original questionnaire, which had been sent to teachers via social media thus greatly facilitating the collection of data. The study was conducted between 10 September 2025 and 15 November 2025 in accordance with ethical standards.

Findings: Research conducted among teachers in Polish schools has revealed the problem of quiet quitting. A multitude of factors contributing to teachers' work overload have been identified. In addition, low pay and a lack of prospects for career advancement contribute to long-term stress and poor health, which in turn leads to a decline in work efficiency and, eventually, to quiet quitting.

Practical implications: The results of a survey conducted among Polish teachers showed that there is a need for systemic measures to improve teachers' working conditions and salaries, standardise working hours, and implement mental health support and occupational stress reduction programmes. It is also advisable to implement measures in schools and society aimed at increasing the prestige of the teaching profession and improving the public image of teachers.

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Originality/Value: *The authors present original and up-to-date research that has revealed the real phenomenon of quiet quitting among the teachers surveyed. The study identified the most important factors that, according to teachers, contribute to quiet quitting, the consequences of this phenomenon, and ways to counteract its negative effects. The topic is relevant due to the steady rise of quiet quitting not only in Poland but also worldwide. The research conducted provides a foundation for seeking new scientific solutions to mitigate this phenomenon in the interests of teachers' well-being, students' welfare and society as a whole.*

Keywords: *The phenomenon of quiet quitting, teacher, health, wellbeing, stress.*

JEL codes: *J28, M54, I28, I21.*

Paper type: *Research article.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the phenomenon of quiet quitting (QQ) is global and affects members of many professions. It describes a situation in which an employee does not formally resign from their job but changes their commitment to the duties at hand. Instead of taking on additional responsibilities and going beyond the minimum requirements of their position, they only do what is strictly required.

A person who practises quiet quitting does not seek promotion, does not get involved in matters outside the scope of their duties, such as organising company events, additional training or working overtime. It may also involve reducing the amount of work outside working hours, for example, not replying to emails after hours. In the case of teachers, it also involves abandoning innovative activities and reducing emotional engagement (Mahand and Caldwell, 2023).

Teachers do not resign from their jobs, but they are less motivated to perform them with above-the-average commitment if they do not receive adequate recognition for their work. This may be due to job dissatisfaction, burnout, or lack of motivation linked to unsatisfactory remuneration. By withdrawing from additional activities and innovative pursuits, teachers aim to improve their own health and maintain a balance between their professional and private lives (Memiş, 2024; Harter, 2022).

School principals expect teachers to provide high-quality teaching and educational services, show teamwork skills and care for student development, be innovative, responsible and professional in their daily work, but also be motivated to pursue continuous professional development in order to meet student expectations. To meet these requirements, teachers need a range of soft skills and a high level of emotional commitment, as well as the ability to manage their own time and energy in order to

maintain a balance between professional and personal demands (Madigan and Kim, 2021; Lyon, 2025).

QQ does not literally mean that a teacher has left their job, but rather that they have mentally and emotionally withdrawn from fully engaging in their duties. This phenomenon is the result of dissatisfaction or burnout, but also a reaction to the expectations of the entire education system (students, parents, headteachers) who do not provide sufficient motivation or support.

QQ is essentially a decision which creates a situation where an employee is remunerated without performing any additional tasks. Therefore, such attitude towards work conflicts with basic social expectations regarding the role of a teacher and educator ((Madigan and Kim, 2021; Yasemin and Sürmeli, 2023; Lewandowska, 2023).

The QQ phenomenon had been observed before, but after 2022 it intensified significantly due to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees around the world returned to work after a long period of isolation. Many of them re-evaluated their lives and set new priorities, discovering that their professional careers were not worth the ultimate sacrifice. Many teachers complained at the time about being overworked and lacking institutional support.

They are increasingly setting boundaries in professional matters – they do not work overtime, do not respond to emails and text messages after school hours. They also do not perform additional tasks, doing only the minimum required to keep their jobs (Wellbeing Polska, 2023; Toropova *et al.*, 202; Madigan and Kim, 2021).

Jim Harter, the creator of the concept of quiet quitting, pointed out that this phenomenon is linked with a sense of burnout and loss of motivation in the workplace. The origins of QQ are believed to date back to the second half of 2021, immediately after the so-called Great Resignation in the US, when approximately 4 million employees left their current jobs (Harter, 2022).

This phenomenon had far-reaching consequences not only for the economy but also for the labour market itself, changing the way employees, employers and institutions view employment (Scheyett, 2023). The QQ phenomenon is definitely global in nature and is not limited to the United States. Although the term has gained popularity mainly in the US, the phenomenon is the result of broader changes in attitudes towards work that can be observed around the world.

2. Research Overview

As mentioned above, the QQ problem must be considered globally. In Australia, a study conducted by the Australian Education Union (AEU) found that 47% of teachers were considering changing careers due to low pay, excessive workloads and a lack of

administrative support. These same factors lead to QQ, where teachers begin to perform their duties without much engagement (Black Dog Institute 2023, N = 4000). This is a significant increase compared to the 14% of teachers intending to leave the profession in 2021 (Australian Education Union, 2021).

In the United Kingdom, an organization called Teacher Wellbeing Index has revealed that over half of all teachers experience chronic stress, and 45% of teachers are considering changing careers or switching to a position that does not require such a high level of commitment. These findings suggest that teachers often perform their duties only to a minimal extent, which is one of the manifestations of quiet quitting (Teacher Support Network, 2020).

According to a study conducted by the National Education Association (NEA) in the United States, teachers reported significant levels of burnout. In 2021, the NEA reported that 55% of teachers were considering leaving the profession within the next few years, with 40% citing burnout as the main reason. While not a direct connection to QQ, it shows that a large proportion of teachers experience burnout, which can lead to a quiet withdrawal from full job commitment (National Education Association, 2021; Jentsch *et al.*, 2022; Engle *et al.*, 2024; Tikkanen *et al.*, 2021).

The Canadian Teachers' Federation conducted research on the quality of teachers' work, which showed that over 40% of teachers in Canada struggle with burnout. Education workers reported that they did not feel supported by governments or school administrations, which led to greater distancing from their work. The same reasons can lead to the QQ phenomenon, where teachers perform their tasks but do not engage emotionally (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2024).

According to a 2022 report by Nationale-Nederlanden, as many as 75% of employees in Poland have experienced increased stress in the workplace, which in the future may lead them to abandon their profession or quietly resign (Nationale-Nederlanden Report, 2022).

In Poland, the average age of teachers is 48. Many young teachers declare that they are considering leaving the profession. One in three teachers who have left the profession in recent years had less than five years of experience. This is a sign that simply entering the profession is not enough; systematic support programmes are needed. They should include mentoring in the first years of work, reduction of bureaucratic burdens, and developing paths of specialisation tailored to the interests and competences of young teachers.

Only 20% of teachers declare that they are satisfied with their remuneration, which is one of the lowest results among the profession (the average for the EU countries surveyed is 37%). Compared to other countries, teachers in Poland are particularly likely to believe that their voices are not heard by the authorities. Only 15% of teachers indicated that decision-makers value teachers' opinions, and 9% said that teachers in

Poland have an influence on education policy. Many Polish teachers do not feel that their work is valued. Only two out of three teachers feel appreciated by their students (66%), and every second teacher feels appreciated by parents (53%).

Even less frequently, teachers feel that the authorities value their opinions (15%), that their profession is appreciated by society (10%) and by the media (9%). Compared to other countries, these results place Poland among the countries with the lowest level of perceived social respect.

A significant proportion of Polish teachers struggle with occupational stress – over one-third (38%) experience significant or high levels of stress at work. The effects of stress are particularly evident in the mental sphere: 30% of teachers believe that their work has a significant or high negative impact on their health, and 21% believe it has a negative impact on their physical health. Sixty-three per cent of teachers report an imbalance between their professional duties and their personal lives, 8% say that work cannot be reconciled with their private lives at all, and 55% say that it can only be reconciled to a certain extent (TALIS, 2024).

In addition, data from the 2024 Gallup report on employee engagement in Europe is indeed alarming. The report indicates that only 13% of employees in Europe declare full engagement in their work, which means that the vast majority of employees in Europe (as many as 87%) show low or moderate engagement (Gallup State of the Global Workplace, 2024).

With regard to the reports mentioned above, it should be noted that QQ in the teaching profession is a phenomenon that can be the result of many different factors, including burnout, stress, poor health, dissatisfaction, fatigue due to excessive workload, lack of recognition and low pay.

Reports and studies from various countries indicate that teachers around the world are struggling with this problem, which can lead to a decrease in their commitment to work, although this does not mean that they formally leave the profession.

This phenomenon should serve as a signal to decision-makers in education systems about the need to improve working conditions and provide support for teachers (Liu *et al.*, 2023; Kasalak and Dağyar, 2020; Smith, 2022; Lewandowska, 2023; Madden, 2025; Ümit *et al.*, 2025).

With regard to the subject of this article, emphasis has been placed on the occurrence of quiet quitting among teachers in Poland. At present, no comprehensive studies have been found in Polish literature describing the relationship between QQ and teachers' gender, the type of school they work in, their personal experiences, or even organisational culture, although this is a topic that can be analysed from various perspectives. Research on the QQ phenomenon and its relationship with many factors is still in its infancy.

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned QQ phenomenon in relation to teachers, a study was designed with the main objective of identifying the occurrence of ‘quiet quitting’ among teachers working in schools in Poland, taking into account certain conditions (gender and type of school). The focus of the study on teachers from different types of schools, including primary and secondary schools, is important because the age of a student determines the level of emotional involvement on the part of a teacher.

Above all, it requires different activities, different teaching methods, different exam preparation, and cooperation with parents and other parties involved with the school. These are just some of the factors that demonstrate the specific nature of a teacher's work.

3. Testing Procedure

The focus of the study was to examine the phenomenon of quiet quitting among teachers in Poland. The aim of the planned survey was to address the main problem formulated in the form of a question: Does the phenomenon of quiet quitting occur among the teachers surveyed? The key problem was broken down into four questions:

- *What could be the causes of QQ among Polish teachers?*
- *How does QQ manifest itself among Polish teachers?*
- *Can the type of school and gender influence the occurrence of the QQ phenomenon?*
- *What, in the opinion of teachers, could be the consequences of the QQ phenomenon in Polish schools?*

The study assumed that the QQ phenomenon among the teachers surveyed may occur to varying degrees depending on the type of school in which they work and their gender. Due to the absence of standardised measurement tools for the subject of the study, an original questionnaire was developed for this particular study. The questions concerned the gender of the respondents, the type of school in which they work, their awareness of the QQ phenomenon, its causes, symptoms and consequences. The research was conducted from 10 September 2025 to 15 November 2025.

The questionnaires were distributed via social media platforms for teachers, which greatly helped with the project's implementation. Only volunteers took part in the study.

The survey was conducted among 340 teachers working in primary and secondary schools across Poland. Of these, 240 worked in primary schools and 140 in secondary schools. Women constituted the majority of the surveyed group (81%); in terms of length of time spent in the profession, most teachers (40%) had been working for 5-10 years, followed by those with teaching experience of 11-16 years (26%). Next, 13% of the respondents reported 1-4 years of work experience and 10% reported 17-25

years. The smallest percentage (11%) were people who had been working as teachers for over 25 years.

4. Causes of QQ among Polish Teachers, Consequences and Ways of Counteracting its Negative Effects

Only 65% of the surveyed group of teachers declared that they know what the QQ phenomenon is. The group of respondents with the longest work experience, i.e. over 25 years, declared that they had never encountered the term 'quiet quitting'.

According to data collected by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) in Poland and from studies on the employment situation in the education system, it can be observed that the number of teachers is decreasing every year, especially at primary and secondary school level.

Table 1. Number of teachers in Poland, including those leaving the profession

Period of time	Number of teachers in Poland	Leaving the profession
2010	approx. 520.000	no data available
2020	approx. 480.000	approx. 40.000
2022	approx. 470.000	approx. 10.000
2023	approx. 450.000	no data available

Note: Based on data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS), available at: <https://stat.gov.pl/>

Source: Own elaboration

The largest decline in the number of teachers in Poland was recorded between 2018 and 2020, and the main reasons were changes in the education system introduced by the government, concerning the liquidation of lower secondary schools, as well as demographic issues related to the decrease in the number of students and difficult working conditions, low salaries and problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To confirm the hypothesis that the QQ phenomenon among the teachers surveyed may occur to different extents depending on the type of school in which they work but also depending on their gender, respondents were asked what they thought were the most common causes of the quiet quitting phenomenon among Polish teachers. The factors influencing the likelihood of QQ occurring are presented in Table 1.

Table 2. List of factors influencing the likelihood of QQ occurring

The causes of QQ	Females	Males	Primary school teaching	Secondary school teaching
	%	%	%	%
Prolonged stress	95.0	72.0	55.0	45.0
Burnout	75.0	64.0	65.0	35.0
Overload of responsibilities, excessive documentation	65.0	81.0	52.0	48.0
Low pay	58.0	76.0	72.0	38.0

Mismatch between the amount of work and the remuneration received	55.0	65.0	51.0	49.0
No prospects for career advancement	68.0	71.0	35.0	65.0
Limited opportunities for personal development	53.0	57.0	51.0	49.0
There were somatic side effects that occurred later	58.00	54.00	53.00	51.00

Note: The percentages do not add up to 100% because the survey had multiple-choice questions.

Source: Own elaboration.

The data presented show slight differences in the responses given by females and males. A higher percentage of female teachers indicated stress and burnout as the source of QQ. The type of school slightly differentiated the responses, with a higher percentage of primary school teachers indicating stress, burnout and low pay as factors determining the occurrence of QQ compared to secondary school teachers.

More than half of the surveyed women and men cited somatic symptoms resulting from long-term stress as the cause of their QQ. Women reported that chronic stress most often resulted from somatic symptoms such as severe migraine headaches, postprandial abdominal cramps, and insomnia.

Another area of interest was to examine teachers' behaviours that may indicate the occurrence of QQ. The most common responses given by the teachers surveyed are presented in Table 3. Due to the fact that the behaviours listed were similar for most respondents, no percentages were given and no distinction was made between gender and type of school. However, they were grouped according to the types of responsibilities had.

Table 3. QQ symptoms in the study group of teachers

Area of responsibilities	Examples of specific duties
Sticking to the working hours	Working only during set hours
	Performing duties only at school
	Not taking work home
	Refusal to substitute outside of hours allocated as part of the teaching load
Giving up on extra duties	No participation in additional extracurricular activities
	No participation in projects
	No involvement in parent-teacher cooperation
	No participation in the work of various committees
Reducing the amount of preparation required for school lessons	No desire to develop one's own teaching materials
	Using ready-made materials
	Reducing the time needed for lesson preparation

Source: Own elaboration.

Quiet quitting leads to a significant decline in the quality of educational, teaching and extracurricular activities in schools, both at primary and secondary level. Such practices deprive students of additional support, which is often crucial for their development, especially in the case of gifted students who need more attention from teachers. Students with special educational needs will also be unable to count on the help of such teachers, which is important in the process of ensuring equal educational opportunities, especially at the primary school stage.

It should be noted that without extra commitment from teachers, schools are unable to implement projects aimed at development and improvement of their educational offer. The results of the study show that Polish teachers see the negative effects of quiet quitting as the most significant.

The most common responses regarding the effects of QQ are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *The effects of QQ in the opinion of the surveyed teachers*

Types of extra responsibilities	Primary school teachers N=240	Secondary school teachers N=140
Decline in the standard of teaching	15.0	15.0
Decline in student engagement in the teaching-learning process	55.0	50.0
Reduction in the number of extracurricular activities at school	13.0	10.0
Lack of individual student support	13.0	8.0
Decline in cooperation between teachers	0.0	5.0
Decline in the quality of school performance	4.0	12.0
Overall	100.0	100.0

Source: *Own elaboration.*

The data presented shows differences in the range of QQ effects observed by teachers from primary and secondary schools respectively. These relate to a reduction in student engagement in the teaching-learning process and a decline in the quality of school work. Primary school teachers paid more attention to the lack of individual support offered to students, which is understandable given the developmental conditions and needs of pupils at this age.

The last question was designed to find out what teachers expect in terms of counteracting the negative effects of QQ. The suggestions put forward constitute the most important needs identified by Polish teachers, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Key priorities in counteracting the negative effects of QQ*

Priority area	Specific needs
Reasonable workload and consideration for personal time	Reduction of unnecessary documentation and administrative tasks
	Acknowledging that work does not come to an end with the last lesson of the day

	Respect for personal time and private life
Psychological support and reduction of occupational stress	Real efforts to promote mental wellbeing, e.g. training in stress management and coping with emotions
	Access to psychological support
	Measures to reduce chronic overload
Working conditions fostering development and autonomy	Greater autonomy in planning and teaching classes
	Real participation in shaping educational decisions at school
	Developing professional skills according to one's own needs, rather than just imposed standards
	Recognition of efforts and achievements
	Adequate remuneration and financial incentives
Professional recognition and appropriate remuneration	Social recognition and professional prestige, which influences the sense of purpose in work

Source: *Own elaboration.*

As can be seen from the presented needs of teachers, to effectively counteract the phenomenon of quiet quitting, systemic changes are required that would focus on improving teachers' working conditions, including adequate remuneration for their work.

They also recognise the need for respect and appreciation. It also seems necessary to support teachers' mental well-being by promoting a work-life balance and providing them with access to psychological support. Help of this type will improve teachers' well-being and may significantly reduce the scale of quiet quitting.

5. Conclusions

The research shows that the phenomenon of quiet quitting occurs among Polish teachers to varying degrees, which partially confirms the hypothesis. However, the differences resulting from employment in different types of schools and gender were insignificant.

This phenomenon may be a symptom of more serious problems in the entire education system. In order to effectively counteract this, systemic solutions and an approach that considers the needs of teachers and promotes a culture of appreciation and cooperation will be necessary.

Based on the analysis of the research results, several recommendations have been formulated that can be implemented to help reduce the scale of quiet quitting but also contribute to improving the quality of education and the well-being of teachers. Here are the key recommendations:

- It is necessary to improve teachers' working conditions, salaries, employment conditions and standardise working hours. It is also advisable to implement

measures in schools and society aimed at increasing the prestige of the teaching profession and improving the public image of teachers.

- Teachers complain about being overburdened with school paperwork, so it is advisable to reduce bureaucracy in schools. This will be possible by standardising and simplifying school administration procedures and reducing unnecessary duties. This will allow teachers to focus on teaching and educating. It is also necessary to support the mental and physical health of teachers.
- Introduction of psychological support programmes, stress management and burnout training, and access to professional psychological help, which can improve teachers' well-being.
- Teachers pointed to the need for systemic support in developing their competences and transparency in career advancement paths. Transparency in this area will increase teachers' sense of satisfaction and will allow them to develop the feel of control over their own careers.
- Building a community and a culture of cooperation. Teachers have signalled the need for integration in their own professional environment, as they currently feel that cooperation has declined. It is advisable to undertake initiatives that strengthen the sense of unity and cooperation, enabling the exchange of experiences and mutual assistance. These initiatives contribute to improving teachers' engagement.

To conclude, it should be noted that the QQ phenomenon occurs in the group of teachers surveyed, which contributes to a decline in the quality of education, a decrease in the employment of young teachers committed to implementing innovations, a deterioration in the relationship between teachers and parents, and, in the long term, an increased risk of teachers leaving the profession. QQ is a warning sign for the entire education system.

It disappears when employees regain control, balance and develop a sense of importance of their work. It seems reasonable to conduct further research with a broader and more diverse sample of teachers, as well as to use qualitative methods that would allow for an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon.

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