

How Employees Justify Quiet Quitting
A Qualitative Analysis of Antiwork Narratives on Workplace Disengagement

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Abstract

Quiet Quitting has established itself in public and scholarly debate for reduced work engagement, but its exact definition and understanding remain unclear. It is often perceived when workers are unhappy with their job but cannot afford to actually quit. This thesis investigates how Quiet Quitters themselves justify and interpret their behaviour by analysing authentic, naturally occurring data from the r/antiwork community on Reddit. A qualitative content analysis was performed on 176 comments from 22 Quiet Quitting related posts, comparing the findings to a nomological network that was developed based on prior research.

The central aspect of Quiet Quitting is contractual compliance. The fulfilment of formal tasks is used as moral defence against criticism, since the contract establishes the exact balance of labour and wage. Individuals are often pushed towards this due to past frustrations in the workplace, opting to for a better work-life balance when their efforts go unnoticed. R/antiwork also strongly prefers 'act your wage' as a label for their behaviour. Quiet Quitting is perceived as an attempt to demonize the withdrawal of discretionary efforts, which organisations have used to increase profits but refusing to share it with those that produce it.

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1. Introduction

Workplace disengagement is not a new concept to organizational life. For as long as humans have had to trade labour for a salary, it is safe to say most of them have not gone to their physical and mental limits to complete their tasks. This complex relationship has been subjected to decades of research (e.g. Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Terms like burnout, boreout, organizational silence or withdrawal of efficiency are household names in human resource research and academic work, trying to better our understanding of these phenomena and developing more effective solutions.

Despite being an established academic field, in 2022 a new term called “Quiet Quitting” (QQ) gathered notable traction on the social media site TikTok and has since spread into public discourse. In one of its earliest mentions, it is described as:

“You are quitting the idea of going above and beyond. You are still performing your duties, but you are no longer subscribing to the hustle culture mentality [...] your worth as a person is no defined by your labour” (zaidleppelin, 2022).

Hustle culture as he calls it, the idea that hard work will result in financial success, is the centre of the American Dream. Capitalism promised workers a meritocracy, where your social class is no longer determined by your birth but by your merit. In other words, your worth was indeed defined by your labour. But zaidleppelin’s video is by far not the only one unsubscribing from meritocracy.

“accidentally became important at work [and] its ruining my life” (heelbitee, 2024)

It is easy to dismiss the attitude as entitlement, but the sentiment that hard work no longer brings any benefits seems to be prevalent enough to result in these kinds of social media posts. People are either not interested in improving their financial status or do not believe it is possible.

The perceived death of meritocracy does not only express itself in QQ, but also in numbers. A typical American home buyer in 2025 would need to spend 45% more of their income on mortgage payments compared to 2019 (Wheat & Eckerd, 2025). German rental offers have increased by 50% on average from 2010 to 2022 (Jasper et al., 2024). In 2022 alone, the cost of living in the EU increased by double the increase in wages (ETUC, 2023). The number of billionaires, the very antithesis to meritocracy in my opinion, continues to reach new records every year (Forbes, n.d.).

While these developments have been ongoing, they surfaced during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the global move to remote work prompting many to reassess their relationship with the workplace and their priorities in life as they were able to spend more time with their family and friends (Öztürk et al., 2023). When the return to work began, disappointment spread, leading to a voluntary mass exodus of workers who could afford it, the Great Resignation. For those who could not be part of the Great Resignation due to job insecurity, financial dependence or other constraints, their disappointment manifested in increased disengagement and by readjusting their attitude: they started to quit quietly (Aydın & Levent, 2025; Serenko, 2024). This inherently connects QQ to lower social classes and people stuck in dead-end jobs since they cannot take the risk of actually quitting, yet researchers often fail to take this demographic trend into account when developing scales. 83% of Anand et al. (2024)'s sample for their quantitative study consisted of middle and senior managers, junior management making up the rest. Galanis et al. (2023) based their scale on 89.6% university degree holders, 54% of them holding a MSc/PhD. It should be questioned how authentic and valid these scales and data actually are when the term originated from people who have to financially rely on undesirable jobs and could therefore not partake in the Great Resignation.

Many academic works were also quick to point out that it is not a new concept but rather a renamed term based on existing concepts such as disengagement, withdrawal behaviour and job neglect (Aydın & AziZoğlu, 2022). Johnson claims, that ironically the only 'new' thing about QQ is that it is not quiet anymore, the fact that the term has been coined and is now discussed in media and literature has increased the public visibility, not the behaviour itself (Johnson, 2023). He points out that 'Work-to-Rule' and withholding goodwill are long-standing workforce responses that have already been documented in the past. The buzz around this term will fade while the behaviour continues to persist, Johnson concludes.

The dismissal of underlying shifts in motivation or questionable data sampling is exemplary of the misunderstanding that academic literature demonstrates when dealing with QQ. The conflation with preexisting terms for withdrawal often comes hand in hand with shaming workers for this behaviour, attributing it to laziness and actions that are detrimental to both the organization and colleagues. QQers are deviant employees (Öztürk et al., 2023) that are free-riding social loafers (Bell & Kennebrew, 2023), at least that is the impression that one would get if they followed the discourse at the time in mainstream media and journal articles.

Even the more 'sympathetic' opinions on QQ still frame it as an attitude issue that has to be fixed. A 2022 Harvard Business Review states: "At first glance, [QQ] may not seem

problematic. After all, these employees aren't disengaging from their core tasks, they're just refusing to go beyond them. But for many companies, a workforce that is willing to go beyond the call of duty is a critical competitive advantage" (Klotz & Bolino, 2022, p. 2). This highlights how extra effort has become normalized in many organizations, particularly under "ideal worker" norms that presume continuous availability and overtime (Dillard et al., 2025; Scheyett, 2022). The steady increase in tasks outside of the job description, so called job creep, is a "fact of life" (Keogh, 2024) after all.

The proposed solutions reflect this understanding of QQ as a simple rebrand, relying on established solutions to other forms of disengagement. Surveillance or financial incentives could solve this, but are dismissed due to threatening profits, so going above and beyond expectations has to become a moral issue that is framed within a higher purpose (Johnson, 2023). The focus is on reaffirming organizational commitment through buffering methods like clarifying expectations or appealing to the workers' emotions (Galanis et al., 2024). Even though most studies observe and diagnose structural strains, they prescribe individual and attitudinal fixes without taking the employees' perspective into account. Observing stressed and understaffed nurses and concluding that you should "optimize the emotional intelligence profiles" (Galanis et al., 2024, p. 601) to reduce QQ seems like a rather surface-level solution. It is quite illustrative that one of the few papers that actually suggests hiring more workers is titled "A Return to Humanism" (Dillard et al., 2025).

Bringing a human perspective to the QQ debate is also the aim of this paper by analysing naturally occurring, first-person accounts posted in response to discussions of QQ that reflect lived experiences more closely. Treating these comments as emic data enables an examination of how employees themselves interpret and justify their behaviour, rather than imposing predetermined categories derived from adjacent constructs or limiting research to niche fields. This design allows the study to contribute a more authentic analysis of QQers attitude and state of mind, what it symbolizes about potential shifting workplace norms.

Understanding this issue fundamentally on a more grounded level could help companies to boost their retention rates and performance through proactive measures to increase alignment and understanding for frustrations that employees face (Kachhap & Singh, 2024). This becomes especially relevant in industries where talent retention is a competitive advantage (Anand et al., 2024). Harris' findings strongly suggest that it would be unproductive to reduce QQers to an archetype, rather it is important to "directly to engage with those employees perceived to be

undertaking quiet quitting in order to explore and understand both the motivations for such acts and also how such behaviours are enacted or manifested” (Harris, 2025, p.578).

This study will analyse online forum discourse (r/antiwork on Reddit) to gather opinions from actual QQers. Analysing social media communities, Reddit in particular, is an approach that has been taken by other studies to gather curated data on stigmatized behaviour (e.g. Bhandari & Sun, 2023; Eschliman et al., 2024), making it a suitable approach to contribute to the knowledge gap while also serving as guidelines for the process. The following chapter will outline the theoretical foundation of the study by reviewing existing literature about QQ and correlated concepts in order to create a framework that will guide the empirical research. The aim of the study is to deepen the understanding of QQ by centring employees’ own narratives on what motivates their workplace disengagement as they express it in an online safe space. Accordingly, the research is guided by the following question:

How do employees justify and interpret their work engagement and motivation leading to quiet quitting behaviour?

2. Theoretical Framework

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, it is important to create a structural overview of QQ. For this purpose, a nomological framework of QQ will be developed in this chapter, a conceptual mapping method introduced by Cronbach and Meehl (1955), which was used by another QQ study for a similar purpose (Barret, 2024). It groups elements of a concept into indicators, antecedents, correlations, and consequences in order to establish conceptual clarity moving forward. While nomological networks are often used to provide evidence for construct validity in quantitative studies, their function also makes them well-suited to establish deductive concepts in a qualitative study. Its use is “not limited to quantitative research approaches. Some if not all relations might be examined with qualitative methods” (Stegmann, 2014, p. 31). It is being used as a conceptual map in this case to serve as a deductive method for the data collection, but also as a point of comparison for any inductive concepts that might emerge naturally from the data.

2.1 Quiet Quitting Indicators

Peer-reviewed sources have not agreed on one set definition of QQ. When looking at the lowest common denominator and taking Zaidleppelin's definition, often credited as the origin of the term, into account, QQ can be defined as "employees intentionally opting actively to manage their work/working lives to adhere to contracted duties/hours while avoiding voluntarily taking on additional responsibilities, tasks, or roles" (Harris, 2025, p. 565). While the wording might differ, most definitions essentially describe the same underlying concepts (e.g. Dillard et al., 2025; Scheyett, 2022; Serenko, 2024), identified by

- 1) carrying out formal requirements/assigned tasks,
- 2) avoiding non-contractually agreed upon tasks/responsibilities,
- 3) strict time/availability boundary setting.

With QQs unclear conceptual boundaries, it can often be observed how other concepts overlap during discussion. Turnover intentions or time theft could be seen as the logical extension of QQ motivations, but they do not necessarily have to go hand in hand. Their conflation can, purposefully or not, portray QQers in an overly negative light. QQ might be indicated in many different ways, yet it is important that these don't contradict the definition of the term.

2.2 Quiet Quitting Antecedents

The following section synthesises the key antecedents that emerged most prominently in the existing QQ literature, focusing on meaningful concepts with high explanatory relevance rather than an exhaustive overview to allow for defined coding of the data.

2.2.1 Effort-Reward Imbalance

Because QQ is frequently described as a withdrawal from 'going above and beyond', its antecedents can be thoroughly examined through a contrast with organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). OCB describes discretionary efforts beneficial to the employer that workers engage in despite them not being part of their formal job requirements (Smith et al., 1983), capturing exactly those actions that QQers disengage from. Thus, the conditions that typically foster OCB can be seen as the inverse of those under which QQ becomes more likely. OCB is often presented as *oppositional* to QQ, however it is important to highlight that it is not *the opposite*, which would be to engage in counterproductive, sabotaging behaviour (Robinson &

Bennett, 1995). Rather, a strict adherence to job requirements is the reduction and eventual absence of OCB.

To understand why QQers disengage from OCB, it should be considered why employees perform it in the first place. In OCB literature, these efforts are explained by social exchange logic (Blau, 2017), employees are willing to engage in discretionary efforts when they perceive recognition and rewards from the organisation (Smith et al., 1983). When observing QQ through this social exchange theory lens, it indicates that individuals in the modern working environment see the potential benefits of OCB as less valuable than the costs (e.g., workload, stress, responsibility) (Talukder & Prieto, 2025). As effort and reward are no longer in equilibrium, workers realign their behaviour to instead claim the benefits of QQ. Therefore, Effort-Reward imbalance (Siegrist, 1996) is an antecedent for QQ because it removes the incentive to provide discretionary effort.

2.2.2 Low Organizational/Emotional Commitment

Due to their oppositional nature, OCB can also help explain other antecedents of QQ such as organizational and emotional commitment to the workplace (Meyer & Allen, 1991), a frequently cited antecedent of OCB (Smith et al., 1983). Beyond contingent rewards, most OCB motivations laid out by Smith et al. (1983) tend to be altruistic in nature, trying to enhance the efficiency of the company and reflecting their emotional investment into the workplace. QQ is strongly associated with the absence of these feelings (Anand et al., 2024; Hamouche et al., 2023; Patel et al., 2025). This indifference towards the organizational success indicates that employees are not incentivized by the same factors that are used to push them towards altruistic OCB, such as organizational identification or emotional attachment, which reflects in their decision to withdraw from proactive work behaviours (Harris, 2025). This makes Low Organizational/Emotional Commitment an antecedent to QQ.

2.2.4 Toxic Working Conditions

One of the most salient antecedents to QQ that has been identified, are toxic working conditions. Toxic environments are marked by disrespect, neglect and hyper competition towards and among employees, directly contradicting the core psychological needs of self-determination that lead to intrinsic motivation (Aydin & AziZoğlu, 2022). When the organisation fails to align itself through low organizational support and unmet expectations, it will result in both

behavioural and psychological withdrawal as the workers perceive the social exchange as unfair. Empirical data by Talukder and Prieto (2025) suggest that poor quality exchanges with leaders and low organizational support are significant antecedents of QQ. Harris (2025) also found that employees experiencing value misalignment and negative workplace dynamics are more likely to engage in QQ.

A correlated concept to this is Quiet Firing, referring to managers intentionally creating undesirable working conditions, trying to encourage a voluntary resignation (Anand et al., 2024). While these two concepts can be strongly intertwined, their causation is contextually dependent. Organizations might utilize Quiet Firing to bypass severance, benefits or reduce the staff indirectly which would make it an antecedent to QQ, motivating workers to withdraw effort due to poor treatment. However, it can also arise as a reaction to QQ when managers try to offload the employees that they perceive as disengaged to free up the position (Ellera et al., 2023). Due to this ambiguous relationship, it will be classified as a correlate.

2.2.4 Low Social Security/Protesting Power

A historic version of workplace withdrawal, ‘Work-to-Rule’ has often been compared to QQ and can be used to identify a pushing factor. While QQ is mainly an individual effort to improve personal well-being, ‘Work-to-Rule’ describes a collective effort in which employees strictly adhere to minimum requirements regarding time, tasks and efforts (Anand et al., 2024). The term dates back to the late 19th century in Italy and the UK where workers used it as a “civilized form of voicing discontent” without provoking harsh anti-strike crackdowns (Museum of Protest, n.d.). The purpose is to slow down organizational productivity as protest to demand better working conditions.

Whereas a ‘Work-to-Rule’ activist is collectively organizing in the hopes of settling labour disputes, a QQer does not seem to harbour any of these hopes. As the word ‘quiet’ implies, QQers keep to themselves as they reduce their effort discretely. This is indicative of the shifting workplace and labour market dynamics touched upon in the first chapter. The reason why QQers are ‘quiet’ despite being unhappy, is that they are trying to hold onto their jobs since the alternative of being unemployed is even worse, indicating lower social security and protesting/labour market power (Harris, 2025). Without these antecedents, there would be no reason for QQ since openly protesting or actually quitting and looking for a better job would be more effective alternatives, as many did during the Great Resignation.

Work-to-Rule is therefore a related concept that also guides the explanation of Low Social Security/Protesting Power as an antecedent.

2.3 Consequences

As seen above, this part will detail the key consequences of QQ that featured most prominently in existing literature.

2.3.1 Personal Benefits

The most evident outcome of QQ that both short- and long-term practitioners report, is a wide range of personal benefits. Most notably, by refusing overtime and extra-role tasks, QQers readjust the work-life balance in their favour. Shifting from “living to work” to “working to live” has led to them reporting better health, less stress, balanced lives and in general, more happiness (Harris, 2025). Generation Z and young Millennials are particularly focused on achieving this balance as flexible work schedules and being treated with respect rise in priority (Öztürk et al., 2023).

2.3.2 Career Setbacks

While QQ may result in an improved work-life balance, many have pointed out that this comes at the cost of a potential negative impact on one’s career, making promotions/raises more unlikely as well as lowering the chance to receive positive recommendation letters or references (Kachhap & Singh, 2024; Serenko, 2024).

Both media and academic narratives have put great effort into highlighting this, describing how QQers “irreparably damage their chances of promotion and internal career growth” (Serenko, 2024, p.36). Longitudinal research has shown that QQers recognize and mostly accept the plateauing of their career, and sometimes revert their behaviour because of this (Harris, 2025).

Public figures like Kevon O’Leary strongly opposed QQ at the time of the terms’ rising popularity (Malinsky, 2022), calling it a recipe for failure. Nowadays, it is still easy to find CEOs who publicly dismiss QQ and the idea of being successful while maintaining a work-life balance (ET Online, 2025), demonstrating how Career Setbacks are a key consequence of QQ that is frequently used to argue against it.

2.3.3 Coworker Reaction

One of the most significant consequences of QQ is the increase in workload and burden placed on colleagues as they are left to pick up the extra work (Ratnatunga, 2022; Serenko, 2024). Both quantitative and qualitative data have shown that coworkers who observe QQ often react negatively, characterized by reduced support for that individual, increased incivility and a tendency to side with bosses to pressure them into ‘falling in line’ and ‘getting their act together’ (Bennett et al., 2025; Harris, 2025). People who have been QQ for a prolonged period of time also reported social isolation as their relationships with coworkers worsened permanently (Harris, 2025).

2.4 Quiet Quitting Nomological Framework

In this chapter, a nomological network of QQ was developed to create conceptual clarity and to guide the subsequent analysis. This has been summarized in Figure 1.

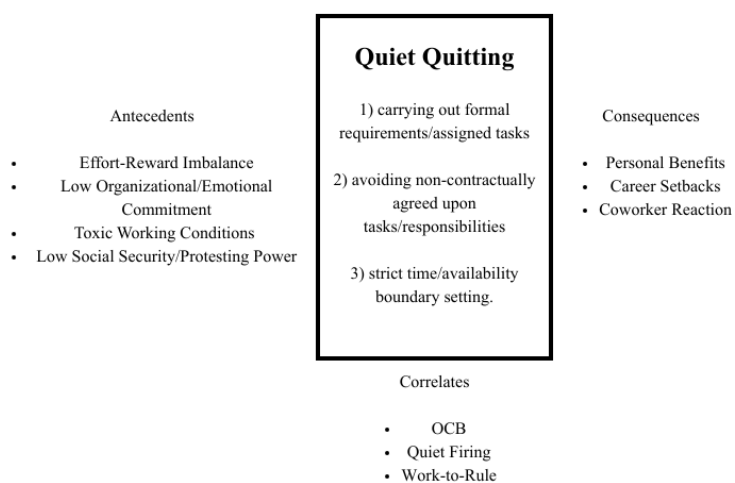


Figure 1. Quiet Quitting Nomological Framework

By positioning QQ in relation to correlated concepts, it was possible to identify the key antecedents and consequences that position these terms in clear relations despite similarities in their indicative behaviour. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach used to investigate the data in order to identify alignment and differences with the network.

3. Methodology

This chapter will explain the methodological approach to the study and how the decisions contributed towards the research goal. This study aims to contribute to the discussion of QQ by providing insights into naturally occurring and authentic discussions rather than research-prompted narratives. The nomological framework developed in the previous chapter will serve as deductive coding guidance in the data collection, as well as a point of comparison for any inductive concepts that will develop from the data.

3.1. What is Reddit?

Reddit is one of the largest social media platforms with over 100 million daily users (Reddit, 2024), allowing logged-in accounts to share and comment on any form of content. What makes it unique is its structure. In particular, Reddit is segmented into ‘subreddits’, which are user-generated and managed communities dedicated to specific areas of interest. The mention of a subreddit can be recognized by the notation “r/[subreddit name]”, referring to the URL link. This categorization enables both users and researchers to find content and discussions related to curated themes rather than having to search for specific keywords. Reddit also uses a community voting system in which people upvote or downvote posts/comments, with higher net scores being featured more prominently. The anonymous participation makes it challenging to collect demographic information on users, with official data from 2021 reporting a skew towards men (57%) and the 18-34 age group (58%) (Reddit, 2021). Subreddits have been of great interest to researchers due to the detailed exploration they enable for specific topics (Proferes et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Reddit is completely anonymous due to users being free to choose whatever pseudonym they would like. As discussion on Reddit often involves personal, first-hand accounts, users tend to stay anonymous or utilize one-time accounts whenever a post could imply something about their identity. This makes Reddit especially suited for gathering personal testimonies on stigmatized or illegal behaviour, such as drug usage (Eschliman et al., 2024) or homelessness (Bhandari & Sun, 2023). Being a QQer can often be seen as “concerning, embarrassing, or even offensive” (Harris, 2025, p. 577) and described as an obstacle for companies (Liu-Lastres et al., 2024). Relying on data that was provided by QQers without having to fear negative consequences from their employer ensures authenticity.

As posts and comments occur naturally online without being prompted by a researcher, they remove human cognition and social interactions from the data collection process, mitigating their possible negative impacts (Keusch & Kreuter, 2021). This unobtrusive approach is one of the main benefits of studying social media, participants are unaware of their role as research subjects, reducing reactive behaviour and creating more authentic results (Hill et al., 2014; Hsueh Hua Chen, 2017). Reddit's 'thread' structure of comment sections allows for lengthy contributions and enables discussion among users more effectively, creating qualitatively and quantitatively more expansive datasets (Proferes et al., 2021), making it a suitable source for data collection.

3.2 What is r/antiwork?

R/antiwork is a subreddit dedicated to sharing and discussing 'antiwork' ideas, experiences, and related current topics. It gained rapid traction in late 2021/early 2022, emblematic of the Great Resignation (Medlar et al., 2022). As of October 2025, it has 2.9 million members.

“Unemployment for all, not just the rich!”

their slogan reads (*R/Antiwork*, n.d.). Posts in this community span from ideological debates on late-stage capitalism and labour rights to anecdotal and personal stories of negative working experiences.

Notably, the subreddit went private and experienced a sharp halt in momentum after one of the moderators got interviewed by Fox News in 2022, an interview “so embarrassing it made me want to go to work” (tingispingis, 2022). The interview received significant backlash on the subreddit from hostile users and frustrated community members, who argued that the interviewee reinforced stereotypes and missed the chance to criticise corporate workplace culture on the big stage. Despite this shock, longitudinal analysis has found no major shifts in the subreddit's core themes, underlining the validity of the study, as both time and sharp increases/decreases in active users did not change the topical content of discussions among the community (Medlar et al., 2022).

In the broad labour discourse, r/antiwork challenges the neoliberal idea of self-realization through work, instead highlighting wages, stability, protections, and work–life balance. In its rules, the community explicitly bans pro-capitalist, employer, landlord or police content (*R/Antiwork*, n.d.). Due to this policy and target audience, the subreddit forms a cultural and hidden transcript. It documents the attitude and actions workers take, sharing them with

likeminded individuals in a safe place with no fear of repercussions (Shuster, 2022). Because the community polices its own norms through rules and upvotes, it also reveals which QQ framings are popular among the community. Due to this strong ideological bias and moderation policies, r/antiwork should not be treated as a statistically representative sample, but rather a vantage point that can provide theoretical insights, forming a population of relevant texts to conduct content analysis on (Krippendorff, 2019). Alliger and McEachern (2023) have highlighted how considering the thinking behind this ideology can enable one to re-examine and better understand the psychological character of organized labour.

QQ is one of the key antiwork practices, symbolic of these shifting workplace values and closely associated with prominent antiwork terminology like ‘act your wage’ (Guazzo & Gandini, 2024; Shuster, 2022). Worker empowerment is one of the core themes on r/antiwork, prominently encouraging workers to refuse extra-role demands, allowing the direct observation of discussions that actual QQers engage in. It concentrates first-person narratives on reducing extra-role behaviour and setting boundaries, which directly enables the research question on how employees interpret and justify QQ, and what kind of grievances create it in the first place. The community is an empirically rich setting that represents a more extreme standpoint compared to the mainstream discourse, with the potential to provide new insights to the academic narrative.

In conclusion, Reddit and r/antiwork are a valid and suitable data source for examining QQ, providing naturally occurring, authentic, discourse-level data. Its cohesive identity and thematic consistency ensure theoretical relevance. Conversations evolve anonymously, organically, guided by community norms and collective framing processes. This allows for the observation of how QQ is constructed, contested, and normalized among workers themselves, aligning with the study’s goal to trace an employee-centred perspective.

3.3 Data Collection

For the data collection, a python script was developed with the help of ChatGPT 5 (Appendix 1) to automatically transfer comments of threads related to QQ into a plain text file that could then be used with Atlas.ti for coding.

The threads were picked by using Reddit’s internal search function to identify the 20 most upvoted posts containing the term QQ, then scraping the 10 most upvoted comments from each one via the python script. No time period was excluded. The most popular threads were picked

in order to represent the most relevant and representative discussions of the community. Each post was reviewed before scraping the comments to identify whether QQ is a core topic of the post or not, since a few only mentioned it in passing.

The analysis of posts rather than individual comments was considered, as threads are the primary content on Reddit. However, this structure would have presented methodological limitations for qualitative content analysis due to the multimedia content of r/antiwork. Many posts consist of links to newspaper articles, video clips or memes, while comments are always in text format. Furthermore, text-based posts often consist of only short prompts like “What’s your opinion on QQ?” without meaningful accompanying text. In these cases, the informative content resides not in the post itself, but in the discussion and reaction among users in the comments. Since the aim of this study is to analyse authentic expressions of opinion and meaning-making around the phenomenon, comments were determined to be the more appropriate unit of analysis due to their content and format. The data was collected in the time span of the 10th November 2025 until the 30th November 2025.

3.4 Research Design

For this study, qualitative content analysis was used as the methodological approach. A qualitative method was chosen instead of a quantitative one as this aligns with the aim of the study to explore and interpret data rather than testing or measuring a hypothesis. Content analysis was chosen as its goal is to systematically classify information in order to “provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992), in this case QQ.

More explicitly, directed content analysis as outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) was chosen as a combination of deductive and inductive methods. This has also been adopted by two other content analysis studies on Reddit (Eschliman et al., 2024; Sowles et al., 2018). This approach is appropriate when “existing theory or prior research exists about a phenomenon that is incomplete or would benefit from further description” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281), closely reflecting the aim of this study to substantiate and compare existing QQ research to worker narratives. Directed content analysis benefits from a more structured approach by being guided through existing research in the early phases of coding. Rather than developing all codes through an inductive approach, a first round of coding is conducted with codes derived from these sources. Afterwards, the data that did not fit the initial coding scheme is given its own code (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The framework developed in the second chapter will serve as

a deductive guide for the coding and as a reference point against which inductive themes emerging from the data can be compared and when necessary, used to refine the conceptualisation.

Of the 200 collected comments, 41 were excluded from analysis after an initial manual review. These comments were not related to QQ directly or did not contain any substantial information. An initial round of deductive coding was conducted, using the categories of the nomological framework developed in the second chapter, sorting quotes into whether they are addressing antecedents, consequences or what they consider indicative behaviour of QQ. Quotes were assigned to multiple categories if relevant, or broken up into different statements if this was possible without removing context. In accordance with Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) method, data that could not be coded directly was highlighted during the first round and then subjected to a second round of coding to determine new categories inductively. A final review of all quotes with the updated codes was then performed in order to potentially rearrange categorization if a new inductive code fit a quote better than one of the deductive ones.

The updated coding structure covered all new emergent themes with a high quantity of codes, hinting towards data saturation. No new codes were identified in the later stages. To ensure data saturation, an additional 20 comments, of which 17 contained relevant content, were pulled via the same selection process and coded using the updated structure. This new data supported the existing codes and did not reveal any new information. Therefore, data saturation was considered fulfilled. With the addition of the saturation sample, the final data set consisted of 176 comments of 22 posts. The final coding table can be found under Appendix 3.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Due to being a public forum that users engage in voluntarily, most Reddit-based research is exempt from an ethical review. As this study only used publicly available data from anonymous users, no consent was gathered from research subjects. There is also no need to create an account in order to view non-age restricted content on Reddit, making it publicly available to all internet users. Neither Reddit nor r/antiwork's terms of service forbid data collection

It is notable that users shared no personal information, no names of people, companies or locations had to be removed from the data set, indicating a strong awareness of the potential consequences of being identified. Usernames were censored during the scraping of comments, replaced by ID numbers both for simplicity and anonymity.

3.6 Reflexivity

As with all qualitative research, the researcher's own biases and beliefs influence the process, a key difference from quantitative methods. Theoretical expectations or personal opinions might shape the selection and handling of the data as qualitative data is subjected to a more nuanced analysis (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

While a mixed approach of deductive and inductive coding offers methodological benefits, it risks containing emergent themes and meaning within prior coding categories. As the only coder, it was my responsibility to ensure that my interpretations still represent the complexity of the data. A deep dive into the literature, reflected in the nomological network, ensured that preconceived notions and codes are based on research, while the inductive code forming of the second round allowed for iterative movement in order to remain adaptive and responsive to the data (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). The quotes assigned to deductive codes in the first round were also re-examined after the second round in order to check for possible connections with the new codes.

My political orientation and interests were a key motivator for this study, but also enhanced potential biases. Removing myself from the data collection process was therefore a key step in ensuring that the data would accurately reflect the consensus of r/antiwork, rather than cherry picking quotes that fit my assumptions. I also personally reflected on moments where my assumptions aligned or were contradictory with the data that I was observing, using them as prompts to actively check my biases and how they might influence my interpretive position.

4. Results

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative content analysis of r/antiwork comment threads concerning QQ. Out of the 22 analysed posts, the majority revolved around personal work anecdotes or users sharing articles and social media posts on QQ, which would prompt others to comment. They were typically around one or two sentences, while some reached the length of a paragraph when users would share their own experience or detail their opinion.

First, the deductive codes of the nomological network and correlated concepts developed in Chapter 2 are presented, followed by a discussion on their representation within the data. Then, the inductive codes that were based on the data itself will be introduced, as well as their

connections to the framework. Extensions, removals and adjustments of the network will be discussed to present an updated version at the end of the chapter.

4.1 Accordance of Deductive Codes

In this section, the accordance of the deductive Indicators, Antecedents and Consequences with the r/antiwork data is examined. For the majority of categories, the comments strongly corroborate the proposed relationships and can be substantiated with a high number of illustrative quotes, while there are also areas in which the data nuances or challenges the existing assumptions.

4.1.1 Indicators

The three QQ indicators 1) carrying out formal requirements/assigned tasks, 2) avoiding non-contractually agreed upon tasks/responsibilities and 3) strict time/availability boundary setting were largely supported with 1) and 2) being explicitly discussed while 3) tended to be implied.

One of the major points of discussion that could be traced throughout the data is the first point of indicative behaviour, 1) carrying out formal requirements/assigned tasks. Users frame employment as a fair contractual exchange on the labour market. Both parties agreed to an exchange of labour, the contract specifying tasks and hours, in return for a salary. Taking on more is a breach of contract and must therefore come hand in hand with settling on new terms: *“if you want me to do something else, we can renegotiate.”* (ID-57). This mindset is frequently used to justify QQ behaviour, rejecting the notion that there is something wrong with taking it easy when all assigned tasks are taken care of.

“You hired me to do a thing for an agreed upon price. I did that thing, nothing more, nothing less. Now pay me the agreed upon rate, nothing more, nothing less” (ID-125).

“It’s an odd value system when what should be standard is called out in amazement.”
(ID-126).

These comments represent the QQ attitude accurately, often free from any form of malice and just a strict adherence to the terms.

The second indicator of QQ, 2) avoiding non-contractually agreed upon tasks/responsibilities, found similarly strong support. Refusing these obligations is seen as healthy and rational,

protecting yourself from performing unpaid labour in the short term, while also preventing the normalisation of a higher workload in the long term. Going all-out on the regular is seen as a mistake, turning exceptional effort into the standard expectation. This seems to be something that multiple workers, as this one, have experienced:

“Indeed, I have in the past made the mistake of starting out giving 110% from the get-go, to get my foot in the door better. And then they get mad when I “only” give 100% later on” (ID-210).

Even if it means letting the team down, QQers justify their behaviour as protective of themselves and other coworkers in the long term. Combating job creep also helps coworkers affected by increased expectations, as this comment argues:

“Nothing sends the message, ‘you need to backfill this position’ louder than the extra work being unfinished because the remaining workers have a full workload” (ID-116).

The third indicator, 3) strict time/availability boundary setting, was not addressed directly. This code did not have any strong relations with other themes of the data as it was largely addressed by the other two indicators. Overtime/availability during off time are non-contractual tasks, already contained in the rejection of 2).

The data shows that QQ is sufficiently defined by 1) and 2), removing 3) from the nomological network as its explanative significance is already covered by the two main indicators.

4.1.2 Antecedents

The four antecedents Effort-Reward Imbalance, Low Organisational/Emotional Commitment, Toxic Working Conditions and Low Social Security/Protesting Power were all prominently featured within the data, displaying a mutually reinforcing relationship to push people towards QQ rather than being separate factors.

Most notably, Effort-Reward Imbalance was assigned to 33 quotes. When users were detailing their QQ motivations, they would often recount past experiences in which taking on additional work voluntarily or being pushed by managers never resulted in any tangible upside:

“That’s when a go-getter realizes no matter how much they go, and how much they get for the company, their pay will never reflect all that going and getting” (ID-103).

This mismatch emerged as the most dominant motivator in pushing people to withdraw discretionary efforts.

Low Organisational/Emotional Commitment emerged as an antecedent with a nuanced relationship to QQ. To many users, it was something natural that did not require any elaboration. After all, *“Who the fuck is emotionally connected to their work?”* (ID-211). However, many commentators related this attitude to previous experiences, similar to Effort-Reward Imbalances. People felt wrung out like a rag (ID-209), a drone (ID-40), or naïve for giving up their youth to stress about work (ID-55). Even previously engaged workers who were willing to put in the effort felt like their enthusiasm was used to exploit them, now becoming increasingly cynical in how they see their employer.

Therefore, the code also exhibits a strong connection to Toxic Working Conditions as well. The dominating sentiment is that corporations do not care if the worker lived or died (ID-31, 55, 122), created by systematic issues like chronic understaffing, overworking and pressuring workers to overperform, summed up by this quote:

“Jaded, disillusioned, cynical; these are the qualities instilled by corporate management culture” (ID-209).

Furthermore, efforts to improve the working conditions are either non-existent or ineffective, exhibiting the lack of willingness or ability of employers to understand their workers (ID-207).

Apart from cultural aspects, financial motivations play into Low Social Security/Protesting Power. Employers are motivated to *“pay as low as it can get”* (ID-81), which results in workers living on the financial edge. Therefore, they cannot threaten with a resignation since they have no savings to fall back onto, forcing them to stay in undesirable positions.

“The detail about no saving money capacity hit me right in the gut. I think companies, especially big ones, thrive on that. Especially when inflation is high, or some political bullshit starts going on” (ID-87).

As this comment and others point out (ID-34, 144, 182 185), inflation is a major factor contributing to this insecurity. While employers are not directly responsible for major socioeconomic factors, they can use them to their advantage. Not only are workers denied bonuses and promotions, but an unadjusted salary over several years also effectively reduces the material conditions of workers since inflation steadily lowers the buying power of that income. The importance of this is further highlighted by the fact that the most upvoted comment

(19.477 upvotes) is discussing this, establishing it as a core theme to understand QQ and social fears.

“Not only does pay not increase, you are actually getting a pay cut if your wage is not adjusted for inflation. Which it usually isn't. So they are not even quiet paying; they are giving workers quiet pay cuts. And they've been doing it for over 40 years, which is why people are no longer able to support a home or family on an average job.” (ID-181).

The data also highlights how high social security fundamentally alters an individual's relationship with wage labour. Workers who enjoy high labour market power can easily choose to walk away, relishing in and being celebrated for leveraging this against their employer (ID-48, 114, 118, 187, 198). When their working conditions worsen, they are able to demand salary increases or just quit outright, illustrating the differences between QQers and Great Resignation participants. Notably, the mistreatment of key employees would often come back to hurt the employer, as this comment exemplifies.

“They had given me so many jobs that they didn't realize it until I was gone. They had to hire 3 people to replace me. And eventually brought me back on contract to teach the new hires (yes, I asked for a ridiculous amount of money)” (ID-198).

In summary, the antecedents are all retained and established as fundamental to understanding QQ. The data further nuances the gradual relationship between them, displaying how Effort-Reward Imbalance and Toxic Working Conditions can function as direct antecedents to QQ but also indirectly by fostering Low Organizational/Emotional Commitment.

4.1.3 Consequences

Personal Benefits, Career Setbacks and Coworker Reactions found differing support within the data. Generally, consequences were significantly less discussed than other topics as users were more interested in discussing what pushed them towards QQ rather than how it has affected their lives.

Personal Benefits seemed to be a consensus, often not discussed directly and just mentioned in passing (ID-7, 9, 62, 65, 147, 152). Users point out how giving 100% on a regular basis is simply not sustainable, choosing to protect their physical and mental health alike, which closely aligns with the literature narrative (Harris, 2025; Öztürk et al., 2023). Despite its relatively weak

presence, Personal Benefits emerged as the main consequence that users perceive as the natural following of QQ.

In contrast, comments related to Career Setbacks largely differed from what was to be expected based on the literature and media framing. Rather than QQ being the reason their career stalls, many users felt motivated to engage in QQ as a reaction to blocked progression or insignificant rewards (ID-50, 88,104, 119, 182, 198). Workers would withdraw their effort and commitment after not seeing the expected progression, feeling like their additional efforts go unappreciated. The literature would often describe Career Setbacks as a trade-off that QQers were willing to accept, yet comments like ID-119 described it as an antecedent to QQ, a specific form of Effort-Reward Imbalance.

“I waited 6 YEARS for recognition and promotion, just to have a less experienced male coworker promoted over me (after I trained him, obviously!). No one should do what I did without a promise in writing for a huge pay increase and title change.” (ID-119).

Distinctly different from this was the discussion cluster under one post where users were commenting on how they have been using QQ as a strategy to provoke termination (ID-41, 44, 46, 48) by intentionally performing subpar. They were ‘quietly quitting’ their jobs in a literal sense, working as little as possible while already searching for alternative positions or hoping to secure unemployment benefits. This resembles ‘quietly quitting your job’ far more accurately than it does for the majority of commenters who insist on fulfilling all contractual obligations. Most self-identified QQers clearly align with this latter, contract-conforming understanding and explicitly distance themselves from the former:

“If anything, constantly calling out, being late, and barely doing your tasks should be [labelled as QQ] because it's like you're daring them to fire you.” (ID-164).

The comment cluster forms a striking contrast to this attitude and describes exactly what ID-164 and other users would title as QQ. The moral high ground that is earned by actually adhering to the contract is also what commenters use to separate themselves from these actual saboteurs and free riders.

Furthermore, the only deductive code that was not largely quantified in the data with quotes was Coworker Reactions. Only two comments loosely referenced how non-QQers might view the topic, describing how most people just want to be left alone and are not motivated to fight back against growing injustice (ID-155, 159)

Based on these results, Coworker Reactions are removed from the network due to lacking support from the data. Career Setbacks are subordinated to Effort-Reward Imbalance as an antecedent while Personal Benefits remain as the sole Consequence based on the deductive network.

4.2 Correlated Concepts

As it is the nature of correlated concepts, these were rarely discussed by name but often referenced or described in different terms.

Behaviour that would be associated with OCB, such as having a good work ethic and helping the organization out, was largely framed as the ability to be exploited (ID-67, 141). Encouraging this behaviour is seen as natural since it is in the best interest of the employer if the worker thinks of the company as a collective, increasing performance without hurting profits.

“All it does is increase your work load, show your boss you're not only willing to do extra but that "Oh well they obviously have the extra time to commit, so here's more responsibility" but without any of the benefits for the employee.” (ID-97).

As this comment shows, discretionary efforts are a relevant topic being discussed in relation to QQ since r/antiwork users wish to withdraw from voluntary, noncontractual labor rather than their contractually obligated duties. Therefore, despite not being named explicitly, OCB is highly correlated to QQ as a concept.

Work-to-Rule was explicitly named three times. Two comments called QQ a misnomer/pejorative term for it (ID-59, 63), seemingly unaware of the collective action aspect of it as a striking tool compared to the individualistic effort of QQ. Beyond this, users did not seem aware or interested in discussing their parallels or underlying motivations. While Work-to-Rule was important to understand and develop Low Social Security/Protesting Power as an antecedent, the data indicates that most of its explanatory relevance was tied to that theme and therefore does not require a separate listing as a correlate.

Quiet Firing was mentioned several times, closely reflecting its description from the literature of worsening conditions or offering fewer shifts, trying to motivate the employee to quit to avoid unemployment claims or work around legal requirements (ID-49, 54, 73, 128, 192). The comments did not reveal new information and were also not informative enough to define Quiet

Firing as an antecedent or consequence but do confirm that this behaviour is also experienced by r/antiwork members and establishing it as a correlated theme.

While OCB and Quiet Firing are retained as correlated themes, Work-to-Rule is removed from the network as it is already sufficiently represented through the Low Social Security/Protesting Power antecedent, which found much stronger substantiation.

4.3 Inductive Codes

In total, five new codes were established after analysing the data. While these themes were often intertwined with already existing codes, they were prominent enough to require separate observation and discussion. These codes were ‘Criticism of the Term’, ‘Origin of Criticism’, ‘Value Extraction by Higher-Ups’, ‘Quiet Demotion’ and ‘Generational Divide’, which will be presented in the following text.

4.3.1. *Criticism of the Term*

One of the most dominant themes (41 comments) that was brought up throughout the vast majority of posts, often unrelated to the specific content, was the extreme disdain of the community for the term QQ itself, summarized under the new code ‘Criticism of the Term’. Similar to media and research narratives, users viewed QQ as a buzzword that popped up out of nowhere to describe normal behaviour. However, they ascribe the rise in popularity and mainstream relevance not to its accurate capturing of the zeitgeist, but rather to the efforts of the ownership class and sympathetic media to stigmatize the refusal of unpaid labour (ID-60). The term of choice in the r/antiwork community is ‘act your wage’ (ID-52, 64, 84, 135, 136, 137, 140, 142, 193). Community members prefer it especially due to dropping the word ‘quitting’ from the terminology which implied that they were no longer doing their job, as well as connecting their behaviour to its direct cause, their wage. I am not a quitter, I simply behave appropriately for the money I am being paid, so their sentiment.

The discourse is framed as top-down, trying to push the responsibility of deteriorating workplace conditions onto employees by labelling completely normal practices as deviant, as these comments exemplify.

“I don't get how anyone is getting traction on this whole concept of "doing your job as per the description is a form of 'quitting.'" The job description lays out the duties and the rate of pay for them” (ID-193).

“I go into a bakery and buy a loaf of bread. I pay the price listed on the shelf and they hand me the product. Quiet quitting! I need my lawn mowed. I pay the neighborhood kid \$20 and he mows it. The nerve of lazy employees!” (ID-130).

The indicative behaviour of QQ, performing your formal duties and tasks, is leaned on heavily as portrayed by these quotes to justify this behaviour. It should be seen as normal to do your work and go home, voluntarily going above expectations should indeed be voluntary and not the default expectation. Even if additional effort is rewarded properly, it is still within the workers' rights to limit themselves to their contractual obligations. The fact that employers are upset about this is a giveaway in the eyes of QQers, often deflecting criticism by mirroring the logic of employers (ID-130, 134). This hypocrisy reveals how they have been relying on unpaid labour to increase profits at the cost of workers.

“Paying X and getting X⁽¹⁰⁾ does not apply anywhere else in the market, (certainly not profesional services) why are employees any different?” (ID-134).

However, many users indicate that they are, in general, willing to take on additional work when it is fairly compensated. For these individuals, the criticism is less directed at the idea of working more but at the way organizations seek it out. The disengaged attitude of QQers is often a focal point of criticism, yet commenters emphasize that employers have no grounds to insist on enthusiasm, discretionary efforts, or additional hours, even when paid. Workers perceive the push for such things as organizations feeling entitled to the engagement of their workers rather than earning it.

“From the article definition it seems being productive and fulfilling the requirements of the job without enthusiasm is now a new form of quitting?” (ID-204).

“Gotta love it when somebody wants something, but can't outright ask because they know it's wrong.” (ID-166).

*“He *wants* the devotion. He wants people to wring out. He doesn't want exactly *slaves*, he wants “free people” but to crush them as easily as a slave” (ID-36).*

As these comments display, users feel like employers want workers to go above and beyond on their own volition, not because they are told so. This way, they can extract the value while leaving the quality/existence of rewards vague or non-existent.

This is further illustrated by a scene from the 1999 movie “Office Space” (Movieclips, 2015), referenced in three unrelated posts by four comments that gathered over eight thousand upvotes collectively (ID-162, 189, 193, 216). The referenced scene shows an interaction between a server and her restaurant manager, the former being criticized for not wearing enough ‘flair’, buttons which are supposed to express the staff’s personality. She responds by pointing out that if he wants more flair, he should just increase the minimum the staff is required to wear, which he takes as a poor reflection of her character and work ethic, someone who only does the minimum of what they are required to do. The strong association that users seem to make between this specific scene and QQ further exemplifies the disdain for the term and the corporate culture that it represents, framing the limitation to job requirements as a moral failing or attitude issue.

The information gathered under this code discusses QQ on a meta contextual level rather than the behaviour itself. As such, the code does not occupy a specific position within the network but retains high explanatory importance as to how QQers form their opinions, viewing the label as misrepresentative of their behaviour. Therefore, the analytical importance of this code is still represented through the indicators in the model which aim to explicitly understand what r/antiwork users view as QQ.

4.3.2 Origin of Criticism

Another line of argumentation that was closely intertwined with the broader Criticism of the Term, yet so prevalent that it emerged as a distinct subcategory, was the ‘Origin of Criticism’. The comments collected under this post specifically criticize QQ in regard to who was pushing for its prominence, and the accompanying condemnation. Users argue that the main push and disapproval for QQ was initiated by the ownership class, corporate media and management-oriented publication that mainly advertise to employers. It is seen as a culture war buzzword that is supposed to demonize workers by shifting the blame for workplace issues and the cost of higher revenue onto them, as these comments lay out.

*“When Bloomberg and WSJ start churning out these articles, I call them *Notes From the Ruling Class.* They usually address some sort of trend or dissident behavior that they would soon like to revert back into their favor.” (ID-74).*

“It's relevant to note that news agencies have also benefitted from these practices in almost every area of their operations. So, they have a vested interest in framing the issue against the workers.” (ID-4).

One user identifies this as ‘manufacturing consent’ (ID-79), a term that describes how mass media under capitalism is shaped by its ownership, systematically filtering and flavouring public discourse in favour of elite interests (Chomsky & Herman, 2002). Due to this attitude community members find it easy to dismiss any form of criticism by these journals or public figures that advocate for going above and beyond, seeing them as fundamentally disconnected from the working class and average people doing their job, exemplified by statements like this:

“It's almost as if business owners and the financial writers don't actually know anyone who has a job” (ID-204).

This disconnect is also present in other workplace issues, notably working from home (ID-22, 26, 74, 108, 147). Higher ups pushing for the return to the office after Covid were not able to grasp how many quality-of-life improvements the average employee gains, advocating for something that benefits the upper class unproportionally. For many users, these two public debates had a similar taste of elites trying push a specific narrative, trying to present their opinion as common sense.

As a specific form of Criticism of the Term, the Origin of Criticism also does not find a position within the nomological network but serves as meta context to the discussion.

4.3.3 Quiet Demotion

Under the code ‘Quiet Demotion’, the data captures many situations where employees were made into QQers as a consequence of staff downsizing, while keeping the workload and pay identical. This is heavily connected with the indicative code of ‘Avoid Extra Tasks’, presenting a special scenario of which workers try to protect themselves. Comments would often discuss situations where teams are cut dramatically while the higher-ups were still expecting the same results (ID-111, 114, 118, 157, 196), once again highlighting ‘Effort-Reward Imbalance’ as a key antecedent by not increasing wages in return. As a result, people keeping a consistent level

of performance get labelled as QQers since they refuse to pick up the workload that the empty position leaves behind. The label for this situation and code was developed from the quote:

“no pay raise, higher work load? Thats a demotion.” (ID-113).

Users ascribe this to employers seeking to maximize profits. Directly reducing salaries is complicated and would create massive backlash, so they ‘quietly demote’ their workers by firing their colleagues and/or increasing the workload, lowering costs/increasing output while maintaining costs. Limiting yourself to your regular duties when somebody is sick or let go, reducing the performance of the team and company for that time period, is therefore important to make the employer feel like temporary overperformance is not a viable long-term standard (ID-112, 116). While there are similarities to ‘Quiet Firing’ in intentionally worsening working conditions, the employer is not trying to get rid of the worker in this scenario, but is betting on them to accept their Quiet Demotion in order to increase revenue.

Quiet Demotion will be classified as an antecedent, a specific form of Effort-Reward Imbalance, within the network since it describes how workers are pushed towards QQ or can get framed as such without changing their previously acceptable behaviour.

4.3.4 Value Extraction by Higher-Ups

The underlying motivation behind criticism of QQ, profit maximization, also motivated the development of another code, ‘Value Extraction by Higher-Ups’. As described throughout this chapter, r/antiwork members strongly feel that extra effort and OCB are not rewarded appropriately. Yet, their unpaid labour still creates value, value that does not benefit them but their employer. In case of a Quiet Demotion for example, a team is downsized and the remaining workers absorb the redistributed workload, while the financial gain of reduced headcount flows upwards to executives, managers and senior staff.

“Most of us don’t see anything from our extra work so why bother?” (ID-2).

“Low employee engagement costs global economy 8 trillion annually. Keep up the good work.

Most of that 8 trillion goes to fucking billionaires anyway.” (ID-179).

“Employers value hungry, keen workers.” Of course they do. They’re the ones earning their boss a new vacation home.” (ID-32).

Comments like these show that the users accept and welcome hurting the bottom line of their employer as a consequence of removing discretionary efforts since, viewing profits based on

unrewarded labour as fundamentally illegitimate. By rephrasing the code, this establishes “Withdrawing Unpaid Value” as a Consequence of QQ that r/antiwork users are actively seeking out.

4.3.5 Generational Divide

Another prominent code that emerged from the data is a ‘Generational Divide’ around how QQ and hard work are understood. Users often discuss older workers (boomers) who have been conditioned to accept overworking in their youth, now seeing healthy boundaries and work-life balance as laziness. However, explaining the nature of this conditioning splits comments into two camps.

One side points to the change in material conditions and how taking on more work, like engaging in OCB, was actually rewarded. The idea of working hard to increase your living standards used to be, at least partly, grounded in reality for previous generations in their opinion. But standards have shifted over time to create the conditions that have been described in previous codes.

“What was “exceptional effort” 40 years ago have been skewed into being the normal expectation” (ID-186).

Comments like this claim that the critics of QQ have not updated their image of reality to the current working place conditions, this curated culture of ‘hustling’ is now being used to manipulate workers to perform discretionary efforts without rewards.

The other side describes the hostility as a form of psychological defence. Extra effort has never paid off and by admitting that QQers are right, older generations would have to confront the fact that they themselves were exploited over the course of their life. There is *“a degree of self loathing that they hold for themselves for not doing the same when they were younger” (ID-99)* while also *“trying to rationalize their years of bootlicking as “the right way.” Otherwise, the sudden realization that they’ve been had might break their brains” (ID-91).*

While the Generational Divide also comments on QQ on a meta level and adds context, it will not be included in the nomological network. Rather than describing a specific concept, the discussion surrounding it stays general and blends multiple factors together. The data does not offer grounds to measure this factor in any way.

4.4 Updated Nomological Network

With the evidence presented in this chapter, the nomological network is updated accordingly. Contextual information, like the critiques of the term, is not presented since it addresses the label and surrounding discourse rather than QQ itself.

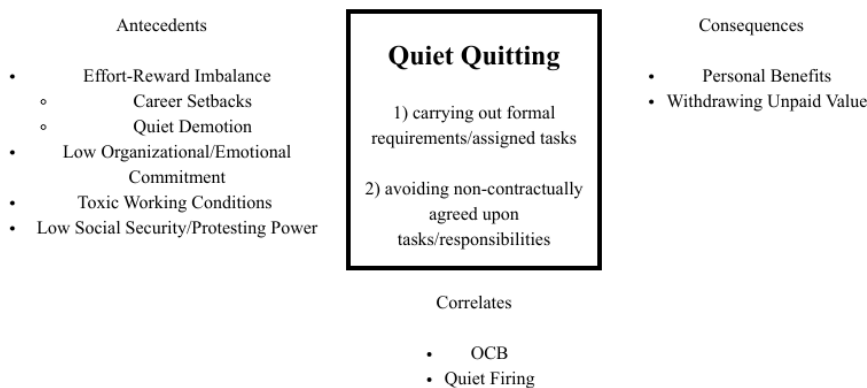


Figure 2. Updated Nomological Network

The updated network conceptualizes QQ around the two indicators: (1) carrying out formal, assigned tasks and (2) avoiding non-contractually agreed-upon responsibilities, centring the employment contract as justification. The behaviour is preceded by a cluster of mutually reinforcing antecedents, multiple forms of Effort-Reward Imbalance functioning as the central factor that drives Low Organizational/Emotional Commitment and Toxic Working Conditions. Low Social Security/Protesting Power further explains this process by limiting the workers' ability to resist openly. Consequences are treated as a welcome byproduct in the data rather than a main motivator.

The study found its most substantial insights on antecedents, demonstrated through the retention of all deductive codes, the extension with inductive subcategories, and the limited discussions of consequences. The community was far more interested in discussing what created the motivations pushing them towards QQ rather than its repercussions.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the findings in light of the theoretical framework and to assess how far the data from r/antiwork corroborates, nuances or challenges existing

understandings of QQ, which were presented based on literature and media. In doing so, the chapter aims to move from a primarily descriptive account of QQ by community members towards an exploration of what QQ represents as a work-related phenomenon. It will position the study within the QQ literature, elaborate on its contributions and make future research proposals.

First, the four central justifications offered by the comments will be examined, focusing on the rationales used to legitimate and defend QQ. In the second subchapter, commenters' interpretation of the QQ discourse on a meta level will be analysed first, followed by a discussion of what this implies about proposed organizational responses. The study will be finished by discussing its strengths and weaknesses, and a final conclusion.

5.1 Justification of Quiet Quitting

The first point that is central to understanding how QQ is justified, is that most do not experience this as something that requires justification in the first place. Carrying out formal requirements/assigned tasks, the first indicator, clearly establishes itself as the fundamental feature of QQ and becomes the main legitimizing factor in the discourse, commenters repeatedly framing themselves as “professional” and “responsible” exactly because they deliver the agreed upon performance but refuse to treat additional tasks as an obligation.

Importantly, the data does not indicate major disagreements between r/antiwork and the academic discourse in regard to what QQ actually looks like at the behavioural level. This is also visible in the network as no indicators were added and only one was removed due to redundancy. Most of the articles and media pieces that have been discussed in this study do acknowledge that QQers engage in their basic tasks and are not complete free riders. However, it is the framing and tone that seemingly make all the difference here and should be updated based on the findings of this study.

This framing directly connects to the second point that guides the discourse, the rejection of the term. Exactly because QQers define their behaviour as compliance with the employment contract rather than withdrawal from work, the label is frequently interpreted as stigmatizing. QQ as a term is rejected because it reframes compliance as deviance.

The data, especially the indicators and Criticism of the Term, suggests that the central conflict emerges from what role is ascribed to the job description. For r/antiwork users, it identifies the exact workload that corresponds to their pay, making it the agreed-upon level of performance,

while employers view it as doing the ‘bare minimum’ to not get fired (Anand et al., 2024; Hamouche et al., 2023; Patel et al., 2025). This helps to explain why debates often result in talking past each other. Many quotes from the data have showcase how easy QQers find it to dismiss any criticism due to fundamentally disagreeing with the moral judgment of their behaviour. This has important implications for literature that uses this framing. Proposed solutions risk missing the actual conflict that would make their suggestions and criticism stick. Before debating how adherence to the job description should be treated, it is important to establish what function it serves from all parties’ perspectives.

The third point central to understanding QQ is that it is mainly reactive, as the prevalence of antecedental discussion shows. Rather than a deliberate trade-off of career advancement for work-life balance, advancement opportunities seem unattainable to QQers. Work-life balance is not this major pulling factor convincing people to give up career progression, but rather the only domain in which workers can secure any tangible upside. The attitude is born out of past frustrations that disillusioned them about reward structures, aligning with works such as Aydin & Levent (2025), Detert (2023), Dillard et al. (2024), and Serenko (2024) that do acknowledge QQ as an effort recalibration to match rewards, as well as the background of QQ as the only realistic alternative to the Great Resignation for many people. The fundamental connection of QQ to Low Social Security cannot be understated, the data highlighting how workers who hold high negotiation power do not have to resort to QQ. This further strengthens the assumption made in the introduction that studies and scales based on individuals with high labour market power fail to capture QQ.

The fourth point of justification revolves around the avoidance of job creep and its normalization. This is touched upon under the ‘Avoid Extra Tasks’ code and elaborated on under ‘Quiet Demotion’. The comments under these codes describe how resignations, layoffs or sick days of coworkers redistribute and increase the workload of remaining employees permanently, organizations taking it as an opportunity to not hire anybody new or deliberately causing it to reduce costs. Even if it means letting the team/company down, QQers justify their behaviour as protective of themselves and other coworkers (ID-112, 116). Raising to the occasion temporarily will not be rewarded but used to quietly demote everyone to a new, unofficial position with more tasks but equal pay. This contradicts the dominant literature narrative of QQ as significantly coworker harming (Bennett et al., 2025; Klotz & Bolino, 2022; Öztürk et al., 2023). It is commonly argued that QQers increase the workload and stress of colleagues, violating reciprocity norms and creating frustrations, declining morale and potentially reinforcing further withdrawal. However, *r/antiwork* frames this lessened

engagement as desirable in the long term, benefiting all workers. If everyone did QQ, the employer would have no choice but to actually reward extra effort, as the value of labour would increase overall.

It is noteworthy that this would require collective action, yet a discussion about encouraging others to join is noticeably absent. While QQers desire macro changes, they limit their actions to a micro level. Future studies could examine this directly and investigate whether and why QQers do not perceive mobilizing their direct peers as necessary or feasible.

Something that is interesting due to its absence rather than its prevalence are ‘Coworker Reactions’. While the criticism of older generations, captured under ‘Generational Divide’, could stem from coworkers, the relationship is never explicitly named. It was to be expected that an antiwork forum is populated with self-identified QQers rather than their colleagues, yet it remains noteworthy that commenters either do not observe negative reactions in their immediate work environment or do not consider them relevant to discussing QQ. Due to the stigmatization of QQ, it is also possible that individuals are ashamed to discuss this, but anonymity, as well as the openness regarding other topics makes this reluctance seem unlikely. Either way, pointing to negative reactions of coworkers does not seem to be an effective argument that could affect QQers, especially due to the perceived upside of their behaviour outlined in the previous paragraph. Further research could investigate this relationship in more detail, exploring how prominent and effective social backlash directed at already disengaged QQers really is and how context and culture might influence this.

5.2 Interpretation of Quiet Quitting

While the goal of this study was to explore the concept of QQ, that goal was only partially achieved. The majority of inductive insights were dedicated to discussing the context of the QQ debate rather than the topic itself. Building on that, this section focuses on discussing what this reveals about the meta environment and the implications of the term.

As explored previously, r/antiwork prefers ‘act your wage’ to describe their behaviour. They claim that the term QQ is un-descriptive but also deliberately reframes what a normal workload should be, implicitly conceding that many organisations have been relying on discretionary efforts to increase revenue. ‘Act your wage’ improves semantic precision but is also analytically relevant because it contains the moral claim: the appropriate level of labour is that which corresponds to your salary. People trying to attack this behaviour would already concede wages

as the centre of it rather than implying immoral behavior by saying ‘quitting’. The findings of this study confirm prior analysis of the antiwork movement’s preference for ‘act your wage’ (Shuster, 2022), further extending it by providing context as to why it resonates with workers. Future research could examine the co-evolution of these competing labels, tracing how they developed and why QQ is far more prominent in public discourse.

R/antiwork already offers an explanation to this question. The mainstream circulation, and quickly followed condemnation, of QQ is created by actors with vested interests in maintaining discretionary efforts as standard and demonizing such a movement, as described in the code ‘Origin of Criticism’. Societal groups such as the ownership class and corporate, management-oriented media seek to uphold the unwritten laws and beliefs that push people towards discretionary efforts since they are the ones that get to actually extract the value of labour. The language of attacking the working class for ‘quitting quietly’ rather than ‘acting their wage’ is on purpose. While one comment states this explicitly, what users describe very much reflects ‘manufacturing consent’, the media being systematically steered and incentivised to produce capitalism and elite friendly interpretations (Chomsky & Herman, 2002).

While Chomsky and Herman discuss the media in their work, it is noteworthy that academic discourse aligns in this regard, heavily prioritizing the term QQ. Despite acknowledging its vague, inaccurate terminology and other studies already highlighting ‘act your wage’ as a more popular alternative, QQ remains the term of choice. The existence of a competing label is ignored or mentioned in passing. This does call into question whether scientific research, intentionally or not, is guilty of promoting anti-labour sentiment. At the very least, this warrants greater reflexivity among academics regarding their relationship with public discourse, dominated by corporate institutions and how this indelibly affects research, or openly acknowledging whose interest they are defending.

This miss-framing of QQ in the wrong meta context also informs the second point of analysis in this subchapter, suggested organizational responses. A large portion of literature commentary proposes to combat QQ directly on a behavioural level, focusing on what contributes to toxic working conditions. Workers are unhappy, so their direct environment must be improved. Fostering well-being in the workplace, advocating for humble bosses (Harter, 2022), increased autonomy in accordance with self-determination theory (Aydin & AziZoğlu, 2022; Deci & Ryan, 1985) are common examples. Furthermore, studies that identify job descriptions as a central point of conflict suggest to adjust them: outcome-based rather than activity-based

(Ratnatunga, 2022), recalibrating and clarifying responsibilities to reflect modern necessities (Anand et al., 2024; Klotz & Bolino, 2022).

While these are valid suggestions, the data showed that working conditions are not the only, nor the most prevalent, antecedent of QQ. With the high presence of Effort-Reward Imbalance, one response is notably underrepresented: adjusting people's salary to their effort. This is precisely when calling it 'act your wage' becomes conceptually clarifying because it directly links the behaviour to its cause: the wage. Even an *antiwork* community is filled with individuals who are completely willing to work more, as long as they are fairly paid. The reactive nature of QQ demonstrates that one must simply adjust the impulse that provokes this reaction in order to change it. By no means is this a revolutionary idea (e.g. Hamouche et al., 2023; Ratnatunga, 2022), yet it feels necessary to state this explicitly since it is underemphasized in contrast to how direct the causation is. Avoiding the recommendation of higher pay could also be viewed as another example of 'manufacturing consent', it is just taken as a given that QQ must be combated without meaningfully hurting the bottom line, as one comment perfectly summarises:

“Anything that puts the financial burden on us is good. Anything that puts the financial burden on them is bad” (ID-214).

When discussing how organizations should respond, it is rarely acknowledged what kind of organizational fields tend to struggle with QQ in the first place. The discourse captured in this study, especially under 'Value Extraction by Higher-Ups' and 'Low Social Security/Protesting Power', indicates that QQ often occurs in power asymmetric, profit-driven employment relationships. When an article confidently states a "bilateral conversation about how they should go about their work, framed in the context of a compelling, higher purpose" (Johnson, 2023, p. 12) as the solution to QQ, it is simply presumed that profit-driven employers are even able to articulate this compelling, higher purpose that deserves discretionary effort. QQ discourse never stops to ask whether a particular organization deserves to fix QQ. I want to encourage future research to more critically examine who reports low engagement in the workplace and what characteristics they share. A cross-industry comparison of QQ could be insightful, not only by highlighting where it is the most prevalent, but also by revealing which industry characteristics discourage employee engagement.

I want to highlight the potential of such a study with an example, using 'Value Extraction by Higher-Ups' as the centre. When late-stage capitalism boils down most companies' mission statement to increasing revenue and hitting an arbitrary KPI before the next shareholder

meeting, it makes sense for workers to withdraw effort and attachment. However, there are organisations that offer a purpose beyond monetary incentives: charities and non-profit organizations. Labour directly benefits struggling communities and individuals, offering employees the compelling and higher purpose that Johnson (2023) was describing. Therefore, it would be a plausible hypothesis that workers experience QQ differently and to a far lesser extent in these organizational fields, removing the ‘Value Extraction by Higher-Ups’ code from consideration. Future research could explore whether there are lessons about worker engagement that could be transferred from organisations that take a responsible and sustainable approach to positioning themselves in society.

5.3 Limitations

The r/antiwork community is a distinct community with shared norms that are enforced by moderation rules, creating a subculture that does not represent workers or QQers as a whole. This limits the transferability of these findings, and they should be understood as context-specific. The homogeneity of the data further implies an echo-chamber quality of the subreddit, comment chains consisting of overwhelming agreement. Reddit’s voting system naturally fosters this by highlighting majority positions and downvoting criticism. It could be worthwhile to compare the findings of this community to both other offline and online contexts, such as more career-focused subreddits (e.g., r/work, r/careerguidance).

Furthermore, the reliance on anonymous, voluntarily provided secondary data prevents any form of follow-up or clarification that the research might have required. While the study identified themes and patterns, a deep dive is required to establish the origin or nuance of expressed opinions.

This data collection method also heavily limits the demographic information that can be obtained. The community seems to be U.S. centred as it was mentioned by name multiple times, even in posts unrelated to regional debate. American English spelling was also used in the majority of comments. Besides a few specific discussions surrounding unemployment benefits and legal regulations, none of the content was specific to the U.S. While the data did not consist of U.S. specific commentary, this strong cultural tendency has to be acknowledged. As proposed earlier, it should be investigated how QQ is experienced differently across contexts, but also cultures, which would allow the examination of the cultural bias.

5.4 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to investigate an online subculture that strictly positions itself against hard work in order to answer the research question: “How do employees justify and interpret their work engagement and motivation leading to quiet quitting behaviour?”. By analysing 176 comments from 22 r/antiwork posts, this study uncovered how actual QQers see their behaviour as rational and morally defensible in trying to protect themselves from unfair working conditions and exploitation.

The primary justification for reduced work engagement and motivation is through the employment contract, using it as the direct link between effort and compensation. The data frames QQ mainly as a reaction to past experiences, which reinforced that going above and beyond is not recognized in meaningful ways, centring Effort-Reward Imbalance as the most salient motivation. In response, QQers readjust their performance to match the reward that both parties settled on in the contract. Therefore, the term itself is also condemned in favor of ‘act your wage’, dropping the ‘quitting’ which delegitimizes the retention of the position. This meta-criticism is also extended to the discussion of the term, interpreting it as an attempt to reframe discretionary efforts as the standard again, now that people are examining their employment situations more critically.

This study contributes to a better understanding of QQ as a workplace phenomenon by focusing on authentic worker narratives rather than presuming a behavioural issue that requires fixing. The updated nomological network can help researchers and employers to better understand what motivates QQers and how to meaningfully interact with them. Furthermore, an underexplored function of QQ as a language tool for blame attribution was discussed, highlighting the importance of a more nuanced approach to public discourse.

Solving QQ will not free the world from capitalism, but it is a symptom of how short-term thinking detached from employees as humans is not a viable long-term strategy for organisations. When employers start to withdraw incentives such as promotions and raises but retain the expectation of discretionary effort, it is only a matter of time until workers respond. Both employers and society at large should reflect on where chasing fortune for the top at the cost of everyone else has taken us.

“When fulfilling the obligations you legally agreed to perform is viewed as subversive and indigent; that’s how you know the system relies on exploitation to sustain itself.” (ID-184).

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Figures

Figure 1

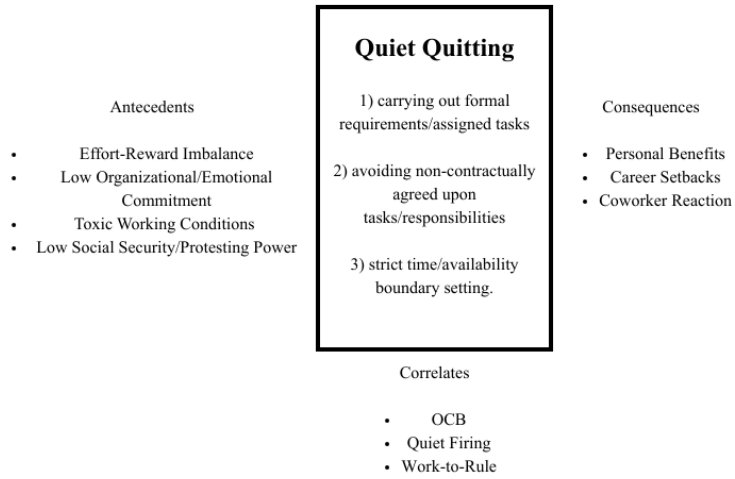
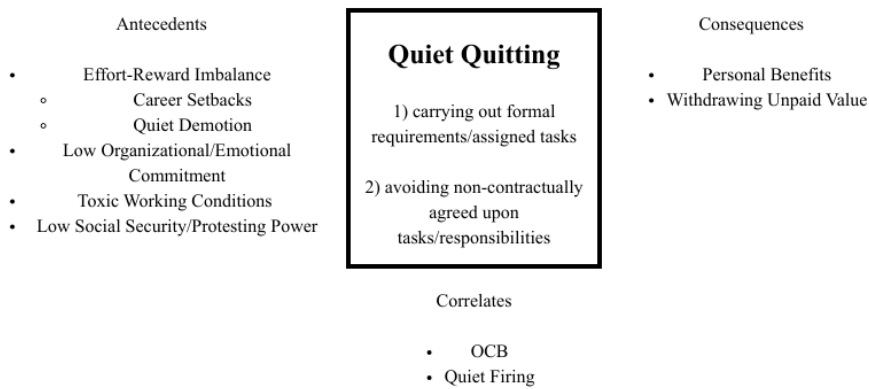


Figure 2



Appendix

Appendix 1. Development of Python Script with ChatGPT 5

are there AI tools or could you perhaps fulfill the task of me giving you a link to a reddit post and then automatically getting the most popular responses to the post in a list or something like that

Nachgedacht für 50s >

Short answer: yes. You've got two good options—and I can do option 1 right here in chat.

- I do it for you (quick + no setup)

Paste a Reddit post link. I'll fetch the comments, sort them by "Top" (or "Best," your choice), and return a clean list with, for each comment:

 - rank, score, author (or anonymized), timestamp
 - first ~200–300 chars of the text
 - direct permalink to the comment
 - (optional) include/removes for deleted/automod, depth (top-level only vs. include replies), min-score threshold, CSV/JSON export
- DIY (tiny script; fully reproducible)

If you prefer to run it yourself (e.g., for methods transparency), here's a minimal approach that doesn't require API keys:

 - Take the post URL and append: `.json?sort=top&limit=500&raw_json=1`
 - Parse the second element of the returned array (the comments tree).
 - Walk the tree (`replies.data.children`) and collect for each comment: `author`, `body`, `score`, `created_utc`, `permalink`.
 - Sort by `score` (or rely on Reddit's server-side `sort=top` / `sort=confidence` for "Best").
 - Export as a table/CSV.

If you want, I can also (a) include nested replies up to depth N, (b) exclude removed/deleted/AutoModerator, (c) anonymize usernames for ethics, and (d) hand you a CSV/JSON you can drop straight into your analysis pipeline.

Send a link and any preferences (Top vs. Best, depth, format), and I'll produce the list.

okay wait, please slowly walk me through the second method

Perfect, let's do it step by step and keep it human.

I'll show you the "no Reddit API key, just the post's JSON" method. You can literally do the first half in your browser, and the second half in Python (or any language).

1. Get the normal Reddit URL

Say you have a post like:

```
https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/abcd12/what_is_something/
```

(Your link will look a bit different, that's fine.)

That's the *human* version.

2. Turn it into the JSON version

Reddit can return the same post as raw data if you add `.json` to the end.

So you make it:

```
https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/abcd12/what_is_something/.json
```

Two nice extras you can add:

- `?sort=top` → tell Reddit you want top comments
- `&limit=500` → ask for more comments
- `&raw_json=1` → keep emojis etc. unescaped

So a good, generic pattern is:

```
https://www.reddit.com/r/.../post_id/.../.json?sort=top&limit=500&raw_json=1
```

Try opening that in your browser. You'll see an ugly wall of JSON — that's good.

3. Understand what comes back

Reddit returns a list with two parts:

- `[0]` → the post itself (title, score, etc.)
- `[1]` → the comments

We care about the second one.

Inside the second one, the comments live here:

```
text
[1].data.children
```

Each `child` is usually a top-level comment. Each comment has this shape (simplified):

```
json
{
  "kind": "t1",
  "data": {
    "author": "someuser",
    "body": "the comment text",
    "score": 1234,
    "created_utc": 1730880000,
    "permalink": "/r/.../comments/.../commentid/",
    "replies": { ... } // nested comments, sometimes "" if none
  }
}
```

So: each top-level comment = `child.data`.

4. Decide what you want to extract

For "most popular responses" we usually want, per comment:

- text → `data["body"]`
- score → `data["score"]`
- author → `data["author"]`
- link → `https://www.reddit.com + data["perma"]`
- maybe time → `data["created_utc"]`

5. Python example (copy-paste-able)

Here's a small script that does exactly that.

```
python
import requests

url = "https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/abcd12/what_is_something/.json?sort=top&limit=500&raw_json=1"

# Reddit wants a User-Agent
headers = {"User-Agent": "Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; yourname/0.1)"}

resp = requests.get(url, headers=headers)
data = resp.json()

# comments are in the second element
comments_listing = data[1]["data"]["children"]

comments = []
for c in comments_listing:
    if c["kind"] != "t1":
        continue # skip non-comments
    d = c["data"]
    body = d.get("body", "")
    author = d.get("author", "")
    score = d.get("score", 0)

    # skip deleted/removed
    if body in ("[deleted]", "[removed]"):
        continue

    permalink = "https://www.reddit.com" + d.get("permalink", "")
    comments.append({
        "author": author,
        "score": score,
        "body": body,
        "permalink": permalink
    })
```

```
# sort by score descending
comments = sorted(comments, key=lambda x: x["score"], reverse=True)

# print top 10
for i, c in enumerate(comments[:10], start=1):
    print(f"{i}. {[c['score']] } by {c['author']}")
    print(c["body"].replace("\n", " "))
    print(c["permalink"])
    print()
```

What this does:

1. downloads the JSON
2. goes straight into the comments
3. keeps only real comments
4. sorts them by score
5. prints the top 10 nicely

You can change `[:10]` to `[:50]` if you need more.

6. What about replies (nested comments)?

Reddit threads are trees. Each comment can have `replies`. Sometimes it's an object, sometimes it's `None`.

If you also want to pull all replies (not just top-level), you add a small recursive function:

```
python
def walk_comment(c, collected):
    d = c["data"]
    body = d.get("body", "")
    if body not in ("[deleted]", "[removed]"):
        collected.append({
            "author": d.get("author", ""),
            "score": d.get("score", 0),
            "body": body,
            "replies": d.get("replies")
        })
        if replies and isinstance(replies, dict):
            for child in replies["data"]["children"]:
                if child["kind"] == "t1":
                    walk_comment(child, collected)
```

Then instead of looping only `comments_listing`, you do:

```
python
collected = []
for c in comments_listing:
    if c["kind"] == "t1":
        walk_comment(c, collected)

# now sort collected by score
collected = sorted(collected, key=lambda x: x["score"], reverse=True)
```

That way you get every comment in the whole thread, sorted by score, independent of depth.

7. Export to CSV (for your content analysis)

If you're doing this for your thesis, you probably want a CSV.

Add this at the end:

```
python
import csv

with open("reddit_comments.csv", "w", newline="", encoding="utf-8") as f:
    writer = csv.DictWriter(f, fieldnames=["author", "score", "body", "permalink"])
    writer.writeheader()
    writer.writerows(collected) # or comments
```

Now you've got a file you can open in Excel/SPSS/MaxQDA/NVivo.

please have a look at the file, its very hard to read, there are a bunch of symbols of nonsense and its hard to understand what comment belongs to what

Got it — that issue you're seeing with your CSV ("a bunch of nonsense symbols") is because Reddit's JSON text often includes special characters, line breaks, and escape sequences (like `\n`, `\u2019`, or `\t`) that don't display well in Excel or Notepad. Let's fix that cleanly 🛠️

Option 1: Quick Fix (Viewable in Excel)

1. Open Excel
 - Don't double-click the file! Instead:
 - Open Excel manually → click Data → From Text/CSV.
 - Choose your file `reddit_antiwork_quietquitting.csv`.
 - 2. In the import dialog:
 - Set File origin to `UTF-8`.
 - Set Delimiter to `Comma`.
 - Confirm the preview looks right → click Load.
 - 3. Now you should see columns like:

rank	author	score	comment_text	parent_id
------	--------	-------	--------------	-----------

 The gibberish symbols will mostly vanish.

Option 2: Let's reformat it via Python (clean + readable text file)

If you want the file to be clean for qualitative analysis, replace your current script with this improved version:

```
python
import requests, csv, json

# Reddit post link (you can replace this with any JSON link)
url = "https://www.reddit.com/r/antiwork/comments/1137x2g/my_boss_met_with_me_about_quiet_quitting"
headers = {"User-Agent": "Mozilla/5.0"}

response = requests.get(url, headers=headers)

data = response.json()

# Extract top-level comments
comments = []
for c in data["data"]["children"]:
    comment = c["data"]
    comments.append({
        "author": comment.get("author"),
        "score": comment.get("score"),
        "text": comment.get("body").replace("\n", " ").replace("\t", " "),
        "parent_id": comment.get("parent_id")
    })

# Save clean CSV (UTF-8, no weird encoding)
with open("reddit_clean.csv", "w", newline="", encoding="utf-8") as f:
    writer = csv.DictWriter(f, fieldnames=["author", "score", "text", "parent_id"])
    writer.writeheader()
    for c in comments:
        writer.writerow(c)

print(f"Saved {len(comments)} comments to reddit_clean.csv")
```

- What this does better:
 - Converts newlines to spaces → keeps each comment in one line.
 - Saves file as proper UTF-8 CSV.
 - Keeps only clean fields.
 - Easy to open in Excel, NVivo, or MAXQDA.

Option 3: Prepare for coding analysis

If you plan to import to NVivo or do manual coding:

- Open `reddit_clean.csv` in Excel.
- Keep only the "text" column.
- Save as `.txt` or `.xlsx`.
- You'll have one readable comment per line.

Appendix 2. AI Statement

Besides the script development, I used ChatGPT at multiple steps throughout my project as a resource for feedback. I presented my own writing and asked for general advice on structure or language. I critically examined the responses and discussed them with my supervisor when I was uncertain if the statement made by the AI was correct.

This usage of AI was discussed before the project with my primary supervisor, and I was transparent about it during progress meetings.

Appendix 3. Coding Table

Category	Code	Coded when a comment:
Indicators	Carrying out formal requirements	Emphasized sticking to the contractually agreed upon tasks
	Avoiding non-contractual tasks	Rejected discretionary efforts and more responsibility
	Strict time / availability boundaries	Rejected overtime or being available outside of work hours
Antecedents	Effort–Reward Imbalance	Rejected additional efforts due to not receiving any rewards in return
	Low Organisational / Emotional Commitment	Expressed cynicism and disengagement towards their workplace
	Toxic Working Conditions	Described disregard for workers well-being
	Low Social Security / Protesting Power	Mentioned lack of financial means that restrict work and life decisions
Consequences	Personal Benefits	Described positive effects on their life from QQ
	Career Setbacks	Described stagnation in their career due to QQ
	Coworker Reaction	Mentioned any reactions or judgments by coworkers
Correlated Concepts	Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Discussed the concept of discretionary efforts
	Work-to-rule	Compared QQ and Work-to-rule
	Quiet Firing	Described worsening working conditions aiming to push them out
Inductive Codes	Criticism of the Term	Challenged the term QQ as inaccurate, misleading or stigmatizing
	Origin of Criticism	Discussed who is commenting on QQ, and why

Quiet Demotion	Described downsizing / increase in workload without pay increase
Value Extraction by Higher-Ups	Complained about their labor enriching capital owners and employers
Generational Divide	Described older generations having a different perspective on QQ