Global Leadership Graduate Literature Review

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 What is the Great Resignation? Wikipedia defines it as, “…was a mainly American economic trend in which employees voluntarily resigned from their jobs en masse, beginning in early 2021 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic”. Why are employees participating in the Great Resignation though? There are many theories, and much research has been done, I think we are still too close to it to fully understand all the reasons for this change in our work life balance. While I know Covid-19 did play a role in this situation and the work forever, I do not believe lockdowns we endured during 2020 are to be held solely responsible. The lockdowns and quick reorganization of work merely opened the door to a flood of issues that workers have been enduring for years. This is also coming off the cusp of elder GenZ graduating college and moving into the workforce. I am going to review several articles on how the influence of leadership styles on employee job satisfaction in the workplace along with work life balance all play a role in The Great Resignation. I will then discuss what we can take from Global Leadership to renovate the career landscape with future generations.

 Let’s start with how leadership has affected quiet quitting. According to Websters Dictionary Quiet Quitting is a noun, the means “the practice of doing the minimum amount of work required for one’s job.” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2023). The term quiet quitting is a new phenomenon that gained popularity in 2022 and brought fear amongst employers’ post pandemic. “The adage that people quit their bosses, not their jobs, succinctly captures the pivotal role of leader in shaping employees’ job satisfaction” (Leonie Blackhaus, Nov 2022). This statement has been around for years and yet can sum up quiet quitting so effectively. It highlights the great impact of how leadership affects both workplace outcomes and employee satisfaction. Blackhaus considers the growing setting of leadership over the past two decades but also explores its repercussions for the public sector. Blackhaus and Vogel state, “…many scholars have examined how leadership influences the attitudes, motivations, and behaviors of followers, such as job satisfaction, work engagement, or individual performance. However, the outcomes differ strongly in kind and may relate, for instance, to employees, groups, or the organization” (Blackhaus, 2022). They go on to say that leadership styles can either be extremely efficient or damaging to a company. Leadership style may be affected by the company culture within an organization yet is still an important attribute to overall employee satisfaction. For example, I was encouraged to join the military right out of high school for a variety of reasons, but I knew that I would not thrive in that type of leadership style. Had I decided to join anyway would I have been successful? Who knows but an important part of choosing a path is knowing your limits. Certain industries such as, armed forces, education, federal government have very specific leadership styles and it is usually because those industries need to be run a certain way to be effective. This could mean that new employees leave because they realize that this industry does not match a leadership style that suits them as individuals. I am not saying these industries do not have room for growth and constructive criticism. The point is that there are a lot of careers in the world, and you need to find one that works for you. This heightens the importance for education in leadership theories during the early educational years. Incorporating diverse leadership styles and education can accurately steer individuals to appropriate leadership style and career field.

 Based off the information from Blackhaus and Vogel we can conclude that more education in leadership studies is necessary to avoid situations like The Great Resignation. Typically, students are only exposed to two or three leadership styles on a consistent basis throughout their high school and college careers. This does not give them the foundational knowledge base to make an educated decision on what type of leadership they are looking for in a company or direct manager. By not instructing our future generations effectively we are undeniably hurting ourselves and setting the economy up for another Great Resignation.

 Now let’s look at Senge’s article on being a Learning Organization and what that means in relation to quiet quitting. Senge says “The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization” (Senge 2006). In my opinion this statement did not age well. This may be true, and you may excel to a certain point with loyalty and knowledge, However, at some point you as an employee will have more knowledge than what you are being compensated for. This may not be the organizations’ fault and it may not be your fault but if you are somewhere long enough your knowledge will outgrow your salary unless you make a move out of the company or department.

 In his book Productive Workplaces, Marvin Weisbord discusses in his Theory Y, “…if given the chance most people will take responsibility, care about their jobs, wish to grow and achieve, and do excellent work” (Weisbord 2011). This goes in tandem with his Pay for knowledge structure, where he and a team came up with a compensation matrix in which skills are paid for, “They noted all the skills required at each level in each function. Raises they said, could be granted for increasing broad knowledge across functions, or in-depth knowledge in any one.” (Weisbord 2011). This means that everyone could be at the highest pay rate. In turn employees are more motivated to be part of the learning organization that Senge discusses in his article. Conversely, quiet quitting comes in to play when employees are asked to perform tasks that may be outside of their specialty or compensation. This isn’t to say they don’t want to be great at their jobs or move up in the company. Nevertheless, I think corporations are in the middle of a hard lesson that is: if you want to pay minimum wage or base salary then employees are going to base level work. Gone are the days where you go above and beyond in hopes for a raise or promotion sometime in the not so near future. “When people become more engaged in and committed to their work, they are usually willing to confront more difficult issues.” (Senge, 2006). I think people could work together like in Theory Y and would be appreciative of the Paid for Skills compensation matrix. Yet, I have seen very few companies do something like this. Let’s dive into a personal example. Let’s say I am a teller at a local bank, and an opportunity pops up to learn something that is a higher responsibility and adds risk to my job. Would this look good on my resume? Sure. Would it make my manager happy? Probably? However, there are no tangible benefits for me to assume this extra risk and responsibility. So what is my motivation? I could do it just because I enjoy the challenge and I want to make my manager and coworkers happy. However, in the end, if we had a pay for skills matrix, where I was being appropriately compensated for it, I would be a lot more willing to add risk to may daily tasks.

 To sum up Senge and Weisbord I think that we are seeing employees who have outgrown their salary. They are mentally exhausted from doing a job that no longer engages them. Yet they are not willing to take the risk to learn new tasks and skills without being properly compensated.

We know that “Satisfied workers are more productive, deliver higher quality of work and improve a firm's competitiveness and success. Conversely, unsatisfied workers are more frequently late for work, absent from work, and motivated to leave the firm.” (Westover 2019). So, what is the reason workers are so unsatisfied that they resigned in such mass quantities? Let’s look at this statistic from an article written in 2022 to gain more insight, “In the United States, according to the already-quoted Bankrate’s survey, the main push to make a change was flexible opportunities of working hours arrangements (56%), higher pay (53%), job security (47%), remote work options (41%)” (Kuzior 2022). If we know these are these are the reasons employees are leaving their jobs by the masses what can employers do to keep retention up? Many parents are struggling to get kids to school before work, trying to juggle time off for sick children so we can see why flexibility would be key to working parents needs. With parents also taking a more active role in children’s lives it is important to have a company that understands all the unexpected circumstances that can occur with children in the home. Having a once a year “Bring you child to work day” is no longer sufficient for the desire to have work/life balance. In Westover’s study of 11 countries he finds, “the gap between the status of work–life balance and what is considered desirable for increased job satisfaction, as determined in this study suggests managers should consider increasing scheduling flexibility. This might entail offering variability in start and end times, working from home, and split-week schedules.” (Westover 2019).

Most may think these new ideals from employees are post-pandemic, but Westover conducted his research and published his article in 2019 which proves this has been an ongoing issue that was only magnified by the pandemic. Employees are no longer tolerating these 19th century standards set by corporations. We can still see from the article, Great Resignation—Ethical, Cultural, Relational, and Personal Dimensions of Generation Y and Z Employees’ Engagement “The majority of workers who left their employers in 2021 quoted no opportunities for advancement (63%), low pay (63%), feeling disrespected at work (57%), childcare issues (48%), or not enough paid time off (43%) as reasons for leaving.” (Kuzior 2022). I am left to wonder with all the information available to corporations about employee satisfaction why aren’t more changes being made? What is making employers’ think they can keep their same models used for decades and still be desirable to the young generations entering the workforce? Kuzior ends with, this about Generation Z and Y, “They are and will with no doubt be significantly changing the work world, thus a closer look at this generational shift is indispensable. According to several studies, this age cohort consists of the best-educated people yet.” (Kuzior 2022). According to an article by Fisher in 2014 this all started with Millennials valuing time more than money, “Millennials, as some refer to this age cohort, include people born between 1980 and 1996. According to several studies, this generation is focused on self-fulfillment and satisfaction. Other core values, especially visible in the working environment, include respect, recognition, continuous development, fairness, tolerance, and equity. Regardless of the label, sociologists agree that this generation is not mainly money-driven and that the above-mentioned values play a more significant role for them in the workplace than the height of their salary.” (Fisher 2014).

No matter how much push back corporations give employees, they are not backing down according to, The Great Resignation: the great knowledge exodus or the onset of the Great Knowledge Revolution? “The fact that the Great Resignation has already altered the cultural fabric of the contemporary labor market and created an ebb of knowledge is undeniable. The future, however, is not as bleak as it seems as long as organizations find ways to proactively anticipate and adapt to the ongoing changes.” (Serenko 2022). Social media is an internationally powerful influence. Employees are becoming more knowledgeable about working conditions around the world and throughout other companies. People are working together across the globe to change the workforce with the power of social media. Seeing how changes can be made and ideas can be implemented gives employees the strength to push back against aging corporate norms.

“The resignation rates are not expected to plummet in the near future: a recent survey by Microsoft reveals that 41% of the global workforce is likely to consider leaving their present organization within the next year” (Serenko, 2022). We have already begun to see changes occurring with the Baby Boomer generations retiring and younger generations like X and Millennials entering the workforce. However, I think we can expect to see even more significant changes coming as Generation X and Millennials move towards retirement age. As we look at quiet quitting and what to expect in coming years, I think that more employees are simply going to walk away from careers to either find better opportunities or something that give more personal fulfillment. We learn from Serenko that The Great Resignation is not over, “Moreover, 46% are considering making a major career transition into a new field (The Work Trend Index, 2021) and some even decided to pursue a vocation or turn their hobby into a source of income.” (Serenko, 2022).

As a personal reflection, I was not in the workforce during the pandemic or the rise of quiet quitting, but I did watch from the outside as family and friends were mistreated by government and private corporations throughout the pandemic and the year following. Once I was ready to return to work, I struggled to find employment despite there being companies begging for employees to return to the office. I realize that the workforce will never be the same and we need leaders taking course such as this to guide us into the next phase of corporate structure. Companies cannot operate without employees, so they need be treated as vital as they are. I am excited for this next step in corporate America and to be a part of this change. I truly believe that if executives have their eyes and ears open to their employees, we can all work better together.

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