

Job Insecurity, Work Alienation, and Quiet Quitting Among Restaurant Employees

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Geliş tarihi / Received: 02.01.2026

Kabul tarihi / Accepted: 20.04.2026

Abstract

The theoretical framework of this research was approached Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Within the theoretical structure of the model, the research examines the mediator role of work alienation on the impact of cognitive and affective job insecurity on quiet quitting behavior in a sample of restaurant employees. Data were collected from 396 employees working in casual dining restaurants located in Ankara, Türkiye, between November and December 2025, using a convenience sampling method and a cross-sectional survey design. Established scales were employed to measure cognitive and affective job insecurity, work alienation, and quiet quitting on a five-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS V.22 and IBM AMOS V.20. The structural model demonstrated acceptable fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.56$, CFI = .968, TLI = .961, RMSEA = .063). The results indicated that cognitive job insecurity was related to work alienation ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) and quiet quitting ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$), while affective job insecurity was linked to with work alienation ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$) and quiet quitting ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$). Work alienation, in turn, predicted quiet quitting ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$). The model explained 18.5% of the variance in work alienation and 45.9% of the variance in quiet quitting. Bootstrapping analyses confirmed significant indirect effects of cognitive ($\beta = .03$, 95% CI [.006, .074]) and affective job insecurity ($\beta = .07$, 95% CI [.037, .124]) on quiet quitting via work alienation, indicating partial mediation.

Keywords: Job insecurity, work alienation, quiet quitting, restaurant employees

Introduction

Restaurant operators face the dual challenge of building a strong employee-centered work culture while also creating an attractive and engaging brand for customers. In service-dominant markets such as the restaurant sector, staff members are the primary architects of lasting guest impressions, often carrying as much weight as the food or drink being served. Consequently, for a restaurant to achieve a competitive edge and provide truly unique experiences, fostering employee commitment and active engagement is a strategic necessity. However, current practices and industry dynamics within the casual food sector can sometimes negatively impact employees' sense of belonging to their work and their ability to demonstrate full commitment. In the food service industry, sectoral dynamics such as high employee turnover rates, demand fluctuations, and low profit margins make employment uncertainty a chronic problem for employees. This uncertain environment, dominated by shift work and flexible employment models, transforms job insecurity into a central element at the heart of employees' concerns about job continuity. These labor-intensive service environments create a perception of risk in the minds of employees, undermining both their present and future career security. Employees view this perceived instability regarding job continuity as a serious obstacle to their professional lives. Job insecurity is conceptualized in the literature in two dimensions: A perceived threat to one's job or employment highlights cognitive job insecurity, while affective job insecurity corresponds to psychological reactions such as fear, anxiety, and worry that this possibility creates in the individual (Akgunduz & Eryılmaz, 2018; Hellgren et al., 1999; Pires, 2025). Accordingly, it has been observed that job insecurity increases feelings of burnout among employees, strengthens their intention to leave their jobs, and triggers negative behaviors such as social loafing (Akgunduz & Eryılmaz, 2018; Cho et al., 2016).

While post-pandemic labor market dynamics initially manifested in voluntary turnover during "The Great Resignation" (Klotz, 2022; Liu-Lastres et al., 2024), increasing economic uncertainty has led many employees to remain in their positions while psychologically withdrawing from work. Traditional work concepts such as "job dedication" and "organizational citizenship" have begun to be replaced by new behavioural patterns in which employees prioritize their psychological well-being (Gürer et al., 2024; Pasha & Soetjijto, 2025). Thus, employees have shifted away from organizational commitment, focusing solely on fulfilling defined tasks (Lord, 2022). This behavioural pattern, described as quiet quitting, involves limiting effort to formally required tasks and avoiding discretionary contributions (Galani et al., 2023; Gün, 2024; Hamouche et al., 2023; Yıldız, 2023). Quiet quitting explains an employee's decision to remain in their job and fulfill the minimum responsibilities required by their job description, while consciously avoiding non-job-related behaviors (e.g., overtime, volunteer work) and thus creating a psychological distance from their job (Gürer et al., 2024; Molchan & Clore, 2023; Zenger & Folkman, 2022).

By focusing upon the effect of job insecurity on quiet quitting, work alienation emerges as a psychological mechanism often overlooked in the literature. Alienation is defined as a state in which an individual feels a sense of meaninglessness and powerlessness by disconnecting from their job, the service they produce, and social relationships within the work environment (Hai et al., 2025; Nair & Vohra, 2010; Susanto et al., 2025). Within the definition of alienation mentioned above, the factors paving the way for quiet quitting may particularly include a lack of employer interest and support, limited opportunities for professional development, misalignment between organizational goals and employee expectations, the desire to establish

a work-life balance, and feelings of dissatisfaction and disappointment (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Pandey, 2022; Zenger & Folkman, 2022). The COR Theory, which provides a theoretical interpretation of all these phenomena, draws attention to individuals' efforts to obtain, protect, and maintain resources they value, such as stable employment, income security, and psychological well-being. Perceived job insecurity is considered a threat within this process and can initiate the process of resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989). As employees attempt to conserve their remaining emotional and cognitive resources, they may first experience work alienation characterized by feelings of meaninglessness, powerlessness, and detachment from their job (Nair & Vohra, 2010). This psychological withdrawal can subsequently translate into behavioural withdrawal in the form of quiet quitting. Accordingly, this study examines the effects of cognitive and affective job insecurity on quiet quitting and investigates the mediating role of work alienation in casual dining restaurants. Consequently, it is a theoretically expected sequence for an employee facing the risk of job loss (insecurity) to first lose their emotional attachment to the job (alienation) and subsequently engage in behavioural withdrawal (quiet quitting). Accordingly, examining the impact of job insecurity on quiet quitting in the restaurant industry and identifying the role of work alienation in this connection constitutes the mission of this study.

Conceptual Background and Hypotheses Development

Job insecurity and work alienation

Job insecurity, recognized as one of the most prominent stressors in modern working life, is treated as a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive evaluations regarding the likelihood of job loss (cognitive job insecurity) and emotional reactions such as fear and anxiety stemming from this likelihood (affective job insecurity) (Hellgren et al., 1999; Shoss, 2017).

When businesses fail to provide a secure environment for the future, employees develop defense mechanisms to conserve their energy and maintain psychological balance, leading them to distance themselves from their jobs (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). This attitude, developed in response to job insecurity, is grounded in the Resource Conservation Theory. According to this theory, when employees perceive uncertainty or threat, they exhibit withdrawal behaviors to protect their psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989). The failure to ensure job security is perceived by staff members as a risk factor and a threat to existing resources (Hamouche et al., 2023). When a business does not offer a secure future, employees tend to distance themselves from their jobs to conserve energy and maintain psychological stability (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). This distancing process is defined in the literature as "work alienation," referring to the employee's feeling that their job is meaningless (Nair & Vohra, 2010; Shantz et al., 2015). In the restaurant sector, where employee turnover rates are particularly high, individuals who view their jobs as temporary tend to exhibit work alienation behavior, finding it unnecessary to invest in their work (Akgunduz & Eryilmaz, 2018; Susanto et al., 2025). Similarly, Atalay (2023) reported a moderate and statistically significant relationship between job insecurity and work alienation. This finding indicates that the negative effects of job insecurity on employees largely manifest through work alienation. In research conducted during the COVID-19 period, Lagios et al. (2023) revealed that uncertainty regarding job continuity reduced the meaning employees gave to their jobs and weakened their psychological bond with the organization, thus increasing work alienation. Similarly, Sverke et al. (2002) showed that job insecurity leads to disengagement, low commitment, and negative attitudes, and that this perception is a fundamental factor fueling work alienation processes.

Drawing on this theoretical framework, first hypotheses:

H1a: Cognitive job insecurity has positive impacts on work alienation.

H1b: Affective job insecurity has positive impacts on work alienation.

Job insecurity and quiet quitting

The phenomenon of job insecurity can be addressed from a multifaceted perspective. The perceived threat of job loss and the anxieties it brings can lead to undesirable emotional responses (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Katalav et al., 2021). However, Quiet quitting is defined as employees psychologically distancing themselves from their jobs, acting only within the scope of their job descriptions, without undertaking or feeling any additional responsibilities (Örücü & Hasırcı, 2024). Job insecurity threatens employees' work-related resources and, consequently, their psychology, giving rise to Conservation of Resources Theory. This leads employees to avoid extra behaviors outside their defined roles in order to protect their resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018). In this context, Quiet quitting can be interpreted as a process where voluntary contributions are withdrawn, developing as a defense mechanism (Arar et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the psychological contract breach perspective suggests that job insecurity creates a perception that the organization has failed to meet implicit security expectations, causing employees to reduce their voluntary contributions to the organization (Akça, 2024; Dağlı et al., 2025; Rousseau, 1998). In this perspective, quiet quitting is evaluated as a passive employee response to psychological contract breach (Görmüş, 2024).

In the literature, job insecurity is examined through its cognitive and affective dimensions, with both dimensions stated to reduce the employee's willingness to invest in the organization (Özbucak Albar, 2018; Seçer, 2011). Indeed,

Hamouche et al. (2023) and Khan et al. (2022) have demonstrated that job insecurity increases psychological withdrawal and quiet quitting tendencies among employees. Especially, the literature emphasizes job insecurity as a significant organizational antecedent of quiet quitting (Çalışkan, 2023; Lestari et al., 2024).

Based upon the literature mentioned above, following supposition:

H2a: Cognitive job insecurity has positive impacts on quiet quitting.

H2b: Affective job insecurity has positive impacts on quiet quitting.

Work alienation and quiet quitting

It becomes evident that an employee's loss of control over work processes (i.e. powerlessness) or inability to perceive the value of their work (i.e. meaninglessness) leads to the withdrawal of their emotional investment in his/her job (Gharbi et al., 2025). Almarzooqee et al. (2025) further demonstrated that high job demands and perceived injustice strengthen the sense of alienation among employees, and this psychological detachment directly fuels quiet quitting behaviours. Similarly, Karrani et al. (2024) empirically validated the close relationship between the two variables by determining that practices strengthening relational job design reduce levels of work alienation, thereby decreasing the likelihood of quiet quitting.

Furthermore, Güner et al. (2024) stated that given quiet quitting involves mental detachment from work and workplace, it shares common aspects with the concept of work alienation. In a study conducted on healthcare professionals, Kartal (2018) revealed that the dimensions of powerlessness and meaninglessness are determinants of performance loss and push employees toward the behaviour of "doing only what is required." In this context, quiet quitting is evaluated as an inevitable behavioural reflection of work alienation in modern working life and as a psychological defense mechanism for employ-

ees. Shepard (1970) indicated that employees experiencing work alienation distance themselves from organizational goals and gravitate toward activities outside of job requirements. This type of detachment overlaps with quiet quitting behaviour, where an employee limits their organizational contribution by fulfilling only minimum duties.

In light of the literature mentioned above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H3: Work alienation has positive impact on quiet quitting.

Work alienation as a mediator

Employees who perceive a probability of job loss (i.e. cognitive job insecurity) or individuals experiencing intense anxiety regarding this situation (i.e. affective job insecurity) evaluate such uncertainty as a fundamental threat of resource loss (Hellgren et al., 1999; Shoss, 2017). This perception exacerbates work alienation by weakening an employee's sense of control over work processes (i.e. powerlessness) and reinforcing the notion that they cannot obtain a return on their labor (i.e. meaninglessness) (Nair & Vohra, 2010; Shantz et al., 2015). The ensuing work alienation precipitates a defensive withdrawal process aimed at preserving the individual's psychological resources; in modern working life, this process manifests as quiet quitting behaviour, characterized by employees contenting themselves solely with defined tasks and avoiding extra-role behaviours (Hamouche et al., 2023; Kobak, 2023).

Work alienation functions as a critical mediating mechanism between environmental stressors and employee behaviours (Chen & Ye, 2024). For example, in the study conducted by Karrani et al. (2024), it was shown that work alienation plays a full mediating role in the relationship between job design and quiet quitting. Similarly, the studies conducted during the pandemic indicated that the perception of job insecurity primarily amplifies work alienation, and this increased alienation subsequently occur to employees' psychological withdrawal from work and the strengthening of quiet quitting tendencies (Khan et al., 2022; Hamouche, 2021). In light of the literature mentioned above, the following final hypotheses:

H4a: Work alienation has a mediating effect on the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and quiet quitting.

H4b: Work alienation has a mediating effect on the relationship between affective job insecurity and quiet quitting.

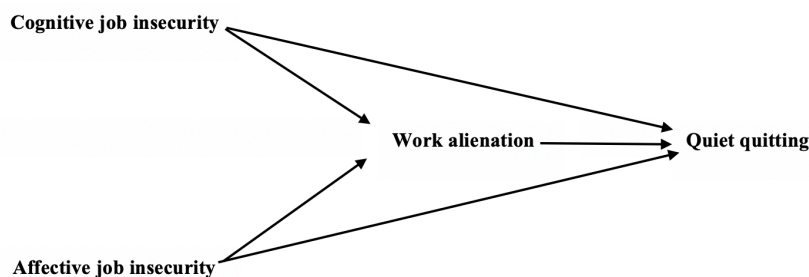
Method

Research framework

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationships between cognitive job insecurity, affective job insecurity, work alienation and quiet quitting within a sample of the employees from casual dining restaurants located in Ankara, the capital of Türkiye.

The research model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Measurement model



With this understanding, the present study aims to examine how cognitive and affective job insecurity, as being two critical forms of workplace uncertainty, influence valuable employee outcomes through the mechanism of work alienation. Specifically, this study investigates: (1) the impact of cognitive and affective job insecurity on work alienation (2) the effects of cognitive and affective job insecurity on quiet quitting behaviour, (3) the effect of work alienation on quiet quitting behaviour, and (4) the mediating role of work alienation in the relationships between both forms of job insecurity and employees' quiet quitting behaviour.

Measurement instrument

The scales used in this study were directly employed from prior research. Cognitive and affective job insecurity were measured using the 7-item Job Insecurity Scale developed by Hellgren et al. (1999) and later used by Akgunduz and Eryilmaz (2018). Work alienation was measured using the original 6-item scale developed by Nair and Vohra (2010). For this instruments used in the study, the back-translation technique was used. A translation process involving translation from English into Turkish, followed by back-translation into the original language and final revision into Turkish, was employed (Kara et al., 2006). Quiet quitting was measured using the 7-item scale developed by Karrani et al. (2024) and adapted into Turkish by Can and Okat (2025). Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study of the complete measurement instrument was conducted. Hair et al. (2014) recommend a minimum of 50 participants for pilot testing. In line with this recommendation, the questionnaire was administered to 50 individuals working in the restaurant industry. The participants did not report any difficulties in understanding or completing the questionnaire; therefore, no modifications were made to the instrument. Data collected using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree showed Cron-

bach's alpha coefficients above 0.70 across all scales (Nunnally, 1978).

Sample

The study data were collected from employees working in casual dining restaurants located in the busiest neighborhoods (Kızılay, Bahçelievler, Beşevler, and Balgat) of the Çankaya district, which is a central district of Ankara. As part of this study, the managers of the most popular (i.e. high occupancy rate) casual dining restaurants in these areas were contacted first, and then, the purpose and scope of the study were explained. After obtaining the necessary permissions, the survey forms were distributed to the restaurant businesses. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. The survey forms were left at the restaurants, allowing employees to complete them at their convenience. Approximately two weeks later, the completed surveys were collected by the research team. The data were collected between November 15 and December 10, 2025, using convenience sampling method, were examined for incomplete and erroneous responses, and 396 valid surveys were determined as being the study data. The ethical approval required for the data collection in this study was obtained from the Batman University Ethics Committee, with the decision number 2025/12-07.

Data analysis

The obtained data were analyzed using statistical analysis programs SPSS and AMOS. The relationships between variables were primarily examined based on factor analysis, and the latent factor structures of the measurement items were revealed (Hair et al., 2014; Saeed et al., 2022). Exploratory factor analysis is valuable for evaluating factor loadings before proceeding to confirmatory factor analysis (Mia, Majri, and Rahman, 2019).

The research process was designed in accordance with the two-stage approach proposed

by Anderson & Gerbing (1988). In this context, the measurement model and the structural model were evaluated, respectively. In the first stage, the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model was established using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The hypothesized factor structure was validated using CFA (Suhr, 2006). Subsequently, composite reliability values were determined to assess the internal consistency and reliability of each construct (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In the second stage, the hypothesized relationships between the constructs were tested using structural equation modeling.

Common method variance

In this study, since the data were obtained from the same source at a single time and from a single instrument form the detection of possible common method bias was evaluated using Harman's one-factor test to determine whether a single latent factor explained the majority of the covariance among the measured variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). According to the findings, it was revealed that none of the 20 observed items loaded on to a single factor, and no

single factor explained the vast majority of the shared variance. In addition, within the scope of confirmatory factor analysis, the one-factor model showed significantly worse fit and had unacceptable goodness-of-fit indices compared to the previously mentioned four-factor model ($\chi^2 = 4051.304$, $df = 171$; $GFI = 0.38$; $AGFI = 0.23$; $NFI = 0.48$; $CFI = 0.49$; $RMSEA = 0.249$). Based on the findings, it can be said that common method bias does not pose a problem in this study.

Results

Demographics

The profile of the respondents were presented in Table 1. Male employees represented 63.4%, with female employees representing 36.6%. A majority of the participants are single (52.8%), while 47.2% are married. More than half of the participants are aged between 18 and 29 years (53.3%). In terms of educational background, most respondents hold an associate degree (42.4%) or a high school diploma (27.3%). Regarding working period at a current restaurant, the majority of participants have 1–3 years of working experience (60.1%).

Table 1
Profile of the respondents

Demographic	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	251	63.4
	Female	145	36.6
Marital Status	Married	187	47.2
	Single	209	52.8
Age	18-29 years	211	53.3
	30-39 years	129	32.6
	40-49 years	43	10.9
	50 years and over	13	3.3
Educational qualification	Primary education	39	9.8
	High school	108	27.3
	Associate degree	168	42.4
Working period	Bachelor’s degree	81	20.5
	1-3 years	238	60.1
	4-6 years	65	16.4
	7 years and more	93	23.5

Factor analysis and normality test

The factor structure and construct validity of the scales used in the research were determined by exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Based on previous research (Çolakoğlu & Büyükekşi, 2014), Principal Axis Factoring with Direct Oblimin rotation was performed in the present study. Principal Axis Factoring allows for the investigation of latent constructs by focusing on shared variance rather than total variance, and Direct Oblimin rotation was chosen because the constructs were theoretically expected to correlate. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was checked in terms of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sample adequacy measure (.872) and Bartlett's Sphericity Test results, and it was

revealed that the obtained data were statistically significant ($\chi^2 (190) = 7744.810, p < .001$), which confirmed the suitability of the data for factor analysis (Hair et al., 1998). In determining the number of factors, eigenvalues greater than 1 were used as the basis. Accordingly, the variance explained by the four factors was determined as 65.34%. Factor loadings ranged from .515 to .990. No substantial cross-loadings (>.50) were observed (Karagöz, 2021). Factor loadings ranged from .515 to .990, indicating strong item-factor relationships. Although some loadings were very high, no evidence of redundancy was detected based on item content and reliability diagnostics. The EFA results revealed a well-defined (see Table 2).

Table 2

Results of factor analysis

Items (Variables)	Quiet quitting	Work alienation	Cognitive job insecurity	Affective job insecurity
QQ1	.890			
QQ2	.719			
QQ3	.765			
QQ4	.689			
QQ5	.618			
QQ6	.515			
QQ7	.831			
WA1		.971		
WA2		.549		
WA3		.938		
WA4		.961		
WA5		.569		
WA6		.990		
COJ11			.795	
COJ12			.811	
COJ13			.833	
COJ14			.724	
AFJ11				.650
AFJ12				.734
AFJ13				.639
% of variance	42.080	12.389	6.370	4.497
Cumulative %	42.080	54.469	60.839	65.337
Cronbach's α	.94	.90	.88	.77

By examining whether the data met the assumptions of normality and multicollinearity, normality was assessed by evaluating skewness and kurtosis values using SPSS. The skewness values ranged from -0.860 to -0.47 , while the kurtosis values ranged from -0.091 to $+0.258$, all of which fall within acceptable limits. These results indicate that the data demonstrate normal distribution, as all skewness and kurtosis values are within the recommended range of -1 to $+1$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Multicollinearity was evaluated by examining variance inflation factor (VIF) values in SPSS. The results showed that all constructs had VIF values below 2, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in the present study (Hair et al., 2011).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

In this study, designed according to the two-

step method most commonly used in structural equation modeling, confirmatory factor analysis was performed for each of the four factor structures revealed through exploratory factor analysis. The study is based on maximum likelihood estimation. These measurement models were evaluated according to the fit criteria suggested in previous studies (Hair et al., 2014; Kline, 2011). The values obtained from the fit indices revealed that the models have a good fit. The affective job insecurity construct was measured with a limited number of items, resulting in a just-identified measurement model ($df = 0$). Therefore, perfect fit indices were obtained by definition rather than indicating superior model fit. This approach is consistent with prior job insecurity studies using affective dimensions measured with few indicators Hellgren et al., 1999) (See Table 3).

Table 3

Result of confirmatory factor analysis

Construct	Model	X ²	df	X ² /df	GFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Cognitive job insecur.	Default	4.666	1	4.66	0.994	0.997	0.996	0.096
Affective job insecur.	Default	0.000	0	-	1.000	1.000	1.000	-
Work alienation	Default	26.995	7	3.856	0.979	0.995	0.993	0.085
Quiet quitting	Default	30.570	10	3.057	0.978	0.988	0.983	0.072

Measurement model

The findings regarding the measurement model indicate that the four-factor structure is above acceptable levels in terms of validity and reliability. The loadings of all items on the relevant factors range from $.59$ to $.99$, with the vast majority of factor loadings above $.60$, and t-values above 1.96 , indicating statistical significance. Significantly high factor loadings were obtained in the Work Alienation dimension, demonstrating strong representation of this structure.

Items in the Quiet Quitting, Cognitive Job Insecurity, and Affective Job Insecurity dimensions also show consistent correlations with the factors. The fit indices, $\chi^2/df=2.977$, $GFI=.89$, $AGFI=.86$, $CFI=.95$, $NFI=.94$, $RMSEA=.071$ showed that the measurement model had a good fit with the data. Convergent validity AVE values ($.53-.74$) are above the recommended threshold for all factors, while high composite reliability (CR) values ($.77-.94$) reveal strong internal consistency of the scales (See Table 4).

Table 4
Measurement model, AVE and CR.

	St. loading	t-value	AVE	CR
COJI1	0.968	25.125	0.61	0.85
COJI2	0.610	13.793		
COJI3	0.596	13.378		
COJI4	0.887	F		
AFJI1	0.679	11.668	0.53	0.77
AFJI2	0.756	12.476		
AFJI3	0.758	F		
WA1	0.989	F	0.74	0.94
WA2	0.610	15.134		
WA3	0.929	46.314		
WA4	0.950	54.217		
WA5	0.612	15.214		
WA6	0.991	93.258		
QQ1	0.784	F	0.56	0.90
QQ2	0.776	16.192		
QQ3	0.795	16.675		
QQ4	0.774	16.158		
QQ5	0.709	14.552		
QQ6	0.697	14.271		
QQ7	0.712	25.474		

F, fixed. Standardized loadings are significant at 0.001 level.

Furthermore, for all variables, the square root of AVE was greater than their inter-construct correlations, (Table 5). Thus, the measurement model was valid and satisfactory in terms of both convergent and discriminant validity. Overall,

the findings demonstrate that the measurement model is valid and reliable and provides a suitable basis for structural equation modeling analyses (Gefen & Straub, 2005; Kim, Leong & Lee, 2005; Hair et al., 2014; Kline, 2011).

Table 5
Discriminant validity

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
COJI	4.07	0.80	0.781			
AFCI	3.88	0.74	0.434	0.728		
WA	3.99	0.86	0.370	0.393	0.860	
QQ	3.98	0.83	0.543	0.466	0.502	0.748

N=396; Note(s): COJI= Cognitive job insecurity AFCI = Affective job insecurity WA = Work alienation QQ = Quiet quitting; Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Hypotheses testing

The full structural model was tested using AMOS maximum likelihood estimation. With respect to the measurement model, the hypothesized model demonstrated an adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.56$, NFI = .950, RFI = .938, IFI = .969, TLI = .961, CFI = .968, RMSEA = .063). Overall, the results supported our hypotheses, the results are presented in Table 6.

The structural model results indicated that both dimensions of job insecurity had significant positive effects on work alienation and quiet quitting. Cognitive job insecurity was positively associated with work alienation ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) and quiet quitting ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$), while affective job insecurity was positively associated with work alienation ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$) and quiet quitting ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$). In addition, work

alienation was found to have a significant positive effect on quiet quitting ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 4.44$, $p < .001$). Although several structural paths were statistically significant, their effect sizes differ, yielding important theoretical insights. Specifically, cognitive job insecurity shows a relatively small effect on work alienation but a substantially stronger effect on quiet quitting. These findings suggest that cognitive job insecurity is a more salient predictor of quiet quitting than of work alienation, highlighting the theoretical and practical relevance of addressing cognitive job insecurity in understanding employees' tendencies toward quiet quitting. Accordingly, hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b, H3 were supported. The model explained 18.5% of the variance in work alienation ($R^2 = 0.185$) and 45.9% of the variance in quiet quitting ($R^2 = 0.459$).

Table 6
Standardized regression weights

Hypotheses	Standardized estimates*	SE	t-values	Results
H1a: Cognitive job insecurity has positive impacts on work alienation	0.142*	0.065	2.448	Supported
H1b: Affective job insecurity has positive impacts on work alienation	0.342***	0.102	5.199	Supported
H2a: Cognitive job insecurity has positive impacts on quiet quitting	0.341***	0.055	6.361	Supported
H2b: Affective job insecurity has positive impacts on quiet quitting	0.309***	0.088	4.902	Supported
H3: Work alienation has positive impact on quiet quitting	0.212***	0.043	4.444	Supported

Note(s): R-square(R2): Work alienation (0.185); Quiet quitting (0.459) * $P < .05$, *** $P < .001$,

Mediation analyses were conducted by using the bias-corrected bootstrap procedure. The results revealed significant positive indirect effects of cognitive job insecurity on quiet quitting via work alienation ($\beta = 0.03$) and of affective job insecurity on quiet quitting via work alienation ($\beta = 0.07$). The 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for both indirect effects did

not include zero, indicating statistically significant mediation effects. Since the direct relationships between both dimensions of job insecurity and quiet quitting remained significant, work alienation was identified as a partial mediator. Accordingly, hypotheses H4a, and H4b were supported (see Table 7).

Table 7
Mediation effects (bias-corrected bootstrap)

Hypotheses	Standardized Indirect Effect (β)	SE	Lower (BC)	Upper (BC)	Results
H4a: Work alienation has a mediating effect on the relationship between cognitive job insecurity and quiet quitting	0.030	0.017	0.006	0.074	Supported
H4b: Work alienation has a mediating effect on the relationship between affective job insecurity and quiet quitting	0.072	0.022	0.037	0.124	Supported

Discussion

Today, where the restaurant business is getting more and more competitive (Shin, 2019), employees’ perceptions regarding various aspects of their work, particularly job insecurity, point to several critical issues. In this study, we have examined the effects of cognitive and affective job insecurity perceived by restaurant employees on their work alienation and quiet quitting behaviour. First, the findings showed that perceptions of cognitive and affective job insecurity are positively associated with work alienation, which is consistent with the studies of Abouelenien et al. (2024) and Sobaih et al. (2025) suggesting that a higher perception of job insecurity by employees increases work alienation by weakening their sense of control, meaning, and emotional attachment to their jobs. Second, employees’ perceptions of cognitive and affective job insecurity show a positive relationship with quiet quitting behaviour, which is also consistent with the studies of Hamouche et al. (2023) and Lestari et al. (2024). This result may indicate that employees respond to job insecurity by conserving their personal resources, resulting in reduced effort, lowered involvement, and the emergence of quiet quitting behaviour.

Third, work alienation is positively related to quiet quitting behaviour, indicating that feelings of meaninglessness and powerlessness at work translate into reduced effort and disengaged behaviour, which is also consistent with the studies of Li & Chen (2018) and Karrani et al. (2025). Furthermore, work alienation partially mediates the relationships between job insecurity and quiet quitting. While both cognitive and affective job insecurity increase alienation, cognitive insecurity has a notably stronger direct effect on quiet quitting, indicating that employees’ rational assessments of job instability can lead to immediate behavioural withdrawal. In contrast, affective insecurity primarily influences quiet quitting indirectly through work alienation, highlighting how perceptions of insecurity translate into disengagement in restaurant settings. The study draws on the Conservation of Resources framework to examine how cognitive and affective job insecurity, along with work alienation, function as key psychological mechanisms that influence employees’ quiet quitting behaviours. The research findings indicate a strong correlation between cognitive job insecurity and quiet quitting. Unlike affective job insecurity, which reflects emotional re-

sponses such as anxiety and unease, cognitive job insecurity involves employees' cognitive assessments of the likelihood of losing their jobs. Employees' perception of job insecurity intentionally influences their voluntary extra-role behaviors and professional commitment. From a resource conservation theory perspective, these cognitive assessments lead employees to develop protective strategies to prevent further depletion of their resources. In restaurant businesses, where emotional and physical labor is intense, incorrect human resources policies can reduce employees' voluntary efforts and professional commitment. Therefore, it is undeniable that cognitive job insecurity can trigger quiet quitting behavior.

The results of the mediation analysis show that work alienation partially explains the relationship between job insecurity and quiet quitting behavior. However, it should be noted that the strong direct relationship between cognitive job insecurity and quiet quitting suggests that avoiding voluntary extra-role behaviors is not solely due to decreased attachment. Employees may engage in quiet quitting behavior even before experiencing work alienation, simply because they perceive cognitive insecurity. This implies that quiet quitting in insecure restaurant environments may reflect conscious strategic disengagement rather than purely affect-driven withdrawal. Although social exchange theory might interpret reduced effort as reciprocity for perceived organizational withdrawal, the pronounced role of cognitive insecurity highlights the importance of rational decision-making processes in shaping extra-role behaviour reduction.

Conclusion

This study, which mainly examines the perception of job insecurity in restaurant businesses, highlights threats to success in professional restaurant management, such as work alienation and quiet quitting. The implication of this

paper can present key insights for enhancing human resource management practices in restaurant businesses. Restaurant services represent labor-intensive processes, both physically and emotionally. These processes, where production and consumption occur simultaneously, carry risk factors in terms of employee-customer relations. Given that employee satisfaction is a precursor to customer satisfaction, the professional execution of service processes, especially by front-line staff, will be reflected in the quality of service output.

This paper highlights the importance of employees' perceptions of job security. The effects of perceived job insecurity can be described as employee disillusionment, loss of interest in their work, and a lack of commitment to their job. Job security is a strategic issue within the scope of restaurant businesses' responsibilities towards their employees. Failure to fulfill promises and commitments leads to employee disillusionment and decreased performance. In cognitively and emotionally insecure environments, employees develop withdrawal behaviors when they perceive unfair treatment.

In this context, restaurant managers should take measures to increase employees' sense of job security, which can weaken the perception of potential job insecurity. For example, transparent communication practices, regular feedback, and employee participation in decision-making processes can reduce alienation and quiet quitting behaviours. Furthermore, creating a work environment that supports psychological safety allows employees to express their concerns and demonstrate greater commitment to their jobs. From a governance perspective, it is highly valuable for restaurant businesses to foster decision-making processes that encourage shared participation and transparency among employees whenever possible.

While this study offers valuable insights into some employee-related issues, certain limita-

tions need to be considered for future research. Firstly, the sample was limited to front-line employees working in casual dining restaurants in Ankara. Consequently, the generalizability of the findings across Turkey may be limited. Extending the sample to include different types of restaurants represents a valuable first step. Future studies could be enhanced by employing time-lagged or multi-wave designs, using alternative data sources such as supervisor ratings, and exploring moderators like leadership, psychological safety, or perceptions of fairness to better understand the conditions under which job insecurity and quiet quitting arise.

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