Positive Leadership as a Mediator Between Quiet Quitting and Emotion Use in Healthcare Workers

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Positive Leadership Quiet Quitting Use of Emotion Healthcare Workers Healthcare Service Received 16 May 2025 Revised 7 December 2025 Accepted 10 December 2025 **Article Classification:** Research Article	**Purpose** – This study aims to examine the relationship between healthcare workers' perceptions of the use of emotion, positive leadership, and their levels of quiet quitting tendency, and to analyze the mediating role of positive leadership in the relationship between use of emotion and quiet quitting. **Design/methodology/approach** – A quantitative research design was adopted by applying a questionnaire to physicians, nurses, technicians, and administrative staff working in the healthcare sector. Data were collected through a survey, and a partial least squares structural equation model was used to test the proposed model and hypotheses. **Results** – The findings revealed that positive leadership is negatively associated with quiet quitting and fully mediates the relationship between use of emotion and quiet quitting. In the context of the Turkish healthcare system, the corrective and motivating role of positive leadership in reducing quiet quitting among healthcare workers was confirmed. **Discussion** – This study contributes to the literature by revealing the mediating role of positive leadership in the relationship between emotional expression and quiet quitting. The findings emphasize that positive leadership may enhance healthcare service sustainability by fostering employee motivation. However, the generalizability of the results is limited to the healthcare context in Turkey.

1. Introduction

While increasing competition due to globalization leads businesses to develop new strategies (Özüdoğru et al., 2018; Ekşili & Alparslan, 2021), healthcare institutions aim to deliver the utmost quality of service through their human resources and medical equipment by focusing on increasing the development, motivation and productivity of employees (Karaman et al., 2019).

Health services have a characteristic that deeply affects society both due to its relationship with those who demand health services and its interaction with the environment. Predicting the future of human health and determining the adequacy of healthcare workers in relation to the population is not an easy task. The Covid-19 pandemic has considerably transformed how leaders in organizations manage their relationships with employees. It has forced them to take a more supportive approach to enhance employee well-being while maintaining productivity. The pandemic has also sped up the shift in how companies engage and communicate with their workforce (Almazrouei & Zacca, 2022). In addition to the difficulties experienced in delivering healthcare services, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the loss of healthcare workers. According to a preliminary report, an estimated 80,000–180,000 healthcare workers worldwide died from COVID-19 between January 2020 and May 2021, and a total of 506 healthcare workers in Turkey passed away between March 11, 2020, and February 28, 2022 (Nesanır et al., 2022). With the increase in losses, work intensity has increased even more. Thus, the quality of the service process must be a key focus to meet the demand and enhance patient satisfaction (Akar & Arıkan, 2023). Consequently, the problems caused by the global pandemic have been seriously experienced in the health sector (Poon et al., 2022). Quiet quitting (QQTG) refers

to a situation in which employee's commitment and motivation to the organization decreases. This situation might result in a decline in employees' loyalty to the organization, general unhappiness and inability to spare time for personal needs. Therefore, Savaş and Turan (2023) believe that there are important reasons why employees tend towards quiet quitting.

Recent studies describe quiet quitting as a subtle form of work withdrawal that relates closely to organizational commitment, burnout, and employee performance. Hamouche et al. (2023) show that emotional exhaustion, perceptions of unfairness, and heavy workloads increase employees' tendency to restrict their efforts to basic job requirements, which in turn reduces affective commitment and both in-role and extra-role performance. Quiet quitting also shares similarities with presenteeism, as employees remain physically present but contribute below their capacity. Overall, these insights suggest that declining well-being and commitment can produce hidden productivity losses that are difficult to detect yet consequential for organizational effectiveness.

A leader can focus on positivity to drive positive change and implement health care vision and strategies for all stakeholders. They should develop competencies such as communication, collaboration, understanding, and innovation to manage change and complex environments. Moreover, strengthening leadership skills at all levels of healthcare management can contribute to solving health problems effectively. Leaders in the health sector should ensure the creation and delivery of quality, accessible and equitable health services and systems for patients (Odugbose et al., 2024).

Adopting positive leadership (POLS) styles has been found to enhance both the quality of employees' work and their overall well-being in China (Sun et al., 2023). POLS practices—such as demonstrating visible leadership—play a crucial role in shaping organizational culture (Ali & Nouban, 2024). Another form of leadership that has a positive association on both organizations and employees is responsible leadership (Antunes & Franco, 2016). Responsible leadership entails traits deeply rooted in Chinese culture, such as self-discipline and fostering employees' intellectual growth, as observed in research conducted in China (Qu et al., 2024). Their study involved interviews with 9 managers and 92 stakeholders, highlighting these cultural attributes as pivotal factors in assuming accountability. Inclusive leadership, as a form of POLS, has been shown to foster an organizational environment in which employees feel safe and secure (Shafaei & Nejati, 2024). Accordingly, the leader should ensure the continuity of organizational learning by focusing on the learning behavior of the employee. Because an organization that focuses on criticizing mistakes can make the work experience of the employee meaningless.

As Damghanian et al. (2023) point out information from health crises such as Covid-19 can be used to develop POLS for managers and USOE behaviors for employees. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the significance of employees' mental health alongside their physical well-being. POLS, for example in a bank, can help spread positive emotions within the organization by meeting the psychological needs of employees, organizing sporting events, and making working conditions more flexible. The Covid-19 pandemic reshaped societies and underscored the need for organizations to implement effective change strategies to adapt to their surroundings. Positive leaders can play an effective role by promoting positive emotions to reduce employees' resistance to change and their tendency towards organizational inertia. The pandemic process emphasizes the need for training of positive leaders who can be pioneers in crisis management. To effectively disseminate accurate information during a crisis, positive leaders can enhance communication channels and motivate employees to proactively form groups on social networks (Damghanian et al., 2023).

The ability to influence and motivate others by leveraging power is a hallmark of effective leadership (Üzüm et al., 2022). Leadership behaviours that support employees' hope and motivation can lead to desirable work behaviours (Mehboob et al., 2023). Leader behaviors that emphasize communication have been shown to reduce employees' QQTG behaviors by 96% (Joshi & Khullar, 2024). With the changes that may cause quiet quitting, one of the preferred leadership approaches is POLS (Mumford & Fried, 2014). The innovativeness of the global environment in business life requires organisational leaders to establish positive relationships (Malinga et al., 2019). This situation shows that the application of positive psychology to organisational management contributes to the realisation of POLS. POLS is a leadership style that prioritizes employees' needs by ensuring organizational justice, providing necessary resources and conditions, and empowering them with authority and responsibility while offering constructive feedback (Alparslan & Ekşili, 2023). The

centre of the concept of POLS is organisational virtue and this leadership approach is determined by its specific research field, methods, foci, and goals (Meyer et al., 2019). Joaquim et al. (2023) emphasize that a key aspect of human resource management is the ability of positive leaders to tackle the issue of QQTG in the workplace by addressing employees' needs effectively. Young et al. (2024) conducted a study comparing data collected in February 2021 and February 2023 from academics and staff at the medical center, determining that the POLS program implemented before February 2023 significantly reduced the turnover intention of healthcare workers. Young et al. (2024) found that the POLS program for healthcare workers in the radiological imaging unit of the medical center led to a two-year improvement in employees' perceptions of leadership, organizational climate, organizational commitment, burnout levels, and turnover intentions.

Another factor that can help address the issue of QQTG is the use of emotion (USOE), which involves making a strong effort by setting meaningful goals, fostering self-belief, and motivating oneself (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). As Seçgin (2013) states, as an antecedent of positive organizational behavior, organizations should effectively direct employees' emotions in line with business goals POLS. The emotional volatility (Şenol, 2022) of employees, when guided by positive leaders in alignment with organizational goals, can be a significant factor in positively influencing job performance.

According to Serenko (2024), the consequences of QQTG behavior vary based on how it is perceived and handled by the organization. Some employees, who were reluctant to work under their current managers and were experiencing psychological fatigue, viewed quietly quitting as a temporary solution until they found a new job. Others, who preferred not to change employers but only performed assigned tasks with low initiative, eventually faced dismissal. Certain employees were demoted and had their promotion requests denied. Colleagues who did not engage in QQTG found themselves shouldering additional work to compensate for their disengaged peers. However, some employees found positive outcomes from quietly quitting. For instance, it often led to an improved mood and better quality of life outside of work. Additionally, it sometimes resulted in career advancement and salary increases (Serenko, 2024). The successors of QQTG behaviors of employees are lack of or low participation, ignoring their responsibilities, constant complaining, lack of enthusiasm and increased absenteeism (Thakur, 2024), and increased turnover intentions (Jelača & Golubović, 2024). Another consequence of QQTG is the potential loss of employees who have accumulated organizational knowledge and skills. Moreover, reduced internal motivation to share information can disrupt the flow of knowledge within the organization (Serenko, 2024).

The ongoing effects of significant issues faced by healthcare employees since the pandemic (Boy & Sürmeli, 2023) highlight the importance of our research, as it increases the likelihood of QQTG among health workers. Our research aims to achieve effective results by emphasizing the importance of POLS in solving important problems such as QQTG faced by healthcare workers. Given the limited research on quiet quitting, our study seeks to address this gap by exploring its causes, consequences, and ways to manage it.

The researchers suggest examining the reasons for QQTG and draw attention to ex isting studies on this topic (Serenko, 2024). Therefore, the main question of our study can be as follows: Our study explores the potential of enhancing healthcare workers' emotional intelligence to mitigate 'quiet quitting,' thus fostering a positive workplace culture through effective leadership. This approach distinguishes itself from previous research by uncovering specific factors contributing to quiet quitting. In this regard, our research is one of the first studies in its field, as there is no other research in the literature that examines quiet quitting, use of emotion, and POLS as interconnected variables.

2. Theoretical Development and Hypotheses

2.1. The Great Resignation

The term Great Resignation describes the situation in which around 33 million US citizens quit their jobs from the spring of 2021 until the end of the year. Secondary income earners from the stock and housing markets, those who refused to wear masks, and those who had to take care of their children were among the groups that contributed to the Great Resignation (Rosalsky, 2022). The heightened uncertainty during the Covid-19 pandemic led people to reassess their work and life priorities, prompting them to explore alternatives they had not considered before. This has led people to feel the need to renew their behavioral habits. Negative emotions in the workplace contribute to quiet quitting, and the long-term association of the pandemic on

employees and organizations will only become fully apparent in the coming years (Ksinan Jiskrova, 2022). The Great Resignation and quiet quitting, which emerged during the pandemic, have played a key role in moving away from hustle culture (Serenko, 2024).

2.2. The Broaden and Build Theory

Since the start of the pandemic, cultivating positive feelings among employees has shown to be an effective solution for addressing harmful workplace problems, such as QQTG. Research has shown that adults who engage in meditation experience increased daily positive emotions, which accumulate over time (Fredrickson et al., 2008). This accumulation bolstered personal resources, ultimately diminishing illness symptoms and enhancing social support.

The positive organizational behavior approach, which critiques the exclusive focus of psychological science on weaknesses and emphasizes personal strengths, began attracting global attention in the early 21st century, with its antecedents including positive psychology, positive emotions, and positive organizational science (Seçgin, 2013). Positive psychology focuses on investigating the reasons for success and development (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Furthermore, positive psychology contends that cultivating positive emotions and realizing human potential are essential endeavors (Seçgin, 2013). People's ability to recognize and leverage their strengths and virtues enhances their satisfaction in both personal and professional life (Money et al., 2009).

Cunha et al. (2021) conceptualize Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) as an approach that considers both positive and negative organizational experiences, rather than focusing solely on positivity. They propose a "generative paradox pedagogy" that uses tensions between these forces to foster collective development, organizational virtue, and well-being. This perspective frames positivity as a strategic resource that enhances creativity and resilience, expanding the theoretical and practical scope of POS.

Findings from Dirzytė and Patapas (2022) indicate that positive organizational practices play a significant role in enhancing employees' life satisfaction and psychological capital across both public and private sector organizations. Their results show that supportive leadership, transparent communication, and recognition practices are positively associated with higher levels of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism—core components of psychological capital. From a Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) perspective, these findings suggest that cultivating positive work practices can strengthen employees' psychological resources, which in turn contribute to improved well-being and overall job attitudes. Integrating these insights into the present study, it can be inferred that organizational environments characterized by positive practices are likely to facilitate the development of psychological capital, thereby supporting the broader theoretical link between POB constructs and employee outcomes.

Fredrickson (2002) stated that experiencing positive emotions such as happiness, caring, and love increases employees' well-being and human capacity. According to her research, positive emotions expand sources of thought and behavior. By feeling these emotions, people can become more knowledgeable, healthy, and social individuals. The importance of activities that build and expand positive emotions has been emphasized in prior research (Fredrickson, 2002). Under the guidance of a positive leader, individuals can enhance their enjoyment of life through activities such as meditation and yoga, engaging in visionary future-oriented practices, and immersing themselves in natural environments. These activities can be programmed into their non-work lives to foster well-being and fulfillment. Such activities can increase creativity and dynamism. Fredrickson's Broaden and Build Theory (2003) is related to that positive emotions like hope, joy, peace, and love contribute to emotional growth and personal development. In her earlier work, Fredrickson (2001) argued that positive emotions broaden an individual's thinking and behavior, encouraging greater flexibility and adaptability. For instance, emotions like curiosity and interest boost motivation for exploration, leading to the acquisition of new knowledge, perspectives, and experiences. Building the capacity to feel positive emotions enhances personal resources, making these emotions more enduring (Seçgin, 2013). Positive emotions such as pride, gratitude, and elation can also foster stronger commitment, higher morality, and greater harmony within groups and social organizations (Fredrickson, 2003). BBTH implicitly encompasses POLS, USOE and QQTG. In addition to the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001), the relationship between USOE, POLS, and QQTG can be further explained through several theoretical perspectives. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that supportive organizational behaviors encourage reciprocal positive actions from leaders and employees, reducing tendencies of quiet quitting. The Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker &

Demerouti, 2007) posits that resources provided by supportive leadership help employees manage job demands, thereby mitigating disengagement. Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) emphasizes that when employees' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied through positive leadership, intrinsic motivation increases and the likelihood of quiet quitting decreases. Collectively, these theories support the notion that USOE can foster POLS, which in turn reduces QQTG among healthcare workers.

2.3. Hypotheses Development

A leader directs and mobilizes both themselves and their environment toward the achievement of goals, with emotional intelligence identified as the most important leadership trait (Koca et al., 2024). The use of emotion, which exerts a stronger influence than other emotional intelligence sub-dimensions, has been identified as the most important factor affecting leadership (Kiishi, 2024). By using emotions in a positive way, a positive leader ensures employee productivity and achievement of the targeted success level of the organization. In addition, they focus on moving away from negative events to reveal the potential of employees (Conger, 1989). It is a type of leader that provides many benefits to followers, organizational groups, organizations and society (Monzani & Van Dick, 2020). POLS, which can also refer to thoughtful behavior, can be effective in creating and using positive emotions in business employees (Bayar, 2021).

A study grounded in Conservation of Resources Theory examined how POLS behaviors influence employee well-being. Reviewing 118 management articles published over a 19-year period, the study reported that research on POLS peaked in 2020. In addition to drawing on Broaden and Build Theory (BBT), the authors incorporated four additional theoretical perspectives to highlight the importance of employees' emotional recovery. The findings further indicated that POLS, viewed as an effective strategy for addressing pandemic-related challenges, enhances employee well-being and fosters a strong team environment (Azila-Gbettor et al., 2024).

When a positive manager focuses on social responsibility and leverages their authority accordingly, it can enhance the company's financial performance. This leadership style has been suggested to significantly contribute to the long-term success of organizations (Skubinn et al., 2019). Moreover, Hawthorne studies have revealed that employees' positive emotions are associated with their performance (Özkan, 2016). Believing it would contribute to increasing organizational peace and performance in the high workload health sector, we developed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. USOE significantly and positively affects POLS.

QQTG encompasses elements such as unmet expectations, intentionally restricting work activities to the job description, and reluctance to take on additional tasks. It emerges as a time-honored effort to ease one's workload. This process involves the employee aiming to perform at a level that can sustain their job due to reasons such as insufficient external motivation, burnout and frustration with the organization. Although QQTG reduces the burnout level of the employee, it may negatively affect their progress in their work life (Serenko, 2024). The antecedents of QQTG are too few career development opportunities, a toxic work environment, insufficient collaboration, work-life balance problems, inadequate pay and compensation, and inappropriate communication (Jelača & Golubović, 2024). The quality of time spent outside of work has an ongoing and significant association on personal health. A study examining the relationship between personal life and positive emotions and its effects on personal health found that having sufficient personal time outside of work reduces stress and enhances positive emotions. Maintaining a work-life balance can foster positive emotions, and as a result, a positive leader can play a key role in minimizing QQTG (Han & Patterson, 2007).

Rosalsky (2022) discovered that employees who feel they are not fairly compensated for their work are more likely to engage in quiet quitting. It occurs when employees' performance is at its lowest level, and they are unwilling to meet the organization's expectations. Jelača and Golubović (2024) found that QQTG is less prevalent in Serbia compared to economically developed countries like the US and EU member states. However, they also observed that Generation Z in Serbia displays QQTG tendencies. Positive affect, associated with an employee's extroverted personality, has been identified as a significant factor in reducing the likelihood of QQTG behavior (Arar et al., 2023). POLS is related to positive organizational science; this leadership style can provide the necessary conditions for employees to realize themselves, progress and

develop within the organization (Monzani & Van Dick, 2020). In this context, we developed the following hypothesis to explore the relationship between POLS and QQTG:

Hypothesis 2. POLS has a significant negative association on quiet quitting.

Mark Boldger first coined the term "quiet quitting" in 2009 (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). In 2022, Zaid Khan's viral video on social media sparked the beginning of online discussions on quiet quitting, as determined by research (Güler, 2023). A scale for assessing quiet quitting was developed to evaluate university faculty members' tendencies using a 33-item questionnaire (Thomas et al., 2022). Similarly, Zhang and Rodrigue (2023) determined that mothers display QQTG behaviors after having children using their developed scale. A scale developed to assess the degree of quiet quitting among university students revealed a high level of QQTG tendency within this population (Savaş & Turan, 2023). Some of the reasons cited in the study include having low expectations, feeling more comfortable and postponing work instead of spending time on important issues.

In a study conducted within the Turkish healthcare sector, Gözlü (2023) aimed to raise awareness about the concept of QQTG in the industry. The research reveals that the people-oriented health sector needs to provide more effective services. In this regard, it is important to identify the factors that lead to QQTG and implement practices such as enhancing communication quality with employees, clarifying their responsibilities, and managing conflicts effectively. These steps will increase the importance given to health workers by increasing organizational commitment (Gözlü, 2023). In another study conducted in Greece in September 2023, Galanis et al. observed that approximately 61% of 629 nurses exhibited QQTG behavior, and 41% expressed intent to quit their jobs. QQTG may prevent healthcare workers from providing quality and effective services. Therefore, it is important to support and motivate nurses within the organization and to create working environments professionally, which will enable them to stay (Galanis et al., 2024). We formulated the following hypothesis to explore the correlation between USOE and QQTG among healthcare workers, aiming to identify similarities in their behaviors:

Hypothesis 3: The USOE has a significant negative association on QQTG.

A leader should seriously consider how he or she is perceived. For example, regular feedback and evaluations from employees should ensure that the leader understands their relational expectations (Ayoko et al., 2023). Redin et al. (2023) carried out a study in Nigeria to explore the relationship between POLS and the use of emotion. The study utilized an emotional intelligence model with four sub-variables: Assessing one's own emotions, assessing others' emotions, regulating emotions, and using emotions. The findings showed a strong and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Moreover, Redin et al. (2023) determined that evaluating one's own emotions and the USOE are the most crucial factors of emotional intelligence that enhance organizational leadership effectiveness. A leader's actions can lead to positive organizational transformation; however, this transformation is based on the leader's positive association on the development of employees. A positive leader can inspire employees with a vision that leads to common good and excellence, thus creating a positive organizational culture (Redin et al., 2023). Quiet quitting, which refers to the employee's attempt to protect their health and happiness against the time pressure at the workplace by devoting more time to their life outside of work, is to continue working with less responsibility (Çalışkan, 2023). This situation causes some negative effects on organizations on a global and strategic scale (Yıldız, 2023). Based on this information, we developed the following hypothesis, as it is believed that POLS may act as a mediator in the relationship between the USOE and QQTG:

Hypothesis 4. POLS serves as a mediator in the relationship between the USOE and QQTG.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and Procedure

Building on the literature review, the goal of our study is to examine the connection between quiet quitting, the use of emotion, and POLS, while also investigating the mediating role of POLS. The theoretical framework and hypotheses of the investigation, which are based on the causal and intermediary connections among variables, are illustrated in Figure 1.
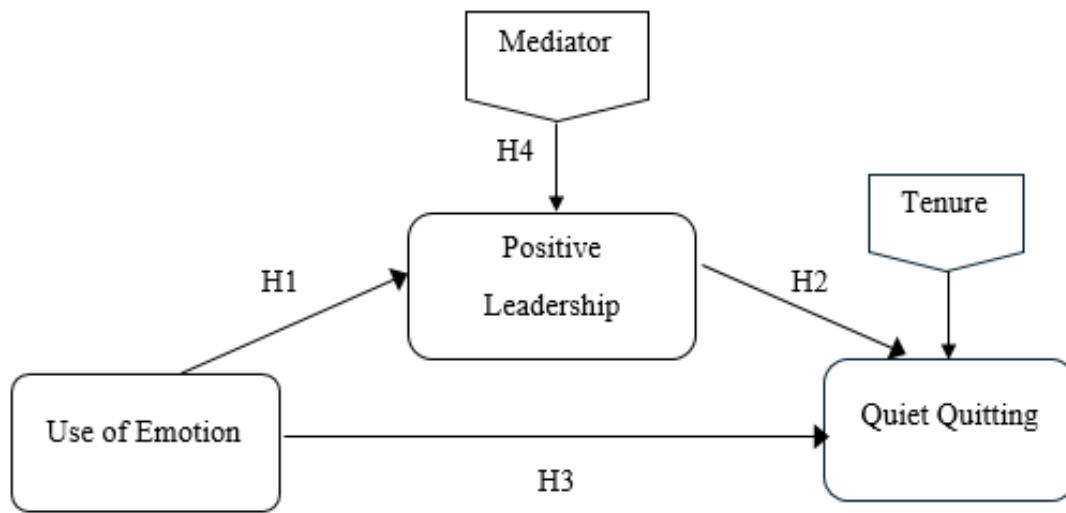
Figure 1. Model of Inquiry and Hypotheses

In our study, we employed a quantitative methodology to ascertain the association and mediating function of POLS predicated on positive emotions within the nexus between USOE and QQTG. To conduct this survey, we obtained permission from the Kocaeli University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee, with the decision dated April 18, 2024, and numbered E. 579264. The research participants were provided with an informed consent form in writing. The consent form stated that participation in the study was voluntary, and that the data could be used for publication purposes, but personal information would be kept confidential. We gathered the data for our study using a questionnaire composed of four sections, employing a 5-point Likert scale that asked participants to rate their agreement with various statements from 1 to 5.

Positive organizational behavior, influenced by the positive psychology movement, has been defined as a management technique that can improve job performance (Luthans, 2002). BBTH has a significant association on employees. This theory is increasingly gaining attention for promoting positive emotions and fostering enduring personal resources. POLS behaviors can positively influence employees and reduce QQTG and thus reduce turnover. The group being studied, which is expected to offer insights to managers, includes healthcare workers in Kocaeli. A total of 224 healthcare workers, who we determined by random sampling method (Koçak & Kerse, 2022), voluntarily supported our study. We collected data from both online sources (72 questionnaires) and face-to-face interactions (152 questionnaires). We conducted the data collection process from April to May 2024. Out of the collected data, we excluded 32 questionnaires from the analysis due to incorrect answers to the control question, therefore we conducted research on 198 employees. Based on the information that a reasonable sample size for multivariate normally distributed data using structural equation modeling should be at least 150 or 200 (Yılmaz & Çelik, 2009), it can be concluded that the study's sample size is adequate, given the number of participants (Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2004). The confidence interval of this study is 95% and the sampling error is .05.

In our study, we have taken some measures to minimize the common method variance. First, we informed the participants about the aim of our study and encouraged their involvement, emphasizing voluntary participation in the surveys and implementing a confidentiality policy. Second, we added a control question to the questionnaire to improve the reliability of the findings. The questionnaire includes statements about POLS, USOE and QQTG. In the last part of the questionnaire, we incorporated demographic questions (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We assessed our research hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM), a more robust method than regression analysis that allows for examining relationships between theoretical constructs and empirical data (Çiçek et al., 2021). We built the measurement and structural models using SEM (AMOS 24) program.

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Quiet Quitting Scale

QQTG Scale is a tool designed to measure the degree to which employees disengage from their work without formally resigning. The QQTG scale, consisting of eight items and developed to allow participants to self-assess, was used in this study (Kıyık Kıcır, 2023). One of the items on the scale is "I do not express my opinions and thoughts about my job because I am afraid that my manager will give me more tasks". The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was .70.

3.2.2. Positive Leadership Scale

POLS is a tool designed to measure the behaviors and characteristics of leaders who foster positive organizational environments. A six-item scale developed by previous researchers was used in our study (Alparslan & Ekşili, 2023). One of the statements on the scale reads, "my manager acts fairly". The scale showed Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .86, indicating good reliability.

3.2.3. Use of Emotion Scale

USOE is a tool designed to assess an individual's ability to effectively recognize, regulate, and apply emotions in various contexts.

A four-item scale developed by Wong and Law (2002) was used to collect the data. "I always encourage myself to do my best" is one of the four statements of the scale. The scale showed Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .73, suggesting moderate reliability.

3.2.4. Control Variables

In our study, tenure was selected as a control variable because prior research has consistently demonstrated its significant influence on employees' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors within organizational contexts. Specifically, tenure is often associated with individuals' level of organizational familiarity, adaptation, and commitment, which can, in turn, affect the dependent variable examined in our model. Other demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, education level) were initially considered; however, preliminary analyses indicated that they did not show significant correlations with the dependent variable and thus were not included in the final model to maintain parsimony and avoid unnecessary complexity. For these reasons, tenure was treated as a key control variable and included as a continuous variable in the analysis. Tenure was originally collected as an ordinal variable with categorical ranges (e.g., 1–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years). In the analysis, these categories were coded numerically (e.g., 1 = 1–5 years, 2 = 6–10 years, etc.) and treated as a continuous variable for analytical purposes, a common practice in similar research when the intervals between categories represent approximately equal ranges.

4. Findings

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Descriptive statistics about the demographic characteristics of the sample group included in the study are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants According to Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Group	No(f)	Pct.
Gender	Female	123	64,1
	Male	65	33,9
Education	High school	25	13
	Associate's Degree Undergraduate	45	23,4
	Bachelor's degree	109	56,8
	Postgraduate	13	6,8
Age	20-30	79	41,1

	20-40	61	31,8
	40 and above	52	27,1
Position	Doctor	28	14,6
	Nurse	85	44,3
	Technician	48	25
	Administrative	31	16,1
Experience	1-5 years	72	37,5
	5-10 years	46	24
	10-15 years	22	11,5

123 of the participants were female (64.1%) and 85 were male (33.9%). Education; the highest degree was undergraduate (n=109; 56.8%), and the lowest was postgraduate (n=13; 6.8%). Age group; the highest number was between the 20-30 age group (n=79; 41.1%), and the lowest number was in the 40 and above age group (n=52; 27.1%). Experience; it was observed that the highest number was 1-5 years (n=72; 37.5%), and the lowest was 10-15 years (n=22; 11.5%). Position; It was determined that there were employees working as doctor (n= 28; 14.6%), nurse (n=85; 44.3%), technician (n=48; 25.0%) and administrative (n=31; 16.1%).

4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

It was established that parametric tests could be applied for data analysis. The analyses were performed using IBM SPSS 20 and AMOS 24, with the significance level fixed at .05 as shown in Table 2. Correlation values indicate a positive link between the USOE and POLS (r = .22), a negative link between POLS and QQTG (r = -.27), a marginally positive link between the USOE and QQTG (r = .04), and a negative link between tenure and QQTG (r = -.20).

Table 2. Measurement Model and SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) Path Analysis Values

Measure	Measurement Values	Path Values	Cut-off Criteria
CMIN/DF	1.223	1.170	<5
CFI	0.980	0.958	>90
RMR	0.057	0.069	<0,08
RMSEA	0.034	0.030	<0,08
NFI	0.915	0.781	>90
GFI	0.953	0.954	>90

Note: CMIN/DF = Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio; CFI = Index for comparing model fit; RMR = Root mean square of residuals; RMSEA = Root mean square approximation error; NFI = Normalized fit index; GFI = Fit quality index.

The mean, standard deviation, and correlation values of the study variables were calculated using IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0 software, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations Correlations Values

Factors	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Use of emotion	15.73	2.94	1	-	-	-
2. Quiet quitting	6.08	2.76	0.139	1	-	-
3. Positive leadership	20.06	5.68	0.227	-0.276	1	-
4. Tenure	2.76	0.57	-	-0.209	-	1

4.3. Evaluation of Measurement Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity metrics of the measurement model are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Factor Loadings, Cronbach's α, CR and AVE

	Item	Factor Load	α–CR–AVE
1. Quiet Quitting	QQTG 4	0.77	(0.70)-(1.32)-(0.64)
	QQTG 5	0.87	CR>AVE
	QQTG 6	0.74	
2. Use of Emotion	USOE 1	0.71	(0.73)-(1.28)-(0.55)
	USOE 2	0.75	CR>AVE
	USOE 3	0.71	
	USOE 4	0.79	
3. Positive leadership	POLS 1	0.78	(0.86)-(1.23)-(0.64)
	POLS 2	0.79	CR>AVE
	POLS 3	0.88	
	POLS 4	0.73	
	POLS 5	0.80	
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Criterion			
	QQTG	USOE	POLS
Quiet Quitting	-	-	-
Use of Emotion	-0.21	-	-
Positive leadership	0.51	0.22	-
Model Summary			
	R²	VIF	
QQTG	0.12	-	
USOE	0.03	-	
USOE => QQTG	-	1	
POLS => QQTG	-	0.159	
POLS => USOE	-	0.002	

Note: α = Coefficient Alpha; CR: Construct Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Explained; R²: Explained variance. Q²: Predictive relevance; VIF: Variance inflation factor.

The VIF values, being less than the threshold (<5), suggest the absence of any linear dependence issues among the variables. The R² values derived from the model indicate that QQTG is explained by the predictor variable at 12%, and USOE is explained at 3%. The research model shows promise in predicting QQTG and USOE (Hair et al., 2017).

Upon examining the values in Table 1, the findings for Cronbach's α (> .7), composite reliability (> .7), average variance extracted (AVE > .40), and factor loadings (.71 to .88) indicate that the model achieves internal consistency reliability and convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). However, to improve the AVE values due to low factor loadings, the first, second, third, seventh, and eighth items of the QQTG Scale, as well as the sixth item of the POLS Scale, we removed from the measurement model. Furthermore, the CR and AVE metrics for each construct exceed the prescribed benchmark values (Hair et al., 2017). Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) coefficients being below the threshold value (< .85) confirm that discriminant validity is achieved and that the factor structures are distinct. 0.587

4.4. Common Method Variance Examinations

As a result of EFA, we removed from the analysis the 6th item in the POLS scale with a factor loading below .50 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). The outcomes of the repeated EFA indicated that the scale items were aligned with a single factor, showing factor loadings in the range of .733 to .881. The scale relationship 64% of the variance. Additionally, we observed that the items in the USOE scale loaded onto a single factor, with factor loadings ranging from .716 to .790, explaining 55% of the variance. We excluded items 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8 from the

analysis because their factor loadings on the QQTG scale were below 0.50. Although this resulted in a three-item structure, these remaining items were conceptually consistent with the original theoretical construct of the scale and adequately represented the underlying dimension. Prior to item removal, the content and theoretical relevance of each item were carefully examined. Only those items that did not show satisfactory statistical performance and were partially redundant in terms of conceptual overlap were excluded. Therefore, the decision was not solely based on statistical results but also on theoretical considerations ensuring that the content validity of the scale was preserved. As a result of conducting the EFA again, we found that the items were aligned with a single factor, with loadings ranging from 0.744 to 0.875, and the scale accounted for 64% of the variance. It is expected that the variance ratio explained by the scales is greater than .40 (Büyüköztürk, 2002), and the factor loads are expected to be .50 and above (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

4.5. Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses examined in the research were tested using the partial least squares structural equation modeling approach SEM (AMOS 24). The path coefficients and their significance levels are shown in Figure 2.
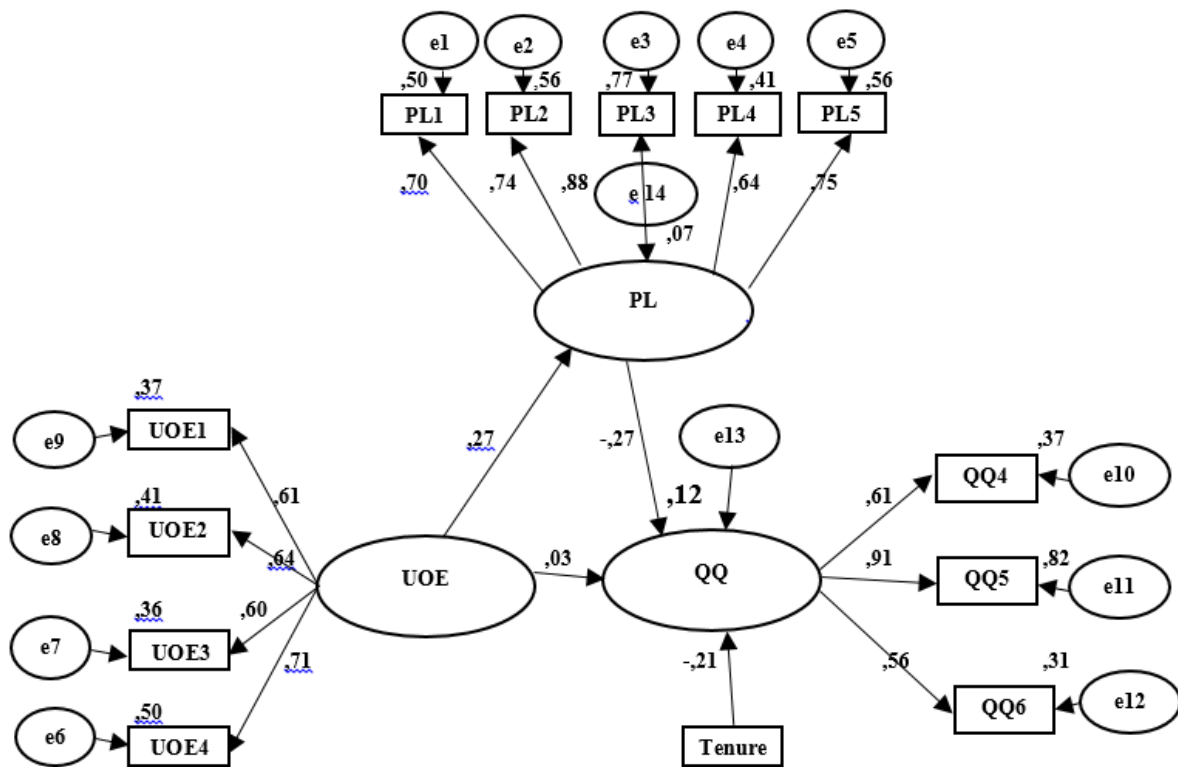

Figure 2. Structural Model and Coefficients

The results of the SEM analysis for the research model, including standardized regression coefficients (β), critical ratios (C.R.), multiple determination coefficients (R^2), and significance (p) values for the structural associations, are presented in Table 4. Upon analyzing the results, we found a consistent directional relationship between the USOE and POLS ($\beta = 0.227$), with the regression coefficient being 0.227. With a significance threshold of 0.05, we found that the independent variable, the use of emotion, relationship 22.7% of the variance in POLS as the dependent variable. Consequently, 77.3% of the variance is not explained by the independent latent variables ($1-R^2$). The results of the regression analysis indicated a positive and significant effect of QQTG on POLS ($\beta = 0.265$, $p = 0.004$), supporting H1. Conversely, POLS demonstrated a negative and significant effect on QQTG ($\beta = -0.248$, $p = 0.009$), supporting H2. The effect of USOE on QQTG was not significant ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.587$), leading to the rejection of H3. Additionally, tenure had a negative and significant effect on QQTG ($\beta = -0.209$, $p = 0.009$). We confirmed at 0.05 significance level that tenure as the

independent latent variable, explains 20.9% of QQTG as the dependent latent variable. The proportion that the independent variable cannot explain (1-R²) is 79.1%.

The results of the mediator test using bootstrap are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of Mediator Test Using Bootstrap

Direct effect	St.Est.	S.E.	C.R.	R²	P	Hyp.	Hyp. Results
QQTG => POLS	0.265	0.123	2.852	0.227	0.004	H1	Accept
POLS => QQTG	-0.248	0.074	-2.611	-0.276	0.009	H2	Accept
USOE => QQTG	0.05	0.096	0.543	0.043	0.587	H3	Reject
Tenure=> QQTG	-0.209	0.046	-2.611	-0.209	0.009		
Total effect	**St.Est.**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**S.E.**	**P Value**		
USOE => QQTG	-0.016	-0.179	0.139	0.097	0.883		0.879
Indirect effect							
USOE => POLS => QQTG	-0.066	-0.15	-0.026	0.034	0.003		***

Note: ***P<0.05; All model explained 12% of the variance in QQTG; St. Est. = Standardized estimated value; S.E. = Standard Error; C.R. = Critical ratio. R² = Multiple coefficients of determination; P= Significance; Hyp. = Hypothesis.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

In the Turkish sample, we observed that POLS exhibited a negative effect on QQTG (β = -0.248), indicating its corrective and mobilizing potential to reduce tendencies of quiet quitting among healthcare workers and thereby enhance the delivery of healthcare services. POLS not only improves the sustainability of healthcare services but also positively motivates employees. Additionally, we believe our research will contribute to reducing labor turnover by identifying the variables that affect QQTG in the healthcare sector. Healthcare organizations' management could benefit from implementing new practices aimed at reducing the occurrence of QQTG among their staff. For instance, thoroughly assessing the circumstances of employees inclined towards QQTG can help in better understanding their needs. Providing support for employees in managing both work and personal time, as well as promoting mental health management, is crucial. Managers should assist employees experiencing tendencies towards QQTG in developing skills for learning new career management techniques, thereby enhancing productivity and mitigating burnout.

Theoretical implications

Based on BBTH (Fredrickson, 2001), our research revealed that USOE plays a significant role in influencing POLS. We have proven that POLS can mitigate the negative potential of QQTG by positively influencing employee behavior. In the context of our study, we identified that POLS acts as a complete mediator between the USOE and QQTG, within the macro perspective. Our paper presents two main implications regarding the meaning of POLS. The first implication concerns the reasons why a leadership approach has positive characteristics (Monzani & Van Dick, 2020). Positive leaders exhibit behaviors that deeply attach importance to their employees. Leaders who aim to develop their positive characteristics can use the POLS approach as a guide.

Another implication regarding the meaning of POLS is that leaders taking on management roles in organizations with negative characteristics can be influenced by these negative aspects. POLS is a relational process and can be sustained through the contributions of employees, groups and the improvement of the environment. In all dyadic relationships, both the leader and followers are sources and recipients POLS, which is characterized by a high-quality social exchange between them (Monzani & Van Dick, 2020).

Practical implications

The inclusion of POLS as a full mediator in the relationship between USOE and QQTG can positively contribute to the employee's feelings towards work and enable more effective management of health workers. In this context, POLS can provide a supportive atmosphere that reduces QQTG in the identified relationships. Failure to take adequate measures to prevent QQTG may reduce the motivation of employees who avoid this

behavior and cause loss of workforce. This may lead to confrontations between employees and management, thereby increasing conflicts within the organization. As a result, demoralization of healthcare teams may increase time loss, and the quality of healthcare services for patients may be negatively affected (Galanis et al., 2024).

In our study, one of the practical implications for the management of the QQTG process is the creation of structures to support the implementation of POLS within the organization. To establish these structures, we need to create positive environments where employees can freely share their views and interact effectively with their managers. Employers, managers, and human resource officers should actively demonstrate POLS to foster a positive workplace atmosphere.

Limitations and future research

Current data indicates that our study is the first to investigate healthcare workers' perspectives on POLS, quiet quitting, and USOE in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our research offers opportunities to reduce QQTG and limit its consequences through the adoption of POLS. A crisis in one country in the world can affect other countries and spread rapidly through information communication channels. Therefore, our research is expected to enhance crises preparedness and potentially increase the number of studies on the analyzed variables across different geographies. There are some limitations to be considered in our study. One limitation of our study is that it was conducted during a defined timeframe. In other words, while the psychological fatigue and negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare workers have lessened, they persist. Another limitation of our study is that the economic challenges faced by employees globally and in Turkey after the pandemic may have influenced our results. Despite these limitations, our study's findings offer valuable insights for both managers and employees.

Grasping the connections between the causes and consequences of leader behavior can offer essential insights for effective management. In our study, we employed a quantitative approach to examine POLS. Besides this approach, future studies might employ a single method or a combination of methods to achieve more detailed results. The perception of the employees was effective in the measurement of the research variables. Our research, which includes employees in the service sector, consists of participants working in the health sector in Turkey. Future researchers could design studies to focus on identifying the antecedents and consequences of leader behaviors and quiet quitting.

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