

**Is There Light at the End of the Tunnel?: The Moderation Effect of Hope in Distress**

**Tolerance and its Impact on Turnover Intentions and Quiet Quitting**

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### **Abstract**

In today's dynamic work environment, understanding individual and combined factors that influence employee retention and engagement is critical to both the company and the employee. Employee turnover is both an expensive and disruptive experience, which impacts organizational performance, team well-being, and the company's financial health. One growing area of management research interest is the role of cognitive and emotional variables in predicting turnover intentions and behaviors like quiet quitting. In our study, we surveyed 301 participants in the United States to determine the predictive power of distress tolerance on quiet quitting and turnover intentions and explore how an employee's level of hope impacts this relationship. We found evidence that distress tolerance was positively and significantly related to both turnover intentions and quiet quitting. These results indicate that employees with higher distress tolerance levels will be more likely to leave their organization or quietly quit, or both, which partially aligns with our hypotheses. Employees' hopefulness significantly altered the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions but did not affect the relationship with quiet quitting. Our findings have theoretical and practical implications including deepening our understanding of the internal forces that impact retention within organizations.

## Synopsis

### Purpose

This research aims to explore the moderation effect of hope on the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions, as well as quiet quitting. By investigating how hope influences the likelihood of employees leaving their jobs despite experiencing high levels of distress, this study aims to identify key factors that contribute to employee retention.

Understanding this dynamic can provide valuable insights for developing effective retention strategies that mitigate stress and foster a hopeful outlook among employees.

### Problem of Practice

Over the past few years, there has been a growing awareness towards turnover intentions and quiet quitting in the workplace. Around 50% of the United States' current workforce has silently resigned from their job (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). With this intimidating statistic, employers must consider ways to retain and engage employees within the workplace. Mahand and Caldwell (2023) suggested the following reasons for quiet quitting: lack of commitment to career development, failure to value employees, increasing employee disconnection, decline in organizational trust, and importance of employee autonomy. We argue that employees' levels of distress tolerance and hope may dictate whether they will quietly quit or intend to leave their organization.

### Results

To test hypothesis 1, we ran a linear regression to see if distress predicts turnover intentions. The model was significant ( $F(1,299) = 13.332$   $p < .001$ ) with a standardized regression coefficient of  $\beta = .207$  ( $p < .001$ ). This means hypothesis 1 is partially supported. We

found that distress tolerance does predict turnover intentions, but the relationship is positive instead of negative as we initially thought.

For hypothesis 2, we also used a linear regression to check if distress tolerance predicts quiet quitting. The model was significant ( $F(1,299) = 38.713, p < .001$ ) with a standardized regression coefficient of  $\beta = .339 (p < .001)$ , supporting hypothesis 2.

In hypothesis 3, we examined whether the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions was moderated by the employee's level of hope. This model explained a significant portion of the variance ( $R^2 = .139; F(3,297) = 16.094, p < .001$ ). The interaction between distress tolerance and hope was significant ( $\beta = .199, p < .05$ ) and added a small amount of explanatory power to the model ( $\Delta R^2 = .012; \Delta F(1,297) = 4.218, p < .05$ ). We examined the simple slopes for the interaction, which have been provided in Figure 2. Therefore, hope significantly moderates the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions, partially supporting hypothesis 3.

For hypothesis 4, we examined if hope affects the relationship between distress tolerance and quiet quitting. This model explained a significant portion of the variance ( $R^2 = .169; F(3,297) = 20.092, p < .001$ ). Distress tolerance was positively related to quiet quitting ( $\beta = .191, p < .001$ ). However, the interaction between distress tolerance and hope was not significant ( $\beta = .055, p = .151$ ) and only added a small amount of explanatory power ( $\Delta R^2 = .006; \Delta F(1,297) = 2.071, p = .151$ ). Thus, hope does not moderate the relationship between distress tolerance and quiet quitting, so hypothesis 4 is not supported.

## Conclusions

We developed and analyzed a theoretical model that specifies how distress tolerance affects turnover intentions and quiet quitting among employees and when the employees'

hopefulness alters this relationship. We found evidence that distress tolerance positively and significantly explains a portion of turnover intentions and quiet quitting. These results indicate that employees with higher distress tolerance levels will be more likely to leave their organization and/or quietly quit, which partially aligns with our hypotheses. Employees' hopefulness significantly altered the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions but did not affect the relationship with quiet quitting.

### **Practical Relevance**

Concerning practitioners, we intend for our study to be used to help understand the internal forces within employees (i.e., distress tolerance and hope) and how those internal forces impact retention within organizations. Our results indicate that employees with higher levels of distress tolerance are more likely to leave the organization compared to employees with low levels of distress tolerance. Employees with high levels of distress tolerance are likely to quietly quit and employees with low levels are less likely to quietly quit. Our analysis also indicated that employees with high levels in both hope and distress tolerance are more likely to turnover, but there was no significant effect for quiet quitting. Practitioners should be aware that employees who have a higher tolerance for distress and higher levels of hope are more likely to leave the organization as their tolerance for uncertainty (i.e., looking for other job opportunities), is higher. For highly tolerant and hopeful employees, there is light at the end of the tunnel, they will find the opportunities needed based on their levels of tolerance for uncertainty and their ability to appraise new opportunities and find new pathways.

## Methods

### Research Question

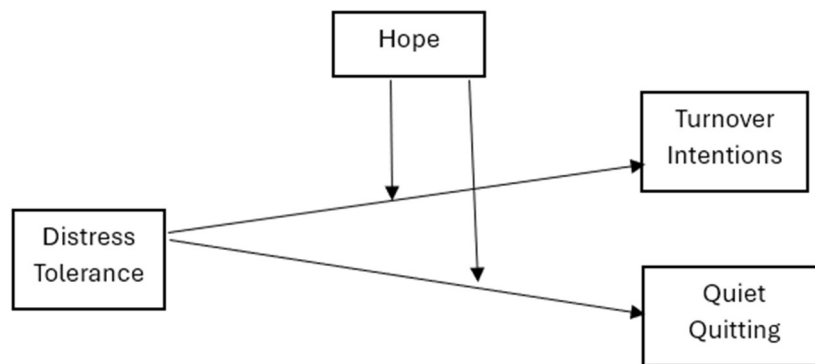
The effect between distress tolerance, turnover intentions, and quiet quitting can be explored using the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory posits that stress occurs from the loss or threat of losing resources. From this theoretical perspective, distress tolerance can be viewed as an employee's ability to manage stress from the loss of resources (Simons & Gaher, 2005). Higher levels of distress tolerance may enable employees to adapt more effectively to resource challenges, potentially reducing the likelihood of turnover intentions and increasing the events of quiet quitting. We predict that employees with high levels of distress tolerance will be less likely to leave their organization because they will be capable of managing their work stress and not feel the need to leave. However, employees with these high levels of distress tolerance are predicted to be more likely to quietly quit because they may manage the loss of resources by disengaging in work functions and events. We argue that employees with higher levels of distress tolerance will likely be inclined to quietly quit due to avoidance mechanisms, which coincides with employees participating in only mandatory activities. Figure 1 depicts our theoretical model.

### Figure 1

#### *Theoretical Model<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> The theoretical model hypothesizes that distress tolerance predicts quiet quitting and turnover intentions. The model also suggests hope moderates these relationships.



**Hypothesis 1:** Distress tolerance is negatively related to turnover intentions.

**Hypothesis 2:** Distress tolerance is positively related to quiet quitting.

The moderating effect of hope in this relationship can be understood through COR theory. Hope, as a positive psychological resource, may serve as a buffer against the impact of resource loss on distress and turnover intentions. Employees with higher levels of hope may be more resilient in the face of adversity, finding alternative pathways to resource attainment and mitigating the negative effects of distress tolerance on turnover intentions and quiet quitting.

**Hypothesis 3:** Hope moderates the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions, where the relationship will be stronger for individuals with lower levels of hope, and weaker for individuals with higher levels of hope.

**Hypothesis 4:** Hope moderates the relationship between distress tolerance and quiet quitting, where the relationship will be stronger for individuals with lower levels of hope, and weaker for individuals with higher levels of hope.

## Method and Design

Participants completed the questionnaires across two-time points, with predictors and outcomes separated across time points. Specifically the measures were administered one week

apart from each other to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). At time one, we measured distress tolerance and hope. Distress tolerance was measured using the Distress Tolerance Scale (DTS), which is a self-reported 15-item questionnaire designed to assess the ability to tolerate emotional distress (Simons & Gaher, 2005). Snyder et al.'s (1991) Hope Trait Scale was used to measure the level of hope the employees possess. Socio-demographic information was also gathered at time one. Approximately a week after time one, we measured the outcome variables: turnover intention and quiet quitting. Turnover intention was measured using the Turnover Intention scale (Michaels & Spector, 1982). We used Galanis et al.'s (2023) Quiet Quitting scale to measure quiet quitting.

### **Data Collection, Sample, and Analysis**

The participants of the study are working adults recruited through Prolific. The study comprised a total of 301 participants all of whom were based in the United States. A breakdown of the participants based off gender, education, work location, race, and region has been provided within Appendix A. The initial sample size was 328 participants, but 27 participants were eliminated due to missing data, outliers, and issues with normality. The exact procedures are discussed within Appendix A.

### **Practical Problem**

Over the past few years, there has been a growing awareness towards turnover intentions and quiet quitting in the workplace. Around 50% of the United States' current workforce has silently resigned from their job (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). With this intimidating statistic, employers must consider ways to retain and engage employees within the workplace. Mahand and Caldwell (2023) suggest the following reasons for quiet quitting: lack of commitment to career development, failure to value employees, increasing employee



disconnection, decline in organizational trust, and importance of employee autonomy. We argue that employees' levels of distress tolerance and hope may dictate whether they will quietly quit or intend to leave their organization.

Distress tolerance is the perceived capacity to withstand emotional and physical distress. The term "is used to convey any kind of negative state, including the feelings of uncertainty, ambiguity, frustration, negative emotion, and physical pain or discomfort" (Veilleux, 2022, p. 358), and has been previously linked to various occupational outcomes. For instance, a study performed with middle managers by Keenan and McBain (1979), showed that intolerance to ambiguity—one of the dimensions of distress tolerance—showed that employees with low tolerance to ambiguity were more prone to job dissatisfaction and tension at work.

Hope, as a moderating construct, represents "perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways" (Snyder, 2002, p. 249). Hope, therefore, emphasizes cognitive appraisals regarding goal setting and goal obtainment, where the high-hope employee's analysis points towards a relatively high possibility of success instead of focusing on failure (Snyder et al., 1991). Hope, like optimism, is considered a stable personality trait that is not limited to a specific situation or setting (Snyder et al., 1991), which means it extends to all areas, including the professional environment.

Given these findings, the current study presents a different hypothesis: that distress tolerance predicts quiet quitting and turnover intentions. More compelling, we propose that hope can moderate this relationship, implying that even when employees have lower or higher distress tolerance, those with high hope might be less inclined to quietly quit or turnover intentions. This probable interaction between distress tolerance and hope could provide organizations with valuable insights into employee retention strategies. By understanding how these variables work

together, organizations might be better equipped to champion an inclusive work environment that caters to employees' emotional and motivational needs.

## **Literature Review**

### **Distress Tolerance, Turnover Intention, and Quiet Quitting**

Previous research has independently examined the roles of distress tolerance, turnover intentions, quiet quitting, and hope in the workplace. This study seeks to close a research gap in the literature by exploring their combined impact on quiet quitting and turnover intentions and hope as a moderator between these relationships. By doing so, our research wishes to highlight nuanced employee dynamics that influence engagement and retention, thereby contributing to this complex research field with an enhanced understanding of factors that drive workplace outcomes.

### **Distress Tolerance**

Distress tolerance is defined as “the perceived capacity to withstand negative emotional and/or other aversive states (e.g., physical discomfort) and the behavioral act of withstanding distressing internal states elicited by some type of stressor” (Zvolensky et al., 2010, p.2). It is a self-referent construct that consists of the individual’s evaluation of experiencing negative states with respect to (1) tolerability and aversiveness, (2) appraisal and acceptability, (3) tendency to absorb attention and disrupt functioning, and (4) regulation of emotions (Simmons & Gaher, 2005). The distress tolerance construct is manifested in diverse aspects of the regulation of affect and behavior. Simons and Gaher (2005) cited Gross (1998) who identified five ways in which emotion may be regulated: (1) selection of the situation, (2) modification of the situation, (3) deployment of attention, (4) change of cognitions, and (5) modulation of response. The first four points referred to the determination of approach or avoid the situations, the strength and type of

efforts to modify the situation, the tendency to focus on or ignore distressing situations, and absorb the attention by focusing on distressing factors (catastrophizing or minimizing). The fifth response, focused regulation, includes the modulation of behavioral, experiential, and psychological responses, each increasing or decreasing the function of distress tolerance.

Persons with lower levels of distress tolerance may be prone to maladaptive behaviors (Zvolensky et al., 2010) and attempt to avoid negative emotions and/or related aversive states (anxiety, worry, stress, etc.). Therefore, they may be prone to higher turnover intention and silent resignation as an avoidance reaction to the circumstances experienced at the workplace. Distress tolerance is conceptually studied as part of a network of risk and protective processes but is also related to other variables, including avoidant coping, anxiety sensitivity, emotion regulation, and experiential avoidance (Zvolensky et al., 2010). In other words, individuals with lower levels of distress tolerance may dysregulate their responses to the stimuli being received and present maladaptive behaviors like disengagement and avoidance as a coping mechanism to diminish distress, as well as the use of minimization of the situations to deal with the day-to-day (Zvolensky et al., 2010). All these behaviors are compatible with the behaviors presented when an employee has turnover intentions and/or is experiencing quiet quitting.

For the study at hand, we explore tolerance to uncertainty, ambiguity, frustration, and negative emotional states in the workplace and its effects on the intentions to turnover and quiet quitting. Tolerance to uncertainty is defined as “the individual differences in the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions to uncertain situations” while tolerance to ambiguity “reflects individual differences in perceived tolerance of complicated, foreign or vague situations or stimuli”; the difference between tolerance to uncertainty and tolerance to ambiguity is the

vagueness of the situation (Simons & Gaher, 2005). In the workplace it refers to not having enough information regarding a specific task requested (Keenan & McBain, 1979).

Tolerance to frustration is defined as the capacity to withstand aggravation (frustrated life goals). People with lower levels of tolerance to frustration may present procrastination, self-harm, anxiety, and depression symptoms (Zvolensky et al., 2010). The fourth dimension is tolerance of negative emotional stress, which is the perceived capacity to withstand internal distress. It reflects self-control, including coping mechanisms such as engagement and disengagement strategies.

### **Turnover Intentions**

Turnover Intentions refer to an attitude or propensity to leave the organization (Avey et al., 2009; Podsakoff et al., 2007). High turnover in the workplace can have several detrimental effects on both organizations and employees. First, it can lead to inflated operational costs due to the expenses associated with recruiting, onboarding, and training new employees (Hall, 2019). Moreover, frequent turnover can disrupt team dynamics and hinder productivity, as existing employees may need to pick up the slack or deal with constant changes in their work environment. Additionally, it can impact employee morale and job satisfaction, as a high turnover rate can create a sense of instability and insecurity among the employees of an organization (Han, 2020). Furthermore, valuable institutional knowledge may be lost when experienced employees leave, potentially impacting the quality of products or services and hindering innovation, as well as diverting attention to nonproductive activities (Heavy et al., 2013). Overall, high turnover can impede an organization's ability to maintain stability, foster a positive work culture, and achieve its long-term goals. To define turnover intentions for our

study, we will adopt the definition by Tett and Meyer (1993) as “the conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave an organization” (p. 262).

In recent years, researchers have increasingly focused on external factors that impact employee turnover intentions. One such study by Bhat et al. (2021, p.1) stated that “lack of external job opportunities compels employees to maintain organizational membership, even though against the stressful working environment.” Furthermore, the authors went on to argue that “the practical implication explains that the employee and organization relationship is governed more by external economic conditions than by the psychological feelings of the employees toward the organization (organizational commitment).”

On the other hand, recent studies have tested the internal or individual factors motivating the turnover of employees (Rafiq et al., 2022), including psychological demands and personal satisfaction. A meta-analysis of the studies performed in the 1990s regarding turnover intentions confirmed Hom and Griffeth’s (1995) assessment, indicating that disengaged or withdrawal behaviors like lateness, absences, and low performance are predictors of turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). There are many factors identified as antecedents of turnover intentions, however, to our best knowledge, no studies are measuring the effect of distress tolerance and hope on employees' turnover intentions.

### **Quiet Quitting**

‘Quiet quitting’ is a relatively new term but not a new construct used to describe a form of employee disengagement, where employees opt out of tasks beyond the officially assigned duties and/or becoming less psychologically invested in work (Klotz & Bolino, 2022). These employees, known as quiet quitters, continue to fulfill their core job tasks, but they disengage from any extra activities or tasks. Quiet quitters do not put extra effort into their workplace, so

they do not stay late, show up early, complete additional non-required tasks or attend non-mandatory meetings (Klotz & Bolino, 2022; Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). This phenomenon may cause tension within the workplace because the employee may be viewed as unwilling to contribute to the organization. Coworkers may become disgruntled from the difference in effort put into the organization because they may go above and beyond compared to quiet quitters.

Galanis et al. (2023) created a Quiet Quitting scale with three dimensions: detachment, lack of initiative, and lack of motivation. We argue that their scale asks employees what actions they take that are associated with quiet quitting. Concurrent validity has been supported through analysis against job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover intentions.

### **Hope as a Moderator of the Distress Tolerance – Outcomes Relationships**

Hope is defined as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (Snyder, 2002, p. 250). The hope scales have two components: agency and pathways. Pathways thinking is the thought process of linking our current stance in the organization to a future goal (the way), which the employee expects to be successful in attaining. Agency thinking is the motivational aspect of wanting to continue the path we have imagined for ourselves within the organization from the present to the future goal (the will). Research has adopted Snyder’s (2002) scales for dispositional (trait) and developmental (state) hope. Trait hope measures an employee’s overall level of hope given any situational context (Snyder et al., 1991), whereas state hope measures an employee’s level of hope given certain circumstances or an event (Snyder et al., 1996). The Trait Scale is commonly used in Positive Psychology literature, while Positive Organizational Behavior tends to use the State Scale. In regard to recruiting and retaining employees, our study focuses on dispositional hope (Trait Scale) because

silent resignation and turnover intentions can occur at any point in time. This scale indicates a person's dispositional hope given different environments. Psychological studies have shown this construct has internal reliability, temporal reliability, and concurrent and discriminant validation (Snyder et al., 1991).

Hope has been shown to positively impact an employee's well-being and performance (Reichard et al., 2013). Also, research has shown that an employee's level of hope predicts their problem-solving quality and amount (Peterson & Byron, 2008) and their productivity (Combs et al., 2010). Chernyak-Hai et al. (2023) studied hope as a moderator for the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior. However, there are multiple gaps regarding the impact of hope in organizations: (1) there has been limited use of dispositional hope as a moderator within the organizational behavior literature and (2) little to no research has been conducted to examine how hope affects retention through turnover intentions and quiet quitting.

### **COR Theory**

The COR theory, developed by Hobfoll (1989), establishes that stress occurs when individuals are (1) threatened to lose resources, (2) lose resources, or (3) fail to gain resources (Golembiewski et al., 2001). This perceived threat or need for resources investment (possible loss of resources) can occur in different forms at the workplace including changes in leadership, role ambiguity, failed projects, and threats to personal resources such as professional responsibility, and self-efficacy.

In the context of distress tolerance, turnover intentions, and quiet quitting, employees may experience stress when they perceive a depletion of crucial resources, such as job satisfaction, social support, or psychological well-being, causing avoidance coping mechanisms

that increase quiet quitting and turnover intentions. Distress tolerance, in this framework, can be viewed as an individual's ability to manage and cope with the stress (Simons & Gaher, 2005) associated with resource loss. Higher levels of distress tolerance may enable employees to adapt more effectively to resource challenges, potentially reducing the likelihood of turnover intentions and increasing the events of quiet quitting. We argue that employees with higher levels of distress tolerance will likely be inclined to quiet quitting due to avoidance mechanisms, which coincides with employees participating in only mandatory activities. In summary, applying the COR theory to the relationship between distress tolerance, turnover intentions, quiet quitting, and the moderating role of hope provides a framework that emphasizes the importance of resource dynamics in understanding employee adaptation to stress and the potential role of hope as a protective factor in this process.

## Findings

Our study's descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1. To test hypothesis 1, a linear regression was conducted to examine distress intolerance as a predictor of turnover intentions. The data met the assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals based on the examination of plots of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values. The overall model was statistically significant ( $F(1,299) = 13.332$   $p < .001$ ) and indicated that distress intolerance explained a small proportion of the variance in turnover intentions ( $R^2 = .043$ ). The standardized regression coefficient was  $\beta = .207$  ( $p < .001$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is partially supported. The result of the study confirms distress tolerance as a predictor of turnover intentions, however showing a positive significant relationship between the variables instead of the negative relationship hypothesized.

## Table 1



*Descriptive Statistics for the Theoretical Model*

Descriptive Statistics				
Variable	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
DisTol	2.599	0.867	0.483	-0.288
Hope	6.097	1.101	-0.563	0.329
TurnOV	2.628	1.641	0.658	-0.837
QuietQuit	2.445	0.660	0.550	-0.419

*Note:*  $n = 301$ . DisTol = distress tolerance; TurnOV = turnover intention; QuietQuit = quiet quitting.

To test hypothesis 2, distress tolerance was also examined as a predictor of quiet quitting conducting a linear regression. The data met the assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals based on the examination of plots of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values. Supporting hypothesis 2, the overall model was statistically significant ( $F(1,299) = 38.713, p < .001$ ), and indicated that distress tolerance explained a small proportion of the variance in quiet quitting ( $R^2 = .115$ ). The standardized regression coefficient was  $\beta = .339$  ( $p < .001$ ). The correlations for our theoretical model are within Table 2.

**Table 2***Bivariate Correlations of Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. DisTol	1			
2. Hope	-.355**	1		
3. TurnOV	.207**	-.346**	1	
4. QuietQuit	.339**	-.326**	.445**	1

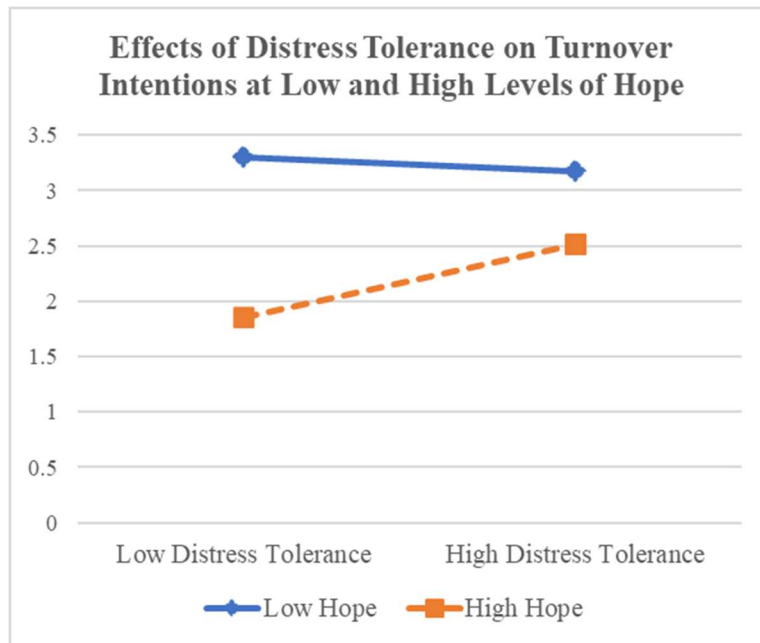
*Note:*  $n = 301$ . DisTol = distress tolerance; TurnOV = turnover intentions; QuietQuit = quiet quitting.

\*\*  $p < .01$ , two-tailed

As part of hypothesis 3, we examined whether the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions was moderated by hope. To examine these relationships, we used

Hayes's (2018) PROCESS Macro. The model containing distress tolerance, turnover intentions, and the interaction explained a significant proportion of variance ( $R^2 = .139$ ;  $F(3,297) = 16.094$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Distress tolerance was not significantly related to turnover intentions in the full model. However, the interaction term between distress tolerance and hope was significant in the full model ( $\beta = .199$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and this model explained a small proportion of variance above the model with only the main effects ( $\Delta R^2 = .097$ ;  $\Delta F(1,297) = 2.762$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, hope significantly moderates the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions. To understand the form of the interaction simple slopes were examined. At low levels of hope (i.e., 1SD below the mean) the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions was not significant ( $\beta = -.049$ ,  $p = 0.753$ ). However, at high levels of hope (i.e., 1SD above the mean) the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.388$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Therefore, the results partially support hypothesis 3. Figure 2 shows the interaction plot for distress tolerance and hope.

**Figure 2*****Effects of Distress Tolerance on Turnover Intentions at Low and High Levels of Hope***



For hypothesis 4, we examined whether the relationship between distress tolerance and quiet quitting was moderated by hope. To examine these relationships, we used Hayes's (2018) PROCESS Macro. The model containing distress tolerance, quiet quitting, and the interaction explained a significant proportion of the variance ( $R^2 = .169$ ;  $F(3,297) = 20.093$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Distress tolerance was positively related to quiet quitting and showed to be significant ( $\beta = .191$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, when the interaction between distress tolerance and hope was included in the model it was not significant ( $\beta = .055$ ,  $p = .151$ ), and this model explained a small proportion of variance above the model with only the main effects ( $\Delta R^2 = .0058$ ;  $\Delta F(1,297) = 2.071$ ,  $p = .151$ ). Thus, hope does not moderate the relationship between distress tolerance and quiet quitting. Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether differences arose in turnover intentions and quiet quitting across the participant's work-mode. Results indicated there was not a significant effect for work-mode across the three groups (i.e., 100% in the office, 100% remote

work, and split between in the office and remote work) for turnover intentions ( $F(2,298) = 1.545$ ,  $p = .215$ ;  $\eta^2 = .010$ ) or quiet quitting ( $F(2,298) = 2.046$ ,  $p = .131$ ;  $\eta^2 = .014$ ).

### **Lessons for Practice**

Concerning practitioners, we intend for our study to be used to help understand the internal forces within employees (i.e., distress tolerance and hope) and how those internal forces impact retention within organizations. Based on our results, employees with higher levels of distress tolerance are more likely to leave the organization compared to employees with low levels of distress tolerance. Likewise, employees with high levels of distress tolerance are likely to quietly quit and employees with low levels are less likely to quietly quit. The inclusion of hope as moderator within our analysis also showed that employees with high levels in both hope and distress tolerance are more likely to turnover, but there was no significant effect for quiet quitting. Practitioners should be aware that employees who have a higher tolerance for distress and higher levels of hope are more likely to leave the organization as their tolerance for uncertainty (i.e. looking for other job opportunities), is higher. High levels of hope provide both “the will and the way” for employees to look for new career pathways, as persons with high-hope consistently fare better than their low-hope counterparts in psychological adjustment (Snyder, 2002), which combined with high distress tolerance levels may cause the employee to decide more easily to move on to other opportunities. Therefore, for highly tolerant, highly hopeful employees there is light at the end of the tunnel, but not necessarily inside of their current role. They will find the opportunities needed based on their levels of tolerance for uncertainty and their ability to appraise new opportunities and find new pathways.

### **Contributions to Theory**

Our findings contribute to organizational behavior research by extending the nomological network for turnover intentions and quiet quitting to include distress tolerance and hope as antecedents. Regarding organizational behavior research, we analyzed employees' trait hope, which has seldom been tested (Avey et al., 2009; Luthans, 2002). The contributions from our study are inhibited by a few limitations that we recommend be further examined in future research. The data were self-reported by the participants and came from a single source. Future researchers may consider other methods and multiple viewpoints (i.e. employee, colleagues, or supervisors) to reduce the common method bias. Also, a significant portion of the participants had low levels of turnover intentions, which may alter the results of this study. We conducted an additional analysis to determine whether there was a significant difference related to work modality. We found that employees' work mode (i.e., remote, in the office, or combination) was not significantly different between groups for turnover intentions or quiet quitting. Further research could specifically investigate individual and demographic characteristics from employees to determine who is more likely to turnover and evaluate their distress tolerance, hope, and likelihood to quietly quit.

Our results showed that low levels of hope did not significantly affect the relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions. Future research could dive deeper into understanding the difference between varying levels of hope within employees. Another limitation of our study is we predicted a negative relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions. Based on prior research and the COR theory, we argued that distress tolerance would be negatively related to turnover intentions and positively related to quiet quitting due to the strategies that employees implement to avoid distress (Hobfoll, 1989). However, a positive relationship between distress tolerance and both outcomes, turnover

intentions and quiet quitting, emerged. Our results indicate that people with higher distress tolerances are more likely to quietly quit and intend to leave their organization. This positive relationship needs to be further investigated to determine what circumstances create a negative versus positive relationship between distress tolerance and each of the outcomes, especially considering external opportunities available for the participants in the market as those have being presented as crucial determinants for turnover intentions in prior studies (Bhat et al., 2021). Future researchers may also consider the use of State Hope rather than Trait Hope within our theoretical model. State Hope (commonly known as developmental hope) is the level of hope a person has during a particular situation or event while Trait Hope is the dispositional hope a person has at any point in time throughout their life (Snyder, 2002). The inclusion of an employee's developmental hope during strenuous working conditions may reveal the predicted negative relationship between distress tolerance and turnover intentions and the positive relationship between distress tolerance and quiet quitting.

**Keywords**

Distress Tolerance, Turnover Intentions, Quiet Quitting, Employee Retention, Hope Moderation, Organizational Behavior

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## Appendix A: Method

The participants of the study are working adults recruited through Prolific. The questionnaires were administered at two-time points, with predictors and outcomes separated across time points, one week apart from each other, to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

### Sample

The study comprised a total of 301 participants (post data cleaning effects summarized below) all of whom were based in the United States, with a notable gender distribution of 44.52% female ( $n=134$ ), 53.49% male ( $n=161$ ), and 1.99% identifying as other ( $n=6$ ). Educational attainment varied among participants: 1% had some high school education ( $n=3$ ), 9.3% held a high school diploma or equivalent ( $n=28$ ), 0.66% had vocational training ( $n=2$ ), 17.94% had some college education ( $n=54$ ), 10.63% held an associate's degree ( $n=32$ ), 37.87% had a bachelor's degree ( $n=114$ ), 17.61% held a master's degree ( $n=53$ ), 4.32% had a doctorate degree ( $n=13$ ), and 0.66% fell into other categories ( $n=2$ ). Regarding work location, 51.5% of participants worked in a facility or office 100% of the time ( $n=155$ ), 16.94% telecommuted 100% of the time ( $n=51$ ), and 31.56% had a hybrid arrangement ( $n=95$ ). The regional distribution included 21.93% from the Northeast ( $n=66$ ), 27.24% from the Midwest ( $n=82$ ), 14.62% from the West ( $n=44$ ), and 36.21% from the South ( $n=109$ ). The racial composition of the sample was diverse: 4.65% Asian ( $n=14$ ), 6.98% Black or African American ( $n=21$ ), 3.24% Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin ( $n=13$ ), less than 0.33% Middle Eastern or North African ( $n=1$ ), 77.41% White or Caucasian ( $n=233$ ), 5.65% multiracial or other ( $n=17$ ), and 0.66% preferred not to answer ( $n=2$ ). Socio-demographic characteristics are provided in Figure 3.

**Figure 3***Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants at Baseline* [11](#)

Baseline characteristic	Full sample	
	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	134	44.52
Male	161	53.49
Other	6	1.99
Highest educational level		
Some high school	3	1.00
High school diploma or equivalent	28	9.30
Vocational training	2	0.66
Some college	54	17.94
Associate's degree	32	10.63
Bachelor's degree	114	37.87
Master's degree	53	17.61
Doctorate degree	13	4.32
Other	2	0.66
Work Location		
Facility or office 100%	155	51.50
Telecommute 100%	51	16.94
Hybrid	95	31.56
Region		
Northeast	66	21.93
Midwest	82	27.24
West	44	14.62
South	109	36.21
Race		
Asian	14	4.65
Black or African American	21	6.98
Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	13	3.24
Middle Eastern or North African	1	0.33
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.00
White or Caucasian	233	77.41
Multiracial or Other	17	5.65
Preferred not to answer	2	0.66

We screened our data for outliers and normality regarding the variables within our study: distress tolerance, hope, turnover intentions, and silent resignation. The initial sample size was  $n = 328$ . However, twenty of the participants did not complete part two questionnaires, which lowered our sample size to 308. We examined univariate outliers using z-scores, based on Raykov and Marcouildes's (2012) guideline of  $\pm 3.0$  for extreme cases. Based on the z-scores, there were six outliers within the Hope (5 outliers ranging from -4.13 to -3.10) and Quiet Quitting (1 outlier with a value of 3.33) variables. After removing the six outliers, the univariate Q-Q plots indicated that each variable was approximately normally distributed and none of the

variables had a high level of skewness or kurtosis exceeding the  $\pm 1.00$  cutoffs (Meyers et al., 2017). The skewness values ranged from  $-.563$  to  $.658$  and kurtosis ranged from  $-.837$  to  $.329$ . Also, we examined the multivariate outliers by examining Mahalanobis distances using a cutoff of  $18.467$  based on  $4$  *df* at  $p < .001$  (Meyers et al., 2017). One of the cases exceeded the cutoff with a Mahalanobis distance of  $20.89$ , so we removed the multivariate outlier. Once the seven outliers were removed, the data appears to be multivariate normal and univariate normal. Our final sample size was  $n = 301$ .

## **Time One Measures**

### ***Distress Tolerance***

Distress tolerance was measured using the Distress Tolerance Scale (DTS), which is a self-reported 15-item questionnaire designed to assess the ability to tolerate emotional distress (Simons & Gaher, 2005). Participants are instructed to think of times when they have felt distressed or upset. The participants then selected the option that best describes their beliefs regarding the statement. Participants answered items such as “I’ll do anything to stop feeling distressed or upset” on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Total scores are a mean of four subscale scores: tolerance (3 items  $\alpha = .83$ ), Appraisal (6 items  $\alpha = .65$ ), Absorption (3 items  $\alpha = .87$ ), and Regulation (3 items  $\alpha = .87$ ). Higher scores reflect higher tolerance to distress (Simons & Gaher, 2005). This trait demonstrates relative stability over time and test–retest reliability ranging from  $.67$  to  $.78$  (Simons & Gaher, 2005). The instrument of the study was found to be reliable ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

### ***Hope***

Snyder et al., (1991) Hope Trait Scale was used to measure the level of hope the employees possess. This scale is composed of 12 items that measure the Agency (4 items,  $\alpha = .87$ ), Pathways (4 items  $\alpha = .86$ ), and distractor components of the construct (4 items,  $\alpha = .76$ ).

The distractor items were removed before further analyses were completed. The participants were instructed to select the option that best describes them using an 8-point Likert scale that ranges from “Definitely False” to “Definitely True.” Participants answered items such as “There are lots of ways around any problem,” which is an item from the pathway's subscale. Internal reliability for the 8-item scale (without distractors) showed an excellent level of internal reliability ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Socio-demographic information was also gathered at time one.

## **Time Two Measures**

### ***Turnover Intention***

Approximately a week after time one, participants were requested to answer the Turnover Intention scale (Michaels & Spector, 1982) used to measure our turnover intention construct. The scale comprises 3 items, and participants selected the option that best described them in each statement. Responses were provided using a Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Turnover was significantly predicted by the 3-item measure (Michaels & Spector, 1982). Internal reliability for the scale is excellent ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

### ***Quiet Quitting***

Galanis et al. 's (2023) Quiet Quitting scale was used to measure the likelihood of employee's tendency to quietly quit. The scale included 7 items ( $\alpha = .81$ ). Participants were instructed to select the option that best described their experience at the workplace, selecting from options on a 5-point Likert format that range from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” One of the items within the scale was “I often pretend to be working in order to avoid tasks.” Internal reliability was excellent ( $\alpha = .81$ ) for the 7-item scale.