



# Naked Resignation: A Professional Risk-Taking

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## Abstract

Naked resignation is resigning from the job without any backup or job lined up. The present study looks at why individuals resign from their jobs without any backup plan. The study aims to explore reasons, outcomes, challenges, and available support systems for naked resignation. The study utilises qualitative research methods and incorporates interviews to understand the experience of naked resignation. The snowball sampling method was used to select the participants for the study. The thematic analysis was used to analyse the information obtained through participant interviews. The findings show that job-related factors such as job stress, toxic work culture, and workload are leading reasons for quitting the job without a backup plan. Similarly, the outcomes are feelings of relief with uncertainty and anxiety about the future. The resignation leads to better physical and mental well-being in individuals.

**Keywords:** naked resignation, reasons, challenges, support systems, outcomes

## Background

Resignation is a factor that matters to the employee, such as the employer or organisation. Resignation creates a shift from normal career advancements. Resigning from their employer is a significant event for an employee. Naked resignation, or "quit and run," refers to employees suddenly leaving their positions without providing notice periods,

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explanation, or handover procedures. The work environment has experienced significant disruption due to COVID-19 in recent times. As 2021 began, through the emergence of work-from-home and hybrid working conditions, a noticeable shift in employee attitudes led to a dramatic rise in resignations.(Shukla et al., 2022).The pandemic made individuals reevaluate their careers and identify the scope of freelancing and relaxed working conditions. Recently, employees have looked forward to more job satisfaction and personal priorities. In this context, industrial psychologists focus on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in organisational behaviour and work settings. Extrinsic motivation focuses on good pay and better working conditions. Intrinsic focuses on commitment, job satisfaction, human connection, etc(Promsri, 2018). A surge in attrition rate from 12% to 21% from 2020 to 2021 during the post-pandemic wave of resignations. The attrition rate is a key metric for understanding the frequency of employees leaving an organisation.(Rathore, 2024).

Naked resignation is a workplace trend in China that is quite popular on Chinese social media platforms like Weibo. This trend seeks to free individuals from the relentless corporate grind, encouraging them to explore new interests, develop new skills, and travel. The pandemic and economic downturn have only amplified the trend of leaving the job without a backup plan. The high employee turnover has negatively affected the company or organisation and the existing employees. There will be a conjunction between employees due to the gap created by the resigned employee. In recent news reports and data, it has been found that when an employee leaves the organisation, more importance is given to the organisation than individual personal factors. This has prompted many young professionals to reassess their careers and seek greater life purpose.

Several studies have concentrated on employees' intent to leave an organisation, exit interviews, organisational difficulties, knowledge transfer process, etc.(Jins & Radhakrishnan, 2012, 2012; Lin & Hong, 2022; Manoj & Namratha, 2021; Mishra, 2010). Research on nurses shows a negative relationship between employees' intent to leave and job satisfaction.(Gibson & Petrosko, 2014; Numminen et al., 2016; Poghosyan et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2020; Trybou et al., 2015).The majority of the research on early resignation and mass resignation focuses on professionals from healthcare settings, including doctors, nurses, disability and rehabilitation staff(Mercan Baspinar et al., 2024; Numminen et al., 2016; Pumpoung, 2016; Shukla et al., 2022; Tarhan et al., 2022). Looking into the Indian IT sector, there is an increase of 52% in hiring a more skilled workforce (Kajarekar,2021), and 23% of the expected attrition rate shows an abrupt job change among employees (Kothari, 2022). Also, more focus of the same has been given to the pandemic and its interaction with the work life of

healthcare providers worldwide. The studies connected to multiple professionals and work settings have not been explored.

Research has highlighted many factors, such as stress, toxic work culture, compensation, workload, and job burnout, that make an employee resign.(Kersaint et al., 2007; Maier et al., 2015; Njau, 2013; Owens, 2023; Yasin & Khalid, 2015). Research also points out the negative emotions employees experience toward their workplaces and helps explain various undesirable behaviours employees exhibit(Mousa, 2017).The reasons for leaving the job are categorised into three main stimulating factors: organisational/institutional, personal, and psychosocial. (Lutchman, 2019; Reyes et al., 2019). The work-life balance, upward mobility, and routinisation are the core factors for resignation, while pay has not been identified as a core one.(Rajapaksha, 2015). While looking into employee resignation, employee resignation strongly correlates with policy and administration, relationships within the organisation, organisational image, burnout behaviour, and labour market comparisons. (Putri & Surya, 2020)Identifying transformational leadership and job satisfaction significantly negatively affected employee turnover intention. Also, work stress had a positive correlation to employee turnover intention. According to a survey, a significant number of workers who resigned were due to low pay (63%), lack of advancement opportunities (63%), and feelings of disrespect in the workplace (57%)(Parker & Horowitz, 2022).

An obvious question arises about the presence of resigned employees in the workforce. The shift in employment settings from regular to more flexible made employees leave their stressful workforce. A report by Mitchell & Dill (2021) highlighted the role of freelancing among employees who resigned from their regular full-time workforce, which ignores their work-life balance and family time. Those who entered freelancing, self-employment, and entrepreneurial ventures have better time and family time than regular employees. An increase in self-employment and entrepreneurial ventures led to the gig economy, which provides both the employer and the employee flexibility (Nadler, 2017). Lim (2021) stated the importance of upskilling for better jobs and exploring pleasant hobbies among the employees who resigned from the regular workforce. This has enhanced their happiness and mental health, and improving their skills helped them to create a demand for more flexible jobs and freelancing.

Looking into the cultural aspects of resignation, the individualistic culture shows increased tolerance to naked resignation, whereas stigmatisation remains in a collectivistic cultural setting. The prevalence of naked resignation varies across cultures, and its view varies among societies. The studies from various cultural settings pointed out resignation

in terms of positive and negative influences. Resignation is a coping mechanism in Japanese culture (Suzuki, 2004). While looking into the gender differences in the factors leading to resignation apart from the organisational points of view are the sociocultural and personal aspects. There appears to be a significant time gap in the studies associated with the matrimonial role in the resignation process. The cultural and generational changes in the matrimonial system and the job engagement of women in the present Indian society point out a massive gap in exploring and understanding the overall experience of resignation in divergent work settings. Current research has inadequately explored the sociopsychological driving forces that lead employees to quit their jobs abruptly. Also, no adequate research covers the experience of naked resignation in employees, that is, individuals leaving their jobs with no backup plan. This study explores reasons, outcomes, challenges, and available support systems for naked resignation.

## **Method**

The study utilises qualitative research methods and incorporates interviews to understand the experience of naked resignation. Semi-structured telephonic interviews were selected as the data collection method. This approach was chosen over face-to-face interviews for several methodological advantages. First, telephonic interviews provided greater accessibility to participants. Second, the relative anonymity of phone conversations facilitated discussions of more sensitive aspects. Third, this offered more flexibility in scheduling. The individuals who resigned after 2021 and were jobless for at least 1 month were included in the study. The timeframe selected was to examine resignation decisions made after the significant pandemic-related workplace disruptions, capturing contemporary resignation trends. The one-month minimum unemployment period ensured that participants had experienced meaningful duration without immediate re-employment, allowing for deeper insights into their intentional decision to leave without a backup plan and the subsequent experience of unemployment. The individuals laid off from their jobs and resigned due to severe medical conditions were excluded.

The snowball sampling method was used to select the participants for the study. Through snowball sampling, 20 participants were approached for the interview, and only nine agreed to participate. Most of them reported that they were not ready to recall the situation as it was stressful. The small sample size ( $n=9$ ) may not represent the full spectrum of resignation experiences. Additionally, a potential response bias exists, as 11 of the 20 approached individuals declined participation, with many finding

the resignation experience too stressful to discuss. Thus, the results might be skewed to more resolved narratives. The thematic analysis was used to analyse the information obtained through participant interviews. The interviews were conducted in the participants' native language, which was transcribed and translated into English for analysis. The analysis was done using NVivo 15, where systematic coding was performed. The transcribed and translated interviews in text format were imported into NVivo, and codes and sentiments were assigned. Then, the themes were identified for each of the research questions.

**Table 1***Demographic picture of participants*

	Age	Gender	Educational Qualification	Employment status	Marital Status	Locality
Participant 1	29	Female	BBA	Employed	Unmarried	Urban
Participant 2	34	Female	MSW	Unemployed	Married	Rural
Participant 3	42	Male	BSc	Unemployed	Married	Suburban
Participant 4	38	Female	MHA	Unemployed	Married	Urban
Participant 5	30	Female	BCom	Unemployed	Married	Urban
Participant 6	35	Male	MBA	Unemployed	Unmarried	Urban
Participant 7	32	Female	BA	Unemployed	Unmarried	Urban
Participant 8	29	Male	BCom	Unemployed	Unmarried	Suburban
Participant 9	35	Female	MBA	Unemployed	Married	Suburban

## Results and Discussion

The study aims to explore reasons, outcomes, and available support systems for naked resignation. Thematic analysis of responses to the open-ended questions revealed five broad themes and sub-themes, representing 32 codes used 259 times. The five themes are *the reason for the resignation, emotions after resignation, Status of New Job-Seeking, Outcomes of resignation, and Major support Systems for those who resigned.*

**Figure 1**

*Codes identified from the data*

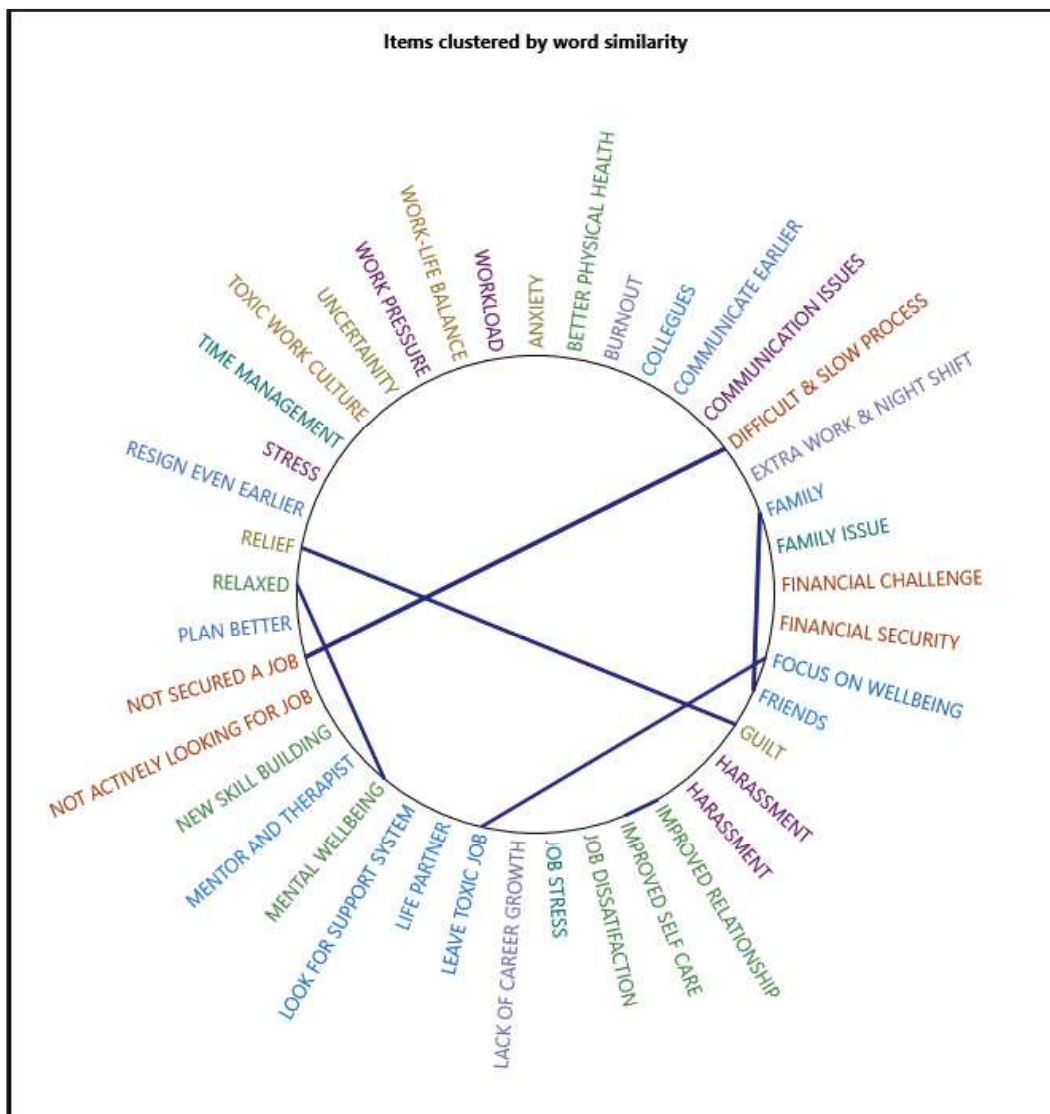




Table 2 answers the first research question on reasons for resignation, indicating that are 12 subthemes generated as reasons for resigning from the job. The prominent reason for resigning was connected to job-related factors, where 11 subthemes were identified. The 11 subthemes are *burnout*, *communication issues*, *Extra work time*, *harassment*, *job dissatisfaction*, *lack of autonomy*, *No Career Growth*, *Toxic Work Environment*, *Work-Life Balance*, *Workload*, *job stress*, and *work pressure*. The family-related factor was the family issues, including lack of support from the family and health issues of the family member. It noted that only two participants reported the reason for resignation as a family matter, with only four references related to this code. The fascinating factor is that both the participants reported family issues as females. In this modern era, a bias has been seen in the job status of females and males while taking up the family responsibilities in concern.

**Table 2***Themes of reason for resignation*

<b>Codes/ Themes &amp; Subthemes</b>	<b>Files</b>	<b>References</b>
Job-related factors		
Burnout	5	6
Communication Issues	3	3
Extra Worktime & Night Shift	3	8
Harassment	1	5
Job dissatisfaction	2	2
Job Stress & Work Pressure	8	15
Lack of Autonomy in Job	2	3
No Career Growth	3	3
Toxic Work Environment	7	12
Work-Life Balance	7	10
Workload	5	11
Other Factors		
Family Issues	2	4

The significant reasons for resigning from the job are job stress or work pressure and a toxic work environment. It is noted that 15 and 12 references

were identified in the themes of job stress and toxic work environment, respectively, with participants of 8 and 7 for each. It is pointed out that 80% of the participants reported leaving the job due to job stress and toxic work culture. There are also cases of burnout where the participants were not able to get control over their physical and mental health due to job stress and burnout. The participant's words on burnout: *"I found it hard to recover from those shifts – my body was not adjusting to the irregular hours, and I started experiencing a lot of stress-related symptoms, like anxiety and trouble concentrating."* Bakker et. Al. (2005) pointed out that resigning is a primary step to regain a healthier work-life balance and prioritise mental health.

A woman highlighted the presence of gender differences in the workforce. She pointed out, "I had been working at my last job for almost three years, and I just felt like I had hit a ceiling in growth. The work environment was not great—there was much micromanaging, and I felt very burnt out." There is a glass ceiling in the workforce where there are limitations in growth and promotions because of gender. Jabbar and Imran (2013) pointed out the gender differences in managerial roles and identified that women are not quickly promoted from lower to top positions. Some studies identified the adverse effects of the glass ceiling on women's career progression (Osituyo, 2018; Amudha et al., 2016). Despite the glass ceiling effect, women in the workplace face even more complicated issues of harassment, which a female participant reported. She reported it as "At first, it was the usual work pressures—deadlines, long hours, and high expectations. However, things escalated when my team lead began making inappropriate comments and advances. It started subtly, like compliments that crossed the line, but it became more explicit and uncomfortable over time. I did not feel safe, and I could not focus on my work because I was constantly worried about what might happen next. Despite trying to report it to HR, nothing was done." Subaveerapandiyan et. Al. (2024) studied the prevalence and effect of workplace harassment among female library professionals in Indian academic libraries. The study explored and identified a high prevalence of harassment predominantly by colleagues, which has a significant effect on their psychological well-being and job satisfaction.

Looking into the emotional aspects of resignation, how individuals view their resignation process, and how they deal with it. It is noted that all the participants reported having relief from the constant pressure associated with the job. The other emotions associated with the resignation were anxiety, fear, guilt, and uncertainty. Like relief, individuals also had negative emotions associated with the resignation process. Guilt and anxiety were other primary emotions associated with the resignation process. Five individuals reported being guilty of resigning from the job,



and six were anxious about the future connecting to getting a new job. Employees experiencing chronic work stress and burnout are more likely to face exhaustion, which gives both positive and negative emotions associated with the job and resignation (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

**Table 3***Themes on Emotions after Resignation*

Anxiety	6	6
Fear & Scary	2	4
Guilt	5	8
Relief	9	14
Uncertainty	5	7

Emotions of the resignation process are always connected to the accessibility of a new job. All the participants noted that the job-seeking process is slow and difficult. The participants reported the process: *"It took me about three months to find a new position. The job search was not easy, and I had moments where I felt discouraged, but I tried to stay positive. I updated my resume and LinkedIn and reached out to my network. I also applied to positions I genuinely wanted rather than any job I could get."* "There are many opportunities in the job market, but many factors affect the process when entering the job seeker world. Only one participant out of 9 got a new job after resigning, and the remaining eight were either in the stage of job searching or not searching for a new job for the time to resolve the issues associated with the previous job or in the stage of healing themselves.

**Table 4***Themes on Status of New Job-Seeking*

<b>Difficult process</b>	6	9
<b>Not Searching</b>	4	5
<b>Searching not secured</b>	4	4

The outcomes of the resignation are important as they can impact the individual's job-searching process. Most participants reported having mental and physical well-being after resigning from the job. It is noted that 8 out of 9 participants reported having better mental well-being and having quality time in their lives. Similarly, 6 out of them reported improved relationships and better physical well-being. Most reported positive effects associated with resignation, but some participants reported having

financial constraints after resignation. There were mixed emotions after resigning from the job. One of the participants reported, *“On one hand, I was happy to be free of the stress and the constant juggling act. However, I felt guilty about leaving a stable job, especially because I did not have another job lined up. I was not sure what was next, but I knew I could not continue in that toxic environment where I felt unsupported both at home and at work. It was like I had reached a breaking point.”* Other themes related to the outcomes of resignation are improved self-care and skill development.

Table 5

*Themes on Outcomes of Resignation*

Financial Constraints	5	6
Improved Relationships	6	7
Improved Self Care	4	5
Mental Wellbeing	8	10
Physical Wellbeing	6	8
Quality Time	8	8
Skill Development	4	4

Table 6 reported the themes of the support system in the resignation phase—the significant support received from family, including partners, friends, colleagues, therapists, and mentors. The two participants emphasised the support of their partners in the decision-making process of resignation: *“My wife was my biggest support during that time. She could see how much I was struggling, and she encouraged me to take a step back and think about my health and happiness”*. *“My family, especially my wife, was very supportive. She knew how much the job affected me, and I think her perspective was the most impactful.”* Also, 4 participants sought advice and help from the mentor and the therapist for support during the resignation.

Table 6

*Themes on Major support Systems for those resigned*

Colleagues	6	8
Family	7	17
Friends	8	10
Mentor or Therapist	4	5

## Conclusion

The five themes are the reason for the naked resignation, emotions after naked resignation, the status of new job-seeking, outcomes of naked resignation, and significant support systems for those who resigned. The subthemes for naked resignation are burnout, communication issues, Extra work time, harassment, job dissatisfaction, lack of autonomy, No Career Growth, Toxic Work Environment, Work-Life Balance, Workload, family issues, job stress, and work pressure. The emotions associated with the resignation were relief, anxiety, fear, guilt, and uncertainty – the significant support received from family, including partners, friends, colleagues, therapists, and mentors. Since naked resignation is risk-taking, some people get into it due to the stressful work and toxic work culture.

## Limitations of the study

- The sample size is too small to generalise the results in a large population. Small sample sizes may limit the ability to detect patterns or trends representative of larger groups.
- The sample includes individuals who got a new job, are in the job searching process, and are not searching for a new job.
- The study is retrospective, which limits its data extraction.
- 9 individuals were not selected randomly; their experiences may be biased toward a specific demographic.

## Implications of the study

- The study helps to understand job stress and toxic work culture as central reasons for resignation; thus, organisations should enhance workplace mental health resources, including confidential counselling services, stress management programs, and mental health days.
- Strengthen unemployment support systems to provide adequate financial cushioning for those between jobs.
- Companies need systematic approaches to identify and address toxic workplace behaviours, particularly from management.
- Implementing flexible work options could help retain employees who might otherwise resign due to work-life balance issues.
- Develop stronger protections for gig workers, as many participants reported turning to gig work during their unemployment period.

- The link between job-related stress and emotional well-being helps highlight the importance of mental health and well-being programs in the workplace.

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