

Quiet Quitting vs SOAR Model: A New Lens on Student Disengagement

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Abstract

Quiet quitting among secondary school students refers to a situation where learners are physically present in class but emotionally detached from the learning process. These students often do what is necessary to meet expectations but show little enthusiasm, initiative, or sense of purpose in their studies. Such disengagement not only affects academic achievement but also influences students' emotional well-being and their connection to the school community. To address this issue, a more positive and strengths-based framework is needed. This concept paper discusses quiet quitting through the SOAR Model, which focuses on *Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results*. The methodology involves a conceptual exploration of the SOAR framework, explaining how each element can be applied to understand the causes, responses, and potential interventions related to quiet quitting. The discussion highlights that recognizing student strengths, creating meaningful opportunities, and nurturing aspirations can encourage renewed motivation and active participation in learning. The SOAR approach also emphasizes measurable outcomes that focus on holistic growth rather than academic performance alone. Findings suggest that when schools apply a strengths-oriented perspective and foster supportive relationships, students are more likely to remain engaged and resilient. However, this paper is limited to theoretical discussion and secondary sources, without empirical validation. Moving forward, it is recommended that future researchers conduct systematic assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of existing engagement strategies and the overall learning climate.

Keywords: Quiet Quitting, SOAR Model, Students, Secondary School

Introduction

The formation of student's identity, values, and aspirations can be developed through education at the secondary school level. At this stage, adolescents begin to engage in curricular and co-curricular programs that indirectly shape their character nurturing leadership, discipline, and high motivation, ultimately making them role models for their peers. The most comprehensive human trait is when individuals are curious, energetic, motivated, and inspired to learn and develop their potential responsibly by utilizing their talents (Paloş et al., 2025). However, a phenomenon that has haunted the global community is now also affecting the education system in Malaysia. An increasing number of students are

showing signs of emotional exhaustion, loss of interest in learning, and reduced participation in classroom activities, even though they still attend school (Pham Thi & Duong, 2024). This phenomenon is known as quiet quitting, where students only fulfill the minimum academic requirements without showing any additional effort to enhance their personal potential.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), established in 1945 under the United Nations (UN), aims to promote global security through international cooperation in the fields of education, science, and culture (Yasmin, 2022). The organization implements the Education 2030 Agenda, particularly the Fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4), which emphasizes inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (Committee, 2025). UNESCO's and SDG 4's approaches call on educational institutions to create environments and learning experiences that support students' autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and emotional balance.

In addition, Malaysia's 13th Plan and the *Malaysia Madani* framework focus on establishing a more inclusive and competitive education system to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education. The government has also allocated RM82.1 billion for the year 2025 and RM66.2 billion (MoE, 2023) previously to further improve the quality of national education, encompassing all aspects including student development. This clearly demonstrates the Malaysian government's hope that students in schools who will become the future leaders of the nation can enhance their potential, compete healthily, and continue to develop themselves.

This study examines the contemporary perspective of "quiet quitting" and compares it to the affirmative, future-oriented SOAR Model to create a more constructive framework for grappling with the issue. Specifically, the study aims to evaluate the possibility of the SOAR Model—Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results in the context of quiet quitting—as a replacement lens that transforms dissociation as an opportunity for strength. The scope focuses on synthesising theoretical ideas from the SOAR model, recent empirical research, and strength-based educational approaches to suggest a more comprehensive view of student disengagement. By clearly defining these objectives and constraints, the study gives readers an organized view of how both quiet quitting and the SOAR framework will be examined to provide novel implications for student engagement research and practice.

This phenomenon is not merely an issue of discipline or students' indifferent attitudes, but rather reflects a crisis in student well-being that could disrupt the efforts of the government and even those at the global level. Therefore, this study aims to provide a detailed explanation of quiet quitting behaviour among secondary school students in Malaysia, based on a strategic plan using the SOAR Model (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results).

This theoretical foundation examines the phenomena of silent quitting via a positive organizational development lens, drawing on the SOAR model (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results). Rather than viewing low students' engagement as a deficit or academic performance issue, the SOAR model provides an empirical basis for investigating how individuals' perceived strengths and opportunities mould their goals for significant work and influence the outcomes to which they are willing to make a difference. Through this lens,

quiet resigning can be seen as a misalignment between students' aspirational goals and the academic environment's ability to recognize and use their abilities, hence influencing the level of discretionary effort they expend.

Soar Model Assessment – Strategic Planning Tool

SOAR: A new approach to strategic planning, published in 2003, has a potent technique for strategic planning. It stands for strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results, assisting firms in making the most of their advantages, investigating fresh prospects, establishing challenging objectives and producing measurable outcomes. The philosophy behind the SOAR framework is an appreciative inquiry, used to formulate plans that are aligned with the planned insights (Aziz et al., 2019).

SOAR model is also applied worldwide. For instance, Sugiarti et al. (2023) study shows that the results of the SWOT analysis, then re-analysed with SOAR, create new co-creations for digital marketing businesses. Kamran et al. (2025) used a qualitative research method to explore the strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results (SOAR) factors that could optimise the teaching and learning process for children with special educational needs in the context of an inclusive school located in Karachi, Pakistan. Putri & Pertiwi (2025) recently analyzed and described the public information disclosure strategy through the Information and Documentation Management Officer (PPID) of East Java Province using SOAR analysis. The SOAR Analysis Model can be illustrated as in Figure 1.0 as below:



Figure 1.0: SOAR Model Assessment Framework

In the SOAR matrix, strengths are the foundational elements that set a research apart. These are internal attributes that contribute to its competitive research advantage. Identifying and leveraging strengths are crucial for a successful SOAR action plan in research. These are the internal attributes, capabilities or resources that give an organization a competitive advantage or contribute to its success. Identifying strengths helps organizations understand what they do well and what sets them apart from others in the digital era (Omran et al., 2023).

Opportunities, in the SOAR Matrix, is used to recognize and capitalize on opportunities that are key to staying agile in research and responsive to the education market dynamics. Aspirations encompass the visionary goals and ambitions that guide a research towards future success. In the SOAR matrix, this part is about picturing what the educational organization (schools, HEI, etc) wants to achieve and deciding where it wants to go for growth. Results in SOAR analysis focus on the positives and measurable outcomes in the research topic. This involves evaluating the effectiveness of strategic initiatives and ensuring that the organization (schools, HEI, etc) achieves its objectives.

SOAR has been contrasted to the classic SWOT diagnostic analysis that diverts organizational resources away from strengths and opportunities by focusing on weaknesses and threats. Rather, SOAR is dialogue-based (Cole et al., 2022). It has been demonstrated that SOAR is a flexible and successful strategic framework that fosters innovation, energy and organizational engagement. Strength, Opportunity, Aspiration and Result are the acronyms for SOAR. It is a dynamic, contemporary and creative method for developing strategic thinking, assessing individual and group performance, developing strategies and formulating plans in SOAR's strategic thinking and strategic planning.

SOAR is a framework that emphasizes the development and application of positive strategies through the identification of strengths, chances for constructive creativity, encouraging individuals and groups to share goals, and determining quantifiable and significant outcomes. Thus, strategic planning is accelerated by this approach. The Strength, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) analytical approach has gained popularity as a planning and analysis tool for strategic initiatives over the past ten years. By applying this technique to identify environmental correlations, a firm can engage with its surroundings and establish business strategy. For more than 20 years, SOAR has established a reputation as a framework that provides a flexible way to think strategically and develop strategies (Muhammad & Hromada, 2023).

Organizations have found success using the SOAR Model to improve student performance, motivation and engagement while facilitating change and development. The SOAR framework's goal is to accomplish the product target management aspiration by using the strategic planning approach based on the development of opportunities and strengths. In order to create plans that are in line with the planned insights, the SOAR framework is based on an appreciative inquiry. The analysis integrates the group's thoughts and promotes cooperation inside the company.

The SOAR framework also provides a flexible approach to strategic thinking, planning and leadership that invites the entire system into a strategic planning or strategy process by incorporating all who have an interest in the future success of the organization. These stakeholders can be internal workers such as employees or external participants such as suppliers, consumers, and societies. SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) analysis is an appreciative inquiry tool that is uniquely tailored to enable strategic planning around well-defined goals. SOAR analysis differs from the well-known SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis within two dimensions; it focuses on the future prospects and results from a subject of interest while SWOT aims at inherent weaknesses and perceived threats (Prabu et al., 2023).

In the context of today's education, issues of student well-being and engagement are receiving increasing attention, especially when facing the phenomenon of quiet quitting among secondary school students. Through the strength's element, teachers can identify the factors and root causes behind this phenomenon. An important question to consider is how a student who once had great ambitions, determination, and high motivation could eventually lose the drive to succeed. Similarly, how can a student who has never shown any desire to change their life goals throughout their schooling be understood and supported? The thoughts and emotions of these students must be identified, as they can serve as key strengths in curbing the widespread occurrence of this issue. The opportunities element, on the other hand, opens up chances for all parties to play significant roles in planning activities or strategies to help these students.

Apart of that, the aspirations element emphasizes the importance of perseverance, competitiveness, and the desire to achieve beyond the minimum standard, serving as a guiding principle for students in their journey toward better self-development. Finally, the results element plays a role in assessing the extent to which the interventions implemented have an impact on students' well-being. This approach explains that students become more engaged when their basic psychological needs are fulfilled. Therefore, the application of the SOAR Model in addressing the issue of quiet quitting among secondary school students has the potential to create a positive learning environment and support the holistic development of students.

Strength (s): What can we Build On?

The Strengths element in the SOAR Model plays a crucial role in identifying and building upon existing strengths that can be leveraged to rekindle students' enthusiasm. Although some students exhibit signs of emotional exhaustion, a loss of interest in learning, and mere attendance without genuine commitment there are still many inner strengths that can be highlighted to help them become active again. One of the key strengths lies in the awareness and concern of teachers and schools for students' well-being (Pokharel and Adhikari 2020). School counselors can play a central role alongside teachers in understanding the emotional, social, and academic needs of students. The ability of teachers to identify the causes and behavioral patterns of students involved in quiet quitting is an important asset for planning effective intervention strategies (Patel et al., 2024).

The potential and positive values of students also serve as key strengths that can be developed. Although some students show signs of losing motivation, most of them still possess a sense of responsibility and a desire to succeed. Emotional exhaustion influences student behavior, but if students have strong self-worth and the ability to perceive things positively, that alone can be enough to restore their motivation (Zarina et al., 2023). This inner strength is referred to as a strength-based approach.

From the perspective of school organization, one of the main strengths lies in the commitment and supportive culture among educators. Schools not only focus on academic achievement but also play a vital role in nurturing student's holistic development. The uniqueness of the education system, which emphasizes human values, unity, and well-being, provides an advantage in creating a meaningful learning environment (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015). The achievements of students who have successfully adapted after the

pandemic such as improved attendance and participation in confidence-building activities serve as positive examples that can form the basis for strengthening strategies to address quiet quitting (Patel et al., 2024).

Another important strength is the positive relationship between teachers and students. When students feel that their teachers genuinely care and understand them, they are more likely to engage and find personal meaning in learning (Paloş et al., 2025). As students come from diverse family backgrounds, not all of them feel understood or supported at home. When teachers build trusting relationships with their students, they become a safe space for sharing concerns and gaining emotional support, an aspect long emphasized in Malaysia's efforts to create values-driven schools (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015). These meaningful connections enable teachers to design learning strategies that respond to students' real needs. Therefore, the real strength in addressing the quiet quitting phenomenon lies not only in educational systems or policies but also in the combined force of student potential, teacher empathy, and a supportive school culture that reignites motivation and purpose (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023; Patel et al., 2024).

Opportunities (o): What are Stakeholders Asking for?

The opportunities element opens a meaningful space for everyone. Teachers, administrators, parents, and even the local community have to work together in planning activities and strategies that support students who may be quietly disengaging from school (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023; Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE), 2015). Each challenge that students face can be viewed not as a setback, but as a chance to reflect on what we're doing and to find better ways to spark their interest and strengthen their connection to learning (Patel et al., 2024). Since the pandemic, schools have gone through so many changes, from integrating technology to paying more attention to student well-being and offering more flexible ways to learn. Altogether, these changes point us toward a more meaningful and human-centered transformation in education (Qin et al., 2025).

One of the most meaningful opportunities teachers can explore is creating learning experiences that build on student's individual strengths and interests. (Paloş et al., 2025) quoted that when students are interested in the material and want to understand it and find its meaning, they adopt a deep approach to learning, which is associated with higher engagement and better outcomes. Teachers often know their students better than anyone else. Their potential, their quirks, and the things that spark their curiosity (Prabu et al., 2023). By using this insight, lessons can be designed to feel more enjoyable, creative, and personally meaningful. For instance, many students today are naturally drawn to technology; tapping into that interest by introducing digital-based group projects can make learning more exciting and relatable. When students are given the freedom to choose activities and express their ideas, they begin to see learning not as a task, but as something that reflects who they are. This kind of opportunity has the power to reignite motivation that may have dimmed under academic pressure or the lingering effects of the pandemic (Qin et al., 2025).

Besides that, schools have a good chance to make their emotional and psychosocial support systems stronger so students can feel safe and supported (Pokharel & Adhikari, 2020). This can be done by working together with NGOs, counselors, or nearby universities to organize motivational talks, well-being workshops, and mental health programs (Pham Thi & Duong,

2024; Yasmin, 2022) Still, schools need to be careful and respect students' privacy because once trust is broken, students may pull away even more (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023). These kinds of efforts not only help students do better in school but also care for their emotions and social life. (Kim, 2024) reminds that emotional well-being is the main key to keeping students engaged and motivated to learn.

In addition, schools now have a strong opportunity to improve their emotional and psychosocial support systems. This can be done by working closely with outside partners such as NGOs, universities, or certified counselors to create programs that focus on motivation, well-being, and mental health care (Zarina et al., 2023). Still, every effort should respect privacy and confidentiality because once trust is lost, students may become more distant and disengaged (Pham Thi & Duong, 2024). These kinds of programs not only help students perform better in class but also build their confidence and emotional strength. Emotional well-being plays an important role in helping students stay connected and enjoy learning in a meaningful way

There is also a lot of potential in getting parents and the local community more involved in education (Zarina et al., 2023). As the saying goes, *"it takes a village to raise a child,"* still makes sense today. Students do not just learn from books or teachers, they learn from the people around them. When schools start working more closely with families, community groups, or even nearby organizations, it helps students feel like learning actually matters in real life (Kim, 2024; Yasmin, 2022). It also helps them come to school more regularly because they see that everyone around them cares about their growth. This kind of teamwork reflects what the SDG4 (Committee, 2025) has been talking about the education that is inclusive, fair, and gives every student a real chance to succeed.

Aspirations (A): What do we care deeply?

The aspirations element in the SOAR Model highlights the importance of passion, determination, and the drive to achieve more than just the basics. In the context of quiet quitting among secondary school students, this element plays a vital role in helping them find purpose, direction, and inner motivation to learn (Qin et al., 2025). However, during adolescence, determination alone is not enough. It must be supported by guidance, encouragement, and emotional understanding from teachers and peers. Aspirations are not simply dreams for the future, they reflect how students see themselves and the meaning they attach to their efforts. When students have clear and meaningful aspirations, they are more likely to stay persistent and show emotional resilience even when facing academic or personal challenges (Patel et al., 2024).

Developing student aspirations requires a learning environment that combines support, empowerment, and opportunities for self-discovery. Teachers can play a big part by helping students set realistic yet inspiring goals that match their strengths and interests. At the same time, peers can also be a strong source of encouragement, especially through programs like Peer Mentor (PRS), where students help each other grow and stay motivated. The efforts can create a positive and caring school culture where every student feels valued. Education should not only focus on academic success but also on building students' confidence, curiosity, and sense of responsibility (Kim, 2024).

Apart from that, aspirations should also be nurtured through learning experiences that allow students to explore their interests, make choices, and measure success through personal growth instead of exam marks alone. Learning methods such as project-based learning and reflection help students connect classroom lessons with their personal goals. When students feel that their autonomy and competence are recognized, their motivation becomes stronger, and they take greater ownership of their learning (Qin et al., 2025). Teachers do play a key role here by giving constructive feedback, celebrating effort, and allowing students to make meaningful decisions about their learning. This kind of classroom environment fosters confidence, creativity, and a healthy mindset that helps students see learning as a journey of growth.

In the bigger picture, aspirations serve as a driving force for holistic development. They help students build a personal vision that gives learning deeper meaning and long-term direction. When aspirations are encouraged, students start to see education not just as something they have to do, but as something that matters to who they want to be. This mindset is essential in addressing the issue of quiet quitting, a problem that often arises when students lose interest or purpose in learning. By helping students connect their studies to real goals and personal meaning, schools can reduce disengagement and foster long-lasting motivation (Tok & Uzun, 2025).

In short, fostering aspirations is about helping students believe in themselves again. When students know why they are learning and feel supported by teachers, friends, and families, they become more determined to keep going, even when challenges appear. Aspirations build not just academic growth, but also hope, direction, and emotional strength, the qualities that keep students motivated for life.

Results: How do we know we are succeeding?

The results element in the SOAR Model focuses on how strategies demonstrate their effectiveness and success in achieving established goals. In addressing the quiet quitting phenomenon among secondary school students, this component helps schools, teachers, and policymakers evaluate whether interventions have genuinely improved students' engagement, motivation, and emotional well-being. Evaluation should not only focus on exam scores or academic performance but also on how far students show interest, enthusiasm, and ownership in their learning process (Qin et al., 2025). When schools track both academic and emotional outcomes, they gain a clearer picture of how learning experiences shape student growth.

To assess whether progress is taking place, several meaningful indicators can serve as benchmarks. These include improvements in attendance rates, fewer signs of passive participation during lessons, greater involvement in co-curricular activities, and higher self-reported well-being scores based on surveys or classroom reflections (Kim, 2024). Positive changes in behavior such as students showing curiosity, taking initiative, or collaborating more confidently are also strong indicators of progress. These outcomes suggest that students are not only physically present in class but also mentally and emotionally engaged in their learning.

The results element also encourages schools to identify a few key indicators that represent balanced student development in academic, emotional, and social. For example, stronger relationships between students and teachers, higher satisfaction with the learning environment, and improved self-confidence can all reflect the success of ongoing initiatives. Evaluations should be continuous so that schools can monitor trends, celebrate small victories, and adjust strategies when necessary. Effective interventions require more than one-off programs. Students need ongoing support structures, such as teacher training on student well-being, peer mentoring programs, and access to counseling services. When schools invest in these resources, they help students develop a stronger sense of belonging and resilience (Patel et al., 2024).

Research also highlights that students are more likely to stay motivated and engaged when their basic needs for autonomy, competence, and connection are fulfilled (Tok & Uzun, 2025). This means that schools should focus not only on cognitive development but also on building a supportive and inclusive emotional climate. When students feel safe to express themselves, make choices, and contribute meaningfully to school life, their learning motivation naturally grows.

Finally, the results element emphasizes the importance of recognizing student growth and effort, not just their final outcomes. Recognition does not always have to be in the form of rewards; genuine praise, leadership opportunities, or public acknowledgment can also make a big difference. When students feel appreciated for their effort and progress, their intrinsic motivation increases, helping them stay focused and excited about learning (Qin et al., 2025; Tok & Uzun, 2025).

The results component acts as a reflection of how well the strategies under Strengths, Opportunities, and Aspirations have worked together. When students begin to show improved attendance, stronger enthusiasm, and greater emotional balance, it signifies that the collective efforts to address quiet quitting are leading to meaningful and lasting outcomes not only for the students but for the school community as a whole.

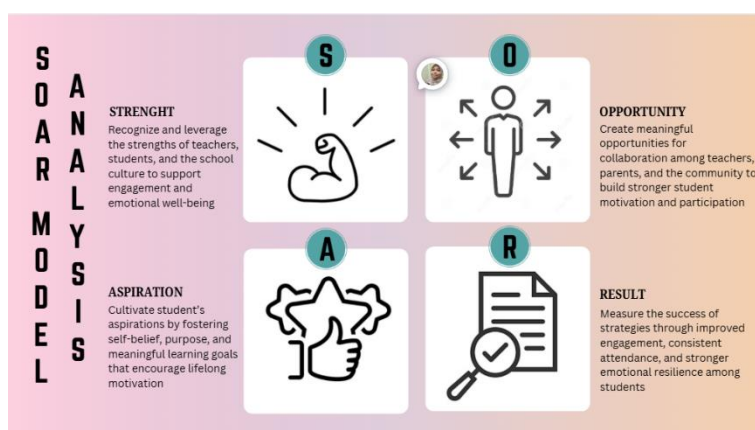


Figure 2.0: SOAR Model Framework on Quiet Quitting among Student.

Figure 2 illustrates the SOAR Model framework, which emphasizes the four key elements, Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results as a positive approach to understanding and addressing quiet quitting among secondary school students. This model highlights how

schools can leverage the strengths of teachers and students, create meaningful opportunities for collaboration, cultivate student's aspirations, and measure the results through improved engagement and well-being. The SOAR framework offers a constructive perspective by focusing on what works well rather than what is lacking, thus shifting the discussion from problem-based to potential-driven solutions.

Summary

In summary, these results indicate that the SOAR Model provides a meaningful and structured framework for understanding and addressing the issue of quiet quitting among secondary school students. By focusing on Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results, the model helps schools recognize what works well, promote collaboration, strengthen student motivation, and measure progress in ways that go beyond exam performance. Due to practical constraints, this paper cannot offer a full review of all SOAR applications; it only explored how the framework can be applied within school settings to identify early signs of disengagement and to develop supportive strategies that re-engage students in learning. The findings have important implications for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers, as they highlight the need to view quiet quitting not as a sign of student weakness, but as an opportunity to improve the learning environment. In addition, this study can serve as a guide in designing programs that empower students to take greater ownership of their learning and encourage teachers to adopt a more empathetic, strengths-based approach. By understanding how students' strengths, aspirations, and emotional well-being interact, schools are better equipped to identify the root causes of disengagement and take early action before motivation declines further. Moving forward, it is recommended that future researchers conduct systematic assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of existing engagement strategies and the overall learning climate. Such assessments can provide valuable evidence for refining current approaches, deepening understanding of student behavior, and ensuring that future interventions are data-driven and responsive to learner real needs.

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