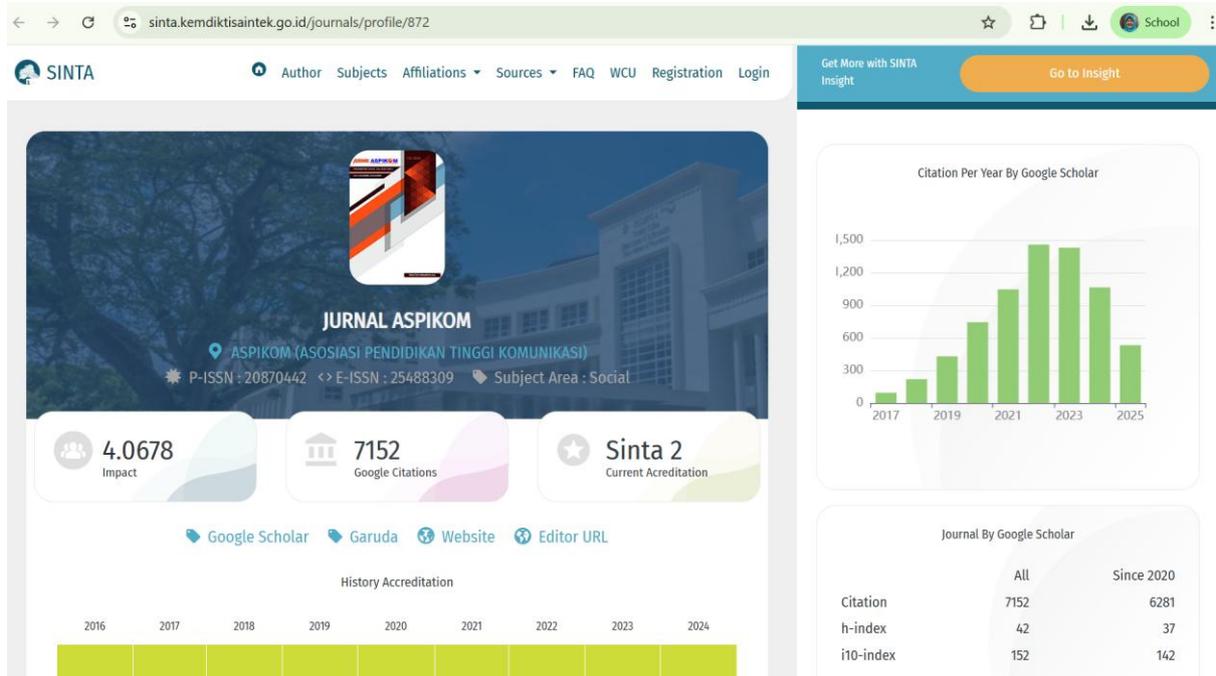


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 P-ISSN : 2087-0442
 E-ISSN : 2548-8309

TERAKREDITASI SK NO. 36a/E/KPT/2016 <http://jurnalaspikom.org>

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Jurnal ASPIKOM is an academic journal concerned with the study of communication theory and practice. **Jurnal ASPIKOM** is dedicated to the publication of original scholarship in the general contexts of New Media and Communication Technologies, Public Relations, Media and Journalism.

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JURNAL ASPIKOM
ASOSIASI PENDIDIKAN TINGGI ILMU KOMUNIKASI

P-ISSN : 2087-0442
E-ISSN : 2548-8309

TERAKREDITASI SK NO. 34a/E/KPT/2016 <http://jurnalaspikom.org>

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Quarter life crisis in the communication process on early adulthood

Novi Andayani Praptiningsih, Silvie Mil, Herri Mulyono, Joseph Agbuya Villarama, Ninez B Tulo, Nerissa S Olarte

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of Quarter Life Crisis (QLC) in emerging adults. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with several informants and analysis of relevant literature. The findings indicate that Quarter Life Crisis is a condition commonly experienced by individuals during the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood. Common symptoms include anxiety about the future, confusion in making major life decisions (such as choosing between continuing education or getting married), social pressure, and frustration due to social comparison with peers. The main contributing factors to QLC include intolerance to uncertainty, suboptimal personal growth, and low family functioning. Using a holistic-systemic model, the QLC experiences of each informant in this study are understood as a process of communication with the surrounding environment and self-transformation, through four phases: locked-in, separation, exploration, and rebuilding.

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Quarter life crisis in the communication process on early adulthood

Novi Andayani Praptiningsih¹, Silvie Mil², Herri Mulyono³, Joseph Agbuya Villarama⁴,
Ninez B.Tulo⁵, Nerissa S. Olarte⁶

¹Department of Communication Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA), Jakarta, Indonesia

²Department of Early Childhood Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA), Jakarta, Indonesia

³Departement of English Language Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA), Jakarta, Indonesia

⁴College of Education, Central Luzon State University, Philippines

⁵ College of Education, Tarlac State University, Philippines

⁶Department of Communication, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Tarlac State University, Philippines

Corresponding author,  novi.ap@uhamka.ac.id

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Article History:

Received 2025-07-31.

Revised 2025-08-09.

Accepted 2025-09-20.

Published 2025-09-22.

Keywords:

Quarter Life Crisis,
Communication Process,
Early Adulthood.

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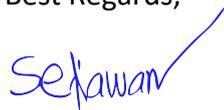
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Quarter life crisis in the communication process on early adulthood

Novi Andayani Praptiningsih¹, Silvie Mil², Herri Mulyono³, Joseph Agbuya Villarama⁴, Ninez B.Tulo⁵, Nerissa S. Olarte⁶

¹Department of Communication Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA), Jakarta, Indonesia

²Department of Early Childhood Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA), Jakarta, Indonesia

³Department of English Language Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA), Jakarta, Indonesia

⁴College of Education, Central Luzon State University, Philippines

⁵ College of Education, Tarlac State University, Philippines

⁶Department of Communication, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Tarlac State University, Philippines

Corresponding author, ✉ novi.ap@uhamka.ac.id

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Introduction

Quarter-life crisis is a period of anxiety and uncertainty experienced by an individual during early adulthood (Lestari et al., 2022), which is a response to overwhelming instability, constant changes, too many choices, and feelings of panic and helplessness. Common symptoms experienced during the quarter-life crisis period include: feelings of confusion, lack of motivation about the future, anxiety, and an excessive fear of failure (Pamungkas & Hendrastomo 2024), low self-esteem and self-doubt, feelings of hopelessness, and emotional distress (Siswanti., et al. 2023; Pamungkas & Hendrastomo 2024). In addition, doubts may arise regarding life purpose and self-identity (Hestari, 2020).

The transition from adolescence to early adulthood does not always proceed smoothly. At times, it leads to unfavorable conditions often referred to as a *quarter-life crisis*. This

phenomenon refers to a period of emotional turmoil and affective shift experienced by individuals aged approximately 18–29 years, marked by anxiety and uncertainty about the future, career, professional identity, and romantic relationships (Arnett, 2023). This emotional crisis commonly experienced by “twentysomethings”, a term referring to individuals in early adulthood, includes feelings of loneliness, incompetence, alienation, self-doubt, and fear of failure (Atwood & Scholtz, 2008). Such emotional distress is often triggered by inadequate communication processes with peers, nuclear family members, and the social environment in which millennials interact.

Research conducted in the United Kingdom found that 70% of individuals over the age of 30 had experienced a quarter-life crisis during their early twenties. The most frequently reported issues during this crisis involved heartbreak, conflicts with family, discomfort with inconsistent work rhythms, and experiences of job termination or contract cancellations (Robinson & Wright, 2013). Moreover, 40% of individuals aged 18–29 were reported to have experienced mental health disturbances, primarily mood disorders, substance abuse, and emotional instability (Arnett et al., 2014). Peer support and effective interpersonal communication significantly influence the onset and experience of a quarter-life crisis (Asrar & Taufani, 2022).

Financial worries and economic insecurity have contributed to a decline in overall economic well-being (Sujudi & Ginting, 2020), along with a noticeable reduction in job opportunities across various sectors. However, advances in communication technology can serve as a vehicle for transmitting positive values and promoting mental health awareness in the context of quarter-life crises (Sagala, 2022). For instance, podcasts can be utilized to foster positivity among millennials, and digital marketing can empower young adults to develop online businesses and engage in e-commerce ventures.

Problem-Solving Approach

The problem-solving strategy employed in this study adopts a holistic model application to systematically explore the manifestations and experiential framework of crisis during early adulthood, utilizing a holistic-systemic theoretical framework. The holistic model consists of four distinct phases: (1) **Locked-in**, (2) **Separation/Time-out**, (3) **Exploration**, and (4) **Rebuilding**. These four episodes are interconnected with dimensions of identity, motivation, environment, and affective-cognitive functioning.

State of the Art and Novelty

Early adulthood is characterized by the emergence of individual responsibilities in the domains of work, financial stability, and professional livelihood. A person’s productivity during this stage is significantly influenced by their level of **subjective well-being**. This study surveyed university students aged 20–23 years to assess the presence and impact of quarter-life crisis. The instruments employed included the Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience. Findings indicate a significant relationship between quarter-life crisis and quality of life, highlighting a direct association with subjective well-being (Suyono et al., 2021). Subjective well-being refers to an individual’s ability to evaluate and perceive their life based on personal understanding and attitudes (Diener et al., 2015). Subjective well-being is categorized into three elements: pleasure and satisfaction as reflections of the cognitive dimension, and happiness and neuroticism as representations of the affective aspect (Compton & Hoffman, 2019). Conflicts experienced during a quarter-life crisis are highly diverse, often emerging during the transitional period from high school to university (Santrock, 2012). At this stage, individuals typically lack diverse life experiences, which can lead to heightened emotional sensitivity and vulnerability to identity crises (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). As individuals age, their dilemmas

become increasingly complex and disorganized if they lack adequate self-regulation. This often results in heightened emotional reactivity and temperamental instability in response to situational pressures.

A study conducted among university students in Malang revealed that while students generally possess a high degree of self-efficacy, they nonetheless face substantial obstacles in completing their final academic projects. In a sample of 57 respondents, eight students demonstrated moderate levels of self-efficacy (scores between 39–51), while the majority, 49 students, exhibited high self-efficacy with scores above 51. With regard to quarter-life crisis levels, only three respondents reported experiencing a low degree of crisis, whereas 54 students were categorized as having a moderate level of quarter-life crisis. Notably, none of the participants experienced a high level of quarter-life crisis. These findings suggest that students' strong self-efficacy may serve as a protective factor, mitigating the developmental challenges commonly associated with quarter-life crises.

Similar issues have been observed in a study conducted in Surabaya, which examined the relationship between procrastination and quarter-life crisis among 387 male and female university students (Julianda, 2012). The results of a separate study also confirmed a negative correlation between self-efficacy and quarter-life crisis, indicating that as self-efficacy (Variable X) increases, the experience of quarter-life crisis (Variable Y) tends to decrease (Muttaqien & Hidayati, 2020).

Low emotional intelligence has been found to lead to maladaptive emotional responses, including symptoms of depression. A study exploring the role of emotional intelligence in relation to quarter-life crisis among 125 final-year university students found that emotional intelligence significantly influences the likelihood of experiencing a quarter-life crisis. Specifically, aspects such as social skills, empathy, and self-motivation contributed 55.6% to the variance in quarter-life crisis outcomes. However, other components of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness and self-regulation, were not found to have a significant effect. The social skill dimension of emotional intelligence was particularly influential in helping individuals establish strong interpersonal relationships, including romantic connections, friendships, and familial bonds (Fatchurrahmi & Urbayatun, 2022).

A survey involving 92 respondents examined the relationship between hope and quarter-life crisis among university students entangled in unhealthy (toxic) relationships. The findings indicated a negative correlation, namely, the higher the level of hope, the lower the intensity of the quarter-life crisis experienced (Setiawan & Milati, 2022). Quarter-life crisis often arises from a failure of the ego to fulfill developmental responsibilities during early adulthood, leaving individuals trapped in distressing life circumstances (Afandi & Afandi, 2021).

The holistic model applied in this line of research adopts a systematic and time-sensitive exploration of quarter-life crisis manifestations and the lived experiences of individuals during this transitional period, grounded in a holistic-systemic theoretical framework (Robinson et al., 2013). Group physical activities conducted in shared environments can foster a strong sense of camaraderie, enhancing individual self-confidence and establishing a deep sense of belonging within the group. These collective experiences help individuals build meaningful friendships, which in turn reinforce group identity and emotional resilience (Cirklová, 2020).

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on quarter-life crisis among emerging adults within the socio-cultural context of Indonesia. Individuals at this life stage often question their values, beliefs, and life direction, leading to a sense of disorientation and uncertainty about their personal choices. This internal conflict may result in self-dissatisfaction and

emotional distress, manifesting as anxiety and confusion. Feelings of envy toward the accomplishments of peers, especially when personal achievements seem inadequate, are frequently reported. Such envy is often intensified by direct or indirect comparisons facilitated through social media platforms, where curated portrayals of success and ideal lifestyles dominate.

Consequently, individuals may experience disappointment and diminished self-confidence regarding their own progress, leading to heightened dissatisfaction and, in some cases, stress. This condition exacerbates insecurity and deepens the sense of confusion about the future, which are core features of the quarter-life crisis.

Feelings of loneliness, isolation, and withdrawal from social interaction can stem from negative thoughts about oneself. This feeling arises because thoughts and emotions related to confusion or anxiety about the future make it difficult for them to enjoy or appreciate what they currently have. So, even though their life is objectively quite good, they still feel restless and unhappy. Behavioral responses such as delaying decisions, quitting a job, or avoiding change as attempts to escape a crisis (Pamungkas & Hendrastomo, 2024).

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of Quarter-Life Crisis among individuals in early adulthood. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore subjective experiences, personal meanings, and the psychosocial dynamics underlying the crisis from the informants' perspectives.

Research Design

The design used is a phenomenological study, which focuses on the lived experiences of individuals going through QLC. This approach aims to explore the essence of participants' experiences in navigating life transitions during early adulthood.

Subjects and Informant Selection Techniques

The informants in this study consist of four individuals aged 20–35, selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: 1) experiencing doubt or emotional distress related to career, education, relationships, or personal identity, 2) willing to openly share their experiences, and 3) representing diverse genders (male and female). The researcher also considered socioeconomic backgrounds and educational status to obtain a more comprehensive perspective. The identities of informants in this study are disguised with the alphabets A to D to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of informants. This research has passed the research validity test from the Institute for Research, Community Service, and Publication (LPPMP) Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through: 1) in-depth semi-structured interviews using flexible open-ended questions, 2) non-participant observation, particularly of nonverbal expressions during the interviews, and 3) literature review. Interviews were conducted either online or in person, depending on the informants' circumstances, with each session lasting 45–60 minutes.

Tabel 1. Brief Profile and Experience Quotes of Research Informants

Infor man	Gender	Age	Experience Quotes	QLC issues that arise
A	Woman	23 years	“After graduating with my bachelor’s degree, I was torn between pursuing a master’s degree or getting married first. I felt like I had to make a decision quickly...”	Confusion about major post-college decision-making (life direction ambiguity)
B	Woman	24 years	“My work environment is so... I’m thinking, should I just change jobs?”	Work environment pressure, career uncertainty (job dissatisfaction)
C	Man	27 years	“My friends already have partners, while I don’t... I feel left behind...”	Social comparison, social norm pressure (social pressure)
D	Woman	25 years	“I graduated from a top university, but I still can’t find a job. I feel like a failure”	Hope vs reality after education, identity crisis (disappointment with self-expectations)

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Data validity was tested through source triangulation (comparing data from interviews and literature), member checking, and discussions between researchers to avoid interpretive bias.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of Quarter-Life Crisis in early adulthood, specifically among individuals aged 20–35 years, with a focus on contributing factors, the most vulnerable age range, and differences in experiences based on gender. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach through interviews with several informants and an analysis of relevant literature.

The findings indicate that Quarter-Life Crisis is a common psychological condition experienced during the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood. Common symptoms include anxiety about the future, confusion when making major life decisions (such as choosing between further education or marriage), social pressure, and frustration resulting from social comparisons with peers. In terms of age range, individuals aged 20–24 were found to be the most vulnerable to QLC, followed by those aged 25–29. This correlates with life phases marked by transitions from education to the workforce, along with increasing demands for emotional and financial independence.

The study also found that women are more prone to experiencing QLC than men. Contributing factors include social pressure to marry early, cultural expectations of women’s dual roles, and a heavier emotional burden in navigating life dynamics. Some typical situations revealed by the informants include:

- Confusion in determining priorities between getting married or pursuing higher education.

- Dissatisfaction with an unproductive work environment and considering a job change.
- Feelings of being emotionally left behind for not having a partner, while peers are already married.
- Disappointment from not securing a job despite having a strong educational background.

Based on the interview results, the informants who experienced a quarter-life crisis shared how they managed to overcome it. Each story is presented as a reflection that illustrates the emotional struggles, identity confusion, and search for meaning that are commonly experienced during early adulthood.

Case 1: Pursue Graduate Studies or Get Married First?

"After finishing my bachelor's degree, I was torn between pursuing a master's degree or getting married. It felt like I had to make a quick decision, even though I wasn't ready for either." (Informant A, female, 23 years old)

A is a bright young woman. During junior high school, she was placed in an accelerated class, completing the program in only two years instead of the usual three. She graduated with her bachelor's degree at a relatively young age. Now, she faces a dilemma: whether to pursue her master's degree—having received a scholarship she doesn't want to waste—or to get married, as her boyfriend, who is two years older and already employed, has proposed to her.

Efforts made by A as key learning points:

- A decided to pursue her master's degree, which had been her dream since childhood to attain a high level of education.
- Her boyfriend also decided to pursue further education, with the hope that they would graduate around the same time.
- They planned to get married after both completed their master's degrees.

Case 2: Facing Burnout in a Toxic Work Environment

"My work environment is extremely toxic. Communication within the team doesn't function. It makes me wonder—should I just quit my job?" (Informant B, female, 24 years old)

B is a creative professional—resilient, ambitious, and highly accomplished. She experienced severe burnout and lost her motivation for life. To many people, B appeared "successful": she had major clients, a large social media following, and an impressive portfolio. However, behind the scenes, she was suffering from overwhelming mental exhaustion. At one point, she even considered completely giving up her job. She felt unsupported by her team, including her supervisor. B began to feel that her current work environment was no longer comfortable or conducive. She was torn between staying in the toxic environment or resigning.

Efforts made by B as key learning points:

- B eventually took a three-month leave and began therapy.
- She restructured her work boundaries and started focusing on life balance.
- She realized that success is not only about external achievements but also about internal well-being.

Case 3: Between Expectations and the Reality of a Relationship

"My friends already have partners, while I don't. Sometimes I feel left behind and start thinking there's something wrong with me." (Informant C, male, 27 years old)

C works at a startup and had been in a six-year relationship with a partner his age. He wanted to get married but felt unprepared both financially and emotionally. C felt pressure from his surroundings to get married. His partner was ready, but C was still seeking stability in his career. Conflicts began to emerge, and eventually, the relationship ended.

Efforts made by C as key learning points:

- C began individual counseling and started to identify the life values he prioritized.
- He realized that being honest with himself was crucial in making major decisions.
- From the failed relationship, C learned the importance of communication and setting personal boundaries.

Case 4: Between a Bachelor's Degree and the Real World

"I graduated from a top university, but still haven't found a job. It feels like I've failed."
(Informant D, female, 25 years old)

D is a Chemical Engineering graduate from a prestigious public university. She felt like a failure for not being able to find a job that matched her interests and for feeling left behind compared to her peers. She graduated cum laude and carried high expectations from her family. However, after a year of job applications, she had not yet secured a suitable position. She began to question her past choices—whether she truly wanted that major, or if it was merely to fulfill her parents' expectations.

Efforts made by D as key learning points:

- D finally decided to take an interior design course, a long-held hobby she had previously set aside.
- She took on part-time work and gradually built a design portfolio.
- The quarter-life crisis encouraged D to reconnect with herself and boldly revise her life plans.

Applying a Holistic Model in Addressing QLC Issues

This study adopts a holistic-systemic framework to explore crisis experiences during early adulthood. The model views crisis as a process involving dynamic interactions among identity, motivation, environmental, and affective-cognitive factors, which unfold across four developmental phases: **Locked-in**, **Separation/Time-out**, **Exploration**, and **Rebuilding**. The following is a mapping of each case within this framework:

Phase 1: Locked-in

This phase is characterized by a feeling of being trapped in structures or expectations that no longer align with one's personal values, yet the individual is not ready to step out of them.

- **Informant A** felt stuck between family expectations (to pursue further education) and her partner's expectations (to get married).
- **Informant B** appeared "socially successful" but felt empty and burdened by an unhealthy work environment.
- **Informant D** felt trapped in the shadow of academic success that had not yet translated into professional achievement.

From Phase 1, the related aspects include **identity conflict** and **personal values versus external expectations**, as well as **high affective tension** (such as anxiety, frustration, and feelings of failure).

Phase 2: Separation / Time-out

In this phase, individuals begin to distance themselves from limiting structures or roles, often marked by withdrawal, pause, or intense self-reflection.

- **Informant B** took a three-month leave and underwent therapy—a clear form of “time-out” for mental recovery.
- **Informant C** experienced the end of a relationship, which became a pause point from social pressure to get married.
- **Informant D** stopped pursuing jobs related to her academic background and began questioning her past motivations.

In Phase 2, the relevant aspects include a **drive for self-reflection** and **reassessment of life’s meaning**. Additionally, the **conflict between reality and idealism** begins to be consciously processed.

Phase 3: Exploration

This is a period of searching and experimentation: individuals begin to try new paths, exploring values, interests, and life goals that feel more authentic.

- **Informant A** and her partner pursued further education together, chasing childhood dreams with a clear plan.
- **Informant D** ventured into a new field—interior design—which reflected her personal interests.
- **Informant C** attended counseling to rediscover values important to his relationships and life.

In Phase 3, the key aspects involve the emergence of **intrinsic motivation**, and a process of **identity and life choice exploration** carried out with greater awareness and maturity.

Phase 4: Rebuilding

This stage involves reconstructing identity and life direction based on new insights. Individuals begin to consciously rebuild their lives, guided by prior reflection and exploration.

- **Informant A** developed a long-term life plan with her partner, balancing education and marriage.
- **Informant B** redefined work boundaries and strengthened balance between career and mental health.
- **Informant D** began building a design portfolio as the foundation for a new career more aligned with her true self.

In Phase 4, the relevant aspects are the formation of a **new, more stable and integrated identity**, along with the emergence of a **more resilient mindset**, aware of personal boundaries and priorities.

The findings of this study align with the literature stating that QLC is triggered by internal and external pressures. Internal factors originate from within the individual and are related to psychological conditions and personal experiences. These feelings are emotional and psychological responses that arise when facing significant transitional periods. In addition, **intolerance of uncertainty** and **underdeveloped personal growth** also contribute to the onset of a quarter-life crisis *crisis* (Melati, 2024). A quarter-life crisis can occur when someone finds it difficult to accept or feels uncomfortable with a life filled with uncertainty and constant change. The inability to cope with ambiguity and unpredictability

leads to anxiety and confusion about the future. Individuals who frequently experience **overthinking**, excessive thoughts about the future that trigger stress and confusion, are also more prone to experiencing a quarter-life crisis (Auliya et al., 2023; Pamungkas & Hendrastomo, 2024).

External factors stem from the individual's surrounding environment, such as **social pressure**, **family expectations**, and **cultural norms**. Pressure from the environment—such as sensitive questions about life milestones (“When will you graduate?”, “When will you get married?”, and so on)—as well as societal expectations, can trigger stress and anxiety. **Social media** also plays a role as an external factor that exacerbates the quarter-life crisis, as individuals tend to compare themselves to others' achievements (Alkatiri & Aprianty 2024; Mcleod, 2018).

Intolerance of uncertainty makes individuals feel unable to control the direction of their lives. When family support is lacking, this crisis worsens. On the other hand, healthy personal growth, such as the ability to adapt and manage emotions, has been shown to be a protective factor. This study also found differences in the experiences of QLC between women and men. Women tend to experience greater social pressure related to relationships and social expectations, while men are more focused on career achievement.

Open communication, emotional support from the mother or a maternal figure, and involvement in positive activities are key factors in fostering adolescent resilience. Furthermore, adolescents demonstrate the ability to manage emotions and develop positive meaning from the situations they experience. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening the role of family and social environments in supporting adolescents facing the absence of a father figure (Afriliani et al., 2025).

Negative experiences and inner conflicts can lead to social anxiety (Ayeras et al., 2024). For example, obstacles such as the lack of lactation facilities at the workplace, heavy workloads, and limited support for breastfeeding career women (Villarama et al., 2024). A lack of preparation, support, or assistance in facing challenges in new roles may cause individuals to struggle to adapt during early adulthood (Paputungan, 2023) firstly because it enters the longest age in the stages of human life, secondly, undergoing heavy and complex developmental tasks with various dynamics of physical and psychological problems as a result of previous developments, third, mature age in solving challenges life, fourth, How does the concept of Islam view adulthood. The purpose of this article is to add Knowledge of how each individual is able to deal with and enter adulthood, both early, middle and late adulthood. Able to prepare physically and psychologically healthy which will have a positive impact on oneself and the environment. The research method of this article is qualitative, using in-depth interviews, observation and documentation approaches. Adulthood is the initial and difficult time for an individual in adjusting himself to a new life and new social expectations. At this time, an individual is required to let go of dependence on parents and try to be independent as an adult human being. Adult development becomes an age of extraordinary challenges throughout the life span and varies according to times and cultures (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, 1999. Strategies used by informants to overcome QLC included seeking social support, making short-term plans, and engaging in self-reflection. However, some informants still expressed confusion and required more intensive support.

Through a holistic-systemic perspective, QLC is not only seen as an individual psychological problem, but as a multidimensional phenomenon formed from the interaction between aspects of the intrapersonal, social, cultural, economic, and spiritual communication processes. By developing self-awareness, adolescents can enhance their independence, better manage emotions, and build healthy interpersonal relationships.

Individuals with a high level of self-awareness tend to be more capable of coping with social and emotional pressures and are better prepared to create a positive and meaningful future (Suzanna, et al., 2024; Hafizha, 2023). Journaling is also a beneficial method for self-reflection. Journaling involves regularly writing about experiences, thoughts, and feelings with the aim of better understanding oneself (Susilo & Anggapuspa, 2024; Santoso & Rinaldi, 2022). Writing enables free and authentic expression, which greatly benefits mental health and the development of self-awareness (Ardini et al., 2023).

Barriers such as laziness, fear of repetition, or difficulty in expressing emotions can be overcome by using specific prompts as writing guides. International meta-analyses confirm that journaling interventions can improve quality of life by reducing stress and enhancing emotional flexibility as well as interpersonal relationships (Keng et al., 2020; Bakar & Usmar, 2022) but it is not known whether MBSR may impact cellular aging in healthy populations. Further, little research has evaluated MBSR against an active control condition, which precludes strong conclusions regarding the unique effects of mindfulness on psychological functioning. The present study examined the effects of MBSR versus music therapy-based stress reduction (MTSR). Therefore, journaling is highly recommended as an effective strategy for maintaining mental health and supporting personal growth.

The roles of family, peers, and the broader community are highly significant in lowering the risk of a quarter-life crisis and in helping individuals build psychological well-being and succeed in navigating the transition to adulthood (Rahmah & Masfufah, 2023). In the Indonesian context, research confirms that social support from family and friends plays an essential role in helping individuals cope with stress and enhance psychological well-being (Sari, 2021; Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2020; Hestari, 2020; Rahmah & Masfufah, 2023).

Research in Indonesia shows that students who receive social support from family and friends have lower levels of anxiety and are more resilient in recovering from failure (Andaresta & Indrawati, 2025). In addition, social support plays a crucial role in enhancing mental resilience, emotional well-being, and emotion regulation abilities. Individuals who feel socially supported have been shown to manage stress more effectively, control negative emotions, and maintain psychological balance (Xie et al. 2024). Families need to be equipped with knowledge about the early signs of mental health problems, how to provide appropriate support, and the importance of seeking professional help when needed (Levinson, 2021; Dwistia et al., 2025).

Families that practice healthy communication are more resilient in facing life's pressures, adapt more easily to change, and possess stronger emotional resilience when dealing with crises such as the quarter-life crisis (Tarigan & Ritonga 2024; Wijaya et al., 2023). Regarding family support, sometimes the family itself can trigger unhealthy relationships. Toxic family members may include those closest to the individual, such as immediate family; father, mother, and siblings (Praptiningsih et al., 2024a). The perpetrator engages in bullying in the form of verbal, physical, and even sexual abuse (Praptiningsih & Putra, 2021). Individuals in toxic relationships must learn to love themselves more and protect their mental health (Praptiningsih et al., 2024b).

Research findings show that a quarter-life crisis can trigger Personal Growth Initiative (PGI), which serves as a mediator in reducing psychological distress caused by uncertainty about the future (Balqis et al., 2023; Williams, 2024). Other studies emphasize that self-reflection during a quarter-life crisis helps individuals eliminate negative feelings such as anxiety, despair, and confusion, while creating space for renewed hope and optimism (Alfaruqy & Indrawati 2023; Hairunisa et al., 2025).

Regular self-reflection plays an important role in helping individuals recognize their true values and life priorities. This process enables individuals to become aware of what truly matters in life, allowing them to make decisions that are more aligned with their personal goals and aspirations (Goldberg et al., 2022).

Quarter-life crisis is not merely an obstacle, but an important part of young adult development that can stimulate reflection and personal growth (Robinson et al., 2013). This phase, although filled with pressure, can serve as a crucial turning point in the journey toward maturity and the pursuit of a meaningful life (Atwood & Scholtz, 2008). Crisis experiences can enhance creativity and problem-solving abilities, as individuals are driven to seek solutions to the challenges in their lives (Simons & Baldwin, 2023). This motivation then encourages individuals to make positive changes, such as improving social relationships, pursuing their passions, or contributing more to their surroundings (King & Hicks, 2021).

An individual's success in dealing with QLC is determined by the ability to maintain balance between these dimensions. Within this framework, the communication process functions as a mechanism for adaptation and transformation, both at the intrapersonal communication level through self-reflection and emotional regulation, at the interpersonal communication level through the formation of social support and constructive relationships, and at the social level through the exchange of meaning, values, and information resources. The integration of a holistic-systemic understanding and an effective communication process makes QLC not merely a period of crisis, but a potential turning point towards identity maturity in the communication process, as well as the construction of a more comprehensive meaning of life.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the Quarter-Life Crisis is a complex phenomenon influenced by various internal and external factors. The main contributing factors to QLC include intolerance of uncertainty, underdeveloped personal growth, and low family functioning. Addressing QLC requires an integrated approach, including strengthening adaptive skills, stress management, and the development of a well-structured life plan from an early stage. Support from family and the social environment is also a crucial factor in helping individuals navigate this period of crisis.

By applying a holistic-systemic model, Quarter Life Crisis experience in this study is understood as a process of communication with the surrounding environment and a process of self-transformation. This model helps explain how individuals face conflict between external expectations and inner needs (Locked-in phase), take distance from pressure and engage in reflection (Separation), begin exploring new directions and personal values (Exploration), and eventually reconstruct a life more aligned with their true identity (Rebuilding). The application of this model highlights that QLC is a critical phase in the formation of early adult identity, not only a challenging period, but also a highly significant opportunity for growth. With a deeper understanding of QLC, stakeholders including families and policymakers are expected to design more effective interventions to help young adults navigate this transitional phase in a healthier and more constructive manner through a conducive communication process.

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