# Quarter Life Crisis Job Seeker Early Adulthood

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#### **Abstract**

Looking for work is a task that early adult individuals must fulfil, but there are challenges in finding work, such as a mismatch of abilities and expectations. This can give rise to a feeling of inadequacy and questions about the future, which will make individuals trapped in a crisis in early adulthood, namely the quarter-life crisis. This research aims to empirically test the picture of the quarter-life crisis in young adults who are looking for work. This research is descriptive, using a scale based on aspects of the quarter-life crisis. The sampling technique uses a purposive sampling technique. Respondents in this study were early adults aged 18 - 30 years who were not working and were looking for work, with a total of 174 respondents. Based on the results of data analysis, it is known that early adults who are looking for work are in the high category with an empirical mean of 114.68, which means that young adults who are looking for work feel worried and doubtful about their work-life. In the quarter-life crisis aspect, almost all aspects are in the high category except being trapped in a difficult situation, which is in the medium category.

**Keywords**: quarter life crisis, adulthood, Job seeker.

## Introduction

In early adulthood, Erikson said that each stage of development would face a crisis if the individual does not complete the developmental tasks at each stage and Erikson conveyed his theory referring to intimacy vs isolation, the individual tries to fulfil commitments to other people, but if in this case the individual does not If you are successful, you will feel isolated and will only care about yourself (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2009).

This transition period to early adulthood allows individuals to explore themselves, determine what career choices they want to take, and think about what they want to become and the lifestyle they want to live. Individuals must adapt to the changes they face; becoming an adult means being independent, separating

from parents, having a permanent job, forming commitments and relationships with other people, what kind of life they have to live and wondering whether the decisions they make are right (Arnett, 2004). Hurlock (2015) states that developmental tasks in early adulthood include getting a job, choosing a partner, starting a family, raising children, taking care of the household, and joining and participating in social groups. For young adults, completing developmental tasks and self-discovery is a significant challenge (Halfon, Forest, Lerner, & Faustman, 2017).

In a survey of 31 respondents aged 18 to 25, five subjects valued most, such as career, soul mate, education, competition and health (Nurdifa, 2020). In another research conducted by Murphy (2011) on four people, the results stated that several things trigger stress in the

lives of new adults, namely related to personal relationships, housing, financial problems, selfdevelopment and anxiety about the future or career.

This career anxiety is caused because individuals in early adulthood must enter the world of work to be financially separated from their parents (Robinson, 2015). Entering early adulthood is a time to get work that can improve the quality of life of young adults (Basis, 2014). However, finding work is difficult (Susanto, 2022).

Data from the Central Statistics Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (BPS) shows that until February 2023, 146.62 million people were looking for work. Additionally, the 2023 Salary Survey published by the professional recruiting firm shows that 76% of working professionals are willing to look for work this year. However, there are general challenges in the job search process: 62% need more experience, 55% lack technical skills, and 40% are related to high salaries and social expectations (Hafiz, 2023).

The high number of job seekers and the challenges in finding work strengthen competition between individuals so that individuals can look within themselves to see their abilities. As stated on job search sites, individuals looking for work must meet the requirements, and according to surveys, more than 50% of job seekers are only accepted if they meet the requirements (Ardianda, 2016).

These problems will make young adults looking for work worry about their future and question whether they have the ability. This gives rise to a negative emotional crisis that generally occurs in early adulthood, called a quarter-life crisis. The quarter-life crisis arises from various challenges transitioning from adolescence to early adulthood (Robinson & Wright, 2013).

An online survey conducted by LinkedIn (2017) of 6,014 respondents aged 25 - 33 years throughout the United States, England, India and Australia in 2017 showed that 75% aged 25 - 33 years had experienced a quarter-life crisis with an average age of 27 years. The survey results were dominated by individuals who felt

confused and anxious about their career and job choices. As many as 61% stated that career and work problems were the number 1 cause (LinkedIn et al., 2017). The results of research conducted by Herawati & Hidayat (2020) in Pekanbaru show that quarter-life crisis data in early adulthood is in the medium category with a percentage of 43.22% and in the high category with a percentage of 27.97%. Influencing factors include gender, status and occupation. The research results show that women who are unmarried and do not have a job are more likely to experience a quarter-life crisis.

Challenges at each stage require individuals to adapt to unfamiliar changes and new things. Signs that someone is starting to experience a midlife crisis in early adulthood are life changes that require adaptation, demands from parents and the environment, expectations that do not match reality, behaviour compared to others and fear of failure. When the demands placed on oneself are too great, and there is no capacity in oneself, it will cause a crisis if the lack of good support continues and develops into disorders such as depression. Expectations that do not match reality in work and relationships cause anxiety, confusion, worry, and stress in young adults during a midlife crisis or quarter-life crisis (Pinggolio, 2015).

The quarter-life crisis is characterized by individuals having difficulty setting their life goals, asking questions about the work they will undertake in the future, not having the ability to make definite choices for their life, and comparing their achievements with those of others, thus creating a feeling of uselessness (Robinson et al., 2013). What often happens nowadays is that individuals always get questions from their surroundings about their achievements in adulthood. These questions are questions about current education, work or life partner. Questions from a society that will never end can trigger an individual to doubt what he is doing and always feel inadequate about himself. Apart from that, nowadays, with the development of social media, it is also a trigger for individuals to experience a quarterlife crisis; social media can be a trigger for individuals to compare themselves with other

people, distance themselves from other people to interact and socialize, thereby closing and narrowing existing connections and relationships.

Karpika and Segel (2021)stated that individuals who experience a quarter-life crisis show characteristics such as worry about future conditions, questioning their life, differences of opinion with parents who oppose their life goals, feeling like they have failed due to a lack of strong inner motivation, feeling left behind. Moreover, he compares himself with his friends. Karpika and Segel (2021) also stated that the impact that will be experienced by individuals who experience a quarter-life crisis is that the individual will feel excessive anxiety and confusion about their life. The choices they have to make will cause indecision at every step, which will make the individual stay in place. Individuals will experience confusion about what to do, which will make individuals experience stress.

The quarter-life crisis is often experienced at the age of 20 - 25 years, where this condition means that individuals begin to enter early adulthood and face many problems and environmental demands, such as anxiety, fear and worry about the future (Permatasari, 2021; Sari, 2021; Karpika & Segel, 2021). Other research related to quarter-life crisis often occurs in individuals who will graduate from education and are anxious about the period after graduation; some of these individuals lack the ability or skills related to the world of work in the future (Rossi & Mebert, 2011; Herawati & Hidayat, 2020; Riyanto & Arini, 2021; Karpika & Segel, 2021; Fadhilah et al., 2022)

Another finding was obtained in research conducted by Qonita and Puspitadewi (2022) that individuals are likely to make job changes if they feel worried and uncertain about their jobs.

### Literature review

Robbins and Wilner (2001) stated that the quarter-life crisis is a phenomenon where individuals continuously question the future.

This occurs in the transition phase from the academic world to the "real" world, which occurs in the late teens to mid-30s and occurs more intensely in the 20s. Individuals leave the comfort of the world of education they are living in and must face the real stage of reality, which gives rise to the instability of change, ultimately making individuals feel helpless. According to Robbins and Wilner (2001), there are seven aspects of a quarter-life crisis, namely hesitation in making decisions, despair, giving negative self-assessments, being trapped in a difficult situation, feeling anxious, depressed, and worrying about interpersonal relationships.

Arnett (2006) states that in adulthood, or the transition period from adolescence to early adulthood (emerging adulthood) at 18 - 25 years, individuals begin to explore themselves and determine career and lifestyle choices. This will cause an emotional crisis or what is called a quarter-life crisis. Individuals experience emotional feelings caused by the changes they have to undergo. Determining a career, building a relationship with a partner, and living independently from parental dependence and financial problems will cause individuals to experience feelings of confusion and doubt about themselves in determining their goals and how to live in the future, which are the causes of emotional shocks during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004).

Furthermore, according to Fischer (2008), the quarter-life crisis is a condition in your 20s that gives rise to worry and uncertainty about learning how to live independently, building a career, relationships, finances and becoming an adult that drains you emotionally, mentally and physically. Nash and Muray's (2010) quarterlife crisis is an emotional crisis regarding dreams and hopes, challenges in academic interests, religion and spirituality, as well as work and career, which in some individuals gives rise to feelings of panic, pressure, insecurity and meaninglessness. Nash and Muray (2010) stated that several aspects of individuals experience a quarter-life crisis, namely Hopes and dreams, obstacles in the academic, religious and spiritual fields, career life, family, friends and romance, and self-identity.

Early adult individuals looking for work experience real changes, namely the transition from the world of education to the world of work and have to leave their sense of comfort in the world of education. Meanwhile, according to Fischer (2008), the quarter-life crisis is a condition in the 20s that gives rise to worry and uncertainty about learning how to live independently, building a career, relationships, finances and becoming an emotionally, mentally and physically draining adult.

# Method

The quantitative research method in this research is descriptive research. Nazir (2005) states that descriptive research is a method of researching the status of a human group, an object, or a set of conditions to create a systematic, factual and accurate description of the facts, characteristics and relationships between the investigated phenomena. The data obtained in this research will be analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques by looking at the empirical mean, hypothetical standard deviation and hypothetical mean, which reveal a picture of the quarter-life crisis in early

adulthood. The quarter-life crisis scale described by Robbins and Wilner (2001) is uncertainty in making decisions, despair, negative self-evaluation, being trapped in a difficult situation, anxiety, depression, and worry about interpersonal relationships. The sample in this study were early adults aged 18 – 30 looking for work.

### **Results and Discussion**

The total number of respondents obtained was 174 respondents in this study. The distribution of research subject data is explained in Table 1

Table 1. Responden characteristics

Gender	Number	Of	Percentage	of
	Respondents		Respondents	
Men	50		28,7%	<u>-</u>
Woman	124		71,3%	
	174		100%	

Table 2 presents the results of the empirical mean, hypothetical mean, and hypothetical standard deviation of quarter-life crisis, Quarter-life crisis in this research is included in the high category

Table 2. Empirical Mean, Hypothetical Mean, and Hypothetical Standard Deviation of Quarter Life Crisis

Variabel	Empirical Mean	Hypothetical Mean	Standard Deviation	Category	
Quarter Life Crisis	114.68	87.5	20.83	High	

Meanwhile, in Table 3, the mean results of the quarter-life crisis aspects will be described. The results show that almost all aspects of the

quarter-life crisis are in the high category except for the Stuck in a difficult situation.

Tabel 3. Empirical Mean, Hypothetical Mean, and Hypothetical Standard Deviation of Quarter Life Crisis Aspects

Quarter Life Crisis Aspects	Empirical Mean	Hypothetical Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Indecision in making decisions	13.84	10.5	2.5	High
Hopeless	9.6	7	1.67	High
Negative self-evaluation	32.13	24.5	5.83	High
Stuck in a difficult situation	16.26	14	3.33	Average
Worried	9.47	7	1.67	High
Stressed	14.66	10.5	2.5	High
Worried about interpersonal	18.73	14	3.33	High

Quarter Life Crisis Aspects	Empirical Mean	Hypothetical Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
relationships		•	•	

Table 4, the mean results of the quarter-life crisis aspect will be described with the identity of the research subjects. Almost all identities

are in the high category except for married individuals. The quarter-life crisis is in the average category.

Table 4. Identity of research subjects

Identity	Nu	Percenta	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	mbe	ge of	quarter	Indecisi	Hopele	Negativ	Stuck in	Worried	Stressed	Worried
	r Of	Respond	life	on in	SS	e self-	a			about
	Res	ents	crisis	making		judgme	difficult			interpers
	pon			decision		nt	situatio			onal
	dent			S			n			relations
	S									hips
Men	50	28,7%	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Women	124	71,3%	High	High	High	High	Averag	High	High	High
							e			
Senior High	88	50,6%	High	High	High	High	Averag	High	High	High
School							e			
Third	6	3.4%	High	High	High	High	Averag	High	High	High
Diploma							e			
Education										
Bachelor	79	45,5%	High	High	High	High	Averag	High	High	High
							e			
Postgraduat	1	0,6%	Average	High	High	Averag	High	High	High	Average
e	440					e				
Single	119	68,4%	High	High	High	High	Averag	High	High	High
-	4.4	25.224	*** 1	*** 1	*** 1	*** 1	e	*** 1	*** 1	*** *
In	44	25,3%	High	High	High	High	Averag	High	High	High
Relationshi							e			
p	1.1	6.20/								
Marriage	11	6.3%	Average	Average	Averag	Averag	Averag	Average	Average	Average
TT 1 A	00	51.700/	TT' 1	TT' 1	e	e	e	TT' 1	TT' 1	TT: 1
Take A	90	51,72%	High	High	High	High	Averag	High	High	High
Course Or Certificatio							e			
n Not Taking	84	48,27%	High	High	High	Uich	Avoroa	High	High	Lligh
•	64	46,27%	High	nign	nigii	High	Averag	High	nigii	High
Courses Or Certificatio							e			
n										

## Discussion

This stage begins at 18 - 25 years old when individuals begin to explore themselves, determine what career they want to take, and think about what they want to be like. To pass the adult stage, some tasks and challenges must be met by individuals. Santrock (2011) states that early adulthood is when individuals work, have a relationship or fall in love with the opposite sex, build a commitment and find their right place in adult society. Getting a job is one of the tasks that early adult individuals must do. However, there are obstacles in finding work, such as not matching one's abilities with the job standards that must be met, lack of experience and high expectations regarding compensation. This will make early adult individuals looking for work feel worried about their future and question whether they have the abilities that will give rise to a negative crisis generally occurring in early adulthood, namely the quarter-life crisis.

Based on the data analysis that has been carried out, the quarter-life crisis in early adults who are looking for work is in the high category. A quarter-life crisis is a condition where individuals become directionless and helpless and continuously question the future of their lives (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). Early adults aged 18 - 30 should already have jobs and live independently from their parents. However, in reality, they cannot fulfil this and still have to try to find and get a job according to their abilities, talents and interests. The difficult process of looking for work makes these young adults feel incompetent, lost direction and helpless about their future, especially their careers. In the high category, the Quarter-life crisis means that young adults looking for work feel serious worry, doubt and uncertainty regarding their work life. Life-related to work and career can make early adult individuals experience a quarter-life crisis, as research conducted by Riyanto and Arini (2021) shows that individuals who experience a quarter-life crisis feel more worried about their careers. Concerns about their inability to get a job and feelings of being trapped in their life choices because there is work that does not match their self-identity and expectations and research conducted by Wijaya and Saprowi (2022) shows that the quarter-life crisis experienced by individuals aged 18 - 25 years is at high category with a percentage of 60%.

Based on the aspects of the quarter-life crisis proposed by Robbins and Wilner (2001), uncertainty in making decisions is in the high category. It can be said that individuals who are looking for work have many choices and uncertainties in aspects of life, especially in looking for work, such as what job they want or a job that is suitable for them and after making a decision, they will ask whether the decision taken is a good thing for them. The results are in This high category because individuals experience life changes. Early adult individuals seeking work explore jobs that suit their interests, abilities and principles. Changes and choices make individuals making instability and uncertainty in their lives, especially in their choices about work. As said by Arnett (2004), the age of 18 - 25 is an early adulthood period full of change and selfexploration.

In the second aspect, despair is in the high category. Despair is a condition of loss of hope due to experiencing failure or not getting satisfactory results so that the individual does not believe in himself. Despair is in the high category because early adult individuals looking for work feel that they should have gotten the job they wanted and met their expectations at that age. It is unsuitable, and they still have to look for work. The research

results for ages 26 - 30 are categorised as high quarter-life crises. The more mature the age requires individuals to get work that meets their expectations. Nash and Muray (2010) stated that if someone experiences a quarter-life crisis, hopes and dreams will arise about what kind of life they will live. These hopes and dreams will raise questions about whether they can achieve them.

The third aspect is giving a negative selfassessment in the high category. Negative selfassessment arises when individuals feel like they have failed and do not believe in themselves, which ends up giving bad judgments and comparing them with other people. In this case, giving a negative selfassessment is in the high category because early adult individuals who are looking for work often compare themselves with other people their age who have found suitable work, feel embarrassed because they are unable to find suitable work, have low self-confidence about looking for a job that suits him. According to Karpika and Segel (2021), an individual is required to compete well; this often makes individuals compare themselves with others.

The fourth aspect, being trapped in a difficult situation, is in the medium category. The pressures environment influences and individuals in their thinking patterns, decision making and behaviour, which will make them trapped in difficult situations to make decisions and solve problems. In this case, early adult individuals looking for work still know that what they are doing in looking for work is not completely wrong; they still have the drive to look for work and know what job they want to look for. They are not trapped in continuing their education to escape their job search. Being trapped in a difficult situation is in the moderate category in line with what Arnett (2004) said: life in early adulthood will have the possibility of change, and the individual has the opportunity to change it in a positive direction. Even though the environment has an influence, the individual still makes decisions about their life.

In the fifth aspect, feelings of anxiety are in the high category. Feelings of anxiety arise because individuals worry about their lives. Difficulties in fulfilling tasks and life goals make individuals anxious about the prospect of failure. In this case, early adult individuals who are looking for work always experience feelings of anxiety when thinking about work, and this often happens every day of their lives. This anxiety arises because of personal instability and the difficulties experienced by young adults looking for work. According to Hurlock (1980), early adulthood is a time of emotional tension because changes and tasks that must be fulfilled, such as worries about inappropriate work and new societal roles, make early adult individuals feel emotionally unstable.

The sixth aspect, namely pressure, is in the high category. The demands of other people and one's expectations about having to live a perfect life make early adult individuals feel depressed. In this case, early adult individuals who are looking for work feel pressure to live a life like adults who have a job that suits them, feel great expectations and pressure in looking for work that suits themselves and their environment, and have to face job choices that will change the course of his life. According to Nash and Muray (2010), individuals not ready to face the demands of fulfilling their duties in early adulthood will feel depressed and empty.

The seventh aspect, namely worrying about interpersonal relationships, is in the high category. The difficulty of living an adult life requires building a good relationship with parents, friends or a partner and finding someone who suits him. In this case, early adult individuals looking for work need others to support whatever happens, especially regarding their imperfect work life or to listen to complaints about the job they are looking for. The research results show that individuals with single and dating status have a high categorization, which is different from those with a married status with a medium categorization. It can be said that unmarried individuals will feel higher anxiety than those who are married. According to Arnett (2004), one of the external factors for individuals

experiencing a quarter-life crisis is starting to explore and question interpersonal relationships, whether with family, friends or a partner, whether they have found the one that suits what they need and want.

In the gender description data, men and women are in the high category. Based on the empirical mean value, men have a higher value, according to Robinson and Wright (2013), for individuals who experience a quarter-life crisis, the crisis experienced by men is more focused on problems related to career or work. In contrast, the crisis experienced by women has experienced a greater focus on family and relationship issues. The research results show that almost every level of education is in the high category. In Herawati and Hidayat's (2020) research, individuals who have completed their education are in a condition where they choose to continue their education or work. Furthermore, as stated by Robbins and Wilner (2001), the quarter-life crisis is experienced by individuals during the transition from the academic world to the real world, looking work which means for experiencing adult life.

In the data describing relationship status, the research results show that married individuals fall into the medium categorization, while individuals who are single and in a relationship fall into the high categorization. Following research by Artiningsih and Savira (2021), married individuals have lower quarter-life crisis scores than unmarried individuals. In the early adulthood stage, Erikson mentioned intimacy vs isolation, which can be said that if individuals succeed in building healthy and intimate relationships, they will not feel isolated (Papalia et al., 2009). Robinson (2015) also said that when experiencing a quarter-life crisis, individuals will isolate or isolate themselves, so a healthy relationship is important for early adult individuals.

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