

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Relationship between Identity Exploration and Career Maturity with Quarter-Life Crisis among Final-Year Students at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the relationship between identity exploration and career maturity with quarter-life crisis among final-year students at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya. The study used a sample of 149 final-year students from Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, selected through purposive sampling. The scales used in this research were constructed based on each respective theory. The hypothesis testing employed in this study was multiple linear regression analysis to assess the relationship between identity exploration, career maturity, and quarter-life crisis. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between identity exploration and career maturity when correlated together with quarter-life crisis. The variables of identity exploration and career maturity collectively contributed 37.4% ($R\text{-square} = 0.374$) to the quarter-life crisis. Based on this, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between identity exploration and career maturity with quarter-life crisis.

Keywords: *Identity Exploration, Career Maturity, Quarter Life Crisis*

INTRODUCTION

Every stage of developmental change that humans go through involves a critical learning process. Learning becomes essential for each individual, especially in an era of globalization that demands open insight and thinking, and the ability to solve problems critically and creatively. For example, in the transition phase from adolescence to adulthood, individuals undergo learning to think abstractly, become independent, and take on responsibility, as explained by Papalia et al. (2001).

One of the transition phases humans go through is the phase of emerging adulthood. Arnett (2004) explains that emerging adulthood is a transitional phase occurring as individuals move from adolescence to adulthood, typically beginning at age 18 and continuing until around age 25. Academically, this age range often includes individuals pursuing higher education as college students. The emerging adulthood phase is experienced by all individuals, especially final-year college students who are in the transition from the academic world to the real world. Final-year

students are generally between 20-25 years old (Permatasari et al., 2019), aligning with the developmental stage defined by Arnett as the onset of emerging adulthood.

During this period, each individual goes through a phase of self-discovery, beginning with personal identity, interpersonal relationships, future career aspirations, decision-making, and how they view life. Additionally, individuals strive to utilize their potential to understand their life direction, future orientation, and take responsibility for their actions. They also gradually begin to achieve financial independence from their parents.

According to Robinson (2019), individuals entering early adulthood typically develop good emotional maturity, allowing them to respond appropriately when facing challenges or problems. However, in reality, many changes and demands experienced during early adulthood are not always met with a positive response. As a result, many individuals in early adulthood feel pressured by the numerous demands they face, particularly concerning their future. This often leads to negative feelings, such as confusion,

anxiety, helplessness, lack of confidence, feeling overwhelmed, perceiving oneself as lacking talent, dissatisfaction with past efforts, unfulfilled desires, and a deep fear of failure.

Based on preliminary observations conducted through a questionnaire distributed by the researcher on April 1, 2024, to 103 final-year students at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, it was found that many final-year students in early adulthood are facing difficulties. The observed difficulties include: 64% of final-year students feel that nothing they do is right, 68% feel they are not achieving anything, 60% lack motivation, 68% feel pressured to achieve something, 72% feel unsure of how to achieve their goals, 71% struggle with decision-making, 65% engage in excessive self-analysis, 70% feel guilty and that they disappoint their parents, 77% feel their lives are not going according to plan, 80% are confused about their careers, and 62% experience financial instability.

These conditions ultimately lead individuals to experience an emotional crisis. Robbins and Wilner (2001) refer to this crisis as a "quarter-life crisis," or an emotional crisis occurring at a quarter of one's life, encompassing fears about facing the future in areas such as career, education, choosing a partner, finances, relationships, and social life. Atwood and Scholtz (in Rosalinda & Michael, 2019) define the quarter-life crisis as an emotional crisis marked by various negative feelings, such as confusion, anxiety, helplessness, and fear of failure. It can also be described as a response to instability experienced by individuals due to having too many choices to make, along with a sense of panic and powerlessness that arises between the ages of 18 and 29 (Afnan et al., 2020).

One group particularly vulnerable to the quarter-life crisis phenomenon is college students. This aligns with research by Zharifah et al. (2023), which found that 14 out of 17 student participants experiencing a quarter-life crisis were aged 20-23, typically final-year students. Individuals going through a quarter-life crisis mostly feel that their life path is monotonous, experience excessive anxiety when thinking about the future, and regret past decisions. This phenomenon is common among college graduates or students in the process of completing their studies. Generally, the quarter-life crisis can affect anyone in their twenties, especially those in

the process of or who have just completed their higher education (Allison & Risman, 2016).

According to Arnett (in Syifa'ussurur et al., 2021), the quarter-life crisis occurs due to two factors: internal and external factors. Internal factors include identity exploration, instability, being self-focused, feeling "in between," and the age of possibilities. External factors include friends, romantic relationships, family dynamics, career and job-related issues, and academic challenges. The quarter-life crisis typically occurs during the emerging adulthood phase, a time when individuals experience many changes. During this period, individuals gain the freedom to explore various opportunities in life, such as romance, career (job search), and making important life decisions. This stage of exploration is referred to as identity exploration.

According to Arnett (2013), identity exploration or freedom in exploring self identity is a phase in which individuals undergo significant changes related to their sense of self. During this phase, individuals strive to develop or define their personal identity, adapt to new environments, and gain an understanding of themselves, including their strengths and weaknesses.

This stage often causes pressure because individuals are unable to clearly predict their future. While the process of identity exploration allows individuals to experience new things with freedom, not all outcomes of this exploration are pleasant. On the contrary, the results of such exploration often lead to confusion and may even result in rejection from their surroundings. Ultimately, this rejection and confusion turn into an emotional crisis felt by final-year students. Identity exploration can be seen through aspects of the quarter-life crisis, where final-year students often feel they have not yet found the identity they desire. As a result, they may easily compare themselves to others and experience an identity crisis (Robinson, 2019).

Final-year students are about to complete their education, and it is crucial for them to have an understanding of the career they will pursue. This is an indication of career maturity. According to Super (in Wakhinuddin, 2020), career maturity is very important for individuals because at this stage, they must choose a career that aligns with their interests and talents, while also preparing themselves to enter the workforce. Winkel and Hastuti (2006) state that career maturity reflects an individual's success in completing

career development tasks that are characteristic of a particular developmental stage. An individual's career maturity can be reflected in aspects of the quarter-life crisis, such as concerns about available career options (Ummah, 2021). This is particularly seen in final-year students, who are essentially in the phase of hoping to work or Job Hopping. During this phase, students expect to find a job that matches their personality after graduation (Savickas, 2001).

The number of available job options can make final-year students feel confused because it is difficult to make the right choice. There is no guarantee that one option is better than another, so final-year students must carefully consider their decisions. Ideally, students in their final year should be prepared to enter the workforce. However, in reality, many final-year students experience a quarter-life crisis because they are unsure about the career they will pursue after completing their education. Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled "The Relationship between Identity Exploration and Career Maturity with Quarter-Life Crisis among Final-Year Students at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya."

METHOD

The research design used in this study is a quantitative approach with a correlational research type. The population in this study consists of final-year students at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, totaling 1.320 students. The sample size representing this study is 93 subjects, determined using the Slovin formula. The sampling technique used in this study is non-probability sampling, with purposive sampling as one of the methods. In this sampling process, specific criteria are applied for selecting the sample. The criteria for this study include students who are at least in their 8th semester and aged between 18-29 years.

The data collection method used in this study is through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed online via the Google Forms platform, containing statements that respondents were required to answer. The measurement tools used in this study are scales. There are three scales used, namely: the quarter-life crisis scale, the identity exploration scale, and the career maturity scale. The scale model used is the Likert scale, which

includes several statements with both favorable and unfavorable responses toward the object.

The data analysis used in this study is multiple linear regression analysis. Multiple linear regression is a method used to determine whether there is a relationship between two or more independent variables and one dependent variable (Janie, 2012). Data analysis is conducted using the SPSS 29 for Windows software. To meet the assumptions for multiple linear regression, several classical assumption tests are performed, including the normality test, linearity test, heteroscedasticity test, and multicollinearity test.

RESULTS

This study was conducted on final-year students at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya. Data collection took place over 16 days, from May 21, 2024, to June 6, 2024. The data was collected by distributing a questionnaire to all final-year students in each faculty at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya. The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms, resulting in 149 responses from final-year students, consisting of 47 male students and 102 female students.

Based on the item discrimination power test results for the quarter-life crisis scale, out of 29 items used, 27 items were valid and 2 items were discarded as invalid. The item discrimination power test for the quarter-life crisis scale was conducted in two rounds. For the identity exploration scale, out of 22 items used, 18 items were valid and 4 items were discarded as invalid. The item discrimination power test for the identity exploration scale was conducted in two rounds. For the career maturity scale, out of 32 items used, 27 items were valid and 5 items were discarded as invalid. The item discrimination power test for the career maturity scale was conducted in two rounds.

Based on the reliability test results for the quarter-life crisis scale, the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.942, with 27 valid items. It can be concluded that the quarter-life crisis scale is reliable because the value of 0.942 is greater than 0.6. For the identity exploration scale, the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.926, with 18 valid items. It can be concluded that the identity exploration scale is reliable because the value of 0.926 is greater than 0.6. For the career maturity scale, the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.909, with 27 valid items. It can be

concluded that the career maturity scale is reliable because the value of 0.909 is greater than 0.6.

Multiple linear regression analysis is a method used to determine whether there is a relationship between

two or more independent variables and a single dependent variable (Janie, 2012). The following are the results of the multiple linear regression test conducted using SPSS 29 for Windows.

Table 1 Results of Multiple Linear Regression Test

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	MeanSquare	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9436,393	2	4718,197	43,574	<,001 ^b
	Residual	15808,922	146	108,280		
	Total	25245,315	148			
a. Dependent Variable: QLC						
b. Predictors: (Constant), KK, IE						

In the table above, the calculated F-value is greater than the F-table value of 3.06, and $p = 0.01$ ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant relationship between the variables of identity exploration and career maturity with quarter-life crisis. Therefore, the hypothesis in this study is accepted, indicating a significant relationship between identity exploration and career maturity with quarter-life crisis.

Table 2. Results of the Contribution of Identity Exploration and Career Maturity to Quarter-Life Crisis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.611 ^a	0,374	0,365	10,40578
a. Predictors: (Constant), KK, IE				

In Table 1, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.611, and the R Square is 0.374. This indicates that 37.4% of the variance in the quarter-life crisis variable is influenced by the identity exploration and career maturity variables, while the remaining 62.6% is influenced by other variables not examined in this

study.

In the table 3, the coefficient of equation B (in the table) for identity exploration is 0.770, and for career maturity is -0.176. The relationship between each dependent and independent variable based on the significance values is as follows:

- Identity exploration variable and quarter-life crisis: The t-value is 7.250, with a significance level of $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, indicating a significant positive relationship between identity exploration variable and quarter-life crisis variable. This suggests that as identity exploration increases, quarter-life crisis also increases.
- Career maturity variable and quarter-life crisis: The t-value is -2.048, with a significance value of $p = 0.042 < 0.05$, indicating a significant negative relationship between career maturity variable and quarter-life crisis variable. This means that as career maturity increases, the quarter-life crisis decreases, and conversely, as career maturity decreases, the quarter-life crisis increases.

Table 3 Test Results Between Variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	53,560	9,270		5,778	0,000
IE	0,770	0,106	0,530	7,250	0,000
KK	-0,176	0,086	-0,150	-2,048	0,042
a. Dependent Variable: QLC					

DISCUSSION

Identity exploration is often associated with adolescence, but Arnett (2013) states that it is a defining feature of early adulthood. According to Erikson, identity exploration often occurs in two areas: love and work (as cited in Arnett, 2013). Most individuals take their first steps in terms of romance, love, and sex during adolescence. However, upon reaching early adulthood, identity exploration in this area becomes clearer, and young adults begin to consider the type of romantic relationships they desire and the kind of long-term relationships they envision. The late teenage years and early twenties are often considered the ideal time for this exploration.

Christopher (2018) states that individuals are usually free from the direct influence of parents and teachers, yet they are not fully bound by adult responsibilities such as full-time work or becoming parents. This allows individuals to take time to explore their identity in the context of love and romantic relationships. On the other hand, young adults are also free to explore identity-related issues regarding work, such as the long-term career fields they are interested in and the type of job they wish to pursue.

According to Arnett (2013), young adults begin to consider questions such as, "What kind of job am I good at?" and "What kind of job do I want in the long term?" As individuals explore various college majors and try different jobs, they gain a deeper understanding of themselves, discovering what they like and dislike, what interests them, and where their talents lie. Additionally, individuals also learn from what they enjoy and what they are not skilled at during this process. Although many individuals may experience failure in college or in the workforce, these experiences are valuable because they help to gain insight into their skills, strengths, and weaknesses (Arnett, 2004).

Ravert (2009) found that much of the exploration that occurs during early adulthood is considered a pleasurable experience, and some behaviors driven by a desire for sensation-seeking are things that adults wish to explore before settling into adult life. However, some individuals face greater pressure due to a lack of preparation for entering adulthood (Habibie et al., 2019).

Individuals who are not well-prepared for early adulthood may be shocked by the challenging situations they encounter. This can disrupt their psychological well-being. Nash and Murray (2010) noted that individuals may experience stress, anxiety, and a loss of motivation to live (Habibie et al., 2019). Negative feelings such as uncertainty, helplessness, fear of failure, and self-doubt may continuously emerge (Rosalinda & Michael, 2019). If individuals consistently ignore these conditions and fail to address them properly, they may experience emotional crises such as frustration, depression, and other psychological disorders (Rosalinda & Michael, 2019). Such crises are often referred to as quarter-life crises.

Robbins and Wilner (2001) define the quarter-life crisis as a phase experienced by individuals after completing higher education, where they feel anxious and stressed about facing the ever-changing realities of life. They are confronted with many choices that cause doubt, feel out of control, and sometimes even experience panic (Sujudi, 2020). The quarter-life crisis is often encountered by individuals in the same age range as early adulthood, typically between the twenties and thirties (Sujudi, 2020).

The results of the variable test in this study show that there is a significant positive relationship between identity exploration and quarter life crisis, with a coefficient of 0.770 and a significance value of 0.000. The statistical significance test value is smaller than 0.05, which means there is a significant positive relationship between identity exploration and quarter life crisis among final-year students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, with an effective contribution of 53% to quarter life crisis. Based on this, it can be concluded that as identity exploration increases among students, the quarter life crisis also increases. This finding contrasts with a previous study by Ardhany (2021), which found a negative relationship between identity exploration and quarter life crisis. According to Marcia (in Desmita, 2010), identity exploration is closely related to commitment.

Commitment is the development of identity that reflects an individual's responsibility toward what they do. Identity exploration and commitment are dimensions of identity that can be used to observe and measure the development of an individual's

identity status. Based on this, it can be concluded that identity exploration has a positive relationship with quarter life crisis because of the students' low commitment to the responsibilities they hold.

The results of the inter-variable test show that there is a significant negative relationship between career maturity and quarter life crisis, with a coefficient of -0.176 and a significance value of 0.042. Since the significance test value is smaller than 0.05, this indicates a significant negative relationship between career maturity and quarter life crisis among final-year students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, effectively contributing 15% to the quarter life crisis. Based on this, it can be concluded that as career maturity among students increases, the quarter life crisis they experience will decrease. This finding is supported by previous research conducted by Adawiyah (2022), which found a negative relationship between career maturity and quarter life crisis in early adulthood, with career maturity effectively contributing 5.6% to the quarter life crisis.

Based on the explanation, identity exploration and quarter life crisis are interconnected. This is because the process of identity exploration occurs in early adulthood is a crucial phase in exploring romantic relationships or careers. During this phase, individuals have the opportunity to explore their interests, talents, and personal values through experiences in love, education, and work. This stage is essential for individual development, however, it can also lead to feelings of stress and anxiety as individuals face the complexity of choices and evolving role expectations in adult life. This, in turn, can contribute to the occurrence of a quarter life crisis.

Quarter life crisis is a phenomenon in which individuals in their twenties experience instability, constant changes, and an overwhelming number of choices, leading to feelings of panic, frustration, hopelessness, confusion, and excessive pressure (Robbins & Willner, 2001). This phenomenon is often felt by final-year students or those who are working on their theses. The burden and pressure of entering the workforce, coupled with confusion about the next steps, can exacerbate this condition. Quarter life crisis is also triggered by various life demands faced by individuals. Prolonged emotional crises can have negative effects, such as stress and

even depression, on an individual's life.

Quarter life crisis is influenced by both internal and external factors, including relationships with parents, friends, and partners, academic issues, self-identity, as well as career and employment. These factors play a crucial role in triggering quarter life crisis. One significant factor is career and employment. According to research conducted by Agustin, career and job selection has a significant impact on an individual's success in facing quarter life crisis (Agustin, 2012). Career and job-related issues can also serve as indicators of a person's career maturity level.

Career maturity refers to an individual's ability to prepare for and plan future career choices in accordance with their current life stage. To achieve career maturity, individuals need to review several aspects, particularly in terms of affective and cognitive readiness. Affective readiness involves career exploration and planning, while cognitive readiness includes decision-making skills and understanding the workforce (Coertse & Schepers, 2004). This is especially important for individuals, particularly students who are completing their thesis and facing the transition from academic world to the actual world of work.

Individuals experiencing a quarter life crisis usually feel isolated, incapable, self-doubting, stressed, emotionally unstable, and fearful of failure. This is supported by research from Riyanto and Arini (2021), which states that 86% of graduates from the 2019-2020 period experienced a quarter life crisis. Interviews in their study revealed that many participants were concerned about not finding employment due to the ongoing pandemic, which created a difficult economic situation. Furthermore, among those who had already secured jobs, participants felt trapped in life choices because their work did not align with their expectations.

Based on the explanation, career maturity is a crucial factor in the decision-making process when individuals face a quarter life crisis. Readiness in terms of self-understanding, knowledge about the workforce, and the ability to plan and take appropriate steps in one's career are essential to help individuals overcome the challenges they face at this stage. The transition from the academic world to the professional world is a phase that demands

individuals to be well- prepared. During this stage, individuals are confronted with various choices and possibilities that may arise. This condition often causes individuals to feel confused, anxious, and worried about an uncertain future, which can ultimately lead to the onset of a quarter life crisis.

According to Robinson (2019), a quarter life crisis occurs because individuals in early adulthood experience an identity crisis. During the exploration process, they face indecision, which eventually makes it difficult for them to choose the career path they will pursue after graduation. If an individual experiences a quarter life crisis, it will hinder their self-exploration process and prevent them from determining their future career path.

Arnett (as cited in Syifa'ussurur et al., 2021) mentions that the quarter life crisis that occurs during emerging adulthood is caused by two factors: internal and external factors. Internal factors include identity exploration, instability, being self-focused, feeling "in-between," and the ages of possibilities. External factors include relationships with friends, romantic relationships, family relations, work life, career, and academic challenges. Halfon et al. (as cited in Herawati & Hidayat, 2020) state that in early adulthood, individuals have a great opportunity to explore themselves, but they also face significant challenges. The challenges, obstacles, and difficulties encountered can lead to feelings of doubt, helplessness, and even pessimism in young adults (Rossi & Mebert, 2011). The importance of identity in human life, especially during emerging adulthood, cannot be underestimated. A well- formed identity helps individuals recognize themselves and discover the uniqueness of their personality. With a strong identity, individuals feel more prepared and capable of facing the challenges that arise in their developmental process.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between identity exploration and career maturity with the emergence of quarter life crisis in final- year students. The complex process of identity exploration and the search for career maturity often trigger the onset of quarter life crisis during early adulthood. Individuals at this stage frequently feel uncertain when making decisions about the career path they will pursue after completing their studies,

which makes them more susceptible to experiencing a quarter life crisis.

CONCLUSION

Results from multiple linear regression yielded an R^2 value of 0.611 and a calculated F of 43.574, exceeding the F table value of 3.06, with $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$). It can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between identity exploration and career maturity with quarter life crisis in final-year students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya. The results of this test indicate that when correlated together, identity exploration and career maturity have a significant relationship with quarter life crisis. The variables of identity exploration and career maturity together contribute 37.4% ($R^2 = 0.374$), with the remaining variance influenced by other factors not examined in this study. Based on this, it can be interpreted that there is an interrelation between identity exploration and career maturity with quarter life crisis. Therefore, the hypothesis in this study is accepted, indicating a significant relationship between identity exploration and career maturity with quarter life crisis in final-year students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya.

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DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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