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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON QUARTER LIFE CRISIS IN THESIS PREPARATION STUDENTS WITH ANXIETY AS A MEDIATOR

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The Role of Social Support on Quarter Life Crisis in Thesis Preparation Students with Anxiety as a Mediator

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Keywords

Quarter-Life Crisis; Anxiety; Social Support

Abstract

Final-year students are in the emerging adulthood phase or the transition between late adolescence and early adulthood, they experience many changes and concerns in various aspects. Instability in these phases can be referred to as Quarter-Life Crisis, anxiety and social support are included in the factors that cause Quarter-Life Crisis. Quantitative methods and accidental sampling techniques were used with the criteria of final year students who were in thesis preparation and were aged between 18 and 30 years. The instruments used were Quarter-Life Crisis Scale (QLS), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPSS) and Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS). The results of the analysis show that social support plays a significant negative role on anxiety (2,9%), anxiety plays a significant positive role on Quarter-Life Crisis (20,2%) and anxiety is able to mediate the relationship between social support and Quarter-Life Crisis (p-value $0,00851461 < 0,05$). It is hoped that through this research, individuals who have friends or family or relatives who are preparing a thesis can provide more support to them, in order to minimize anxiety and Quarter-Life Crisis owned by students who are in thesis preparation.

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The Role of Social Support on Quarter Life Crisis in Thesis Preparation Students with Anxiety as a Mediator

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Abstract. Final-year students are in the emerging adulthood phase or the transition between late adolescence and early adulthood, they experience many changes and concerns in various aspects. Instability in these phases can be referred to as Quarter-Life Crisis, anxiety and social support are included in the factors that cause Quarter-Life Crisis. Quantitative methods and accidental sampling techniques were used with the criteria of final year students who were in thesis preparation and were aged between 18 and 30 years. The instruments used were Quarter-Life Crisis Scale (QLS), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPSS) and Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS). The results of the analysis show that social support plays a significant negative role on anxiety (2,9%), anxiety plays a significant positive role on Quarter-Life Crisis (20,2%) and anxiety is able to mediate the relationship between social support and Quarter-Life Crisis ($p\text{-value } 0,00851461 < 0,05$). It is hoped that through this research, individuals who have friends or family or relatives who are preparing a thesis can provide more support to them, in order to minimize anxiety and Quarter-Life Crisis owned by students who are in thesis preparation.

Keywords: Quarter-Life Crisis, Anxiety, Social Support

1 Introduction

Education is a crucial aspect of human life, with each individual expected to pursue knowledge to the highest level possible. According to data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbud Ristek), the number of students in Indonesia was estimated to reach 9.32 million in 2022. The process of studying at a higher education institution is quite complex and challenging, as students face various challenges and obstacles. Final-year students tend to encounter different types of crises, such as confusion in deciding between further studies or entering the workforce, concerns about graduation, and anxiety and stress during the final project [1]. One of the challenges faced by students is writing a scientific paper in the form of a thesis, which is one of the requirements to complete the educational program [2].

Final-year students are in a transitional period between late adolescence and early adulthood [3]. According to Marliani [as cited in 4], the average age of students when completing their final studies is typically between 22 and 24 years old, placing them in

the early adulthood development stage. Sallata & Huwae [4] argue that the developmental phase at the end of adolescence leading into early adulthood is a preparatory period for maturity, during which individuals often experience significant changes. Arnett [as cited in 5] introduced the theory of emerging adulthood in the first decade of the 21st century to describe a prolonged developmental period between adolescence and young adulthood, which occurs from ages 18 to 25. This theory highlights the psychological and subjective experiences of individuals aged 18 to 25, characterizing this period as one of identity exploration, a feeling of being "in-between," instability, self-focus, and a wide range of possibilities [5].

The term Quarter-Life Crisis was first introduced by Robbins & Wilner [6] in reference to what was initially called a midlife crisis. Nash & Murray [7] define the Quarter-Life Crisis as the emergence of deep feelings of uncertainty, an inability to make decisions based on objective reality, and confusion in making choices that will impact an individual's future. According to Fischer [8], the key to overcoming this crisis is not to overcome it, but to accept it recognizing it as a life transition phase. This quarter-life period occurs between adolescence and adulthood, ranging from ages 18 to 30 [9]. There are seven indicators of a Quarter-Life Crisis according to Robbins & Wilner, namely: (1) Difficulty making decisions; (2) Despair; (3) Negative self-assessment; (4) Feeling stuck in life; (5) Anxiety about the future; (6) Feeling pressured by existing demands; and (7) Worry about interpersonal relationships [10]. Hasyim et al. [11] note that Quarter-Life Crisis often occurs in early adulthood, particularly in one's twenties, and is triggered by several internal and external factors. Spirituality, anxiety, and commitment to higher goals are the most influential internal variables related to the Quarter-Life Crisis. Meanwhile, age, gender, and social support are the external factors that have the greatest impact.

Allinson [as cited in 12] stated that the changes that occur during the Quarter-Life Crisis phase can lead to responses such as stress, anxiety, and even depression. Nevid et al. [13] define anxiety as a condition of discomfort or worry that a person feels about the possibility of something bad happening. According to Waluyan & Suharto [14] anxiety is a common phenomenon in human life, but if its intensity is excessive anxiety can cause discomfort and interfere with daily activities. Reducing anxiety levels can influence an individual's perception of the Quarter-Life Crisis. Initially, this crisis is often seen as a burden, but with reduced anxiety the view of the crisis can become more positive, enabling individuals to feel more empowered in facing challenges and seeking effective solutions [15]. Hamilton [as cited in 16] divides anxiety into 14 dimensions: (1) Anxious mood; (2) Tension; (3) Fears; (4) Insomnia; (5) Intellectual; (6) Depressed mood; (7) Somatic (muscular); (8) Somatic (sensory); (9) Cardiovascular symptoms; (10) Respiratory symptoms; (11) Gastrointestinal symptoms; (12) Genitourinary symptoms; (13) Autonomic symptoms; and (14) Behavior. Anxiety is related to social support, when individuals receive high social support their anxiety levels tend to decrease and vice versa [17].

According to Sarafino & Smith [18], social support refers to concrete actions performed by others or the support received, including feelings or perceptions of comfort, care, and assistance available. Therefore, social support includes both actions taken by others and the support received. Zimet et al. [as cited in 19] divide the dimensions of

social support into three categories: (1) Family support; (2) Friend support; and (3) Significant others. The social support received by final-year students, including encouragement, appreciation, positive remarks, motivation, attention, affection, and guidance from parents, family, friends, and the surrounding environment, is a significant factor in reducing stress levels.

A survey conducted by GenSINDO on the phenomenon of Quarter-Life Crisis from April 24 to 28 2020, involving 31 respondents consisting of students and workers aged 18-25 with a composition of 95% students and 5% workers, found that as they enter early adulthood they experience concerns about various aspects including education, careers, health, romantic relationships, and global competition [20]. Social support plays a crucial role in helping individuals achieve mental tranquillity, especially when facing challenges during the Quarter-Life Crisis phase [1]. This is not in line with the findings of Fadillah & Rozi [21], which states that social support does not have an impact on the quarter-life crisis. Santo & Alfian [17] conducted a study that if individuals receive high social support, their anxiety levels tend to decrease. Setiawan & Pramadi [15] found lower anxiety can make individuals more capable of facing challenges and finding solutions, thus changing the perspective on the crisis to a more positive one.

Based on the background described above, anxiety is considered as a mediator in the relationship between social support and Quarter-Life Crisis. High social support tends to reduce the level of anxiety experienced by individuals, and lower anxiety enables individuals to better cope with Quarter-Life Crisis. It is expected that anxiety can provide a more detailed explanation of how the relationship between social support and Quarter-Life Crisis among undergraduate students in thesis preparation.

2 Methodology

2.1 Samples

Accidental sampling used became sampling method. The criteria for sample selection in this study include: (1) Final-year students writing their thesis; (2) Aged 18 – 30 years. This study involved a total of 271 participants. The majority of participants consisted of women ($n = 220$, 81.2%), aged 21 years ($n = 113$, 41.7%), and in their 7th to 9th semesters of study ($n = 246$, 90.8%).

2.2 Measurement

The Quarter-Life Crisis Scale developed by Afandi et al. [10] based on the indicators from Robbins & Wilner (2001) is used to measure the Quarter-Life Crisis variable. This measurement consists of 26 items with 7 subscales, each item is rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 4 (1= strongly disagree, 4= strongly agree), the reliability score obtained was 0.860.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPSS) developed by Zimet et al. (1988) is used to measure the Social Support variable, translated into Indonesian by Sulistiani et al. [19]. This measurement tool consists of 3 subscales with

total items are 12 items. Each item is rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 (1= strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree), higher scores indicating higher levels of social support. The reliability score obtained was 0.892.

The Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS) is used to measure anxiety levels. Created by Hamilton in 1959 and translated into Indonesian by Ramdan [16], the measurement consists of 14 items with 14 subscales. Each item is scored on a scale from 0 to 4 (0= none, 4= severe), the reliability score obtained was 0.904.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was gathered online by distributing questionnaires through social media such as Instagram, Line, WhatsApp, Twitter, and others using Google Forms. The researcher used gadgets, the internet, and questionnaires via Google Forms as the primary tools for this process. Data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0 application, encompassing descriptive statistical tests for respondents and variables, classical assumption tests, and path analysis with the Sobel Test.

3 Results And Discussion

Table 1 presents a descriptive overview of the research variables, showing average scores of 64.95 for the quarter-life crisis, 58.66 for social support, and 17.40 for anxiety.

This study found that most students in thesis preparation experience a moderate level of Quarter-Life Crisis. This finding is consistent with previous research by Salsabilla [22]. Additionally, the level of social support they received was also in the moderate category, supporting the findings of Fachri et al. [23]. However, unlike the findings of Putri & Akbar [24], the anxiety levels of students in this study tended to be lower.

Table 1. Descriptive Overview of Research Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Category
Quarter-Life Crisis	271	64.95	Moderate
Social Support	271	58.66	Moderate
Anxiety	271	17.40	Low

In regression models, normality testing is conducted to assess whether the data distribution is normal or abnormal. In this study, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was applied because the sample size exceeded 50 respondents. The data distribution is considered normal, as shown in Table 2 where the significance value is $0.076 > 0.05$.

Table 2. Normality Test One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Unstandardized Residual
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.076 ^c

This study utilized simple linear regression and multiple linear regression analyses, with the coefficient of determination test used to measure the influence among variables. Based on Table 3, social support has an 2.9% effect on anxiety, anxiety has a 20.2% effect on Quarter-Life Crisis, and with the inclusion of anxiety, social support affect quarter-life crisis by 32.8%. The rest is influenced by other variables that are outside the scope of study.

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination Test (Linear Regression Analyses)

Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Social Support to Anxiety	.029	.025
Anxiety to Quarter-Life Crisis	.202	.199
Social Support to Quarter-Life Crisis (with anxiety as mediator)	.333	.328

The F-test results indicate that variables are interrelated if the significance value is less than 0.05. Table 4 shows that social support plays a significant role in the occurrence of anxiety ($F = 8.004$, sig. $0.005 < 0.05$), anxiety plays a statistically significant role in the occurrence of Quarter-Life Crisis ($F = 68.250$, sig. $0.000 < 0.05$), and with the inclusion of anxiety, Quarter-Life Crisis and social support play a significant role ($F = 66.765$, sig. $0.000 < 0.05$).

Table 4. F Simultan Test (Linear Regression Analyses)

Model	F	Sig.
Social Support to Anxiety	8.004	.000 ^b
Anxiety to Quarter-Life Crisis	68.250	.000 ^b
Social Support to Quarter-Life Crisis (with anxiety as mediator)	66.765	.000 ^b

Hypotheses are tested using the t-test, where a significance value of less than 0.05 (sig. < 0.05) indicates that a variable plays a role, while a significance value greater than 0.05 (sig. > 0.05) indicates it does not. The direction of the variable's role, whether positive or negative, is determined by examining the regression coefficient value. The results in Table 5 show a significant negative role effect of social support on anxiety ($B = -0.129$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that higher levels of social support led to lower anxiety levels, while lower social support is linked to higher anxiety. This finding corresponds with the research conducted by Fitriana et al. [25], which showed a negative effect of perceived social support on the anxiety of thesis-writing students in Makassar City. Anxiety has positive role effect on Quarter-Life Crisis ($B = 0.397$, $p < 0.05$), this indicates that final-year students preparing their theses experience higher levels of a Quarter-Life Crisis when their anxiety is high, and lower levels of a crisis when their anxiety is low. Similarly, Setiawan & Pramadi [15] found that low anxiety enables individuals to better address challenges and find solutions, reframing the crisis in a more positive light.

Table 5. t Partial Test (Linear Regression Analyses)

Model	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	24.988	2.750	9.086	.000
Social Support	-.129	.046	-2.829	.005
(Constant)	58.041	.975	59.536	.000
Anxiety	.397	.048	8.261	.005
(Constant)	73.417	2.307	31.826	.000
Social Support (with the inclusion of anxiety)	-.246	.034	-7.230	.000
Anxiety (with the inclusion of anxiety)	.342	.045	7.645	.000

After including anxiety as a variable in the equation, social support shows a negative and significant effect on the Quarter-Life Crisis ($B = -0.246$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that final-year students preparing their theses experience a lower Quarter-Life Crisis when they receive high levels of social support, while low social support corresponds to higher levels of the crisis. This finding is not consistent with the study by Fadillah & Rozi [21] which states that social support does not directly influence the quarter-life crisis.

The Sobel test is conducted to identify the indirect effect between the variables involved (whether or not there is such an effect). The calculation uses the value of unstandardized coefficients and standardized coefficients. The unstandardized coefficients value of social support on anxiety is -0.129 (a) and the standardized coefficients value of social support on anxiety is 0.046 (sa). For anxiety towards Quarter-Life Crisis has an unstandardized coefficients value of 0.342 (b) and standardized coefficients of 0.045 (sb). The basis for decision making is by looking at the $p\text{-value} < 0.05$.

Table 6. Sobel Test Calculation

Coefficients	Test Statistic	Std. Error	P-Value
-0.129	-2.6309519	0.01676884	0.00851461
0.342			
0.046			
0.045			

The social support variable has a significant negative effect on the Quarter-Life Crisis variable through the anxiety variable ($p\text{-value } 0.00851461 < 0.05$). This indicates that anxiety serves as a mediator in the relationship between social support and the Quarter-Life Crisis, meaning that social support has a significant negative impact on the Quarter-Life Crisis via anxiety.

Table 7. Compare two sample means based on gender with Independent Sample T-Test

Variabel	P	Description
Quarter-Life Crisis	.002	There is a difference

External factors influencing the occurrence of the quarter-life crisis include levels of anxiety, commitment to achieving long-term goals, and aspects of spirituality. Meanwhile, internal factors consist of gender, the level of social support, and the individual's age range [11]. Conducting a comparative analysis of the quarter-life crisis based on gender is essential, as gender is identified as one of the contributing factors to the quarter-life crisis. Independent Sample T-Test used to compare variables between male and female groups. Based on Table 7, there is a significant difference ($p = 0.002$) in the Quarter-Life Crisis levels between males and females, gender affects Quarter-Life Crisis.

4 Conclusions And Suggestions

The results from SPSS analysis revealed the following findings: (1) Social support impacts the anxiety by 2.9%, with a $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, confirming a significant negative role of social support on anxiety. (2) Anxiety has an effect on Quarter-Life Crisis by 20.2%, with a $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, signifying a significant positive role of anxiety on Quarter-Life Crisis. (3) Anxiety is able to mediate the relationship between social support and Quarter-Life Crisis, or in other words, social support has a significant negative effect on Quarter-Life Crisis through anxiety, with a $p\text{-value } 0.00851461 < 0.05$.

This study demonstrates that the variables of social support, anxiety, and the Quarter-Life Crisis are interconnected and influence one another. Social support plays a role in anxiety, anxiety influences the Quarter-Life Crisis, and anxiety acts as a mediator in the relationship between social support and the Quarter-Life Crisis. The majority of participants in this study were female, with less than one-fifth being male, and the participants' ages ranged from 18 to 30 years. The level of Quarter-Life Crisis among students working on their theses can be assessed based on gender, consistent with the findings of Hasyim et al. [11], which identified gender as a contributing factor to the Quarter-Life Crisis.

Several limitations of this study include the use of questionnaires distributed solely through social media, which resulted in an uneven distribution of participants and an imbalanced proportion of male and female participants. The researchers also acknowledge the absence of demographic questions specifically related to each variable, such as whether participants experience anxiety while working on their theses, how they receive social support from those around them, or whether they worry about their future. The demographic questions used were limited to age, gender, and semester, lacking more in-depth demographic inquiries.

One strength of this study is the novelty of examining the variables of social support, anxiety, and the Quarter-Life Crisis simultaneously, with anxiety as a mediator. This represents a significant contribution, as previous studies typically focused on only two variables, such as social support and anxiety, social support and the Quarter-Life Crisis, or anxiety and the Quarter-Life Crisis. Additionally, most prior research primarily involved final-year students or emerging adults, with limited studies specifically targeting students working on their theses.

Based on previous studies, it is expected that the results of this research can contribute to the development of similar studies in the field of clinical psychology, particularly those focusing on social support, anxiety, and the Quarter-Life Crisis. Considering the limited research involving university students working on their theses to explore the roles or influences of social support, anxiety, and the Quarter-Life Crisis, future studies should expand the scope of variables to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

Subsequent research could also employ qualitative methods to conduct in-depth studies. This approach is designed to provide a more thorough understanding of the various factors influencing the Quarter-Life Crisis. Future researchers may also investigate the impact of social support on the Quarter-Life Crisis, with anxiety as a moderating variable. The inclusion of diverse variables in future research will contribute to generating more updated findings in the field of clinical psychology.

Excessive anxiety without adequate social support from those arounds can make the Quarter-Life Crisis phase more challenging, potentially prolonging this phase and hindering daily activities. It is recommended that students working on their theses consider these findings to seek social support, which can help reduce anxiety and foster a calmer attitude in facing the Quarter-Life Crisis. Furthermore, this study is expected to provide valuable implications for individuals with friends, family members, or relatives who are working on their theses. They are encouraged to pay more attention to these individuals and offer full support to help minimize their anxiety and mitigate the Quarter-Life Crisis experienced by students completing their theses.

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