



Early Adult Happiness During the Quarter-Life Crisis Period in Terms of Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Early adults undergoing their developmental tasks have the potential to experience a *quarter-life crisis* as a life challenge that brings about several negative impacts. These problems can be overcome if early adults have happiness in their lives. Happiness can be increased by instilling self-esteem obtained from within themselves and those around them. This study aims to determine the relationship between self-esteem and happiness in early adults experiencing a *quarter-life crisis*. This study uses a quantitative approach method. The sample of this study was 209 early adults experiencing a *quarter-life crisis* determined through a *purposive sampling technique*. The measuring instrument used in this study was a *Likert-type scale*, namely the happiness scale and the self-esteem scale. The happiness scale consists of 14 valid items with a reliability value of 0.712 and the self-esteem scale consists of 27 valid items worth 0.848 obtained through a reliability test using *Cronbach's Alpha* so that both scales can be declared *reliable*. The happiness scale and the self-esteem scale are declared normal with p-values of 0.065 and 0.200, respectively. The data analysis technique for this study uses the *Pearson product moment correlation test*. The results of this study indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and happiness in early adults experiencing a *quarter-life crisis* with a calculated r value of $0.0574 > r_{table} 0.114$ and a sig value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords: early adulthood, self-esteem, happiness, development, *quarter life crisis*

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1. Introduction

During the transition to early adulthood, individuals carry different obligations. Individuals in early adulthood develop by having knowledge and skills in achieving careers and families, individuals are considered to have good physical abilities in their development, then individuals think logically and can link instincts with emotions in cognitive development, and in moral development, individuals depend on personal experience [1].

Early adulthood has the potential to experience difficult times that give rise to negative emotions as a result of the crisis. The crisis period will affect the individual's developmental tasks so that they can experience crucial problems if not resolved properly [2]. This period is called the *quarter-life crisis phenomenon* where Robinson explains that the *quarter-life crisis* has two different age stages, namely the *locked-out period* (21-25 years) when individuals have difficulty in establishing commitments with others, tend to feel isolated and useless which has an impact on emotions and the *locked-in period* (25-35 years) when individuals feel trapped in their role as adults [3].

The phenomenon of *quarter-life crisis* has a higher potential to occur during the *locked-out age period* where individuals face academic challenges, experience failure in their work and career lives, and develop

anxiety in determining their future direction [4]. Individuals experiencing a crisis feel trapped in life planning, doubting their career choices and self-identity [5]. Another statement also explains that *quarter-life crisis* in the early adult development stage can encourage individuals to be more independent in exploring themselves in terms of education, career, and establishing romantic relationships which has the potential to give rise to an emotional crisis [6].

Research by LinkedIn shows that as many as 75% of 6,014 young adult participants worldwide experienced a *quarter-life crisis*, one of the effects of which was anxiety [7]. Based on data from the Ministry of Health, it states that at the age of 20-30 years, young adults who experience a *quarter-life crisis* giving rise to anxiety with a figure of 6.8% or around 18,373 people, more than 23,000 people experiencing depression, and around 1,193 Indonesians attempting suicide [8].

In addition, the impact of early adulthood experiencing a crisis also affects physical, mental, and happiness health by giving rise to two possibilities, namely the individual successfully adapts himself and feels happy through the challenges faced or experiences difficulties first because the journey to achieving personal happiness can be in the form of positive and negative experiences [9]. Happiness is a positive emotional condition that is owned by an individual and is characterized by positive activities [10]. Happiness is

defined as a pleasant life that involves a person in maintaining positive feelings in the past, present, and future [11]. Happiness in an individual's life includes feelings that have a good impact on physical health, successful performance, and psychological well-being [12].

Positive emotions that a person has related to happiness can optimize personal resources, improve the quality of social relationships, and protect oneself against perceived stress [11]. Another theory also states that the feelings of happiness that arise can be a source of motivation and positive energy that brings strong confidence for individuals to achieve goals [13]. Individual happiness can be seen as influenced by various factors, one of which is self-esteem in determining how individuals view themselves [14].

Self-esteem is defined as self-evaluation in terms of acceptance or rejection and having confidence in one's strength, significance, virtue, and abilities [15]. Individuals who feel valuable will be happier. Having the ability to appreciate oneself can impact an individual's thinking with a positive perspective, thus encouraging the capacity for happiness [16]. There are research results that support that a person's self-esteem can increase happiness in life [17].

Self-esteem by instilling virtue values is able to bring up optimal psychological conditions and give meaning to life which has a positive impact on well-being [18]. The formation of self-esteem in early adulthood develops through experience and interaction with the environment, and is supported by developmental tasks that have been passed so that individuals can actualize themselves, have a way of thinking and more potential, and do not depend on other people's assessments regarding their personality [19]. In addition, self-esteem can make individuals become more optimistic because they often experience positive emotions, and feel a sense of satisfaction with themselves [20].

Previous similar research related to the relationship between self-esteem and happiness showed results where the self-esteem of an individual can give rise to happiness [16]. This research has a difference in the research *setting* compared to the current research, where this research is important to be conducted with a contribution to the happiness felt during the crisis period in early adult development.

In addition, research with the topic of discussing happiness in early adulthood when experiencing a *quarter life crisis* is still rare, especially in Indonesia, so researchers have a concern about the urgency of the *quarter life crisis phenomenon* as a psychological issue that is still prevalent among generation z where based on existing data, *quarter life crisis* has a negative impact on the development of early adulthood if not handled properly. Therefore, researchers feel the need to conduct a study entitled " Early Adult Happiness During the *Quarter Life Crisis Period* Reviewed from Self-

Esteem" to explore happiness in early adulthood during the *quarter life crisis period* by being linked to self-esteem as a predictor that can influence the level of happiness . The implementation of this study is based on the hypothesis that there is a relationship between self-esteem and happiness in early adults who experience a *quarter life crisis* .

2. Research methodology

The quantitative method was used as a research method with the dependent variable being happiness and the independent variable being self-esteem. The sample of this study consisted of 209 young adults experiencing a *quarter-life crisis* in Indonesia. The researcher did not know the actual population size, therefore the *sampling technique* in the form of *non-probability sampling* was chosen through the *purposive sampling* method as a sample determination technique by adjusting the criteria of the research subjects [21].

Likert scale as a data collection method aims to assess the ideas, views, and behaviors of individuals or groups regarding social phenomena that occur [2 2]. The happiness scale and self-esteem scale are used as measuring tools in conducting research. The happiness scale used is based on aspects proposed by Seligman, namely a pleasant life, a meaningful life, and self-involvement [10]. Then, the self-esteem scale was modified using Coopersmith 's self-esteem aspects ADDIN

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consisting of aspects of strength, significance, virtue, and ability [15].

Validity and reliability testing were conducted on the research measurement instruments. The 14-item happiness scale showed no items were dropped, with a

reliability value of 0.712. Furthermore, the 27-item self-esteem scale also showed no items dropped, with a reliability value of 0.873.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Description of Research Subject Characteristics

Descriptive data were used to describe the research subjects according to the required characteristics to provide a picture that aligns with the researcher's objectives, namely early adults experiencing *quarter-life crisis* in Indonesia. The frequency distribution of data for *quarter-life crisis screening* can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 *Quarter Life Crisis Screening Scores*

Score	Category	F	Percentage
≥ 7	Very high	83	24.7%
5 – 6	Tall	126	37.5%
3 – 4	Currently	86	25.6%
1 – 2	Low	31	9.2%
≤ 1	Very Low	10	3%
Total		336	100%

Table 1 shows that of the 336 respondents who filled out the research questionnaire, 209 respondents were obtained as research samples through *quarter life crisis screening*, with a minimum total of 5 points answering "Yes . " This study sample is in the very high category with a percentage of 24.7% and the high category with a percentage of 37.5%. The results of the distribution of subjects in terms of age characteristics are as follows:

Table 2. Age Distribution of Research Subjects

Aspect	Age	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21	117	56%
	22	46	22%
	23	17	8.1%
	24	18	8.6%
	25	11	5.3%
Total		209	100%

Table 2 shows that the largest number of subjects were aged 21, at 56%, while the lowest number of subjects were aged 25, at 5.3%. Furthermore, the distribution of subjects by gender is as follows:

Table 3. Gender Distribution of Research Subjects

Aspect	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Man	35	16.7%
	Woman	174	83.3%
Total		209	100%

Table 3 shows that the largest number of subjects were female, at 83.3%. Furthermore, the distribution of subjects in terms of status characteristics is as follows:

Table 4. Distribution of Research Subject Status

Aspect	Status	Frequency	Percentage
Status	Students	147	70.3%
	Worker	44	21.1%
	Doesn't work	18	8.6%
Total		209	100%

Table 4 shows that the subjects with the highest number of students (70.3%), while the subjects with the lowest

percentage were young adults who were unemployed (8.6%). Furthermore, the distribution of subjects in terms of domicile characteristics is as follows:

Table 5. Distribution of Research Subjects' Domiciles

Aspect	Domicile	F	Percentage
Domicile	Southeast Sulawesi	1	0.5%
	South Sulawesi	5	2.4%
	North Kalimantan	28	13.4%
	East Kalimantan	95	45.5%
	South Kalimantan	3	1.4%
	West Kalimantan	1	0.5%
	West Nusa Tenggara	1	0.5%
	Bali	3	1.4%
	East Java	19	9.1%
	DI Yogyakarta	7	3.3%
	Central Java	8	3.8%
	West Java	17	8.1%
	DKI Jakarta	9	4.3%
	Banten	4	1.9%
	Bangka Belitung	1	0.5%
	South Sumatra	2	1%
	Bengkulu	1	0.5%
	West Sumatra	2	1%
	Riau	1	0.5%
	North Sumatra	1	0.5%
Total		209	100%

Table 5 shows that the subjects with the largest number came from East Kalimantan Province, namely a percentage of 45.5%.

3.2. Descriptive Test

Descriptive data aims to illustrate the distribution of data on early adults experiencing *quarter-life crisis* in Indonesia . The empirical *mean and hypothetical mean* were obtained through the responses given by the research sample from filling out the scales used, namely the happiness scale and the self-esteem scale. The results of the calculation of the empirical *mean and hypothetical mean* can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Empirical Mean and Hypothetical Mean

Variables	Empirical Mean	Hypothetical Mean	Status
Happiness	37.04	35	Currently
Pride	72.55	67.5	Currently

Table 6 shows that the results of the happiness scale measurements obtained an empirical *mean of 37.04* with moderate status based on the frequency distribution of data for the happiness scale as follows:

Table 7. Categorization of Happiness Scale Scores

Score	Category	F	Percentage
≥ 46	Very high	8	3.8%
39 – 46	Tall	69	33%
32 – 38	Currently	111	53.1%
25 – 31	Low	21	10%
≤ 25	Very Low	-	0%
Total		209	100%

Table 6 also shows that the results of the self-esteem scale measurements obtained an empirical *mean of 72.55* with moderate status based on the frequency distribution of data for the self-esteem scale as follows:

Table 8. Categorization of Self-Esteem Scale Scores

Score	Category	F	Percentage
≥ 88	Very high	10	4.8%
74 – 88	Tall	86	41.1%
61 – 73	Currently	101	48.3%
47 – 60	Low	11	5.3%
≤ 47	Very Low	1	0.5%
Total		209	100%

Before proceeding to the hypothesis testing stage, it is important to first conduct an assumption test which includes a normality test and a linearity test so that the results are obtained with the following explanation:

3.3. Normality Test

The normality test as a research procedure focuses on the frequency deviation of the data distribution being studied. The *Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test* is conducted using the rule that if $p > 0.05$ then the data distribution is normal, conversely if $p < 0.05$ then the data distribution is not normal [23]. In this study, both variables can be stated to be normally distributed as listed in Table 9.

Table 9. Results of the Normality Assumption Test

Variables	z	p	Information
Happiness	0.060	0.065	Normal
Pride	0.043	0.200	Normal

3.4. Linearity Test

The linearity test is a research procedure used to determine the linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The rules for the linearity test are as follows: $p > 0.05$ and the calculated F value $< F$ table at a significance level of 5%, it is stated as linear, and vice versa [23]. In this study, the relationship between the two variables can be stated as linear as listed in Table 10.

Table 10. Linearity Assumption Test Results

Variables	F Count	F Table	p	Information
Happiness – Self-Esteem	0.865	2.73	0.699	Linear

3.5. Correlation Hypothesis Test

After the assumption test is carried out, the research process continues with a hypothesis test through *Pearson product moment correlation analysis*. In the correlation test, Guzeller states that the way to evaluate how large or small the correlation coefficient is can use the following consistency classification standards [24]:

Table 11. Standardization of Correlation Coefficient Classification

r Count	Category
< 0.10	Very Low
0.11 – 0.30	Low
0.31 – 0.50	Currently
0.51 – 0.80	Strong
> 0.81	Very strong

The use of the rule is explained by a $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, which can be stated as significant, and vice versa [25].

The results of the correlation test between The relationship between self-esteem variables and happiness variables can be seen in Table 12.

Table 12. Results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test

Variables	r Count	r Table	P	Information
Self-Esteem - Happiness	0.574	0.114	0.000	Strongly Correlated

The table above shows that the calculated r value is $0.574 > r$ table 0.114 and the p value is $0.000 < 0.05$ where the coefficient interval between 0.510 to 0.800 is included in the strong category, which means there is a significant strong relationship between self-esteem and happiness so that the hypothesis in this study is accepted.

Partial correlation analysis is used to test the relationship between aspects of the self-esteem variable (X) and happiness (Y). The rule is that if the p-value < 0.05 and the calculated $r > r$ table at a significance level of 0.05, then the aspects between the self-esteem variable (X) and happiness (Y) can be stated to have a significant relationship, and vice versa. The results of the partial correlation analysis test for aspect Y₁ are as follows:

Table 13. Results of Partial Correlation Analysis of Enjoyable Aspects of Life (Y₁)

Aspect	r Count	r Table	P	Information
Strength (X ₁)	0.513	0.114	0.000	Strongly Correlated
Significance (X ₂)	0.499	0.114	0.000	Moderately Correlated
Virtue (X ₃)	0.393	0.114	0.000	Moderately Correlated
Ability (X ₄)	0.573	0.114	0.000	Strongly Correlated

The data presentation above shows that all aspects in variable X are correlated with aspect Y₁ in variable Y. Furthermore, the results of the partial correlation analysis test for aspect Y₂ are as follows:

Table 14. Results of Partial Correlation Analysis of Meaningful Life Aspects (Y₂)

Aspect	r Count	r Table	P	Information
Strength (X ₁)	0.367	0.114	0.000	Moderately Correlated
Significance (X ₂)	0.380	0.114	0.000	Moderately Correlated
Virtue (X ₃)	0.192	0.114	0.005	Low Correlation
Ability (X ₄)	0.338	0.114	0.000	Moderately Correlated

The data presentation above shows that all aspects in variable X are correlated with aspect Y₂ in variable Y. Furthermore, the results of the partial correlation analysis test for aspect Y₃ are as follows:

Table 15. Results of Partial Correlation Analysis Test of Self-Involvement Aspect (Y₃)

Aspect	r Count	r Table	P	Information
Strength (X ₁)	0.309	0.114	0.000	Moderately Correlated

Significance (X ₂)	0.264	0.114	0.000	Low Correlation
Virtue (X ₃)	0.139	0.114	0.044	Low Correlation
Ability (X ₄)	0.349	0.114	0.000	Moderately Correlated

Partial correlation analysis test results between the aspects of the self-esteem variable (X) and the happiness variable (Y) shows that all aspects of the X variable, namely aspects X₁, X₂, X₃, and X₄ are correlated with all aspects of the Y variable, namely aspects Y₁, Y₂, and Y₃.

The purpose of the data analysis results is to determine the relationship between self-esteem and happiness that individuals have when they are in the early adulthood stage where there are obstacles that must be overcome, namely the *quarter-life crisis phase*. The results of the hypothesis test through the *Pearson product moment correlation* on both variables state that there is a significant positive relationship, namely the higher the self-esteem, the higher the happiness, and vice versa. Another statement supports the results of the study with an explanation related to one of the factors influencing happiness, namely self-esteem which can determine how individuals view themselves [14].

Previous research findings also strengthen the results of this study, which explains that individuals with good self-esteem can focus on their own views or assessments through positive and negative attitudes, thereby giving rise to happiness with the life they live [26]. In line with the results of other studies that explain that self-esteem can make individuals understand themselves well through positive evaluations and have happiness [16]. Supported by research that shows that self-esteem and happiness are significantly positively related in the samples studied [27].

Based on the demographics of the subjects, it can be seen that the distribution of data related to early adults who experience *quarter-life crisis* is mostly female. The phenomenon of *quarter-life crisis* is more often felt by women because they are more susceptible to feeling depressed and the emergence of anxiety and worry about their lives [28]. The condition of *quarter-life crisis* in women in terms of the dimensions of anxiety in decision-making due to feeling confused, hopeless and trapped, having a negative view of themselves, and anxiety about life pressures shows higher results than men [29].

The characteristics of the subjects in this study also show that the majority of early adults have student status. The challenge of *quarter-life crisis* for students causes the emergence of psychosocial problems in them, namely anxiety about the future [30]. In addition, *quarter-life crisis* in students is due to not having a good future plan but being responsible for many life demands, which gives rise to anxiety about career failure and fear related to attachment to relationships with the opposite sex [31].

it is known that most of the subjects of early adulthood experiencing *quarter-life crisis* are in East Kalimantan. The Indonesian Health Survey conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2023 showed that East Kalimantan had the second-highest prevalence of depression in Indonesia, at 2.2% [32]. Furthermore, it was explained that depression is one of the psychological impacts experienced due to *quarter-life crisis* [33].

Based on the descriptive test, a picture of the distribution of happiness scale measurement data was obtained in early adults who experienced a *quarter-life crisis* which showed a moderate level of happiness within themselves. This level of happiness is caused by the individual's ability to adapt to the crisis in his life which is heading towards achieving *flourishing* as the highest level of mental health, but if it is associated with the PERMA theory by Seligman, happiness has not fully described several indicators, in line with the explanation regarding the highest achievement of happiness must fulfill all indicators in PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment) [34]. Therefore, the results obtained show that the happiness of the majority of subjects in this study has not reached a high level.

There is also a theory that states the relationship between the concept of happiness in Seligman's book, where the pleasant aspects of life include positive emotions and relationships, the meaningful aspects of life include the sense of meaning and achievement in the form of goals in life, as well as aspects of self-involvement include the individual's full involvement in carrying out activities [35]. In addition, times of crisis are considered to be able to give rise to more pronounced negative feelings in early adulthood, thus becoming one of the causes of individuals not being able to fully achieve high levels of happiness [36]. Individuals in carrying out their life obligations can experience difficulties or success in achieving happiness through positive and negative experiences they feel [9].

Furthermore, a descriptive test was also conducted on the measurement of the self-esteem scale where the results obtained showed that the self-esteem possessed was at a moderate level in the research subjects. The self-esteem possessed by early adult individuals, especially students, gave rise to the view that they were valuable, but lacked self-confidence and were influenced by acceptance from the social environment [37].

In line with the statement explaining that self-esteem in early adulthood comes from fulfilling the need for self-esteem obtained in the family as a forum to appreciate and encourage the potential of individuals to become more confident, but it is not uncommon in a family to have children who like to be compared by their parents [38]. Self-esteem can also be influenced by self-

acceptance related to the ability of early adult individuals to accept themselves in all situations they experience so that it has the potential to give rise to positive beliefs. [3 9]. Other research also shows that good levels of self-esteem can occur by cultivating self-acceptance as a support for psychological well-being [40].

Data analysis conducted based on partial correlation test, obtained results that interpret that the aspects of strength, meaningfulness, virtue, and ability have a relationship to the pleasant aspects of life in early adults who experience *quarter life crisis*. The strength aspect is related to the pleasant aspects of life because individuals can increase the strength of character qualities related to thoughts and feelings, as well as behaviors that are owned when facing difficult situations so that it has an impact on the process of having a pleasant life [41].

Other research also explains that the meaning of an individual has a contribution to positive affective, such as the presence of pleasant emotions that remain within the individual because they receive affection and a form of acceptance from others [15]. In addition, the aspect of virtue is also related to the pleasant aspect of life because in addition to life experiences, individuals are also influenced by religiosity in terms of virtue which plays a role in following the applicable ethics and religion so that it gives rise to a pleasant life [4 2]. Then, the aspect of ability is related to the pleasant aspect of life because the individual's ability to overcome the pressures that arise in his life can increase pleasant emotions [4 3].

Data analysis conducted based on partial correlation test on meaningful aspects of life in early adulthood who experienced *quarter life crisis* showed that the strength aspect is related to meaningful aspects of life, there are research results that explain that strength can describe the quality of individual character as an internal side of happiness shown through self-behavior in daily life in finding the meaning of life [4 1]. Furthermore, the aspect of meaningfulness has a relationship with meaningful aspects of life in line with the statement that reveals the meaningfulness felt by individuals in participating in their social environment will be able to bring up meaning in life [4 4].

The aspect of virtue is also related to the meaningful aspect of life, there is research that shows that virtue with spiritual values as individual beliefs can have an impact on psychology which provides a sense of gratitude and optimism so that it increases the meaning of life through the value of goodness carried out in living life [4 5]. Then, the aspect of ability has a relationship with the meaningful aspect of life because individuals with confidence in their own abilities can motivate themselves to determine the desired goals, as well as bring out the meaning obtained from the way

individuals view themselves with positive feelings that grow within themselves [9].

Data analysis conducted based on partial correlation test on self-involvement aspect in early adulthood who experienced *quarter life crisis* showed that strength aspect is related to self-involvement aspect which means that strength in an individual can help him to build potential and character positively in his involvement by providing benefits to others [4 6]. In addition, the aspect of meaningfulness also shows a relationship to the self-involvement aspect where individuals who feel that they are meaningful and receive good acceptance from their environment can encourage the individual to get involved in groups so that they consider their existence useful for others [3 8].

Other findings show that the virtue aspect is related to the self-involvement aspect because individuals with a moral identity need to have virtue as a self-regulation process so that it shows involvement in carrying out moral actions [4 7]. Furthermore, individuals who develop their abilities as a potential to play an active role by getting involved in society thus increasing the sense of security and happiness in their social environment [4 4].

4. Conclusion

Based on the research that has been conducted, the results obtained state that there is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and happiness in early adults who experience a *quarter-life crisis*. In addition, the difficulties felt during the *quarter-life crisis* can be minimized as long as students have the strength and ability in self-esteem that is most correlated with all aspects of happiness, namely a pleasant life, a meaningful life, and self-involvement so that when faced with the challenges of a *quarter-life crisis*, early adults, especially students, are confident that they can get through it well and achieve happiness in their lives.

This study focused on a sample of young adults who were in the *locked-out age period* during the *quarter-life crisis*. Therefore, the researcher suggests using a larger sample by adding young adults in the *locked-in age period* to obtain a broader picture beyond the research results. Future researchers are expected to develop phenomenological methods to be able to examine more deeply related literature and descriptions of the happiness of young adults during the *quarter-life crisis*. In addition, it is also recommended to apply factors other than self-esteem that influence happiness, such as gratitude and hope.

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