

## Self-Esteem between Social Support and Quarter-Life Crisis

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### Abstract:

During emerging adulthood, individuals may experience a developmental crisis known as the Quarter-Life Crisis. The Quarter-Life Crisis can be influenced by various factors, including social support and self-esteem. This study aims to investigate the role of social support in the Quarter-Life Crisis, with self-esteem acting as a mediator, in emerging adults. A total of 151 participants aged 18-29 years were involved in this study. Three measurement tools were utilized: the Quarter-Life Crisis Scale, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). The PROCESS analysis indicates that self-esteem mediates the relationship between social support and the Quarter-Life Crisis by 38% (-0.3790;  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings demonstrate that self-esteem serves as a mediator in the relationship between social support and the Quarter-Life Crisis.

**Keyword:** Emerging Adulthood; Self-Esteem; Social Support; Quarter-Life Crisis

### Introduction:

According to Arnett (2007), emerging adulthood is a developmental stage experienced by individuals aged 18-29 years. During emerging adulthood, individuals undergo an evolution in psychosocial development related to expanded identity exploration and the subjective feeling of being in transition between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2001). Lane (2014), notes that many life changes and major roles occur during emerging adulthood, including leaving home, entering or leaving educational settings, and starting careers. These transitions place individuals at significant risk for mental health

issues.

One mental health risk that individuals in emerging adulthood may face is depression. Robinson et al. (2020), report that individuals in this age group score high on depression measures, indicating a developmental crisis. This suggests that those who score high on depression measures tend to experience developmental crises during emerging adulthood.

A specific developmental crisis in emerging adulthood is known as the quarter-life crisis. Robinson et al. (2013) describe the quarter-life crisis as a period marked by increased difficulty,

stress, instability, and a significant turning point in a person's life. Additionally, the quarter-life crisis is characterized by the transition from post-school life to more challenging conditions (Robinson & Wright, 2013).

The causes of the quarter-life crisis include both internal and external factors. One internal factor, according to Olenik-Shemesh et al. (2018), is self-esteem, which influences the occurrence of the quarter-life crisis from within the individual. On the other hand, social support (Praharso et al., 2017) is an external factor contributing to the quarter-life crisis. Therefore, self-esteem and social support are the primary variables of interest in this study.

According to Bernardon et al. (2011), social support consists of both tangible and intangible assistance derived from an individual's social bonds, often characterized by the perception of being cared for and valued. Previous research has linked social support to beneficial physical and psychological health outcomes when facing difficulties (Perrier et al., 2010). This makes social support essential for individuals during crises, as the numerous emerging challenges can easily lead to depression (Rossi & Mebert, 2011). Rossi & Mebert (2011), found that the greater the social support, the lower the tendency for individuals to experience depression during emerging adulthood. Similarly of what Wood et al. (2018) noted that individuals in emerging adulthood need social support due to significant changes, requiring substantial support to navigate these transitions successfully.

According to Swickert et al. (2010) social support can take various forms, including material assistance, esteem support, someone to talk to about problems, or someone to help with tasks. Vangelisti (2009), identified two main types of social support: received social support and perceived social support. Received social support focuses on the quantity and quality of support given, while perceived social support is based on the availability and adequacy of social connections (Eagle et al., 2018).

Another variable examined in this study is self-esteem. Self-esteem has many definitions; one of which can be understood as the emotional process and result of one's perceptions or experiences related to positive or negative evaluations (Smelser, 1989). According to Mruk (2013), self-esteem is associated with feelings of worthiness and is fundamentally affective, arising from the relationship between competence and worthiness. Individuals with high self-esteem have a strong ability to recover (Srisayekti et al., 2015). This resilience is necessary for individuals facing a quarter-life crisis, a period filled with trials and tribulations involving career choices, finances, living arrangements, and relationships (Robbins & Wilner, 2001).

In addition to its correlation with the quarter-life crisis, social support also correlates with self-esteem. Perlin & Bierman (2013) found that social support enhances feelings of self-esteem and fosters a sense of belonging in a social environment. Other findings indicate that social support can improve self-esteem, which helps individuals with self-adjustment (Lau et al., 2018). Furthermore, social support provided by parents and friends, in the form of a sense of security, can boost self-esteem (Roman et al., 2008).

Thus, based on previous research showing that social support correlates with self-esteem and that self-esteem is an external factor in the quarter-life crisis, this study assumes that self-esteem can mediate the relationship between social support and the quarter-life crisis. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the role of self-esteem as a mediator between social support and the quarter-life crisis during emerging adulthood.

### **Methods:**

There were 151 participants aged 18-29 years in this study, with a higher number of female participants compared to male participants (N=113; 74.83%). The largest age group among the participants was 21 years old (N=64; 42.38%). The other age groups had varying numbers, with the smallest groups (N=2; 1.32%) being 26, 27, 28, and 29 years old.

**Table 1. Description of Research Participants**

Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
• Male	113	74,83
• Female	38	25,17
Age		
• 18	10	6,62
• 19	13	8,61
• 20	17	11,26
• 21	64	42,38
• 22	11	7,29
• 23	16	10,60
• 24	7	4,65
• 25	5	3,31
• 26	2	1,32
• 27	2	1,32
• 28	2	1,32
• 29	2	1,32

Three variables were measured in this study: the dependent variable, the quarter-life crisis; the independent variable, social support; and the mediator variable, self-esteem. The quarter-life crisis was measured using the Quarter-Life Crisis Scale (Agustin, 2012) which has a reliability of 0.944 based on research data. The item-total correlation coefficients for the Quarter-Life Crisis Scale ranged from 0.413 to 0.797, with a total of 24 items.

Social support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988) translated

by Winahyu et al. (2015) consisting of 12 items. The process of translating the MSPSS into Indonesian followed the back-translation method for cross-cultural research (Brislin, 1970). *The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support* (MSPSS) had item-total correlation coefficients ranging from 0.484 to 0.730, with a reliability of 0.910 based on research data.

Self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965) which consists of 9 items. The RSES had a reliability of 0.879 with item-total correlation coefficients ranging from 0.504 to 0.748 based on research data.

All scales used in this study were distributed online through social media and group chats using Google Forms. Google Forms was chosen due to its familiarity and frequent use. Additionally, using Google Forms to collect data was an effort by the researchers to minimize interaction with many people and maintain social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The scales were disseminated in narrative form accompanied by posters from October 24 to 26, 2021. During the data collection process, 151 participants aged 18-29 years were involved. Before completing the scales, participants were directed to fill out an informed consent form on the initial page of the Google Form.

After the data was collected, an assumption test was conducted, which included tests for normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. Data that passed these tests were then analyzed using PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) with the statistical software SPSS version 22.0. The purpose of the PROCESS analysis was to determine whether self-esteem mediates the relationship between social support and the quarter-life crisis.

**Results and Discussion:**

**Result:**

This study categorized data into three levels: low, medium, and high for each variable based on hypothetical scores. The purpose of data categorization was to classify individuals into

tiered groups using the data categorization formula. The details of the data categorization are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Data categorization**

Variable	Low		Medium		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Quarter-Life Crisis	0	0	46	30,46	105	69,53
Social Support	0	0	35	23,18	116	76,82
Self-Esteem	0	0	21	13,90	130	86,09

Based on the data presented in Table 2, the majority of participants were categorized as having a high level of quarter-life crisis (N=105; 69.53%). A similar pattern was observed for the variables of social support (N=116; 76.82%) and self-esteem (N=130; 86.09%), with most participants falling into the high categorization.

Several assumption tests were conducted before performing the hypothesis tests, including normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. The results of the normality test, based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, indicated that the data for the Quarter-Life Crisis variable were normally distributed, while the other two variables were not. Detailed results of the normality test can be seen in Table 3..

**Table 3. Results of the Normality Test**

Variabel	Significance	Description
Quarter-Life Crisis	$p > 0,05$	Normal
Social Support	$p < 0,05$	Not normal

Self-Esteem	$p < 0,05$	Not normal
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In addition to the normality test, a linearity test was also conducted on the research data. The results of the linearity test between the social support variable and the quarter-life crisis variable indicated no linear relationship (F=12.619; deviation from linearity  $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 4 Results of the Linearity Test**

Variabel	F	Deviation from Linearity	Description
Social Support * Quarter-Life Crisis	12,619	$p > 0,05$	Non-linear
Self-Esteem * Quarter-Life Crisis	91,644	$p > 0,05$	Non-Linear

This study also performed a multicollinearity test to determine whether there were correlations between the independent variables. The results showed no multicollinearity among the independent variables. This was evidenced by the multicollinearity test results, which indicated that the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were below 10 (VIF<10; SS=1.000; SE=1.000) and Tolerance values were above 0.1 (Tolerance>0.1; SS=1.000; SE=1.000). Additionally, the data passed the heteroscedasticity test, indicating that there was no constant variance of residuals for all observations in the regression model. This was shown by the significance of the correlation  $p < 0.05$  based on the Glejser Test.

Regarding data analysis, this study used PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) to examine the role of social support in the quarter-life crisis, with self-esteem as a mediator. Detailed explanations of the

role of each variable can be seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2.



Figure 1. Path of Social Support on the Quarter-

Life Crisis Without Mediation

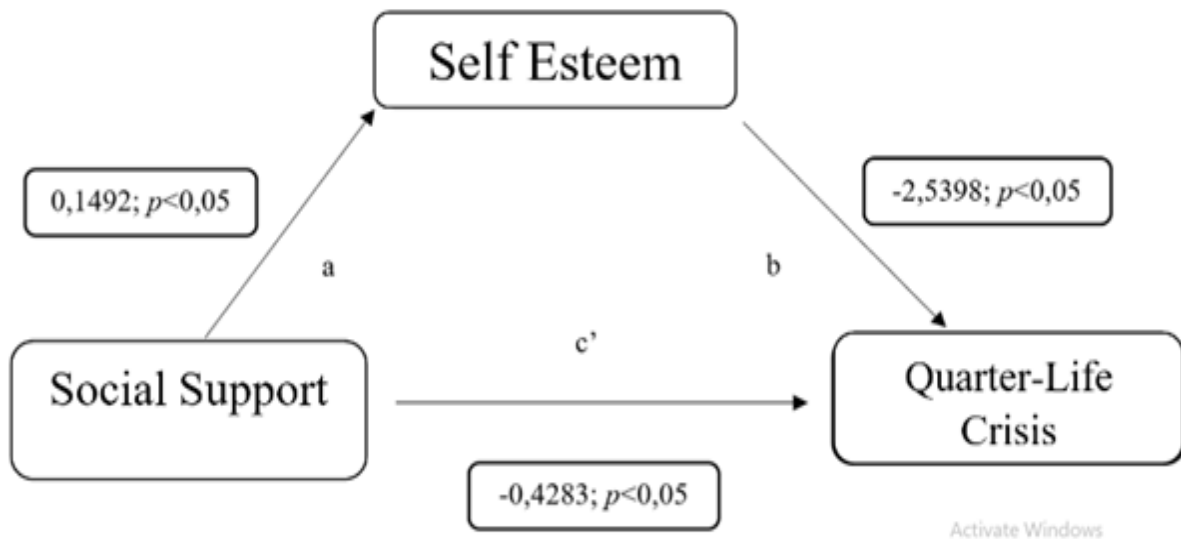


Figure 2. Overall Path

Table 5. Detailed Path of Indirect Effect(s)  
Overall

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
-0,3790	0,0858	-0.0214	-0,0088

**Discussion:**

This study involved three variables: the quarter-life crisis, social support, and self-esteem as a mediator. The objective of this research was to examine the role of self-esteem as a mediator in the relationship between social support and the

quarter-life crisis. The findings suggest that higher self-esteem enhances the effectiveness of social support in addressing the quarter-life crisis. The analysis showed that self-esteem successfully mediated the relationship between social support and the quarter-life crisis by 38%.

These results also support previous research that found self-esteem to be a mediator in the relationship between social support and adjustment outcomes (Lau et al., 2018). According to Lau et al. (2018), students' adjustment during transitional periods improved when their self-esteem was bolstered by social support from family and friends. Additionally,

self-esteem has been shown to mediate the relationship between stressful life events and mental health outcomes in student participants (Lee, 2020).

Self-esteem is related to the feeling that one is a precious valuable human being (Alvina & Dewi, 2016). Individuals with high or good self-esteem believe that they have potential and are worthy of success in life, and vice versa (Aza et al., 2019). Therefore, high or good self-esteem is needed when facing a quarter-life crisis, which is often marked by low self-esteem (Walshe, 2018).

In this study, self-esteem was found to play a role as a full mediator. This is because social support correlates with the quarter-life crisis through the mediating role of self-esteem. Recent research shows that social support is crucial during emerging adulthood (Lane & Fink, 2015). This is due to the many life transitions, significant mental health risks, and changing roles, such as leaving home, entering and leaving educational settings, and starting careers during this period (Lane, 2014). Moreover, social support from family and friends effectively helps individuals during times of stress and consistently correlates with good mental health, including a lower tendency to develop major depressive disorders (Lakey & Cronin, 2008; Nguyen et al., 2017).

Another finding of this study is that social support correlates with self-esteem. Social support can enhance feelings of self-worth and a sense of belonging in a social environment (Pearlin & Bierman, 2013). According to Swickert et al. (2010), various forms of social support can be provided, including esteem support, which involves giving positive evaluations during the assessment process of an individual. Individuals who feel supported by their surroundings can boost their confidence and motivation to improve because they tend to interpret their life experiences positively, have self-confidence, and view their lives more optimistically (Nurmalasari & Putri, 2015).

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