

Quarter-Life Crisis and Readiness for Marriage in Early Adulthood

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Abstract:

This paper explores the phenomenon of quarter-life crisis in the context of marriage during early adulthood. In this transitional phase, individuals face challenges related to identity, career, and interpersonal relationships. Social pressure and stigma can influence the decision to marry, leading to anxiety and confusion. Emotional and socio-emotional readiness are crucial before getting married, making it essential to prepare adequately for building a healthy relationship. Through a review of literature from the past ten years, this paper reveals the complexities of marriage at a young age and emphasizes the importance of communication and social support in navigating this crisis.

Keywords: *Early Adulthood, Readiness, Quarter Life Crisis, Marriage*

1. Introduction

In life, adulthood is the longest phase experienced by an individual (Hurlock, 1999). Late adolescence to early adulthood is a crucial period in the transition to maturity, where individuals undergo significant physical, emotional, and social changes. During this stage, many young people face major challenges related to self-identity, thoughts, and judgment from their surroundings. Anxiety about the future often arises, accompanied by feelings of uncertainty that can hinder their ability to make important decisions. Many experience confusion and a loss of direction, which often leads to the phenomenon of a quarter-life crisis.

Robbins and Wilner (2001) were the first experts to introduce the term "quarter-life crisis" based on their research on young people in America. They labeled these young people as "twenty-somethings," referring to individuals who have just left the comfort of being students and are starting to enter the real world, facing demands to work or get married. The feelings associated with a quarter-life crisis emerge at the end of adolescence when individuals approach the final stages of their studies and prepare for the "real world," whether in high school or college. The approaching graduation often triggers anxiety about the future, causing fear due to cultural changes and environmental differences they will soon face.

Becoming an adult presents its own challenges, often considered a difficult period, as individuals must detach from dependence on their parents and begin learning independence. University students fall into the early adulthood phase, typically ranging from 18 to 30 years old. This period is characterized by adjustments to new life patterns and social expectations. Early adults are expected to take on new roles, develop new attitudes, desires, and values in line with these new responsibilities. Additionally, they are expected to adjust independently

(Hurlock, 2004).

According to Primala (2017), anxiety over life choices is often experienced by women who feel that pursuing higher education is unnecessary. Instead, they begin to focus on lifelong commitments and forming quality relationships rather than just seeking quantity. Meanwhile, Noor H (2018) states that individuals experiencing this crisis often feel a loss of life motivation, failure, low self-confidence, and a sense of meaninglessness, even withdrawing from social interactions. One of the most apparent characteristics of individuals going through a quarter-life crisis is confusion and excessive worry about life feeling monotonous.

Macrae (2011) mentioned in his research that many young adults aged 19 to 25 experience panic attacks and self-doubt regarding their ability to navigate adulthood due to this crisis. Based on the explanations and research findings above, it can be concluded that the transition from adolescence to adulthood is a complex process. Various stressors that emerge during this period can create difficulties, making individuals feel stuck and directionless in their adult lives. They begin to struggle with facing the world, managing emotions, and questioning whether the life path they have chosen is the right one.

Amidst this uncertainty, marriage becomes a significant social issue for individuals aged 18 to 25. Many begin to consider finding a life partner, yet societal pressure and stigma—such as the notion that women who do not marry soon will become "old maids"—often accelerate this decision. This pressure leads parents to arrange marriages for their daughters without fully considering their emotional readiness. Before marrying, individuals need to assess their preparedness to build a happy and prosperous household. The success of a marriage depends on mental and emotional readiness, family support, and self-understanding in navigating this transitional phase.

2. Methods

a. Research Approach

This study employs a library research approach. Library research is a research activity conducted by gathering information and data from various resources available in libraries, including reference books, previous research findings, articles, notes, and various journals discussing the issues under study (Nur Latifah et al., 2021). Data is obtained by searching for literature relevant to the discussed issue.

In this study, the author applies the library research method for several reasons. First, data sources do not necessarily have to be collected from field research; they can be obtained from libraries, documents, journals, books, and other literature. Second, information or data can address research questions as they are derived from books, scientific reports, and previous research findings, which remain valuable for library research.

b. Data Collection Technique

The research was conducted by collecting journal articles from various relevant sources. Five references were obtained using the Publish or Perish database and Google Scholar, with keywords such as early adulthood, quarter-life crisis, marriage, and marital readiness.

c. Data Analysis

The data analysis technique was used as a reference to extract the core discussion and yield research findings. The analysis technique applied follows the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Rahmi et al., 2021). Data is presented in the form of a description or brief explanation for better understanding. Subsequently, the data is analyzed in a specific and clear manner to derive conclusions. The research articles used were selected based on data relevance criteria, then collected, summarized, analyzed, and finally reinterpreted to draw conclusions in line with the research problem.

3. Hasil

This study examines various aspects related to the quarter-life crisis and marriage readiness in early adulthood based on a review of several scientific journals. The research findings reviewed can be summarized as follows:

- a. Bagus Hafarinto, Selly Rahmayati, Salsabila Laurensia, Delvina Faulin, Alrefi, Minarsi (2024) – This study found that negative perceptions from the surrounding environment are one of the main factors triggering the quarter-life crisis. This contributes to increased anxiety and fear in making important decisions in early adulthood.
- b. Shaqilla Aulia Hakim, Ulfa Masfufah (2023) – This study shows that physical and emotional readiness is crucial for facing challenges in marriage. Proper preparation and emotional stability play a significant role in creating a happy marriage in the future.
- c. Muhammad Zein Permana & Alnida Destiana Nishfathul Medynna (2021) – The findings of this study reveal that individuals in the emerging adulthood stage generally have fears of commitment, new responsibilities, and the transition to married life.
- d. Herdian Herdiana & Dzikria Afifah Primala Wijaya (2023) – This study confirms that the quarter-life crisis can negatively impact an individual's mental health, including increased stress levels, anxiety, and depression.
- e. Luluk Masluchah, Wardatul Mufidah, Uti Lestari (2022) – This study found that the higher an individual's self-concept, the lower the likelihood of experiencing a quarter-life crisis. Conversely, individuals with a low self-concept tend to be more vulnerable to this crisis.

4. Discussion

The analyzed studies indicate that the quarter-life crisis and marriage readiness in early adulthood are closely related. The quarter-life crisis is often characterized by uncertainty, anxiety, and confusion in making important decisions, including marriage. This phenomenon is exacerbated by social pressure that expects individuals to marry at a young age, especially in cultures that view marriage as an indicator of maturity.

Marriage in early adulthood is often perceived as a social obligation. Many individuals feel burdened by family and societal expectations, particularly women who face negative stigma if they do not marry soon. This can lead individuals to make marriage decisions without adequate emotional readiness. Marriage readiness should not only be measured by age or financial stability but also by emotional maturity. The ability to manage emotions, resolve conflicts, and communicate effectively are essential factors in building a healthy and harmonious relationship.

Additionally, the quarter-life crisis can lead to fear of commitment, resulting in delays or lack of readiness in entering married life. Many young adults feel they do not yet fully know themselves or are not mentally prepared to share life with a partner. Unrealistic social expectations further exacerbate their psychological pressure.

Research also shows that the quarter-life crisis has negative effects on mental health, with individuals often experiencing excessive anxiety, stress, and even depression due to pressure to meet societal expectations. In this context, social support from family, friends, and communities plays a crucial role in helping individuals cope with emotional challenges. This support provides a sense of security and boosts confidence in making decisions that align with their readiness.

In addition to social support, effective communication between partners is a vital aspect of marriage readiness. Open communication allows couples to understand each other's expectations, concerns, and life goals, helping them build a stronger relationship. The ability to resolve conflicts constructively also helps couples maintain harmony in their marriage.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, individuals facing a quarter-life crisis need self-reflection to evaluate their emotional readiness before deciding to marry. This process enables them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and manage negative emotions such as anxiety. With adequate emotional readiness, along with social support and effective communication, individuals can navigate the quarter-life crisis more wisely and build a healthy and harmonious marriage.

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