



The impact of quarter-life crisis on physical activity and well-being among university students in Indonesia

El impacto de la crisis de los veintitantos en la actividad física y el bienestar de los estudiantes universitarios en Indonesia

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Abstract

Introduction: The Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) is a developmental phenomenon that affects university students, particularly in the context of emerging adulthood. In Indonesia, cultural norms and social expectations may influence how students experience QLC, impacting their mental health, physical activity, and well-being.

Objective: This study aims to examine the impact of Quarter-Life Crisis on physical activity and well-being among university students in Indonesia, considering the role of demographic factors such as gender, age, and marital status.

Methodology: A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design was employed, using the Rasch Model to analyze data from 628 university students across 17 provinces in Indonesia. A questionnaire assessing QLC symptoms and levels of physical activity was distributed online. Data were analyzed using Winsteps 5.1.5 software.

Results: The study found that younger students and those married experienced higher levels of QLC, particularly anxiety and loss of motivation. Students who reported high QLC levels were less likely to engage in physical activities. No significant gender differences were observed in the levels of QLC.

Discussion: The findings suggest that age and marital status play a significant role in shaping students' experiences of QLC, which may hinder their engagement in physical activities, ultimately affecting their overall well-being.

Conclusion: Universities should implement holistic interventions that integrate physical activity with mental health support to help students cope with QLC, enhancing their resilience, and improving their mental and physical health.

Keywords

Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC); physical activity; well-being; university students; Indonesia.

Resumen

Introducción: La crisis de los veintitantos (QLC, por sus siglas en inglés) es un fenómeno del desarrollo que afecta a los estudiantes universitarios, especialmente en el contexto de la edad adulta emergente. En Indonesia, las normas culturales y las expectativas sociales pueden influir en la forma en que los estudiantes viven la QLC, lo que repercute en su salud mental, su actividad física y su bienestar.

Objetivo: El objetivo de este estudio es examinar el impacto de la crisis de los veintitantos en la actividad física y el bienestar de los estudiantes universitarios de Indonesia, teniendo en cuenta el papel de factores demográficos como el género, la edad y el estado civil.

Metodología: Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo con un diseño transversal, utilizando el modelo de Rasch para analizar los datos de 628 estudiantes universitarios de 17 provincias de Indonesia. Se distribuyó en línea un cuestionario para evaluar los síntomas de la QLC y los niveles de actividad física. Los datos se analizaron con el software Winsteps 5.1.5.

Resultados: El estudio reveló que los estudiantes más jóvenes y los casados experimentaban niveles más altos de QLC, en particular ansiedad y pérdida de motivación. Los estudiantes que informaron niveles altos de QLC eran menos propensos a realizar actividades físicas. No se observaron diferencias significativas entre los sexos en los niveles de QLC.

Discusión: Los resultados sugieren que la edad y el estado civil desempeñan un papel importante en la configuración de las experiencias de los estudiantes con respecto a la calidad de vida, lo que puede obstaculizar su participación en actividades físicas y, en última instancia, afectar su bienestar general.

Conclusión: Las universidades deben implementar intervenciones holísticas que integren la actividad física con el apoyo a la salud mental para ayudar a los estudiantes a lidiar con el QLC, mejorando su resiliencia y su salud mental y física.

Palabras clave

Crisis de los veintitantos (QLC); actividad física; bienestar; estudiantes universitarios; Indonesia.



Introduction

The Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) is a developmental crisis that typically occurs in emerging adulthood, characterized by anxiety, confusion, and dissatisfaction with life choices. Introduced by Robbins and Wilner (2001) QLC reflects feelings of uncertainty about career, relationships, and personal identity during the transition into adulthood. Arnett (2000) describes this stage as one marked by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, and transitions in work and social relationships. Erikson's (1994) psychosocial theory emphasizes that resolving the conflict between intimacy and isolation is the central task of early adulthood. However, QLC can also manifest as either "locked-out," where individuals fail to transition into expected adult roles, or "locked-in," where individuals feel trapped in unsatisfying or misaligned roles (Robinson, 2019).

Recent studies have highlighted the multidimensional nature of QLC, encompassing emotional distress, cognitive confusion, and relational conflicts (Ballesteros et al., 2024; Wahyudin et al., 2025). The impact of QLC on mental well-being is widely recognized across different cultures, with significant implications for psychological health during early adulthood. A survey by LinkedIn Corporate Communications (2017) revealed that 75% of adults aged 23–33 in countries like the United States, the UK, India, and Australia experienced QLC, primarily due to career uncertainty, financial instability, and relationship challenges. Research in Asia, including Indonesia, has similarly identified uncertainty, dissatisfaction, and indecision as key aspects of QLC (Hasyim et al., 2024) further highlighting the impact of socio-cultural pressures such as family expectations and gender roles on this crisis.

In Indonesia, QLC is influenced by strong cultural norms surrounding marriage and career success, with young adults facing growing pressure to meet family expectations (Pramudya et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2022). Although the emotional and psychological effects of QLC have been explored, its impact on physical activity and overall well-being has received limited attention, especially among university students (Bernardino et al., 2025; Hermawan, 2025; Kilani & Kilani, 2026; Wahyudin et al., 2026). Physical activity is widely known to improve mental and physical health, serving as a key coping strategy for managing stress, anxiety, and depression (David & Román, 2025; Flores-paredes, 2026; Rus, 2025). However, students experiencing high levels of QLC may be less likely to engage in physical activities due to emotional exhaustion, further compromising their mental and physical health.

Physical activity offers numerous benefits, including stress reduction, mood improvement, and enhanced resilience, which are particularly important for students facing the psychological challenges of QLC. Participation in sports or other physical activities can be an effective tool for coping with anxiety, boosting self-esteem, and improving overall well-being. Despite these benefits, individuals undergoing QLC may experience reduced motivation to engage in such activities, further exacerbating their crisis. Therefore, understanding the relationship between QLC and physical activity is crucial for developing interventions that promote better mental and physical health outcomes for students during this challenging phase of life.

Demographic factors, such as gender, age, and marital status, play significant roles in shaping QLC experiences. Studies indicate that women are often more affected by societal pressures regarding marriage, while men face greater career-related stresses (Horta & Tang, 2023; Uddin & Hoque, 2025). Furthermore, younger students and those who are married may experience more intense emotional distress, influencing their ability to participate in physical activities.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining the impact of QLC on physical activity and well-being among Indonesian university students. By exploring the role of demographic variables, including gender, age, and marital status, the research seeks to provide insights into how QLC affects both the psychological and physical health of students. The findings are expected to inform the design of targeted counseling interventions and support systems that promote mental resilience and physical well-being during this critical developmental stage.

Method

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design to investigate the psychological, behavioral, and physical activity-related manifestations of Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) and its impact on physical activity and well-being among university students in Indonesia. The quantitative approach was selected for its capacity to systematically measure psychological constructs and to statistically test the relationships between demographic variables and QLC levels (Creswell, 2013). The cross-sectional design is particularly appropriate as it allows for a snapshot of respondents' psychological and physical conditions at a specific point in time, a method widely used in developmental and counseling research to analyze normative crises (Balki et al., 2023; Barbieri et al., 2024; Maier et al., 2023; Pandey & Pathak, 2024).

Data collection was conducted entirely online, with respondents accessing the questionnaire via a Google Form link. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the assurance of anonymity. Respondents were required to provide informed consent before proceeding with the questionnaire. The average completion time was approximately 10-15 minutes. This online method was considered effective, as it facilitated reaching a large number of respondents despite constraints related to time and location. Additionally, this approach aligns with current psychological research practices that leverage digital platforms to reach geographically and socially diverse samples, allowing for efficient and representative data collection suitable for Rasch analysis (Avinç & Doğan, 2024; Robersshaw et al., 2025; Villarino, 2025).

Participants

The participants in this study were active university students from various universities across Indonesia. A total of 628 respondents from 17 provinces (Aceh, Banten, Bengkulu, Jakarta, Jambi, West Java, Central Java, East Java, East Kalimantan, Riau Islands, Lampung, East Nusa Tenggara, Papua, Riau, West Sumatera, South Sumatera, North Sumatera) participated, providing a representative picture of QLC experiences across diverse socio-cultural contexts. The inclusion criteria were: (a) being an active undergraduate student, and (b) being aged between 18 and 64 years. This age range was chosen to encompass both emerging adulthood and middle adulthood stages. Reifman & Niehuis, (2023) conceptualized emerging adulthood as ages 18–29. This study allows for examining whether QLC is predominantly experienced during emerging adulthood or affects later stages of development (Flynn, 2022; Hasyim et al., 2024; Petrov et al., 2022; Robinson, 2019).

Participants were categorized by gender (male, female) and marital status (single, married, divorced), as these demographic variables significantly influence QLC experiences and physical activity (Agusti et al., 2022; Mirza et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2022). Women often face social pressure related to marriage, while men are more burdened by career responsibilities (Ali et al., 2022; Gui, 2023; Horta & Tang, 2023; Putri et al., 2022). Purposive sampling was employed, and data were collected online via a Google Form link shared through university email lists and student WhatsApp groups. This method effectively reaches large, geographically dispersed respondent pools (Arndt et al., 2022; Fielden, 2020; Khan, 2024).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=628)

Demographic	n	%	Total	Reliability	Mean Measure
Gender					
Male	73	11.62	73	0.92	0.57
Female	555	88.38	555	0.86	0.48
Age					
18 - 21 Years	488	77.71	488	0.87	0.48
22 - 35 Years	123	19.59	123	0.88	0.48
36 - 64 Years	17	2.71	17	0.90	0.93
Marital Status					
Marry	28	4.46	28	0.92	0.78
Unmarried	595	94.75	595	0.87	0.47
Divorced	5	0.80	5	0.91	0.66



Instrument

The research instrument was developed by the author, based on the theory of Robbins and Wilner (2001) regarding Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC), which defines it as a normative developmental crisis in early adulthood, characterized by five key dimensions: anxiety, doubt, fear, alienation, and loss of motivation. These dimensions are supported by Erikson's (1968, 1994) psychosocial theory, which focuses on the intimacy versus isolation conflict, and Santrock's (2015) theory on role transitions and identity exploration, as well as Hall and Lindzey's (2002) personality theory on anxiety and motivation dynamics.

The QLC scale consists of 40 items distributed across these five dimensions. Respondents rated each statement on a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and Not Sure. This format was selected to capture variations in the intensity of QLC experiences while minimizing neutral response bias. To reduce automatic agreement bias, some items were phrased positively and others negatively, with reverse scoring applied to negatively worded items.

The instrument was developed according to modern psychological measurement principles. Content validity was ensured through expert review, while construct validity was grounded in a robust theoretical framework from Robbins & Wilner (2001) and recent QLC research (Ballesteros et al., 2024; Hasyim et al., 2024). The instrument also considered the Indonesian cultural context, addressing social pressures such as the ideal age for marriage (Harsono et al., 2024; Himawan et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2022; Yulianto et al., 2022).

Table 2. Reliability of Person and Item the Instrument

	Mean Logit (SD)	Separation	Reliability	Alpha Cronbach	Raw Variance Explained
Item	0.00	16.22	1.00	0.86	42.5%
Person	0.49	2.32	0.84		

Reliability and validity testing results are presented in Table 2. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.86 confirms excellent internal consistency, and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) for the QLC scale reached 42.5%, exceeding the minimum threshold (Bond et al., 2015; Elhaik, 2022; Linacre, 2002; Thakur, 2025; Wu et al., 2022). This indicates the instrument effectively measures QLC and is reliable for the study.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using the Rasch model with the aid of Winsteps 5.1.5 software. The Rasch model, based on Item Response Theory (IRT), provides advantages over classical test theory by transforming ordinal data from the Likert scale into interval measures, adjusting for item difficulty and respondent ability (Bond & Fox, 2013). This process involves converting response frequencies into probabilities and then representing them as logits through a logarithmic function, allowing for more accurate measurements of participant responses and the instrument's overall fit.

The Rasch model was calibrated using a conjoint measurement approach, combining item difficulty levels with respondent abilities on a single logit scale (Linacre, 2010; Sumintono & Widhiarso, 2014; Thakur, 2025). The analysis showed that the total variance explained by the model exceeded 42.5%, indicating a good fit of the instrument. Additionally, the separation index was greater than two, and the reliability for both items and respondents exceeded 0.80, confirming excellent reliability of the instrument.

After calibration, individual logit scores were exported for further analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted to explore the depiction of quarter-life crisis, physical activity, and well-being among students in Indonesia. An ANOVA test was then performed to assess differences based on demographic data (Gender, Age, and Marital Status). In Rasch analysis, ANOVA helps determine if demographic factors influence variations in QLC experiences and physical activity levels. All analyses were conducted using Winsteps and Excel.

Results

Student Quarter-Life Crisis in Indonesia

The QLC crisis analysis was conducted using a two-facet scale model (items and respondents) with the Rasch Rating Scale Model (RSM), applied to data from 628 respondents and 40 items in the QLC Scale. The results, presented in Table 3, show that the average logit value for the items is 0.00 logits, indicating that the item difficulty levels were calibrated to a neutral point, with a standard deviation of 0.75, reflecting a good range of item difficulty. For respondents, the average logit value is 0.49 logits, indicating a generally higher level of perceived QLC, with a standard deviation of 0.49. This reflects considerable variation in QLC perceptions among respondents. The measurements also show small standard errors (0.02 for respondents and 0.12 for items), indicating that the measurements are highly accurate and reliable, with minimal measurement error.

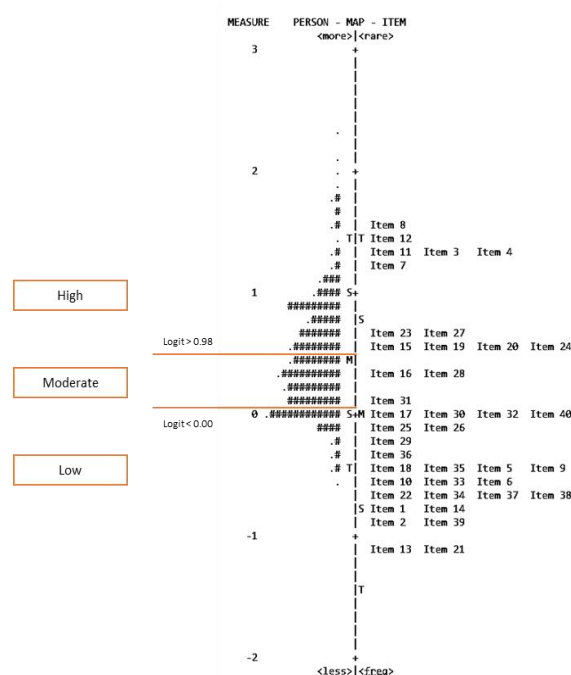
Table 3. Summary Statistic of Person and items

	Person	Item
N	628	40
Measure (Logit)		
Mean	0.49	0.00
Standard Deviation, SD	0.49	0.75
Standard Error, SE	0.02	0.12
Alpha Cronbach	0.86 (Item)	
Raw variance explains by measure	42.5% (PCA)	

*p < 0.01

Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents' scores based on their logit values, ranging from high quarter-life crisis (logit score > +0.75) to low quarter-life crisis (logit score < -0.75), as displayed on the left side of the graph. The distribution of logit scores is divided into three categories: high QLC in the upper-left, moderate QLC in the middle, and low QLC in the lower-left. This categorization is based on the mean and standard deviation, with scores ranging from high QLC to low QLC.

Figure 1. Person-Item Map of Students Quarter Life Crisis



Demographic Variable contribute to variation in students Quarter life crisis

Table 4 presents the distribution of Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) levels among university students based on demographic variables (N=628). The table categorizes QLC into three groups: High, Moderate, and Low, based on the Logit Variable Person (LVP) scores, a metric derived from Rasch analysis. The demographic variables analyzed include gender, age, and marital status.

Table 4. Student Quarter Life Crisis according to demographic (N=628)

Demographic	High Level Quarter Life Crisis 0.98 $\geq$ LVP	Moderate Level Quarter Life Crisis 0.98 $\leq$ LVP > 0.00	Low Level Quarter Life Crisis 0.00 $\leq$ LVP
Gender			
Male	71 (13%)	406 (73%)	78 (14%)
Female	16 (22%)	44 (60%)	13 (18%)
Age			
18-21 Years	62 (13%)	358 (73%)	68 (14%)
22-35 Years	17 (14%)	83 (67%)	23 (19%)
36-64 Years	8 (47%)	9 (53%)	0 (0%)
Marital Status			
Married	9 (32%)	17 (61%)	2 (7%)
Single	77 (13%)	429 (72%)	89 (15%)
Divorced	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	0 (0%)

Based on Table 4, female students tend to be more vulnerable to high levels of Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC), with 22% of women experiencing high QLC compared to 13% of men. However, the majority of students from both genders fall into the moderate level category. The 18-21 age group shows an even distribution, with the majority (73%) at the moderate level. As age increases, the 22-35 age group shows a decrease in high-level QLC (14%), and the 36-64 age group experiences almost no high-level QLC (0%).

Regarding marital status, married students report higher levels of QLC (32%) compared to unmarried students (13%), although the majority in both groups fall into the moderate category. These findings suggest that factors such as gender, age, and marital status significantly influence the severity of QLC experienced by students, with females, younger individuals, and those who are married being more susceptible to emotional and psychological challenges.

In terms of physical activity and well-being, it is likely that students experiencing higher levels of QLC may face additional barriers to engaging in physical activity, which can further affect their overall health and well-being. Therefore, addressing these challenges through supportive interventions is essential to promoting better physical and mental health outcomes for students.

Gender Based Differences in Quarter Life Crisis

The distribution of self-control levels across gender is shown in Table 4, providing a more detailed breakdown of male and female students in each self-control category.

An analysis of the differences in Quarter-Life Crisis based on gender was performed to examine potential variations in the crisis experiences of male and female students. The results of the ANOVA test are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The Gender Differences in Quarter Life Crisis

Gender	Mean-Squares	F-test	Prob>F
Gender	0.49	2.05	0.148

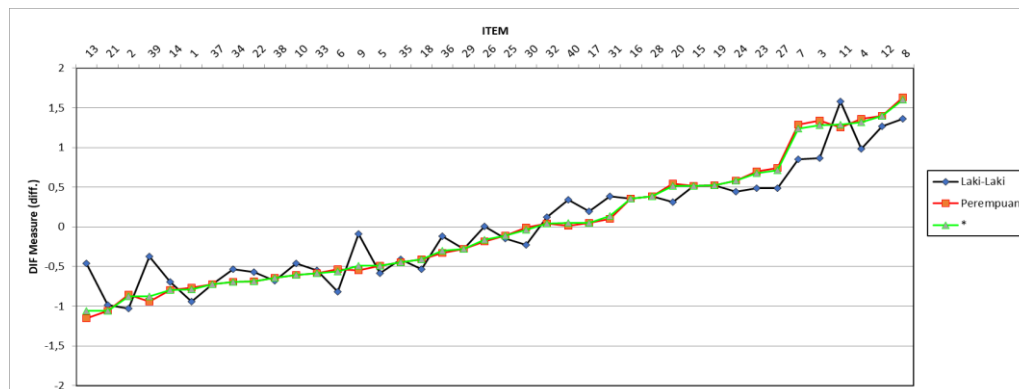
The analysis in Table 5 indicates no significant gender differences in Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) levels. This suggests that gender does not significantly affect the intensity of QLC in this sample, with both male and female students reporting similar experiences. However, while gender itself does not show a significant impact, it is possible that other factors, such as age or marital status, may still influence how students experience QLC and its effects on physical activity and well-being.

Figure 2 visualizes the Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) experiences across male and female students. The graph shows that there are no significant differences between the genders. The trends for male (Laki-Laki)



and female (Perempuan) students appear similar, with both groups showing comparable patterns of crisis intensity across the various items measured. The lines representing male and female responses are close to each other, suggesting that gender does not significantly impact the levels of Quarter-Life Crisis, as confirmed by the ANOVA results presented in Table 5 (F-test = 2.05, $p > 0.05$).

Figure 2. DIF Analysis Based on Gender



Age Based Differences in Quarter Life Crisis

An analysis of Quarter-Life Crisis differences based on age was conducted to determine whether variations exist among students aged 18-21, 22-35, and 36-64 years. The results of the ANOVA test, presented in Table 6.

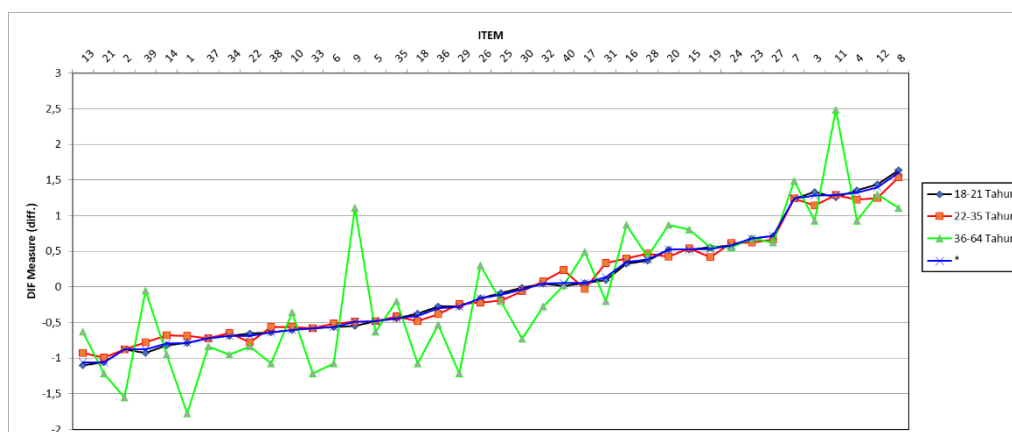
Table 6. The Age Differences in Quarter Life Crisis

	Mean-Squares	F-test	Prob>F
Age	1.68	7.16	0.0008

The analysis presented in Table 6 shows significant differences in Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) across age groups. This indicates that age influences the level of Quarter-Life Crisis, with individuals in different age groups experiencing varying degrees of crisis. Specifically, younger students (18-21 years) tend to report higher levels of QLC compared to older students in the 22-35 and 36-64 age groups. These findings suggest that age plays a role in shaping an individual's experience of QLC, which can influence their overall well-being and participation in physical activity.

Based on Figure 3, which illustrates the differences in Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) experiences based on age, the graph shows significant variations among different age groups. The 18-21 age group (blue line) exhibits a more intense crisis pattern compared to the 22-35 years (red line) and 36-64 years (green line) groups, which show a more stable and lower level of crisis. This is consistent with the ANOVA test results presented in Table 6 (F-test = 7.16, $p < 0.05$).

Figure 3. DIF Analysis Based on Age



Marital Status Based Differences in Quarter Life Crisis

An analysis of the differences in Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) based on marital status was conducted to examine whether there are variations in crisis experiences among individuals who are married, unmarried, and divorced. The results of the ANOVA test are presented in Table 7.

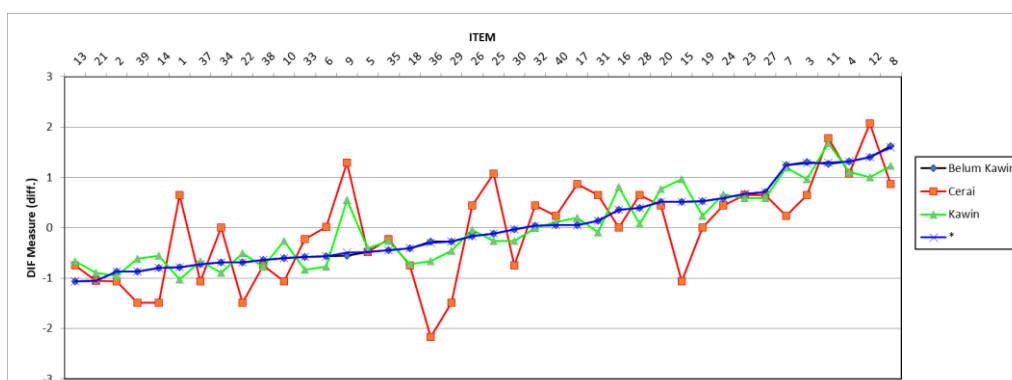
Table 7. The Marital Status Differences in Quarter-Life Crisis

	Mean-Squares	F-test	Prob>F
Marital Status	1.35	5.72	0.034

The analysis presented in Table 7 shows that marital status has a significant impact on Quarter-Life Crisis. This indicates a significant difference in the level of QLC experienced by married and unmarried individuals. Married students are likely to face different life challenges or transitions, such as increased family responsibilities, career pressures, and societal expectations, which influence their experience of Quarter-Life Crisis compared to those who are unmarried.

Based on Figure 4, which presents the differences in Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) experiences based on marital status, the graph shows distinct patterns for married (Kawin), unmarried (Belum Kawin), and divorced (Ceraai) individuals. The married group (green line) displays a more fluctuating and higher intensity of crisis compared to the unmarried (blue line) and divorced (red line) groups, who show more stability with lower levels of crisis. This is consistent with the results presented in Table 7, where the ANOVA test (F-test = 5.72, $p < 0.05$) indicates that marital status significantly affects the experience of Quarter-Life Crisis.

Figure 4. DIF Analysis Based on Marital Status



The Key Chalanges in Enhacing Quarter Life Crisis

Table 8 presents the results of the analysis of the main challenges faced during the Quarter-Life Crisis period, based on academic resilience indicators from 628 respondents. Each aspect of Quarter-Life Crisis—anxiety, doubt, fear, alienation, and loss of motivation—was analyzed using the mean logit value (Logit Mean) and standard deviation (Standard De-viation).

Table 8. Self-Control Levels by Region

Aspect of Quarter Life Crisis	Logit Mean	Standard Deviation
Anxiety	0.16	1.06
Doubt	0.08	0.95
Fear	0.03	0.67
Alienation	0.11	0.34
Loss of Motivation	-0.52	0.33

Table 8 illustrates the respondents' responses to various aspects of Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC). The anxiety aspect indicates that students tend to experience a moderate level of anxiety, with considerable variation among them. The doubt aspect shows that while students experience doubt, the level is not excessively high, but there are significant differences between individuals. The fear aspect reveals that the level of fear experienced by students is relatively low, with moderate variation among respondents. The alienation aspect reflects relatively low feelings of alienation among students, with minimal differences between them. Finally, the loss of motivation aspect indicates that many students feel a significant loss of motivation, although this feeling is fairly consistent across the student population. The distribution of Quarter-Life Crisis among students, based on their demographic back-ground, is depicted using the logit value item (LVI) in Table 9 and Figure 5.

Figure 5. Item-Person Map of Students QLC

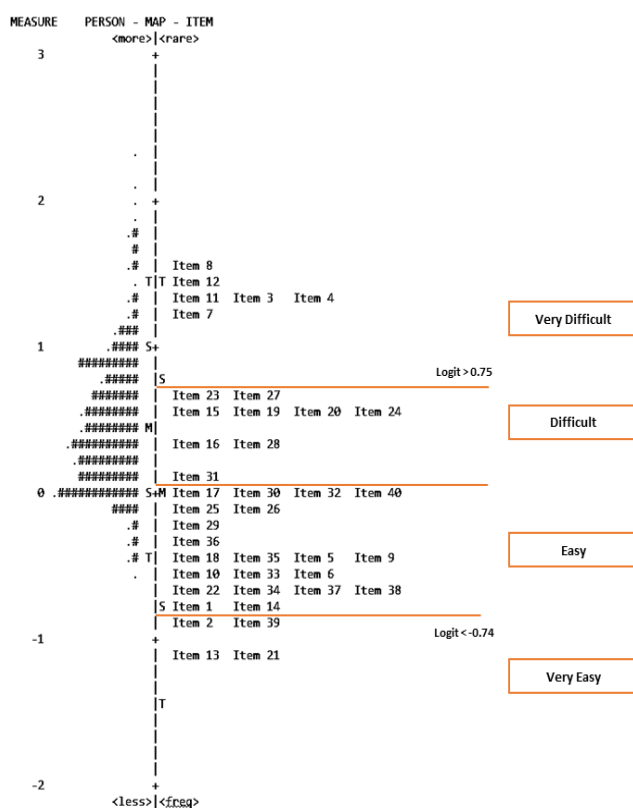


Table 9 classifies the difficulty levels of items in the Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) scale according to the logit values (LVI), which represent varying degrees of anxiety, doubt, fear, alienation, and loss of motivation.

Table 9. Item Difficulty Level classification according to logit value of item (LVI)

Difficulty Level	Anxiety (Item 1-8)	Doubt (Item 9-16)	Factors Fear (Item 17- 24)	Alienation (Item 25-32)	Loss of Motivation (Item 33-40)
Very Difficult LVI>0.75	Item 3 : Fear of career competition in the future Item 4: Fear of limited career opportunities in the future Item 7: Concern about facing rapid changes in the job market Item 8: Concern about failing to meet parental expectations due to the difficulty of finding a job after graduation	Item 11 : Seeking guidance from parents regarding the career path I will choose Item 12 : Hoping for good fortune when faced with career choices	-	-	-
Difficult +0.75 ≥ LVI ≥ 0.00	-	Item 15 : Pessimistic about the current major I have chosen offering clear career opportunities. Item 16: Given the current situation, I am unsure about having a good future.	Item 17 : No doubt about the career path I have chosen. Item 19: Feel pessimistic about entering the job market after graduation due to being unprepared for technological changes. Item 20: Feel incapable of competing in the future. Item 23: Anxious about the future due to the inability to compete. Item 24: Feel that I will not secure the desired job.	Item 25 : Feel challenged by the rapid technological changes. Item 27: Feel confused about the decision I have made for the future. Item 28: Confused about my career plans due to an inability to keep up with technological advancements. Item 30: Happy to face the changes of the current era. Item 31: Feel lonely because I cannot keep up with the rapid technological changes. Item 32: Feel empty because I lack the resources that my friends have.	Item 40: Feel that the efforts made are in vain due to the loss of job opportunities caused by technological advancements.
Easy 0.00 ≥ LVI ≥ -0.75	Item 5: Optimistic about facing the rapid technological changes. Item 6: Confident in my ability to face career challenges.	Item 9: Seeking information about future job opportunities to make career decisions. Item 10: Confident that the decision I made regarding my career plans is the right one.	Item 18: Feel optimistic about being able to face future career competition. Item 22: The current technological advancements make it easier for me to achieve my goals.	Item 26: No doubt about the education I have chosen as the path to a successful career. Item 29: Facing the future with complete calm.	Item 33: Optimistic about securing a job in the future. Item 34: The intensity of current life competition motivates me to study harder. Item 35: Feel hopeless because my parents cannot provide the necessary resources for studying, unlike my friends. Item 36: The rapid technological changes today make me feel hopeless. Item 37: Optimistic that I will achieve my career dreams. Item 38: Ready to face competition in securing a job.
Very Easy LVI < -0.75	Item 1: Optimistic about facing the future. Item 2: Ready to face the challenges for my future career.	Item 13: The education I have chosen offers broad career opportunities. Item 14: Confident that I can achieve the career I dream of.	Item 21: Given my current situation, I am confident that my future will be successful.	-	Item 39: Want to quit college because I lack the necessary resources for studying.

In the Very Difficult category, students tend to experience high levels of anxiety, particularly related to career uncertainty, rapid job market changes, and parental expectations. The doubt factor also emerges



strongly, as students express concerns such as needing guidance from parents or relying on luck when making career choices. Moving to the Difficult category, students continue to struggle with uncertainty about their chosen major and pessimism about facing future career challenges. They also report higher levels of alienation, with confusion over career decisions and difficulties in adapting to technological advancements. The loss of motivation is evident, as many students feel that their efforts are futile due to shifting job opportunities and changes in the job market.

As students progress to the Easy and Very Easy categories, they begin to show greater self-confidence and optimism. Their perceptions of technological changes shift positively, as they see it as a tool to achieve career goals. Alienation diminishes, and they feel better prepared for competition and challenges. In the Very Easy category, students show the highest levels of optimism and confidence about their future careers. They view their education as a significant opportunity, feel assured in their success, and are ready to face challenges.

Discussion

This study investigates the experience of Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) among university students in Indonesia, focusing on variations based on demographic factors and the psychological challenges faced during this transitional period. Data analysis using the Rasch Model provides an in-depth understanding of how students experience QLC, revealing a diverse distribution of the crisis levels they encounter. The findings provide valuable insights into how demographic factors—such as gender, age, and marital status—affect the intensity of QLC, as well as how academic resilience plays a role in alleviating the psychological pressures faced by students.

The analysis reveals that although many students feel overwhelmed by a significant life crisis, some experience it at more moderate levels. High levels of crisis, often associated with feelings of anxiety, confusion, or uncertainty about life direction, are more commonly reported by younger students and those who are married. This suggests that age and marital status play crucial roles in shaping how students respond to this transitional phase. Similar findings have been reported by Permana & Sulastris (2025) who noted that younger students often experience greater uncertainty about their future careers and life choices. Additionally, Fauzi et al (2024) highlight that married students tend to face increased emotional challenges due to the added responsibilities of marriage, which exacerbate the intensity of their quarter-life crisis.

Interestingly, while gender did not show significant differences in QLC levels in this study, female students may be more vulnerable to social and emotional pressures. Previous research indicates that women face greater social expectations regarding family roles, careers, and personal achievements, which may intensify their QLC experiences (Agusti et al., 2022; Wahyudin et al., 2025). This aligns with findings from Robinson (2019), who highlighted that female students often experience higher levels of anxiety due to societal pressure to balance career and family roles, which exacerbates the emotional toll during QLC. However, in the Indonesian context, cultural factors may influence how males and females express or cope with these crises. As Putri et al (2022) notes, in Indonesian culture, gender roles are deeply rooted, and this cultural influence shapes how individuals experience and manage quarter-life crisis. This highlights the need for further research on how QLC expressions and perceptions may differ between genders across various cultures (Hasyim et al., 2024).

Although the statistical analysis did not reveal significant gender differences in QLC levels, this finding suggests that the crisis may be experienced across genders in relatively similar intensities within the Indonesian context. Rather than indicating the absence of gender-related influences, the result may reflect shared developmental and socio-economic pressures faced by university students regardless of gender. Contemporary research highlights that QLC is increasingly shaped by structural uncertainties—such as career instability and rapid technological change—that affect both men and women in comparable ways (Ballesteros et al., 2024). Therefore, gender may not function as a primary differentiating variable in this sample, even though broader sociocultural expectations continue to shape young adults' life transitions. Shulman et al., (2023) also found that young adults often face significant emotional turmoil as they transition from adolescence to adulthood, exacerbated by career uncertainty and identity exploration. As students age, those in the 22-35 age group show a decrease in QLC intensity, suggesting

that life experience enhances confidence in managing challenges. Richer life experiences, increased social interactions, and achievements serve as protective factors in mitigating the impact of this crisis (Robinson, 2018; Hasyim et al., 2024). Further research emphasizes that life transitions between the ages of 22-35 are often marked by identity consolidation and career stabilization, which reduce the psychological strain of QLC, allowing individuals to adapt more effectively (Darabos et al., 2023; Goedereis et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, marital status has a strong impact on intensifying the QLC experience. Married students report facing more emotional challenges, likely due to social expectations and family responsibilities. The additional responsibilities towards their spouse and potentially children, along with concerns about financial stability and career prospects, increase the pressure they feel. According to a study by Tahira et al., (2023) married students frequently encounter significant academic, social, financial, and health-related challenges, as they juggle their educational pursuits with family responsibilities. In contrast, unmarried students, while still facing career and educational pressures, do not have as many family obligations to consider. These findings emphasize the importance of considering marital status when designing interventions to support students, as married individuals may need more extensive support in navigating the complex challenges they face (Robinson, 2019; Sembring et al., 2024).

The psychological challenges faced by students during QLC are diverse. The analysis reveals that anxiety about future careers and confusion about life direction are two dominant factors affecting students. Many report significant anxiety related to their future, such as fear of failure or not meeting family expectations. This is compounded by doubts about career choices and difficulty determining the next steps in life. Although many students report anxiety about the future, some feel optimistic and confident in handling it, especially those with strong support from family or friends (Putri et al., 2022; Sembring et al., 2024).

Students who feel alienated or have lost motivation often show more passive feelings and a sense of disconnection from the world around them. Their inability to identify opportunities or their sense of being constrained by personal and social circumstances increases their alienation. This aspect is more noticeable in students who struggle to pursue their dreams or feel incapable of competing in a rapidly changing world. Many also report a loss of motivation, feeling unable to see progress in their education or careers. This suggests that while students are aware of the challenges they face, they feel powerless to change their situation, which leads to a loss of enthusiasm or willingness to act (Hasyim et al., 2024; Robinson, 2019).

The classification of item difficulty levels indicates that students are more burdened by issues related to career prospects and rapidly advancing technology. Concerns about the fast-changing job market and anxiety about their ability to compete in future jobs are major challenges. Students who feel unprepared for technological advancements or worry about the difficulty of finding employment in the future experience much higher levels of anxiety compared to those who are more optimistic about their career opportunities. However, students who feel more confident in their ability to face future challenges report more positive feelings, even though the challenges remain (Agarwal et al., 2020; Ballesteros et al., 2024).

Physical activity is an important aspect of well-being, and the analysis suggests that students experiencing high levels of QLC, especially those feeling anxious, unmotivated, or alienated, may struggle to engage in physical activity. Incorporating exercise programs, mindfulness practices, and supportive social networks could significantly improve their ability to cope with QLC and enhance their physical and mental health (Antunes et al., 2025; Hasyim et al., 2024; Sahrah et al., 2023; Sari & Purwandari, 2025; Varela & Carretero, 2025). Overall, these findings suggest that QLC is a highly dynamic and varied experience, influenced by both individual and social factors. Younger students, those who are married, and those who feel less prepared for the future tend to experience more intense life crises. On the other hand, students with greater resilience and a more positive outlook on the future are better equipped to cope with the crisis effectively. Therefore, interventions designed to help students overcome QLC should consider these factors, providing more support to those who are more vulnerable, such as younger students, those who are married, or those who feel more anxious about their future (Hasyim et al., 2024; Meadows et al., 2024).

Conclusion

The findings of this study have significant implications for both research and practice, particularly in understanding the Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) among university students in Indonesia. From a research perspective, the results emphasize the need for further exploration of QLC in non-Western contexts, examining how local cultural norms, family expectations, and social roles influence the nature and intensity of QLC. Specifically, future studies should explore how individualistic and collectivist cultures, such as Indonesia, affect coping strategies and outcomes related to QLC, particularly in relation to physical activity and well-being.

Turning to practical implications, the findings highlight the importance of providing targeted support for students, particularly those more vulnerable to QLC. Universities and academic institutions can use these insights to design interventions aimed at supporting students during this critical transition period. Programs focused on enhancing academic resilience, building coping skills, and offering career counseling would be particularly valuable in helping students navigate the challenges of QLC. Additionally, mental health services and physical activity programs can play a crucial role in supporting students facing emotional challenges such as anxiety, self-doubt, and a lack of motivation.

Physical activity, such as yoga, aerobic exercises, or team sports, should be integrated into university programs to help students manage anxiety and loss of motivation. These activities can significantly improve students' physical and emotional well-being by reducing the psychological impacts of QLC and enhancing their resilience. Furthermore, the study's findings on marital status and age suggest that interventions should be tailored to meet the needs of different student groups. Married students, for instance, may require counseling services to help them balance family responsibilities with academic expectations. Similarly, younger students, particularly those in the early stages of their academic journey, may need additional support in transitioning from high school to university life and in developing clearer identities and future goals.

Finally, this study underscores the need for a holistic approach to student well-being that addresses not only academic pressures but also the emotional, social, and psychological challenges students face during the Quarter-Life Crisis. By creating a supportive environment that integrates physical activity with mental health services, academic institutions can help students successfully navigate this critical life stage, ultimately contributing to their overall success and well-being.

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