

Lost in transition: psychological flexibility and quarter-life crisis among fresh graduates (a correlational and comparative study)

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Received:	Revised:	Accepted:	Published:
03 June 2026	14 September 2026	11 September 2026	01 October 2026

How to cite (APA 7th style): Fazrina, N. H. N., Astuti, N. V., Rahmah, L. (2026). Lost in transition: psychological flexibility and quarter-life crisis among fresh graduates (a correlational and comparative study). *Proyeksi Jurnal Psikologi*, 21(2), 174-186. <https://dx.doi.org/10.30659/jp.21.2.174-186>

Abstract

The Indonesian Health Survey (2023) noted high levels of psychological stress among the 15-24 age group, including recent college graduates who face post-graduation uncertainty and intense job competition. This study aims to examine the relationship between psychological flexibility and quarter-life crisis (QLC), as well as to analyze differences in QLC levels based on gender among fresh graduates. The study design employed a quantitative correlational and comparative approach. The participants consisted of 57 fresh graduates from Sultan Agung Islamic University aged 20-24 years, selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was conducted using the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-49 (AAQ-49) and the Quarter-Life Crisis Scale based on the theory by Robbins and Wilner (2001). The data analysis techniques were Pearson's correlation and the independent samples t-test. The correlation test results indicated a significant negative relationship between psychological flexibility and QLC ($r = -0.808$; $p < 0.01$), meaning that the higher the psychological flexibility, the lower the level of QLC experienced. Meanwhile, the results of the comparative test showed no significant difference in QLC levels between male and female fresh graduates ($t = 0.951$; $p = 0.346$). This finding suggests that male and female fresh graduates in this sample may experience QLC at comparable levels within the present research context. The findings highlight the importance of developing psychological intervention programs based on psychological flexibility to mitigate the impact of QLC on fresh graduates.

Keywords: early adulthood; fresh graduate; psychological flexibility; quarter-life crisis

INTRODUCTION

Background

The post-graduation transition period places fresh graduates at a critical juncture in early adulthood, where social expectations and the realities of life often do not align (Natalia et al., 2023; Robbins & Wilner, 2001). This situation is exacerbated by global economic uncertainty resulting from escalating geopolitical conflicts and international trade tensions, which directly



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impact the limited job market in Indonesia (Andini et al., 2025; Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2025). Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that the unemployment rate among college graduates rose from 5.25% in February 2024 to 6.23% in February 2025, while the 15-24 age group recorded the highest unemployment rate at 16.89% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). These layered pressures have triggered the emergence of the quarter-life crisis (QLC) phenomenon, a crisis characterized by indecision, negative self-evaluation, feelings of being trapped, anxiety, despair, and concerns about interpersonal relationships (Natalia et al., 2023; Robbins & Wilner, 2001). This phenomenon is widespread; as many as 75% of adults aged 25-33 are indicated to be experiencing QLC, and 56.4% of young adults in Indonesia experience anxiety due to the pressures of transition (Perdani et al., 2025). Specifically, 67.2% of fresh graduates fall into the high QLC category, 86.7% feel pressured by environmental demands, and 80% admit to being confused about what to do after graduation (Sembring et al., 2024).

Previous studies have identified several factors influencing the intensity of QLC, including social support, self-efficacy, emotional regulation, and gender (Dawan et al., 2024; Hasyim et al., 2024). Among these factors, this study specifically examines gender because previous findings still show significant inconsistencies. Hasyim et al. (2024), in a systematic review, found that women are more vulnerable to QLC than men, with prevalence rates of 50% and 39%, respectively. Conversely, Andalib and Pohan (2023) found that men exhibited a significantly higher level of QLC ($p = 0.004$). On the other hand, Mirza et al. (2024) found no significant difference between the two genders ($p + 0.372$). This inconsistency suggests that gender differences in QLC cannot yet be generalized. Furthermore, most previous studies have focused on senior students who are still actively enrolled in college. Direct testing on fresh graduates who have completed their studies and are facing a real transition into the workforce remains very limited, making it the focus of this study.

In Indonesia, QLC among fresh graduates is exacerbated by layers of social and collectivist cultural pressures, such as the expectation to find a job immediately, marry before the age of 30, and contribute financially to the extended family—expectations rarely found in the Western QLC Literature (Jahrir, 2025). This pressure is amplified by exposure to others' achievements on social media, with 54.5% of young adults feeling insecure about their own achievements and 66.7% struggling to trust others (Jahrir, 2025; Pratama, 2025). QLC has the potential to produce multidimensional effects if left unaddressed, such as reduced self-esteem, depression, and even clinical anxiety (Pratama, 2025). In facing the pressures of this transition, which is fraught with uncertainty, individuals require psychological capacity to accept negative emotions without being hindered by them, while remaining able to take actions aligned with their life goals. This capacity is known as psychological flexibility (Hayes et al., 2006; Sanuria et al., 2026). Psychological flexibility is crucial because psychologically inflexible fresh graduates tend to get trapped in emotional avoidance of failure, such as constantly lamenting job rejections or feeling helpless. Conversely, individuals with high psychological flexibility can view post-graduation uncertainty not as a paralyzing threat, but as a transitional phase requiring adaptation. They can remain committed to pursuing a career even while overwhelmed by anxiety. This capacity is known as psychological flexibility within the framework of Acceptance and Commitment

Therapy (ACT) (Hayes et al., 2006; Sanuria et al., 2026). Although Natalia et al. (2023) demonstrated that ACT interventions effectively reduce QLC scores with an effect size of 0.92, research directly examining the correlational relationship between psychological flexibility and QLC among fresh graduates in Indonesia remains scarce. Previous studies have primarily focused on descriptive profiles of QLC and exploration of its risk factors (Pratama, 2025; Sembring et al., 2024). Therefore, this study is important to address this empirical gap through a correlational and comparative approach.

Based on this research gap, this study was conducted to empirically examine the role of psychological flexibility in mitigating the impact of the quarter-life crisis (QLC) and to map the characteristics of this phenomenon based on gender. The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on fresh college graduates who are in the midst of a real-world transition into the workforce, as well as the integration of correlations and comparative approaches within a single research design. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the body of literature in developmental psychology and clinical psychology regarding early adult resilience in Indonesia. Practically, the findings from this study are expected to serve as an empirical foundation for universities and mental health practitioners in designing targeted psychological intervention programs to equip fresh graduates to face the uncertainties of the workforce.

Literature review and previous studies

Quarter-Life Crisis

The Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC) is a developmental crisis phase in early adulthood characterized by anxiety, confusion about life direction, and significant social pressure resulting from the demands of independence following the transition into the workforce (Pratama, 2025). This psychological phenomenon is triggered by external factors such as career pressure, as well as internal factors including feelings of insecurity, difficulty building trust, and social comparison on social media (Jahrir, 2025; Pratama, 2025). In Indonesia, the intensity of QLC is exacerbated by a collectivist culture that demands fresh graduates to quickly achieve financial stability, marry, and meet the expectations of the extended family (Jahrir, 2025). Based on the conceptualization by Robbins and Wilner (2001), the manifestations of this crisis are divided into six main dimensions. The first aspect manifests as indecisiveness regarding future career decisions, which often coexists with the second aspect: a sense of hopelessness characterized by a pessimistic view of the difficult situation being faced. This pressure is exacerbated by the third aspect, namely negative self-evaluation resulting from underestimating one's personal capabilities, as well as the fourth aspect, a feeling of being trapped (trapped/stuch) within unavoidable environmental demands. This state of emotional paralysis then triggers the fifth aspect: constant anxiety about future uncertainty, which ultimately impacts the social sphere through the sixth aspect of interpersonal concerns such as fear of social rejection and failure to meet family expectations (Pratama, 2025; Robbins & Wilner, 2001).

Psychological Flexibility

Psychological flexibility is an individual's ability to remain consciously connected to the present experience and to accept various internal experiences, including unpleasant thoughts and

emotions, without engaging in experiential avoidance, in order to remain committed to one's core life values (Hayes et al., 2006; Sánchez-Millán et al., 2022). Within the framework of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), this adaptive capacity is shaped by the dynamic interaction of six key processes (Hayes et al., 2006). The first aspect begins with acceptance, which refers to an individual's voluntary willingness to embrace negative internal experiences without attempting to avoid them; this is then reinforced by the second aspect, cognitive defusion, defined as the ability to avoid getting caught up in negative thoughts by viewing them merely as mental events. Next, the third aspect manifests as contact with the present moment, which prioritizes full awareness of the reality of the here and now, followed by the fourth aspect, namely self-as-context, which allows individuals to view themselves flexibly as observers of the emotional dynamics they are experiencing. This process culminates in the fifth aspect, namely life values, which reflect clarity regarding the direction and meaning of the life one wishes to pursue, and is ultimately put into practice through the sixth aspect: committed action, concrete steps consistent with those values, even when facing various psychological obstacles during the transition.

The Relationship Between Psychological Flexibility and the Quarter-Life Crisis

Psychological flexibility has a significant negative relationship with the quarter-life crisis (QLC), where high psychological adaptability enables individuals to manage stress, uncertainty, and developmental demands during early adulthood more effectively (Natalia et al., 2023). The QLC phenomenon itself is fraught with anxiety about the future, feelings of insecurity, and social comparisons on social media; if ignored, these can trigger negative self-evaluation and more severe emotional distress (Jahrir, 2025; Pratama, 2025). From an ACT perspective, psychological flexibility functions as a protective coping mechanism; flexible individuals can accept transitional anxiety without getting lost in it, reduce the bias in self-evaluation caused by social media exposure, and continue to take productive actions aligned with their career goals (Hayes et al., 2006; Natalia et al., 2023). Thus, high psychological flexibility acts as a buffer that directly reduces the destructive impact of crisis-triggering factors, thereby making it easier for fresh graduates to navigate the post-graduation transition phase adaptively.

Differences in the Quarter-Life Crisis by Gender

Gender is a crucial demographic factor influencing QLC dynamics in early adulthood through the lens of social role theory, in which men and women face different societal expectations during this transitional phase (Hasyim et al., 2024). Women are generally more vulnerable to pressures related to the complexity of interpersonal relationships, marriage expectations, and domestic roles, whereas men are more burdened by demands for financial achievement, economic independence, and career status (Hasyim et al., 2024). These structural differences have led to inconsistent findings in previous research. In a systematic review, Hasyim et al. (2024) found a higher prevalence of QLC among women (50%) compared to men (39%) due to emotional sensitivity and relational stress, while Andalib and Pohan (2023) found the opposite result, indicating that men exhibited significantly higher levels of QLC due to the substantial demands of their role as primary breadwinners. On the other hand, Mirza et al. (2024) found no significant difference in QLC intensity between the two genders. This empirical inconsistency indicates that

gender manifestations of QLC are highly dependent on sample characteristics and cultural context, thereby underscoring the urgency of conducting this study on a more specific population of fresh college graduates.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical review and previous studies, this research proposes two hypotheses. The first hypothesis posits a significant negative relationship between psychological flexibility and quarter-life crisis (QLC) among fresh graduates, meaning that an increase in psychological flexibility is associated with a significant decrease in the level of QLC experienced. Furthermore, the second hypothesis posits that there is no significant difference in the level of quarter-life crisis (QLC) between male and female fresh graduates, indicating that the intensity of this transitional crisis is experienced equally without being influenced by gender.

Research objectives

This study aims to empirically examine the relationship between psychological flexibility and the quarter-life crisis (QLC), as well as to analyze gender differences in the severity of this crisis among fresh graduates of Sultan Agung Islamic University. The urgency of this research objective stems from the severe consequences of QLC, which risks triggering serious mental health conditions such as major depression, clinical anxiety disorders, and even suicidal ideation—issues that, on a broader scale, could threaten the utilization of the demographic dividend due to psychological paralysis among the productive workforce (Pratama, 2025). The novelty of this study lies in shifting the focus of the research from post-crisis clinical intervention testing toward the correlational examination of the relationship, as well as contextualizing collectivist culture amidst the unique social pressures of Indonesia—aspects rarely accommodated in Western literature.

Research benefits

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on developmental and clinical psychology by providing empirical evidence regarding the association between psychological flexibility and quarter-life crisis among fresh graduates within the collectivist cultural context of Indonesia. Practically, the findings provide a strategic foundation for higher education institutions and psychology practitioners to design career mentoring programs and mental resilience training for fresh graduates based on strengthening cognitive resilience to mitigate the risk of clinical depression. For fresh graduates, this study offers educational insights into the importance of reframing negative thoughts to remain capable of acting productively and adaptively amidst massive sociocultural pressures and global economic uncertainty. By integrating these benefits, a deep understanding of the dynamics of psychological flexibility and the quarter-life crisis (QLC) is expected to serve as an empirical foundation for the development of effective psychological interventions to enhance the psychological well-being of the productive workforce.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational and comparative design to

examine the strength and direction of the relationship between psychological flexibility as the independent variable and quarter-life crisis (QLC) as the dependent variable, while also analyzing differences in QLC levels based on gender without manipulating the subjects. Psychological flexibility is operationalized as an individual's ability to remain fully present and act adaptively in accordance with personal values amidst difficult situations. Meanwhile, QLC is defined as an emotional condition involving feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and pressure arising from post-higher-education role transitions.

Participants and Sampling Method

The target population of this study consisted of recent graduates (fresh graduates) of Sultan Agung Islamic University (UNISSULA). Purposive sampling was used with the following inclusion criteria: individuals aged 20-25 years, recent graduates from the 2020, 2021, or 2022 cohorts, and willing to participate voluntarily. Based on these criteria, a total sample of 57 respondents who completed the data collection was obtained.

Research Instrument

Primary data collection was conducted online via the Google Forms platform, employing two psychological adaptation scales in Likert-scale format. The first instrument was the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-49 (AAQ-49), which was adapted to the Indonesian cultural context by Sanuria et al. (2026) to measure psychological inflexibility. AAQ-49 scores were interpreted using reverse scoring to represent the level of psychological flexibility. The second instrument was the Quarter-Life Crisis Scale developed by Bangkit Sedayu based on theoretical aspects from Robbins and Wilner (2001), which includes the dimensions of decision-making indecision, hopelessness, negative self-evaluation, feelings of being trapped, anxiety, and interpersonal concerns. Both instruments underwent validity and reliability testing prior to their use in collecting real-world data.

Procedures and Data Analysis

The research procedure began with a literature review and instrument preparation, followed by the distribution of an online questionnaire link via social media and alumni networks. Participants were provided with an explanation of the research objectives and were required to complete a digital informed consent form guaranteeing data confidentiality before accessing the questionnaire items. After undergoing data cleaning and score coding, the data were analyzed using statistical software. The parametric prerequisite tests used included validity, reliability, normality, and linearity tests. Associative hypothesis testing was performed using the Pearson Product Moment correlation technique, while comparative hypothesis testing was performed using the Independent Sample t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

One month of online primary data collection yielded 57 respondents who were fresh graduates of Sultan Agung Islamic University (UNISSULA) and met the inclusion criteria (ages 21-25).

Participant characteristics were dominated by female respondents and graduates from the 2021 intake cohort. In general, the subjects' profiles were in the early post-graduation transition phase, which is theoretically vulnerable to career transition stress.

Instrument Validation

Prior to the hypothesis testing, item selection was conducted using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value with a minimum correlation coefficient of ≥ 0.30 to ensure the internal validity of the instrument.

Table 1. Results of the Research Scale Reliability Test

Variable	Initial Number of Items	Number of Valid Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Psychological Flexibility (AAQ-49)	49	29	0.886	Very Good
Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC)	40	39	0.954	Very High

Based on Table 1, the validity test results for the AAQ-49 scale yielded 29 valid items with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.886. Meanwhile, the QLC scale yielded 39 valid items with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.954. These results indicate that both instruments possess highly reliable internal consistency for use in collecting real-world data.

Prerequisite Assumption Tests

Normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, given that the study sample size was less than 100 participants ($N = 57$).

Table 2. Result of the Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test

Variable	Statistic	df	Sig. (p)	Conclusion
Psychological Flexibility	0.986	57	0.747	Normally Distributed
Quarter-Life Crisis	0.976	57	0.305	Normally Distributed

Table 2 shows significance values (p) of 0.747 for the psychological flexibility variable and 0.305 for the quarter-life crisis variable. Since the probability values for both variables are greater than the critical value ($p > 0.05$), it can be concluded that the research data are normally distributed. Next, a linearity test was conducted to confirm the nature of the relationship between constructs.

Table 3. Linearity Test Results (Deviation from Linearity)

Variable Relationships	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p)
QLC * Psychological Flexibility	1924.147	28	68.720	0.425	0.986

The results of the linearity test in Table 3 show a significance value of 0.986 ($p > 0.05$) in the "Deviation from Linearity" row. This confirms a linear relationship between the variables of psychological flexibility and quarter-life crisis, thus fulfilling the prerequisite assumption for the use of parametric statistics.

Hypothesis Testing

The first hypothesis (associative) was tested using the Pearson Product Moment correlation technique, while the second hypothesis (comparative) was tested using an independent-samples t-test.

Table 4. Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable	Psychological Flexibility	Quarter-Life Crisis
Psychological Flexibility 1		-0.808**
<i>Sig. (1-tailed)</i>		0.000
Quarter-Life Crisis	-0.808**	1
<i>Sig. (1-tailed)</i>	0.000	

*. Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Based on Table 4, a correlation coefficient (r) of -0.808 was obtained with a significance value of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$). This finding indicates a highly significant negative relationship between psychological flexibility and QLC among fresh graduates, thus accepting the first hypothesis (H1). The coefficient of determination (R^2) obtained was 0.653, indicating that psychological flexibility and QLC shared approximately 65.3% of their variance in this sample, while the remaining 34.7% may be associated with other factors outside this research model.

Table 5. Results of the Comparative Analysis Using the Independent Samples t-test

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Female	46	80.65	17.52	0.951	55	0.346
Male	11	74.90	19.96			

Note: The t-value assumes H_0 : Equal variances assumed ($F = 0.282$; $p = 0.597$).

The results of the group-difference test in Table 5 show that there is no significant difference in the level of quarter-life crisis between female and male fresh graduates ($t = 0.951$; $p = 0.346 > 0.05$), so the second hypothesis (H2) is accepted. Although the mean QLC score was descriptively higher among women (80.65) than that for men (74.90), this difference was not statistically significant.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate a very strong and significant negative relationship

between psychological flexibility and the quarter-life crisis (QLC) among recent graduates. These findings suggest that an individual's internal capacity to manage emotional responses is closely associated with the intensity of the crisis in the context of external situational pressures. The squared correlation coefficient ($R^2 = 0.653$) indicates that psychological flexibility and QLC shared approximately 65.3% of their variance in this sample. However, this finding should be interpreted as an association rather than as evidence of predictive or causal effects. This substantial association is particularly relevant for recent graduates navigating the post-graduation transition phase amid global economic uncertainty and intense labor market competition. While macroeconomic data indicates high rates of open unemployment among college graduates (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025; Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2025), individuals with high psychological flexibility do not become trapped in psychological paralysis. They are able to separate their self-identity from external pressures, so they do not allow sociocultural standards or career obstacles to dictate their self-worth absolutely.

The exceptionally strong correlation observed in this study may be understood from several perspectives. First, the theoretical proximity between psychological flexibility and QLC may partly explain the magnitude of the association. The QLC scale captures experiences such as anxiety, hopelessness, feeling trapped, negative self-evaluation, indecision, and interpersonal concerns, whereas psychological flexibility concerns the capacity to respond adaptively to difficult thoughts and emotions without experiential avoidance. Therefore, individuals who are better able to accept uncertainty, disengage from unhelpful thoughts, and remain committed to valued actions may experience fewer distress-related difficulties during the post-graduation transition. The conceptual proximity between distress-related experiences and responses to difficult experiences may therefore contribute to the strength of the observed association.

Second, measurement overlap may also be a possible explanation. Both constructs were assessed through self-report measures addressing psychological experiences and responses to difficult situations. Furthermore, the relatively homogeneous sample, consisting entirely of fresh graduates from a single university, may have contributed to the strength of the observed association because participants shared similar educational and transitional contexts. Finally, both constructs were assessed using self-report measures administered through the same online platform and within the same data collection period, which may have introduced common method variance and potentially inflated the observed correlation. These possibilities should be considered when interpreting the magnitude of the correlation, particularly because the study used a cross-sectional correlational design.

Psychologically, these findings reinforce the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) model, which posits that psychological distress stems from mental rigidity and experiential avoidance (Hayes et al., 2006). Flexible recent graduates do not expend their mental energy resisting or dwelling on the anxieties of transition. Instead, they apply cognitive defusion to view negative thoughts as temporary mental events that do not hinder progress toward career goals. This adaptive ability aligns with Robbins and Wilner's (2001) theory regarding the characteristics of early-adulthood crises, which are marked by feelings of being trapped and confusion about life

direction. These findings are validated by the empirical evidence of Natalia et al. (2023), which demonstrates that strengthening the acceptance process consistently reduces crisis dimensions among recent graduates. Psychological flexibility enables individuals to continue taking productive, committed actions even under intense psychological pressure (Sánchez-Millán et al., 2022). This capacity is particularly relevant in the context of Indonesia's collectivist culture, where recent graduates are often burdened by layered pressures, including expectations of financial contributions to extended families and the trap of social comparison on social media (Jahrir, 2025; Pratama, 2025).

Meanwhile, the results of the second hypothesis test confirmed that there was no significant difference in QLC levels between male and female fresh graduates. This finding is consistent with Mirza et al. (2024), who also found no significant gender difference in QLC. Through the lens of social role theory, although men and women may face different societal expectations, both groups in the present study were exposed to shared developmental demands associated with the post-graduation transition. Women may face relational-domestic pressures, whereas men may face financial-career demands (Hasyim et al., 2024); however, both groups simultaneously encounter employment uncertainty, career establishment, and financial independence demands. Therefore, the absence of a statistically significant gender difference in this sample suggests that shared transition-related demands may be more salient to the experience of QLC than gender alone. Rather, psychological flexibility may play an important role in how individuals respond to these transitional pressures (Jahrir, 2025).

The absence of a statistically significant gender difference may be understood from the shared developmental context experienced by the participants. Although men and women may encounter different gender-related expectations, both groups in this study were fresh graduates who were simultaneously facing employment uncertainty, career decision-making, financial independence, family expectations, and social comparison. These shared transition-related demands may have been more salient to the experience of QLC than gender alone. Thus, the psychological experience of the post-graduation transition may become relatively similar across genders when individuals face comparable developmental and socioeconomic demands.

This finding also provides a contextual qualification to the social role perspective. Social role theory suggests that gender-related expectations can shape different psychological experiences; however, the present findings indicate that such differences may become less salient when men and women simultaneously experience a shared developmental transition. In the context of fresh graduates, demands related to employability, career establishment, and financial independence may overlap across genders. Therefore, the present finding suggests that developmental context should also be considered when understanding gender differences in QLC, rather than interpreting gender as a standalone determinant of the experience.

Although this study makes a strong empirical contribution to the literature on developmental psychology in Indonesia, it has limitations regarding the sample size, which is restricted to a single higher education institution, as well as an unbalanced gender distribution due to natural population bias in the field. Therefore, generalizing the findings to a broader population of fresh

graduates must be done cautiously, and it is recommended that future research expand to a more representative multisampling scope. Nevertheless, these findings remain an urgent theoretical and practical reference for higher education institutions (Sanuria et al., 2026). The significant contribution of psychological flexibility underscores the importance of universities immediately integrating career counselling programs based on mental resilience into alumni preparation, to ensure graduates can navigate the transition period without compromising their psychological integrity.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, this study concludes that there is a very strong and significant negative relationship between psychological flexibility and the quarter-life crisis (QLC) among recent graduates. The higher an individual's level of psychological flexibility, the lower the intensity of the transitional crisis they experience. The strength of the correlation indicates a substantial association between psychological flexibility and QLC in this sample. However, because this study employed a correlational design, the finding should not be interpreted as evidence that psychological flexibility causes a reduction in QLC. Meanwhile, the comparison test in this study concluded that there is no significant difference in the level of quarter-life crisis when examined by gender. The absence of a statistically significant gender difference suggests that male and female fresh graduates in this sample may experience QLC at comparable levels within the present research context, potentially reflecting shared structural pressures in the labor market and sociocultural expectations within Indonesia's collectivist culture.

Suggestions

Given the strong contribution of the identified variables, several strategic suggestions are proposed for both practical application and future research development. For higher education institutions and psychology practitioners, universities are advised to begin integrating character development programs and mental resilience training based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for senior students. Interventions focused on strengthening psychological flexibility can serve as an effective universal preventive strategy to equip prospective graduates to face the uncertainties of the job market and high social expectations. Meanwhile, for future researchers, the limitations of the sample size and correlational design in this study can be addressed by using experimental research methods to directly test the effectiveness of the psychological flexibility module in reducing crisis scores. Future research is also recommended to expand the multisample scope to various universities with more diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, maintain a balanced gender distribution for statistical power optimization, and apply qualitative approaches or longitudinal studies to explore the dynamics of specific cultural pressures, such as peer pressure and the financial burden of extended families in greater depth over time.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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