Secure Parental Attachment and Quarter Life Crisis in Emerging Adulthood

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Abstract

Quarter-life crisis is a psychological phenomenon that commonly takes place during the transitional period between adolescence and adulthood, also referred to as emerging adulthood. This period is characterized by feelings of being trapped, uncertainty about the future, doubt about the decisions made, and the pressure felt from various sources. It is crucial for individuals to possess the necessary coping mechanisms to overcome these crises, and family support can be a significant factor in helping them do so. This study aims to investigate the connection between parental secure attachment and quarter-life crises in individuals who are in the emerging adulthood stage. The study comprised 192 participants, all of whom met the age criteria of 18 to 29 years. The results of the study revealed that the primary hypothesis was supported, indicating a significant negative correlation between parental secure attachment that parents exhibit, the lower the level of quarter-life crises experienced by their children, and vice versa. Additionally, the minor hypothesis of the study examined the relationship between various aspects of parental attachment, specifically trust, communication, and alienation, and quarter-life crises. The findings revealed that only alienation and communication have an impact on quarter-life crises.

Keywords: Emerging adulthood, quarter life crisis, secure attachment

1. Introduction

Emerging adulthood is a term used to describe the phase of development that transitions individuals from adolescence to adulthood (Arnett et al., 2014). During this period of change, individuals must be capable of adapting to the tasks of adult development (Hartinah, 2008) and are prepared to assume their place within society alongside a community of other adults (Hurlock, 1996). This capacity is crucial for the individual's success in continuing the developmental tasks in the next phase (Putro, 2017). The emerging adulthood phase typically occurs between the ages of 18 and 29 and is often referred to as a period of instability due to the individual's unpreparedness to accept the changes associated with becoming an adult (Arnett et al., 2014).

The difficulties faced by those in the emerging adulthood phase have become increasingly challenging with time. There has been a significant shift in the demographic landscape since this stage of life half a century ago. In the past, many individuals in this transitional period began working full-time after completing high school, with only a small percentage having pursued higher education. Similarly, marriage was common in early twenties, with individuals becoming parents a year later. However, today, a large number of individuals in this phase pursue higher education in their early twenties and start working four years later, making job competition even more intense. As a result,

the unemployment rate has increased, and it is not uncommon for individuals to wait until their thirties to start a family (Arnett, dkk, 2014).

The concept of Emerging Adulthood is often referred to as the period of volitional years or the years of will, during which individuals are afforded the greatest opportunity to explore their identity in the realms of love, work, and worldview. Typically, at the outset of this stage, which occurs at the age of 18, individuals are still reliant on and residing with their parents or guardians, engaging in romantic relationships, and pursuing their education. As individuals progress into their mid to late 20s, they are typically expected to assume greater levels of independence, establish long-term relationships, and define their career paths more clearly (Haflon dkk.,2018). People are currently able to autonomously direct their own future prospects (Herawati & Hidayat, 2020).

The period of 20s is typically marked by emotional volatility, which can lead to a plethora of issues. Furthermore, this stage also presents with a range of challenges (Herawati & Hidayat, 2020). This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the Quarter Life Crisis, which is characterized by feelings of isolation, self-doubt, and a fear of failure in the face of the future (Atwood & Scholtz, 2008). As per Robbins and Wilner (2001), individuals who are undergoing the phase of emerging adulthood may experience quarter-life crises due to their lack of readiness during the transition period from adolescence to adulthood (Artiningsih & Savira, 2021). Three aspects are typically experienced by individuals during a quarter-life crisis, which include emotional instability resulting from changes occurring, dissatisfaction with the choices made, and feelings of being threatened (Robbins & Wilner, 2001).

The disappointment regarding career and interpersonal relationships can contribute to the development of a "quarter-life crisis," a term used to describe a period of introspection and self-evaluation typically experienced by adults in their late twenties or early thirties (Stapleton, 2012). Certainly, this can lead to stress, which play a significant role in the emergence of the quarter-life crisis during early adulthood (Robinson & Wright, 2013). Apart from grappling with issues related to career, relationships, and social life, a quarter-life crisis can also stem from pressure exerted by family members. In such circumstances, family factors significantly influence the individual's perception of the problem. This pressure increases negative emotions, causing the individual to view himself in a negative light. Individuals may possess numerous positive qualities that could be nurtured and developed, even though they remains unaware of them, consequently affecting productivity and social functionality (Rahmania & Tasaufi, 2020).

There are numerous elements that can impact an individual's success or failure during their journey towards attaining maturity. These elements include the personal, familial, and societal resources that they possess, as well as the reciprocal and dynamic interactions that occur in their surroundings, which serve as supportive factors during their transition period (Halfon et al., 2018). The family unit is widely regarded as the smallest and most significant component of society. It serves as the primary setting for the psychological, spiritual, and social development of children, as well as the location where they receive their initial education. The unwavering love and support provided by parents is the first source of affection that children experience, and it is critical for their emotional well-being. Warm and nurturing relationships within the family can instill a sense of security in children, which is an essential need that must be met. The nature of attachment to parents is a

continuous process that begins in the womb and continues to evolve as the individual matures, reflecting their level of development (Diananda, 2020).

Attachment remains crucial during emerging adulthood, as it provides individuals with a sense of security and comfort. This is because emerging adulthood is not yet fully independent from its parents. A secure attachment is beneficial for individuals' ability to manage their emotions. Diananda's (2020) research on the impact of children's attachment to their parents on cognitive development and self-esteem revealed that when children have strong emotional bonds with their parents, they are better able to empathize with others, avoid substance abuse and mental disorders such as depression. Parental attachment also shapes a person's sense of self. With the constant support of an attached figure, the child develops confidence and a positive self-model, becoming a responsible and caring individual. This positive development of the self-schema or person-schema leads to a mature self-concept (Helmi, 1999).

Therefore, it can be inferred that the secure attachment of parents holds significant importance in the development of emotional regulation and self-concept formation in individuals. This becomes particularly crucial for individuals during emerging adulthood, who may be susceptible to experiencing quarter life crises or emotional turmoil due to the increasing demands and pressures of adulthood. One of the primary indicators of a quarter life crisis is emotional instability, leading to feelings of stress and depression. If left unresolved, this crisis can result in severe consequences, including the potential for depression, a lack of self-confidence, feelings of worthlessness, and mental health disorders. Therefore, this research aims to explore the impact of parental attachment on individuals within the transitional age range of emerging adulthood in navigating the challenges of the quarter life crisis.

2. Literature Review

Quarter Life Crisis

According to Robbins and Wilner (2001), the concept of quarter life crisis refers to a period of instability and uncertainty in an individual's life, typically occurring between the ages of 18 and 29. During this phase, individuals often experience doubt about their future and may struggle to find their place in the world. This can lead to conflict with others and create feelings of worry and anxiety about the future. The quarter life crisis is characterized by a sense of being at a crossroads, with multiple choices to make that can leave individuals feeling overwhelmed and helpless. This phenomenon has been widely studied and is considered an important part of the human experience (Robbins and Wilner, 2001).

Robinson and Wright (2013) stated that the quarter-life crisis is composed of four distinct phases. The first phase, known as "locked in," is characterized by an individual's inability to make decisions about their future due to feeling trapped by various choices. Following this, the individual enters the second phase, which is divided into two sub-phases: "separation," in which the individual withdraws from their environment, and "time out," in which the individual reflects on the changes that have occurred in their life. During the transition period, individuals also begin to actively explore

and experiment in order to develop new commitments and goals. This phase is known as "exploration." Once an individual has discovered what aligns with their interests and values, they enter the final phase, "rebuilding," during which they experience a greater sense of self-satisfaction and self-control compared to their life before the crisis.

Secure Parental Attachment

The concept of attachment refers to the emotional connection that an individual forms with a specific attachment figure, which offers a sense of security and comfort. This attachment plays a crucial role in shaping the individual's perception of the world and establishing the structure of their social relationships with others (Bowlby, 1988). Parental attachment holds significant importance in the development of emotions, which enables children to engage with others effectively (Hermasanti, 2009). The quality of parent-child attachment can result in either a secure or insecure attachment. Ideally, the aim is to establish an attachment that fosters a sense of security between the child and their parents. According to Bowlby (1998), secure attachment refers to the bond that develops between a primary caregiver and a child, beginning in the womb and extending throughout the individual's entire lifespan. This perspective is supported by Armsden and Greenberg (1987), who suggested that secure attachment is characterized by trust, effective communication, and a sense of security for the child, thereby preventing feelings of isolation.

There are various dimensions of attachment style outlined by Armsden and Greenberg (1987), which comprise trust, communication, and alienation. In the realm of trust, a person's trust in others is based on the conviction that they will fulfill certain needs. Trust enables individuals to forge more intimate connections with those they trust. Similarly, if parents are capable of comprehending, empathizing, and acknowledging their children's needs, interests, and desires, it can lead to increased trust, fostering positive and healthy relationships.

Effective communication plays a crucial role in fostering strong emotional connections between parents and children. When individuals are open to communication, they are better able to understand and navigate changes in their lives. According to Barrocas (2006), individuals with secure attachment styles possess excellent communication skills, allowing them to reap mutual benefits from social interactions with their attachment figures. In the realm of alienation, a lack of warmth or friendliness in relationships can lead to feelings of separation and isolation. When parents make the effort to express their love for their children and prioritize spending time with them, it creates a sense of safety and security. Conversely, when parents struggle to express their love or fail to make time for their children, it can negatively impact the child's perception of the attachment relationship.

3. Method

This study employs a quantitative correlational research design, which aims to measure and describe the relationship between two or more variables using correlational statistics (Creswell, 2018). On the contrary, Azwar (2019) posits that correlational research seeks to establish the direction and magnitude of the relationship between variables, to gauge, with the correlation coefficient, the degree to which variations in one variable are associated with changes in other

variables. This study was undertaken to investigate the connection between secure parental attachment and the quarter-life crisis in emerging adulthood.

Research Instruments

Data collection was performed to uncover the empirical truth regarding the variables to be studied (Azwar, 2019). In this research, the data collection method utilizes a psychological scale instrument, which is a tool employed by researchers to collect data through measurements (Purwanto, 2008).

The present investigation makes use of the likert scale, a commonly employed tool for evaluating an individual's stance or conduct in relation to a specific idea or event. The Likert Scale consists of two classes of statements: those that express agreement with the indicators being assessed and those that express disagreement with the indicators being assessed.

1. Quarter Life Crisis Scale

The scale used to measure quarter life crisis is a self-devised scale based on three aspects of quarter life crisis as presented by Robbins and Wilner (2001): emotional instability resulting from changes, dissatisfaction with the choices made, and feeling threatened. There are five response options for each question in this scale: "very applicable" with a score of 5, "applicable" with a score of 4, "neutral" with a score of 3, "not applicable" with a score of 2, and "very not applicable" with a score of 1.

2. Secure Parental Attachment Scale

The Secure Parental Attachment Scale is based on the Inventory Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) measuring instrument, which was developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987) and consists of three components: trust, communication, and alienation. This instrument has been translated into Indonesian by the researchers themselves through a readability test. The scale includes five answer options for each question item, with scores ranging from 5 for "always" to 1 for "never". This tool features a scoring system that computes the total score by adding the values of the trust and communication components, and then deducts the alienation value from the sum.

Participants

The individuals comprising the subject pool for this research initiative are those who fall within the age bracket of 18 to 29 years and are in the transitional phase from late adolescence to early adulthood, also known as Emerging Adulthood. The researcher utilized nonprobability sampling, employing an accidental sampling technique, which is a method of selecting cases or respondents who are present or accessible in a specific location based on the research context (Notoatmodjo, 2010). This technique was deemed appropriate since the precise number of individuals in the total population is not definitively known. The researcher estimated the sample size at 103 individuals using a priori power analysis, with an effect size of 0.15.

Data Analysis Techniques

This study utilized multiple linear regression analysis, a method for assessing the relationship between one or more independent variables and a dependent variable (Ghozali, 2011). Specifically, the F test was employed to evaluate the simultaneous relationships among all research variables. To determine if each independent variable has a unique contribution to the dependent variable, the coefficient model was examined.

4. Result and Discussions

Result

The present research utilized multiple linear regression analysis techniques to examine the major and minor hypotheses. In this study, demographic variables were employed as predictors. The minor hypothesis under investigation pertains to the examination of each aspect of parental secure attachment in relation to the quarter life crisis. The outcomes of the statistical tests conducted reveal that the parental secure attachment regression model possesses a statistically significant value. A comprehensive analysis of the results can be found in the table below.

Table I. F lest results 0	i Parentai s	becure All	acime		
Variables	R ²	F	df1	df2	Р
Secure attachment	0,178	41,03	1	190	< 0,001

Table 1. F Test Results of Parental Secure Attachment to Quarter Life Crisis

Based on the results presented in the table above, it can be concluded that the value obtained, F(1,190) = 41.03, p < 0.05, and $R^2 = 0.178$, indicates that 17.8% of parents' secure attachment is significantly associated with the occurrence of quarter-life crisis, with a p-value of less than 0.05.

To examine the connection between the dependent variable and the independent variable, it is possible to consult the model coefficient table. If the regression model has a p-value of less than 0.05, then it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables.

In this study, the outcomes indicated that the regression model involving parents' secure attachment and the quarter life crisis demonstrated a p-value of less than 0.05, suggesting a significant association between the two variables.

		-	-
Variable	Estimate	t	р
Secure Attachment	-0,421	-6,41	< 0,001

The table above indicates that the independent variable of secure parental attachment exhibits a significant relationship (p < 0.05). The direction of this relationship can be observed through the t value in the coefficient model. If the value is positive, the relationship between variables is also in a positive direction, and if it is negative, the direction of the relationship is negative as well. The results of the regression test reveal that the relationship between secure parental attachment and quarter life crisis is negative. Therefore, it can be inferred that the higher the level of secure attachment of parents, the lower the level of quarter life crisis they experience, and vice versa, the lower the level of secure attachment of parents, the higher the level of quarter life crisis.

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of parental secure attachment, specifically trust, communication, and alienation, on the prevalence of quarter-life crisis. The minor hypothesis, which was tested using multiple linear regression analysis, posited a relationship between these factors and the dependent variable. The results of the analysis were as follows:

Dimensions	R ²	F	df1	df2	р	
Trust, communications, and allienations	0,301	27	3	188	< 0,001	significant

Table 3. Outcome of the F Test on the dimensions of Secure Attachment of Parents on QLC

According to the findings from the assessments conducted on the three dimensions of secure parental attachment and their connection to the quarter life crisis, the calculated F-value (3,188) was 27 and the p-value was less than 0.05, with an R-squared value of 0.301. This indicates that the three dimensions of secure parental attachment have a combined influence of 30.1% on the quarter life crisis. The table below presents the details of the partial relationship between these dimensions and the quarter life crisis.

Table 4. Model Coefficient dimensions of secure attachment on QLC				
Estimate	t	р		
-0,132	-1,04	0,298	Not significant	
0,302	2,91	0,004	significant	
0,629	5,67	< 0,001	significant	
	Estimate -0,132 0,302	Estimate t -0,132 -1,04 0,302 2,91	Estimatetp-0,132-1,040,2980,3022,910,004	

Tabel 4. Model Coefficient dimensions of secure attachment on QLC

Based on the model coefficient table presented above, it can be inferred that there are two variables that exhibit a significant relationship with a p-value <0.05, namely communication and alienation. In terms of alienation, the results of the t-value (5.67) indicate a positive relationship direction, indicating that individuals with higher levels of alienation are more likely to experience a quarter-life crisis. With regard to communication, the t-value (2.91) also indicates a positive relationship, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of communication are more likely to experience a quarter-life crisis. However, the trust aspect does not show a significant relationship with the quarter-life crisis (p = 0.298). The regression formula can be used to predict the quarter-life crisis based on a person's secure attachment to their parents.

$$y = (-0,132) x_{trust} + 0,302 x_{communications} + 0,629 x_{allienations} + 1,47$$

Discussions

The emerging adulthood phase is characterized as a transitional period from adolescence to true adulthood. This phase is marked by various new demands and challenges that individuals must confront, including academic problems, work, marriage, worldviews, and demands for independence

from parents. Furthermore, this period is also referred to as the volitional years or years of will, as individuals have the opportunity to explore various fields and discover their identity (Haflon et al., 2018). The numerous transitions and demands that occur during this phase often lead to emotional crises, which are commonly known as quarter life crises (Atwood & Schultz, 2008). Each individual's response to such a crisis will vary, and it is crucial to possess good emotional control in order to navigate through this period successfully.

In this study, it was established that the secure parental attachment contributed significantly to an individual's quarter life crisis, with a percentage of 17.8%. This finding indicates that a substantial portion of individuals' secure attachment to their parents can impact their quarter life crisis. The research conducted by Diananda (2020) on the attachment of children to their parents revealed that attachment serves as a source of security and comfort, enabling those with secure attachment to their parents to better manage their emotions. A strong emotional bond with parents not only improves cognitive development and self-esteem, but also fosters a more positive self-perception, allowing individuals to navigate the numerous changes that occur in their lives, including the quarter life crisis.

Participants in this study comprised individuals who were in the emerging adulthood phase, specifically aged 18-29 years. The findings of the research indicated that age had a significant relationship with quarter life crisis, as evidenced by a p value < 0.05 in the T test with a negative relationship direction, which suggests that age influences the level of quarter life crisis, and the older a person is, the lower the level of quarter life crisis. Conversely, the younger a person is, the higher the level of quarter life crisis. The age range of 18-29 years is considered to be the emerging adulthood phase. During this phase, individuals are faced with various pressures, as they are no longer considered teenagers because they are independent in making decisions, but on the other hand, they are still dependent on their parents and not yet financially independent. This creates feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and career uncertainty, often referred to as a quarter life crisis (Arini, 2021). Research conducted by Robbins and Wilner (2001) on young people in their early 20s showed that they experienced various anxieties about future uncertainty and confusion regarding decision making. Similarly, research conducted by Robinson (2015) with respondents aged 25-35 years found that they were susceptible to experiencing high stress regarding the decisions they had taken. Based on the research results above, it can be concluded that the emerging adulthood phase is vulnerable to experiencing a quarter life crisis, in line with research results which found that age factors also influence a person's quarter life crisis level.

The primary objective of the present investigation is to explore the influence of secure parental attachment, particularly trust, communication, and alienation, on the quarter-life crisis through the application of multiple linear regression analysis. The research findings, as revealed by the F Test, indicate that secure parental attachment as a whole exhibits a noteworthy connection with the quarter-life crisis. Upon scrutinizing the individual components, the study uncovers that only the alienation and communication aspects demonstrate a notable correlation with the quarter-life crisis, with a positive t value. This implies that as the level of alienation and communication rises, so does the level of the quarter-life crisis.

Alienation occurs when individuals experience a deficiency of emotional connection and become estranged from others, particularly in familial relationships. When parents fail to devote time and demonstrate affection towards their offspring, the quality of attachment becomes insecure (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987). According to Ainsworth, insecure attachment is divided into two groups, namely anxious and avoidant (Collins & Read, 1991). Individuals who exhibit an avoidant type of insecure attachment style typically possess a mentality characterized by skepticism, suspicion, and a lack of self-confidence (Simpson, 1990). Concerning social mentality, individuals who experience discomfort with intimacy, struggle with trusting others, and grapple with the fear of losing or being left behind by their peers may exhibit such traits (Collins & Read, 1991). In addition, those who possess an anxious attachment style characterized by insecurity are likely to possess a self-concept that includes feelings of self-doubt, worthlessness, and a lack of understanding, as well as a low level of commitment in interpersonal relationships (Simpson, 1990), often feeling unloved by others, will be less assertive and less sensitive in helping each other (Collins & Read, 1991).

According to the findings of this study, there is a positive relationship between alienation and quarter life crisis, as indicated by the positive t value (5.67). This suggests that individuals with high levels of alienation are likely to experience high levels of quarter life crisis, while those with low levels of alienation are likely to experience low levels of quarter life crisis. As previously discussed, alienation can lead to the development of an insecure attachment style, which is characterized by a negative self-concept (Helmi, 1999). This, in turn, makes individuals more susceptible to feeling trapped in a crisis. In contrast, individuals with a secure attachment style to their parents tend to have a positive self-concept and greater confidence, which helps them better cope with a crisis. This is supported by the results of the main hypothesis analysis, which found that the higher the level of parental secure attachment, the lower the level of quarter life crisis, and vice versa.

Communication plays a significant role in mitigating the impact of the quarter-life crisis, as it exhibits a positive relationship direction. Communication is an exchange of information between two or more individuals to foster connection and achieve shared objectives. Given that family is the most intimate partner, effective communication within the family is particularly crucial. It helps to reduce misunderstandings and enhance mutual understanding. Poor communication within the family can result in a rift, causing children to feel isolated (Rahmawati and Gazali, 2018).

Apart from that, in research conducted by Hadori, Hastuti and Puspitawati (2020) regarding the self-esteem of adolescents in intact and single families, in relation to parent-adolescent communication and attachment, the results showed that parental communication and attachment had a significant positive effect on self- esteem, this indicates that the higher the level of communication and attachment of the parents, the higher the self-esteem they will have. Self-esteem itself is an individual's subjective evaluation of his or her own worth (Noronha, Monteiro, & Pinto, 2018). Self-esteem is able to protect individuals from various mental health issues such as anxiety, stress and depression and helps them develop and achieve life satisfaction (Edwards, 2010). Boosting one's self-esteem can lead to increased self-confidence in tackling obstacles, ultimately enabling them to derive greater pleasure from their own accomplishments (Branden, 2021).

When individuals experience low self-esteem, they tend to struggle with confronting the numerous challenges and changes that occur during the emerging adulthood phase (Husain and

Suminar, 2022). This will inevitably influence individuals in encountering a quarter life crisis, which is characterized by stress, anxiety, self-doubt, fear of failure, and even depression. Low self-esteem will have a significant impact on aspects of self-efficacy and self-respect, hindering individuals in assessing and deciding on matters and leaving them feeling unworthy of achieving their desired objectives, thus exacerbating the consequences of the quarter life crisis (Branden, 2021). Drawing from the data, it may be deduced that interaction between parents and children plays a significant role in shaping an individual's self-esteem, which in turn has an effect on the intensity of the quarter-life crisis. Particularly, those with higher self-esteem are less prone to encountering a quarter-life crisis. This implies that communication has a negative bearing on the quarter-life crisis, and the superior the communication, the lower the chances of experiencing a quarter-life crisis.

However, the study found that communication has a positive relationship with quarter-life crisis, meaning that the higher the level of communication, the higher the level of quarter-life crisis experienced. This contradicts the results of the above-mentioned research, as high levels of communication within the family are believed to create a more harmonious relationship between family members, resulting in a secure attachment between children and parents. The study also revealed that secure attachment has a negative relationship with quarter-life crisis, indicating that the higher the level of secure attachment, the lower the level of quarter-life crisis experienced.

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