



Quarter Life Crisis Dynamics Among Final-Year Islamic Counseling Students: An Islamic Guidance Perspective

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Received: Filled Out by the Editor	Accepted: Filled Out by the Editor	Published: Filled Out by the Editor
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Abstract	<i>This study aims to understand the psychological dynamics of quarter life crisis experienced by final-year students of the Islamic Counseling Guidance (Bimbingan Konseling Islam) study program at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Mataram, to identify the factors contributing to it, and to analyze students' responses from an Islamic counseling perspective. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed, with informants selected through purposive sampling based on indications of quarter life crisis until data saturation was reached. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation, and were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings show that informants experienced anxiety, confusion, stress, and identity crisis shaped by internal factors (low self-confidence, unclear life goals) and external factors (academic pressure, family expectations). Students' responses varied between adaptive coping (spiritual practice, social-support seeking, self-reflection) and maladaptive coping (withdrawal, procrastination, rumination). Within an Islamic counseling framework, spiritual values such as patience (ṣabr), reliance on God (tawakal), and gratitude (shukr) played a central role in helping students manage the crisis, underscoring the importance of an integrative psychological-spiritual approach.</i>
Keywords:	<i>Quarter Life Crisis; Islamic Counseling; Emerging Adulthood; Final-Year Students; Spiritual Coping.</i>

A. Introduction

Early adulthood is a developmental stage marked by a series of complex life demands, including career decisions, interpersonal relationships, and the search for meaning in life. During this phase, individuals frequently confront significant psychological pressure, particularly when they must make important decisions about their future. In psychological literature, this condition is widely known as the quarter life crisis, an emotional and existential crisis typically experienced by individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). The phenomenon has become increasingly salient among university students, especially final-year students who stand at the threshold of the transition from academic life to the world of work and full adult responsibility.

Global evidence suggests that this transition period coincides with heightened vulnerability to mental health difficulties among young people. The World Health Organization's World Mental Health International College Student (WMH-ICS) survey found that a substantial proportion of university students across multiple countries report symptoms consistent with at least one common mental disorder within a given year, with anxiety and mood disorders being the most prevalent (Auerbach et al., 2018). Longitudinal research in Western contexts has likewise documented a marked rise in depressive symptoms and psychological distress among adolescents and emerging adults over the past decade (Twenge et al., 2018). While these studies were not conducted specifically on Indonesian populations, they indicate a broader global pattern in which the transition to adulthood intensified by economic uncertainty, competitive labor markets, and digitally mediated social comparison has become an increasingly precarious psychological passage for young people, including university students in Indonesia.

Final-year students represent a group that is particularly vulnerable to quarter life crisis because they face multiple simultaneous demands: completing a thesis or final assignment, meeting graduation deadlines, and managing social pressure related to family and community expectations about their future. Previous studies indicate that quarter life crisis among university students is characterized by emotional instability, anxiety, confusion in determining life direction, and a sense of helplessness in confronting the realities of adult life (Adellia & Varadhila, 2023). This phase is also frequently accompanied by heightened psychological pressure that, if left unaddressed, may contribute to a decline in mental well-being (Maharani & Santosa, 2024).

Empirically, the phenomenon of quarter life crisis among university students has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Fadhillah et al. (2022), for instance, found that the level of quarter life crisis among students is influenced by demographic factors such as gender, semester standing, and the quality of social relationships. Other studies show that the psychosocial problems emerging during this phase include anxiety, social pressure, and identity confusion closely related to the developmental tasks of early adulthood (Adellia & Varadhila, 2023). In addition, internal factors such as self-concept and self-awareness have also been shown to influence the intensity of quarter life crisis experienced by students (Yolanda & Primanita, 2023), while gratitude has been identified as a potential protective factor against its severity (Zein, 2023).

Nevertheless, the majority of existing studies remain confined to general or quantitative psychological approaches that emphasize statistical relationships among variables such as gratitude, self-awareness, or psychological well-being. In-depth qualitative inquiry into the psychological dynamics of quarter life crisis particularly from the perspective of Islamic Counseling Guidance (Bimbingan Konseling Islam) remains comparatively scarce. This gap is notable because the Islamic counseling approach offers a distinctive lens for understanding human psychological difficulty: one that integrates spiritual dimensions,

Islamic values, and a holistic view of the individual, rather than treating psychological distress as a purely secular, intra-psychic phenomenon.

Within the framework of Islamic Counseling Guidance, the phenomenon of quarter life crisis is understood not merely as a psychological problem but also as a spiritual matter connected to the meaning of life, faith, and the individual's relationship with God. Islamic counseling views the human being as possessing interconnected physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions; consequently, addressing psychological difficulty requires a holistic approach that attends to all of these dimensions simultaneously. This orientation is especially relevant because many students facing life pressures are, in fact, in need of spiritual reinforcement as a source of psychological resilience. Allah states in the Qur'an:

"(They are) those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah. Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest."

(QS. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 28)

This verse indicates that psychological tranquility is closely tied to an individual's spiritual condition. In confronting various life pressures, individuals require the reinforcement of faith and piety in order to manage their emotions and to find meaning in the experiences they undergo.

The present study is important because it addresses a group whose vulnerability is compounded by an additional layer of complexity: students of Islamic Counseling Guidance are simultaneously experiencing the psychological turbulence of quarter life crisis themselves while being trained to become future counselors responsible for helping others manage similar difficulties. This dual position as both a potentially crisis-affected individual and a prospective helping professional has received little scholarly attention, despite its evident relevance to counselor education, self-care practices within the counseling profession, and the broader discourse on practitioner well-being. Without an in-depth understanding of this dynamic, the phenomenon carries the risk of long-term consequences for students' mental health, quality of life, and readiness to assume their future social and professional roles including their capacity to provide effective counseling to others.

Building on this rationale, the novelty of this study lies in its integration of a phenomenological, qualitative account of quarter life crisis with the interpretive framework of Islamic Counseling Guidance, applied specifically to a population of counselor-trainees who occupy a dual role as both help-seekers and future help-providers. This study therefore seeks to understand in depth the psychological dynamics of quarter life crisis among final-year students of Islamic Counseling Guidance at UIN Mataram, to identify the internal and external factors contributing to this crisis, and to analyze how Islamic spiritual values shape students' coping responses. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically by extending the discourse on Islamic Counseling Guidance and practically, by informing the design of counseling services that are more contextually and spiritually responsive to students' needs.

This concern is amplified by the institutional position occupied by State Islamic Universities (PTKIN) such as UIN Mataram within Indonesia's higher-education landscape. As institutions mandated to train future Islamic counselors, religious teachers, and da'wah practitioners, PTKIN campuses carry a dual responsibility: producing graduates who are academically competitive in an increasingly demanding labor market, while also cultivating the spiritual maturity expected of future religious and counseling professionals. This dual mandate arguably intensifies the pressure experienced by final-year Islamic Counseling Guidance students relative to their peers in secular study programs, since they are expected not merely to survive their own quarter life crisis but to emerge from it equipped with the spiritual and psychological maturity to guide others through comparable difficulties. Understanding how this specific population experiences and manages crisis is therefore of direct relevance not only to psychological theory but also to the strategic planning of PTKIN counselor-education curricula across Indonesia.

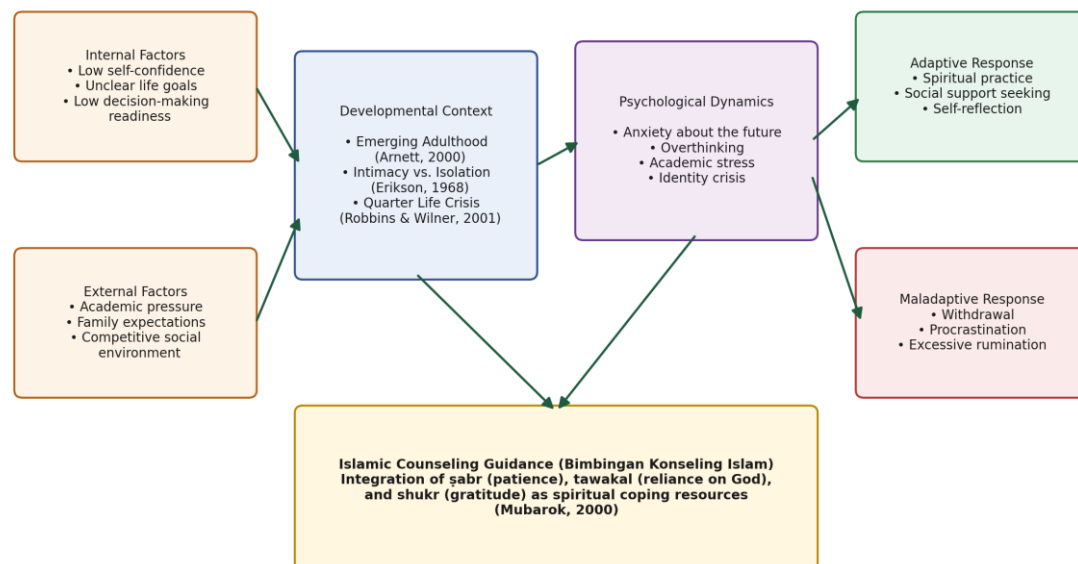


Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking causal factors, developmental context, psychological dynamics, coping responses, and Islamic counseling integration

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a phenomenological design. This design was selected because the purpose of the study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subjective experience of final-year students regarding the psychological dynamics of quarter life crisis. Through this approach, the researcher sought to uncover the meaning of informants' lived experiences in a more comprehensive manner, encompassing both psychological and spiritual dimensions. Accordingly, the study did not merely describe the phenomenon but also interpreted the meaning underlying the experiences reported by informants.

The phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to enter the informants' lifeworld and to understand reality from their own perspective. The central focus of the study was how individuals interpret the crisis they experience and how this process shapes their psychological condition. This approach was also considered relevant for examining the integration of psychological experience with spiritual values in the informants' lives, and was therefore judged most appropriate for addressing the study's objectives.

The study was conducted at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Mataram. This site was selected for its contextual relevance, given that the research subjects were students of the Islamic Counseling Guidance study program, whose academic background is embedded within a religiously oriented institutional environment. This Islamic-based campus setting also enabled the researcher to examine the spiritual dimension of the phenomenon under study in a naturalistic context.

The research subjects were final-year students of the Islamic Counseling Guidance study program. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria: currently completing a final assignment or thesis, undergoing the transition toward the world of work, and displaying indications of quarter life crisis. Informants were selected based on their willingness and their capacity to provide in-depth information about their experiences. The number of informants was determined flexibly until the point of data saturation was reached, resulting in six primary informants (coded R-1 through R-6), summarized in Table 1. To protect participant confidentiality in accordance with the study's ethical protocol, individual demographic identifiers beyond the informant code are withheld from this manuscript.

Table 1. Overview of Key Informants

Code	Participant Description	Data Collection Method(s)
R-1	Final-year student, Islamic Counseling Guidance Program, UIN Mataram	In-depth interview; documentation
R-2	Final-year student, Islamic Counseling Guidance Program, UIN Mataram	In-depth interview; observation
R-3	Final-year student, Islamic Counseling Guidance Program, UIN Mataram	In-depth interview; documentation
R-4	Final-year student, Islamic Counseling Guidance Program, UIN Mataram	In-depth interview; observation
R-5	Final-year student, Islamic Counseling Guidance Program, UIN Mataram	In-depth interview; documentation
R-6	Final-year student, Islamic Counseling Guidance Program, UIN Mataram	In-depth interview; observation; documentation

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Dakwah and Communication Science, UIN Mataram, with approval number [to be completed by the author]. All participants provided written informed consent prior to data collection, and their identities were protected under strict confidentiality principles, consistent with the ethical standards of qualitative research involving human participants.

Given the phenomenological orientation of this study, the researcher's own positionality warrants brief acknowledgment. As a student within the same Islamic Counseling Guidance program and institutional context as the informants, the researcher occupied an insider position that facilitated rapport and access but also required deliberate reflexive bracketing (*epoché*) of personal assumptions about the crisis under study, consistent with Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological method. Field notes documenting the researcher's own reactions and assumptions were maintained throughout data collection and were cross-checked during the triangulation and member-checking stages described below, in order to minimize the risk that the researcher's prior familiarity with the phenomenon would unduly shape the interpretation of informants' accounts.

To obtain rich and comprehensive data, this study employed a triangulation technique combining multiple data-collection methods, namely in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, with the aim of enhancing data validity and enriching the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format using a flexible interview guide. This technique was used to explore informants' subjective experiences regarding their psychological condition, the factors contributing to their crisis, and the ways in which they responded to it. Informants were given space to narrate their experiences openly and in depth, yielding data that were rich and reflective in character.

Observation was conducted to directly examine informants' behavior, emotional expression, and the concrete conditions they experienced within specific contexts. This observation was non-participant in nature, meaning that the researcher did not become directly involved in informants' activities. Observational data were used to reinforce and complement the interview data, while also helping the researcher understand the social context underlying informants' experiences.

Documentation was used as supporting data, including personal notes, records of academic activity, and other relevant documents. This technique helped the researcher obtain additional information not captured through interviews, and also served as a means of triangulation to strengthen the credibility of the data.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Analysis was conducted continuously from the data-collection stage through the completion of the study, in a cyclical process in which each stage is interrelated with the others; analysis therefore did not proceed linearly but continued throughout the research process. The stages of analysis comprised three interrelated components. **Data reduction**

involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the raw data obtained from the field; data were grouped according to the focus of the study, irrelevant data were eliminated, while important data were retained, helping the researcher organize the data in a more directed manner. **Data display** involved presenting the reduced data in the form of a systematic and comprehensible descriptive narrative, organized into specific categories or themes, in order to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships among data and to support the process of drawing conclusions. **Conclusion drawing and verification** constituted the interpretive stage in which the researcher identified the meanings and patterns emerging from the findings; conclusions were treated as provisional and were continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure that the resulting findings were genuinely valid and could be responsibly accounted for.

To maintain the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed several techniques intended to strengthen the credibility and validity of the findings, an important consideration in qualitative research to ensure that the resulting data are trustworthy and consistent with the reality experienced by informants. The techniques used included triangulation, member checking, and persistent observation. **Triangulation** was carried out by comparing data obtained from different sources, techniques, and time points; the researcher compared the results of interviews, observation, and documentation to ensure data consistency, thereby helping reduce potential bias in the study. **Member checking** was carried out by confirming interview results or research findings with informants, with the aim of ensuring that the data obtained corresponded to the experiences intended by the informants, who were given the opportunity to clarify or add information as needed. **Persistent observation** involved observing the phenomenon in depth and repeatedly over a certain period, allowing the researcher to understand context and situation in greater detail and to identify patterns that might not be apparent during initial observation, thereby yielding findings that were more in-depth and comprehensive.

C. Results and Discussion

The results and discussion are presented sequentially, each under a separate subheading. Before presenting the findings, it is important to outline the overall structure of this section. The Results subsection presents the empirical findings obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation, organized according to four foci: the general overview of quarter life crisis among informants, the internal and external factors contributing to it, the psychological dynamics experienced, and the coping responses displayed. The Discussion subsection then interprets these findings in relation to theory, prior research, and the perspective of Islamic Counseling Guidance, and further situates the findings within the broader, cross-cultural discourse on youth mental health and religious coping.

1. Results

a. General Overview of Quarter Life Crisis among Final-Year Students

The findings indicate that the majority of informants experienced psychological conditions consistent with quarter life crisis. This condition was marked by feelings of anxiety, confusion, and uncertainty in facing the future, particularly regarding career prospects and social roles after graduation. This finding suggests that the transition from academic life to the world of work constitutes a phase heavily laden with psychological pressure. In addition, the demand for prompt independence further intensified the psychological condition experienced by informants.

One informant expressed:

"I often feel confused about what to do after graduating; sometimes I feel afraid that I won't be able to meet my parents' expectations."

(Interview with R-1, 2024)

This statement reflects psychological pressure originating from social expectation. It is consistent with the concept of quarter life crisis proposed by Robbins and Wilner (2001), who argue that individuals in early adulthood frequently experience identity confusion and anxiety about the future. The statement also reveals a tension between personal aspiration and environmental demands.

This condition is further illuminated by Arnett's (2000) concept of emerging adulthood, in which individuals occupy a period of identity exploration marked by considerable uncertainty. Final-year students stand at a critical juncture, as they must soon make consequential life decisions. This uncertainty frequently generates feelings of doubt and fear of failure, indicating that quarter life crisis constitutes a common yet clinically and pastorally significant phenomenon that warrants serious attention.

b. Factors Contributing to Quarter Life Crisis

The findings show that both internal and external factors influence the emergence of quarter life crisis, and that these two categories of factors interact with and reinforce one another. This interactional complexity means that each individual experiences the crisis somewhat differently, underscoring the importance of understanding contributing factors when designing appropriate interventions.

Internal factors identified in this study included low self-confidence, confusion in determining life goals, and insufficient readiness to enter the workforce. Several informants admitted that they did not yet feel mentally or competently prepared for life after graduation, revealing a gap between expectation and self-perceived capability that in turn heightened their vulnerability to anxiety.

One informant stated:

"I feel I'm not ready enough; sometimes I feel inferior when I see friends who already have clear plans."

(Interview with R-2, 2024)

This statement reflects a crisis of self-confidence that contributes to anxiety and overthinking. Social comparison also emerged as a factor that exacerbated informants' internal condition, affirming that internal psychological factors play a significant role in triggering the crisis.

External factors identified included academic pressure, family demands, and the influence of the social environment. Pressure to graduate promptly and secure employment constituted the dominant source of stress for final-year students. In addition, family expectations were frequently expressed without corresponding attention to the individual's psychological condition, leaving students feeling burdened and pressured.

This was expressed by one informant:

"My parents often ask when I will graduate and start working; that makes me feel even more pressured."

(Interview with R-3, 2024)

This finding is consistent with Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, which holds that individuals in early adulthood face the simultaneous demands of building identity and social relationships. When these demands are not adequately met, individuals tend to experience psychological crisis, indicating that external factors make a substantial contribution to intensifying the pressure experienced.

c. Psychological Dynamics Experienced by Students

The psychological dynamics experienced by final-year students in this study encompassed four principal aspects: anxiety, overthinking, academic stress, and identity crisis. These four aspects are interrelated and together constitute a complex crisis experience, indicating that quarter life crisis is not a unitary condition but a multidimensional one that requires a comprehensive analytical approach, summarized in Table 2 and visualized in Figure 2.

Anxiety about the future. Most informants experienced anxiety related to employment and life after graduation. This anxiety emerged from uncertainty and limited experience in facing the world of work; individuals worried about being unable to meet their own expectations or those of others, a condition that diminished their emotional composure.

Overthinking. Informants tended to dwell on various negative possibilities that had not necessarily occurred, such as career failure or the inability to meet expectations. This thought

pattern impeded rational decision-making and exacerbated existing anxiety, trapping individuals in a cycle of negative thinking.

Academic stress. Pressure to complete the thesis also reinforced the crisis condition. Students felt burdened by academic demands that had to be fulfilled within a fixed timeframe, resulting in mental and emotional fatigue that, if not properly managed, could impede productivity.

Identity crisis. Students experienced confusion in determining their life direction and sense of self. They found themselves in a phase of searching for life meaning frequently accompanied by doubt, which reinforced uncertainty about the future; identity crisis therefore constitutes the core of quarter life crisis as experienced by informants. This finding resonates with Marcia's (1966) classic account of identity-status development, in which prolonged "identity moratorium" an unresolved state of active exploration without commitment is associated with heightened anxiety and reduced psychological stability.

This dynamic is consistent with Murphy's (2011) perspective, which holds that crisis in early adulthood encompasses emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. These three dimensions interact with and influence the individual's overall condition, indicating that the management of such crises must take all of these dimensions into account simultaneously.

Table 2. Thematic Coding Structure of the Findings

Category	Theme	Indicators / Description
Causal factors	Internal factors	Low self-confidence; unclear life goals; limited readiness for decision-making and for entering the workforce
	External factors	Academic pressure to finish the thesis and graduate on time; family expectations regarding career and independence; competitive social comparison among peers
Psychological dynamics	Anxiety about the future	Worry about employment prospects and post-graduation life; fear of being unable to meet personal or others' expectations
	Overthinking	Persistent rumination on negative possibilities (career failure, unmet expectations); difficulty making decisions rationally
	Academic stress	Mental and emotional fatigue associated with completing the thesis within a fixed timeframe
	Identity crisis	Confusion regarding life direction and self-identity; doubt accompanying the search for life meaning
Coping responses	Adaptive	Increased religious practice; seeking social support; self-reflection
	Maladaptive	Social withdrawal; procrastination; excessive rumination

d. Students' Responses to Quarter Life Crisis

The responses displayed by students in facing quarter life crisis were divided into two categories: adaptive and maladaptive. This variation indicates differences in individuals' capacity to manage stress, with factors such as emotional maturity and social support influencing the type of response that emerges; identifying the dominant response pattern is therefore important.

Several students exhibited positive responses, such as increasing their religious practice, seeking social support, and engaging in self-reflection. These responses indicate an effort on the part of individuals to manage their emotions constructively; spiritual activity, in particular, helped individuals attain inner tranquility, thereby reinforcing their psychological resilience.

One informant remarked:

"I try to draw closer to Allah, so that I can feel calmer and more confident about my life path."

(Interview with R-4, 2024)

This statement indicates that the spiritual approach plays an important role in helping individuals confront crisis. Religious values become a source of strength in facing pressure, indicating that adaptive responses contribute to the recovery of psychological well-being.

However, negative responses were also observed, including withdrawal from the social environment, procrastination, and excessive overthinking. These responses indicate an inability on the part of individuals to manage the pressure they experience; such behaviors, in fact, tend to worsen the individual's psychological condition and, if left unaddressed, may develop into more serious problems.

This was illustrated by another informant, who described a pattern of avoidance rather than confrontation of the pressures faced:

"Sometimes I just avoid my friends and stay in my room; it feels easier than having to explain why my thesis isn't progressing."

(Interview with R-5, 2024)

This pattern of withdrawal, rather than resolving the underlying pressure, appears instead to compound it by removing the individual from precisely the social-support networks that adaptive responders (such as R-4) drew upon. Taken together, the results indicate that the six informants distributed unevenly across the adaptive-maladaptive spectrum, with spiritual engagement and social-support seeking emerging as the most frequently reported adaptive strategy, and withdrawal and procrastination as the most frequently reported maladaptive strategy, a pattern summarized thematically in Table 2 and Figure 2.

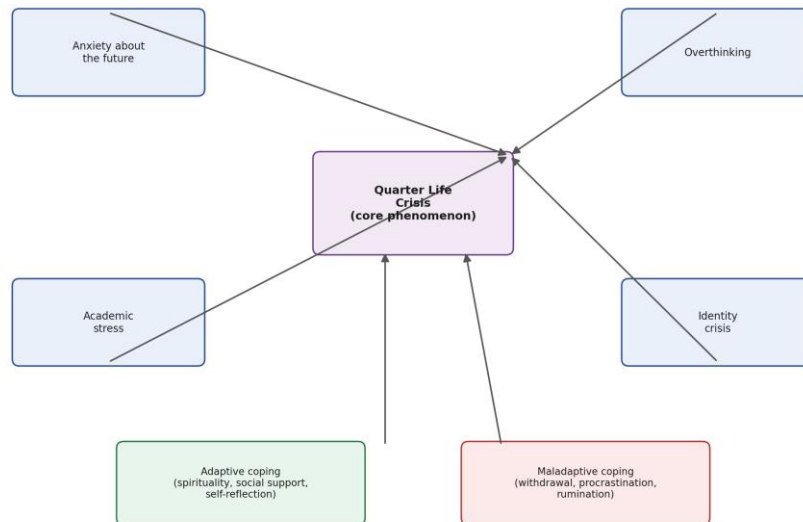


Figure 2. Thematic network map of the four psychological-dynamics themes and their convergence toward adaptive versus maladaptive coping

2. Discussion

Taken together, the findings indicate that quarter life crisis among final-year students of Islamic Counseling Guidance is not a peripheral or transient discomfort but a substantive psychological experience shaped by the convergence of developmental, academic, familial, and spiritual dimensions. The principal meaning of these findings is that the crisis experienced by informants cannot be reduced to a single cause; rather, it emerges from a dynamic interplay between the individual's internal psychological resources and the external demands imposed by academic institutions, families, and peer environments. This interpretation moves beyond a simple restatement of the results and instead positions the crisis as an interactional phenomenon, consistent with the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.

Why do these dynamics emerge so prominently among this particular population? Emerging adulthood theory (Arnett, 2000) helps explain the developmental backdrop: individuals aged 18-29 are expected to explore multiple possible identities, occupations, and relationships before committing to stable adult roles. For final-year students, however, this exploratory phase collides abruptly with the structural deadline of graduation, compressing what should be a gradual identity-consolidation process into a matter of months. Erikson's (1968) psychosocial account of intimacy versus isolation adds a further explanatory layer: students who have not yet resolved a coherent sense of identity struggle to commit to the interpersonal and occupational relationships that early adulthood demands, which manifests as the anxiety, overthinking, and identity confusion documented in this study. In this sense, the four psychological dynamics identified are not isolated symptoms but interconnected expressions of an unresolved developmental transition.

When situated against prior empirical work, the present findings both corroborate and extend the existing literature. Fadhilah et al. (2022) found that demographic variables such as

gender and semester standing predict the intensity of quarter life crisis, while Yolanda and Primanita (2023) demonstrated a significant association between self-awareness and crisis severity, and Zein (2023) identified gratitude as a protective factor. These studies, however, rely predominantly on cross-sectional, variable-centered quantitative designs that establish statistical association without illuminating the lived, first-person process through which the crisis unfolds. The present study extends this literature by showing, through direct testimony, how low self-confidence and unclear life goals (the internal factors identified by Yolanda and Primanita, 2023, in variable form) are actually experienced as a felt sense of inferiority when comparing oneself to peers with clearer plans, and as recurring, intrusive rumination about failure. It would be analytically shallow to simply state that these findings are “consistent with” prior quantitative studies without specifying what the qualitative account adds: namely, a process-level understanding of how statistical predictors translate into subjective distress, and how that distress is, in turn, actively managed or mismanaged by the individual.

A further point of divergence concerns the role of religiosity. Whereas Zein (2023) treats gratitude as one variable among several predicting crisis severity, the present findings suggest that spiritual practice functions not merely as a correlate but as an active coping mechanism that students consciously mobilize in the midst of crisis a process dimension that variable-centered designs are not well equipped to capture. This distinction constitutes the principal theoretical contribution of the present study: it demonstrates that within an Islamic higher-education context, religiosity operates dynamically, as a resource that is drawn upon in real time, rather than as a static individual-difference variable that merely predicts outcomes.

From the standpoint of Islamic Counseling Guidance, the crisis experienced by informants can be understood as part of a broader life trial (*ujian*) that carries the potential for spiritual growth and strengthened faith. According to Mubarak (2000), Islamic counseling aims to help individuals attain a balanced life through the reinforcement of faith, self-development, and the deepening of one’s relationship with Allah. The present findings show that students who were able to internalize spiritual values such as patience (*ṣabr*), reliance on God (*tawakal*), and gratitude (*shukr*) tended to display greater psychological resilience, consistent with the broader international literature on religious coping. Pargament’s (1997) foundational work on the psychology of religion and coping distinguishes between positive religious coping (e.g., seeking spiritual support, benevolent religious reframing) and negative religious coping (e.g., feeling punished or abandoned by God), and associates the former with better mental-health outcomes across diverse religious traditions. Similarly, Koenig, King, and Carson’s (2012) synthesis of the religion–health literature reports a consistent association between religious involvement and lower levels of depression and anxiety. The present findings extend this cross-cultural literature into the specific context of Islamic Counseling Guidance education in Indonesia, showing that practices such as *dhikr*, prayer, and self-reflection function as accessible, culturally embedded coping resources for students navigating the transition to adulthood.

A distinctive contribution of this study, not previously foregrounded in the quarter life crisis literature, concerns the dual positioning of the informants as both crisis-affected individuals and prospective counseling professionals. Because Islamic Counseling Guidance students are being trained to guide others through psychological and spiritual difficulty, their own unresolved crisis carries implications beyond individual well-being: it raises questions about counselor readiness, the necessity of self-care curricula within counselor education, and the risk that unaddressed personal crisis among trainees could affect the quality of counseling they later provide to clients. This role-conflict dimension helper and help-seeker occupying the same person simultaneously represents a conceptual extension of existing quarter life crisis research and suggests a concrete, practice-relevant implication: counselor-education programs, including Islamic Counseling Guidance departments, may benefit from integrating structured reflective practice, peer-support mechanisms, and spiritually informed self-care training into their curricula, so that future counselors are equipped to manage their own developmental crises before or while helping others manage theirs.

Space for Voice: International Review of Social Psychology requires authors to demonstrate the international relevance of their findings, and this requirement is substantively addressed here rather than treated as a symbolic gesture. Although this study was conducted within a specific Indonesian, Islamic higher-education context, its findings resonate with a global pattern documented among emerging adults across diverse cultural settings. International survey data indicate that a substantial share of university students worldwide report clinically significant symptoms of anxiety and depression during the transition to adulthood (Auerbach et al., 2018), and longitudinal evidence from Western contexts shows a parallel rise in psychological distress among young people over the past decade (Twenge et al., 2018). The present study contributes a culturally specific account of how one such population Muslim university students training to become counselors draws on religious and spiritual resources to navigate this universal developmental challenge, thereby enriching cross-cultural understanding of religious coping and offering a model that may be relevant to faith-based higher-education institutions elsewhere, including Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu counseling-education contexts seeking to integrate spiritual resources into student mental-health support. In this sense, the findings speak directly to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), particularly its emphasis on promoting mental health and well-being among young people, by illustrating a contextually grounded, faith-integrated pathway toward psychological resilience that complements secular mental-health interventions rather than substituting for them.

Nevertheless, several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. Methodologically, the study relied on a small, purposively selected sample drawn from a single institution, which limits the transferability of findings to other cultural, institutional, or religious contexts; the cross-sectional nature of the data collection also means that the study captures a snapshot of students' experience rather than tracing how the crisis and its resolution unfold over time. Conceptually, the reliance on self-reported interview data introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, particularly given that informants were

counseling students who may be inclined to frame their coping in normatively approved, spiritually virtuous terms. Future research employing longitudinal or mixed-methods designs, and extending data collection across multiple institutions and religious traditions, would help establish whether the patterns identified here generalize beyond this specific population.

From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest several concrete directions for counselor-education curricula at PTKIN institutions. First, structured peer-support groups facilitated by senior students or counseling faculty could provide a safe forum in which final-year students voice the anxieties documented here before they escalate into withdrawal or prolonged rumination. Second, embedding reflective practicum components – in which trainee counselors process their own developmental crises under supervision – could directly address the role-conflict dimension identified above, helping ensure that future counselors have themselves worked through, rather than merely studied, the psychological terrain they will later help others navigate. Third, campus spiritual-guidance services could be more deliberately coordinated with academic advising, so that the encouragement toward *ṣabr*, *tawakal*, and *shukr* identified as helpful by informants in this study is offered proactively during the final year rather than left to individual initiative.

Finally, situating these findings within a broader comparative frame, the challenge of integrating spiritual formation with professional counselor training is not unique to Islamic higher education. Comparable tensions have been documented in Christian pastoral-counseling programs, where trainees must similarly reconcile personal faith development with emerging clinical competence, and in Buddhist-inflected contact-based counseling models that emphasize mindfulness and non-attachment as therapeutic resources. Cross-tradition dialogue on how different faith-based counseling programs manage this same structural tension preparing spiritually and psychologically mature helpers out of students who are themselves navigating a turbulent developmental transition represents a promising avenue for future comparative research and for the kind of international, cross-cultural scholarly exchange that this journal seeks to foster.

D. Conclusion

This study set out to understand the psychological dynamics of quarter life crisis among final-year students of Islamic Counseling Guidance at UIN Mataram, to identify its contributing factors, and to examine how students respond to it from an Islamic counseling perspective. The findings synthesize into a coherent picture: quarter life crisis among this population emerges from the interaction of internal factors (low self-confidence, unclear life goals) and external factors (academic pressure, family expectations), producing psychological dynamics that encompass anxiety, overthinking, academic stress, and identity crisis. Students respond to this condition through a spectrum of coping strategies ranging from adaptive practices most notably the deepening of religious engagement, the seeking of social support, and self-reflection to maladaptive patterns such as withdrawal, procrastination, and excessive rumination.

The principal contribution of this study is twofold. First, it offers an in-depth, qualitative account of how quarter life crisis is subjectively lived and spiritually navigated within an Islamic higher-education context, extending a literature that has so far been dominated by variable-centered quantitative designs. Second, it foregrounds a previously underexamined dimension of the phenomenon: the dual positioning of Islamic Counseling Guidance students as simultaneously crisis-affected individuals and future counseling professionals, a role-conflict that carries direct implications for counselor-education curricula and for how counseling departments prepare students to care for themselves while learning to care for others. Broader implications extend to the practice of Islamic Counseling Guidance more generally, suggesting that spiritual values such as patience, reliance on God, and gratitude should be treated not as adjunct religious sentiments but as substantive therapeutic resources worthy of deliberate integration into counseling curricula and campus mental-health services.

Building on the limitations noted above, future research would benefit from longitudinal designs capable of tracing how quarter life crisis evolves across the transition from final-year study into early employment, from comparative studies across multiple universities and religious traditions to test the generalizability of the present findings, and from intervention studies that empirically test the effectiveness of Islamic-counseling-based programs for instance, structured dhikr and reflection sessions in reducing crisis-related distress among students. Mixed-methods designs that combine the interpretive depth of phenomenology with the generalizability of survey-based measurement would be particularly valuable in bridging the gap between the qualitative and quantitative strands of this literature.

Ultimately, the take-home message of this study is that quarter life crisis, however unsettling, need not be understood only as a deficit to be corrected; when met with an integrative psychological-spiritual approach, it can become a threshold experience through which students deepen both their self-understanding and their faith. For a population training to become counselors themselves, learning to navigate this threshold well is not only a matter of personal well-being but also a foundation for the compassionate, spiritually grounded practice they will one day offer to others.

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Appendix

Interview guide, informed-consent form, and the full field-note corpus underlying Table 1 and Table 2 are held by the author and are available upon reasonable request, in accordance with the confidentiality protections described in the Method section.