



Self Compassion and Social Support as Determinants of Quarter-Life Crisis in Final-Semester Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

Early adulthood is a transitional phase that is vulnerable to academic pressure, career determination, and future uncertainty, so that final year students have the potential to experience a *quarter-life crisis* (QLC). This phenomenon reflects psychosocial issues that have not been optimally addressed. This study analyzed the effect of *self-compassion* and social support on QLC in final semester nursing students. The research design used was a quantitative cross-sectional study with 160 respondents selected purposively from a total of 246 students. Data collection instruments included the *Quarter-life Crisis Scale*, *Self-Compassion Scale*, and *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support*. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and Spearman correlation. The results showed that *self-compassion* and social support were in the moderate category, while the level of QLC tended to be high. There was a significant negative relationship between *self-compassion* and QLC ($p = -0.699$; $p = 0.000$) and between social support and QLC ($p = -0.400$; $p = 0.000$). These findings confirm that low *self-compassion* and social support contribute to increased QLC in final semester nursing students. The research results indicate the need for promotive and preventive interventions to strengthen these psychosocial protective factors.

1. Introduction

Quarter-life crisis (QLC) is a psychological phenomenon experienced by many individuals during emerging adulthood, particularly between the ages of 18 and 25. This phase is characterized by a transition to independence, the need for career determination, and the formation of self-identity. This condition often causes anxiety, confusion about life direction, and emotional distress when individuals are unable to meet personal and social expectations. According to Robbins *et al.*, (2001 in Duara, Hugh-Jones, and Madill 2021) explains that quarter-life crisis is a transition period from adolescence to early adulthood which is generally experienced at the age of 20 to 30 years, marked by identity uncertainty, demands for independence, and pressure to determine the direction of the future. The emerging adulthood period itself is characterized by exploration of identity, instability, and the search for a clear direction in life, especially when individuals begin to face various external demands such as academic challenges, career preparation, and social pressures that can trigger the emergence of this crisis (Arnett 2000). This condition is most often experienced by students in the final stages of their studies, when they begin to prepare for the workforce and face the various demands of adult roles, making them vulnerable to

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confusion and uncertainty about their future. Globally, the prevalence of QLC is quite high, as found Ballesteros *et al.* (2024) which shows that 38.7% of students and young graduates in the Philippines experience a quarter-life crisis . Similar conditions also occur in Indonesia, where academic pressures, career preparation, and social expectations make final-year students increasingly vulnerable. Priasmoro, Hamidah, and Nurmayunita (2024) found that 50% of final-year D-III Nursing students experienced moderate levels of QLC. which shows that half of the respondents are in a phase of emotional instability and confusion about the direction of life approaching the transition to the world of work . Meanwhile Juwita (2025) reported that 28.4% of final-year students exhibited symptoms of a quarter-life crisis, such as anxiety about the future, career uncertainty, and social pressure . Furthermore, final-semester students were found to experience higher psychosocial stress than first-semester students (Putri, Lestari, and Khisbiyah 2022) . These findings confirm that quarter-life crisis among final-year students is an issue that requires serious attention.

This research is also motivated by the results of an initial survey conducted on August 22, 2025, on 10 final year students of the Nursing Science Study Program S1 FIKES UMP using indicators based on seven dimensions of quarter life crisis . The survey results showed that 80% of students felt confused about determining the next steps after graduation, 60% were worried about choosing the wrong career path, 70% felt insecure compared to the achievements of their peers, and 80% experienced fatigue due to the mismatch between expectations and reality. In addition, 90% of respondents often experienced overthinking about the future, 70% felt stressed when asked about careers or other life plans, and 90% admitted to worrying about disappointing their families. The most dominant aspects found in this survey were fear of disappointing family and overthinking about the future (90%). These findings indicate that final-year students are at a stage vulnerable to emotional stress and uncertainty about their life direction, thus warranting further research into the quarter-life crisis phenomenon.

QLC prevention efforts can be implemented through internal and external protective factors. Internally, self-compassion acts as an emotional regulator that allows individuals to treat themselves with kindness, admit mistakes without blaming themselves, and recognize that failure is part of the human experience (Neff 2003) . Self-compassion is relevant for final-semester students because in this transitional phase , individuals tend to judge themselves harshly, fear failure, and are stressed about meeting academic and family expectations. Self-compassion helps students accept their own processes more healthily, assess their abilities objectively, and make career decisions more calmly without getting caught up in perfectionism and overthinking . Final-year students with good self-compassion tend to be more realistic in assessing their abilities, more adaptive in making decisions, and less easily trapped in overthinking when faced with future uncertainty. Therefore, low self-compassion can increase vulnerability to future anxiety, social comparison, and feelings of inadequacy that are at the core of the quarter-life crisis . In line with this, Wang *et al.* 's (2024) study found that self-compassion was negatively correlated with academic stress, while Merdika, Hartanti, and Listyawati (2025) demonstrated that self-compassion can suppress QLC symptoms and improve psychological well-being. This suggests that self-compassion is an important mechanism in reducing QLC in final-year students.

On the other hand, social support plays a crucial role as an external factor that strengthens the psychological resilience of final-semester students. Sarafino and Smith (2011) explain that social support provides coping resources in the form of emotional and informational support, as well as positive assessments from the environment. For final-year students, social support can foster self-confidence and clarify career paths in the process of determining their future. When social support is low, students are more likely to experience feelings of helplessness and psychological distress that trigger QLC. Research Wulandari and Suarya (2023) identified that social support plays a significant role in suppressing QLC symptoms. Furthermore, Khopidah Adlu, Nuram Mubina, and Citra Hati Leometa (2024) reported that the higher the social support received, the lower the level of QLC experienced by students.

Previous quarter-life crisis research has focused on early adulthood aged 18–30 years, while the 18–25 age range, which Arnett (2000) considers the most vulnerable phase of emerging adulthood for QLC, has not been specifically studied in final-semester students. Furthermore, previous studies tend to highlight external factors such as social media use and residential status, while research on protective factors such as self-compassion and

social support remains limited, particularly in nursing students facing academic pressures and career readiness demands. This gap underpins the importance of this study, which analyzes the influence of self-compassion and social support on quarter-life crisis in final-semester nursing students.

2. Methodology

This study used a quantitative correlational design to analyze the relationship between self-compassion and social support towards quarter-life crisis in final semester students. The population was 246 seventh-semester undergraduate students of the Nursing Science Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto. The sample was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in 152 respondents and an additional 5% reserve for a total of 160 respondents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with the following inclusion criteria: active final semester students aged 18–25 years, currently preparing their final assignments, and willing to fill out the questionnaire; while students on academic leave or serious illness were excluded from the study.

The data collection instruments included the Indonesian version of the self-compassion scale (26 items, 5-point Likert scale; $\alpha = 0.872$) adopted from Sugianto, Suwartono, and Sutanto (2020), the MSPSS (12 items, 7-point Likert scale; $\alpha = 0.890$) adopted from Saudi *et al.* (2024), and the QLCS (18 items, 5-point Likert scale; $\alpha = 0.667$) adopted from Dai (2024), all negative items were reversed in the scoring process. Data were analyzed using SPSS 25 with editing, scoring, coding, and tabulation stages. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test showed that the self-compassion and social support data were not normally distributed ($p \leq 0.05$), and the quarter-life crisis data were normally distributed, so the relationship test used Spearman rank correlation with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. This study obtained ethical approval from the health research ethics committee of Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto (KEPK/UMP/166/VIII/2025).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Description of Respondent Characteristics and Variables

A descriptive overview of the characteristics of respondents and research variables, namely age, quarter life crisis, self-compassion, and social support, is presented to provide an initial understanding of the research data (Table 1).

Table 1
Description of Respondent Characteristics and Variables

| Variables | n | Min | Max | Mean | Elementary School |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|--------|-------------------|
| Age | 160 | 18 | 24 | 21,111 | 1,001 |
| Quarter-life crisis | 160 | 63 | 88 | 75.76 | 4,697 |
| Self-compassion | 160 | 26 | 65 | 39.86 | 6,479 |
| Social Support | 160 | 16 | 74 | 37.94 | 12,377 |

3.1.1 Respondents' Age Overview

Based on the descriptive results in Table 1, the respondents of this study were 160 final semester Nursing students of the FIKES UMP undergraduate program with an age range of 18–24 years and an average of 21.11 years ($SD = 1.001$). The majority were aged 21–22 years, which is included in the emerging adulthood phase according to (Arnett 2000). This phase is a transition period from adolescence to adulthood marked by the search for identity, uncertainty about life direction, and demands for independence. Individuals in their early 20s often face pressures related to careers, the future, and social acceptance, so students at this age are more vulnerable to developmental stress.

3.1.2 Overview of Quarter Life Crisis in Final Semester Nursing Students of UMP Undergraduate Program

In this context, the quarter-life crisis measurement results, as shown in Table 1, indicate that students' scores were in the high category, with an average of 75.76 ($SD = 4.697$). This score reflects a significant level of internal stress among students, particularly in the transition to the workforce and adult responsibilities. This

illustrates that most students are experiencing a phase of uncertainty, self-reflection, and adjustment to increasingly complex life demands. Quarter-life crisis (QLC) in students is measured through seven dimensions: confusion in decision-making, hopelessness, negative self-assessment, being trapped in a difficult situation, feeling anxious, depressed, and worrying about interpersonal relationships. The questionnaire measurement results revealed that the most prominent dimension was feeling anxious and depressed, indicating significant levels of anxiety regarding the future, social pressure, and family expectations. This dimension is the most dominant aspect in describing the QLC of final-semester nursing students in the FIKES UMP Undergraduate Nursing program. Students tend to overthink, worry about disappointing their parents, and feel insecure when comparing themselves to their peers. This condition indicates psychological stress due to uncertainty about life direction and the transition to early adulthood. In line with the theory of Robbins and Wilner (2001) who stated that QLC is characterized by anxiety and confusion about the future, and Arnett (2007) which confirms that the emerging adulthood phase was a period of intense exploration and emotional tension. Other dimensions emerged with less intensity, such as negative self-evaluation, hopelessness, and interpersonal relationship concerns. Meanwhile, the dimensions of being trapped in a difficult situation and decision-making confusion showed low scores. Low scores on the dimensions of being trapped in a difficult situation and decision-making confusion reflect that most students were able to manage the situations they faced without feeling overly stressed or confused in making decisions.

These findings indicate that students are facing high levels of emotional stress and anxiety about the uncertain future. According to Dai (2024) Quarter-life crises in early adulthood often arise due to social pressure and confusion about life's direction. This is in line with findings Putri et al. (2022) stated that academic stress and career demands exacerbate the symptoms of this crisis, especially in final-year students. Meanwhile, Hasyim, Setyowibowo, and Purba (2024) emphasized that even though this phase is full of stress, emerging adulthood can also be a time of positive transformation as individuals begin to understand themselves, develop career readiness, and achieve emotional independence. In the process of navigating these stresses and changes, the ability to be compassionate toward oneself, or self-compassion, is a crucial factor in helping individuals adapt more healthily.

3.1.3 Self-Compassion Overview in Final Semester Nursing Students of UMP Undergraduate Program

The descriptive results of self-compassion, as presented in Table 1, show an average score of 39.86 (SD = 6.479), which is considered moderate. This indicates that students' self-compassion is in the moderate category. This score indicates that students have the ability to accept themselves and face life's challenges, but its application is not yet optimal in suppressing the psychological stress that arises during the transition to early adulthood. Based on the analysis of the self-compassion questionnaire for 160 final-semester students, it was found that the dimension with the highest score was self-kindness, which indicates students' ability to treat themselves with understanding when facing academic and emotional stress. However, the two dimensions with the lowest scores were common humanity and isolation. Low common humanity indicates that some students have not fully realized that difficulties and failures are a natural part of the human experience. Students still tend to view failure as a personal weakness, not a natural learning process, making them more susceptible to feelings of inadequacy. Meanwhile, low isolation scores indicate students' tendency to feel isolated when facing stress. These two aspects are closely related to the emergence of a quarter-life crisis, as a lack of common humanity and a high sense of isolation can be psychological factors that exacerbate the developmental crisis in final-semester students transitioning into the professional world. These findings suggest that while students have the potential for self-compassion, this ability has not yet fully developed as an adaptive mechanism.

Previous research supports this, for example, Puspita, Setiadi, and Inriyana (2025) stated that students with low self-compassion are more susceptible to psychological stress, while Merdika *et al.* (2025) emphasized that self-compassion helps build resilience and face problems adaptively. Thus, the dominance of medium category scores in this study indicates that final year Nursing students at the Faculty of Health Sciences, UMP, have a basic ability to accept themselves, be kind to themselves, and manage negative thoughts. However, these capacities still need to be strengthened to be an effective protector against psychological stress in the transition phase towards adulthood.

3.1.4 Overview of Social Support in Final Semester Nursing Students of UMP Undergraduate Program

The descriptive results in Table 1 show that students' social support scores ranged from 16 to 74, with an average of 37.94 (SD = 12.377), falling into the moderate category. This means that most students have emotional, informational, and instrumental support from their environment, but the quality and consistency are still not optimal. Based on the results of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) questionnaire analysis of 160 final semester undergraduate nursing students, it was found that the dimension with the highest score was perceived support from family. These results confirm that family is the main source of support for emotional comfort, motivation, and practical assistance during the preparation of the final assignment. Perceived support from friends ranked second, the intensity of which depends on the closeness of the relationship and social interaction. Meanwhile, perceived support from friends ranked second, indicating that peers are also an important source of support, especially in academic and social contexts. Meanwhile, perceived support from significant others has the lowest score, but it actually shows a very crucial dimension for students, with a total score. According to Zimet *et al.* (1988), significant others refer to important figures who provide love, attention, and emotional support, which are not limited to romantic partners, but can also be close friends, supervisors, or other individuals who are considered to have an important role in the student's life. This low score indicates that not all students have significant figures who consistently provide emotional support, making them more vulnerable to academic stress and the pressures of life transitions. Analytically, social support plays an important role in reducing stress and increasing students' ability to adapt to academic and social demands.

In line with previous research u Safitri (2021) shows that social support helps students adjust to academic demands and daily life. Wulandari and Suarya (2023) added that students who receive adequate support tend to feel valued, accepted, and have strong social connections, thus strengthening their ability to adapt to challenges. Khopidah Adlu *et al.* (2024) emphasized that social support from various emotional, instrumental, and informational aspects is an important protective factor in dealing with academic stress and the transition to early adulthood. From the researcher's perspective, although students' social support is in the moderate category, its quality needs to be improved so that they are more resilient.

3.2 The Relationship Between Self-Compassion, Social Support and Quarter-Life Crisis

The results of the correlation analysis between self-compassion, social support, and quarter-life crisis are presented to provide an initial overview of the relationship between research variables (Table 2).

Table 2

The Relationship Between Self-Compassion, Social Support and *Quarter-Life Crisis*

| Variables | rho | Sig. (2-tailed) | N |
|--|--------|-----------------|-----|
| <i>Self compassion – Quarter life crisis</i> | -0.699 | 0,000 | 160 |
| <i>Social Support – Quarter life crisis</i> | -0.400 | 0,000 | 160 |

These results indicate a significant negative relationship between self-compassion and quarter-life crisis, as well as between social support and quarter-life crisis, which will then be analyzed in more depth in the discussion section to understand the role of each variable on the respondent's condition.

3.2.1 The Relationship Between Self-Compassion and Quarter life crisis

Based on Table 2, the analysis results show a correlation coefficient value of -0.699 with a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This result indicates a strong and significant negative relationship between self-compassion and quarter-life crisis (QLC) in final semester students of the Nursing Science Study Program, FIKES UMP. This means that the higher the level of self-compassion a student has, the lower their tendency to experience QLC. The determination value (r^2) of 48.8% indicates that almost half of the variation in QLC levels can be explained by the level of self-compassion. This finding shows that internal factors such as an individual's ability to accept themselves, be compassionate, and not judge themselves play an important role in maintaining emotional balance in students during the transition to early adulthood. In other words, students who are able to apply self-compassion tend to be more psychologically stable and are less likely to be trapped in life transition crises such as feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, or uncertainty about the future.

Dimensional measurement results indicate that the most prominent aspect of QLC is feelings of anxiety and stress about the future. Nursing students tend to experience high levels of anxiety related to uncertainty about their life direction, family expectations, and social pressure to achieve immediate success. This condition reflects the deep anxiety that is a common characteristic of emerging adulthood (Arnett 2007). Meanwhile, in the self-compassion variable, the dimensions with the lowest scores are common humanity and isolation. Low levels of common humanity indicate that some students have not yet realized that failure and difficulties are a natural part of the human experience, while low levels of isolation indicate that they feel separated and alone when facing stress.

The correlation between these two findings suggests that low levels of common humanity and high levels of isolation contribute significantly to the emergence of anxiety and stress in Quarter-Life Crisis (QLC). Students who fail to view adversity as a universal experience tend to blame themselves when faced with academic failure or future uncertainty, leading to intense feelings of anxiety and stress. When feelings of isolation are also high, individuals feel a lack of social support and have difficulty calming themselves, ultimately exacerbating psychological distress. This explains why the dimensions of anxiety and stress are the most dominant aspects of students' QLC, as a weak sense of common humanity and a high sense of isolation reinforce each other, increasing the risk of stress, overthinking, and excessive anxiety. Therefore, the higher an individual's level of self-compassion, the lower the likelihood of experiencing a quarter-life crisis, and conversely, low levels of self-compassion can increase the risk of emotional distress during the transition to adulthood.

These findings align with Neff (2003) theory, which explains that self-compassion consists of three main components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, which function to suppress negative emotions and improve an individual's psychological well-being. Robbins and Wilner (2001 in Duara et al. 2021) also stated that individuals who are able to accept themselves and life's challenges without judgment will be more resilient in facing emotional crises during transitions. Research by Hamka, Dewi, dan Razak (2022) supports these findings by showing that self-compassion protects individuals from emotional regulation disorders that can trigger QLC, while Sujadi (2022) found that self-compassion combined with mindfulness plays a role in reducing students' academic anxiety. Thus, the results of this study of undergraduate nursing students at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMP) confirm that low levels of common humanity and high levels of isolation can amplify the anxiety and stress dimensions of the quarter life crisis. Conversely, strengthening these aspects of self-compassion can help students become more adaptive, emotionally stable, and prepared for the transition to adulthood. Therefore, developing self-compassion is an important strategy for preventing and managing quarter-life crises in final-year nursing students.

3.2.2 Relationship Between Social Support and Quarter-Life Crisis

Based on the results of the calculations in Table 2, the correlation coefficient is -0.400 with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a moderate negative relationship between social support and quarter-life crisis (QLC) in final-year nursing students. This means that students who experience higher levels of social support tend to have lower levels of QLC. The value of determination (r^2) of 16% indicates that social support significantly explains the variation in QLC, although its influence is not as significant as self-compassion. These findings confirm that social support acts as an additional protective factor for students, helping them cope with anxiety, academic pressure, and the uncertainty of the transition to early adulthood. From a psychological perspective, the presence of family, friends, and significant figures who can provide emotional support, a sense of security, and acceptance helps students reduce stress levels and increase their capacity to adapt to difficult situations, thereby reducing the risk of QLC.

The relationship between social support and QLC is clearly evident in the most dominant QLC dimension, namely feelings of anxiety and stress about the future. This relationship indicates that students experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress tend to perceive less emotional support from significant others, such as partners, mentors, or individuals considered important in their lives. Lack of support from significant others can worsen students' psychological well-being due to a reduced sense of security, acceptance, and a place to share emotions. This situation makes individuals more vulnerable to stress, excessive worry, and difficulty regulating emotions when facing academic pressure and future uncertainty. This explains why the anxiety and stress dimension is the most dominant aspect of QLC, as weak social support from significant others is unable to reduce

the perceived psychological burden. Conversely, students who receive strong support from family and friends show lower levels of anxiety and stress. Adequate social support serves to provide a sense of connectedness, emotional validation, and motivation to face life's challenges more calmly. Thus, high QLC scores are consistent with low levels of support from significant others, thus strengthening the negative relationship between the two variables. The lower the perception of social support, especially from others, the lower the perceived social support.

This finding is in line with the theory of Sarafino dan Smith (2011) which explains that social support functions as a buffer against stress by providing a sense of security, acceptance, and emotional connection. Furthermore, Arnett(2000) emphasized that in emerging adulthood , individuals desperately need support from their immediate social environment to navigate the process of searching for identity, life direction, and emotional stability. Previous research has shown similar effects: students with adequate social support tend to be more resilient, optimistic, and able to analyze problems realistically (Nazhif Robbani and Nafisatuzzahra 2025) . Social support from family, friends, and significant others has been shown to reduce QLC symptoms and improve students' ability to adapt to academic and social demands. Although its effect is not as strong as self-compassion , these findings confirm that social support remains a significant protective factor in dealing with quarter-life crisis , particularly in reducing anxiety and stress about the future.

The results of this study indicate a significant negative relationship between self-compassion and quarter-life crisis (QLC), as well as between social support and QLC. The relationship between self-compassion and QLC is stronger than that between social support, so students with higher levels of self-compassion tend to experience lower QLC and are able to face academic pressure and future uncertainty with greater emotional stability. Social support continues to act as additional protection, reducing anxiety and stress through a sense of security, acceptance, and motivation from family, friends, or significant figures. These findings emphasize the importance of a balance between internal and external factors in understanding the intensity of QLC in students . A limitation of this study lies in the use of a homogeneous sample, namely final-semester students from one study program, so the results cannot be generalized to a wider population. Therefore, developing self-compassion and maintaining adaptive social support remain important strategies in efforts to prevent and reduce QLC in final-year students.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that self-compassion has the strongest influence on quarter-life crisis (QLC) in final-semester students ($\rho = -0.699$; $r^2 = 48.8\%$), where students with high levels of self-compassion tend to be more emotionally stable and able to cope with academic pressure and future uncertainty. Social support also acts as an additional protective factor ($\rho = -0.400$; $r^2 = 16\%$), which helps reduce anxiety and stress through support from family, friends, or other significant figures.

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Confession

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