



## Gender Differences in Quarter-Life Crisis among Migrant Generation Z

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### ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of quarter-life crisis is increasingly relevant among Generation Z, who grow up amid rapid technological advances and social dynamics that demand swift adaptation. For those living away from home, early adulthood presents a dual challenge: personal development demands alongside adjustment to a new environment. This situation may trigger emotional distress, identity uncertainty, and heightened vulnerability to a quarter-life crisis. This study aims to examine the differences in quarter-life crisis among migrant Generation Z based on gender. A comparative quantitative design was employed with 384 participants (192 males and 192 females) selected through purposive sampling according to predetermined criteria, namely being 18–28 years old and currently living away from home. Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The measurement instrument used was the Quarter Life Crisis Scale developed by Afandi et al. (2023). Data were analyzed using the Mann–Whitney U test after conducting normality and homogeneity tests. The results showed a significant difference in quarter-life crisis between males and females ( $U = 13,893$ ,  $Z = -4.177$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Females reported a higher level of quarter-life crisis compared to males. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender aspects in providing psychological support for migrant Generation Z experiencing a quarter-life crisis.

**Keywords:** Quarter-life crisis; Generation Z; migrants; gender differences; psychological adaptation

### ABSTRAK

Fenomena quarter-life crisis semakin relevan di kalangan Generasi Z, yang tumbuh di tengah kemajuan teknologi yang pesat dan dinamika sosial yang menuntut adaptasi cepat. Bagi mereka yang tinggal jauh dari rumah, masa dewasa awal menghadirkan tantangan ganda: tuntutan pengembangan pribadi bersamaan dengan penyesuaian terhadap lingkungan baru. Situasi ini dapat memicu gangguan emosional, ketidakpastian identitas, dan kerentanan yang lebih tinggi terhadap krisis seperempat abad. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perbedaan quarter-life crisis di kalangan Generasi Z migran berdasarkan jenis kelamin. Desain kuantitatif komparatif digunakan dengan 384 peserta (192 laki-laki dan 192 perempuan) yang dipilih melalui sampling purposif berdasarkan kriteria yang telah ditentukan, yaitu berusia 18–28 tahun dan saat ini tinggal jauh dari rumah. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner online yang didistribusikan melalui Google Forms. Alat ukur yang digunakan adalah Skala quarter-life crisis yang dikembangkan oleh Afandi dkk. (2023). Data dianalisis menggunakan uji Mann–Whitney U setelah melakukan uji normalitas dan homogenitas. Hasil menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan dalam krisis seperempat abad antara laki-laki dan perempuan ( $U = 13.893$ ,  $Z = -4,177$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ). Perempuan melaporkan tingkat krisis quarter-life yang lebih tinggi dibandingkan laki-laki. Temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya mempertimbangkan aspek gender dalam memberikan dukungan psikologis bagi generasi Z migran yang mengalami quarter-life crisis.

**Kata Kunci:** Quarter-life crisis, Generasi Z; migran; perbedaan gender; adaptasi psikologis

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## Introduction

Every individual goes through a series of different stages of growth and development in their life. According to Erikson (Asrar, 2022), humans go through eight stages of development, from infancy to late adulthood, each of which has its own characteristics and responsibilities that each individual must fulfill. Among all these stages, the transition from adolescence to adulthood, known as early adulthood, is often the focus of attention due to its dynamics and challenges. According to Arnett (2015), this phase begins in late adolescence and lasts until the late 20s, with the main focus on the 18-25 age range. According to Afnan et al. (2020), during this phase, many things begin to change, such as psychological conditions, the body, and ways of thinking, which can cause anxiety and discomfort aimed at helping individuals become more mature in their decision-making.

At this stage, individuals are required to fulfill several responsibilities such as finding a livelihood, finding a partner, getting married, performing their duties as a good spouse in the household, helping the community, and carrying out tasks in social life (Hurlock, 2009). When faced with challenges and demands from the environment, individuals respond in different ways. Some feel enthusiastic about exploring life in the future, while others feel anxious, unhappy, worried, and even consider themselves useless. The inability to face and pass through developmental stages properly can increase the risk of various psychological problems, such as confusion, uncertainty, and inner turmoil, known as a quarter-life crisis (Robbins & Wilner, 2001).

This quarter-life crisis stems from the gap between expectations and responsibilities in emerging adulthood, which the individual is unable to overcome. These expectations usually come from the surrounding environment, such as the pressure to get married, have a partner, and be financially secure. This crisis is characterized by anxiety about the direction of one's future, unclear life goals, and frequent social comparison (Karpika & Segel, 2021). Individuals who experience this tend to feel excessive anxiety, disappointment with their lives, and restlessness about their future direction. These concerns are mainly related to work, career, and financial independence (Hasyim et al., 2024). According to a study by the American Psychological Association, individuals experiencing this crisis are more prone to psychological disorders, such as melancholy, stress, anxiety, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (Hasyim et al., 2024). A survey conducted by LinkedIn in 2017 found that 75% of individuals aged 25-30 who use the LinkedIn app reported that they were going through a quarter-life crisis. The causes vary, including jobs that often do not match their passions, making it difficult to find suitable employment (61%), and anxiety caused by comparing themselves to others who are considered more successful (48%). Research by Agustina (2022) conducted in Indonesia found that 98% of respondents reported being in a quarter-life crisis. The causes vary, with 82% of respondents reporting that the cause is financial instability, 79% reporting that they feel they do not deserve a better quality of life, and 76% reporting that the cause is difficulty in making decisions. This crisis is often experienced by individuals between the ages of 18 and 30, which coincides with the phase of life currently being experienced by Generation Z.

Generation Z is the generation born between 1997 and 2012 (Arum et al., 2023). This generation grew up amid rapid technological developments, global competition, and high demands for adaptation to social change. These characteristics make them more technologically adaptive, but also more vulnerable to social pressure, feelings of uncertainty, and anxiety about the future. This generation faces various obstacles, such as demands from family and social circles to meet their expectations, difficulty managing multiple tasks or responsibilities, which ultimately puts them at risk of experiencing a quarter-life crisis (Ratih & Winta, 2024). Identity crises, confusion about life direction, excessive demands from the environment and family, socio-economic realities such as job competition, educational demands, and a collectivist culture that emphasizes social status achievement further increase the likelihood of a quarter-life crisis in this generation.

Research by Rosyiddin and Afandi (2023) shows that Generation Z experiences frustration when unable to motivate themselves, panic due to pressure from family and social suspicion, feeling helpless

when listening to music that seems to describe their lives, and an inability to multitask in their social lives, feeling a loss of purpose in life due to being haunted by an uncertain future, as well as feeling unhappy in their romantic and friendship relationships. Generation Z is often required to adapt quickly to changes, which makes this generation feel stressed due to uncertainty about the future (Rosyiddin & Afandi, 2023). This pressure is often exacerbated by the experience of migrating, which is when a person leaves their home environment to pursue education or work in another area.

For the younger generation, moving away from home can be an opportunity for growth and independence, but it can also be a source of new challenges in the form of loneliness, limited social support, and the demands of cultural adjustment. The transition from living with parents to migrating is a major change for individuals who migrate. This change often gives rise to feelings of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty about life goals, particularly regarding relationships with others and careers (Fitriyanti et al., 2024). Migrants are required to solve all the problems they encounter on their own with their own decisions, because they are separated from their parents (Fauzia et al., 2021). They are often trapped in various problems such as financial issues, worries about life, worries about not achieving their goals, lack of self-confidence, and longing for their parents. This condition ultimately has the potential to increase vulnerability to a quarter-life crisis.

Female and male have different tendencies in dealing with such situations (Putri & Aprianti, 2023). This is because male and female have differences in terms of socio-cultural aspects, gender roles, and strategies for coping with psychological pressure. Female, for example, tend to be more open in expressing their emotions but are also more prone to anxiety, while male are often required to show independence and determination, even though in practice this can cause psychological burdens. Female are more prone to anxiety than male because female are more sensitive to emotions from their surroundings, while male are more sensitive to seeking conditions that evoke pleasant and comfortable feelings (Astrasari, 2015).

Research by Putri and Aprianti (2023) on final year students who use Instagram found that there is a difference between male and female in terms of quarter-life crisis, with female students experiencing a higher level of quarter-life crisis than men. The research by Kusumaningrum and Jannah (2023) on quarter-life crisis in Sidoarjo found that female had a higher quarter-life crisis than male with a frequency of 144 (45%). Research by Artiningsih and Savira (2021) on young adults showed that the average quarter-life crisis score for male was lower than that for female, with female reporting being more prone to feelings of anxiety, pressure from environmental demands, and concerns about relationship success.

The quarter-life crisis phenomenon has been the subject of various studies, particularly in relation to psychological factors such as emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and social support. However, most studies still focus on the quarter-life crisis in general and rarely examine the specific experiences of Generation Z who have migrated. In fact, migration presents additional challenges, such as adjusting to a new environment, limited direct social support from family, and the demand to live more independently, which can exacerbate the crisis experienced. In addition, research on the quarter-life crisis has not yet highlighted differences based on gender. In fact, male and female have different tendencies in responding to psychological pressure. Therefore, researchers are interested in examining the differences in the quarter-life crisis among Generation Z who have migrated based on gender.

## Material and Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a comparative design. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study is to examine the extent of differences in the level of quarter-life crisis between male and female. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), quantitative research helps researchers to measure phenomena objectively while providing a numerical description that can be compared between groups.

### **Participants**

The population in this study was Generation Z aged 18-28 years who were living away from home, either for study or work purposes. The sample was determined using purposive sampling, with the following criteria: Generation Z, aged 18-28 years old, living outside their hometown for at least six months. The sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula because the population was not known precisely, with a margin of error of 5%, resulting in 384 respondents consisting of 192 males and 192 females.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection was conducted using the Quarter Life Crisis Scale developed by Afandi et al. (2023) based on the aspects of quarter life crisis proposed by Robbins and Wilner (2001), which consisted of 26 statements with two types, namely favorable and unfavorable, with answers using a Likert scale. This instrument was distributed online via Google Form to make it more accessible to respondents. The research instrument was tested for validity and reliability. The test results showed that all items met the validity criteria, and the reliability of the scale showed a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value of 0.917, indicating that the instrument was highly reliable and therefore suitable for use in research.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data was first examined and tested for normality using Shapiro-Wilk. The normality test results showed that the data was not normally distributed, so the analysis of differences in the level of quarter life crisis between male and female used the non parametric Mann-Whitney U Test. This test was chosen because it is suitable for comparing two independent groups in data that do not meet parametric assumptions (Gibbons & Chakraborti, 2011).

## **Result**

This study involved 384 Generation Z individuals aged 18-28 years who were living away from home. Of these, each group consisted of 192 males and 192 females. After the data was collected, it was then analyzed. The results of the statistical tests in this study are as follows:

Table 1.  
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Male	192	58.22	10.02	32	94
Female	192	62.05	9.90	29	98

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis show that there were 192 male respondents and 192 female respondents. The male respondents had a mean value of 58.22, with a minimum value of 32 and a maximum value of 94. Meanwhile, the female respondents had a mean of 62.05, with a minimum value of 29 and a maximum value of 98. The standard deviation for male respondents was 10.02, while for female respondents it was 9.9. After obtaining the descriptive statistical results, the next step was to categorize or level the quarter-life crisis.

Table 2.  
Categorization of quarter life crisis in male

Score	F	Percentage	Category
$X < 48.2$	33	17.19%	Low
$48.2 \leq X < 68.22$	134	69.79%	Medium
$X > 68.22$	25	13.02%	High

Based on the results of the Quarter Life Crisis categorization of male respondents, it was found that most were in the moderate category, namely 134 people (69.79%). Furthermore, 33 people (17.19%) were in the low category, while 25 people (13.02%) were in the high category. These findings indicate that the majority of male in this study experienced a moderate level of Quarter Life Crisis, while only a small proportion experienced a high or low level.

Table 3.  
Categorization of quarter life crisis in female

Score	F	Percentage	Category
$X < 52.14$	27	14.06%	Low
$52.14 \leq X < 71.95$	139	72.40%	Medium
$X > 71.95$	26	13.54%	High

Based on the results of the Quarter Life Crisis categorization of female respondents, it was found that most were in the moderate category, namely 139 people (72.40%). Furthermore, 27 people (14.06%) were in the low category, while 26 people (13.54%) were in the high category. These findings indicate that the majority of female in this study experienced a moderate level of Quarter Life Crisis, while only a small proportion experienced a high or low level.

Table 4.  
Normality test

	Type	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Result	Male	.986	192	.047
	Female	.975	192	.001

In the male group, the Shapiro-Wilk value was 0.986 with significance ( $p$ ) = 0.047, while in the female group, the Shapiro-Wilk value was 0.975 with significance ( $p$ ) = 0.001. Since the significance values in both groups are less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the distribution of quarter life crisis scores in both male and female respondents is not normally distributed.

Table 5.  
Homogeneity test

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Result	Based on Mean	.295	1	382
	Based on Median	.375	1	382
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.375	1	380.809
	Based on trimmed mean	.305	1	382

The test results show that the significance value (based on mean) is above 0.05 ( $p$  = 0.587). Thus, it can be concluded that the research data is homogeneous, so that the variation between groups is relatively uniform. However, the normality test shows that the data is not normally distributed. Based on these conditions, hypothesis analysis was performed using the Mann-Whitney U nonparametric test.

Table 6.  
Hypothesis Testing

	Result
Mann-Whitney U	13893.000
Wilcoxon W	32421.000
Z	-4.177
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

The analysis results show that the Mann-Whitney U value is 13,893, with a Z value of -4.177 and a significance level (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of < 0.001. This significance value is less than 0.05, so it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the level of quarter life crisis between Gen Z male and female who are living away from home.

Table 7.  
Categorization of each dimension

	Confused about making decisions	Hopeless	Negative self- assessment	Feeling stuck with life	Anxiou s with the future	Depressed with the available demands	Worried about interpersonal relationship
Male	8.84	9.51	6.99	7.68	9.56	6.48	9.16
Female	9.77	9.77	7.46	8.23	10.34	6.81	9.68

Based on the results of measurements on several psychological dimensions, it appears that female respondents consistently scored higher than male respondents on almost all dimensions. The dimension with the highest score was anxiety with the future ( $M = 9.56$ ;  $F = 10.34$ ), indicating that this aspect was a dominant problem among respondents. Meanwhile, the dimension with relatively lower scores is depressed with the available demands ( $M = 6.48$ ;  $F = 6.81$ ). Other dimensions such as confusion in decision making, negative self-assessment, feeling stuck in life, and concerns about interpersonal relationships also showed fairly high scores, especially among female respondents. In general, this pattern shows that respondents tend to experience fairly high levels of anxiety and negative feelings, with noticeable differences between males and females.

## Discussion

The categorization results show that the majority of respondents, both male and female, are at a moderate level of experiencing a quarter-life crisis. This indicates that most Generation Z migrants are in a transitional phase towards young adulthood with a crisis dynamic that is still at a reasonable level, although it still causes psychological pressure. This condition is in line with the research by Nurhaiza et al. (2022), which explains that during the quarter-life crisis, individuals tend to feel anxiety and confusion about the future, but not all are at an extreme level. Although the majority of both male and female are in the moderate category, there are interesting differences in the distribution of the low and high categories.

The results of the study show a significant difference in the level of quarter-life crisis between Generation Z male and female who have migrated ( $U = 13,893$ ,  $Z = -4.177$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This confirms that gender also influences the experience of quarter-life crisis, especially in individuals who have migrated. This is in line with what Atwood and Scholtz (2008) stated, that male and female experience different quarter-life crises. Male have crises related to social roles, such as being required to be successful in their careers and earn money, while female's crises are more related to social relationships, such as marriage or family. Generation Z grew up in a dynamic environment with demands for rapid adaptation, which often causes psychological pressure when the future feels uncertain (Rosyiddin & Afandi, 2023). This condition is even



more complex because they have to deal with adapting to their environment, limited social support, feelings of loneliness, and independent decisions without family (Fauzia et al., 2021; Fitriyanti et al., 2024). Issues such as uncertainty about the future, economic difficulties, low self-confidence, and longing for family make the quarter-life crisis an emotional response that often arises among young migrants.

This study shows that female tend to experience a higher quarter life crisis than men, with an average score of 62.05 compared to 58.22. These findings confirm the existence of differences in the experience of quarter life crisis between male and female, both statistically and in psychological and sociocultural aspects. This difference is even more significant in the context of Generation Z who live far from their parents, as living away from home requires independence in decision-making and facing the uncertainty of the future. Putri and Aprianti (2023) argue that female are more psychologically vulnerable because they are more expressive in conveying their emotions and are more prone to anxiety and stress. Astarari (2015) also found that female are more sensitive to environmental pressures, unlike male who tend to suppress their emotions and seek comfort.

In addition to emotional factors, Generation Z female who migrate also face various modern social demands. According to Dickerson (2004), female are not only burdened with traditional expectations such as marriage, but also careers, financial independence, and social existence. These demands further burden migrant female who are in a transitional phase of life, potentially exacerbating their quarter-life crisis. Remes (2016) notes that the risk of anxiety in female can be almost twice as high as in men. Given that symptoms of anxiety and depression are associated with quarter-life crisis, it is not surprising that migrant female experience a more intense crisis than men. Darmayanti (2008) argues that female are also more likely to internalize and express their inner conflicts and disappointments, making the symptoms of a quarter-life crisis more apparent. Conversely, migrant male may experience the same pressures, but they tend to hide them, making the impact more subtle.

Furthermore, the orientation of the quarter-life crisis itself differs between male and female, as explained by Atwood and Scholtz (2008). Male tend to face crises related to social roles, such as the demands to be economically and professionally successful. Meanwhile, female experience more crises related to social relationships, including pressures surrounding marriage, family, and interpersonal relationships. In the context of migration, these crises can manifest in the form of feelings of loneliness, loss of emotional support, and uncertainty in balancing personal and social roles. Robinson and Wright (2013) also state that crises in female are more focused on interpersonal relationships, while male are more focused on work issues, such as career pressure, boredom, and even unemployment, all of which are highly relevant to the realities faced by Generation Z when migrating.

Female tend to be more open in expressing their emotional state than male (Artiningsih & Savira, 2021). Although this can be a way to release pressure, this openness also has a negative side in the form of a tendency to compare oneself with the achievements of others, which triggers feelings of inadequacy or insecurity. For Generation Z migrants, the pressure is even more complex because they have to adapt to a new environment, live independently, and face an uncertain future. Exposure to idealized lifestyles on social media further increases the risk of a quarter-life crisis, especially for female. Meanwhile, although male also experience emotional pressure and feelings of inferiority, they tend not to express them openly (Putri & Aprianti, 2023). This difference in emotional expression patterns reinforces the finding that gender plays a role in managing quarter-life crises when living away from home.

The results of the categorization of each dimension show that female tend to have higher scores on all dimensions of the quarter-life crisis than men, with anxiety about the future as the dominant aspect. The future is a major source of stress, especially for Generation Z who have left home. In addition to the transition to young adulthood, they also have to adapt to a new environment, far from family support, and bear the academic, social, and financial burdens independently, which often triggers anxiety and uncertainty in life (Fitriyanti et al., 2024; Jamain et al., 2023). Previous studies (Nurhaiza et al., 2022; Pamungkas & Hendrastomo, 2024;

Hakim et al., 2025) confirm that quarter-life crises are largely triggered by concerns about career, education, finances, and interpersonal relationships, which feel more complex for Generation Z migrants because they also have to adjust to a new environment while meeting family expectations.

For men, this condition often manifests itself in the form of anxiety to achieve certain targets in their 20s, as explained by Putri and Aprianti (2023). Living away from home often makes male feel that they have to be more independent, so the burden of achieving financial and career success arises earlier and more intensely. Meanwhile, for Generation Z female who live away from home, pressure comes more from social and family demands. Jarvis (2011) emphasizes that female in their 20s are often required to balance family and career life. When living away from home, female not only have to adapt to a new academic and social environment, but also carry the expectations of their families back home. This can trigger stronger psychological pressure.

The dimension of confused about making decisions shows that female score higher than men. This is in line with Dickerson's (2004) opinion, which explains that female are more prone to repetitive and doubtful thinking patterns. For Generation Z migrants, this indecision is even stronger because they have to adjust academically, survive in a new environment, and determine their career path with limited family support, which is more difficult for female. A similar pattern can be seen in the dimension of negative self-assessment, where female more often feel insecure and compare themselves to others (Putri & Aprianti, 2023). When living away from home and seeing peers adapt more quickly, feelings of insecurity can increase. Conversely, male tend to evaluate achievements based on personal standards, making them better able to maintain a positive mindset even when facing similar challenges (Putri & Aprianti, 2023).

The dimension of feeling stuck with life is also higher among female. Astasari (2015) explains that female are more susceptible to being carried away by their surroundings, while male tend to divert negative feelings through enjoyable activities. Among Generation Z migrants, this condition is even more complex due to the demands of adapting to a new environment without family support. For female, the emotional burden can be heavier due to layered social expectations and academic demands, making them more likely to feel trapped. In line with Aziz and Rahardjo (2013), these feelings can arise when individuals feel unprepared to face the consequences of their decisions and achievements in a new environment, such as studies, work, or social relationships.

The dimension of worried about interpersonal relationships is also quite high, especially among female. This shows that social relationships are also a source of crisis in early adulthood. For migrants, the challenge of building new networks while maintaining old relationships often exacerbates feelings of anxiety, especially when emotional support is limited. In line with Jamain et al. (2023), poor interpersonal relationships can trigger a quarter-life crisis. For migrants, this is often exacerbated by loneliness and difficulty adapting. The dimension of depressed with the available demands scored lowest for both male and female. Although demands still exist, their intensity is not as strong as anxiety about the future or feelings of hopelessness. Both internal and external pressures continue to play a role in triggering a quarter-life crisis. In line with Zharifa et al. (2023), expectations and demands remain triggering aspects of the crisis. Although the scores are relatively lower, this dimension remains an important aspect for understanding the quarter-life crisis among Generation Z migrants.

## Conclusion

This study reveals that the majority of Generation Z migrants, both male and female, are in the moderate category of experiencing a quarter-life crisis. This shows that the transition phase to early adulthood is indeed synonymous with psychological pressure, although not all individuals experience extreme levels. The Mann-Whitney U test results confirm that there is a significant difference between males and females. Female tend to have higher scores than men, both in total scores and in almost all dimensions of the quarter-life crisis. Psychological and sociocultural factors play a major role, with



female being more prone to anxiety, indecision, negative self-assessment, and concerns about interpersonal relationships. In contrast, male are more focused on career pressures and financial achievements, although they often hide this. In general, the dimension of anxious with the future was the dominant problem among respondents, while the dimension of depressed with the available demands tended to be the lowest. Living abroad reinforces this vulnerability because it requires adaptation to the environment, independence, and facing limited social support.

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