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The Relationship Between Hope and Self-Efficacy and Quarter-Life Crisis in Career Decision-Making Success Among Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

The transition from late adolescence to early adulthood is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity exploration, career decision-making, and increasing responsibility. Generation Z often faces social and professional challenges due to rapid technological changes, economic uncertainty, and high social expectations, which may trigger a quarter-life crisis marked by anxiety, identity confusion, and career doubts. This study aimed to examine the relationship between hope, self-efficacy, and quarter-life crisis among Generation Z. This research employed a quantitative correlational design using quota sampling. The participants consisted of 121 Generation Z individuals aged 18–30 years residing in Central Java. Data were collected using hope, self-efficacy, and quarter-life crisis scales measured on a four-point Likert scale. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The results showed a significant relationship between hope, self-efficacy, and quarter-life crisis ($R = 0.788$; $p < 0.01$) with an effective contribution of 62.1%. Hope ($r = -0.738$; $p < 0.01$) and self-efficacy ($r = -0.731$; $p < 0.01$) were negatively correlated with quarter-life crisis. These findings indicate that higher levels of hope and self-efficacy are associated with lower levels of quarter-life crisis.

1. Introduction

The transition from late adolescence to early adulthood represents a critical developmental stage marked by identity exploration, career decision-making, and increasing personal responsibility. Individuals aged 18–30 frequently experience uncertainty regarding life direction, interpersonal relationships, and career stability (Arnett, 2000). The generation currently dominant in this phase is Generation Z, defined as those born between 1995 and 2010 (Arif, 2021). Growing up in a highly digitalized era, this generation faces rapid technological change and increasingly

complex social and professional dynamics compared to previous generations (Rosyiddin & Afandi, 2023). As a result, high expectations for career success—often defined as the alignment of passion and professional competence—may create considerable psychological pressure. Many members of Generation Z report feeling pressured to succeed and experiencing anxiety and doubt regarding their future careers.

Previous research (Sadri et al., 2024) reports symptoms of anxiety, depression, and overthinking related to interpersonal relationships and job competition, often intensified by self-doubt and growing social demands. Rapid labor market transformation, technological disruption, and economic uncertainty further increase these pressures (Deloitte, 2019). These conditions may contribute to a quarter-life crisis, an emotional crisis that typically occurs between the ages of 18 and 30 and is characterized by anxiety, identity confusion, career indecision, and concerns about the future (Arnett, 2000). Quarter-life crisis is commonly associated with emotional instability, uncertainty about life goals, and difficulties in making important life decisions during the transition to adulthood.

At this stage, individuals are expected to determine career directions, build stable relationships, and establish independence from their families. When these developmental demands are difficult to manage, individuals may experience psychological distress, self-doubt, and prolonged uncertainty about their future. Although this phase may generate significant pressure, it can also function as an important developmental turning point that encourages individuals to reflect on their identity, personal values, and life goals.

Several studies published in the *Journal of Educational Sciences* indicate that students frequently experience various academic and psychological challenges during their educational journey. Difficulties related to self-confidence, communication skills, and speaking anxiety are commonly reported and may influence students' academic adjustment and psychological well-being (Sofiah et al., 2025; Daud et al., 2025). In addition, the rapid development of digital technology has significantly influenced students' learning experiences and social interactions. The increasing use of social media and artificial intelligence in education has created new opportunities for learning but also introduces additional pressures and expectations for students to adapt to more complex academic environments (Ilmita et al., 2025; Yusriani & Fithriani, 2025). Other studies also highlight that students often face learning difficulties, including challenges in mastering language skills and participating actively in academic activities, which further emphasizes the importance of psychological resources that help individuals manage stress and adapt to developmental demands during early adulthood (Ocktavia et al., 2025).

Career understanding—including awareness of interests, talents, and labor market realities—supports adaptive career decision-making (Habibie et al., 2025). However, internal psychological resources also play an essential role in helping individuals navigate developmental challenges. Hope, conceptualized as a cognitive-motivational process, enables individuals to set goals, identify pathways

to achieve those goals, and maintain the motivation necessary to pursue them (Arnett, 2004). Realistic hope can serve as an important psychological resource that helps individuals remain optimistic when facing uncertainty, whereas unrealistic expectations may lead to frustration (Kaftanski & Hanson, 2022).

Another important psychological factor is self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their capability to perform actions necessary to achieve specific goals (Bandura, in Baron & Byrne, 2004). Individuals with strong self-efficacy tend to feel more confident in facing challenges, solving problems, and adapting to changing situations. Self-efficacy also encourages persistence when individuals encounter obstacles in their career development. Previous studies show that self-efficacy contributes to career adaptability and helps reduce psychological distress during transitional life stages (Laurenza et al., 2024; Savilla & Hadi, 2021).

Hope and self-efficacy therefore function as important psychological resources that may help individuals cope with the challenges associated with quarter-life crisis. Individuals with higher levels of hope and self-efficacy are more likely to approach career decisions with confidence, maintain optimism about their future, and adapt more effectively to life transitions. However, empirical research examining the simultaneous roles of hope and self-efficacy in relation to quarter-life crisis among Generation Z remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between hope and self-efficacy and quarter-life crisis in career decision-making among Generation Z.

2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between hope and self-efficacy and quarter-life crisis in career decision-making success among Generation Z. A quota sampling technique was applied, whereby the researcher predetermined a specific number of participants and recruited subjects until the quota was fulfilled (Periantalo, 2016). The participants were Generation Z individuals aged 18–30 years, both male and female, residing in Central Java Province. A total of 125 questionnaires were distributed; however, only 121 were deemed valid and included in the final analysis due to completeness and accuracy of responses.

Data were collected using three psychological measurement instruments: the Hope Scale, the Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Quarter-Life Crisis Scale. All instruments were constructed using a four-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS) (Djaali & Muljono, 2008). Each scale included favorable and unfavorable items to minimize response bias, with scores ranging from 1 to 4 and reverse scoring applied to unfavorable items. The Hope Scale was developed based on Snyder's (2002) components: goals, pathways thinking, and agency thinking ($\alpha = 0.893$).

The Self-Efficacy Scale was based on Bandura's dimensions—level, strength, and generalization (Zimmerman, 2000; $\alpha = 0.905$). The Quarter-Life Crisis Scale was

constructed according to Robbins and Wilner's (2001) aspects ($\alpha = 0.918$). All reliability coefficients exceeded acceptable thresholds, indicating strong internal consistency. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression to test the simultaneous effects of hope and self-efficacy on quarter-life crisis, and simple regression to examine partial relationships, following tests of normality and linearity assumptions.

3. Results and Discussion

The respondents in this study consisted of 81 females (66.9%) and 40 males (33.1%). These data indicate that the majority of participants in this research were female. The distribution of respondents based on gender provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the study. Understanding these characteristics is important to describe the background of the sample and to provide context for the subsequent statistical analysis examining the relationship between the research variables. Detailed information regarding the gender distribution of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	81	66.9%
Male	40	33.1%
Total	121	100%

The respondents' age ranged from 18 to 26 years, with the majority aged 21 years (39.7%) followed by 22 years (31.4%). This age distribution indicates that most participants in this study were in the phase of early adulthood, a developmental period characterized by identity exploration, career planning, and increasing personal responsibility. Understanding the age characteristics of the respondents is important because individuals within this age range are more likely to experience various developmental challenges, including uncertainty about career direction and life goals. These conditions are often associated with the phenomenon of quarter-life crisis. Detailed information regarding the age distribution of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondents' Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	2	1.7%
19	1	0.8%
20	12	9.9%
21	48	39.7%
22	38	31.4%
23	15	12.4%
24	1	0.8%
25	2	1.7%
26	2	1.7%
Total	121	100%

Based on respondents' status, most participants were final-year university students (84.3%), followed by young employees and fresh graduates. This distribution indicates that the majority of respondents were in the final stage of their higher education and were preparing to enter the workforce. At this stage, individuals commonly face important developmental tasks related to career planning, decision-making, and future life goals. These challenges may increase feelings of uncertainty and pressure regarding career readiness and personal identity, which are often associated with the phenomenon of quarter-life crisis. Therefore, understanding the status of respondents provides important context for interpreting the relationship between hope, self-efficacy, and quarter-life crisis examined in this study. Detailed information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Respondents' Status

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Final-year university student	102	84.3%
Fifth-semester university student	2	1.7%
Third-semester university student	1	0.8%
Homemaker	1	0.8%
Young employee	11	9.1%
Freshgraduate	4	3.3%
Total	121	100%

The results of the categorization of respondents' hope levels were predominantly in the moderate category. This indicates that most respondents possess a fairly positive outlook toward the future, yet still experience doubts when perceiving opportunities or the likelihood of success in certain situations. The results indicate that most respondents were in the moderate category of hope, suggesting that respondents have a relatively positive outlook toward the future although some uncertainty remains. Detailed information regarding the distribution of respondents' hope levels is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Categorization of Hope

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	6	5.0%
High	36	29.8%
Moderate	44	36.4%
Low	27	22.3%
Very Low	8	6.6%
Total	121	100%

The results of the categorization of respondents' self-efficacy levels were predominantly in the moderate category. This indicates that respondents possess a sufficient level of confidence in their ability to manage tasks and challenges, although in certain situations they may still experience doubt when dealing with complex problems. A moderate level of self-efficacy reflects a relatively adequate degree of self-confidence; however, it is not yet fully consistent across different conditions. The categorization results show that most respondents were in the moderate category of self-efficacy, indicating a sufficient level of confidence in

dealing with tasks and challenges. Detailed information regarding the distribution of respondents' self-efficacy levels is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Categorization of *Self-efficacy*

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	9	7.44%
High	32	26.45%
Moderate	44	36.4%
Low	27	22.31%
Very Low	9	7.44%
Total	121	100%

The results of the categorization of respondents' quarter-life crisis levels were predominantly in the moderate category. This indicates that most respondents experience confusion, uncertainty, or concerns regarding their future and career at a noticeable yet not severe level. The results indicate that most respondents experienced moderate levels of quarter-life crisis, meaning that feelings of uncertainty about the future are present but not severe. Detailed information regarding the distribution of respondents' quarter-life crisis levels is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Categorization of Quarter-Life Crisis

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	11	9.1%
High	25	20.7%
Moderate	44	36.4%
Low	36	29.8%
Very Low	5	4.1%
Total	121	100%

The results of the normality test for the quarter-life crisis variable showed a significance value of $p = 0.192$ ($p > 0.05$) with a K-SZ value of 0.072, indicating that the quarter-life crisis data were normally distributed. Similarly, the hope variable obtained a significance value of $p = 0.067$ ($p > 0.05$) with a K-SZ value of 0.078, and the self-efficacy variable showed a significance value of $p = 0.169$ ($p > 0.05$) with a K-SZ value of 0.073. These results indicate that all variables in this study were normally distributed. Therefore, the data met the normality assumption required for parametric statistical analysis. The fulfillment of this assumption supports the appropriate and valid implementation of subsequent analyses, allowing correlation and regression tests to be conducted without violating statistical assumptions. Detailed results of the normality test for each variable are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Normality Test Results

Variable	K-SZ	p (0.05)	Description
<i>Quarter Life Crisis</i>	0.072	0.192	Normal
Hope	0.073	0.067	Normal
<i>Self-Efficacy</i>	0.078	0.169	Normal

The results of the linearity test between hope and quarter-life crisis yielded an F value for linearity of 1.069 with a significance level of $p = 0.393$ ($p > 0.05$). These findings indicate that the relationship between hope and quarter-life crisis is linear. The fulfillment of the linearity assumption allows for the appropriate implementation of further statistical analyses. The linear relationship suggests that changes in the level of hope are consistently associated with changes in the level of quarter-life crisis. This finding supports the use of correlation and regression analyses in the study. Detailed results of the linearity test are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Linearity Test of Hope and Quarter-Life Crisis

Variable	F	Sig (p)	Description
Hope and Quarter Life Crisis	1.069	0.393	Linear

The results of the linearity test between self-efficacy and quarter-life crisis yielded an F value for linearity of 0.656 with a significance level of $p = 0.930$ ($p > 0.05$). These findings indicate that the relationship between self-efficacy and quarter-life crisis is linear. The fulfillment of the linearity assumption suggests that changes in the level of self-efficacy are consistently associated with changes in the level of quarter-life crisis. This condition permits the application of further statistical analyses that require a linear relationship pattern. Therefore, the association between self-efficacy and quarter-life crisis can be examined more comprehensively. Detailed results of the linearity test are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Linearity Test of *Self-Efficacy and Quarter-Life Crisis*

Variables	F	Sig (p)	Description
<i>Self-Efficacy and Quarter-Life Crisis</i>	0.656	0.930	Linear

The major hypothesis was tested using multiple linear regression analysis, a statistical technique that involves more than one independent variable to predict a dependent variable. In this analysis, the coefficient of determination (R-square) was used to determine the extent to which the independent variables explained the variance in the dependent variable (Iba & Wardhana, 2024). The results indicated a significance value of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$) with a multiple correlation coefficient ($R_{x_1,2y}$) of 0.788. This finding demonstrates a highly significant relationship between (X1) hope and (X2) self-efficacy and (Y) quarter-life crisis. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is a relationship between hope and self-efficacy and quarter-life crisis is accepted. The effective contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was 62.1%. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Hope and *Self-Efficacy* with *Quarter-Life Crisis*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig (p)
0.788	0.621	0.615	8.371	96.824	0.000

The results of the minor hypothesis testing indicate that the hope variable has a significant relationship with quarter-life crisis, with a significance value (p) of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$), a correlation coefficient (r_{x2y}) of -0.738 , and an R Square value of 0.544. These findings demonstrate a highly significant negative relationship between hope and quarter-life crisis. The negative direction of the relationship indicates that higher levels of hope are associated with lower levels of quarter-life crisis. Conversely, lower levels of hope are associated with higher levels of quarter-life crisis. Based on this statistical analysis, the hypothesis stating a negative relationship between hope and quarter-life crisis is accepted, with an effective contribution of 54.4%. After presenting the descriptive statistics of the respondents and research variables, further statistical analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between hope, self-efficacy, and quarter-life crisis. In accordance with the correlational quantitative approach used in this study, multiple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the partial relationships among the variables. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Regression Analysis Results

Model	R	R Square	Sig (p)
Hope and <i>Quarter-Life Crisis</i>	-0.738	0.544	0.000
<i>Self-Efficacy and Quarter-Life Crisis</i>	-0.731	0.534	0.000

The results indicate that hope has a significant negative relationship with quarter-life crisis ($r = -0.738$, $p < 0.01$) with an effective contribution of 54.4%. This finding suggests that individuals with higher levels of hope tend to experience lower levels of quarter-life crisis. Conversely, individuals with lower levels of hope are more likely to experience higher levels of quarter-life crisis. The results of the second minor hypothesis test also revealed a significant negative relationship between self-efficacy and quarter-life crisis ($r = -0.731$, $p < 0.01$), with an effective contribution of 53.4%. These findings indicate that individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to experience lower levels of quarter-life crisis.

During the transition to early adulthood, individuals face various developmental challenges related to career decisions, relationships, and life goals. Failure to manage these challenges may lead to uncertainty, anxiety, and confusion, commonly referred to as a quarter-life crisis (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). However, developmental crises do not always have negative consequences, as they may also contribute to identity formation and personal growth. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research conducted by Aisyah et al. (2024), which reported a significant negative relationship between hope and quarter-life crisis ($r = -0.514$; $p = 0.000$). Hope functions as an important psychological resource that promotes optimism, goal orientation, and persistence in facing life challenges (Snyder, 2002).

Individuals with higher levels of hope are better able to develop strategies and maintain motivation in achieving their goals despite uncertainty. Self-efficacy also plays an important role in helping individuals cope with developmental challenges. According to Bandura, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks, overcome difficulties, and adapt to life demands. Individuals with

strong self-efficacy tend to be more confident when facing challenges and are less likely to experience emotional distress during developmental transitions. Overall, hope and self-efficacy function as important psychological resources that help individuals cope with uncertainty and developmental pressures during early adulthood, thereby reducing the likelihood of experiencing a quarter-life crisis.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that hope and self-efficacy play an important role in helping individuals cope with the challenges of the quarter-life crisis, particularly among Generation Z in early adulthood. Hope encourages individuals to maintain optimism, set meaningful life goals, and remain motivated despite uncertainties that often arise during the transition to adulthood. At the same time, self-efficacy strengthens individuals' confidence in their ability to make appropriate career decisions, overcome obstacles, and persist when facing difficulties or setbacks. These two psychological resources work together to support individuals in navigating developmental tasks, including identity formation, career exploration, and adjustment to new social roles. Individuals who possess higher levels of hope and self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate resilience and adaptive coping strategies when dealing with life pressures.

In contrast, low levels of these constructs may increase the likelihood of experiencing identity confusion, career indecision, and psychological distress during the quarter-life crisis period, which can hinder personal growth and delay the achievement of developmental milestones in early adulthood. Therefore, strengthening hope and self-efficacy becomes essential in promoting psychological well-being and adaptive functioning among young adults. Educational institutions and social environments play a crucial role in facilitating this process by providing supportive programs such as career guidance, counseling services, and decision-making training. Such interventions can help individuals build confidence, clarify their goals, and develop effective coping strategies. In addition, future studies are recommended to explore other internal and external factors, such as social support, personality traits, and cultural influences, that may contribute to the experience of the quarter-life crisis in young adults.

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