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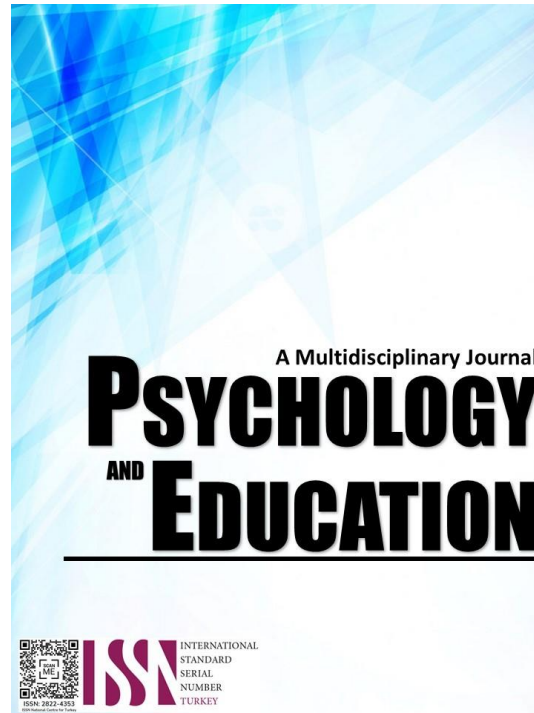**122** PUBLICATIONS **696** CITATIONS

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TUMATANDA NA AKO: THE QUARTER-LIFE CRISIS PHENOMENON AMONG EMERGING ADULTS

Tumatanda na Ako: The Quarter-Life Crisis Phenomenon Among Emerging Adults

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Abstract

A quarter-life crisis (QLC) is a phenomenon that has gained widespread attention in the media and popular literature as a result of the difficulties associated with early adulthood. This study, "Tumatanda na Ako: The Quarter-life Crisis Phenomenon Among Emerging Adults," explored the emerging adults' experiences of quarter-life crisis and the meaning they make out of their experiences of this phenomenon. The study utilized the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the qualitative data gathered from twenty (20) respondents from a higher educational institution in Bocaue, Bulacan. The findings have been the bases for the development of the developmental program entitled, "Know-Now, Know-How: Unveiling the Quarter-life Crisis Phenomenon and Finding Ways to Conquer!" and for the development of a proposed psychological assessment tool namely "Help! I Am Lost," A Quarter-life Crisis Scale.

Keywords: Experiences, Emerging Adulthood, Emerging Adult, Quarter-life Crisis

Introduction

Quarter-life crisis (QLC) is a popular term for developmental crisis episodes that arise at some point in early adulthood (Agarwal, 2022). It is a phenomenon that has gained widespread attention in the media and popular literature as a result of the difficulties associated with early adulthood. To be more specific, this entails an intense period of introspection and stress, both of which are all too typical among many young people who are struggling to question the path that their careers, personal relationships, financial situations, and life's general purpose should take. German psychologist Erik Eriksson suspected a crisis at this point in life. He suggested a quarter-life crisis related to "intimacy versus isolation," which was explained briefly as related to a time to enter the "real world" and exit the protection of the family home or college campus (Flynn, 2021). That is, a quarter-life crisis, in most cases, typically occurs in an attempt of emerging adults to move away from home, find work, form a stable intimate relationship, become financially stable, and a lot more. However, failing to do so could cause them instability, transition, and heightened emotions, which may leave them overwhelmed and incapable of coping (Robinson, 2016).

Emerging adulthood is known as a period of uncertainty. Most people in this era go through times of indecisiveness and worry, during which they begin to doubt their own goals, plans, and even relationships. Although many say it is the ideal period in a person's life — having good health, fewer worries about life responsibilities, ample time to explore and seek out opportunities, and simply take chances in life — they are not exempt from the challenges that emerge later in life (Shallcross, 2016). A growing interest in the study of emerging adulthood, which is a recently proposed phase of life by Arnett in 2000, explains that individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 are already trained or educated to be economically independent (Hochberg & Konner, 2020). However, challenges brought by a sudden life transition were evident among emerging adults. In most cases, they are confronted with the truth that their life is not going on as they intended (Brigham, 2021). That is, they are faced with the possibility that they are not being true to themselves, but they are also unsure of who they are supposed to be. As a result, they suffer from an emotional crisis of identity and self-esteem, a phenomenon called a "quarter-life crisis" (Brigham, 2021).

Considering the aforementioned issues, the present study explored the quarter-life crisis phenomenon among emerging adults. Specifically, unveiling their lived experiences and meaning-making of the situation during the quarter-life crisis provided a clear understanding of the concept of emerging adulthood and how the quarter-life crisis could be implicated in this period.

This study endeavors to contribute to the field of developmental psychology, particularly in the growing academe of the developmental stages alongside human experiences. Interpreting the emerging adults' lived experiences of quarter-life crisis will contribute to

further understanding of early adulthood as a developmental stage.

Research Questions

This study, entitled "Tumatanda na Ako: The Quarter-life Crisis Phenomenon Among Emerging Adults," aimed to explore the quarter-life crisis phenomenon among emerging adults. In particular, the graduating college students at a selected college school in Bocaue, Bulacan, A.Y 2022-2023. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of emerging adults during the quarter-life crisis?
2. What meanings do emerging adults make out of their experiences of the quarter-life crisis?

Methodology

This section features the strategies of inquiry, respondents of the study, data collection approaches, and data analysis procedures that are utilized to generate the results of this study.

Strategies of Inquiry

The study utilized the Phenomenological Research strategy of inquiry, a type of qualitative research that aims to comprehend and characterize the universal core of a phenomenon (Ho & Limpaecher, 2022). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to explore and make meanings out of the quarter-life crisis experiences among emerging adults.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were emerging adults of 20 to 22 years of age. They are students who are in the final year of their college education in a higher educational institution in Bocaue, Bulacan in the academic year 2022 to 2023. They met the criteria formulated for identifying and screening prospective participants: (1) Within the age range of 18 to 25 years old; (2) In the final year level of their college education; and (3) Demonstrated commitment to participating in the study by giving informed consent.

Data Collection Approaches

The researchers conducted individual interviews with each of the participants to ensure their anonymity, hence, giving them the opportunity to respond freely and honestly to the questions. In addition, in order to ensure the participant's psychological safety and well-being, debriefing was performed on each and every one of them after they had taken part in the interview.

Following the research ethics, the researchers secured informed consent from the respondents before the interviews. The informed consent was provided via Google Form, as the data collection was facilitated during a worldwide pandemic; thus, personal interaction is not permitted.

Upon obtaining the participants' consent, they were subjected to a one-on-one interview through Google Meet using the interview guide created by the researchers. This instrument includes a series of questions designed to elicit participants' lived experiences of quarter-life crisis and the meanings they make out of these experiences. The interview questions were examined and validated thoroughly by experts.

After collecting qualitative data from the participants, the responses were transcribed, coded, organized, and interpreted. Finally, the result of the gathered data was summarized and analyzed according to the research objectives.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis is defined in qualitative research as the systematic search and organization of interview transcripts, observation notes, and other non-textual materials. It entails making sense of massive volumes of data by first lowering the volume of raw data, then discovering significant patterns, and ultimately interpreting the data (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). In the present study, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the gathered qualitative data.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative thematic approach developed within psychology and underpinned by an idiographic philosophy, thereby focusing on the subjective lived experiences of individuals (Love, Vetere, & Davis, 2020). IPA is about human experience at its deepest level of pathos and understanding the essence of a studied phenomenon. It is a useful tool for examining data that tries to see what is important to the participant and how they interpret and view their own lives and experiences (Turner, 2017). Further, utilizing the IPA approach in a qualitative research study

reiterates the fact that its main objective and essence are to explore the lived experiences of the research participants and allow them to narrate the research findings through their lived experiences (Alase, 2017). That being the case, this research approach was beneficial to the study as it gave researchers the best opportunity to understand the innermost deliberations of the lived experiences of research participants. As an approach that is participant-oriented, the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach allows the interviewees (research participants) to express themselves and their stories the way they see fit without any distortion and/or prosecution (Alase, 2017).

Results

Following the data-gathering procedure, the analysis generated three superordinate themes that account for the self-reported experiences and interpretations of the respondents on the occurrence of the phenomenon called the quarter-life crisis. These extracted three superordinate themes are written as the following: (1) experience in taking the role of the *"inaasahang anak"*; (2) experience in overthinking about the future; (3) and experience in finding coping strategies.

Experience in Taking the Role of the *"Inaasahang Anak"*

The first superordinate theme focuses on the experiences of the respondents in relation to taking on the role of *"inaasahang anak."* The majority of the respondents admitted that their experiences as either the eldest child in their family or the current or expected breadwinner in the future put an amount of pressure on their shoulders. These instances become worse for other respondents who have not yet figured out their future. Some admitted that being pressured by the role they tend to play in their family forces them to do things such as choosing their career in college even if it is not part of their plan. Some also talk about their desire to become independent yet admit that considering that issue makes them feel guilty, while others reveal that they feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities that their role has brought them. Under this main theme, respondents' experiences can be broken down into three subthemes: feelings of being pressured; feelings of guilt for desiring independence; and feelings of being overwhelmed by responsibilities.

Feelings of being pressured. In this subtheme, respondents talk about how they feel pressured to

succeed in life because they believe that their family relies on them. Specifically, the majority mentioned that they felt like, when they turned 18 years old, their family immediately expected them to be the ones who would take them out of poverty and hardship and that they felt like they were responsible for carrying out all of their family's problems. When asked about how they see themselves as a member of their family, a respondent answered:

"Para sa'kin ano eh, nakaka-pressure kasi panganay din ako."

This statement, however, also revealed how the respondent made sense of his role as the *"inaasahang anak."* Specifically, he said:

"Kailangan ko din mag hirap para sa mga kapatid ko at pamilya ko."

Being the eldest child is more than just being born first among all of the siblings. The respondent realized that as the family's eldest child, it was now his duty to shoulder the responsibilities that his parents are unable to carry.

Similarly to this, another respondent talked about her experiences of being pressured in relation to her role as the eldest child and how she makes sense of this reality now that she was about to graduate from college. In her words, she stated:

"May nararamdaman ng kaunting pressure kase syempre dalawang sem nalang gragraduate na… parang maraming nag eexpect sayo na after ng grad dapat may stable na job kana."

Moreover, she added:

"Ako yung panganay samin so parang wala naman silang sinasabe sakin pero ramdam mo na parang after ng graduation kailangan mo na ng stable job kasi ikaw naman yung magpapa-aral sa kapatid mo."

Both of the respondents admitted their tendency to feel pressured as they take on the role of being the breadwinners of their families. This reality, moreover, forces them to do things not for their own benefit but for their families, such as taking jobs while still studying, doing well in school to secure a better future, and taking on the responsibilities of their parents, such as looking after their siblings. Their experiences further provided them with an understanding of the role they are taking. They were able to make sense and make meaning of their experiences, which affects their

behavior as emerging adults.

These findings were supported by the study of Riñoza (2017), which stated that those who take on the role of *"Inaasahang Anak"* face a number of difficulties, including the following: feelings of inadequacy; feeling pressured to find success; the necessity to prioritize their family before their own needs and desires; the perception of unfair demands or expectations; and their inadequate financial means. Additionally, another study indicated the tendency of young adults to feel like they have committed themselves to take on all the responsibilities, especially those of family, once they turn into adults and that they are expected to care for their parents the same way their parents cared for them (Fortis, 2020).

Feelings of guilt for desiring independence. In this subtheme, respondents discussed their tendency to hold back on doing things, such as leaving their homes to become independent. The majority of the respondents are caught in this situation where in any decision or path they desire to take, they still have to consider if such a thing would benefit their loved ones, specifically with regards to leaving their homes to live on their own. A respondent talked about his experiences considering the decision to live alone and how his family affected his decision-making. In his words, he said:

"...kino-consider ko is yung makaka-benefit ba pati sa mga tao sa paligid ko, pangalawa is hindi ba magsu-suffer kung sino yung mga kasama ko talaga everyday life."

And when asked about the reasons behind his considerations when making decisions, the respondent said that:

"Kasi di ba ang hirap? Nakaka-guilty naman na gawin yung isang bagay tapos sumasaya ka pero yung iba hindi."

In light of this statement, as the respondent interpreted his experiences as *"inaasahang anak,"* he placed himself in a position where he believed he had no right to think only about himself and that such happiness for him alone was forbidden. Even though he really wanted to live on his own, thinking about his family and how they would feel if he left kept him from actually leaving their home. Moreover, some of the respondents expressed their desire for independence in a form of keeping money from their parents and trying to do things on their own. Specifically, a respondent stated that:

"Yung mga experiences ko na yon parang ililihim ko pa sa parents ko na gumagala ako, sasabihin ko na lang sa parents ko pag umuwi ako para di nila maisip na may pera ako. Tas minsan nagsisinungaling ako na kunyari libre lang pero pera ko talaga yung ginagastos ko."

But when asked about how he feels toward his actions, the respondent admitted that:

"Nagi-guilty kasi syempre kahit gusto mong unahin yung sarili mo... parang pag nauna mo nga yung sarili mo pero maiisip mo rin yung parents mo, yung mukha nila parang di maipinta ganun, parang hindi sila masaya ganun na parang inuna mo yung sarili mo. Kaya parang guilt."

When the respondents decide to become selfish for once, keeping their money for themselves, for instance, makes them feel guilty and have no sense of happiness about what they did at all. In this case, the findings revealed the tendency of the respondents to feel guilty just because they want to prioritize themselves, even though they don't need to feel guilty at all. The quarter-life crisis, as research suggests, takes place in such a way that a person feels unrightful to have leisure, for instance, when in fact, there is really nothing wrong with feeling that way upon adulting. Unfortunately, this experience causes emerging adults to have a hard time isolating themselves from their families or identifying themselves outside of their community.

These findings corroborated the study by Sharpe (2022), which revealed that young adults tend to experience a sense of being trapped in some form of commitment, which makes them unfocused, terrified to make any decisions, or thinking only about negative things upon taking some sort of action. That being the case, it is possible for a person to experience the feeling of being powerless over their lives, and that factor restricts their alternatives and prevents them from moving forward. And this matter was, sadly, also prominent among young adults. That is, according to Ghiladurcci (2020), young adults often feel that they cannot make their own decisions because they have to put the needs of their families first. They also feel pressured whenever their family expects them to do something, and when they fail to do so, they will feel guilty as they believe they have a moral obligation to provide for their family.

Feelings of being overwhelmed by responsibilities. In this subtheme, there is a focus on the mental and

emotional aftermath of the process of entering adulthood. Responsibilities are now being thrown at the respondents as people expect them to become more accountable for their futures as well as their families' lives, even though they are still students in college. As they do not feel ready to take on the adult role yet, they feel overwhelmed by the number of responsibilities they have to attend to and every decision they ought to make. A respondent mentioned that:

"To be honest nakaka-overwhelmed kasi syempre ano... yung responsibility na hindi mo naman dapat na dati ginagawa ay ginagawa mo na ngayon."

And when asked about how he feels toward these experiences, the respondent explained that:

"Since 4th year college ako di ba then 22 years old, uhmm too young to... para mag-trabaho and dapat ine-enjoy ko muna yung mga company ko na mga kaibigan ko ayan, pamilya ko. Pero ngayon nagtatrabaho na tayo...naka-ilang trabaho na. Dati naglalaro ka lang di ba? Ganun sobrang hirap."

With regard to this statement, it was revealed that the process of transition from adolescence to young adulthood causes the respondent to feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities he suddenly has to do, such as working while studying. Although he acknowledges the reality that working is what he has to do in order to help his family, he finds this situation challenging considering that he believes he is still too young to work or to experience all of that in general.

For another respondent, however, it was found that the sudden transition had nothing to do with her tendency to feel overwhelmed by responsibilities, as she had already dealt with these experiences earlier in life. Nevertheless, later in life, it came to her senses that everything is becoming too much for her. In this matter, the respondent explained her role in taking care of her younger brother. In her words, she said that:

"...growing up, malaki kasi yung age gap ko sa little brother ko, 7 years, e parehas working ang parents ko. So si kuya naman 10 years ang gap nila nung bunso. So sino bang maaasahan? Kung sino yung mas malapit sa brother so ako."

Additionally, she continued:

"Nandun yung parang sense of kailangan kong maging ate."

Although the respondent completely acknowledges the need for her to take over the role of looking out for her brother, when asked about her thoughts toward her situation, she admitted that:

"Di naman sa maaga pero yung ganung age dapat naglalaro ka pa, pero ayun nagbabantay ka na ng kapatid mo."

The respondent further talked about how she feels envious of her classmates—seeing them achieve a lot in life already while she, on the other hand, still has to attend to her family duties. Her confusion about whether to prioritize her role in their family or to work on her role as becoming an adult overwhelmed her.

Taking the aforementioned statements into consideration, the findings revealed that the majority of the respondents are having difficulty determining where they should be in their lives and are feeling discouraged and unmotivated after discovering that they have already failed to reach that point in their lives. They were caught in a situation of uncertainty, questioning, and intense soul-searching—a phenomenon called a quarter-life crisis.

According to Matud, Díaz, Bethencourt, and Ibáñez (2020) in their study, emerging adulthood is a pivotal time in a person's life that is marked by several transition periods, including changes in living situations, relationships, education, and work life, wherein these changes have the potential to cause the emerging adult to experience stress and psychological discomfort. Likewise, people in this age face moments of instability, transition, and heightened emotion that are often generated when an individual takes significant and deliberate efforts to settle into a stable set of life responsibilities but then encounters problems that leave them feeling overwhelmed and incapable of coping (Robinson, 2017).

Experience of Overthinking About the Future

The second superordinate theme pertains to the hardships of an emerging adult in the middle of a quarter-life crisis. The respondents discussed the difficulties they faced as developing adults going through this phenomenon. The majority of them felt anxious about what was going to happen in their future. They still feel inept at navigating their lives on their own. Some even admitted that even though they are aiming for a certain goal, which is to have a better life, in particular, picturing their lives in detail is still hard for them. Some of the respondents, on the other hand, revealed their experiences related to stagnation.

Specifically, their experiences amidst a quarter-life crisis made them conclude that they were indeed living a stagnant life. Under this main theme, respondents' experiences can be broken down into two subthemes: a feeling of inability to find life's purpose; and a perception of stagnation.

Feeling of inability to find life's purpose. This subtheme explains how the respondents tend to have hazy plans for their future. Despite the fact that they are graduating college students, some of them have not yet considered planning or have not yet figured out what they want to do with their lives in the near future. The majority of respondents expressed confusion about their situations, as they continue to question what the future holds for them. When asked about what their plans for the future are and how they decide to pursue them, a respondent answered:

"Yun nga din eh. Hindi ko pa din alam, kasi hanggang ngayon iniisip ko kung ano mangyayari sa'kin"

According to the respondent, her experience in sorting out her future has never been easy. Her statement also revealed how she struggles to decide what courses of action she must take or how she would map out her plans according to a future that she barely has an idea of.

Additionally, when asked about her thoughts regarding this matter, in her words, she said:

"Parang ngayon ano focus muna ko sa kung ano meron kasi di ko rin naman kasi masasabi na mangyayari ba to pag plinano ko. Pano kung may iba palang nakalaan para sakin di ba?"

The respondent realized that when they reached the point where they needed to face the transitions that may happen as they went along in adulthood, it became much more difficult to know their purpose and figure out what they really wanted to do in life. Their experiences regarding this matter made them realize the value of focusing on the "now." Even though they couldn't plan their future, this kind of behavior was their way to deal with feeling like they were falling behind.

In a similar way, one of the respondents who had the same experience talked about a time when she didn't know what her purpose was and how she dealt with those uncertainties. She said:

"Actually kasi ako yung klase ng tao na hindi ko talaga iniisip kung ano yung mangyayare sa future ko.

Ako talaga yung tao na go with the flow kasi naniniwala ako sa uncertainties ng buhay. Siguro kung may gusto man akong gagawin, siguro gagawin ko na lang din yung best ko to pursue that dream or career in the future."

But when asked about how she felt about this matter, she answered:

"Siguro anxious din kase di mo talaga alam yung mangyayare in the future. Kumbaga ineexpect mo yung mangyayare sayo, what if iba yung kakalabasan non? So medyo nakakakaba din."

The respondent admitted that she tried not to put too much pressure on herself when finding out her life's purpose. Although her experiences related to this matter are not as clear as those of her peers, she still feels motivated to continue. However, as she understood her situation, she also admitted that it made her feel worried at some point. That is, being unsure about one's life is indeed concerning.

The majority of the respondents acknowledge that there will be uncertainty in their daily lives in the future and that they will have difficulty determining their purpose. Consequently, they admitted that it often leads them to be anxious and confused since they believe that they are now in such a crucial period of their lives and that planning out their future is a must, especially since they have no idea about what is going to happen in their lives.

This finding is supported by Flynn (2021), wherein he stated in his study that quarter-life crises, unfortunately, are becoming all too common in society, as many young people battle with questions about the direction of their careers, relationships, and general life purpose. Further, emerging adults are unfamiliar with the feelings of instability, ambivalence, and extreme powerlessness that accompany adulthood because their lives have been relatively predictable until graduation from university (Robinson, 2016). That being the case, while many young adults struggle to prepare for productive jobs, it can also be challenging for them to build secure careers (Gonser, 2018).

Perception of Stagnation. In this subtheme, the perception of stagnation or a life where you feel stuck and seemed to be neither moving backward nor advancing towards a certain cue in life was explained. Several respondents faced stagnation in life, which they explain as a tendency to feel motionless and unmotivated. Some mentioned that they tend to feel as

if nothing motivates them to act. It is as if their life is moving to a rest. Things are sophomoric and repetitious because of how they are done and because the results are as predicted. A respondent revealed her experience with the same phenomenon. She stated:

"Well, nape-pressure ako since wala pa kong masyadong achievement dito sa edad na meron ako ngayon, and also yung life ko… very stagnant, parang nagiging routine na lang."

The respondent explains how she felt so unmotivated to continue moving forward as she felt like her life was running like a cycle, remaining unchanged despite everything she had done. In a similar situation, another respondent mentioned:

"Nandun ako sa point ng buhay ko na nag e-explore ako and parang alam mo yun... hindi ako naka-stuck, gumagalaw ako pero hindi rin—hindi ko pa rin nararating yung gusto kong papuntahan."

As observed in both responses, the respondents described their lives as emerging adults as still being stuck in the process of exploring adulthood. Although they are making efforts to prepare for that particular phase of life—it was as if they were present, preparing, and attempting to be ready, but they are still not there yet but are only in one phase. And for these reasons, the respondents in the same situation feel stuck and unmotivated.

Moreover, when asked about their thoughts regarding this matter, someone explained that:

"Medyo kinakabahan kasi nga di ba ano ayaw natin mag-fail sa buhay and syempre ang pagfefail kasama na talaga yan and normal lang din yan. So kinakabahan ako pero uhm hinihiling ko din na kung hindi man umayon yung mga gusto kong mangyari sa mga pangarap ko, uhm maging handa ako emotionally kung paano ko iha-handle."

In light of this statement, as the respondent acknowledges these experiences in her life, which include failure, in particular, she comes to the conclusion that this reality is bound to happen at some point in everyone's lives. And if that thing happens to her, she hopes that she was able to prepare herself prior to facing the consequences of possible stagnation and that the failure may not be too detrimental for her.

According to Ambrose (2021), stagnation happens when a person doesn't have anything in life that

motivates him/her enough to take sustained steps toward it. A person feels exhausted when they take on too many things that don't come naturally. In a literature review written by Brigham (2021), it was revealed that millennial graduates in 2008 experienced career stagnation after repeatedly losing their jobs and failing to establish a solid career path. Many young adults have been thrown into a spiral as a result of the lack of career opportunities, the inability to travel, and being compelled to stay at home. This has caused many to question what the point of all of their years of hard work has been (Brigham, 2021).

Experience in Finding Coping Strategies

This superordinate theme focuses on the experiences of the respondents in finding various coping techniques to adopt in order to cope with their detrimental experiences and approaching issues brought about by the quarter-life crisis. The respondents acknowledged that they encountered numerous obstacles as emerging adults. And such issues include doubting their ability to continue their lives and contemplating their future ambitions—a phenomenon called a quarter-life crisis. These negative feelings led them to seek comfort and find a means to continue—thus, bringing about these four subthemes: determination to pursue dreams; finding social support; having faith in God; and validating emotions and break needs.

Determination to pursue dreams. This subtheme discussed the respondents' unwavering will to pursue their dreams and aspirations. The respondents admitted that the ways they live their lives in college are not what they expected, as they had hoped for a more defined and concrete mapping of their plans at this age but had failed to do so. Despite this, however, what motivates them to continue is their dream of pursuing and achieving more for a better life. And, regardless of whether what they are pursuing is what they really want or not, they still want to continue and succeed in life. One respondent shared her thoughts about how she remains motivated, mentioning that:

"...yung mga gusto kong mangyari sa buhay ko di ba parang uhm... kasi dadating ka naman talaga sa point na "Ayoko na ang hirap, hindi ko na talaga gusto" ganon. Pero magiging positive kapag—kapag iniisip mo yung "Ay ganito nga pala yung mga plano ko," "Ay ganito nga pala yung gusto kong mangyari sa future ko, ganto yung gusto kong makita after ilang years" ganyan. Saka yung state ko rin ngayon, hindi ko gusto yung ganito, I want more."

In light of this statement, upon understanding her experiences amidst the quarter-life crisis, the respondent emphasizes her firm belief that despite these detrimental issues upon her development, she can continue and have the right result because she wanted to have more of life, she wanted to be better and attain personal development, and she believes in her own capabilities that she will actually achieve all of her dreams.

Moreover, another respondent said that he remains motivated and fuelled to do everything and give his best efforts for the welfare of the people around him. He wanted to give them a better life and stop the generational suffering that their family has been enduring for a very long time. When asked about his experiences concerning this matter, he said that:

"Ang ginawa ko maging masipag..."

The respondent explained that even if he wanted to look for a job to support their family, his role as the eldest and second parent to his sibling and an athletic scholar in college prevented him from having spare time to look for a job. Given that, what he decided to do was to study hard and do well in school so that his scholarship would not be put to waste and that a better future could be created for their family.

When asked about his thoughts regarding his situation, the respondent reasoned that:

"...kailangan mo lang talaga maging positive kasi nga napakarami ng responsibilidad na kailangan mong gawin; kailangan pagbutihin yung pag-aaral mo, kailangan mo maging masipag at the same time. Ang ginawa ko maging masipag para yung [magiging] anak ko di maranasan yung naranasan ko, at the same time, makabili ng bahay. Sabi ko nga sa sarili ko "Ito na... itong generation na to, ito na yung last na magkakaroon ng pamilya namin ng mahirap."

Through the means of continuous pursuit of their dreams, the respondents were reminded of their desired kind of life. They were being reminded of what they had been fighting for since the beginning. And those aspirations or people who became their source of motivation are what keep them strong enough to face life's battles, no matter how difficult they are.

These findings were supported by the study of Tilburg and Igou (2019), which postulated and tested that people's forecasts of a brighter future than the present serve a vital function: they give meaning to life. Moreover, the findings of this study demonstrated that

visualizing a brighter future delivers a significant existential benefit: it acts as a technique for discovering purpose in life.

Finding social support. When the respondents began to question their lives again, feeling anxious and unsure of which path to take or whenever they felt lost, receiving social support was one of their keys to returning on track. A respondent stated that she reaches out to other people with a positive mindset for support when she sees that she can no longer keep up her optimistic viewpoint about the future. She mentioned that being surrounded by people who share her mindset and are as mature as she is allows her to be reminded of what she truly fights for in life. And thus, it pushes her to strive once more. Specifically, she said that:

"...there are times na kailangan mo lang din talagang kumausap ng mga tao na mas... sing-mature... merong same din nang pag-iisip sayo ganon."

And when asked about her reason for doing so, she said that:

"So kapag ganun kasi parang magkakaron ka din—parang babalik ka dun sa "Oo nga pala dapat ipagpatuloy mo yung mga gagawin mo kasi oo nga pala kung ganito ganyan"... maganda rin yung nasu-surround ka ng mga taong positive din and may mature na pag-iisip."

This statement refers to her moment of realization after talking to someone. Receiving social support in times of difficulty may come in various forms, but regardless, the respondent felt grateful to have someone as she coped with the challenges posed by the quarter-life crisis. In a similar vein, another respondent mentioned that:

"Nagagawa kong magpatuloy, siguro dahil sa mga taong nagpupush sakin or nag iinspire sakin na kaya ko to ganyan. Parang sa kabila ng mga nangyare din sakin, ayon, nagiging... naaachive ko din yung goal ko"

For both of the respondents, having the most significant people in their lives—people who can help them become more positive and better people—is enough to make them eager to achieve their goals. Even though they recognize that they still lack something and are not confident enough to continue what they started, seeing the people who are close to them gives them the strength to fight for their lives. It

motivates them to think that there is someone who depends on them and believes in their potential, and most especially that there will be people who will support them in every single way.

These findings were supported by Andayani's (2020) study, which determined that social support provided to individuals will assist them in implementing effective coping techniques to overcome the crisis they are facing. This study explains that the family is the closest support system for early-adolescent individuals and that a well-functioning family could help these individuals face the crisis. Additionally, the study of Orben, Tomova, and Blakemore (2020) theorized and tested that the adolescent stage of life is marked by an enhanced sensitivity to social stimuli and a greater need for peer interaction. In particular, this study showed that acceptance by peers and being influenced by peers are important to the development of early adolescence.

Having faith in God. Some of the respondents stated that, at such a time when the anxiety and confusion about their lives overtook their will to continue, they sought comfort from God. A respondent mentioned that:

"Kumakapit talaga ako sa kay God, alam mo yon? Kase during those down moments kase talaga parang every day kailangan kong may panghugutan ng lakas ganyan, so, sa Kaniya lang talaga."

When asked about what motivates her to keep going despite all the challenges brought on by the quarter-life crisis, the respondent was brought to tears while trying to answer. She admitted that adulting has never been easy for her and that this matter had caused her to have suicidal thoughts and attempts. But God, as she explained, prevents her from doing so. And the current situation that she is in has made her realize that:

"Ibibigay ni Lord yan kung kailan handa ka na, kaya mo nang i-grab yung blessing na ibibigay niya sa'yo."

The respondent indicates that even though she is in the middle of confusion about her life—feeling lost about which path to take—she believes that God is just waiting for her to be ready. And that when that time comes, God will clear her mind and direct her to the path He wants her to take. Someone also shares about her fear of God's disappointments and how it keeps her awake from her suicidal thoughts:

"...and I always think of how God will be disappointed in me kung magiging ganun lang yung buhay

ko—kapag nag-give up. Kayo nga kaya niyo e, edi ako kaya ko din."

She emphasizes how God kept her from quitting and how her faith influences her will to continue.

Alexander (2018) mentioned in her article that spending uninterrupted time in prayer and listening to God may provide you with greater insight into your future steps. However, this is not really the case with the study of Torralba, Oviedo, and Canteras (2021), which investigated the positive and healthy role of the religious dimension in the development of adolescence. Although one group demonstrated positive religious coping, the other group of students appeared to be expressing spiritual dissatisfaction or possibly spiritual conflict. The study further suggested that there are several things that must be dealt with in order to grow up and become an adult. In such struggles, even those that involve religious or spiritual beliefs, the role of faith is often unclear and seen as useless or disappointing.

Validating emotions and break needs. Some of the respondents mentioned that despite having a lot to think about and worry about in their adulting lives, they still never forget to take a pause, breathe, and make the most of their moments. One even mentioned that in order for her to avoid overthinking:

"I meditate, I do journal every night, I read. Tapos ano, nilalayo ko talaga yung sarili ko sa bagay na ayaw ko."

The respondent was able to resort to this kind of coping strategy as she began to realize the importance of taking a pause when necessary. In her words, she said:

"Kung napapagod ka, be honest to yourself. Hindi yung sakit pa yung magdudulot sa'yo para mag-pahinga."

Her previous experiences with challenges, including the quarter-life crisis, made her understand the importance of taking care of one's self and not thinking of one's life as a race. Similarly, the respondent emphasizes that becoming more aware of what her body needs really helps her to continue moving forward.

The same case was discussed by another respondent. Specifically, she shared that recognizing emotions and then allowing the 'self' to feel them until becoming okay can help in coping better. Sometimes in life, as

she explained, people do not need someone to motivate them; instead, there are times that people just need to listen to themselves and then eventually feel better. Aside from validating their feelings, some respondents also acknowledged that they needed a break in order to deal with the quarter-life crisis. A respondent mentioned that:

"Yung mga maliliit na mga bagay kong ginagawa, kunwari simpleng pagfa-fan kay Taylor, nakaka-motivate sakin; simpleng panonood ng movie, nakaka-motivate sakin. Kahit sobrang busy ko gumagawa pa din ako ng kaunting oras para dun sa mga bagay na yun."

She emphasizes that, aside from the drive that she gets from her family, she manages to continue with her life because of her hobbies and the things that make her happy—further indicating that sometimes a little escape through them can be very helpful for her. Another one also expresses their thoughts about the importance of taking pauses, setting limits, and taking little steps to attend to commitments and how it can be helpful in managing, coping with, and avoiding burnout brought on by the quarter-life crisis. Specifically, the respondent mentioned that:

"Kapag nakikita ko, nata-track ko na ay sobra na naman akong nagwo-worry sa ano sa bagay na... kumbaga iniisip ko na sana 2 years nasa akin na tong bagay na to... ano, ang ginagawa ko is bini-busy ko yung sarili ko para ma-distract ako."

And when asked about her reason for doing it, the respondent explained that:

"Kasi kapag inisip ko nang inisip, magiging worst pa yung scenario na nasa isip ko and ako lang din yung magsu-suffer kaya dini-distract ko yung sarili ko kapag ayun... kinakabahan ako about future."

Taking all of their experiences into consideration and in an attempt to reduce their detrimental impact on their development, the respondents' understanding of this matter brought them to the conclusion that imposing coping strategies is a vital factor in dealing with the quarter-life crisis.

These findings were supported by Walsche's (2018) study, which examines a potential crisis phase during the early adulthood developmental stage, termed the quarter-life crisis. This study also analyzes the association between the criterion measure of coping self-efficacy and three predictor variables: emotional intelligence, maximizing decision-making style, and self-esteem. Positive thinking was highlighted as the study's primary theme. Respondents underlined the adaptive advantages of controlling one's thoughts in order to cultivate appreciation, be more sympathetic to oneself, and shift negative thinking patterns by focusing on the positive. The results revealed a correlation between coping strategies and mental processes. The findings suggested that the respondents' ability to actively adjust or control their thoughts correlated with their ability to manage a crisis.

Discussion

The quarter-life crisis phenomenon makes the day-to-day lives of emerging adults extremely challenging. As revealed by the study, the majority of the respondents felt burdened as they were experiencing becoming the *"inaasahang anak."* This further leads them to have a hard time making decisions as they tend to consider what is beneficial for their loved ones all the time. The findings revealed that most of the respondents felt pressured to succeed in life because they believed that their families relied on them. Specifically, the majority mentioned that they felt like, when they turned 18 years old, their family immediately expected them to be the ones who would take them out of poverty and hardship and that they felt like they were responsible for carrying out all of their family's problems. Moreover, some respondents also talked about their tendency to feel guilty over their desire for independence. According to their statement, one of the factors that held them back from actually leaving their homes was their family. They acknowledge their role as the *"inaasahang anak"* and that is why they feel like living independently was not appropriate and that desiring it is just an act of selfishness. Aside from these experiences, it was revealed that a small number of respondents felt overwhelmed by the number of responsibilities that they have as *"inaasahang anak."* They were specifically caught in a situation where they were unsure whether they should prioritize working or studying in particular. Doing both things at the same time, however, causes a detrimental impact on their development.

In light of the respondents' experiences concerning their tendency to overthink their future, it was found that the majority of the respondents admitted that finding their purpose in life had never been easy. That is, their fear of future uncertainties made it difficult for them to map out their plans and have expectations for the future. Additionally, experiences concerning the

respondents' perception of stagnation were another thing revealed in the study. The respondents admitted that they are having difficulties moving forward as they feel like their lives are stuck and only rotational. They believe that they should be somewhere already, at the current point in their lives, but yet they have failed to be there—thus, causing them to feel unmotivated.

The last set of experiences found in the study were the experiences of the respondents in finding coping strategies as they dealt with the challenges brought by a quarter-life crisis. As revealed by the study, the quarter-life crisis phenomenon does indeed make the journey of an emerging adult extremely challenging. That is why respondents utilized strategies to cope with the phenomenon. The majority of the respondents admitted that remembering their dreams and what they have been fighting for since the beginning drives them to move forward. Additionally, they also acknowledge the support they have been receiving since then. As they stated, being reminded by those who support them provides them with enough motivation to get back on track. They also tend to return to God when everything becomes too heavy for them to handle. And they never forget to also show care for themselves. In particular, some of the respondents mentioned the importance of not pushing themselves to their own limits and recognizing what their bodies need. By validating what they feel and becoming aware of what they need, such as rest, for instance, they are provided with another amount of strength to continue moving forward.

In light of the aforementioned experiences of the respondents amidst a quarter-life crisis, the respondents were able to make sense of the situation they are currently in as an emerging adults experiencing a quarter-life crisis, and had a better understanding of the proper course of action they have to take and better ways of dealing with the phenomenon.

Conclusion

Based on the summary of findings, the following conclusions are hereby drawn: (1) As they were transitioning into adulthood, all of the respondents began to recognize their role as *"inaasahang anak,"* which consequently brought them such detrimental experiences as being pressured, feeling guilty about wanting to become independent, and feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities. (2) As the respondents were caught in a quarter-life crisis

situation, they tended to overthink their future, which caused them to feel unable to find their life purpose, and when they discovered that they had not reached their desired point of success in life, they felt demotivated or stagnant. (3) Regardless of the difficulties, their determination to pursue their dreams, finding social support, having faith in God, and becoming more aware of themselves, such as acknowledging their emotions and recognizing what their bodies needed, supplied them with immense motivation to continue persisting in life.

Moreover, based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are hereby specified: (1) Emerging adults tend to struggle with quarter-life crisis without their knowledge and are, thus, unable to utilize coping strategies that could help them endure this developmental phenomenon. In that sense, constructing a psychological assessment tool is significant to help identify and evaluate the degree to which emerging adults are experiencing a quarter-life crisis. This will benefit not only the young adults, but the field of developmental psychology in general. (2) It is significant for emerging adults to establish support systems that could help them acquire motivation and help them get back on track, as this could certainly, help them overcome the challenges brought by the quarter-life crisis. That being the case, emerging adults struggling with quarter-life crisis were recommended to attend counseling. This could provide them with the opportunity to learn about the situation that they are in and gain a greater understanding of themselves and their own role in the problems that they are possibly facing. The respondents or college students, in general, can visit their school guidance counseling office. The social support and motivational drive that they could gain from these sources of relief can help them cope with the challenging day-to-day experiences they face amidst a quarter-life crisis.

Furthermore, (3) emerging adults are recommended to increase awareness about the concept of "quarter-life crisis" as they might face this phenomenon at a certain point in their lives. Considering that the quarter-life crisis is as common as the well-known midlife crisis and yet only a few have been aware of this phenomenon, it is significant for emerging adults to attend seminars, courses, and other programs that place emphasis on discussing and exploring topics related to the quarter-life crisis. With the help of these events, they will be able to understand and recognize that the experiences and challenges that they face during such a period are normal as they undergo the transitional stage. (4) Future researchers must look for other groups of candidates to be respondents in this

study. Instead of focusing on graduating college students, future researchers should consider studying the day-to-day lives of all college students, at all levels, who are experiencing a quarter-life crisis at a selected college university. Likewise, they can also consider those that have recently graduated, since this group of people is still within the age range wherein a quarter-life crisis is common. In this way, they will be able to explore more of the complexity or diversity of the experiences of emerging adults at this stage of life. And more importantly, future researchers will be able to conduct investigations into the unresolved matters in this study.

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