

Work-life Balance as a Mediator of the Correlation between Psychological Well-being and Quarter Life Crisis in Early Adulthood in Ternate City

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This research is aimed at finding out whether work-life balance is a mediator of connections. psychological well-being and quarter life crisis in early adulthood in the town of Ternate. The population in this study is early adults with a vulnerable age of 18–29 years and are working. **Method:** This study uses correlational quantitative research methods. The sampling technique used purposive sampling technique and used the Krejcie and Morgan table as a guide to determining the sample which got a sample of 269 early adults with a vulnerable age of 18–29 years and were working. The data collection method uses a psychological scale model, namely a Likert scale adapted from previous research. Data analysis uses path analysis mediation analysis techniques using JASP software. **Results:** This study found that work-life balance acts as a significant mediator (partial mediation) in the connection between psychological well-being and quarter life crisis with a p value of <0.001 , and an estimate value of -0.353 . Individuals with good psychological well-being tend to have better work-life balance, which can reduce the level of quarter life crisis that the individual has. **Novelty:** This study contributes by empirically validating the mediating role of work-life balance in the relationship between psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis in early working adults, particularly within the unique socio-cultural setting of Ternate – an area that has not been widely examined in previous studies.

INTRODUCTION

The fact is that humans will always experience development at their age, whether that development is physical, social-emotional, or cognitive. As a result, individuals will always face developmental challenges and demands in life. Each stage of human growth has its traits, responsibilities, and expectations. The transition period from adolescence to adulthood, also known as emerging adulthood, was hypothesized by Arnett [1] and is a critical and exciting stage of development that is particularly sensitive for those between the ages of 18 and 25. Individuals feel they are in the middle of the equation at this transitional phase, meaning they are no longer adolescents but have not yet reached complete adulthood [2] c. Adolescence can be a more negative stage of development than adulthood, which is the peak of life, health, and physical development [3]. As they are anticipated to be ready to make important decisions for adulthood, such as where they will work and who they will marry in the future, individuals in their early 20s and 30s are going through a challenging stage of development [4]. One of the obstacles that need to be overcome at this time is the issue of social pressure, as many questions will arise from social sources, including when to get married, when to get a job, when to buy a house, and other issues [3]. This stage of development at this age is often referred to as the early adulthood stage.

The ability to pay attention, be a good topic, judge, express oneself clearly, be confident, exercise restraint, be calm under pressure, learn, and be decisive are some of the individual characteristics that can cause problems during emerging adulthood. Early adult individuals are also prone to emotional crises, according to Buss & Barnes' research [5]. Because of this, young adult individuals are especially cautious when choosing a place to live in the future. Those who are unable to overcome current obstacles may feel confused and unsure of how to proceed as not all individuals can conquer the difficulties and problems that arise. Quarter-life crisis is a condition that affects individuals who experience emotional crises, including feelings of helplessness, self-doubt, fear of failure, and isolation [6]. Due to the detrimental effects of a quarter-life crisis in the early adult stage, individuals may feel helpless, anxious, self-conscious, and fearful of failure [2]. According to Robbins and Wilner, vulnerable individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 may face an identity crisis as a result of personal insecurities during the transition from youth to adulthood [2]. According to Fischer, the quarter-life crisis is a state of anxiety caused by future uncertainties about connections, work, and other aspects of life [7]. Early adults experiencing a quarter-life crisis will be anxious because they are concerned about their future social life. Theoretically, Robbins and Wilner identified characteristics of a quarter-life crisis, including indecision, hopelessness, poor self-evaluation, feeling trapped in challenging circumstances, anxiety, depression, and concern for interpersonal connections [2]. Most early adults will experience aspects of a quarter-life crisis when they are in the age range of 18-29 years.

Based on research conducted by Rahmah, Suliatni, and Kusumandari with the title "Quarter Life Crisis in Early Adulthood: How is the level of resilience in early adulthood?" in 2023 in 96 early adults, showed that early adults with a very high quarter life crisis category had as many as 7.3%, 32.3% in the high category and 27.1% in the moderate category [7]. Another study conducted in 2024 by Alkatiri and Aprianty entitled "The Effect of Intensity of Social Media Use on Quarter Life Crisis in Early Adults" on 344 early adult subjects found that 17% of early adults experienced quarter life crisis in the high category, 70% in the medium category and 14% in the low category [8]. In line with research conducted by Khairunnisa and Wulandari in 2023 with the title "The Role of Resilience on Quarter Life Crisis in Early Adulthood" in 107 early adult respondents found that 32.71% of early adults had a high level of quarter life crisis, 61.68% in the moderate category and 5.50% in the low category [9]. The three studies that have been conducted previously, show that the average early adult experiences a quarter-life crisis in the moderate to very high category. Reinforced by the results of an initial survey conducted by distributing a mini-scale about a quarter-life crisis to 30 early adults in Ternate City. The items asked were the development of aspects of Robbins and Wilner's quarter-life crisis. Of the 30 respondents, the results showed that 18 respondents who answered felt the problem of a quarter-life crisis in several aspects, such as the aspect of being trapped in difficult situations, see Figure 1.

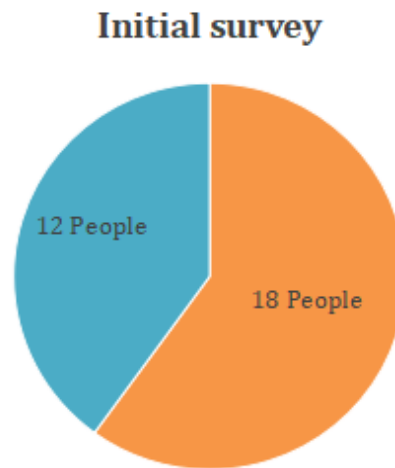


Figure 1. Initial survey QLC.

Scale distribution was carried out using items developed from 6 aspects of the quarter-life crisis according to Robbins and Wilner. The data generated from the initial survey shows that of the six aspects, the aspect of being trapped in a difficult situation is the aspect with the highest percentage of 19%, which can be interpreted if the individual feels heavy in making a decision that makes the individual trapped in a difficult situation. In the aspect of despair at 17.6%, the despair felt is usually the result of failure, dissatisfaction, and futile results experienced previously. Negative self-assessment is an aspect with a percentage of 17.2%, individuals who view themselves negatively tend to question and doubt their ability to overcome life's challenges. The aspect of confusion in making decisions with a percentage of 15.8%, here at the age of emerging adulthood individuals will begin to face many choices in their lives that can make individuals feel scared to be confused in making decisions. Furthermore, the aspect of worrying about interpersonal connections received a response of 15.7%, society's stereotypes of a connection in early adulthood such as marriage can make individuals worry and wonder what their partner will be like. While in the aspect of anxiety with a response of 14.7% with many dreams to be achieved having a feeling of not believing in their abilities and shadows of failure make individuals feel anxious.

Early adults who experience a quarter-life crisis are certainly influenced by several factors, according to Pande [10] several factors influence quarter life crisis in early adulthood, namely; health, lifestyle, stress, work, amount of work, dislike for work, free time, time discipline, career and plans to achieve future goals. Individuals experiencing a quarter-life crisis for a long time can make individuals vulnerable to mental disorders [11]. Things that can influence or suppress the occurrence of quarter-life crisis are those who have acceptance of their shortcomings and strengths, the desire to develop themselves, and have a view of the direction of their life goals which can be referred to as the attitude of good psychological well-being. In line with research conducted by Rahimah, Fitriah, and Safitri "Psychological Well Being and The Tendency of Quarter Life Crisis" according to research, there is a correlation between psychological well-being and

quarter-life crisis; the better psychological well-being a person has, the less likely they are to experience quarter life crisis [11].

The ability of individuals to accept their strengths and weaknesses, make their own decisions, have a purpose in life, interact with other individuals in a positive way, and manage their environment are examples of psychological well-being, which is the full expression of psychological potential [11]. Ryff defines psychological well-being as a state of comprehensive well-being that includes a favorable assessment of oneself and others around the individual [12]. Ryff postulates six elements of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive connections with other individuals, personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery, and life purpose [13]. The influence of psychological well-being comes from within the individual.

Work-life balance is another factor that can affect the occurrence of a quarter-life crisis, according to Soerjoatmodjo's research in "Quarter-life Crisis and Psychological Empowerment" [14]. If work-life balance is the impact of a quarter-life crisis on some employees, then it can also affect the occurrence of a quarter-life crisis. To prevent conflict, Hayman defines work-life balance as a harmonious blend between an individual's involvement in work and other aspects of their life outside of work [15]. Work-life balance, according to Komari & Sulistiowati, is a theory of how individuals manage their work and family environments and the boundaries between them to achieve balance [16]. When individuals can fulfill all their obligations at work and home without compromising their physical or mental well-being, they have demonstrated the capacity to balance professional demands with personal and family expectations [17]. Work interference with personal life (WIPL) describes situations where work affects personal life, Personal life interference with work (PLIW) describes situations where personal life affects work, and Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) describes situations where personal life enhances and supports work, the dimensions of work-life balance according to Hayman [18] Individuals who feel that their responsibilities in life and at work are unbalanced may experience more stress and role conflict [19]. However, due to its function as a mediator variable, Haar and Brougham [20] proposed that work-life balance provides a psychological foundation for individuals to produce positive work outcomes. The work-life balance variable was used as a mediator in a study by Suganda to see if it could function as a mediator between other variables "Regarding the mediating role of work-life balance in the connection between psychological capital and turnover intention, it is accepted" [20]. Conflict can contribute to low job satisfaction and be a contributing factor for those experiencing a quarter-life crisis.

Another study conducted by Saraswati and Lie "Psychological Well-Being: The Impact of Work-Life Balance and Work Pressure" showed a significant influence in the direction of a positive connection and up to 18.5% of psychological well-being on work-life balance [21]. Juggling roles at work, at home, or with other individuals is not easy; different roles undoubtedly have different demands, and trying to balance them can cause stress, which will undoubtedly affect individual well-being [21]. According to research by Rejeki et al., there is a linear connection between psychological well-being

and work-life balance with a significance of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), which means that the more work-life balance, the higher the psychological well-being of the individual [22].

Two factors that can be the basis of research have emerged from the development of the quarter-life crisis factor; however, not many studies, especially in Ternate City, have examined the connection between psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis with work-life balance acting as a mediator in early adulthood. To determine whether work-life balance mediates the connection between psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis in early adulthood in Ternate City, this study was conducted. In addition, the connection between the variables of psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis, work-life balance and quarter-life crisis, work-life balance and psychological well-being, and how the connection between psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis through work-life balance was tested.

RESEARCH METHOD

Quantitative technique, which is research conducted by collecting data and presenting it as numbers, was used in this study [23]. To determine the connection between mediator factors and other variables, quantitative correlational research is the methodology used [24]. Work-life balance, quarter-life crisis, and psychological well-being are the variables studied.

The population in this study was 40,939 early adults in Ternate City with special characteristics aged 18-25 years and currently working. In this study, a purposive sampling technique was used, which means that the sample was selected based on the specified criteria. Taking the number of samples using the Krejcie and Morgan table guide with a percentage of 10% of the total population of 40,939, which is 269.

The data collection method for this research is a psychological scale, namely the Likert scale which is disseminated via Google Form. Sugiyono emphasized that the Likert scale is used to measure how people or groups feel about social issues. Respondents are asked to choose from a variety of possibilities using a Likert scale, a data collection method. Scores are based on favorable and unfavorable item types [25]. A cross-sectional design, which examines the dynamics of the connection between risk factors and effects on variables, was used to collect research data over a period of time. According to Sugiyono, cross-sectional studies examine items over a period of time rather than continuously over a long period of time [26].

It consists of three measuring instruments that will be used in this study, which are modified versions of instruments used by previous researchers. Specifically, the psychological well-being variable will be measured using a scale developed by Siti Masyta from six Ryff dimensions or aspects: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive connections with other individuals, life goals, and self-acceptance. This scale has 31 items and a Cronbach Alpha calculation of 0.902. The work-life balance variable will be measured by a scale that has been developed by Noviani Wijianti which has 14 items and an Alpha Cronbach of 0.915, will be used to measure the work-life balance variable. It uses Hayman's three dimensions of work-life balance: work

interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), and work-personal life enhancement (WPLE). The quarter-life crisis variable, on the other hand, used a scale created by Dinda Putri based on Robbins and Wilner's aspects of a quarter-life crisis. These aspects include uncertainty in decision-making, feelings of hopelessness, negative self-assessment, feeling trapped in a challenging situation, anxiety, distress, and concerns about interpersonal connections. This scale consists of 20 items with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.830. The research data will be analyzed using the mediation path analysis technique on the SEM menu with the help of the JASP 0.16.1.0 program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research that has been conducted with the characteristics of early adult respondents aged 18-29 years who are working in Ternate City, 269 respondents have been obtained. JASP software will then be used to analyze the data collected. The distribution of regression model analysis data in the observation sample was examined using a normality test to see if it was normal [27]. A quantile-quantile plot, or Q-Q Plot, is used in data normality tests to visually evaluate normally distributed data [28]. The Q-Q Plot compares the data to a specified quantity (percentile) of the theoretical distribution after sorting the data from smallest to highest value and displaying it as a dot. The points will fall on or close to the 45-degree reference line if the data is regularly distributed [28]. The analysis results, see Figure 2, show that the data displayed through dots are near the reference line that forms 45 degrees.

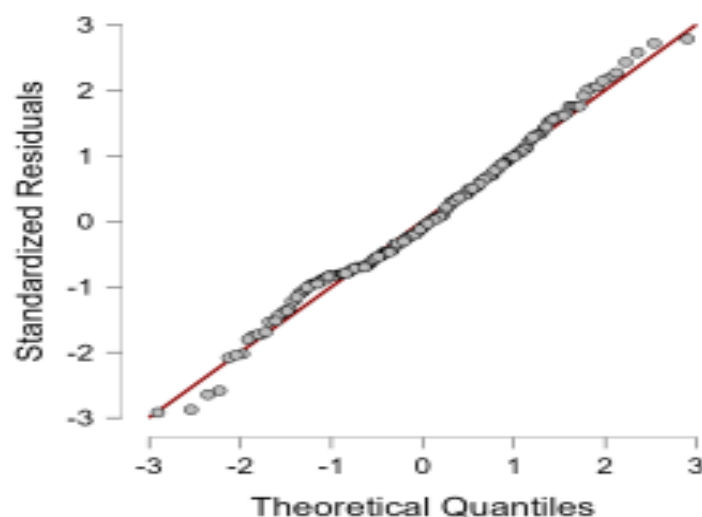


Figure 2. Normalitas test.

Analysis of mediator hypothesis testing is carried out using the Mediation Analysis analysis model on the SEM menu in JASP. This model analysis is carried out to test the hypothesis made to find out how the influence of psychological well-being is

affected by the quarter-life crisis with work-life balance as a mediator variable. The direct, indirect, and total effects were analyzed based on the results of the analysis.

Table 1. Direct effects.

				Std.			95% Confidence Interv.	
			Estimate	Error	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
PWB	→	QLC	-0.349	0.056	-6.272	< .001	-0.259	-0.240

Note: Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

The direct effect of variations in the independent variable on the dependent variable is referred to as the direct effect [29]. From the analysis (table 1) of Direct Effect, the p-value is <0.001, and the estimate value is -0.349. This means that the WLB variable has a negative direct effect on the QLC variable.

Table 2. Indirect effects.

									95% Confidence Interval	
					Estima te	Std. Error	z- value	p	Low er	Uppe r
PW B	→	WL B	→	QL C	-0.353	0.046	-7.688	< .001	- 0.443	- 0.263

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

Indirect Effect is a variation in the independent variable that can have an indirect impact on the dependent variable through the mediating variable; mediation analysis uses mediating variables to explain the indirect effect of variations in the independent variable on the dependent variable [29]. The analysis results (table 2) show that the p-value is <0.001 and the estimated value is -0.353. These results indicate that the PWB variable indirectly negatively affects the QLC variable through the WLB variable.

Mediation testing uses a comparison of the estimated results of the direct effect and indirect effect if when the indirect effect value exceeds the direct effect value, the variable is considered a mediator variable. However, if the indirect effect value does not exceed the direct effect value, but produces significant results, then the variable is considered a partial mediator variable. [30]. The results show that the direct effect is -0.349 and compared to the indirect effect result of -0.353, which means that the indirect effect value does not exceed the direct effect value so it can be interpreted that the work-life balance (WLB) variable acts as a partial mediator.

Table 3. Total effects.

							95% Confidence Interval	
			Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
PWB	→	QLC	-0.702	0.041	16.935	< .001	-0.783	-0.621

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

Total Effect is the effect of variations in independent and mediating variables simultaneously on the dependent variable, providing an explanation of how this variation impacts the dependent variable [29]. Based on the analysis results shown (table 3), the p -value < 0.001, and the estimated value is -0.702. This means that the WLB variable and the PWB variable negatively impact the QLC variable simultaneously.

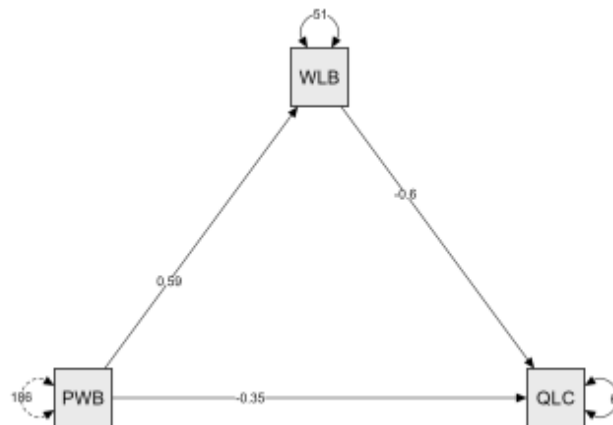


Figure 3. Path plot.

Another analysis uses a model that presents a path image, also known as a path plot as shown in Figure 3. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the mediation analysis of this study shows the connection between psychological well-being and work-life balance variables with an estimated value of 0.59, which indicates a direct positive connection between the two variables. Then work-life balance and quarter-life crisis with an estimated value of -0.6 which is assumed to have a direct negative connection. While psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis with an estimated value of -0.35 which is assumed to have a direct negative connection. It can be interpreted that the results of psychological well-being have a stronger connection with a quarter-life crisis if mediated by work-life balance.

Table 4. R-squared.

	R ²
QLC	0.617
WLB	0.562

From the calculation of the R-squared value, the coefficient of determination can be known, which aims to measure how the analysis model explains the effect of variable X (PWB) simultaneously or together on variable Y (QLC) and variable Z (WLB) [30]. The R-squared results show that the coefficient of determination of quarter-life crisis is 0.617 or 61.7% of psychological well-being variables influence quarter-life crisis, and 37.3% of quarter-life crisis phenomena are influenced by other variables besides psychological well-being. The coefficient of determination of the influence of psychological well-being on work-life balance is 0.562 or 56.2%, which means that 43.8% of work-life balance is influenced by other variables besides psychological.

Discussion

Based on the outcomes of the research analysis that has been done, the results of the study identify the correlation between psychological well-being (PWB) and quarter-life crisis (QLC) with work-life balance (WLB) as a mediator in early adults who work in Ternate City. Analysis using JASP with the Mediation Analysis method shows that the direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect have a significant effect with a p-value <0.001 where the result is <0.05.

Psychological well-being (PWB) has a direct negative impact on the quarter-life crisis (QLC), according to the direct effect results, see Table 1 of the SEM Mediation Analysis model. It can be concluded that the level of quarter-life crisis experienced decreases with an individual's psychological well-being. In other words, psychologically healthy people are more likely to be able to handle difficulties in their early adult years without suffering a serious crisis. This finding is consistent with [11] study "Psychological Well-Being and the Tendency of Quarter-Life Crisis", which showed that there is a negative connection between psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis, with the tendency to experience quarter-life crisis decreasing as psychological well-being increases.

Through work-life balance (WLB) serving as a mediator, the indirect effect analysis, see Table 2 shows that psychological well-being (PWB) also directly negatively impacts quarter-life crisis (QLC). This finding suggests that the correlat between psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis is mediated by work-life balance. In other words, psychologically healthy people usually manage their work and personal lives in a balanced way, which in turn can reduce the severity of the quarter-life crisis. In research [20] by making the work-life balance variable a mediator and testing if the variable can be a mediator connecting other variables "regarding the mediating role of work-life balance in the relationship between psychological capital and turnover intention, is accepted". In addition to being considered as a mediator based on the findings of the

analysis, work-life balance also functions as a partial mediator variable because the results showed significant results both before and after work-life balance was included as a mediator. Even without the mediating component of work-life balance, psychological well-being can still have a direct impact on the quarter-life crisis, according to the role of partial mediation. Therefore, the correlation between psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis may be mediated by other factors

According to the results of the total effect, see Table 3, the combination of psychological well-being (PWB) and the state of a quarter-life crisis (QLC) has a direct negative influence on the state of a quarter-life crisis. This conclusion can be assumed if the two factors work together to reduce the level of a quarter-life crisis. Therefore, individuals need to improve their mental health and work-life balance to reduce quarter-life crisis.

The results of the path plot, see Figure 3 show that the correlations between the variables follow a pattern consistent with the findings of the previous analysis. Work-life balance and psychological well-being are directly positively related, indicating that those with good psychological well-being usually also have good work-life balance. Work-life balance and psychological well-being have a strong positive correlation, according to a study [13], which suggests that as psychological well-being increases, so does work-life balance. On the other hand, a high level of work-life balance can reduce an individual's level of quarter-life crisis because it has a direct negative connection. Likewise, psychological well-being has a direct negative connection with a quarter-life crisis, which strengthens the results if high psychological well-being in individuals contributes to reducing the level of a quarter-life crisis.

According to the analysis, a quarter-life crisis is directly affected by psychological well-being; individuals who have higher psychological well-being usually also have lower levels of a quarter-life crisis. According to Robbins and Wilner's theory, people who have good psychological health are better able to cope with the difficulties that come with a quarter-life crisis because it is a result of their confusion about the transition to adulthood [2]. In addition, other findings suggest that work-life balance mediates the relationship between psychological well-being and quarter-life crisis, indicating that those with a healthy work-life balance tend to experience lower quarter-life crisis. According to research [22], people who can maintain a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives will have better psychological health, which reduces the likelihood of emotional stress, which can lead to a quarter-life crisis, according to another study. Thus, the findings of this study corroborate pre-existing hypotheses and suggest that psychological well-being and work-life balance come together to reduce the impact of the quarter-life crisis in people in the emerging adulthood stage.

The outcomes of the research show that the cross-sectional method has limitations because it only collects data at one point in time, making it difficult to fully explain the causal connections between variables and show how those connections change over time. In addition, this study only looked at work-life balance as a mediator; other factors, such

as social support or other external influences are likely to play an important role in influencing quarter-life crises.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study found that work-life balance (WLB) serves as a mediator (partial mediation) between psychological well-being (PWB) and quarter-life crisis (QLC). Individuals with good mental health tend to have better work-life balance, which can help reduce the risk of a quarter-life crisis. These results show how important work-life balance is to regulate both factors. **Implication :** The results of this study have significant consequences for company policies and worker welfare programs. Companies and organizations can consider starting programs that help employees feel psychologically comfortable and find a balance between work life and personal life. In addition, this applies to educational institutions or counselors who provide support to people experiencing the transitional phase of a quarter-life crisis. Based on the outcomes of the research to reduce the impact of a quarter-life crisis, individuals are advised to manage psychological well-being through stress management techniques, mindfulness, and balancing personal and work life. In addition, employers should focus on initiatives that can help employee well-being, such as time management training, mental health service programs, and a work culture that promotes it. Businesses can create a more productive and healthy work environment by conducting periodic psychological well-being surveys. **Limitation :** However, this study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which only captures the relationship between variables at a single point in time, preventing conclusions about causality. The sample was also restricted to a specific demographic in Ternate, limiting generalizability to other populations with different socio-cultural backgrounds. **Future Research :** To provide a better picture of the dynamics of change in the connection between psychological well-being, work-life balance, and quarter-life crisis, future researchers are advised to use a longitudinal design to more deeply examine how the connection between variables develops over time. Other mediator variables that may affect the connection between the variables, such as social support or other outside influences, should also be considered. By involving additional variables and a more comprehensive design, future researchers can provide a better analysis of other factors that influence quarter-life crisis in early adulthood.

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