

The Effect of Mindfulness and Loneliness on Sense of Purpose in Individuals in the Age of Quarter Life Crisis

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KEYWORDS

Sense of Purpose; Mindfulness;
Loneliness; Quarter Life Crisis

ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a global effort to achieve sustainable prosperity for all, with a strong focus on the quality of the next generation, particularly the youth. The future of a nation is closely tied to the quality of its young population. Early adulthood is a crucial period for determining career paths and life goals, which directly impact personal development and self-quality. One of the critical challenges faced during this period is the quarter life crisis (QLC), characterized by confusion over life purpose. In Indonesia, data shows that more than half of youth experience QLC, typically occurring between the ages of 18 and 35. This study aims to explore the factors influencing a sense of purpose to offer effective strategies for addressing the quarter life crisis. The research was conducted using a quantitative approach with non-probability sampling and survey methods. The sample consisted of 196 respondents (71.7% female and 28.3% male). Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS version 8.0 software. Results revealed that mindfulness and loneliness have a significant impact ($p < 0.05$) on the sense of purpose in individuals experiencing QLC, with an R-squared value of 0.090, indicating a 9% influence. These findings highlight the need for targeted counseling and psychological support services to address the quarter life crisis. Providing counseling that focuses on enhancing mindfulness and reducing loneliness can help individuals strengthen their sense of purpose, ultimately enabling them to navigate this challenging life stage more effectively.

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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially the 3rd goal, are to ensure a healthy life and promote individual welfare, and the 4th goal is to ensure quality education so that human resources can innovate in the development and optimization of learning to improve superior human resources to support the 2030 SDGs. The future of the nation is highly dependent on the quality of its next generation, namely the youth. Therefore, the quality of the youth generations is something that must be considered. In terms of development, youth must go through the development period of early adulthood which is characterized by the process of exploring and trying various alternative options and during this period, a quarter life crisis occurs (Hasyim et al., 2024). The phenomenon of quarter life crisis is characterized by despair, frustration with relationships and the world, confusion about identity, insecurity about the

present, short-term and long-term future (Murphy, 2011). Individuals who experience a quarter life crisis feel confused about their role in the world and what their lives are for.

Research trends show that many young people in Indonesia experience a quarter life crisis. The LinkedIn platform has conducted a survey in 2017, it was found that 75% of individuals aged 23-33 have experienced a quarter life crisis (Putra, 2020). Then, around 59% of 80 students in Makassar experienced a quarter life crisis which was characterized by anxiety and concern about the future (Hasyim et al., 2024). Habibie in (Lestari et al., 2022) said that the academic leap that is often experienced by students to the world of work sometimes causes wounds and emotional instability so that they experience emotional crises. This shows that indeed the problem of confusion about the purpose of life is still relevant to youth in Indonesia.

One of the dominant themes during the quarter life crisis is confusion in life goals (Murphy, 2011). Doubt in the purpose of life, is indeed a phase that every human being must go through in its development. Although this is normal in development, individuals who cannot face the crisis will experience a negative impact on their future development. Individuals who experience a quarter life crisis have high anxiety, loneliness, dissatisfaction, always feel depressed, and worry about their abilities and future (Hasyim et al., 2024). Therefore, a study is needed to help individuals overcome the quarter life crisis. In that case, sense of purpose is a variable that needs to be considered.

Referring to Ryff (1989), a sense of purpose is characterized by the existence of "purpose, intention, and direction, all of which contribute to the feeling that life is meaningful". With a sense of purpose, individuals will not experience indecision in determining decisions in their lives. Likewise for students, having a sense of purpose will clarify their reasons and goals for studying. Therefore, it is important for individuals to have a sense of purpose so that innovation, development, and learning optimization can be realized in improving superior human resources. There are several factors related to a sense of purpose. Yemiscigil et al. (2021) found that in people with low socio-economic backgrounds, retirement factors tend to make a higher sense of purpose. There is a study that tries to increase the sense of purpose by providing meaningful activities (Westbroek et al., 2010). Other factors such as mindfulness and loneliness are also related to a sense of purpose in individuals. This is very important in the formation of an individual's awareness of his or her life purpose. These factors come from within the individual and also the surrounding environment.

There is a study discussing the relationship between sense of purpose and mindfulness, namely Allan et al. (2015) with mathematical modeling to identify the relationship between mindfulness and self-awareness. In this study, the level of mindfulness was measured from a sample of 305 graduate students. The results of this study identified that mindfulness is positively related to self-awareness and that increasing this ability has a positive impact on the sense of purpose. Mindfulness was proposed in the 1970s by psychologist Ellen Lange, which is an individual's cognitive way of staying open to new things. Referring to Wang et al. (2021), mindfulness is a behavioral process in which new information is received through various perspectives and categories and then reconstructed through a multi-perspective approach.

Another factor that can affect the sense of purpose is loneliness. The effects of loneliness can have a negative impact on an individual's sense of purpose because social exclusion can make individuals see the world around them as threatening (Chernyak & Zayas, 2010). When the individual considers the world threatening, then they will find it difficult to determine the purpose of their life. This shows that interaction with others can affect the sense of purpose in individuals. Loneliness is a negative psychological condition that occurs based on the difference

between the level of social relationships that exist and the level of social relationships that individuals want to achieve (Perlman & Peplau, 1981).

The correlation or relationship between the variables of mindfulness and sense of purpose was also found by Wang et al. (2021). In other studies, it was also explained that there was a correlation or relationship between the variables of loneliness and sense of purpose which showed a negative correlation (Kang et al., 2021). Therefore, the researcher made this study by trying to make a good contribution because the researcher explored the influence of two independent variables, namely mindfulness and loneliness, on the sense of purpose in individuals at the age of quarter life crisis. This is done by the researcher based on previous research which only presented the results that there is a correlation of the variables of mindfulness and loneliness to the sense of purpose. This study also explains how important psychological intervention is, namely by increasing mindfulness and reducing loneliness with the aim of forming superior human resources and of course having a sense of purpose in life.

Based on the phenomenon and facts supported by several related literature, the researcher is interested in conducting a study on individuals at the age of quarter life crisis with the title "The Effect of Mindfulness and Loneliness on Sense of Purpose."

This study aims to examine the influence of loneliness and mindfulness on the sense of purpose, as well as to determine the contribution of these two factors. The theoretical benefit is to explore the factors that influence the sense of purpose and provide insight into the impact of mindfulness and loneliness. Practically, this research can help individuals improve mindfulness and reduce loneliness in seeking life goals, as well as encourage the improvement of social skills. For educational institutions, this research can be a reference and basis in dealing with the lack of sense of purpose. The government can also use the results of this research to formulate relevant policies in nation building.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The population of this study is all individuals in Indonesia who are experiencing a quarter life crisis with wide demographic variation. The sample used was in the age range of 18-35 years who were willing to take part in the study. This study uses a non-probability sampling method because the target population is infinite (the number cannot be known/calculated with certainty). More specifically, the researcher used convenience and snowball sampling to find the sample. A total of 224 respondents were obtained, but only 196 data were valid for use. A total of 28 respondent data could not be processed due to inconsistent questionnaire filling. The 196 data consisted of 28.3% men and 71.7% women, aged 18-31 years ($M=20.11$; $SD=1,818$), 93% are Muslims, the majority perceive themselves as Javanese, 31% of respondents live in West Java; 21% in Banten; and 11% in DKI Jakarta. Then, as many as 89.90% of respondents were students.

According to Hajar 1996 in (Alwi, 2015) on statistics, the larger the sample size is expected to produce better results. This is due to the fact that larger sample sizes have a greater likelihood of resembling the standard deviation of the population and the mean of the population. A small, randomly selected sample can also accurately describe the population, although a larger sample will be better. Although there is a formula that can be used to describe the required sample size, the sample size obtained is only an outline, not a necessity (Alwi, 2015).

Procedure

Data was obtained through a google form with each variable scale that has been adapted into Indonesian Language and demographic questions. Then, the researcher disseminated the google form link through the Whatsapp, Instagram, and X applications. The data acquisition lasted about 3 days, from May 21-23, 2024. Once the data was collected, the researcher eliminated the inconsistent data. To detect inconsistent data, the researcher listed some additional items such as "This question is not an error question. Please select "strongly agree" (number 7)". After obtaining valid data, the researcher tested the reliability of each measuring tool using SPSS. Then, the researcher conducted a multiple linear regression analysis to test the influence of mindfulness and loneliness on the quarter life crisis.

Data Collection Instruments

Sense of Purpose Scale (SOPS-2), developed by Sharma and Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2019) to measure Sense of Purpose. This scale contains 14 items and a likert scale of 7 points from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Examples of items from this scale are "I'm certain about my life's purpose," and "I seek to help others."

Mindfulness Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS) by Brown and Ryan (2003) as a mindfulness scale. MAAS contains 15 items with a 6-point likert scale from 1 (almost always) to 6 (almost never). Examples of items are "It seems I am 'running on automatic', without much awareness of what I'm doing", and "I drive places on 'automatic pilot' and then wonder why I went there".

The 3rd version of the UCLA Loneliness scale by Daniel W Russel (1996) as the loneliness scale. UCLA 3rd edition contains 20 items with a 4-point likert scale from 1 (never) to 4 (always). Examples of items like "How often do you feel alone?" [How often do you feel alone?], and "How often do you feel that there is no one you can contact?" [How often do you feel that there is no one you can turn to?],

All data collection instruments were tested for reliability using IBM SPSS version 8.0 software. with the result of Cronbach alpha (>0.7) which shows that all reliable instruments measure the variables measured.

Data analysis uses multiple linear regression analysis with IBM SPSS version 8.0 software. This analysis tested whether there was an effect of mindfulness and loneliness on the sense of purpose at the same time. In addition to regression analysis, the researcher also conducted an additional analysis using a t-test to measure the difference in the influence of each independent variable (mindfulness and loneliness) on the bound variable (sense of purpose). Then, the researcher also conducted a t-test to see the difference in influence between the sexes (women and men). To compare with the previous literature, the researcher also analyzed the correlation between mindfulness and sense of purpose and between loneliness and sense of purpose.

Results and Discussions

Data categorization was carried out to determine the distribution of participant scores on the variables of sense of purpose, mindfulness, and loneliness. This categorization is divided into three, namely low, medium, and high. The sense of purpose variable showed that 26.5% (52 people) of participants were included in the low category, 38.3% (75 people) were included in the medium category, and 35.2% (69 people) were included in the high category. In the mindfulness variable, the majority of participants had moderate mindfulness of 36.2%, (71 people). For the loneliness variable, the majority of participants also had moderate loneliness, which was 33.7% (66 people). The results of descriptive analysis on the three variables in this

study showed that the average score of the sense of purpose variable was 73.61 with SD= 14.173, the average score of the loneliness variable was 14.31 with SD= 10.008, and the average score of the mindfulness variable was 51.57 with SD= 12.005.

Table 1. Results of Descriptive Analysis

| Variable | Mean | Std. Deviation | Data categorization | | | | | |
|------------------|-------|----------------|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | | Low | | Keep | | Tall | |
| | | | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Sense of purpose | 73,61 | 14,173 | 52 | 26,5 | 75 | 38,3 | 69 | 35,2 |
| Mindfulness | 51,57 | 12,005 | 55 | 28,1 | 71 | 36,2 | 70 | 35,7 |
| Loneliness | 14,31 | 10,008 | 65 | 33,2 | 66 | 33,7 | 65 | 33,2 |

Table 2 below shows the results of regression analysis which shows whether or not the influence of the two independent variables on the bound variables. Whether or not the influence is significant or not can be known through a sig value of <0.005.

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Test Results

| Variable | R | R ² | F | Significance Value |
|---------------------|-------|----------------|-------|--------------------|
| Y: Sense of Purpose | 0,301 | 0,90 | 9,536 | 0,000 |
| X1: Mindfulness | | | | |
| X2: Loneliness | | | | |

The results of linear regression analysis were obtained with the number R = 0.301 and the value of F = 9.536 with a significance value of 0.000. These results show that there is a significant influence of mindfulness and loneliness on the sense of purpose. From table 2, an R Square of 0.90 indicates that 9% of the sense of purpose is influenced by mindfulness and loneliness. Then, from the results of the F-Test, an F result of 9.536 was obtained with a significance of 0.000 which means that IV significantly affects DV.

Table 3. Summary of Regression Coefficient Table Results

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficient Beta | T | Mr. |
|-------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | | | |
| (Constant) | 63,112 | 6,674 | | 9,457 | 0,000 |
| Mindfulness | 0,33 | 0,081 | 0,279 | 4,051 | 0,000 |
| Loneliness | -0,135 | 0,098 | -0,095 | -1,38 | 0,169 |

Table 3 results in the regression equation $Y = 63.112 + 0.33x_1 - 0.135x_2$. The equation shows that every increase in the score of mindfulness will increase the sense of purpose by 0.33 and every increase in the score of loneliness will decrease the sense of purpose by 0.135. If mindfulness and loneliness are eliminated, a sense of purpose score of 63.112 will be obtained.

Table 4. Gender T-Test Results

| | F | Mr | Sig (2-tailed) |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Equal variance assumed | 24 | 0,876 | 0,145 |

From table 4, a significance value (2-tailed) of 0.145 was obtained, this result shows that there is no difference in the influence of gender on the sense of purpose.

Table 5. Correlation Test Results between Variables

| Variable | r | Mr |
|--------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Sense of purpose - Mindfulness | 0.285 | 0.00 |
| Sense of purpose - Loneliness | -0.112 | 0.59 |

From table 5, the correlation between mindfulness and sense of purpose is 0.285 with a sig of 0.000. These results show that there is a positive and significant correlation. Then, the correlation between loneliness and sense of purpose was -0.112 with a sig of 0.59. These results show that there is a negative and insignificant correlation.

The results of the study showed that there was a significant influence of the mindfulness and loneliness variables on the sense of purpose variables. From previous studies, it was found that there was a correlation between mindfulness and sense of purpose and loneliness with a sense of purpose. Correlation from previous studies indicates the existence of a reciprocal relationship that can be proven in this study. In a study conducted by Wang et al. (2021), the correlation between mindfulness and sense of purpose was 0.0268 with a sig of 0.000. In this study, the correlation between mindfulness and sense of purpose was 0.285 with a sig of 0.000. From both studies, it was shown that there was a positive correlation between mindfulness and sense of purpose. This shows that the higher the individual's mindfulness, the higher the sense of purpose.

Research on the correlation between loneliness and sense of purpose has been conducted by Pfund & Miller-Perrin (2019) As a result, the correlation was -0.53 and significant at the level of $p < 0.001$. In this study, the correlation between loneliness and sense of purpose was -0.112 with a sig of 0.59. In this study, the correlation between loneliness and sense of purpose was not significant. This can happen because of a very large difference in the number of participants (5× times). Pfund et al. managed to get 1,100 data while this study only got 196 data. Then the sample from the Pfund et al. study is S1 students at a christian, liberal, private art university in Northern California, while this study, the majority of S1 students but not limited to that, there are several samples who have worked, gap years, and have just graduated from high school. The sample in this study is also the majority of Muslims with a more non-individualistic Indonesia culture. The difference in the characteristics of the sample can make the results of the correlation of loneliness in the sense of purpose in the two studies different.

Then in this study, the researcher tried to explore more deeply about the influence of the two independent variables on dependent variables. The results of regression analysis showed that the results of multiple linear regression found that 9% of sense of purpose was significantly influenced by mindfulness and loneliness. While 91% is caused by other factors.

Mindfulness encourages the efficient operation of internal impulses to explore the value of life through improved cognition. When goals in life are formed, the efficiency of self-exploration is increased to seek information from the environment. At the same time, the

threshold of consciousness is opened to increase sensitivity which can clarify the purpose of life (Wang et al., 2021).

Then high mindfulness can also increase self-awareness so that individuals can better know their strengths and weaknesses. By knowing this, individuals can know what needs to be done for their development efforts. This can clarify the sense of purpose.

In Trisnasari and Wicaksono (2021), according to Weiss (1973), loneliness has two dimensions, namely social isolation and emotional isolation. Then, according to Chernyak & Zayas (2010), the isolated individual will affect the way he sees the world. The act of isolation can make him feel afraid to face the future because he feels that if he has to deal with it alone without anyone else who can help him. If the individual feels this way, then it will be difficult for him to determine his goals in life.

Furthermore, on the results of the T-test mindfulness, The results were obtained that there was a significant difference in sense of purpose between groups with a level mindfulness high and low. As for the variable loneliness, there is no significant difference in sense of purpose between groups with a level loneliness high and low. Then, for the results of the T-test on gender, it was found that there was no significant difference in sense of purpose between women and men.

Based on the results of the analysis, an effort is needed to increase the level of mindfulness from members who are vulnerable to quarter life crisis, especially students who play the role of recipients of the next leadership milestone relay. This can be realized by interventions such as mindfulness meditation or socialization by experts on ways to improve mindfulness. With the improvement mindfulness, which is expected to clarify the sense of purpose so that well being can be achieved, in accordance with SDGs goal number three on well-being.

Conclusion

The results of the study showed that 9% of the sense of purpose was influenced by mindfulness and loneliness. Mindfulness affects the sense of purpose significantly. However, loneliness did not affect the sense of purpose significantly. The variation in sense of purpose in men and women also did not show any meaningful/significant difference so that both sexes had the same opportunity to experience confusion in sense of purpose. More attention is needed to control mindfulness in individuals aged 18-35 to suppress confusion in the sense of purpose. Interventions such as simple mindfulness meditation can be carried out independently by the individual or can also be inserted into the learning curriculum. Further research may attempt to design intervention programs that can effectively improve mindfulness in individuals aged 18-35 years. Then it is necessary to explore more deeply about the factors that can affect the sense of purpose more massively.

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