

# Family communication patterns and quarter-life crisis: A cross-sectional study of final-year nursing students

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## Abstract

A quarter-life crisis is a psychological condition characterized by uncertainty, anxiety, and emotional instability commonly experienced by young adults in transitional life phases, particularly among final-year university students. Family communication is central in providing emotional support and shaping individual coping strategies. This study examined the relationship between family communication patterns and the incidence of quarter-life crisis among final-year nursing students. A cross-sectional study was conducted involving 73 participants selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a validated family communication questionnaire and a quarter-life crisis scale, then analyzed using the Spearman rank correlation test. The results revealed a significant inverse relationship between family communication patterns and quarter-life crisis levels, indicating that better family communication is associated with lower levels of psychological distress. These findings highlight the importance of family interactions in supporting students' emotional well-being during critical academic and life transitions. Integrating family-focused psychoeducation may be beneficial in mental health interventions for nursing students.

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## 1. Introduction

A quarter-life crisis (QLC) is a psychosocial condition typically experienced by individuals in their twenties, particularly those transitioning from adolescence to early adulthood, known as the "emerging adulthood" stage. This period is often marked by confusion, instability, and anxiety regarding future roles, relationships, and career paths (Masluchah et al., 2022). Final-year students are especially vulnerable to QLC, facing academic demands, pressure to succeed, and uncertainty about their life trajectory after graduation (Pradhika & Japar, 2024).

Several studies indicate that individuals experiencing a quarter-life crisis often report mental health symptoms such as prolonged stress, identity confusion, social withdrawal, and depressive tendencies (Fauziah et al., 2024). According to Hasyim et al. (2024), a LinkedIn survey conducted in 2017 found that 75% of 6,014 respondents aged 25–33 across India, the UK, Australia, and the US had experienced a quarter-life crisis. Similarly, a national study by Lani & Kristinawati (2023) found that 54% of Indonesian respondents aged 25–35 experienced a moderate level of QLC, while 38.02% of students were identified as having a moderate level and 28.74% a high level (Sandaputri & Mariyati, 2024).

Preliminary data collected in August 2024 from final-year nursing students in Jombang revealed high academic stress, family pressure, and indecision about plans. Notably, some students reported dominant family members influencing their decisions, heightening their emotional distress. These findings

point to the significance of familial influence, particularly communication styles, in shaping students' coping mechanisms.

Family communication, the interaction process among family members to exchange thoughts, emotions, and expectations, is vital in supporting individuals during transitional phases (Wijaya et al., 2023). Functional communication—characterized by openness, mutual respect, and emotional support—has been linked to better emotional resilience (Attaqy et al., 2021). Conversely, dysfunctional communication—marked by criticism, dominance, or emotional neglect—may exacerbate confusion, fear, and anxiety during crisis periods (Almalail, S. N. & Rahmi, 2023). This study examines the relationship between family communication patterns and the level of quarter-life crisis among final-year nursing students. A deeper understanding of this relationship may inform the development of evidence-based, family-oriented interventions by health educators and counselors to enhance the emotional well-being of final-year nursing students during their transition into adulthood.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Research Design and Participants**

This study employed a quantitative analytic method with a cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between family communication patterns and quarter-life crisis among final-year nursing students. A cross-sectional approach was deemed appropriate, allowing researchers to simultaneously assess the relationship between variables. The study was conducted in the Bachelor of Nursing Study Program, Faculty of Health, ITS Kes ICMe Jombang. The study population comprised all final-year nursing students enrolled in 2024/2025, totaling 90 individuals. Based on eligibility and availability, a total sample of 73 students was selected using simple random sampling, ensuring each member of the population had an equal probability of being chosen. This sample size meets the recommendations for correlational studies, which suggest a minimum of 30 to 50 participants to detect meaningful associations with adequate statistical power (Subhaktiyasa, 2024b).

### **2.2 Instruments and Data Collection**

Data collection in this study utilized two structured and validated questionnaires aligned with the research variables: family communication patterns and quarter-life crisis. The first instrument, designed to measure family communication patterns, was adapted from Kuncahya (2019) and consists of 14 items categorized into two key indicators—functional and dysfunctional communication (Cahyanto et al., 2022). Functional patterns are reflected in seven positively worded items (items 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, and 13), while dysfunctional patterns are captured through seven negatively worded items (items 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, and 14). Each item was assessed using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), yielding a total score range between 14 and 56. The validity of this instrument was established through preliminary testing in Pojok Village, Nogosari District, Boyolali, using a significance level of 0.05. All items demonstrated  $r$ -count values exceeding the  $r$ -table threshold ( $r > 0.532$ ), confirming their construct validity. Furthermore, reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha produced a coefficient of 0.904, indicating excellent internal consistency and measurement reliability (Subhaktiyasa, 2024a).

To assess the level of quarter-life crisis, the study employed a 22-item instrument developed by Pradhika (2024), covering seven psychological indicators: depression, hopelessness, entrapment, anxiety about relationships, general anxiety, indecisiveness, and negative self-perception. Each indicator comprises favorable and unfavorable statements, comprehensively assessing students' emotional state. Responses were recorded using the same four-point Likert scale (1–4), resulting in a total score range from 22 to 88. Validity testing confirmed that all items met the required correlation coefficient ( $r \geq 0.50$ ), and the reliability analysis produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.877, indicating strong internal consistency. Both instruments were distributed in printed form during scheduled class meetings. Before completing the questionnaires, participants received a brief explanation regarding the study's purpose, ethical considerations, and voluntary nature. The data collection process was conducted over one week in November 2024 under the supervision of the research team.

### **2.3 Data Analysis**

The data analysis process was conducted in two stages: univariate and bivariate. Univariate analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to summarize respondents' characteristics and the distribution of each research variable. This method follows standard practices for describing data patterns in both

quantitative and qualitative perspectives (Subhaktiyasa et al., 2025). Frequencies and percentages were used to describe variables such as family communication patterns and levels of quarter-life crisis, allowing for a clear depiction of data trends within the sample (Nursalam, 2020). The Spearman rank-order correlation test was employed for bivariate analysis to examine the relationship between family communication patterns (independent variable) and quarter-life crisis (dependent variable) among final-year nursing students. This non-parametric statistical test is suitable for ordinal data and effectively identifies the strength and direction of associations between two ranked variables. The test was conducted using a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ . A p-value  $< 0.05$  was considered statistically significant, indicating the presence of a meaningful correlation between the variables.

## 2.4 Ethical Considerations

This study obtained ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee of ITS Kes ICMe Jombang (Approval No. 208/KEPK/ITSKES-ICME/X/2024), ensuring the research adhered to established ethical standards. All respondents were provided clear information regarding the study's purpose, procedures, and rights as participants. Written informed consent was obtained voluntarily, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Results

This section presents the study's findings in three parts: the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents, the distribution of key research variables, and the results of the correlation analysis between family communication patterns and quarter-life crisis.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	10	14
	Female	63	86
Age (years)	20 – 21	51	70
	22 – 23	21	29
	24 – 25	1	1
Residence status	With family	21	29
	Boarding house	49	67
	Islamic boarding school	3	4
Atmosphere in the family	Harmonious	63	86
	Conflict	10	14
Leadership in the family	Democratic	59	81
	Authoritarian	14	19
Based on dreams	Have a dream	73	100
	Do not have dreams	0	0
Interpersonal relationships	Negative, or there is a problem	26	36
	Positive or no problem	47	64
Major	As desired	55	75
	Forced or there is a demand	18	25

Table 2. Distribution Of Family Communication Patterns

Family communication patterns	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Dysfunctional	24	33
Functional	49	67

Based on Table 1, most respondents were female (86%), and most were aged between 20 and 21 (70%). Regarding residence status, 67% of students lived in boarding houses, 29% lived with their families, and only 4% resided in Islamic boarding schools. Most respondents reported a harmonious family atmosphere (86%) and democratic leadership in the family (81%). All respondents (100%) indicated personal aspirations or life goals. Furthermore, 64% described their interpersonal relationships as positive or without

significant problems. Lastly, 75% of the respondents stated that they were enrolled in the academic major of their choice. As presented in Table 2, 67% of respondents reported experiencing a functional family communication pattern, while 33% experienced a dysfunctional pattern. This distribution indicates that most students perceived their family interactions as supportive, constructive, and characterized by mutual understanding. Such findings highlight a favorable communication environment within most families, which may positively affect students' emotional and psychological resilience.

Table 3. Distribution Of Quarter-Life Crisis Levels

Quarter-life crisis	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Low	26	36
Moderate	29	40
hight	18	24

As shown in Table 3, 40% of respondents experienced a moderate quarter-life crisis, while 36% were in the low category and 24% in the high category. This distribution indicates that many final-year students are navigating this developmental crisis at varying intensity levels. Moderate to high quarter-life crises in more than half of the respondents suggest increased attention to psychosocial support during adulthood.

Table 4. Cross-tabulation Between Family Communication Patterns and Quarter-Life Crisis

Family communication patterns	Quarter-life crisis						Total	p-value	
	Low		Moderate		Hight				
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Dysfunctional	0	0	6	8	18	24	24	33	0.000
Functional	26	36	23	32	0	0	49	67	

Table 4 presents the cross-tabulation between family communication patterns and quarter-life crisis levels. The highest frequency was observed among respondents with functional family communication who experienced a low quarter-life crisis (35.6%), while dysfunctional patterns were more frequently associated with moderate to high crisis levels. The Spearman rank-order correlation test showed a statistically significant inverse relationship ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $r_s = -0.667$ ), indicating that students from families with functional communication patterns were less likely to experience quarter-life crisis symptoms.

### 3.2 Discussion

This study examined the relationship between family communication patterns and the quarter-life crisis among final-year nursing students (Rahmawati & Gazali, 2020). This study reveals that most final-year nursing students reported experiencing functional family communication patterns. It aligns with Kunchahya (2019), who emphasized that functional families are characterized by openness, emotional expression, mutual respect, and a secure environment. In this study, respondents' high scores on items reflecting supportive and honest communication indicate a strong foundation of familial interaction that likely contributes to resilience during transitional life phases. Attaqy et al. (2021) also noted that open and respectful communication within the family promotes problem-solving and positively influences emotional development. In terms of the quarter-life crisis, nearly half of the students were categorized as experiencing it at a moderate level. Although these students may demonstrate competence in handling current academic challenges, many still experience internal conflict and uncertainty regarding their future. It is supported by Fauziah et al. (2024), who found that students commonly face anxiety when navigating decisions related to further education, career choices, and personal relationships. The transition from academic life to professional and social adulthood presents multiple decision points, which may trigger emotional strain (Fazira et al., 2022).

This study further found a significant negative correlation between family communication patterns and the severity of the quarter-life crisis. Students from families with functional communication reported lower crisis levels, whereas those with dysfunctional communication patterns reported higher ones (Yoanita, 2022). It supports the assertion by Dalimunthe et al. (2024) that open communication can act as a buffer against emotional crises by enhancing clarity, empathy, and shared problem-solving. Additionally, Masluchah et al. (2022) described anxiety during the quarter-life crisis as a response to imagined failure, which is exacerbated when individuals lack emotional support. The role of family as a primary support

system in early adulthood has been underscored in several studies (Pamawang et al., 2023). Wijaya et al. (2023) emphasized that positive communication builds trust and closeness, equipping young adults with the emotional strength to navigate life transitions. Pradhika & Japar (2024) also concluded that social support helps alleviate anxiety and fosters a sense of acceptance. In this context, family-based interventions may promote well-being among students vulnerable to quarter-life crises (Oktaviani & Soetjningsih, 2023).

The present study supports findings from Maringka (2023), who reported that open family communication empowers Generation Z to actively engage in decision-making without fear of judgment. Equal participation in family discourse fosters emotional security and constructive coping strategies. Similarly, Korah (2022) found a negative correlation between family functioning and the intensity of the quarter-life crisis, suggesting that healthy family dynamics can reduce emotional instability during this developmental stage. Fauziyyah (2024) also highlighted the impact of minimal family support on the intensification of crisis symptoms, noting that critical family expectations without accompanying encouragement can lead to depression and hopelessness. The evidence reinforces that functional family communication not only buffers the impact of developmental crises but also strengthens young adults' capacity for self-regulation, responsibility, and long-term goal setting. These results have implications for nursing education and counseling services, highlighting the importance of involving families in student support strategies and promoting healthy communication practices (Budiani et al., 2024). These findings contribute to nursing science by reinforcing the value of family-centered communication in promoting students' emotional resilience and should inform future interventions within academic support systems.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study concludes a significant negative correlation between family communication patterns and quarter-life crisis levels among final-year nursing students, with functional communication associated with lower emotional distress. These findings underscore the role of family interaction in supporting students' psychological resilience during the transition to adulthood and suggest the need to integrate family-based communication strategies into mental health support services. The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of emotional development in early adulthood and offers practical implications for nursing education and student counseling programs. However, as this study employed a cross-sectional design and was limited to a single institution, the findings may not be generalizable to broader populations. Future research must explore these variables longitudinally and across diverse educational and cultural settings to validate and expand on the current results.

#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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