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Quarter Life Crisis among Emerging Adults in Turkey and Its Relationship with Intolerance of Uncertainty

Türkiye'deki Beliren Yetişkinlerde Çeyrek Yaşam Krizi ve Belirsizliğe Tahammülsüzlük ile İlişkisi

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ABSTRACT

Quarter Life Crisis is a relatively new concept that helps understand the developmental difficulties of people in their twenties and early thirties. The present study aims to address the challenges faced by Turkish emerging adults in transition to adulthood and its relationship with the intolerance of uncertainty. The sample of the study consisted of 514 (370 female, 144 male) Turkish emerging adults. Crisis Screening Questionnaire (CSQ), Adult Crisis Episode Retrospective Self-Assessment Tool (ACERSAT), Personal Information Form, and Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS) were administered. Results showed that the majority of the participants (82%) experienced crises on different levels. Participants mainly experienced difficulties in career-related areas. Age, perceived level of happiness, perceived level of difficulty, and intolerance of uncertainty were determined as significant predictors of crisis. There were statistically significant differences in the intolerance of uncertainty and crisis levels among age groups.

Article Information

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ÖZET

Çeyrek Yaşam Krizi, yirmili yaşlardaki ve otuzlu yaşların başındaki insanların gelişimsel zorluklarını anlamaya yardımcı olan nispeten yeni bir kavramdır. Bu çalışma, yetişkinliğe geçiş sürecinde olan Türkiye'deki beliren yetişkinlerin karşılaştığı zorlukları ve bunun belirsizliğe tahammülsüzlük ile ilişkisini ele almayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın örneklemini 514 (370 kadın, 144 erkek) beliren yetişkinden oluşmaktadır. Kriz Tarama Anketi (KTA-9), Yetişkin Kriz Olayları Retrospektif Öz Değerlendirme Aracı (YKORÖDA), Kişisel Bilgi Formu ve Belirsizliğe Tahammülsüzlük Ölçeği (BTÖ) uygulanmıştır. Sonuçlar, katılımcıların büyük kısmının (%82) farklı seviyelerde kriz yaşadığını göstermektedir. Katılımcılar çoğunlukla kariyerle ilgili alanlarda zorluk yaşadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Yaş, algılanan mutluluk düzeyi, algılanan zorluk düzeyi ve belirsizliğe tahammülsüzlük krizin anlamlı yordayıcıları olarak belirlenmiştir. Yaş grupları arasında belirsizliğe tahammülsüzlük ve kriz düzeylerinde anlamlı farklılıklar gözlenmiştir.

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INTRODUCTION

Transition to adulthood has been taking attention more than before for the last few decades. The term “emerging adulthood” had been proposed scientifically by Arnett (2000), referring people between adolescence and young adulthood, which gained popularity in a short period among researchers, and the term “emerging adulthood” had begun to be used even in public in addition to the scientific community. Various research results, including in Turkey, showed that emerging adulthood typically represents people between ages 18-26 who live in cities still in education and do not feel to identify themselves as adults yet (Atak & Çok, 2010; Doğan & Cebioğlu, 2011). However, difficulties experienced by this age group and whether they face a developmental crisis have not been focused on in detail.

Previous research has found that there were some challenges during this age range. Cote (2006) points out that it takes a long time for the emerging adults to assume adult roles and resolve the identity stage due to the delay in education to work transition in industrialized countries. Therefore, it may intensify the identity crisis, and identity confusion may occur. Contrary to what is often reflected by the mainstream media and many scholars, emerging adults endure many struggles and troubles during this age range. The new life in this transition may be overwhelming for some regarding its demands and their coping resources to meet them. Therefore, this period may trigger psychopathology, such as substance use and abuse, antisocial behavior, and depression while assuming the new social roles as emerging adults (Schulenberg, & Zarrett, 2006). A longitudinal study was conducted to frame a more realistic portrait of emerging adults’ lives, 230 interviews were done, and many of them described this period as confusing, troubled, depressing, and sometimes dangerous (Smith et al., 2011). Participants construed themselves as if they lose their ways and are wounded in those ages. Thus, Smith et al. (2011) concluded that people had experienced many troubles in the emerging adulthood period. It would not be wrong to say that it has a “dark side” despite its inherently positive aspects.

In the year 2001, Robbins and Wilner (2001) identified the *quarter-life crisis* (QLC) as the first time, which refers to ups and downs in the lives of emerging adults. In this period, emerging adults may be confused about their identity; feel insecure in their short and long-term goals, and drift into a state of chaos in their romantic relationships, family life, and work-life due to the inherent uncertainty. After Robbins and Wilner’s (2001) definition, this concept has mainly attracted the attention of popular culture. Then, in the scientific literature, the life difficulties of the young adults/emerging adults have been studied extensively by a British researcher, namely Oliver Robinson (Robinson, 2008; Robinson & Smith, 2010a, 2010b; Robinson, 2016, 2019; Robinson et al., 2020).

Robinson proposed that the age period of the twenties and early thirties are usually difficult periods for emerging adults since they are expected to make important decisions about their adult lives, such as whom to marry and where to work. The difficult task and primary stressor for this age group is to decide on these adultish things while they are not yet adults; they are still financially dependent on their parents, and their roles are expected to switch from children and adolescent mode to adulthood (Robinson, 2013). Like Robbins and Wilner (2001) stated, contrary to their previous life, the post-graduation period is full of uncertainty. Furthermore, young adults are not familiar with experiencing instability, indecision, and intense helplessness since their lives’ steps had been quite clear until their university graduation. In a longitudinal study that was conducted with the participation of 200 graduate young adults during the first 18 months after graduation, 25% of them indicated increased anxiety and depression (Robinson, 2016). Another longitudinal study was on post-university transition and quarter-life crisis, which investigates the

life after graduation, time-dependent changes in graduates' well-being and depressive symptoms, and their relations with personal crisis appraisal (Robinson et al., 2020). According to its results, the participants who stated that they were in a crisis reported lower well-being and higher depression.

When effects on mental health are considered, understanding this new concept, the quarter-life crisis (QLC), becomes more critical. The research investigated the types and prevalence of quarter-life crises found out that crises peak roughly in the mid-twenties and have a typical pattern over different people's lives (Robinson & Wright, 2013; Robinson et al., 2013). Robinson (2016) introduces a dual typology while explaining the quarter-life crisis. He classifies the crisis under two types: *locked-out* and *locked-in* type (Robinson, n.d., 2019). In the locked-out type, emerging adults feel as if they fail to achieve adulthood; the 21-25 year-olds generally experience it after university graduation. They may think that they cannot have a job, be financially independent, and have a stable romantic relationship. The other type of crisis is the locked-in type; it occurs during the age of 25-35. Emerging adults could take up some adult roles in this type, but they feel trapped in those roles that could be a relationship or work that they do not want to continue and hide their dissatisfaction with those commitments (Robinson, 2019). Both types of crisis are crucial to understanding the challenges of emerging adulthood while they strive to settle down.

During emerging adulthood, young people are hovering between "excitement and uncertainty, wide-open possibility and confusion, new freedoms and new fears" (Arnett, 2004, p. 3). Accordingly, QLC is proposed for a period full of stress, instability, and experiencing life-changing events while assuming adult roles under these ups and downs. QLC is usually experienced when emerging adults get a job, have a romantic relationship, get married, or start living like adults. They then realize that these life-changing steps lead to stress or restrains them from developing themselves. This crisis period is developmentally vital for people because it includes ending old bonds, beginning new commitments, and experiencing strong emotions (Robinson, 2013).

Although this period inherently has many possibilities to explore, this might create anxiety and uncertainty for some emerging adults (Arnett, 2004). The uncertainty coming with this abundance of options might be one of the main reasons for QLC. Some people cannot bear uncertainty, which would cause them to have a crisis. They may have a strong tendency to regard an uncertain situation as an adverse event and dangerous even there is no clue about it (Dugas et al., 2001) and regardless of possibilities. This situation is called intolerance of uncertainty (Buhr & Dugas, 2002; Dugas et al., 2001). As the uncertainty increases, their worry soars (Ladouceur et al., 2000). During emerging adulthood, young people are supposed to undergo many changes and to take essential decisions influencing their adult lives (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2017). They might experience uncertainty and instability that leads to stress while changing; they might feel their lives are going to an "invisible destination" (p. 568). Because of these characteristics of emerging adulthood, it has some darkness in it, and young people might have difficulty and pain (Smith et al., 2011). To Nelson (2020), the qualities of emerging adulthood have changed. Now, young people postpone marriage longer than two decades ago, they have felt less responsible to others. Also, they are exposed to plenty of instability and feel free while deciding their own choices. Their brains still have limitations; they believe that they should be carefree and have lots of adventures before being a complete adult, and their lives are more unstructured than the past. Thus, this lack of structure might make the emerging adulthood period threatening, as well, for the people who cannot bear ambiguous situations since this period is uncertain and full of novelty by its very nature. Therefore, managing this uncertainty and instability is crucial for them to deal with this stressful period.

Studies on emerging adults and this age's difficulties have mainly been conducted in West Europe and North America (Arnett, 2000; Jensen & Arnett, 2019). Therefore, future research on the challenges of these ages in different cultures was suggested to be very important. For example, a study conducted in India (Mitra & Arnett, 2019) indicates that it is very harsh for emerging adults to negotiate between traditional roles and independence in a collectivist context. Also, parental expectations are another factor that makes their adulthood transition more challenging than in individualistic countries. Likewise, Turkey represents a different cultural context (Atak et al., 2016) characterized by a more collectivist rather than the dominant individualistic structures of Western societies. Moreover, the differences among people in the same age- twenties until mid-thirties- are salient and seem to be ready to be studied.

The Present Study

Turkey has been a changing country in terms of population structure and life conditions. There are now approximately 24 million people between the ages of 20-35, a substantial segment of the total population (TUIK, 2020). So determining the life difficulties and crises that this age group has faced is very important.

In Turkey, in parallel with changes in the demographic structure, the age of marriage, being a parent, work-life, and education life have been changing dramatically. These changing trends make studies on emerging adults necessary (Atak et al., 2016). Research conducted with 5829 undergraduate students, aged between 17 and 24, suggests that their main problem areas are emotional, academic, and economic (Erkan et al., 2012). Another research (Eryılmaz & Ercan, 2011) examining the well-being of different age groups (14-17, 18-25, and 26-45) found that the well-being of the participants whose age is 18-25, which can be called as emerging adults, was lower than both the participants aged between 14-17 and 26-45. Thus, the problems related to the areas mentioned above may threaten their well-being during this transition (Korkut-Owen & Demirbaş-Çelik, 2018).

The data given by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK, 2019) has confirmed the changing nature of the demographic structure. When the data is examined, for the people aged 20-29, the marriage age became 25-29 in 2019, which was around 20-24 in 2001. Regarding employment, 35.3% of people aged 20-34 in Turkey fell into the category named Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) (Eurostat, 2020). According to the TUIK data, the unemployment rate of young people increased by 5.1 points from 2018 to 2019 (Youth in Statistics, 2019). When recent demographic changes are taken into account, it may be said that young adults in Turkey assume adult roles later than before, which shows a parallel pattern with Arnett's claims (2000, 2004). The above-indicated challenges and those changes make it more important for the researchers to focus on this age group and post-university transition.

Based on the studies on different populations mentioned above, this research aims to determine the difficulties faced by emerging adults or young people between ages 20-35 and to size up the quarter-life crisis experiences of this group. Within this context, the present study examines five research questions. First, how the participants evaluate themselves in terms of happiness, difficulties in their lives, and health situations? Second, in which areas do the participants have a crisis? Third, how many participants experience a quarter-life crisis? Forth, are age, perceived happiness, perceived difficulty, and intolerance of uncertainty significant predictors of a quarter-life crisis? Fifth, as the last question, do the level of crisis and intolerance of uncertainty statistically differ with age groups and gender? In light of the related literature, we expect that participants have had troubles, and their happiness levels have been negatively

affected. Also, they will indicate specific areas in which they have a crisis. Another anticipation of this study is that many Turkish emerging adults have suffered from QLC like their peers in some other countries. We also expect participants indicating high intolerance of uncertainty may report high crisis levels, as well. Lastly, we suppose that there may be a statistically significant difference between the levels of intolerance of uncertainty and crisis regarding age groups and gender.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Participants were 514 emerging adults, 370 (72%) female and 144 (28%) male. The convenience sampling method was used. Two methods were used to collect the data; online forms and paper-based questionnaires. The sample's age range was 20-35, with a mean age of 26.36 (SD = 3.32). Descriptive information about the participants is presented in Table 1. Previous studies reported having a crisis, and prevalent crisis features differed between age groups (Robinson & Wright, 2013; Robinson, 2016). Therefore, the age variable was analyzed as three groups: 20-25, 26-30, and 31-35.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variables	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	370	72
	Male	144	28
Educational status	High School Degree	46	8,9
	Associate Degree	39	7,6
	Bachelor Degree	339	66
	Master Degree	84	16,3
	Doctorate Degree	6	1
Having a job	Yes	353	68,7
	No	161	31,3
Being in a romantic relationship	Yes	288	56
	No	226	44
Living (with)	Alone	76	14,8
	Family	268	52,2
	Girlfriend/boyfriend	13	2,5
	Friend	45	8,8
	In dorm	10	1,9
	Sibling/cousin/others	11	2,1
	Married	86	16,8
Other	4	0,8	
Total		514	100

Ethical Statement

This research was completed in line with the Helsinki Declaration. The study was investigated and permitted by Baskent University Scientific Research and Ethical Review Board (Signature Date: 28.11.2019 and REF: 17162298.600-300). While data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their opportunity to withdraw.

Measures

Four different measures were used in this study.

Personal Information Form. The personal information form was developed by the researchers for demographic and basic information. It contains questions about the participants' education levels,

relationship status, employment status, perceived level of happiness, and perceived level of difficulty in life.

Crisis Screening Questionnaire-9 (CSQ-9). Crisis Screening Questionnaire-9 developed by Petrov et al. (2019), which consists of 9 items, aims to measure whether a crisis happens in people's lives. Participants rate items on a dichotomous scale (0= "no", 1= "yes"). The total score of 1 to 3 indicates no crisis, 4 to 6 indicates a partial crisis, 7 to 9 indicates the crisis. According to the measure, as the crisis increases as the total score increases, as well. The questionnaire was adapted into Turkish by the researchers after permission was obtained from the original researchers. The questionnaire was translated to Turkish in the adaptation process and then translated back to English by two independent experts to ensure language validity. After the final Turkish version of the questionnaire was formed, it was examined by three experts in the research topic, and it was found appropriate to measure the intended feature. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine to construct validity. According to the results, the questionnaire has acceptable fit indexes ($\chi^2/df = 3.46$, RMSEA = .06, NFI= .92, NNFI= .92 CFI = .94, GFI = .98, AGFI = .97, IFI = .94). Kuder-Richardson-20 internal consistency coefficient of the Crisis Screening Questionnaire-9 was determined as .74. According to the results, CSQ-9 was found valid and reliable, and suitable for use.

Adult Crisis Episode Retrospective Self-Assessment Tool (ACERSAT). The adult crisis episode retrospective self-assessment tool is a self-report tool developed by Robinson and Wright (2013). It aims to provide data on the events that might be experienced in crisis episodes. The tool contains 23 items, and each item represents an adverse or stressful life event. ACERSAT was initially used to assess the past crisis. In the current study, researchers adapted it to collect data on the events that happened recently. The list of events translated to Turkish for the adaptation, and then the Turkish text was translated back to English by two independent experts. A pilot study was conducted on undergraduate students to test understandability and fluency.

Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS). The Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (Sarı & Dağ, 2009, adapted from the English version by Buhr & Dugas, 2002) includes 27 items relating to the idea that uncertainty is unacceptable, frustrating, and stressful, reflects the negative personality and leads to inaction. The Turkish version of the scale contains four factors: 1) Uncertainty is upsetting and stressful, 2) Negative self-assessments related to the uncertainty, 3) It is frustrating not to know about the future, 4) Uncertainty leads to the inability to act. The items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Does not describe me at all, 5=Describe me very well) and higher scores indicate a higher level of intolerance of uncertainty. The Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the Turkish version is quite high ($\alpha = .93$), and the test-retest reliability coefficient is acceptable ($r = .66$) (Sarı & Dağ, 2009). In the current study, confirmatory factor analysis conducted and results show that the scale has acceptable fit indexes: ($\chi^2/df = 4.29$, RMSEA = .06, NFI= .97, NNFI= .97, CFI = .98, GFI = .99, AGFI = .99, IFI = .98, SRMR = .04). In the present study, the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as .94.

Data Analysis

We first examined descriptive values and correlations between the variables and used the two-way multivariate analysis of variance to examine differences in the variables. Then, multiple linear regression was used to determine whether age, perceived level of happiness, perceived level of difficulty, and intolerance of uncertainty predict the quarter-life crisis.

RESULTS

How did the participants evaluate themselves in terms of happiness, difficulties in their lives, and health situations?

Table 2. Frequencies of participants' perceived level of happiness, perceived level of difficulty, and physical condition, shown as %

		%
Perceived level of happiness	Quite unhappy	4,1
	Unhappy	11,1
	Partially happy	50,3
	Quite happy	28,7
	Very happy	5,8
Perceived level of difficulty	Quite easy	1
	Easy	6,6
	Partially difficult	43,3
	Quite difficult	35,9
	Very difficult	13,3
Physical condition	Important/major health problems	2,1
	Minor health problems	18,2
	Partially healthy	18,2
	Quite healthy	51,8
	Very healthy	9,8

As seen in Table 2, approximately half of the participants (50.3%) considered themselves to be “partially happy.” On the other hand, the difficulty of life was evaluated as “partially difficult” (43,3%) and “quite difficult” (35,9%). As for the physical health condition, more than half of the participants (51.8%) considered themselves to be “quite healthy.”

In which areas do the participants have a crisis?

As seen in Table 3, female participants answered as “Experiencing a very high level of stress and pressure at your job” the most. This challenging life experience has seemed prominent among women of all age groups. This item was followed by “Feeling trapped in a job you did not want to be in anymore.” Likewise, although it was significantly answered by women between the ages of 26-30, it has been expressed as a hard life experienced by women from all age groups.

On the other hand, male participants predominantly answered the item “Experiencing a very high level of stress and pressure at your job.” This challenging life experience became evident among men of all age groups. Again, this item was followed by “Feeling trapped in a job you did not want to be in anymore.” Male participants of all age groups stated that they had a challenging life experience. Between the ages of 20-25 and 31-35 also often reported having family conflicts or disputes.

Similarly, it is observed that “An unwanted unemployment period” was excessively answered by women and men aged between 20-25 and 31-35. Cases such as “debt or financial difficulties” were evident among males aged 26-30. While women between the ages of 26-30 stated that they experienced “a career change,” 31-35 stated they had “debt and financial difficulties.” Challenging experiences concerning the birth of a child and the difficulties for the child’s behavior are common in women between the ages of 31-35. Furthermore, family conflict or dispute was among the challenging life experiences of women aged 20-25.

Table 3. Frequencies of response to each item, by gender and age, shown as %

	Female			Male		
	Age Groups			Age Groups		
	20-25	26-30	31-35	20-25	26-30	31-35
1. Feeling trapped in a job you didn't want to be in anymore	33,5	49,3	34,8	35	35	20
2. Experiencing a high level of stress and pressure in your job	45,8	52,1	41,3	43,3	41,7	52
3. Resigning from a job	24,6	18,1	10,9	21,7	11,7	4
4. Being fired from a job	3,4	2,1	8,7	5	3,3	4
5. An unwanted period of unemployment	45,8	26,4	17,4	36,7	31,7	16
6. A change of career	22,9	20,8	37	23,3	31,7	24
7. Debt or financial difficulties	16,8	16	26,1	20	31,7	16
8. Being locked into in a relationship that you no longer wanted to be in	10,6	10,4	8,7	15	13,3	4
9. Being in an abusive relationship	7,3	5,6	6,5	3,3	0	0
10. Divorce or relationship breakup	9,5	10,4	6,5	18,3	16,7	0
11. Death of a person close to you	14	11,1	8,7	11,7	18,3	4
12. The birth of a child	2,8	11,1	34,8	1,7	5	16
13. Difficulties with your child's behavior	1,7	9,7	32,6	0	3,3	16
14. Family conflict or dispute	34,1	27,8	15,2	23,3	15	20
15. Confusion over sexual preference	1,7	1,4	4,3	1,7	3,3	4
16. 'Coming out': Making sexual preference known to friends and family	1,7	0,7	6,5	1,7	0	0
17. Uncertainty or confusion in your own beliefs or worldview	22,9	18,8	19,6	20	21,7	16
18. Alcohol/substance abuse or addiction	11,7	4,9	6,5	20	18,3	4
19. Physical illness or injury to yourself	15,6	16,7	10,9	10	18,3	12
20. Physical illness or injury to someone close to you	20,7	20,1	17,4	23,3	16,7	20
21. Caring for an ill or disabled loved one	7,8	8,3	4,3	0	5	4
22. Being diagnosed with a mental illness	6,7	4,9	4,3	6,7	0	4
23. A person close to you being diagnosed with mental illness	9,5	7,6	13	6,7	1,7	4

Note. Bold: Score in the top quartile of frequencies.

Accordingly, it can be interpreted that both women and men have challenging life experiences in business-related/financial issues. While for men, experiences in business-related/career/financial issues stand out significantly, for women, in addition to the challenging life experiences in the career field, family conflicts between the ages of 20-25 and the challenging life experiences with the child at the ages of 31-35 became evident.

How many participants experience a quarter-life crisis?

As seen in Table 4, approximately 82% of the participants experience a crisis between ages 20-35 on different levels. The percentage of those experiencing a crisis in the 20-35 age group was 84.4%, in the 25-30 age group 85%, and in the 30-35 age group was 73.2%.

Table 4. The findings on the prevalence of the crisis

Age Group	Gender	No Crisis		Partial Crisis		Crisis	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
20-25	Female	26	14.5	59	33.0	94	52.5
	Male	11	19.0	23	39.7	24	41.4
	Total	37	15.6	82	34.6	118	49.8
25-30	Female	23	16.1	57	39.9	63	44.1
	Male	7	12.3	29	50.9	21	36.8
	Total	30	15.0	86	43.0	84	42.0
30-35	Female	12	27.3	21	47.7	11	25.0
	Male	6	26.1	10	43.5	7	30.4
	Total	18	26.9	31	46.3	28	26.9
Total		95	18.5	199	38.7	220	42.8

Are age, perceived happiness, perceived difficulty, and intolerance of uncertainty significant predictors of a quarter-life crisis?

Before performing the regression analysis, the assumptions of multiple linear regression were checked. Significant correlations between independent and dependent variables ranged from -.18 to .49 (Table 5). Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is 1.63 and below 10, and the tolerance value is .61, which is above. These results indicated no multicollinearity problem. According to the Durbin-Watson test statistic, no autocorrelation was detected, and the data met the assumption of independent errors (Durbin-Watson value =1.85).

Table 5. The findings of Pearson correlation between crisis, age, perceived level of happiness, perceived level of difficulty, and intolerance of uncertainty

	Crisis	Perceived Level of Happiness	Perceived Level of Difficulty	Intolerance of Uncertainty	Age
Crisis	1.00	-	-	-	-
Perceived Level of Happiness	-.46**	1.00	-	-	-
Perceived Level of Difficulty	.33**	-.30**	1.00	-	-
Intolerance of Uncertainty	.49**	-.30**	.14**	1.00	-
Age	-.18**	.15**	-.06**	-.14**	1.00

**p <.01

As seen in the results of the multiple regression analysis (Table 6); the model is valid, and when all variables are considered together, it explains 38% of the total variance in crisis ($R^2 = .39$, adjusted $R^2 = .38$, $F = 80.29$ and $p < .001$). Perceived level of happiness ($\beta = -.28$, $p < .001$), perceived level of difficulty ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$), intolerance of uncertainty ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$), and age ($\beta = -.07$, $p < .05$) were determined as significant predictors of crisis. The model predicts that an increase in the intolerance to uncertainty and perceived difficulty level of life will cause an increase in total crisis scores. On the contrary, a decrease in age and perceived level of happiness scores predicts an increase in total crisis scores.

Table 6. The findings of multiple regression analysis to determine the prediction of the crisis by age, perceived level of happiness, perceived level of difficulty, and intolerance of uncertainty

Variable	B	Standard Error	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Δ <i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	4.49	.95		4.74	.000***	.39	.38	80.29	.000***
Perceived Level of Happiness	-.77	.10	-.28	-7.42	.000***				
Perceived Level of Difficulty	.52	.10	.18	5.13	.000***				
Intolerance of Uncertainty	.04	.00	.37	10.12	.000***				
Age	-.05	.02	-.07	-2.10	.036*				

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Do the level of crisis and intolerance of uncertainty statistically differ with age groups and gender?

Table 7. Descriptive statistics on intolerance of uncertainty and crisis

	Age Group	Intolerance of Uncertainty		Crisis	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Female	20-25	81.53	19.82	6.25	2.20
	26-30	78.67	20.01	5.77	2.20
	31-35	75.23	20.80	4.76	2.53
	Total	79.63	20.07	5.87	2.29
Male	20-25	77.81	24.25	5.50	2.57
	26-30	71.89	18.35	5.56	2.29
	31-35	65.36	25.59	4.68	2.86
	Total	73.21	22.54	5.38	2.51
Total	20-25	80.60	21.03	6.06	2.32
	26-30	76.68	19.73	5.71	2.22
	31-35	71.76	22.91	4.73	2.63
	Total	77.82	20.98	5.73	2.36

Descriptive statistics (Table 7) indicated that the 20-25 age group participants had the highest intolerance of uncertainty and crisis scores, followed by 26-30 and 31-35 age group. Females have higher scores of intolerance of uncertainty and crisis. The Box's M test statistic was found to be not significant (Box's M= 17.32, *F* = 1.14, *p* (.32) > .001). Therefore there are no significant differences between the covariance matrices. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances results indicated that the variances of crisis are equal across the groups. Still, the variances of intolerance of uncertainty are not equal (Intolerance of Uncertainty *F* = 2.27, *p* (.046) < .05), Crisis *F* = 1.15, *p* (.331) > .05). Pillai's Trace was used as a test statistic since the required assumptions are not met for intolerance of uncertainty.

Table 8.

The findings of two-way multivariate analysis of variance for crisis and intolerance of uncertainty by age and gender

Effect		Value	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>df</i> _{error}	<i>P</i> -value	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.900	2279.598	2.000	507.000.000***	.900	
Age	Pillai's Trace	.032	4.075	4.000	1016.000.003**	.016	
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.017	4.512	2.000	507.000.011*	.017	

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Results of the two-way MANOVA (Table 8) indicated that there are statistically significant differences among the age groups and gender on a linear combination of the intolerance of uncertainty and crisis (Pillai's Trace = .900, $F = 2279.598$, $p < .001$). The follow-up ANOVAs and the results Tukey HSD test (Table 9) indicated that the mean score for intolerance of uncertainty of individuals in the 20-25 age group is significantly higher than those in the 31-35 age group ($F = 5.32$, $p < .01$). However, no significant difference was observed between the 20-25 and 26-30 age groups; and between the 26-30 and 31-35 age groups ($p > .05$). The univariate tests also indicated a statistically significant difference in the crisis among the three age groups ($F = 5.96$, $p < .01$). Post hoc (Tukey HSD) analysis indicated that the crisis scores of individuals in the 20-25 and 26-30 age groups were significantly higher than those in the 31-35 age group ($p < .01$). However, no significant difference was observed between the 20-25 and 26-30 age groups ($p > .05$).

Table 9. Significant univariate effects and post-hoc test for age groups

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	df	Mean Square	F	P-value	Partial Eta Squared	Tukey HSD ^a
Age	IUS	2	2275.538	5.327	.005**	.021	1 > 3
	Crisis	2	32.272	5.964	.003**	.023	1, 2 > 3
Gender	IUS	1	3858.814	9.033	.003**	.017	
	Crisis	1	9.983	1.845	.175	.004	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

^a 1 = 20-25 age group, 2 = 25-30 age group, 3 = 30-35 age group

According to the results of univariate tests, there is a significant difference between males' and females' intolerance of uncertainty scores ($F = 9.03$, $p < .01$), females have higher scores of intolerance of uncertainty. The difference between males' and females' crisis scores is not significant ($F = 1.84$, $p > .05$).

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

By investigating the difficulties emerging adults face, this study intended to shed light on their challenges and whether Turkish emerging adults have quarter-life crises like their peers indicated in the relevant literature and its possible predictors. First of all, our first question was related to participants' self-evaluations about their happiness, perceived difficulty of life, and health situation. Over half of the participants indicated that they were partially happy and physically healthy. The majority of them stated that their lives were complicated at some levels, except a few. The second question of this study sought an answer to in which areas they have been faced difficulties that can be called a crisis. The most remarkable areas in which participants indicated crisis might have grouped as job-related negative experiences and financial issues. The third question was about QLC prevalence, how many of them have experienced a QLC, and results showed that more than four in five participants had a crisis at some levels. When it comes to predictors of QLC, as intolerance of uncertainty and perceived difficulty of life increase, QLC scores are increasing. Also, decreases in age and perceived happiness scores contrarily predict an increase in total crisis scores. Finally, the last hypothesis was confirmed since the analysis revealed significant differences among three age groups regarding the intolerance of uncertainty levels and crisis scores.

Despite the inherent excitement and optimism of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004), the results of this study showed that facing challenges is also inevitable for young people. Although it is undeniable that this period is essential for development and adds richness and new dimensions to young people's lives, the other side of the coin, difficulties, should not be ignored. People have gone through many changes

and made important decisions that will affect their future lives (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2017). According to TUIK's data (2019), young people's general level of happiness may be regarded as decreasing year by year. Our results showed parallels in the way that half of our participants stated that they are partially happy, and over four in five of the participants evaluated their lives as difficult at some levels. While the rate of participants having difficulties is that much high, it can be inferred that they have some adjustment problems while struggling to keep up with the changes coming with emerging adulthood. If a young person has some adjustment problems while changing, it will permanently disrupt their future adult lives (Cote, 2000). Lane (2014) mentioned some common transitions during emerging adulthood, such as high school graduation, the direct transition to professional life without a college education, the freshman transition, the senior year experience, and the life after college. She stated that those transitions might pose intense pressure and distress for some emerging adults rather than excitement and optimism. Thus, revealing the neglected side of this period takes on a new meaning in structuring the right interventions for this age group.

Today's career path is not a straight way worldwide depending on changes and developments in the economy, values, trends, and many other factors. Therefore, emerging adults may feel insecure, frequently change their jobs, and always need more training to stay up to date. They need to diversify their skills, be more flexible, and be ready to retool when necessary (Smith et al., 2011). Their paths are even more heterogeneous (Nelson, 2020). Thus, it is not unexpected for us to see that participants stated more crises in job-related areas than other life events. Although Arnett (2000) theorizes that young adults' exploration of work-life gets beyond a joke during emerging adulthood and becomes more focused and committed, our results showed a somewhat reverse situation. Changing careers and resigning from a job are strong crisis-related indications of participants. Resigning was relatively more prevalent among 20-25 aged people, whereas changing careers is more frequent among 31-35 aged people. Also, experiencing intense stress and pressure at work was another much-stated item with evidential value while explaining how rough their path is and why they feel so insecure.

Besides, the world of work demands them to improve themselves non-stop to be secure at work; economic and societal changes have also triggered this demand. Since the unemployment rate has skyrocketed in recent decades and creates huge competition for employment opportunities, young people's pressure is understandable. According to OECD, young people who have fewer skills are "more vulnerable to unemployment and inactivity" (Society at a Glance, 2019). In this report, Turkey is listed as one of the countries with the highest NEET population share. Young people without a university degree three times more tend to be NEET than the young with a degree (OECD, 2019). Thus, it can be said that extended education paths become musts for young people to have decent work. As stated before, Turkey's unemployment rate has increased day by day (Eurostat, 2020; TUIK, 2019), and it becomes a crucial problem both for the young and society.

Similarly, the present study results showed that many young people have gone through an unwanted period of unemployment. It may be associated with the locked-out type of crisis; Robinson (2019) stated that 21-25 aged people generally experience this type of crisis; however, it seems prolonged in our sample. For both genders, unemployment is a real issue for both 20-25 and 26-30 aged people. This difference may take its source from countries' unemployment rates and employment opportunities. Besides, the events such as feeling trapped in a job, resigning from it, and changing career may be associated with the

locked-in type of crisis since they resemble the phases of this type. Also, its age range was shifted in our sample. It was observed in all three groups, whereas it was stated 25-35 in Robinson's study (2019).

Both adjustment problems and unemployment issues may be the reasons for the crisis that most participants had. Robinson and Wright (2013) retrospectively examined the events which people experience during a crisis. Relationship problems were worth attention for, especially women; however, according to our results, women's main problem areas were related to work and financial issues like men's. This difference may be because of participants' retrospective evaluations of their lives and the employment status of their sample. The unemployed participants' rate was nearly 10% for their study, whereas it was 31% for our sample. Therefore, job-related issues inevitably came to the forefront.

In the research of Mitra and Arnett (2019), parental issues were slightly remarkable. In their study, parental expectations for emerging adults' career paths were mentioned as an obligation by stating that parents have an essential role in young adults' career decisions. Also, while trying to be a fully independent adult and exploring themselves, Indian emerging adults have felt as if they have to continue their family values and traditions. In light of the results of a collectivistic culture, when our participants' financial dependence is considered, being completely independent of families becomes a fantasy. Since the unemployed participants of this study have a 31% share, it can be said that they are still dependent on their families while deciding for their own lives. Thus, this may pose some problems with family members. For female participants, the frequency of experiencing family conflict and the dispute is more salient for 20-25 and 26-30 aged groups. Whereas for males, it is more remarkable for just 20-25 aged people. It is not surprising for us to see this result. Most participants still lived in their parents' houses, so they cannot be fully independent unless they settled their own houses; conflict and family disputes are inevitable.

When it comes to evaluating crisis scores, one in fifth participants indicated no crisis while the rest have crises at some levels. This rate is obvious evidence of how crucial to understand QLC. Like their peers worldwide, Turkish emerging adults may have also been affected by social and economic changes, and they have issues with work, family, and social life. Since depression and well-being have been strongly correlated with crisis (Robinson et al., 2020), this high rate of remarking crisis is worth figuring out. In this sense, age, level of happiness in general, difficulty level of life, and intolerance of uncertainty were examined as possible predictors of this developmental crisis within the scope of the present study. As expected, increased difficulty of life and intolerance of uncertainty predicted an increase in crisis scores, whereas decreased age and happiness level predicted the increasing crisis. When the three age groups were compared to their crisis scores, 20-25 and 26-30 aged people have higher scores than 31-35. It is crucial that our sample was spanning early emerging adulthood into early adulthood because it allows comparing, seeing from a broader perspective, and evaluating whether this period is extended. Thus, it may be inferred that since the 31-35 aged people are relatively more settled down, have less instability in their lives, and their crisis score was found lower than others. Similarly, a comparison of age groups regarding their intolerance of uncertainty levels showed that 20-25 aged people are more intolerant of uncertainty than 31-35 aged people. Therefore, especially the people aged 20-30 are more vulnerable to experience crisis, and intolerance of uncertainty is a notable predictor as these people have to manage some novelty, developmental changes, and uncertain situation by the very nature of that period.

Overall, the findings of this study bring light to the existing body of relevant literature on emerging adults in Turkey and introduce the quarter-life crisis concept to Turkish literature. Findings are consistent with

the previous studies on QLC (Robinson, 2016), and Turkish emerging adults experience quarter-life crises, too. Therefore, it is believed that this study contributes to the field of guidance and psychological counseling. Admittedly, it is not the end of everything for university students to have chosen a field to study. There is a so much harder life outside the university, waiting for graduates. They should be supported via mental health services at universities to cope with developmental changes and uncertainty coming with both developmental and societal changes and make them ready for their ongoing and future lives.

Although this study has contributions to the field, its limitations should not be ignored. First of all, the sample of this study consisted of only educated young people, and most of them lived in metropolises in Turkey. Thus, the findings of this study may be generalized for only the people who have similar features rather than all the emerging adults. Second of all, in terms of gender distribution, the female is dominant. Therefore, future studies should try to reach a balanced distribution. These limitations should be considered while utilizing the results.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, we believe that the present results have an essential contribution to understanding contemporary emerging adults' life difficulties and their crisis experiences. This finding emphasizes the importance of preventive counseling activities when working with emerging adults and university students. Research in career counseling in Turkey mainly focused on college transition and has been conducted on high-school and university students (Çarkıt, 2019; Yeşilyaprak, 2012). This study is significant since it reveals that emerging adults experience difficulties in career-related areas, such as finding and maintaining a suitable job and dealing with the stress and pressure at work during the post-graduation period. Hence, it is critical for career counselors and researchers working in the career field to be aware of this group's needs and provide career counseling services effectively in higher education institutions and the Turkish Employment Agency.

Further studies would investigate the Quarter-Life Crisis with different demographic groups and their relation with different variables across time. We encourage researchers to conduct longitudinal studies. Related future research would be incredibly informative to understand and help emerging adults through interventions in higher education settings, workplaces, and community centers with an inclusive approach.

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Author Contributions

This study was conducted by all the authors working together and cooperatively. Therefore, all of the authors substantially contributed to this work in each step of the study.

Conflict of Interest

It has been reported by the authors that there is no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Statement

This study was completed in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration. In line with this, the study was permitted by Baskent University Scientific Research and Ethical Review Board.

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