



Developmental Dynamics of Young Adulthood: Exploring Aspects of The Physical, Emotional, Social, Career and Sexual

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Abstract

Introduction to The Problem: Young adulthood is a complex and crucial developmental phase, marked by significant changes in physical, emotional, social, career, and sexual aspects. This study is motivated by the lack of comprehensive research that discusses these five aspects integratively within the framework of developmental psychology. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the dynamics of individual development during young adulthood to enrich understanding of the challenges and potential faced during this stage. **Design/methods/approach:** This research employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method. Data is gathered from various scholarly sources such as journals, books, and articles, which are then analyzed using content analysis techniques. **Findings:** The findings indicate that during this stage, individuals are at the peak of their physical condition but begin to experience signs of biological aging. Emotionally, their self-regulation abilities increase with life experience. Socially, individuals begin to build stable relationships and face the transition toward independence. In terms of career, this stage enters the exploration phase and the consolidation of professional identity. Meanwhile, sexual development reflects the pursuit of mature emotional and physical intimacy, although misunderstandings about the meaning of love are often present. **Research implications/limitations:** The limitations of this study lie in its non-empirical approach, which does not involve field data or direct interviews, making the analysis theoretical and less representative of individuals' actual subjective experiences. **Originality/value:** Nevertheless, this study offers original value by integrating the aspects of career and sexuality, which are rarely studied together, and contributes to the development of psychological interventions and life education programs for young adults.

Keywords: Young Adulthood: Physical, Emotional, Social, Career, and Sexual Development

Introduction

The concept of adulthood as a phase in development (Wijngaarden, 1963; Andriesen, 1974) is somewhat inaccurate from several perspectives. The term "volwassen" in Dutch means "adult." "Vol" means full and "wassen" means grow, so "volwassen" means fully grown or "finished

growing." In both the Netherlands and Indonesia, the age of 21 is considered the threshold of adulthood. This age limit is historically derived and is not absolute; it can also be set at 25 or 18 years old. This age marks the point at which an individual gains the rights of a citizen, allowing them to perform certain responsibilities independent of their parents, such as voting, legal responsibilities, and marriage without parental consent. In Indonesia, adulthood is considered to begin at 21. This means that at this age, a person is considered an adult and is assumed to take responsibility for their actions. They gain certain rights, such as the right to vote for the People's Representative Council, marry without a guardian, and so on. Taking responsibility for their actions also means that they can face legal penalties if they violate laws (Monks & Haditono, 2006).

Adulthood is a continuation of infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Humans continue to develop and undergo positive changes (change over time), moving towards becoming devout servants of Allah and achieving a good ending in their lives. A person who can navigate each stage of life is usually able to face the next stage because they have completed developmental tasks and overcome obstacles (hazards) along the way. According to developmental psychologist Santrock (1999), young adulthood is considered a transitional phase, involving physical transition, intellectual transition (cognitive transition), and social role transition (social role transition) (Santrock, 1999; Dariyo, 2004).

Adulthood is the longest stage of life for every human being, as more than half of a person's life will be spent in adulthood. Adulthood has developmental tasks that continue to mature individuals, even though there may be developmental challenges along the way. This is the concept of human life, which involves trials as Allah's servants who are grateful and sincere about Allah's decrees. According to Nurdin, for a child, parents should be role models in behavior, thinking, and attitudes. Parents, especially fathers and mothers, who are the closest to their children, have a significant influence on their physical and psychological growth as they enter adulthood. Parents should create a healthy environment for their children. A mature adult is the product of good parenting and an environment that upholds principles, norms, and religious values. From childhood and adolescence until the age of 18, adulthood begins from the age of twenty and continues until old age. These stages of life are essential and need to be carefully considered by every parent to prepare resilient children who will grow into resilient adults (Jannah et al., 2021).

This article will discuss: 1) The physical development of young adulthood, 2) The emotional development of young adulthood, 3) The social development of young adulthood, 4) The career development of young adulthood, 5) The sexual development of young adulthood.

Literature Riview

Theories Supporting the Research

Sigmund Freud's theory of psychosexual stages has evolved into a psychosocial theory. This theory arranges sexual developmental stages based on growth zones; as age progresses, sexual attraction shifts from the oral zone to the latency zone, and then concentrates on the genital zone (Crain, 2014; Fredella & Sosialita, 2023). The psychosexual theory has limitations, as it fails to explain the achievements and common issues that arise during the various developmental stages of age. Based on these limitations, Erik Erikson, a neo-psychoanalyst, developed stages of human social development from childhood to old age.

Early adulthood, also known as young adulthood, typically spans from the ages of twenty to thirty. Individuals in early adulthood often prefer living independently and tend to socialize with others. Previously, they had strong bonds with their peer groups, but these relationships tend to diminish over time (Simangunsong, N. 2020; Rizki, 2022). They become more selective, forming personal connections only with those who share their views. At this stage, there is a strong desire to establish personal relationships with specific individuals while remaining distant or unfamiliar with others. According to Erikson, this stage is focused on achieving intimacy with others and avoiding isolation.

To demonstrate and cultivate attachment and intimacy with others, this period is often marked by certain relationships, commonly referred to as dating. Psychosocial theory stems from Sigmund Freud's psychosexual stages. According to this theory, sexual development stages are organized by growth zones. As individuals age, sexual attraction shifts from the oral zone to the latency zone, and ultimately to the genital zone (Crain, 2014; Fredella & Sosialita, 2023). However, the psychosexual theory does not fully explain the common challenges that arise during various developmental stages. Based on these limitations, Erik Erikson, a neo-psychoanalyst, developed stages of human social development from childhood to old age.

However, if individuals lack the capacity to form effective relationships with others during this time, Erikson suggests that the maladaptive tendency that emerges is indifference, where one becomes overly free to do whatever they desire without concern for others. Erikson describes this as isolation from another perspective, or malignancy, which refers to an individual's tendency to isolate or shut themselves off from love, friendship, and society. Furthermore, feelings of anger and revenge may manifest as loneliness and isolation (Nooradia, 2016; Rizki, 2022). The primary strength needed at this stage is "love," as it involves a struggle between closeness or intimacy versus alienation or loneliness. At this stage, social agents include partners, spouses, and friends who can

build a kind of friendship to foster love and togetherness. Feelings of loneliness, alienation, and worthlessness arise when these needs are unmet (Krismawati, 2018; Rizki, 2022).

Donald Super's Career Development Theory

The concept of life-space emphasizes that individuals go through various life roles that mutually influence their career development. These roles include being a student, worker, family member, community member, and others. These roles interact and change in dominance throughout the life cycle (D. Brown, 2002; Nisa et al., 2025). The self-concept is central to Donald Super's theory, which emphasizes that a career is an expression of an individual's self. The self-concept encompasses an individual's perception of their interests, values, abilities, and life goals. Throughout the life cycle, the self-concept develops through educational experiences, work, and social interactions. Career choice is viewed as an individual's effort to actualize their self-concept. When individuals are able to choose a job that aligns with their self-concept, they tend to feel satisfied and motivated to grow. Thus, career development is not only about job adjustment, but also about how individuals discover their identity through the work roles they take on. The core of Super's theory is the idea that a career is an expression of the individual's self-concept, which includes values, interests, abilities, and aspirations (D. Brown, 2002; Nisa et al., 2025). Career choices reflect how individuals view themselves in the context of work. The self-concept is the result of a complex interaction between physical and mental growth, personal experiences, as well as environmental characteristics and stimuli (Sharma, 2016; Nisa et al., 2025).

Donald Super's theory explains that career development includes five stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. Analysis shows that parental involvement plays an important role in each stage: Establishment Stage (25-44 Years): At this stage, individuals establish themselves in the workforce. Parental moral support helps individuals face the early challenges of their careers (Putri et al., 2025). This concept refers to an individual's ability to make realistic career decisions according to their developmental stage. Maturity in this context includes an individual's understanding of their interests and abilities, awareness of available career options, and the ability to plan career steps strategically. Career-mature individuals are better able to face challenges in the workforce with greater flexibility and adaptability. This maturity also plays a crucial role in helping individuals navigate career transitions, such as job or industry changes. With a high level of career maturity, individuals are more confident in making career decisions that align with their long-term goals. A career is an expression of an individual's self-concept, encompassing their values, interests, abilities, and aspirations (D. Brown, 2002; Nisa et al., 2025).

Barbara Fredrickson's Positive Emotion Theory

Positive emotions are a unique direct response to something meaningful to an individual and represent temporary pleasure (Barbara, 2001; Yuliastri, 2022). Barbara outlines the most frequently felt emotions and then shifts to the less frequently felt ones, including: joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love (Barbara, 2013; Yuliastri, 2022).

Jeffrey Arnett's Emerging Adulthood Theory

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, an American psychologist, states that emerging adulthood is a term for a group of individuals who are transitioning from adolescence to young adulthood, typically aged 18 to 29 years (Arnett, 2000; Angelica, 2023). The pressures and demands experienced from the environment cause individuals to undergo an identity crisis (Shiddiq, 2021; Angelica, 2023). Robbins and Wilner (in Thorspecken, 2005) say that an identity crisis is a condition where individuals realize that important things in their lives have been lost. In the emerging adulthood phase, individuals begin to have their own perspectives and mindsets that differ from the adolescent phase. The norms typically followed during adolescence can no longer be fully applied in adulthood, causing individuals to often mask their confusion during the transition from adolescence to early adulthood by adopting an ambivalent attitude (Thorspecken, 2005; Shiddiq, 2021; Angelica, 2023).

Young adulthood is said to have good sleep quality when sleeping without disturbances for approximately 7-8 hours a day (Nadya & Wati, 2023; Angelica, 2023). In the phase of emerging adulthood, the term refers to the transition between adolescence and young adulthood, marking a developmental stage from late teens to the twenties or occurring at the ages of 18-25 (Arnett, 2000; Fredella & Sosialita, 2023). Emerging adulthood does not view themselves as teenagers, nor do they see themselves as fully adults. According to Arnett, emerging adulthood is a "feeling in-between" period (Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman, & Keshet, 2018; Fredella & Sosialita, 2023).

This period guides individuals away from adolescence and towards taking responsibility for themselves while still being connected to parents, family, and close friends. Emerging adulthood cannot be categorized as an adolescent developmental stage because, during this phase, individuals have the independence to make decisions while financial instability causes them to still rely on their parents (Arnett & Tanner, 2006; Fredella & Sosialita, 2023). Emerging adulthood is an age for self-exploration, particularly in love and work, and is a time when communication and affection from parents begin to decline (Parra, Oliva, & Reina, 2015).

Exploration of self-identity, romantic relationships, and establishing romantic connections with the opposite sex characterize this stage, where romantic relationships often involve "dating," while work and education present significant challenges due to frequent changes and instability.

The abundance of life choices can cause emerging adults to feel confused about making the right decisions and how to face them. Emerging adults are required to compete fiercely to survive, which causes them to feel pressured. Those who cannot compete and cope with changes will experience negative responses or a personal crisis known as a quarter-life crisis (Fatchurrahmi & Urbayatum, 2022; Angelica, 2023).

Kashdan and Rottenberg's Psychological Flexibility Theory

Mental health is a fundamental aspect of human life that influences how individuals think, feel, and act in response to various life situations (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010; Umar et al., 2025). Mental health awareness refers to the level of understanding an individual has regarding their psychological condition, including the ability to recognize symptoms of mental disorders, manage emotions adaptively, and take proactive steps to seek professional help if needed. This awareness plays a crucial role in guiding individuals toward recovery and sustainable psychological well-being (Putri et al., 2023; Rudianto, 2022; Umar et al., 2025).

Previous Research Relevant to the Research Topic

A study conducted in 2019 explained that, physically, early adulthood represents a phase where individuals are prepared to take on roles and responsibilities, accept their position in society, and engage in social relationships within it. During this period, individuals begin forming relationships with the opposite sex, marked by the establishment of a household. Additionally, this stage is considered a time of dependency on changing values and emotional tension, which often manifests as fear and anxiety about the successes and failures experienced when solving problems. At this stage, school counselors and therapists are expected to guide clients to help them achieve their developmental tasks happily and without difficulties.

A study conducted in 2021 revealed that early adulthood is a challenging period because individuals generally experience anxiety, doubt, and confusion about the direction of their lives. Psychological differences among individuals also influence their developmental tasks. One psychological disorder is maladaptive daydreaming (MD), which involves excessive fantasizing. Individuals with MD tend to view themselves as worthless and have low self-esteem. First, this occurs due to a lack of motivation, attention, and support from close ones, especially family. Second, it happens because individuals struggle to face reality, especially when fulfilling their developmental tasks and determining life goals during early adulthood.

Research conducted in 2023 classified early adulthood as ages 20-40. In this period, roles and responsibilities become greater, and developmental tasks of early adulthood emerge, such as the desire to choose a life partner, the need for similarity and understanding, thinking about careers or jobs, and much more. During this time, problems begin to arise, both physical and social, in early

adulthood individuals. One of these issues is the emergence of a hedonistic lifestyle, following foreign cultural trends, along with adapting to developmental tasks such as pursuing education and careers, whether in the form of success or failure, choosing to marry or remain single, and withdrawing from the community. The study found that many individuals in early adulthood often experience these issues due to difficulties in emotional regulation. The research revealed that many people resolve problems emotionally during the transition to early adulthood (Sekar Indah Aryati, 2021).

Methods

This study uses a qualitative research method. According to Bongdan and Taylor, as cited by Moleong, qualitative research involves descriptive data, either oral or written, from individuals or behaviors that are observed (Moleong, 2010). The research employs a literature review approach (Safarudin et al., 2023). A literature review is a research method that involves gathering information and data through various materials from libraries, including reference books, articles, journals, notes, and previous research findings, conducted systematically by collecting, processing, and synthesizing the data to answer the raised research problems (Sari & Asmendri, 2020).

Primary data sources are obtained through scholarly journals, books related to Developmental Psychology, and notes, while secondary data sources are obtained through direct observation of the subjects, specifically individuals in the early adulthood stage. The data analysis technique used is content analysis. Content analysis is a research technique that involves analyzing and understanding texts objectively, systematically, and qualitatively (Lupi & Nurdin, 2016).

The steps in the literature review research, according to Kuhlthau (2002), as cited by Mirzaqon and Purwoko (2017), are as follows (Sari & Asmendri, 2020): topic selection, information exploration, determining the research focus, collecting data sources, preparing data presentation, and report preparation (Siregar et al., 2022).

Result

Physical Development in Early Adulthood

1. Biological Aging in Early Adulthood

According to Arking (2006), throughout childhood and adolescence, the body grows larger and stronger, coordination improves, and the sensory systems become more efficient at gathering information. Once the body's structure reaches its maximum capacity and efficiency, biological aging (or senescence) begins to occur (Berk, 2012). Biological aging results from a combination of many causes, some of which operate at the DNA level, others

at the cellular level, and still others at the tissue, organ, and overall body level. At the age of 20, an individual is at the peak of strength, endurance, sensory sharpness, and immune system function. However, after the next two decades, the body will age and enter middle and late adulthood, during which more noticeable declines will occur (Berk, 2012).

a. Aging at the DNA and Cellular Levels

Contemporary explanations of biological aging at the DNA and cellular levels consist of two main types: (1) explanations that emphasize the programmed impact of certain genes, and (2) explanations that highlight the cumulative effect of random events that damage genetic components and cells. Each of these perspectives has its proponents, and it is likely that a combination of both may ultimately prove to be true (Berk, 2012).

According to Cevenini et al., as cited by Kerber et al. and Mitchell et al., genetic programmed aging is supported by studies on kinship that show that longevity is an inherited family trait. Individuals with long-lived parents tend to have a longer lifespan as well. The lifespan of identical twins is generally more similar compared to that of fraternal twins. Rather than directly inheriting longevity, individuals may inherit one or more risk factors that influence their chances of living longer or shorter lives, such as grip strength, respiratory function, blood pressure, and bone density (Berk, 2012).

b. Aging at the Tissue and Organ Levels

According to Schneider, as cited by Wickens, in the cross-linkage theory of aging, over time, the protein fibers that make up the body's connective tissue form bonds or linkages with each other. When these normally separate fibers connect, the tissue becomes less elastic, leading to negative outcomes such as the loss of flexibility in organs such as the skin, clouding of the eye lens, arterial blockages, and kidney damage. Like other aspects of aging, cross-linking can be mitigated by external factors such as exercise, regular dietary habits, vitamin-rich foods, and low-fat nutrition (Berk, 2012).

2. Health and Physical Changes in Early Adulthood

Most young adults are at the peak of their health, strength, energy, endurance, and motor function. Visual acuity becomes very prominent at the age of 20-40 years. The senses of taste, smell, and sensitivity to pain and temperature generally persist until at least the age of 45. However, hearing gradually, especially for high-pitched sounds, starts to decline from adolescence and becomes more noticeable after the age of 25, some say at the age of 30

(Papalia & Anwar, 2008). Below is a table of physical changes or developments due to aging that start occurring in young adults (Berk, 2012).

Table 1. Table of Physical Changes Due to Aging

Organ or System	Time of Change	Description
Vision	From age 30	As the lens hardens and thins, the ability to focus on nearby objects decreases. The yellowing of the lens, weakening of the muscles controlling the pupil, and the dulling of the vitreous (a gel-like substance filling the eye) reduce the amount of light reaching the retina, impairing the ability to distinguish colors and to see at night. Visual sharpness, or accuracy in differentiation, gradually diminishes.
Hearing	From age 30	Sensitivity to sound decreases, particularly for high frequencies, but gradually extends to all frequencies. Changes in men occur at twice the rate compared to women.
Touch	Gradual	The loss of touch receptors reduces sensitivity in the hands, especially at the fingertips.
Cardiovascular	Gradual	As the heart muscle becomes stiffer, maximum heart rate decreases, reducing the heart's ability to meet the body's oxygen needs during physical exertion. As arteries tighten and accumulate plaque, blood flow to body cells decreases.
Respiratory	Gradual	During physical activity, respiratory capacity decreases and breathing rate increases. The stiffening of connective tissue in the lungs and chest muscles makes it harder for the lungs to achieve full volume.
Immune System	Gradual	Shrinking of the thymus gland hinders the maturation of T cells and the ability of B cells to fight disease, affecting immune response.
Muscles	Gradual	As muscle-stimulating nerves deteriorate, the number of fast-twitch muscle fibers (responsible for speed and explosive strength) decreases, while slow-twitch muscle fibers (which support endurance) increase in thickness. Tendons and ligaments (which transfer muscle action) tighten, reducing speed and flexibility of movement.

Skeleton	Late 30s	Cartilage in the joints thins and cracks, causing the bone ends beneath to erode. New cells continue to accumulate in the outer layers of the bones, and bone mineral content decreases. Bones become wider but more porous, weakening the skeleton and making it more prone to fractures. Changes occur faster in women than in men.
Reproductive System	In women, accelerates after age 35; in men, from age 40	Fertility issues (such as difficulty conceiving and giving birth on time) and the risk of having a baby with chromosomal abnormalities increase.
Skin	Gradual	The outer layer of the skin (epidermis) loosens its attachment to the dermis (middle layer), and the hypodermis (inner layer) thins; fat cells in the hypodermis decrease. As a result, the skin becomes loose, less elastic, and wrinkled. Changes occur more rapidly in women than in men.
Hair	From age 35	Hair turns gray and thins.

Sumber: Arking, 2006: Whalley, 2001: Whitbourne, 1996.

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that, in young adulthood, the foundation for physical function for the rest of life's span has been established. In their 20s and 30s, the level of health problems is much lower compared to later in life, making young adulthood a prime time to prevent future health problems. However, according to Sanker, as cited by Elizabeth, health is also partly influenced by genes and behavioral factors such as what they eat, whether they get enough sleep, how physically active they are, and whether they smoke, drink, or use drugs, which greatly contribute to health and well-being now and in the future. Several lifestyle factors directly related to health and fitness include nutrition, cholesterol, obesity, sleep, physical activity, and alcohol and drug consumption. Indirect influences such as socio-economic status, race or ethnicity, gender, and relationships also affect health and physical condition. Additionally, poverty and racial discrimination contribute to health disparities.

Emotional Development in Early Adulthood

Young adulthood is a developmental stage occurring from approximately 18 to 40 years of age. During this stage, individuals undergo significant emotional changes in response to life transitions, such as entering the workforce, forming romantic relationships, and achieving financial independence. Emotional regulation abilities improve compared to adolescence because

individuals have developed skills to manage stress and adapt to more complex social demands (Santrock, 2021). Emotions in young adults are influenced by biological, social, and psychological factors. At this age, individuals tend to seek meaning in life and build stable relationships, influencing their emotional well-being (Gross, 2014). Additionally, increased cognitive capacity contributes to better emotional management than in previous ages (Kring & Sloan, 2020). In the emotional development of young adults, individuals begin to achieve a balance between rationality and emotionality. They are better able to recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions effectively. This is influenced by increasingly diverse life experiences and enhanced social and communication skills that enable them to form more stable and meaningful relationships (Pessoa, 2021).

3. Factors Influencing Emotional Development in Early Adulthood

Several key factors influencing emotional development in young adulthood include:

a. Life Experiences

According to Barbara L. Fredrickson's theory on the role of positive emotions in individual development, positive emotions such as happiness, gratitude, and hope play a crucial role in building psychological resilience and enhancing a person's capacity to face life's challenges. In the context of life experiences, individuals who face various challenges, such as difficulties in education, work, or social relationships, develop better skills in managing their emotions. This occurs because each challenge provides an opportunity for individuals to learn, adapt, and strengthen their emotional resilience. Fredrickson also emphasizes that positive experiences gained from challenges can broaden an individual's perspective and shape a more flexible and optimistic mindset. Thus, diverse life experiences not only shape a person's mindset but also contribute to their emotional and psychological well-being (Fredrickson, 2001).

b. Social Environment

According to Scherer's theory in *Social and Cultural Aspects of Emotional Expression*, the social environment plays an important role in shaping an individual's emotional well-being. Interpersonal relationships, whether with partners, friends, or colleagues, provide emotional support that can help individuals face life's challenges. Scherer emphasizes that a person's emotional expression is heavily influenced by social and cultural factors, which ultimately determine how individuals interact and build relationships with others. Individuals with good social skills tend to be better able to express emotions appropriately and understand the emotions of others. This

allows them to build supportive social networks, where they can effectively receive and provide emotional support. Scherer also highlights that a healthy social environment helps individuals manage stress, increase self-confidence, and strengthen their psychological well-being. Therefore, positive interpersonal relationships and good social skills are key factors in creating optimal emotional well-being (Scherer, 2020).

c. Mental Health

According to Kashdan & Rottenberg's theory in Psychological Flexibility and Emotional Well-Being, mental health is significantly influenced by psychological factors such as academic stress, work pressure, and challenges in romantic relationships. When individuals face excessive pressure, their ability to regulate emotions can be impaired, potentially leading to emotional imbalance. Kashdan and Rottenberg highlight the concept of psychological flexibility, which is the individual's ability to adapt to changes and manage emotions adaptively in various situations. Individuals with good psychological flexibility tend to be better able to cope with stress without experiencing significant negative impacts on their mental health. Conversely, individuals with low levels of psychological flexibility are more vulnerable to mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. These mental health disorders can hinder the development of healthy emotions because individuals experiencing anxiety or depression often have rigid thinking patterns, find it difficult to manage stress, and tend to avoid emotional challenges. As a result, they struggle to build stable emotional well-being. Therefore, it is important for individuals to develop psychological flexibility to enhance their mental resilience and emotional well-being (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2021).

Social Development in Early Adulthood

Social development during young adulthood is an important process that reflects the transition of individuals from adolescent dependency to more stable social independence. Between the ages of 18-40, individuals begin to form more intimate and meaningful relationships, build a wide social network, and take on social roles within family, work, and society. This period is often characterized by identity exploration, social role exploration, and emotional challenges such as a quarter-life crisis. Jeffrey Arnett states that "Emerging adulthood is a time of life when many different remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain" (Arnett, 2000). Diana Putri Arini's research emphasizes that the success in forming intimate relationships is an important foundation for building a healthy family and social community (Arini, 2021). One of the

most common social development challenges during young adulthood is the quarter-life crisis, which is a feeling of identity crisis and uncertainty about the future that usually occurs in the 20s. Erik Erikson states that the main task at this stage is facing the conflict between intimacy versus isolation, where individuals must be able to establish emotional closeness with others without losing their identity. In this context, social relationships are not limited to romantic relations but also include friendships, professional relationships, and community social interactions (Erikson, 1968).

Career Development in Early Adulthood

Young adulthood is a phase of human development that occurs between the ages of 20 and 30, marked by a significant transition from adolescence to adulthood, including in terms of career, social relationships, and individual responsibilities (Santrock, 2021). According to Super's career development theory, young adulthood falls within the exploration and establishment stage. In this phase, individuals actively explore various career possibilities, try different jobs, and begin to commit to specific professional choices (Super et al., 2020). Career exploration is conducted through formal education, internship experiences, and part-time work that provide insights into the working world (Wang & Zheng, 2020). Additionally, in the initial implementation phase, individuals begin to stabilize their positions in the workplace and strive to achieve optimal performance in their jobs (Hartung & Taber, 2021).

This exploration phase also becomes a crucial stage for strengthening career identity, which is an individual's understanding of their interests, values, and potential related to the working world (Erikson, 1968). A strong career identity plays a role in enhancing motivation, persistence in facing work challenges, and long-term career satisfaction (Hirschi, 2020). There are both internal and external factors influencing career development in young adults. Internal factors include self-efficacy, career interests, and personal values. Self-efficacy, or the confidence in completing work tasks, is a major predictor of career success (Lent & Brown, 2020). Moreover, clear career interests can help individuals filter various job options that align with their personality and aspirations (Nota & Rossier, 2021). Personal values such as the desire to contribute to society, work-life balance, and the need for recognition also influence career direction and satisfaction (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Meanwhile, external factors impacting these aspects include environmental factors such as social support, economic conditions, work culture, access to education and training, and the dynamics of the labor market.

Sexual Development in Early Adulthood

According to Erickson, someone classified as being in early adulthood is in a stage of warm, close, and communicative relationships that involve sexual contact. If intimacy fails, they will

experience isolation (feeling excluded from others, loneliness, blaming themselves for being different from others). Early adulthood is the beginning phase where a person starts forming intimate relationships with the opposite sex (Ritonga, 2016). When puberty begins to be felt, individuals, both men and women, will experience attraction with a sense of "shyness." Then they usually start forming primary relationships that involve emotions gradually. It begins with harmonious relationships, then dating, and eventually into the form of romance (a deep and meaningful paired relationship). L. Kirkendall wrote an essay about some signs of love that suggest feelings resembling love but are not love, as follows (Ritonga, 2016):

- a. Enjoying dating is often misinterpreted as love. During dating periods, feelings of happiness often arise. These fleeting feelings are often generalized to imply that the "lover" is compatible with each other in various aspects of life. In fact, it is not certain that they will agree on matters such as finances, raising children, and so on. A mature love life must have compatibility and enjoyment in many things (Ritonga, 2016).
- b. The presence of pride is interpreted as love. Often, someone feels proud if they can win the heart of their group's idol. Men or women compete to quickly win hearts with excessive pride. That feeling of pride is not love, but merely a sense of satisfaction in defeating or subduing the group's idol (Ritonga, 2016).
- c. Sexual attraction is misinterpreted as love. The gaze upon body curves, the arousal from physical contact, the shadows of pleasure in marital life, all make someone feel attracted to a specific member of the opposite sex, wanting to get married quickly. Such sexual lust attraction is not love, but merely the temptation of lust (Ritonga, 2016).
- d. The desire to rebel is misinterpreted as love. Young Indonesian men in this transition of values often face obstacles, particularly from parents, in gaining autonomy and freedom, leading them to want to rebel. They believe that having a partner who can become a lifelong companion will allow them to break free from parental constraints, hence their desire to marry quickly. They think they are in love, but it is merely a push to rebel (Ritonga, 2016).
- e. The desire to possess can be misinterpreted as love. The fact is that the desire to possess or jealousy is an embodiment of the desire to control and monopolize, or symptoms of indecisiveness. This is often considered as love, whereas true love contains freedom for the beloved and also protection to prevent misuse of freedom (Ritonga, 2016).
- f. The desire to defeat others can be misinterpreted as love. Dating among men often leads to competition. As an expression of dominance, they want to be regarded as the winner or

"champ." They want to defeat their rivals. This is often considered as love, when in fact it is merely competition (Ritonga, 2016).

- g. The desire to maintain prestige is often misinterpreted as love. Often men lose in competition or are left by their lovers, prompting them to quickly find a replacement and rush to marry. By doing so, it is as if they are saying: "I also don't love you, you mean nothing to me. See for yourself, I will marry someone else." This person believes it is love, but it's just to maintain their sense of pride (Ritonga, 2016).
- h. Giving gifts can be misconstrued as love. Gifts inherently bring joy and also represent a pure declaration of love, but gifts don't always mean love. There is a possibility that the gift is a subtle way to compel the recipient to form a close relationship and ensure its continuation. Such gifts usually come from unrequited love that typically occurs on the giver's side. The recipient feels happy and mistaken it as love, whereas in reality, it is just a feeling of being "obligated" or "reluctant," or both (Ritonga, 2016).

Discussion

This research is a development of previous studies, as the results of previous research conducted in 2019 explained that in adulthood, individuals have roles and responsibilities and are recognized in society and involved in social relationships within it. During this period, a person has a connection to the opposite sex. Additionally, this period is called a time of dependence on changes in values and emotional tension begins to emerge, often placed on fears and worries about success and failure experienced in solving problems. The focus of this research is more on the role of guidance counselors and counselors in directing their clients.

Then, the second study conducted in 2021 stated that early adulthood is a difficult period because concerns start to grow and individuals begin to be confused in determining their life's direction. This makes individuals susceptible to their developmental tasks and vulnerable to psychological disorders, namely maladaptive daydreaming (MD), which is the activity of excessive daydreaming. Individuals with maladaptive daydreaming (MD) tend to view themselves as less valuable and have low self-confidence.

The last study, conducted in 2023, with research results stating that early adulthood is a time when a person has increasingly greater roles and responsibilities. At that time, issues from physical to social began to emerge, including hedonism, adaptation to developmental tasks such as pursuing education and career in terms of success or failure, the choice to marry or remain single, and withdrawing from the community. In addition, during this time there is difficulty in emotional control. Compared to previous research, the 2019 study focused more on physical, social, and

emotional development in early adulthood as well as the role of guidance counselors and counselors in addressing client issues. The second study in 2021 focused primarily on psychological disorders faced by individuals in early adulthood. The last study conducted in 2023 focused on issues that arise in early adulthood, whether physical, social, or emotional development. Compared to previous research, the latest findings from this study examine early adulthood development by not only focusing on physical, social, and emotional development but also exploring two important aspects, career and sexual development, which are sometimes sidelined and not much discussed in other scientific journals.

On the other hand, this study uses a qualitative approach with literature study methods taken from scientific journals, books, and notes. The researcher takes a broader approach by looking at the general picture of early adulthood, namely PAI UIN Sunan Kalijaga students. Based on findings from experts, the researcher discovered new knowledge that is rarely revealed in public. In physical development, the researcher found that organs age at different times, not simultaneously. In emotional development, it was found that emotions are also influenced by the past, the surrounding environment, and mental health. In social development, the researcher takes theory from Hurlock which states that in this phase, early adulthood experiences job and partner exploration, with a tendency to try various possibilities before making a decision. Thus, the researcher hopes that in young adulthood, there is a need for strong efforts and strategies to overcome life problems that will inevitably make them fall. In career development, the researcher found that this development is very much related to environmental factors, starting from social support, economic conditions, work culture, and access to education and training. And in sexual development, the researcher highlights writings from L. Kirkendall which discuss things often considered love, but in essence, they are not love.

The results of this research indicate that further research is needed to discuss this adult development, as this topic is very interesting to discuss and also because of the rapidly advancing times. It is hoped that there will be new findings that are more relevant. In addition, this study aims to identify young adult development and contribute to future research.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that early adulthood is a complex developmental phase that encompasses physical, emotional, social, career, and sexual aspects. Individuals at this stage are at their physical peak but begin to experience biological changes that mark the onset of the aging process. Emotionally, they demonstrate more mature self-regulation abilities and engage in a search for meaning in life. The social aspect shows a tendency to form intimate and stable

relationships, as well as an increase in independence in making life decisions. In terms of career development, young adults focus on exploring and consolidating their professional identity, while in sexual development, there is a drive to establish meaningful emotional and physical relationships.

These findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential faced by individuals in early adulthood. This study has limitations as it did not involve direct empirical data, thus further research using both quantitative and qualitative field approaches is needed to explore the subjective experiences of individuals in greater depth. The practical implications of this study can serve as a foundation for the design of psychological intervention programs, career counseling, and life education that are relevant for young adults.

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