

SOPHOMORE CRISIS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN JAKARTA

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Abstract

The sophomore crisis is one of the five existential crises that can occur in adolescence to young adulthood. This crisis is related to identity issues about the future. This research aims to determine the description of the sophomore crisis among college students in Jakarta. This research is descriptive quantitative research. The sampling technique used is convenience sampling. In this study, there were 51 respondents consisting of 20 males and 31 females who were students with an age range between 18 years and 24 years. Data collection techniques were carried out using measuring instruments compiled by research based on three domains of the Sophomore crisis: commitment to sources of meaning in life, difficulty in choosing a career path, and fear of the need for a safe plan to reach the highest potential. Data analysis in this study used a descriptive statistical approach. The results of this study showed that 27 respondents experienced a sophomore crisis with a high category. Meanwhile, 24 respondents were classified as experiencing a crisis with a low category. This research also showed that male and female respondents have a second-year crisis stage in the same category, which is classified as high. The researcher suggests strengthening the academic guidance process with lecturers, and the department can carry out monitoring activities based on semesters.

Keywords: *Sophomore crisis, University students, Jakarta*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Going to university is one of the crucial things to get life settled ahead. Parents will spend money on their child's education which they believe would determine the outcome of the future research made by HSBC in 2017 stated that, on average, parents would spend over \$18,433 from primary school to undergraduate level (HSBC, 2017). That said, many students choose their major based on what is needed in the career industry and what could make them strive in the future. They were asked or sometimes forced to choose a major not to their liking or passion but more on what they think they need to be someone successful and would have a stable life. Hence this resulted in most university students feeling like the major they took was not suitable for them. In 2017, ICCN (Indonesia Career Center Network) surveyed university students choosing their majors, and it turns out that 87% of the students chose the wrong major, as it is stated by EndroPrasetyo Aji, Talent Mapping director in IHRF (Indonesia Human Resource Forum) conference in Jakarta (Berita Satu &Makmun, 2017). An 18-year-old deciding on what to study in college after high school seems like an easy thing to do. However, they learned that choosing their major will not only affect their four years of University life will predetermine their future career. A theory called Emerging Adulthood by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett stated that from the age of 18 until 25 is a phase called Emerging Adulthood where they are not considered adolescence or young adulthood. In this theory, it is said that "Emerging adults' educational choices and experiences explore similar questions. In their educational paths, they try various possibilities to prepare them for different kinds of future work. College students often change majors more than once, especially in their first two years, as they try on possible occupational futures, discard them, and pursue others." (Arnett, 2000, 469-480). So being in a phase called Emerging Adulthood, there are still many things that they want to try to find their one's identity. Another theory that fits this situation is Super's Career Theory in the stage of Exploration, where ages 15 to 24 are "trying out" through classes, work experience, and hobbies.

It is the stage in life where they have tentative choices and time to develop skills. As the writer starts to enter his last year of university at the age of 20, he starts thinking about his next life plan. He thinks about what kind of job he should apply for later on, what country he should work in, what he should study next, which degree he should get a master's degree in, etc. However, these sets of questions keep on evolving into more profound questions. He starts to think about whether he is suitable or capable of working in the field that he studied, how it will affect his life later on, and whether the field that he is studying right now is what he wants to pursue in the future, what if jobs outside the field he is studying at are the better choice in life and many more. The writer starts to ponder on his decision made in the past and is now contemplating his future choices. With all of these questions and thoughts in his mind, he starts to question his purpose, meaning, and what life means to him.

The current situation he is currently facing is called an existential crisis, or to be precise, it has been called a sophomore crisis. There are some other cases similar to what the writer has experienced. A girl was a biology nursing major at university, for she enjoyed science and helping people and decided that having a nurse as a career would be her best choice. However, as she was going through her sophomore year, she felt that it was not suitable for her and realized that doing practical and hands-on work as a nurse was not her thing. She then listed the things she likes to do and rethought her choices. Ultimately, she chooses psychology and neurology at a new university feeling better (Andrews, 2016, pp. 104-109). Due to the few recorded cases and research on sophomore crises, there are not many sophomore crisis cases written in journals or books. The sophomore crisis is one of the "existential crises" faced by humanity among four other crises (Commons et al., 2020, 2): the early teenage crisis, the adult crisis, the midlife crisis, and the later-life crisis. The sophomore crisis is the first existential crisis through which an individual begins to question the meaning of their life and how to find such meaning. Suppose this sophomore crisis is recognized but not resolved. In that case, they can feel lost and panicked, resulting in depression caused by the inability to find meaning in life. It is also stated that the sophomore crisis is one of the significant sources of depression. On the other hand, when someone knows what they want to do in the early stages of life, they will not suffer the sophomore crisis. Instead, it would be a poorly grounded guess, or it will be the right one for them.

In this case, it is about how a young adult would experience the sophomore crisis while choosing what they want to do in life or career, specifically among university students in Jakarta. In Jakarta, there are 4,670 Higher Education institutes in Jakarta and 1,348,156 students enrolled out of 8,043,480 students in the whole nation by 2018, which is 16.76% and the most out of all provinces in Indonesia. (Kemendikbud, 2018). People from all across the nation would move and stay in Jakarta to study as education institutes are more advanced and well-equipped. Getting an education in Jakarta would usually associate with getting a good job and earning a nice amount of money for a better economy. The researcher can be considered to be going through a Sophomore Crisis. As the pandemic hit, he got more time to reflect on what he wanted to do in the future, mainly focusing on what career path he wanted to take. He got confused and became more anxious about the future, for what he is taking right now is not what he wants to do in the future, and there are a lot of other choices he can make. However, not pursuing the career he studied would lead him to more complicated difficulties such as time, money, and others. Hence he started to feel desperate and down.

This research aims to see what the sophomore crisis looks like among university students in Jakarta. This research can open up further research about the sophomore crisis in Indonesia, and the sophomore world crisis research is few. It can inform the public about the sophomore crisis as something that exists and is essential to tend to. The research can also raise the urgency of the importance of resolving the sophomore crisis as one of the earlier crises in life so that individuals will not regret their life choices and meaningfulness in life as they reach certain ages, and it will be easier for individuals to face this kind of questions that can lead to crises.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method is quantitative and descriptive research. This study aimed to determine the description of the Sophomore Crisis among students in Jakarta. Data was gathered from 51 participants who are all active university students in Jakarta ages 18-24 years old, which is in the emerging adulthood phase but below the Quarter Life Crisis age, which is 25. The participants' academic level varies from Freshman through Senior year. Characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1 (Participant's Gender), Table 2 (Participant's Age), Table 3 (Academic Levels), dan Table 4 (GPA). The research will be conducted with Non-Probability Convenience. The researcher uses Convenience Sampling because it is the easiest and best way to collect data during this pandemic.

Table 1. Participant's Gender Demographic

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	20	39%
Female	31	61%
Total	51	100%

As shown in the table above, there are 20 (39.2%) male participants and 31 (60.8%) female participant in this research.

Table 2. Participant's Age Demographic

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	1	2%
19	7	14%
20	17	33%
21	15	29%
22	7	14%
23	2	4%
24	2	4%
Total	51	100%

The ranges of participant's age are from 18 – 24 years old. The youngest age out of all participants is 18 years old, with 1

participant (1.96%), followed by 7 (13.73%) 19-year-old participants, 17 (33.33%) 20-year-old participants, 15 (29.41%) 21-year-old participants, 7 (13.73%) 22-year-old participants, 2 (3.92%) 23-year-old participants, and 2 (3.92%) 24-year-old participants.

Table 3. Academic Levels Demographic

Academic Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Freshman (1 st -2 nd Semester)	5	10%
Sophomore (3 rd -4 th Semester)	10	20%
Junior (5 th -6 th Semester)	9	18%
Senior (7 th Semester & Above)	27	52%
Total	51	100%

From what is shown in the table, there are 5 (9.8%) participants who are in their Freshmen year, 10 (19.61%) participants who are in their Sophomore year, 9 (17.65%) participants who are in their junior year and 27 (52.94%) participants who are on their Senior year.

Table 4. GPA Demographic

GPA	Frequency	Percentage
2.50-2.74	1	2%
2.75-2.99	4	8%
3.00-3.24	14	27%
3.25-3.49	16	31%
3.50-3.74	10	20%
3.75-4.00	6	12%
Total	51	100%

The ranges of the participant's GPA are from 2.50 until 3.98. There are 1 (1.96%) participant who has a GPA from 2.50 – 2.74, 4 (7.84%) participants who have GPA ranges from 2.75-2.99, 14 (27.45%) participants who have GPA ranges from 3.00-3.24, 16 (31.37%) participants who have GPA ranges from 3.25-3.49, 10 (19.61%) participants who have GPA ranges from 3.50- 3.74 and 6 (11.77%) participants that have GPA ranges from 3.75-4.00.

The author formed the Sophomore Crisis Questionnaire based on Perry's definition of Sophomore Crisis. The instrument is based on three dimensions which are: (1) Commitment to one's source of the meaning of life, (2) Difficulty in choosing a career path, and (3) Fear of needing a secure plan for reaching their highest potential. The respondent's answers showed that Cronbach's alpha was .743, which shows that the testing tool is reliable. Meanwhile, the validity test through JASP with the item-rest correlation method showed that the validity of this instrument was classified as good, indicated by 16 of the 18 items being declared valid. The item rest correlation coefficient score moves between .369 - .744.

Items in the dimension "Commitment to one's source of the meaning of life" are based on measuring the extent to which one commits to a newly found purpose/meaning of life. The second dimension, "Difficulty in choosing a career path," focuses on measuring their choice, whether they are solid on what they chose or still confused about what they want to do over hundreds of possible careers. Fear of needing a secure plan for reaching their highest potential is the third dimension, where individuals fear not succeeding in the future. It also reaches out to more targets in a shorter period.

The data will be processed statistically in JASP with a descriptive statistic approach using distribution and graphic tables.

3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 5. Sophomore Crisis Categorization Demographic

Frequency	Percentage	Categorization
27	53%	High
24	47%	Low
51	100%	

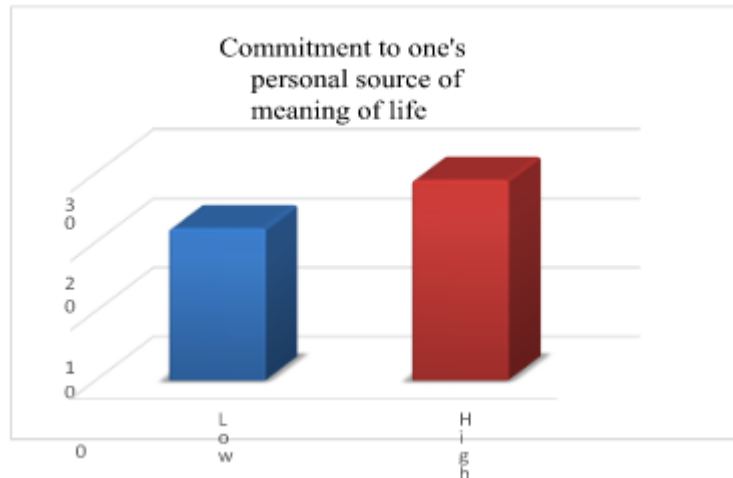
The Sophomore Crisis is divided into two categories which are high and low by using Z score. The criteria of it categorized as high or low is if the result of the Z-Score is above 0 ($X > 0$), then it will be categorized as high and on the other hand if the Z-Score is below 0 ($X < 0$), then it will be categorized as low. We can see that there are 27 (52.94%) participants with High Sophomore Crisis level and 24 (47.06%) participants with Low Sophomore Crisis level. Hence this research shows

that there are struggling with Sophomore Crisis and its number is more than people who are not struggling with Sophomore Crisis.

Table 6. Sophomore Crisis Categorization Demographic

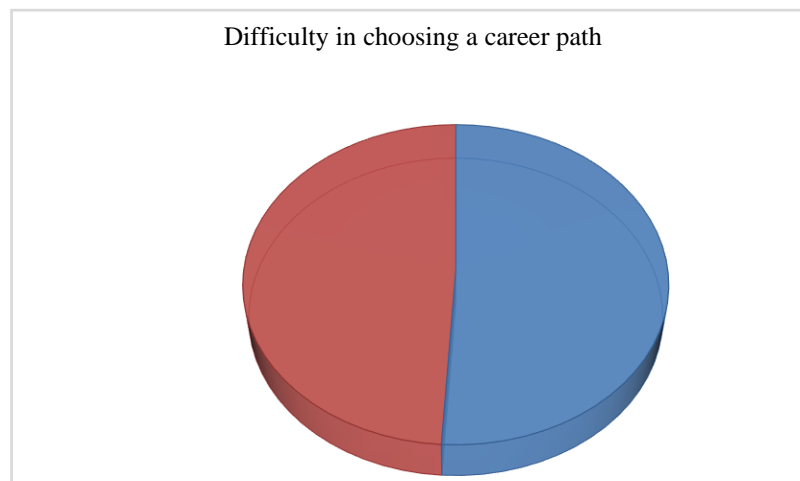
Gender	Frequency		
	High	Low	
Male	11	9	20
Female	16	15	31

There are 11 (21.65%) male participants who have high Sophomore Crisis level and 9 (17.65%) male participants who have low Sophomore Crisis level. On the other hand there are 16 (31.37%) female participants who have high Sophomore Crisis level and 15 (29.41%) female participants have low Sophomore Crisis level. This data shows that there are no differences between Sophomore Crisis by gender.



Graph 1. Dimension 1 of Sophomore Crisis

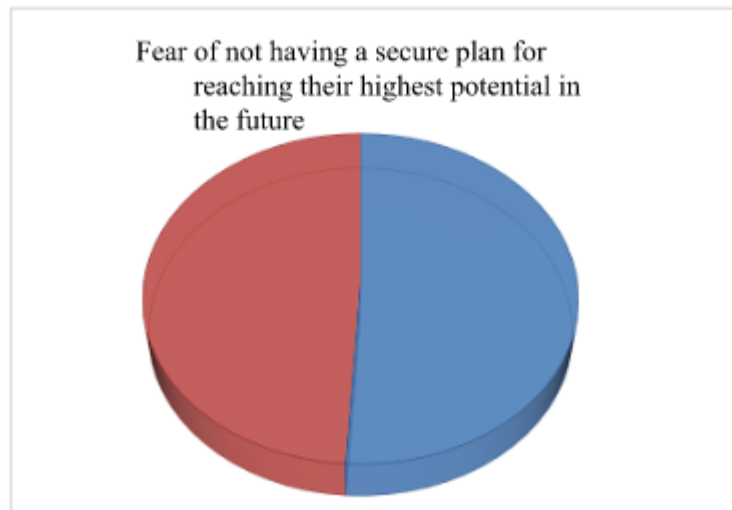
Based on graph 1, data shows that dimension 1 of the sophomore crisis, namely the commitment to one's source of the meaning of life, 29 respondents, or about 57%, is at a high level. Meanwhile, 22 respondents, or about 43%, are at a low level. This shows that most students commit to a personal source that contributes to the meaning of life. However, exploration of this aspect still needs to be done considering that there are still quite a lot of students who are in the low grade, with the percentage reaching 43%.



Graph 2. Dimension 2 of Sophomore Crisis

Based on graph 2, data shows that in the first dimension of the sophomore crisis, namely difficulty in choosing a career path, 25 respondents, or around 49%, are at a high level. Meanwhile, 26 respondents, or about 51%, are at a low level. This insignificant difference in data shows that students need assistance exploring what makes it challenging to develop a career map. In addition, an internal reflective process is needed so that students can find obstacles that make it

difficult to choose their desired career. Meanwhile, this process is also valuable for helping students find their potential talents and directions of interest, so career determination is expected to align with their potential and interests.



Graph 3. Dimension 3 of Sophomore Crisis

Based on graph 3, data shows that in dimension 1 of the sophomore crisis, namely fear of not having a secure plan for reaching their highest potential in the future, 25 respondents, or around 49%, are at a high level. Meanwhile, 26 respondents, or about 51%, are at a low level. This insignificant difference in data indicates that students need assistance in exploring the things they are afraid of to have plans for the future to reach their optimal potential. In addition, students also need to reflect internally to ensure objective information that affects their readiness to develop career plans in the future.

Table 7. Sophomore Crisis Categorization by Academic Level Demographic

Academic Level	High	Low	Percentage
Freshmen	5 (9.8%)	0 (0.0%)	9.8%
Sophomore	3 (5.88%)	7 (13.73%)	19.61%
Junior	5 (9.8%)	4 (7.84%)	17.64%
Senior	14 (27.45%)	13 (25.5%)	52.95%
Total	27	24	100%
	51		

As can be seen from the data above, there are 5 (9.8%) Freshmen level participants who have a high Sophomore Crisis level, 3 (5.88%) Sophomore level participants have a high Sophomore Crisis level, and 7 (13.73%) have a low Sophomore Crisis level, 5 (9.8%) Junior level participants have high Sophomore Crisis level and 4 (7.84%) have low Sophomore Crisis level, there are 14 (27.45%) Senior level participants who have high Sophomore Crisis level, and 13 (25.5%) have low Sophomore Crisis level.

From the data, as Freshmen, having no idea about what they will face and being exposed to new things will make them have second thoughts about their choices. After a year of introduction, most participants adjusted and continued with their choice. However, after reaching Junior and Senior, they might consider other career choices since they are still discovering new things. However, some are sure with their career choices by Senior year.

■ 4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Sophomore Crisis is present among university students in Jakarta, Indonesia, and based on the research, most students are still struggling with the sophomore Crisis 52.94%. Struggling sophomore Crisis means that they recognize that they are at a crossroads in choosing their future. When Sophomore Crisis is recognized but not resolved, they can feel lost and panicked, resulting in depression caused by the inability to find meaning in life. The other 47.06% of the other participants categorized with low Sophomore Crisis level have resolved their anxiety in this Crisis and know what to choose as a career. Based on Academic Levels, Senior-level participants are on a higher level compared with other academic levels. Based on Gender, it turns out that both male and female has a high level of Sophomore Crisis overall.

Prior research about Sophomore Crisis has yet to lead the researcher to start new and use dimensions found in the meaning of Sophomore Crisis to set up a foundation for this research. Hence this is one of the difficulties that were faced in this research. The researcher looked further into the categorization in each dimension. As was stated before, 52.94% of 51 participants are categorized

with a high Sophomore Crisis level, and 47.06% are categorized with a low Sophomore Crisis level. Having one high dimension does not necessarily affect the overall score. Out of 51 participants, 29 (56.86%) of them scored high in the Dimension of "Commitment to one's source of the meaning of life" and both in the Dimension of "Difficulty in choosing a career path" and Dimension of "Fear of not having a secure plan for reaching their highest potential in the future" has 25 (49.02%) participants who scored high in each dimension. From this data, we can say both Dimensions of "Difficulty in choosing a career path" and the Dimension of "Fear of not having a secure plan for reaching their highest potential in the future" have some influence on the overall Sophomore Crisis and Dimension 1 has a significant influence in Sophomore Crisis which is "Commitment to one's source of the meaning of life."

As seen in the data, most male and female participants scored high in Sophomore Crisis. Hence this data can tell us that the most significant influence on Sophomore Crisis is when someone cannot commit to their newly found purpose/meaning in life, which was brought up by William Perry. Many research studies show that females usually have higher anxiety than males. "Anxiety turned out to be the most prevalent and serious issue for college students, especially for female students, while a growing prevalence of depression was found among male students during college. It is significant to adopt collegiate policies reflecting the gender differentials." (Gao, W., Peng, S., & Liu, X., 2020). Then this can be explained by Donald Super's Career Developmental Theory. Super states that by making a vocational choice, people express their self-concept or understanding of themselves, which changes over time. Seek career satisfaction through work where they can express themselves and develop and implement more of their self-concept (Super's Theory, 2019). So not being able to find career satisfaction would prevent them from expressing themselves and developing and implementing themselves. This can be further reinforced by Erik Erikson's Theory of Developmental, where an individual is in the Identity Vs. Identity Confusion phase. Those who get encouragement and reinforcement through their exploration will emerge from this stage with a strong sense of self and a feeling of independence and control. Those who remain unsure of their beliefs and desires will be insecure and confused about themselves and the future.

After facing difficulties and troubles in this research, there are some suggestions that the writer would suggest for future research on the sophomore Crisis. The lack of previous research on this topic is one of the biggest challenges that the researcher faced. Due to the lack of participants, the researcher is only partially confident with the result. However, this would be a great step in getting to know Sophomore Crisis deeper. Hence, his suggestion is to gather more participants to make the overall result more stable and dependable. For the next research, the researcher would like to suggest taking an equal sample of each Gender, age, and academic level so that the results would not be lopsided to a specific age, Gender, and academic level. The researcher will suggest gathering even more sources, even from decades ago, because it can show that there will be a difference that can be compared.

The researcher also points out that having a questionnaire in their local language is a great way to capture more participants. As pointed out in the discussion, some people might need to be more comfortable using English, which leads them to not want to participate or fully understand the questions. For practical suggestions, here are some suggestions that the writer would like to give. For the Psychology Department of Bina Nusantara University, they can create a system where the university can help the students search for what they want to do in the future, not basing it on their studies. For Student Advisory Center (SAC), they can hold events and trips to various fields of work so that students who are interested and have no previous knowledge can learn and explore their interests. Also, letting students join club activities without affecting their absent quota in class would encourage them to be more active without worrying about failing a class. For University Students, please attend seminars and events where you can find out what interests you. Always seek out opportunities such as volunteering or internships where it does not have to be what you are studying but simply what you are interested in doing for the future.

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