

THE QUARTER-LIFE CRISIS EXPERIENCED BY MEGAN IN LYNN SHELTON'S *LAGGIES*

Submitted by:

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ABSTRACT

Laggies (2014) is an independent movie directed by young director Lynn Shelton and writer Andrea Siegel. *Laggies* tells the story of Megan who experiences quarter-life crisis. Quarter-life crisis is a period of constant change, instability, and identity confusion. It hits young adult in the age of early 20s until early 30s where the adolescence transforms into the adulthood. In the movie *Laggies*, the main character, Megan suffers from quarter-life crisis in which she is in her mid-20s but she does not know what she wants to do for her future. In this thesis, the writer will describe the intrinsic aspects, which are narrative and cinematography elements and extrinsic aspect of the movie which is the quarter-life crisis experienced by the character. The objective of this study is to explain the quarter-life crisis experienced by the character in the movie *Laggies*. The method used in collecting the data is library research while the approach used is exponential approach to describe the intrinsic aspects and social psychological approach to describe the extrinsic aspects. The result of this thesis is that Megan in the movie *Laggies* has finally overcome her quarter-life crisis and lived according to her interest and values of life.

Keywords: social psychological approach, character, cinematography, quarter-life crisis, identity crisis, youth and crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Thorspecken (2005:121), the quarter-life crisis is a growing phenomenon happened in American society suffered by many young adults in the age of 20s and 30s. It is a period of stress, instability and major life change. The quarter-life crisis happens when many young adults feel doubted about their future and feel like they are being trapped in their life choices.

The word 'quarter-life crisis' is first introduced by Alexander Robbins and Abby Wilner in their book *Quarterlife Crisis: The Unique Challenge in Your Twenties* (2001) as a result of Wilner's confusion about her future after graduating from college. It can be caused by several reasons such as confusion identity, frustration with relationship and career, disappointment over something, insecurity towards the future and etc.

The movie that the writer will discuss tells the story of a young adult who is in the phase of a quarter-life crisis. Megan, a character of the movie *Laggies* (2014), has many problems relating to her future career and relationship.

In accordance with the purpose of the study which is to explain about the quarter-life crisis experienced by young adults in general and by Megan in the movie *Laggies*, the writer limits the discussion into two aspects which are intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. The intrinsic aspects consist of narrative and cinematography elements. The narrative elements include the characteristic, setting and conflict. Meanwhile, the cinematography elements are about the motion picture and audio visual. The extrinsic aspects help to analyze the social issues experienced by the characters in the movie.

The writer used the method of library research in analyzing the topic by collecting the data from the movie, books and articles on the internet related to the movie and the theories. Meanwhile, the writer used the exponential approach to describe the intrinsic elements of the movie and sociological-psychological approach to analyze the extrinsic elements of the movie.

2. SYNOPSIS OF THE MOVIE *LAGGIES*

Megan (Keira Knightley) is an aimless 28 years old woman who has nothing fixed in her life. She got her advanced degree but worked as a sign girl for her father's tax advice company. One day, in her friend's wedding party, her boyfriend whom she dated for 10 years proposed her. Due to shocked and confused feeling, she ran away from the wedding party and

unexpectedly bumped into a bunch of teenagers who asked her to buy them alcohol because they were still minors. Megan happened to hang out with those teenagers until late and when she went back, when wedding party was over.

She got back home and found her boyfriend talking about the proposal and marriage again. She pretended to have a personal development seminar out of the town for a week in order to escape from the trapping situation. The next day, while driving her car to nowhere, she got a call from Annika, one of the teenagers she met, asked for Megan's help to be her mother for ten minutes to meet the school counselor but in exchange, Megan asked for Annika's help to stay at her house for a week because she had nowhere to go.

While staying at Annika's house, Megan met Annika's father, Craig. He appeared as Megan's exploration. At first, neither Megan nor Craig showed interests to each other. However, time by time, it happened that Megan had a feeling for Craig and so did he. Their relationship became more intimate than before.

The conflict happened when finally Megan confessed her real situation to Craig. He was angry and left Megan alone. Megan decided to come back to her fiancé and continue her lying by saying that her seminar was going smoothly. Then, Megan and Anthony planned to have a wedding abroad without telling anyone.

However, Anthony broke the rule by telling everyone that they would get married abroad. Megan got angry and decided to break off her relationship because she thought that they did not belong to each other anymore. After exploring her life, Megan finally came up with a new perspective and she can decide anything that is more suitable for her value and interests. In the end of this movie, she eventually chose to come to Craig and start her new life with him.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Intrinsic Aspects

3.1.1 Narrative Elements

1) Character

A character is a person who acts in a story and makes the story alive. A character behaves according to his nature and personality in a sudden and unexpected way. Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan in their book *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film (2010)* distinguish characters between major character and minor character. “Major character is the most important character in the story.” Meanwhile, minor character plays a less important role in the overall movie. Usually, they help to move the plot forward or flesh out the motivation of the major character (Barsam and Monahan, 2010: 135-136).

2) Setting

According to Barsam and Monahan (2010:138), the setting of the movie is the time and place in which the story occurs. It explains not only the time and place but also the social, educational, and cultural background of the character. There are three kinds of setting, which are setting of time, setting of place and setting of environment.

3) Conflict

Conflict is an important element in developing the story idea in the movie. Meyer (1990: 45) divides conflict into two: internal and external conflict. Internal conflict occurs between a character and his mind. Meanwhile, external conflict occurs between a character and another character or the environment.

3.1.2 Cinematography Elements

In this thesis, the writer will analyze the cinematography and sound of the movie.

1) Cinematography

Pratista (2008:2) says that cinematography can be divided into three elements, which are camera distance, framing, and picture duration. According to Bordwell & Thompson,

there are seven types of camera distances which are extreme long shot, long shot, medium long shot, medium shot, medium close-up, close-up and extreme long shot (2008:191).

2) Sound

Sound is another cinematography element of the movie. It can be divided into dialogue, music, ambience, and effect tracks (Barsam and Monahan, 2010:28). Dialogue is the speech of the characters expressing the feeling and motivation of the characters. (Barsam and Monahan, 2010:379)

3.2 Extrinsic Aspects

3.2.1 The Definition of Quarter-life Crisis

According to Alexander Robbins and Abby Wilner in their Book *Quarterlife Crisis: The Unique Challenge of Life in Your Twenties* (2001), “the quarter-life crisis is essentially a period of anxiety and uncertainty and that often accompanies the transition to adulthood.” Quarter-life crisis is a phenomenon experienced by many young adults in the age around 20s and early 30s. It is also a response to overwhelming instability, constant change, too many choices, and a panicked sense of helplessness.

3.2.2 The Causes of Quarter Life Crisis

The quarter-life crisis can happen because of many reasons, such as identity confusion; frustration with a relationship, working world, finding a suitable job or career; insecurity towards the future; disappointment over something; family and peer pressure and so on (Robbins and Wilner, 2001:3).

3.2.3 The Phases of Quarter Life Crisis

Dr. Oliver Robinson *et al* (Robinson, Wright, and Smith, 2013:9-11) from the University of Greenwich in London conducts an in-depth research about quarter-life crisis and the result shows that there are 5 phases of the quarter life crisis period, which are locked in, separation/time-out, exploration, rebuilding and developing a new life.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Intrinsic Aspects

4.1.1 Narrative Elements

1) Character

There are two kinds of character, which are major character and minor character. The major characters in this movie are Megan Burch, Anthony and Craig. Meanwhile the minor characters in this movie are Annika and Allison.

2) Setting

Setting explains about the place, time and situation of the events happened in the movie. The setting of this movie is taken in the modern era where many young adults experience quarter-life crisis because the life in modern era gives many possibilities to explore. The setting of place in this movie mostly takes place in Megan's father's house and Office and in Annika's House. The movie discusses the social environment of young adult and teenager. Megan is in those situations where in the beginning of the movie, she is still hanging out with her adult friends otherwise when she is in her quarter-life crisis period she escapes to Annika's house and starts to join the party of teenagers.

3) Conflict

In this thesis, the writer will analyze about the external conflict between the main characters and the other characters. The conflict happened between Megan and Allison, Megan and Annika, Megan and Anthony, Megan and Craig.

4.2 Extrinsic Aspects

4.2.1 The Definition of Quarter-life Crisis

The quarter-life crisis is a phenomenon experienced by many young adults in the age of 20s to 30s where they cannot figure out their future and feel anxious, confused and insecure about that. In this movie, the character Megan experiences quarter-life crisis period. She is in

her mid-20s but still cannot get a proper job and has not got married while all her friends have achieved their own future.

The quarter-life crisis is also a period of anxiety in a response to instability, constant change, too many choices and a panicked sense of helplessness. Megan shows her state of quarter-life crisis period when Anthony purposely proposes her in Allison wedding that makes Megan surprised and panic.

4.2.2 The Causes of Quarter-life Crisis

The quarter-life crisis in this movie happened because of several reasons such as family pressure, peer pressure, insecurity towards the future, disappointment over something and frustration with relationship and finding suitable job and career.

Megan gets a pressure from her mother who asks her to find a proper job rather than hanging around at her father's house and doing nothing. In addition, she also gets a pressure from Allison who asks her why she does not want to find a proper job instead of being her father's tax company sign girl and get married with her long lasting boyfriend. Due to so many pressures relating to her career, she felt anxious and insecure towards her future. Moreover, it makes her frustrated to find a suitable job and career for her.

Megan : My God, I really wanted to go to that personal development seminar because you know I'm twirling a sign for my dad, and I don't know what to do with my future.
(*Laggies*, 00.22.51 – 00.23.03)

Another factor why Megan gets her quarter-life crisis is that her disappointment over her father who cheats on her mother. That makes her more insecure and frustrated towards her relationship and it can be the reason why she cannot directly accept Anthony's proposal because her expectation to get a happy future marriage has been crushed down by her father who has an affair with someone else.

4.2.3 The Phases of Quarter-life Crisis

1) Locked in

The first phase people experienced the quarter-life crisis is that when they feel that they are being trapped by their own commitments. In this movie, that commitment is a relationship. The quarter-life crisis experienced by the character Megan in this movie is related to how Megan acts in facing her relationship with her boyfriend who asks her to get married. As the first phase of the quarter-life crisis, she feels like being trapped in her relationship by something called marriage. She feels afraid if that marriage is not something she wants.

2) Separation/ Time-out

After experiencing the locked in phase, Megan gets through the next phase of quarter-life crisis, which is separation. Separation is a period when a person starts to distance himself mentally and physically from the commitment he is in and time-out is a period when a person decides whether to have final separation or rebuilding his old commitment. In order to escape from the trapping, Megan lies to her boyfriend saying that she will go to the personal development seminar.

3) Exploration

In the phase of exploration, new commitments and goals are tried out and explored. After giving herself time off to think about her future, Megan starts to explore many possibilities that might be best for her future either for her career or relationship. In the phase of separating with her previous life and relationship, she meets Annika and her father, Craig, as her new exploration.

4) Rebuilding and Developing New Commitment

Following the exploration and terminating the old commitment, someone who experiences quarter-life crisis will build and develop a new commitment that is more focused on the interests and values of their life. By experiencing quarter-life crisis, Megan can get a new light of her life. Before, she was just a woman with no future. Nevertheless, after meeting

new people and living in a new environment, she can get time to think about her life seriously and comes out with a fixed decision. She can continue her life by rebuilding and developing her new commitment.

5. CONCLUSION

The quarter-life crisis is a social phenomenon experienced by many young adults in the age of 20s to 30s. Young adults experiencing quarter-life crisis sometimes feel anxious, confused, and insecure towards their future due to the availability of many choices and possibilities. The character Megan in *Laggies* gets to experience the crisis period because she is in her mid-20s but she has no proper job yet, and still has not got married. The causes of her quarter-life crisis are not only the pressure from family and friends related to career and marriage but also her frustration with her relationship and finding a suitable career for her.

Megan gets to experience the phases of quarter-life crisis by her confusion over her relationship with her boyfriend. After she gets through the locked-in phase, she tries to separate herself from her previous life and explore many possibilities available. Eventually, she comes up with a decision to terminate her previous commitment, then rebuild and develop a new commitment for her future.

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