# Rumination, Anxiety and Existential Crisis. The Mediating Role of Coping Skills among University Students.

**ALEENA FAROOQ**

**03-275232-001**

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Science (Clinical Psychology)**

**Supervisor: Dr. Urooj Sadiq**

**Department of Professional Psychology**

**BAHRIA UNIVERSITY LAHORE CAMPUS**

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# Approval for Examination

**Scholar's Name**: Aleena Farooq

**Registration No.:** 03-275232-001

**Program of Study:** Master in Clinical Psychology

**Thesis Title:** Rumination, Anxiety and Existential Crisis. The Mediating Role of Coping Skills among University Students.

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## Dedication

Alhamdulillah, all praise is due to Allah (SWT), the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate, for granting me the strength, patience, and guidance to complete this work. I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, whose unconditional love, endless prayers, and unwavering support have been my greatest source of strength throughout this journey. To my family and friends who stood by me in moments of doubt and encouraged me to keep moving forward, I owe my deepest gratitude. This work is also dedicated to all the students struggling silently with mental health challenges. I hope this research contributes, in some way, to creating greater awareness, compassion, and support for you.

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## ABSTRACT

This research looks at how rumination, anxiety, and existential crisis are connected, with coping skills playing a mediating role among Pakistani university students. Rumination, defined as repetitive negative thinking, is widely recognized as a transdiagnostic factor that worsens psychological distress. In the post-pandemic context, young adults face heightened academic, career, and social uncertainties, which not only increase ruminative tendencies but also foster anxiety and existential concerns regarding purpose, meaning, and the future. Despite substantial research on rumination and anxiety, the unique link between rumination and existential crisis remains underexplored, particularly in South Asian contexts.

This paper, based on Response Styles Theory and cognitive-behavioral frameworks, pursues these relationships using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. University students aged 18–30 were recruited, and data were collected using standardized instruments, including the Rumination Response Scale (RRS), the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7), the Existential Concerns Questionnaire (ECQ), and the Brief COPE Inventory. Correlation, regression, and mediation analyses through SPSS and SmartPLS were applied to test the hypothesized direct and indirect pathways among the variables.

It is hoped that the findings will make theoretical contributions by highlighting rumination as a predictor not only of anxiety but also of existential crisis, and by clarifying the mediating role of maladaptive coping, especially avoidance. In practice, the research can guide culturally sensitive interventions in Pakistani universities, emphasizing resilience building, adaptive coping training, and stigma reduction in mental health support. This study adds to the

limited empirical literature on existential concerns in South Asia and helps broaden the understanding of student mental health in rapidly changing socio-cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** rumination, anxiety, existential crisis, coping skills, university students, Pakistan

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# List of Symbols

| Symbol | Full Form |
|---|---|
| α | Alpha Cronbach's Index |
| β | Standardized Coefficient |
| *f* | Frequency |
| *M* | Mean |
| *SD* | Standard Deviation |
| *%* | Percentage |
| r | Correlation Coefficient |
| *p* | Probability Value |
| *SE* | Standard Error |

# List of Abbreviations

| Abbreviations | Full Form |
|---|---|
| APA | American Psychological Association |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| SMART PLS | Smart Partial Least Squares Software |
| PLS-SEM | Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling |
| RRS | Rumination Response Scale |
| GAD-7 | Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale-7 |
| ECQ | Existential Concerns Questionnaire |
| COPE | Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced |
| SDT | Self-Determination Theory |
| PTSD | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder |