

**ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES,  
MEANING IN LIFE AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOR  
AMONG YOUNG ADULTS**



**ZAHRA BASHARAT  
03-171221-010**

**BAHRIA UNIVERSITY LAHORE CAMPUS**

**ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES,  
MEANING IN LIFE AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOR  
AMONG YOUNG ADULTS**



ZAHRA BASHARAT  
03-171221-010

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of  
Bachelor of Science (Psychology)

Department of Professional Psychology

BAHRIA UNIVERSITY LAHORE CAMPUS

December 2025

## **Approval for Examination**

**Scholar's Name:** Zahra Basharat

**Registration No:** 78823

**Program of the study:** Bachelor of Science in Psychology

**Thesis Title:** Adverse Childhood Experiences, Meaning in Life and Deviant Behavior among young adults.

I hereby confirm that I am satisfied with the completion of the scholar's thesis, and I believe it meets the appropriate standards for examination and submission. The Plagiarism test, conducted using the HEC prescribed software, returned a similarity index of 8%, which is within the permissible limit set by the HEC for BS degree thesis. Additionally, the thesis adheres to BU's recognized format for BS thesis.

**Principal Supervisor Signature:**

**Date:** 19-12-2025

**Name:** Ms. Lubna Kanwal Dar

### **Declaration**

I, Zahra Basharat hereby state that my BS thesis titled **Adverse Childhood Experiences, Meaning in Life and Deviant Behavior among young adults**” is my own work and has not been submitted previously by me for taking any degree from the university **Bahria University** or anywhere else in the country/world. At any time if my statement is found to be incorrect even after my Graduation the university has the right to withdraw/cancel my degree.

Name of student: **Zahra Basharat**

Date: 19-12-2025

## Plagiarism Undertaking

I, solemnly declare that the research work presented in the thesis titled “**Adverse Childhood Experiences, Meaning in Life and Deviant Behavior among young adults**” is solely my research work with no significant contribution from any other person. Small contribution/help wherever taken has been duly acknowledged and that complete thesis has been written by me.

I understand the zero-tolerance policy of the HEC and Bahria University Lahore Campus towards plagiarism. Therefore, I as an author of the above titled thesis declare that no portion of my thesis has been plagiarized, and any material used as reference is properly referred/cited.

I undertake that if I am found guilty of any formal plagiarism in the above titled thesis even after award of BS degree, the university reserves the right to withdraw/revoke my BS degree and that HEC and the University has the right to publish my name on the HEC/University website on which the names of the students are placed who submitted plagiarized thesis.

Scholar's Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student: Zahra Basharat

## **Dedication**

To my parents, whose unconditional love, sacrifices, and constant prayers have been the foundation of my academic journey. Their belief in me gave me the strength to persevere through every challenge. I also dedicate this work to my teachers and mentors, whose guidance, encouragement, and wisdom shaped my learning and inspired my growth. Finally, this thesis is dedicated to all those who supported me in ways seen and unseen—  
this achievement would not have been possible without you.

## **Acknowledgement**

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to Allah Almighty for His countless blessings, guidance, and strength throughout this journey. Without His mercy, this work would not have been possible.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Ms. Lubna Kanwal Dar, for her continuous guidance, patience, and encouragement. Your insightful feedback and unwavering support have been a source of inspiration and motivation throughout this research.

I am forever indebted to my parents, whose love, prayers, and sacrifices have shaped who I am today. Your belief in me gave me the confidence to overcome every challenge, and your constant encouragement kept me going even during difficult times.

I am also thankful to my siblings and husband for their understanding, emotional support, and for always being there to celebrate small victories along the way.

Finally, I would like to thank all my teachers, classmates, and participants who contributed directly or indirectly to this study. Each of you played a role in making this accomplishment possible, and I am sincerely grateful.

Zahra Basharat

## Table of Content

<b>CHAPTER 1.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1 Adverse Childhood Experiences .....	17
1.2 Meaning in Life .....	18
1.3 Deviant Behavior .....	19
1.4 Meaning in life as mediator.....	20
<b>CHAPTER 2.....</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Literature Review.....	22
2.2 Theoretical framework.....	28
2.3 Problem Statement. ....	31
2.4 Significance of the study.....	31
2.5 Research Objectives.....	34
2.6 Hypothesis .....	34
<b>CHAPTER 3.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1 Research Design.....	35
3.2 Population .....	35
3.3 Operational Definitions.....	36
3.4 Assessment Measures.....	35
3.5 Procedure .....	39

3.6 Ethical Considerations.....	39
<b>CHAPTER 4.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>RESULTS.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>51</b>
5.1 Limitations of the study.....	55
5.2 Implications of the study.....	57
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>63</b>

**List of Tables**

---

Table		Page No
1	Demographic profile	41
2	Reliability Analysis	45
3	Correlation Analysis	46
4	Mediation Analysis	48
5	Independent Sample T Test	50

---

**List of Abbreviations**

---

Abbreviations	Full Form
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
MIL	Meaning in Life
NDS	Normative Deviance Scale

---

### List of Symbols

---

Symbol	Full Form
$\alpha$	Alpha Cronbach's Index of Internal Consistency
$\beta$	Standardized Coefficient
$f$	Frequency
M	Mean
SD	Standard Deviation
%	Percentage
r	Correlation Coefficient

---

## List of Appendices

---

Appendices	Page No.
Appendix A	Permission from Authors 63
Appendix B	Permission Letter from Department of Professional Psychology 64
Appendix C	Consent Form 67
Appendix D	Questionnaire 68
Appendix F	Plagiarism Report 81

---

### Abstract

The study examined the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and deviant behavior among young adults, and the mediating role of meaning in life. Using a quantitative cross sectional correlational design, data were collected from 225 purposively sampled participants aged 18-25 years in Lahore. Adverse Childhood Experiences, meaning in life and deviant behavior were assessed using the ACE Questionnaire (ACEQ), Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) and Normative Deviance Scale (NDS), respectively, all scales demonstrated acceptable reliability and normal data distribution. Correlational analysis revealed that ACEs were positively associated with deviant behavior ( $r = .617, p < .01$ ), while meaning in life was negatively related to both ACEs ( $r = -.183, p < .01$ ) and deviant behavior ( $r = -.343, p < .01$ ). Independent sample t-test results indicated no significant gender differences (ACEs:  $t = 0.69, p = .945$ ; MIL:  $t = -0.03, p = .977$ ). Mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 showed that ACEs significantly predicted low meaning in life ( $B = -0.47, p = .006$ ), meaning in life significantly predicted deviant behavior after controlling for ACEs ( $B = -0.32, p < .001$ ) and the direct effect of ACEs on deviant behavior remained significant ( $B = 1.98, SE = 0.18, p < .001$ ), indicating partial mediation. Bootstrapping analysis (5,000 samples) confirmed a significant indirect effect ( $B = 0.15, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.04, 0.31]$ ). These findings highlight meaning in life as protective factor that may reduce deviant behavior among young adults exposed to childhood adversity and meaning centered interventions with future longitudinal research recommended to establish causality.

**Keywords:** Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), Meaning in Life (MIL) and deviant behavior, Normative Deviance Scale (NDS)

**Chapter I****Introduction**

Childhood is an important stage for the development of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral systems. During this period, children develop the ability to regulate their emotions, maintain relationships, and understand the world around them from early interactions with caregivers (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Children typically acquire appropriate patterns of behavior and coping traits whenever they are in safe and supportive developmental environment. Nevertheless, the stages of development are susceptible to significantly altered when childhood is impacted by hardship. Children are confronted with long term stress throughout a period of increased neurodevelopmental sensitivity because of adverse childhood experiences, which include abuse, neglect, parental conflict, and household dysfunction (Felitti et al., 1998). Such early experiences may cause issues with neurological, emotional, behavioral development across life, according to other research (Anda et al., 2006). Adversity influences development in multiple diverse but interrelated ways.

Fear is caused by situations like emotional or physical abuse, neglect deprives children of security and support, and witnessing parental conflict promotes a sense of uncertainty and insecurity. A study by Shonkoff et al. (2012), such situations commonly trigger the body's stress response system, impacting the areas of brain connected with impulse control, emotional regulation, and recognizing threats. Following this, children who are exposed to ACEs often display emotional dysregulation, impulsivity,

maladaptive coping mechanism; these problems can endure into adolescence and adulthood (Hughes et al., 2017).

Prolonged challenges and adverse experiences create hindrance to the development of identity, safety, and trust. According to Cicchetti & Toth (2005), children who grow up in insecure or unstable circumstances can develop negative thoughts about themselves or others, considering relationships as untrustworthy and the world as harmful. Extended exposure to these experiences creates stress in which hormones can disrupt brain network related to managerial skills and decision making, leading to more difficult to regulate emotions or impulses (Teicher & Samson, 2016). Internalized conflicts within the family, increased vulnerability to threat, and unresolved emotional distress may eventually exhibit externally. Numerous individuals consider parents and society responsible for such events in response they develop anger towards society or authority figures as a result of childhood abuse or parental conflict, which manifest as disobedience, risk taking or rule breaking behavior (Agnew, 2006).

These pathways of development help explain why ACEs consistently predict deviant or antisocial conduct throughout adolescence and early adulthood. When coping mechanisms are inefficient and emotional regulation deteriorates then deviant behavior; actions that violate social norms occur in result. (Masten & Cicchetti, 2010). College and university students who are piloting a transitional developmental stage may be vulnerable to engage in deviant or risky behaviors when they carry unresolved adverse experiences. Behaviors like substance abuse, violence, or impulsivity may serve as attempts by students who have unresolved trauma to relieve psychological discomfort or regain control (Anda et al., 2006; Hughes et al., 2017).

Despite the substantial impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), many people do not develop maladaptive behaviors which show the presence of protective psychological factors. According to Frankl (1963), the presence of meaning leads individuals to illuminate negative experiences with a sense of purpose, reduces the likelihood of actions triggered by feelings of hopelessness. Meaning in life is understood as motivational and existential resource that promotes resilience, psychological well-being and behavioral regulation (Steger, 2012). Research shows that individuals with high levels of meaning are less likely to engage in risky taking, impulsive or deviant behavior because meaning offers self-regulation and sense of direction (George & Park, 2016). While those who lack meaning are more inclined towards emotional instability and antisocial conduct, those who possess a strong sense of meaning are less likely to participate in risky or deviant behavior.

Considering this perspective, the current study proposes that meaning in life may mediate the relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and deviant behavior. Although, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) may lead individuals to maladaptive behavioral patterns, a strong sense of meaning in life may buffer or reduce these negative effects. Exploring this mediating pathway is important for understanding how psychological well-being moderates the behavioral effect of childhood stress.

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences**

These are potentially traumatic experiences that occur before the age of 18, such as emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Emotional or physical neglect, and household dysfunction such as parent- child conflict, substance abuse, incarceration, or mental

illness (Felitti et al., 1998). ACEs are progressive which means that as the number of adverse events increases, so does the risk of adverse health and behavioral outcomes (Anda et al., 2006).

ACEs disturb normal developmental processes, impact stress control systems, and increase risk of behavioral and emotional difficulties. These developmental and stress management abnormalities can show up as behavior that externalize, as individuals with higher levels of ACE are more inclined to get involved in lesser sense of purpose of life (Liao et al., 2025) and deviant and antisocial conduct (Dube et al., 2003) Adverse childhood experiences undermine the development of identity and psychological well-being which are essential for constructing a complete, meaningful life narrative. Children who undergo abuse and household dysfunction are much more likely to face unfavorable outcomes in the future. (Reavis et al., 2013).

### **Meaning in life**

Meaning in life refers to the extent to which people perceive their lives have purpose, coherence and meaning. Steger (2012) defines it as complicated construct which contains two dimensions; presence of meaning (belief that one's life is significant and purposeful) and search for meaning (the drive to find or deepen life's purpose). Meaning in life relates to resilience, psychological adjustment, emotional regulation, and general well-being (George and Park, 2016). It is increasingly recognized as protective factor that helps people cope with stress and adversity.

Research has found that meaning in life serves as a predictor and behavior tendencies such as Faiza, Farooqui and Raza (2022) conducted research in Karachi,

Pakistan and found Deviant behavior and satisfaction with life were found to be significantly correlated negatively in a study of 150 adolescents. This suggests that adolescents which perceive life satisfaction to be lower are more likely to engage in deviant.

### **Deviant Behavior**

Deviant behavior involves acts that violate social norms, expectations and rules. In psychological literature, deviant behavior includes drugs use, aggression, academic dishonesty, rule breaking and delinquency (Clinard & Meier, 2011). These behaviors often occur in response to stress, emotional dysregulation, or poor socialization. Deviant behavior in youth and college and university students can be influenced by past trauma, peer influence, and individuals coping strategies.

Adverse Childhood Experiences ACEs have been repeatedly associated with criminality, delinquency and deviant behavior. According to research, both adult criminality and Juvenile delinquency are strongly predicted by childhood maltreatment (abuse and neglect) (Mersky et al., 2012).

Additionally, certain typologies of ACEs (e.g. severe maltreatment, household dysfunction) are linked to greater risks of adult incarceration in large representative samples (Roos et al., 2016). These correlations most likely function through maladaptive coping strategies, poor self-control, and disturbed emotional regulation that stem from early stress. According to government policy analysis, people who have experienced several ACEs are more likely to interact with legal system (Scottish Government, 2018). In addition to early adversity, psychological factors also play a critical role in the development and maintenance of deviant behavior. More specifically, the way

adolescents view experiences and exert influence on their behavior is dictated by their own capacities such as moral reasoning, value orientation and a sense of purpose in life. Kara (2022) reported that adolescents who are more likely to engage in deviant behavior have weaker and less socially driven value meaning tendencies than their peers who are not deviant, demonstrating that a lack of purpose in life makes even more vulnerable to deviant. Furthermore, more deviant behavior is linked to decreased subjective well-being, which has a stronger connection to life's purpose.

Strong meaning acts as a protective psychological resource, while lower meaning or happiness in life can lead to increased deviant behavior. The creation of cohesive and significant life story might be affected by ACEs. Coherence and significance, two crucial components of life's meaning, were discovered to be adversely affected by negative childhood experiences in large cross-sectional study (Rose et al., 2023). Such outcomes reveal that the psychological foundations needed to create a meaningful, purposeful existence are compromised by early adversity.

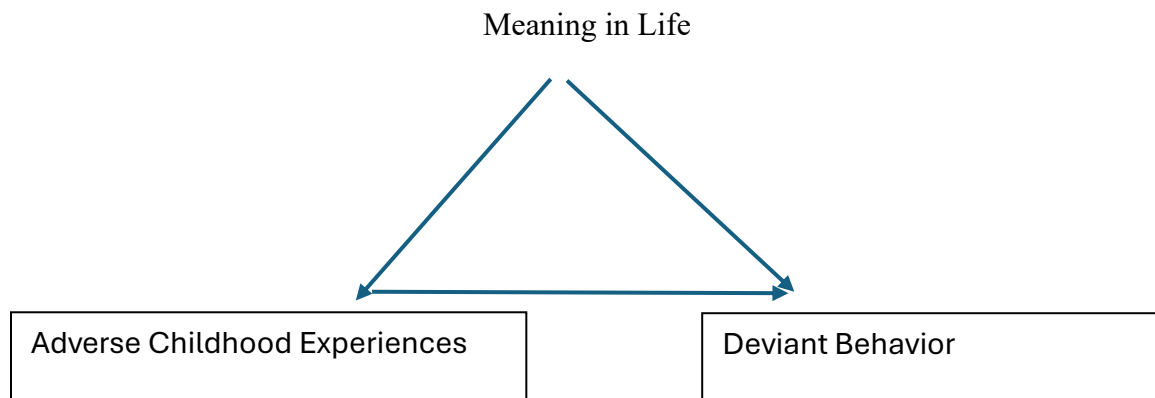
### **Meaning in life as mediator between ACEs and Deviant Behavior**

Coherence, purpose, and significance – key factors that result in inhibition and goal-oriented behavior that are commonly used to define meaning in life (Martela & Steger, 2016). People are more prone to inappropriate ways to cope, and deviant behavior, while these factors are undermined as they perceive it to establish an effective internal framework for understanding experiences and regulating emotions.

Additionally, research on adolescents shows that higher levels of deviant behavior are associated with reduced subjective well-being, which is closely tied to reducing

meaning (Faiza, Farooqui, & Raza, 2022). The above outcomes indicate to a mediational process, where ACEs decreases life's meaning, which in turn increases the risk of deviant behavior. In order to understand how early adversity develops into later behavioral consequences and to discover meaning in life as potentially modifiable intervention step, this research project analyzes this approach among young adults particularly university and college students.

### **Psychological model**



## Chapter II

### Literature Review

In this section of the study, multiple studies explain the association among adverse childhood experiences, deviant behavior and the sense of meaning in life.

A research study on the young adults by the Mahmood and Fatimi (2025), conducted in Pakistan. This research findings explored that 454 young adults including (203 males, 251 females) aged 18-25 who were enrolled in public and private colleges in Rawalpindi, almost 98% of the participants had experienced at least one adverse childhood experience in their lifetime. Interestingly, 82.4% of students reported almost three or more such adversities. Experiencing violence in the community was the most common type of childhood adversity, impacting 88% of participants, which was followed by peer violence 83% and home violence 73%. Of the students, 60% reported emotional abuse, 47% reported physical abuse, and 37% reported sexual abuse. Based on research, students who had experienced six or more ACEs were more than three times (3.39 times) inclined to claim that they had poor mental health than students who encountered one or two adverse experiences (Mahmood & Fatmi, 2025).

Research has found that there is a relationship between Adverse childhood experiences and mental health outcomes. Such research was conducted in Peshawar, Pakistan which explored the relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and depression, suicidal behavior, and risky behaviors in a sample of 400 participants, divided equally between 200 students and 200 drug abusers. They used commonly used tools, such as CES-D- for depression, and the ASSIST for substance use screening.

Increased ACE exposure was considerably linked to higher levels of depression, increased suicidal behavior, and a rise in hazardous or risky behaviors, according to their findings. Logistics regression analyses revealed that ACEs remained a reliable indicator for all three outcomes, regardless of adjusting for demographic variables, the investigator observed differences in gender, pointing out men in their study experienced higher ACEs than women. They ultimately came to the conclusion that childhood adversity strongly influences later mental health risky outcomes, emphasizing the vital importance early evaluation, psychological therapies, health care interventions in Pakistan (Kalsoom and Ara, 2025).

Another similar research conducted by Gul and Atta (2022) examined the effect of negative childhood experiences on lasting psychological health outcomes in Pakistani women attempted suicide. Almost 300 women within the ages of 19 and 40 were recently admitted to hospital after a suicide attempt were a part of this research, which was carried out at the psychiatric departments of in the major Government hospitals in Lahore. The researchers examined the subject's childhood experiences as well as current psychological functioning using the Beck Depression Inventory and the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaires. The outcomes indicated that several women had experienced several ACEs, which include emotional abuse, verbal and physical abuse, and neglect. Additionally, it said that they were brought up in violence or tense households, which increased their constant sense of insecurity. This study reveals a strong relationship between the severity of depression and the number of ACEs, suggesting that women with extensive trauma histories had significantly greater level of depression (Gul & Atta, 2022).

In a cross-national study of sample 3,797 young adults (ages 18-20) comprising 10 different nations comprising five continents, researchers investigated whether different kinds of childhood adversity influenced criminal conduct in young adulthood. They utilized standardized (adverse childhood experiences) questionnaire and a self-reported delinquency scale to investigate childhood abuse, familial dysfunction, and previous criminal conduct. The outcomes proved that among all nations, childhood physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, and household substance abuse substantially raised the risk of getting involved in criminal conduct. Furthermore, the correlations had remained after adjusting for age, sex, cross national socioeconomic distinctions, suggesting major connection between early trauma and later crime. The study additionally indicated that certain types of family dysfunction, including parental substance abuse or mental illness, were especially indicative of criminal conduct, while the consequences varied slightly by gender human development index (HDI) rank at the national level. The researchers take these findings as proof that ACEs serve as cross cultural risk factors for later antisocial and criminal conduct, recommending that early intervention and trauma centered prevention strategies are crucial in numerous social situations (Basto-Pereira et al., 2022).

Here, another study was conducted where 150 adolescents aged 16-19 from multiple educational institutions in Karachi explored the connection between deviant behavior and life satisfaction. They used Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) to determine life satisfaction and the Adolescent Behavior Questionnaire (ABQ) to measure deviant behavior. A great amount of deviance is related to reduced life satisfaction among participants, based on the results, data suggested an intense negative correlation ( $r = -.273, p < .001$ ) between variables. The research also found notables differences in deviant

behavior and life satisfaction corresponding to gender and family structure, highlighting that gender and family circumstances could have an effect on behavior as well as well-being. The investigators concluded that adolescents who involve in deviant behavior are less contented with their life, illustrating the psychological and social wellbeing effects caused by adolescents' deviance in Pakistani culture. For the purpose to minimize deviant behavior and as well as enhance teenager life satisfaction, they stressed the importance of early intervention supporting programs in both educational and familial settings (Faiza, Farooqui, and Raza, 2022).

In addition, researchers explored the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on social behavior in young adults (18-20) years old, particularly deviant (social) and altruistic behavior. The sample was of 490 young adults who performed the ACE questionnaire in addition to the evaluations of deviant conduct and altruism. Higher cumulative exposure to ACE was discovered to be a strong indicator of for increased deviant conduct during the course of the subjects' lives and in previous years. Among ACE subtypes, physical abuse and family substance abuse are especially significant determinants of lifetime deviant conduct, yet recent year deviance was strongly associated with childhood physical abuse. In contrast, the research revealed that ACEs were not a strong consistent marker of altruistic (prosocial) behavior- the overall ACE score had no significant impact on altruism criteria. Nevertheless, emotional neglect was linked with less altruistic behavior when ACE were split down by types, demonstrating different outcomes of specific adversities. Gender also had a significant influence; being male and having gone through ACEs were related to more deviant conduct, however being female not experiencing emotional neglect forecasted somewhat more altruistic

behavior. Their findings contented that early recognition and treatment of ACEs could reduce regressive antisocial tendencies as well as contribute to stronger social skills among young adults (Gomis-Pomares & Villanueva, 2020).

The study surveyed 659 adults in Poland in which researchers measured ACEs (abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, and other adversities) and subsequently long-term outcomes, including self-mutilation, drug use (street drugs, problem drinking), use of mental health services (visit to psychologist and psychiatrist) and self-efficacy. The outcome demonstrated a strong relationship: compared to those with lower ACEs, those with four or more had significantly higher chances of self-mutilation ( $\approx 10.8\times$ ), drug use, and use of mental health treatment. Also, decreased self-efficacy; a gauge for individuals perceived ability to cope with stress and life expectations which was connected to increased levels of ACEs. Researchers derive expectations that childhood adversity diminishes long term psychological coping and resilience capabilities in addition to increasing the likelihood of harmful, risky behaviors (Berent et al., 2020).

For the purpose to investigate how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) influences life satisfaction, adult well-being for almost 20 years. This investigation analyzes data from a large US longitudinal cohort. The findings showed that across all survey phases, individuals experiencing history of ACEs frequently reported decreased life satisfaction. Higher ACE levels have been correlated with deteriorating life satisfaction findings, according to a unique dose- response pattern. Reduced psychological and social well-being was particularly strongly associated with childhood abuse and household dysfunction. The results showed that ACEs had an impact on several aspects of adult functioning, such as social connectivity, personal development,

and emotional well-being. The research's overall findings highlighted the negative long-term impact of childhood adversity on adult well-being (Mosley Johnson et al., 2019).

In order to explore the association between the adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and aggressive behavior and self-esteem, 350 adult men in forensic settings that had all been suspects of physical aggression. They evaluated self-esteem utilizing Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and an updated version of international ACE questionnaire (ACE-IQ). Based on their findings, an abundance of people reported childhood family dysfunction, especially familial violence, as an ACE. Notably, higher level of ACE has been associated with more aggressive behavior in young adults. At the same time, almost all kinds of ACE (except from sexual abuse and social abuse) had strong negative correlation with self-esteem, demonstrating that these men's lower self-esteem was related with more childhood trauma. The study conveys that early trauma could damage self-concept and relationship with others, leading to a higher tendency for aggressiveness and violence later in life. Their findings state that interventions for violent offenders ought to include trauma-based methods, targeting not just behavior but also core childhood trauma and self-esteem problems (Khodabandeh et al., 2018).

Another study investigates how juvenile deviance among low-income teenagers in the Arizona state has been affected by both direct and indirect negative childhood experiences. The observation which is in tune with stress response and strain-based models of aggressiveness, indicated that direct ACEs, especially physical and sexual abuse, significantly increased the risk of violent behavior, using archival assessment data from 225 juveniles who were in the court system. Likewise, physical abuse turned out to be a significant indicator of substance use, revealing that early trauma may increase

vulnerability to substance based coping mechanisms. However, involving in destruction of property has not been expected by either direct or indirect ACEs, demonstrating that multiple deviant behaviors could arise from stages of development. To reduce recidivism among at risk kids, the research emphasizes the significance of trauma informed examination and rehab (Fore, 2018).

An effective study that explains how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) link to substance abuse violence in adulthood within a sample of 180 convicts. They found that those who had greater ACE scores showed significantly larger drug use and aggression score, indicating an extensive connection between early trauma and later hazardous behaviors. Furthermore, violent criminals in their study had both higher ACE and substance use scores compared to non-violent offenders. Substance abuse and ACE scores both in themselves indicated aggressive conduct, depending on their hierarchical logistic regression. Researchers demonstrated that early adversity increases vulnerability for both addiction and aggressiveness, and because both conditions co-occur, an approach based on trauma is required social welfare intervention within forensic and penal settings. They claim that awareness of the associations between violence, substance abuse, and childhood trauma can guide therapies and influence legislation aimed at recidivism and enhance rehabilitation outcomes (Levenson & Grady, 2016).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***General strain theory***

In addition to providing a convincing framework for understanding how early adversity impacts behavior in later life, Agnew's General Strain Theory targets a very human issue: the psychological stress that people endure when they grow up in

circumstances marked by fear, instability or neglect. According to general strain theory, tensions like those resulting from adverse childhood events do more than just cause temporary distress; they build up and become deeply embedded in a person's emotional life which frequently results in emotions of rage, frustration and internal conflict (Agnew, 1992).

Children who experience prolonged adversity without assistance or creative ways of coping may carry these unresolved emotions in adolescence and adulthood, slowly affecting how they manage relationships and difficulties.

According to Agnew (2006), under such strain, people are prone to deviant or criminal conduct as a misguided attempt to cope, escape or find relief from severe emotional tension instead of an innate desire to cause harm.

This strain can manifest for students who have experienced ACEs as a trouble controlling their emotions, greater susceptibility to stress or behaving in ways that instantly distract or divert attention from internal discomfort. By depicting deviant or criminal conduct, as an emotional reaction to a past of suffering which did not receive chance to heal rather than as a moral failure, general strain theory frames it in this way.

### ***The Meaning-Making Model***

A more optimistic and deeply humanistic approach is provided by the Meaning-Making Model, which argues that people can reconsider their sufferings and turn adversity into meaning. The approach by which people try to figure out why difficult circumstances occurred to them as well as these events tie into the greater narratives of their life is referred to as meaning making (Park, 2010).

Instead of being defined by previous struggles, individuals endured an internal conversation that allows them to turn their pain into knowledge, guidance, or inner strengths — sometimes consciously, sometimes quietly overtime.

Researchers like Steger (2012) and Wong (2012) observe that, regardless of situations when a person's background is defined by sufferings, having an overwhelming sense of purpose in life promotes emotional stability, resilience, and enhanced coping mechanism.

Meaning in life can act as a psychological anchor for students who experienced ACEs, assisting them in understanding childhood hardship as a path towards personal growth and self-awareness rather than as a lifetime weight. The meaning making model thus focuses on the massive human capacity to overcome hardship, stating that when people find their purpose, their previous suffering no longer serve as clues to deviant behavior instead, they serve as pathways towards psychological determination and better life decisions.

## **Problem Statement**

Though many students may seem dedicated, self-assured, and ready to begin their careers but some of them hold emotional scars from traumatic childhood experiences. Neglect, instability, or conflict exposure are examples of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that are unlikely to fade away with age. However, they may gently impact students' self-perception, stress management and the level of life satisfaction. Early adversity may cause long lasting psychological impacts, according to research, yet nothing has been established about how these unseen experiences affect students during their tenure in college and university, particularly in non-western environments. Lacking this understanding, many students' emotional difficulties go unnoticed and untreated. Consequently, to raise awareness of the hardships that students may carry in silence, this study to investigate how ACEs damage their psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

## **Rationale and Significance**

Although many individuals who grew up with significant more unpleasant circumstances, childhood is meant to be a period of safety, stability and care. When experiences take the form of abuse, neglect or domestic conflicts, these adverse childhood experiences ACEs will not go completely with time. They persist gradually in a person's emotional context, impacting how they respond to stress, how they perceive themselves, and how they interact with others. The journey from childhood adversity from behavioral outcomes is rarely simple, regardless of the fact that many studies have found that ACEs can result in deviant or risk-taking behavior. Different people have different ways of coping, and not everyone who encounters adversity pursues the same

course. This insight emphasizes the necessity for more in-depth investigation that focuses on how certain young adults develop difficulties while others can move forward wholesome, responsive ways.

Students are crucial because many of them experience unresolved emotional wounds from their past, despite their apparent self-assurance outstanding functioning. These encounters may gradually affect their decision making, mental health and sense of security. Trauma affects behavior and coping mechanism regardless of it is not always obvious. Evaluating ACEs in this population illustrates how people are influenced by adversity irrespective of their age or settings. Through applying this approach researchers may overcome prejudice to gain a deeper understanding of underlying challenges.

Meaning in life is an intrinsic feeling of direction, purpose and clarity that helps people in making sense of their experiences has become a major focus of this research. Meaning in life is a psychological attribute that may help individuals survive through difficult times and understand traumatic events in a way that encourages resilience instead of self-destructive behavior; It is not only a motivational notion. The psychological strain of ACEs can become excessive for young adults who lack feelings of purpose. This could lead them to engage in behaviors like aggressiveness, resistance, or drug abuse which temporarily alleviates their suffering but have long term negative effects. Adversity, on the other hand, may lose some of its impact when people have strong sense of purpose; instead of identifying them, they turn into something to learn from it.

The significance of this research derives from its capacity to shed light on this altering role of meaning. Logically, it promotes a deeper, more sympathetic perspective

of how early adversity molds behavior in the future, but not through straightforward cause and effect links, instead through the complex mechanism of how people understand and react to their past. Practically, the study grants a platform to non-western students, whose ethnic realities and lived experiences are often underrepresented in the literature on ACEs. This improves scientific research's cultural relevance and engagement as well as expanding it.

In a practical way, the findings can help colleges, therapists, and youth focused groups develop programs that foster emotional resilience, self-awareness and a sense of purpose. Interventions can be developed to help adults in establishing an affiliation with their beliefs, objectives and sense of self if it can be proven that meaning in life mitigates the negative effects of ACEs. Ultimately, these findings may be important in helping young individuals build better, more fulfilling livelihood by lowering deviant behavior to improve mental health.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the relationship between adverse childhood experiences, meaning in life, and deviant behavior among young adults.
2. To examine whether gender moderates the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and deviant behavior among young adults.
3. To determine the mediating role of sense of meaning in life in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and deviant behavior among young adults.

## **Hypotheses**

The hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. There will be a relationship between adverse childhood experiences, meaning in life, and deviant behavior among young adults.
  - a) Adverse childhood experiences ACE will be positively associated with deviant behavior in young adults.
  - b) ACE will be negatively associated with a sense of meaning in life among young adults.
  - c) Meaning in life will be negatively associated with deviant behavior among young adults.
2. Meaning in life will mediate the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and deviant behavior in young adults.
3. The relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), deviant behavior and meaning in life will vary by gender, with males and females showing different levels of association.

## Methods

### Research Design

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design to examine how adverse childhood experiences influence deviant behavior in young adults, and mediating role of meaning in life.

### Participants

This study included young adults between the ages of 18-25 years old. A purposive sampling technique was used. Participants are recruited mainly from colleges and universities. The study aimed to gather a balanced sample of 225 participants, including males and females, to allow meaningful comparisons between genders.

#### *Inclusion criteria*

- Young adults aged 18–25 years.
- Students currently enroll in academic institutions (both college and university).
- Provide informed consent and have completed the full survey.

#### *Exclusion criteria*

- Individuals with severe psychiatric disorders.
- Participants involved in any sort of criminal convictions from breaking formalized laws are excluded.
- Participants who provide incomplete or inconsistent responses.

## **Operational Definitions**

The following are the operational definitions of the study variables.

### **1. Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Adverse Childhood Experiences refers to the stressful or traumatic events experienced before the age of 18, including emotional, physical or sexual abuse; emotional or physical neglect; and household dysfunction such as parental separation, substance abuse, or domestic violence. These experiences can negatively impact emotional, social and behavioral development in later life (Felitti et al., 1998).

### **2. Deviant Behavior**

Deviant behaviors refer to the actions or social conduct that violate the dominant socio-cultural expectations, norms and generally accepted rules of society, drawing social disapproval or negative reactions because they are viewed as harmful or disruptive to social order (Clinard & Meier, 2011).

### **3. Meaning in Life**

Meaning in life refers to the perception of one's life has purpose, coherence and significance. It reflects the sense that life is valuable, worth living, and that one's experience has a meaningful direction which contributes to overall psychological wellbeing (Steger et al., 2006).

## **Assessment Measures**

The following assessment measures were used in the present study:

1. Demographic Information Sheet.
2. Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE-Q)
3. Meaning In Life Questionnaire (MLQ)
4. Normative Deviance Scale (NDS)

### ***Demographic Information Sheet***

The following demographic data included: age (in years), education, socioeconomic status, number of earning members in family, family structure, birth order, parental education, parental occupation and ever received counseling. The sheet prioritizes informed consent to ensure the ethical considerations are met through the research process.

### ***Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE-Q)***

Respondents' exposure to negative childhood events has been assessed by ACE-Q. It is a self-report tool developed by Felitti et al. (1998) used to gauge exposure to negative experiences such as abuse, neglect or household dysfunction before the age of 18 years. There are 10 items in the scale and each item on the scale has dichotomous response format (Yes/No), where "Yes" indicates the person encountered that particular adverse event. Higher scores on ACE-Q indicate more negative experiences. The overall score is determined by adding together all the "Yes" answers. This is the most commonly used instrument for evaluating childhood adversity in research and therapeutic settings because of its established content and construct validity, as well as its strong reliability with a Cronbach's alpha range of 0.78.

### ***Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)***

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire evaluates people's sense of self in two areas: Search for meaning (the extent to which a person actively seeks meaning) and presence of purpose (the extent to which a person thinks their life has a purpose). The MLQ has a seven-point Likert scale with 1 indicating "absolutely untrue" and 7 indicating "absolutely true". Higher scores indicate a stronger presence of meaning or a more active search for meaning. The findings for each subscale are calculated separately. The MLQ was developed by Steger et al. (2006) which has been substantially examined in groups of college and university students. With Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, the MLQ showed outstanding reliability in the current investigation and appropriate for individuals of age 18 and 25.

### ***Normative Deviance Scale (NDS)***

The Normative Deviance Scale measures how frequently people act in a way that is culturally inappropriate or violates the law. Higher scores indicate higher amount of deviance conduct. The Likert type response format varies from 1 "Never" to 5 "More than six times". The instrument has an item that measures common behaviors in emerging adults, such as academic dishonesty, petty property crimes, and other socially deviant activities. With Cronbach's alpha 0.81, the NDS, which was developed by Vazsonyi et al. (2001), showed strong dependability in this investigation. A great number of college and university students around the age of 18 and 25, therefore the scale is suitable for them.

## **Procedure**

The development and submission of study proposal, which was accepted by departmental review committee, marked the beginning of research process. After this approval, the department granted permission and the authors of the standardized scales utilized in this study were asked for their formal agreement. In order to collect data from different colleges and universities, their permission was also obtained. The survey took 15-20 minutes online or on paper. Throughout the study, all ethical principles, such as voluntary participation and confidentiality, were strictly adhered to. Once the data were collected, SPSS -26 was used to code and analyze it to provide the findings.

## **Ethical Consideration**

Every ethical standard for research including individuals' participants was fulfilled by this study. The departmental ethical review committee granted its approval just before the start of the data collection. The purpose of the research, their voluntary right to participate, and their freedom to withdraw at any time without giving a reason had been explained to participants. Confidentiality, anonymity, and no risk involved in this study were explained in the informed consent form. All responses were kept completely confidential and used exclusively for academic purposes. To make sure that no specific participant could be identified, the data were kept safely and analyzed in aggregate.

## Results

**Table 1***Demographics Profile (N=225)*

Respondent's characteristics		<i>f%</i>
Age	18-19 years	74 (32.9)
	20-21 years	65 (28.9)
	22-23 years	63 (28.0)
	24-25 years	22 (9.8)
Gender	Male	124 (55.1)
	Female	101 (44.1)
Education level	Intermediate	65 (28.9)
	Bachelor's	145 (64.4)
	Postgraduate	15 (6.7)
Socioeconomic status	Rs.50k-100k	157 (69.8)
	Rs.100k-250k	57 (25.3)
	250k-600k	11 (4.9)
Earning members in family	1	82 (36.4)
	2	78 (34.7)
	3	48 (21.8)
	4	13 (5.8)
	5	2 (.9)
	6	1 (.4)
Family structure	Nuclear	113 (50.2)
	Joint	76 (33.8)
	Single parent	35 (15.6)
	Other	1 (.4)
Birth order	First-born	60 (26.7)

	Middle	92 (40.9)
	Youngest	60 (26.7)
	Only child	12 (5.3)
Father Education	Primary	35 (15.6)
	Secondary	78 (34.7)
	Higher education	90 (40.0)
	No formal education	22 (9.8)
Mother Education	Primary	42 (18.7)
	Secondary	89 (39.6)
	Higher education	63 (28.0)
	No formal education	31 (13.8)
Father Occupation	Employed	165 (73.3)
	Unemployed	23 (10.2)
	Retired	37 (16.4)
Mother Occupation	Employed	55 (24.4)
	Unemployed	144 (64.4)
	Retired	26 (11.6)
Residential Area	Urban	162 (72.0)
	Rural	63 (28.0)
Ever received counseling	No	139 (61.8)
	Yes	86 (38.2)

---

The results in Table 1 present the frequency distribution of demographic data among young adults. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were between 18 and 23 years old, with participants aged 18-19 years making up the largest group (32.9%), followed by those aged 20-21 years (28.9%) and 22-23 (28.0%). The sample was made up of late teenagers and young adults as demonstrated by the lower percentage of respondents (9.8%) which were aged 24-25. In regard to gender, male participant represented a slightly larger percentage of sample (55.1%) as compared to female

respondents (44.1), represented an almost balanced gender distribution. In terms of education, 28.9% of participants were enrolled in intermediate (FA/FSc/A-Levels), but many of them (64.4%) enrolled in bachelor's degree. The majority of respondents were undergraduates, as small percentage of respondents (6.7%) indicated postgraduate education.

In terms of their socioeconomic status, a large percentage of respondents classified into the lower economic category with a household income between Rs.50k-100k. This was followed by the middle-class income group earning Rs.100k-250k (25.8%), while a small proportion (4.9%) belonged to higher income group Rs. 250k-600k.

Regarding the family earning structure, families with one earning member were the most common (36.9%), closely followed by the families with two earners (34.7%). Around 28.4% of the population were specified to have three or more earning members in the family. Concerning the family structure, approximately one third of the population reported living in a joint family system (33.8%), however half of the population belonged to a nuclear family structure (50.2%). Families with a single parent accounted for a lesser percentage (15.6%).

In relation to birth order, middle born children consisted of the biggest percentage of respondents (40.9%) which was followed by first born children (27.1%) and the youngest children (26.7%). Around (5.3%) of the population were only children. Regarding parental education, the majority of fathers had completed secondary school (34.7%) or higher education (40.0%), whereas a small percentage of fathers had

completed primary school (15.6%) or with no formal education was of (9.8%). In the same way, many mothers had either completed secondary education (39.6%) or higher education (28.0%), While lesser proportion had either no formal education (13.8%) or either primary education (18.7%).

Considering the parental occupation, a vast majority of fathers (73.3%), were employed whereas lower numbers were either unemployed (10.2%) or retired (16.4%). On the other hand, majority of mothers were unemployed or homemakers (64.4%), which was followed by those who were employed (24.4%) or retirement rate was low as (11.6%). In respect to their residential background, the majority of respondents resided in urban areas (72.0%) but only (28.0%) were from rural areas.

Lastly, with relation to substance use and psychological support (38.2%), psychological support received while the majority (61.8%) had not received.

**Table 2***Reliability Analysis (N=225)*

Variables	Range						
	M	SD	$\alpha$	Actual	potential	Skew	Kurto
Adverse Childhood Experiences	.280	0.24	0.76	0-1	0-1	.727	-.261
Meaning in Life	5.14	0.63	0.74	1-4	1-7	-.80	1.26
Normative Deviance Scale	1.96	0.85	0.97	1-5	1-5	-.85	0.32

The results in table 2 show that all three scales demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency reliability in this current study. The Normative Deviance Scale exhibits a high degree of reliability with Cronbach's alpha of 0.97, the Meaning in Life Scale produced an alpha value of 0.74 and the Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale displayed Cronbach's alpha of 0.76. Cortina (1993) stated the criteria of Cronbach's alpha value, which should be greater than 0.70 for acceptable of reliability, the results of this research indicating that all scales in present study displayed internal consistency above the suggested threshold. In addition, the descriptive statistics provide evidence of the data's normal distribution. Kurtosis varied from  $-0.26$  to  $1.26$  while skewness ranged from  $-0.85$  to  $-0.80$ . These values fall within the normal distribution's permissible limits. Although Kline (2015) stated that kurtosis values range between  $-3$  and  $+3$  are acceptable, whereas West et al. (1995) argued that skewness values between  $-7$  and  $+7$  shows normality. Likewise, the kurtosis and skewness statistics observed in this study supports the usefulness of parametric statistical analysis by verifying that data was uniformly distributed.

## Hypothesis 1

There will be a relationship between adverse childhood experiences, meaning in life, and deviant behavior among young adults.

- a) Adverse childhood experiences ACE will be positively associated with deviant behavior in young adults.
- b) ACE will be negatively associated with a sense of meaning in life among young adults.
- c) Meaning in life will be negatively associated with deviant behavior among young adults.

**Table 3**

*Correlation Analysis (N= 225)*

Variables	M	SD	ACE	MIL	NDS
Adverse Childhood Experiences	.280	0.24		-.183**	.617**
Meaning in Life	5.14	0.63	-.183**	-.343**	-.343**
Normative Deviance Scale	1.96	0.85	.617**	-.343**	

The results presented in table 3 demonstrated that Adverse Childhood Experiences were significantly and positively correlated with Deviant behavior ( $r = .617, p < .01$ ), indicating that higher levels of childhood adversity contribute to more deviance. Additionally, there was a significant negative correlation between meaning in life and adverse childhood experiences ( $r = -.183, p < .01$ ), establishing a connection between

decreased sense of meaning in life and increased exposure to childhood adversity.

Likewise, there was a strong negative correlation between meaning in life and deviant behavior ( $r = -.343, p < .01$ ), revealing that those who have greater sense of meaning in life are less likely to engage in deviant conduct. At the 0.01 level, every correlation was statistically significant.

## Hypothesis 2

Meaning in life will mediate the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and deviant behavior in young adults.

**Table 4**

*Mediation Analysis on the relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACE), meaning in life (MIL) and deviant behavior (NDS) (N = 225)*

Path	B	SE	t	p
Constant → MIL (Mediator)	3.6734	0.0631	58.17	.000
ACE → MIL	-0.4705	0.1694	-2.78	.006
Constant → NDS	2.5455	0.2616	9.73	.000
MIL → NDS (b path)	-0.3204	0.1775	11.18	.000
ACE → NDS (direct effect, c')	1.9840	0.4328	5.5743	.000
ACE → NDS (total effect, c)	2.1347	0.1824	11.71	.000
ACE → MIL → NDS (Indirect Effect)	0.1507	0.0694	0.0390	0.3130

A mediation analysis was performed by using PROCESS model 4 (Hayes, 2022) to investigate whether meaning in life mediates the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and deviant behavior. Adverse childhood experiences significantly and negatively predicted meaning in life according to data  $B = -0.47$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $t = -2.78$ ,  $p$

= .006. Furthermore, after adjusting for adverse childhood experiences, meaning in life significantly predicted deviant behavior  $B = -0.32$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t = -4.65$ ,  $p < .001$ .

After accounting for the mediator, the direct effect of ACE and NDS remains significant,  $B = 1.98$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $t = 11.18$ ,  $p < .001$ , suggesting partial mediation. ACE has a significant overall effect on NDS as well  $B = 2.13$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $t = 11.71$ ,  $p < .001$ .

According to bootstrapping analysis (5,000 samples), ACE had substantial indirect influence on NDS through MIL,  $B = 0.15$ ,  $Boot SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI [0.04, 0.31]. The mediating role of meaning was supported because the confidence interval did not include zero.

### Hypothesis 3

The relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), deviant behavior and meaning in life will vary by gender, with males and females showing different levels of association.

**Table 5**

*Independent Sample T Test Analysis for Gender differences in Adverse Childhood Experiences, Meaning in Life and Deviant Behavior*

Variables	Males		Females		t	sig
	M	SD	M	SD		
Adverse Childhood Experiences	.281	.259	.279	.229	.069	.945
Meaning in Life	3.54	.606	3.54	.667	-.029	.977
Deviant Behavior	2.04	.859	1.87	.835	1.46	.144

The Independent Sample T Test Analysis was conducted to compare the scores between male and female regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences, Meaning in Life and Deviant Behavior. The results demonstrated that there are no statistically significant gender differences within each of the study variables. Males (M = 0.28, SD = 0.26) and females (M = 0.28, SD = 0.23) revealed nearly the same level of adverse childhood experiences; the distinction was not significantly statistically  $t = 0.69$ ,  $p = .945$ . Furthermore, there was no gender differences in meaning in life yielding similar scores for males (M = 3.54, SD = 0.61) and females (M = 3.54, SD = 0.67),  $t = -0.03$ ,  $p = .977$ .

### Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and deviant behavior with meaning in life as mediating psychological mechanism. Specifically, it investigated whether there is a relationship between adverse childhood experiences, meaning in life, and deviant behavior among young adults. The study further examined whether the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), deviant behavior and meaning in life will vary by gender, with males and females showing different levels of association. The meaning in life would play a role as mediator between adverse childhood experiences and deviant behavior. The findings partially align with prior research, offering nuanced insight into the dynamics of adverse childhood experiences, meaning in life and deviant behavior. Descriptive statistics were performed first in order to see the descriptives of the demographic variables.

In this study, the researchers examined how each of these factors influences the others. It concluded that adverse childhood experiences are significantly associated with both meaning in life and deviant behavior. Yet, in the second hypothesis, the results confirmed that there are no statistically significant gender differences within each of the study variables. However, higher levels of adverse childhood experiences were used to predict deviant behavior and were found to be a much stronger predictor. According to the third hypothesis, the meaning in life serves as a significant partial mediator between adverse childhood experiences and deviant behavior. Moreover, the mediating role of meaning was supported because the confidence interval did not include zero. All the

study's scales were reliable as indicated by Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.76 to 0.97.

Considering the prior research, ACEs were found significantly and positively predict deviant behavior. Extensive literature indicates that exposure to abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction during childhood impairs moral development, social learning, and emotional regulation making young adults more prone to externalizing behaviors (Mersky et al., 2012; Felitti et al., 1998). People with higher ACE exposure often develop maladaptive coping strategies, involving aggression, rule breaking, and antisocial behavior, as a response to chronic stress and unmet emotional needs. Previous research confirms that childhood adversity has a long-lasting impact on behavioral functioning and is supported by the strong direct effect found in this study.

Recent evidence supports the association between ACEs and externalizing or deviant behaviors. For example, Childhood adversity has been linked with increases in externalizing behavior, including aggression and rule breaking, across development. Brown and Shillington (2017) found a significant relationship between cumulative adversities and externalizing outcomes in adolescence and early adulthood. In terms of meaning in life, early trauma has been shown to diminish meaning and purpose in life, disrupting goal setting, and life coherence during emerging childhood (Steger et al., 2019; Glaw et al., 2020).

The results further demonstrated a strong inverse relationship between meaning in life and adverse childhood experiences. This finding is consistent with psychological and developmental viewpoints, which contended that early adverse events might damage people's sense of self-worth, coherence, and purpose (Steger et al., 2006). Childhood

adversity may hinder the development of self-concepts and future focused objectives, resulting in psychological void and a loss of sense of purpose in life. The present findings have been supported by earlier research that revealed those who experience childhood adversity had lower levels of meaning, purpose and life satisfaction.

Furthermore, meaning in life also emerged as a significant predictor of deviant behavior. The result in this accordance with studies indicates that people who believe in their life have purpose are more likely to act in prosocial manner and are less likely to engage in deviant or delinquent conduct (Steger et al., 2012). A propelling framework that directs conduct, fosters self-control, and supports conformity to social norms is provided by meaning in life. Despite adverse environmental conditions, late adolescents and young adults who have a strong sense of purpose may be better able to avoid dangerous or deviant behaviors.

Crucially, the association between adverse childhood experiences and deviant behaviors is partially mediated by meaning in life. This finding is consistent with theoretical models like General Strain Theory (GST) and Meaning Making Model. According to GST, exposure to severe and ongoing stressors such as abuse, neglect and household dysfunction leads to negative emotional states like anger, frustration, and discomfort which enhances the risk of antisocial and deviant behavior as coping mechanism. In relation to the current study, ACEs serves as significant triggers of stress that directly increases the likelihood of deviant behavior.

From the standpoint of meaning making, early adversity may interfere with people's global meaning system, affecting their belief about who they are, the world, and their purpose in life. An essential internal coping mechanism may be diminished ACEs by

impairing the capacity to find purpose in life's circumstances. Deviant behavior is more likely to be maladaptive coping mechanism when people's sense of purpose in life is decreased due to, they may have less adaptive framework to interpret adversity. Within the framework of GST, meaning in life serves as psychological buffer against the negative effects of stress.

## Conclusion

The study investigated the connections between young adults' maladaptive coping mechanism, psychological vulnerability and adverse childhood experiences. Research findings supported the General Strain Theory's postulates the early life stressors increase the likelihood of negative behavioral responses as they demonstrated a significant correlation between higher levels of childhood adversity and more deviant and maladaptive behaviors. The results emphasized the lasting effect of early adverse experiences on psychological and behavioral functioning by highlighting the significance of psychological distress, particularly maladaptive coping strategies, in influencing behavioral outcomes.

Significantly, meaning in life turned out to be crucial psychological defense. The relationship between adverse childhood experiences and deviant behavior was partially mediated by meaning in life, according to mediation analysis. This indicates that people who sustain or create a sense of purpose are better able to control their emotions and develop adaptive coping strategies in spite of early adversity. In order to decrease maladaptive behavior and enhance long term psychological well-being, the results highlight the significance of enhancing the meaning making process and psychological resilience in prevention and intervention initiatives.

## Limitations

- The study used a cross-sectional approach, collecting all data at once. For an understanding of how adverse childhood experiences influence deviant behavior and the significance of meaning in life over time, a longitudinal study would be required. The result may not accurately reflect the experiences of late adolescents or young adults with different developmental trajectories since the study only included participants between ages of 28 and 25.
- Self-reported measures were used to evaluate adverse childhood experiences, meaning in life and deviant behavior. Participants may have underreported or exaggerated their experiences due to social desirability, recall bias or embarrassment.
- The study's exclusion criteria of respondents with serious mental illness or criminal records limited our knowledge of how severe episodes of adversity or deviant conduct are related to meaning in life.
- The results might not be comparable to people outside the cultural settings of the sample since cultural and environmental elements that could affect childhood experiences, a sense of meaning, and a deviant behavior were not considered.
- Other psychological, social or familial elements that may influence the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and deviant behavior were not considered; only the presence and search for meaning were evaluated as mediator.
- The study used standardized scales (ACE-Q, MLQ and NDS) that can be considered reliable yet might not fully capture all aspects of adverse experiences,

deviant behavior and meaning in life. This suggests that using additional testing tools would give more details about the topics being researched.

- The possibility of a negative relationship, in which deviant behavior or a lack of purpose in life could influence in retrospect, was not investigated in study.

## Implications

The following implications are drawn from this study:

- Emphasize the value of early intervention programs to lessen the long-term effect of adverse childhood experiences on deviant behavior in young adults.
- Implies that establishing a sense of purpose in life can serve as protective factors helping people in overcoming early adversity and lowering involvement in deviant behavior.
- Support the use of meaning making techniques in therapeutic and developmental programs for young adults by psychologists, counselors, and educators.
- Highlights the significance of awareness campaigns and prevention measures aimed at families and educational institutions in order to lower the likelihood of adverse childhood experiences.
- Helps lawmakers create youth focused interventions that concentrate on behavioral outcomes as well as psychological health.
- Promotes further investigation into mediating role of life's meaning and other psychological elements in order to construct through models that explain the impacts of childhood adversity.
- Provides beneficial information for mental health professionals to evaluate a patient's history of negative events and establish therapies that enhance life purpose and meaning with the aim to mitigate the likelihood of deviant behavior.

## References

- Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, 30(1), 47–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1992.tb01093.x>
- Agnew, R. (2006). Storylines as a neglected cause of crime. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 43(2), 119–147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427805280063>
- Agnew, R. (2007). *Pressured into crime: An overview of general strain theory*. Routledge.
- Anda, R. F., Felitti, V. J., Bremner, J. D., Walker, J. D., Whitfield, C. H., Perry, B. D., ... Giles, W. H. (2006). The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood: A convergence of evidence from neurobiology and epidemiology. *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*, 256(3), 174–186. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00406-005-0624-4>
- Basto-Pereira, M., Gouveia-Pereira, M., Pereira, C. R., Barrett, E. L., Lawler, S., Newton, N., ... Sakulku, J. (2022). The global impact of adverse childhood experiences on criminal behavior: A cross-continental study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 124, 105459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105459>
- Berent, D., & Wojnar, M. (2020). The role of adverse childhood experiences in risky behaviors, health care utilization, and generalized self-efficacy in the general adult Polish population. *Archives of Medical Science*, 20(3), 769–779. <https://doi.org/10.5114/aoms.2020.96696>

Brown, S. M., & Shillington, A. M. (2017). Childhood adversity and the risk of substance use and delinquency: The role of protective adult relationships. *Child abuse & neglect, 63*, 211-221.

Cicchetti, D., & Toth, S. L. (2005). Child maltreatment. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 1*, 409–438.

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.1.102803.144029>

Clinard, M. B., & Meier, R. F. (1963). *Sociology of deviant behavior*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Clinard, M., & Meier, R. (2011). *Sociology of deviant behavior* (14th ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Dube, S. R., Felitti, V. J., Dong, M., Chapman, D. P., Giles, W. H., & Anda, R. F. (2003). Childhood abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction and the risk of illicit drug use: the adverse childhood experiences study. *Pediatrics, 111*(3), 564-572.

Faiza, A., Farooqui, T., & Raza, H. (2022). Adolescent deviant behavior and satisfaction with life: A brief inquiry. *Journal of Positive School Psychology, 6*(10), 1234–1245.

Fore, S. M. (2018). *The relationship between adverse childhood experiences and juvenile deviance in Arizona*. Grand Canyon University.

Frankl, V. E. (1963). *Man's search for meaning: Revised and updated*. WW Publisher.

Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American journal of preventive medicine, 14*(4), 245-258.

George, L. S., & Park, C. L. (2016). Meaning in life as comprehension, purpose, and mattering: Toward integration and new research questions. *Review of general psychology, 20*(3), 205-220.

Glaw, X., Hazelton, M., Kable, A., & Inder, K. (2020). Exploring academics beliefs about the meaning of life to inform mental health clinical practice. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, 34*(2), 36-42.

Gomis-Pomares, A., & Villanueva, L. (2020). The effect of adverse childhood experiences on deviant and altruistic behavior during emerging adulthood. *Psicothema, 32*(1), 33–39. <https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2019.267>

Gul, A., & Atta, N. (2022). Adverse childhood experiences as predictor of depression and suicidal behavior in women. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research, 4*(4), 557–564.

Hughes, K., Bellis, M. A., Hardcastle, K. A., Sethi, D., Butchart, A., Mikton, C., ... Dunne, M. P. (2017). The effect of multiple adverse childhood experiences on health: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet Public Health, 2*(8), e356–e366. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(17\)30118-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(17)30118-4)

Kalsoom, U., Ume, & Ara, O. (2025). *Adverse childhood experiences as predictor of depression, suicidal, and risky behavior*. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.51770>

Kara, Z., & Kruteleva, L. (2022). Life-meaning and value orientations of adolescents inclined to deviant behavior. *Materials of the International Psychological Forum "Child in the Digital World,"* 1, 54.

Khodabandeh, F., Khalilzadeh, M., & Hemati, Z. (2018). The impact of adverse childhood experiences on adulthood aggression and self-esteem-a study on male forensic clients. *Novelty in Biomedicine,* 6(2), 85-91.

Levenson, J., & Grady, M. (2016). Childhood adversity, substance abuse, and violence: Implications for trauma-informed social work practice. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions,* 16(1–2), 24–45.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1533256X.2016.1151234>

Liao, S., Mo, L., & Wang, L. (2025). The impact of childhood trauma on meaning in life among middle school students: The chain-mediating roles of social support and core self-evaluations. *BMC Psychology,* 13(1), 419. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-01345-2>

Mahmood, S., & Fatmi, Z. (2025). Prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and its association with current mental wellbeing among young adults in Pakistan. *Child Abuse & Neglect,* 163, 107318.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2025.107318>

Martela, F., & Steger, M. F. (2016). The three meanings of meaning in life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and significance. *The Journal of Positive Psychology,* 11(5), 531–545. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2015.1137623>

Masten, A. S., & Cicchetti, D. (2010). Developmental cascades. *Development and psychopathology*, 22(3), 491-495.

Mersky, J. P., Topitzes, J., & Reynolds, A. J. (2012). Unsafe at any age: Linking childhood and adolescent maltreatment to delinquency and crime. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 49(2), 295–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427811415284>

Mosley-Johnson, E., Garacci, E., Wagner, N., Mendez, C., Williams, J. S., & Egede, L. E. (2019). Assessing the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and life satisfaction, psychological well-being, and social well-being: United States longitudinal cohort 1995–2014. *Quality of Life Research*, 28(4), 907–914. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-018-2065-4>

Park, C. L. (2010). Making sense of the meaning literature: An integrative review of meaning making and its effects on adjustment to stressful life events. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136(2), 257–301. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018301>

Reavis, J. A., Looman, J., Franco, K. A., & Rojas, B. (2013). Adverse childhood experiences and adult criminality: How long must we live before we possess our own lives? *The Permanente Journal*, 17(2), 44–49. <https://doi.org/10.7812/TPP/12-072>

Rose, H., Womick, J., & King, L. A. (2023). Purpose maintained: Adverse childhood experiences and meaning in life. *Journal of Personality*, 91(6), 1425–1441. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12822>

Roos, L. E., Afifi, T. O., Martin, C. G., Pietrzak, R. H., Tsai, J., & Sareen, J. (2016). Linking typologies of childhood adversity to adult incarceration: Findings from a nationally representative sample. *American journal of orthopsychiatry*, 86(5), 584.

Shonkoff, J. P., Garner, A. S., Siegel, B. S., Dobbins, M. I., Earls, M. F., McGuinn, L., ... Wood, D. L. (2012). The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. *Pediatrics*, *129*(1), e232–e246. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-2663>

Steger, M. F. (2019). Meaning in life and in work. *The Oxford handbook of meaningful work*, 208-222.

Steger, M. F. (2012). Making meaning in life. *Psychological Inquiry*, *23*(4), 381–385. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2012.720832>

Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. (2006). The meaning in life questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *53*(1), 80–93. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.53.1.80>

Teicher, M. H., Samson, J. A., Anderson, C. M., & Ohashi, K. (2016). The effects of childhood maltreatment on brain structure, function and connectivity. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, *17*(10), 652–666. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn.2016.111>

The Scottish Government. (2018, May). *Understanding childhood adversity, resilience and crime*. The Scottish Government.

Wilson, T. (2018). *Understanding childhood adversity, resilience and crime*. The Scottish Government. [https://www.gov.scot/publications/understanding-childhood-adversity-resilience-crime/?utm\\_source](https://www.gov.scot/publications/understanding-childhood-adversity-resilience-crime/?utm_source)

Ching, S. S., Martinson, I. M., & Wong, T. K. (2012). Meaning making: Psychological adjustment to breast cancer by Chinese women. *Qualitative Health Research*, *22*(2), 250-262.

**APPENDICES**

**CONSENT FORM**

### **Informed Consent**

I, Zahra Basharat, a final-year student at Bahria University, Lahore Campus, am conducting a research study titled “Adverse Childhood Experiences, Meaning in Life, and Deviant Behavior among Young Adults” under the supervision of Ms. Lubna Kanwal Dar. The purpose of this study is to understand how early life experiences may influence later behaviors and to examine the protective role of meaning in life. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The survey will take approximately 20–30 minutes and will include questions on childhood experiences, meaning in life, and behavioral patterns. Your responses will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for research purposes. No personal identifying information will be disclosed in any part of the thesis, presentations, or publications.

By signing this form, you confirm that you have read and understood the study information, and you voluntarily agree to participate.

**Email:** [zahrabasharat2@gmail.com](mailto:zahrabasharat2@gmail.com)

**I consent to participate in this study.**

**Participant’s Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant’s Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET**

## Section I

**Please provide the following information. Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.**

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ years (18–25)

**Gender:**

Male

Female

Transgender, LGBTQ, Other

**Education Level:**

Intermediate (FA/FSc/A-Levels)

Undergraduate (BS/BA/BSc)

Postgraduate (MS/MPhil)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Socioeconomic Status:**

Rs.50k-100k

Rs.100k-250k

250k-600k

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of earning member in family:**

---

**Family Structure:** Nuclear Joint Single Parent

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Birth Order:** First-born Middle Youngest Only Child**Parental Education**Father:  Primary  Secondary  Higher Education  No formal educationMother:  Primary  Secondary  Higher Education  No formal education**Parental Occupation / Employment Status:**Father:  Employed  Unemployed  RetiredMother:  Employed  Unemployed  Retired**Residential Area:** Urban

Rural

**Have you ever received counseling or psychological support?**

Yes

No

## **STUDY TOOLS**

## Section II

**Instructions: This Questionnaire will be asking you some questions about events that happened during your childhood; specifically, the first 18 years of your life. The information you provide by answering these questions will allow us to better understand problems that may have occurred early in your life and allow us to explore how those problems may be impacting the challenges you are experiencing today.**

<b>1.</b>	Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often, swear at you, insult you, put you down and/or threaten you in a way that made you think that you might be physically hurt?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>2.</b>	Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often...push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? Or ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>3.</b>	Did an adult or person at least 5 years older ever touch or fondle or have you touch their body in a sexual way?  Did anyone attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>4.</b>	Did you often or very often feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? Or your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>5.</b>	Did you often or very often feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? Or your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

6.	Was your mother or stepmother often, or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped; or had something thrown at her? Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist or something hard? Ever threatened or hurt by a knife or gun or other weapon?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
7.	As a child, did you ever live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or lived with anyone who used street drugs?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
8.	Was a household member ever depressed; mentally ill or sent to a mental hospital? Has a family member ever attempted suicide?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
9.	As a child, were your parents ever separated (didn't live together) or divorced?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
10.	Did a household member ever go to prison, or was constantly in and out of jail?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

### Section III

**Instructions: Please take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer according to the scale below:**

Sr.	Questions	Absolutely Untrue	Mostly Untrue	Somewhat Untrue	Can't Say True/False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Absolutely True
1.	I understand my life's meaning.							
2.	I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.							
3.	I am always looking to find my life's purpose.							
4.	My life has a clear sense of purpose.							
5.	I have a good sense of what							

	makes my life meaningful.							
<b>6.</b>	I have discovered a satisfying life purpose							
<b>7.</b>	I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant							
<b>8.</b>	I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.							
<b>9.</b>	My life has no clear purpose.							
<b>10.</b>	I am searching for meaning in my life.							

### Section IV

**Instructions: Now we would like to ask you about activities and behaviors in which you may or may not have been involved. Please indicate which of the following acts you have done during your teenage or young adulthood years and how many times you have done them.**

**Have you ever . . . ?**

Sr.	Questions	Never	One time	Two to three times	Four to five times	More than six times
1.	Smashed bottles on the street, school grounds, or other areas?					
2.	Intentionally damaged or destroyed property belonging to your parents or other family members (brothers or sisters)?					
3.	Intentionally damaged or destroyed property belonging to a school, college, or university?					
4.	Intentionally damaged or destroyed other property (signs, windows, mailboxes, parking meter, etc.) that did not belong to you?					
5.	Intentionally damaged or destroyed property belonging to your employer or at your workplace?					
6.	Slashed or in any way damaged seats on a bus, in a movie theater, or something at another public place?					
7.	Written graffiti on a bus, on school walls, on rest room walls, or on anything else in a public place?					
8.	Committed acts of vandalism when coming or going to a football game or other sports event?					

9.	Used tobacco products regularly (e.g., cigarettes, chew, snuff etc.)					
10.	Used "soft" drugs such as marijuana (grass, pot)?					
11.	Used "hard" drugs such as crack, cocaine, or heroin?					
12.	Gone to school when you were drunk or high on drugs?					
13.	Gone to work when you were drunk or high on drugs?					
14.	Gone to a concert when you were drunk or high on drugs?					
15.	Gone to a club/dance/party when you were drunk or high on drugs?					
16.	Gone to a club/dance/party to get drunk or high on drugs?					
17.	Sold any drugs such as marijuana (grass, pot), cocaine, or heroin?					
18.	Cheated on school/college/university tests (e.g., cheat sheet, copy from neighbor, etc.)?					
19.	Been sent out of a classroom because of "bad" behavior (e.g. inappropriate behaviors, cheating etc.)?					
20.	Been suspended or expelled from school/college/university?					
21.	Stayed away from school/classes when your parent(s) thought you were there?					
22.	Intentionally missed classes over a number of days for "no reason," just					

	for fun (e.g., there was no family emergency)?					
23.	Been in trouble at school so that your parents received a phone call about it?					
24.	Skipped school/work (pretending you are ill)?					
25.	Intentionally disobeyed a stop sign or a red traffic light while driving a vehicle?					
26.	Been on someone else's property when you knew you were not supposed to be there?					
27.	Failed to return extra change that you knew a cashier gave you by mistake?					
28.	Tried to deceive a cashier to your advantage (e.g. flash a larger bill and give a smaller one)?					
29.	Let the air out of the tires of a car or bike?					
30.	Lied about your age to get into a nightclub/bar?					
31.	Made nuisance/obscene telephone calls?					
32.	Avoided paying for something (e.g. movies, bus or subway rides, food, etc.)?					
33.	Used fake money or other things in a candy, coke, or stamp machine?					
34.	Shaken/hit a parked car just to turn on the car's alarm?					

35.	Stayed out all night without informing your parents about your whereabouts?					
36.	Stolen, taken, or tried to take something from a family member or relative (e.g. personal items, money, etc.)?					
37.	Stolen, taken, or tried to take something worth \$10 or less (e.g. newspaper, pack of gum, mail, money, etc.)?					
38.	Stolen, taken, or tried to take something worth between \$10 and \$100 (e.g. shirt, watch, cologne, video game cartridge, shoes, money, etc.)?					
39.	Stolen, taken, or tried to take something worth more than \$100 (e.g. leather jacket, car stereo, bike, money, etc.)?					
40.	Stolen, taken, or tried to take something that belonged to "the public" (e.g. street signs, construction signs, etc.)?					
41.	Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle (e.g., car or motorcycle)?					
42.	Bought, sold, or held stolen goods or tried to do any of these things?					
43.	Hit or threatened to hit a person?					
44.	Hit or threatened to hit your parent(s)?					
45.	Hit or threatened to hit other students/peers or people?					
46.	Used force or threatened to beat someone up if they didn't give you					

	money or something else you wanted?					
47.	Been involved in gang fights or other gang activities?					
48.	Beaten someone up so badly they required medical attention?					

**TOOLS PERMISSION**

Require a copy of Normative  
Deviance Scale NDS and  
permission to use it Inbox



me 21 Oct 2025

HiHope this email finds you well.This is Zahra...



Vazsonyi, Alexa... 21 Oct 2025



to me ▾

Hi,

You can find all you need in attached paper – and you have my permission as long as you properly cite it.



Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Ph.D.

Director of Graduate Studies  
(DGS)

Professor of Family Sciences

# Copy of Meaning in Life Questionnaire

Inbox



me 10 Oct 2025

Hi! I hope you are doing well. I'm Zahra Bashar...

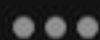


Patricia Frazier 10 Oct 2025

to me ▾



All the information you need is on this website including translated versions of the MLQ: [http://www.michaelfsteger.com/?page\\_id=13](http://www.michaelfsteger.com/?page_id=13)



**PERMISSION LETTER**



BULC/PSY/2025/326

11<sup>th</sup> November 2025

**Permission Letter**

**Subject: Request for Cooperation for Collecting Research Data**

**To Whom It May Concern**

**Respected Sir/Ma'am,**

Bahria University is a Federally Chartered Public Sector University. Bahria University was established by the Pakistan Navy in 2000. Since then, it has steadily grown into one of Pakistan's leading higher education institutions with campuses in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore.

The Department of Professional Psychology (DPP) was established in 2018. The Department offers both BS Psychology and MS Clinical Psychology Programs, aims to give quality education, and promotes ethical and competent psychology practice in Pakistan.

*Ms. Zahra Basharat, a student of Bahria University Lahore Campus, currently enrolled in BS Psychology, VIII Semester. She is conducting final year research entitled "Adverse Childhood Experiences, Meaning in Life and Deviant Behavior among University Students."*

For this purpose, she needs to collect data from your institute/organization. The information provided will remain confidential, and we will ensure the ethical responsibility of all our participants. The results concluded from the collected data will be used only for educational purposes. The identity of any participant will not be disclosed at any time.

We would like to seek your cooperation in conducting this research. Your assistance in our scientific pursuit will be highly appreciated and acknowledged.

Thanking you in anticipation.

**Supervisor**

**Ms. Lubna Kanwal Dar**  
**Sr. Lecturer**

**Dr. Khawer Bilal Baig**  
**Senior Associate Professor/ HOD**  
**Department of Professional Psychology**  
**Bahria University Lahore Campus**

6	Scherer, Stephen G.. "Exploring Central Ohio Suburban Teachers' Perspectives on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Strategies: A Qualitative Exploratory Case Study.", American College of Education Publication	<1 %
7	pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov Internet Source	<1 %
8	fidesetratio.com.pl Internet Source	<1 %
9	Submitted to California Southern University Student Paper	<1 %
10	pure.roehampton.ac.uk Internet Source	<1 %
11	Submitted to University of Stirling Student Paper	<1 %
12	link.springer.com Internet Source	<1 %
13	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	<1 %
14	www.researchsquare.com Internet Source	<1 %
15	Danette E. Ifert, Michael E. Roloff. "Responding to refusals of requests: The role of requester sex on persistence", Communication Reports, 2009 Publication	<1 %
16	César Espin-Riofrio, Ángela Yanza-Montalván, Angélica Cruz-Chóez, Johanna Ivonne Galarza Alay et al. "Chapter 29 Human or Machine? Analyzing the Ability to Detect Artificially	<1 %



- 
- 17** Elizabeth, Otegbayo Bolajoko. "Social Intervention Framework Regarding Ecological Factors Pertaining to Academic Achievement of Pregnant Teenagers in Nigeria", University of Malaya (Malaysia), 2025  
Publication <1 %

---

  - 18** Kai A. D. Morgan Campbell. "Afro-Caribbean Dynamics of Sex and Relationship - Reclaiming the Caribbean Sexual Narrative", Routledge, 2025  
Publication <1 %

---

  - 19** [www.raiv.ulaval.ca](http://www.raiv.ulaval.ca)  
Internet Source <1 %

---

  - 20** Submitted to University of Edinburgh  
Student Paper <1 %

---

  - 21** [repository.umindanao.edu.ph](http://repository.umindanao.edu.ph)  
Internet Source <1 %

---

  - 22** [text-id.123dok.com](http://text-id.123dok.com)  
Internet Source <1 %

---

  - 23** [www.jptcp.com](http://www.jptcp.com)  
Internet Source <1 %

---

  - 24** Submitted to University of New South Wales  
Student Paper <1 %

---

  - 25** [etd.aau.edu.et](http://etd.aau.edu.et)  
Internet Source <1 %

---

  - 26** [repository.unar.ac.id](http://repository.unar.ac.id)  
Internet Source <1 %

---

  - 27** Submitted to HELP UNIVERSITY  
Student Paper <1 %
-

# Thesis

---

## ORIGINALITY REPORT

---

8%

SIMILARITY INDEX

5%

INTERNET SOURCES

6%

PUBLICATIONS

2%

STUDENT PAPERS

---

## PRIMARY SOURCES

---

1 Pragma Asawa, Smita Pandey, Asha Srivastava. "Adverse childhood experiences, emotion regulation and subjective happiness among young adults", Discover Public Health, 2025  
Publication 1%

---

2 [www.mdpi.com](http://www.mdpi.com)  
Internet Source 1%

---

3 Baklund, Kyrin. "The Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on Leadership Styles", Northwest University  
Publication <1%

---

4 Iwona Nowakowska, Joanna Beck, Michael Rönnlund. "Work on self-esteem, reformulate your past, seek pleasure, and stay well: Well-being, time perspectives and changes in anxiety and depressive symptoms over a one-year period", Personality and Individual Differences, 2026  
Publication <1%

---

5 Jun-Yu Huo, Xin-Qiang Wang, Michael F. Steger, Ying Ge, Yin-Cheng Wang, Ming-Fan Liu, Bao-Juan Ye. "Implicit meaning in life: The assessment and construct validity of implicit meaning in life and relations with explicit meaning in life and depression", The Journal of Positive Psychology, 2019  
Publication <1%

---

---

38 Hui Zhou, Yu Chang, Chaiyun Sakulsriprasert, Tinakon Wongpakaran et al. "The Validity and Reliability of the Chinese Version of the Screening Instrument for Borderline Personality Disorder", *Psychiatry International*, 2025  
Publication

---

Exclude quotes Off

Exclude matches Off

Exclude bibliography Off

- 
- 29 [Glaze-Shields, Teresa. "An Exploration of Subjective Connections between Child Abuse and Addiction."](#), Institute for Clinical Social Work (Chicago), 2020  
Publication <1 %
- 
- 30 [Louis A. Pagliaro, Anne Marie Pagliaro. "Substance Use Among Women - A Reference and Resource Guide"](#), Routledge, 2019  
Publication <1 %
- 
- 31 [Ralf Nickel, U. T. Egle. "Influence of childhood adversities and defense styles on the 1-year follow-up of psychosomatic-psychotherapeutic inpatient treatment"](#), Psychotherapy Research, 2007  
Publication <1 %
- 
- 32 [Ton Duc Thang University](#)  
Publication <1 %
- 
- 33 [brill.com](#)  
Internet Source <1 %
- 
- 34 [v.vibdoc.com](#)  
Internet Source <1 %
- 
- 35 [Chan Hang Saing, Kiesha Prem, Ponha Uk, Navy Chann, Pheak Chhoun, Phalkun Mun, Sovannary Tuot, Siyan Yi. "Prevalence and social determinants of psychological distress among people who use drugs in Cambodia"](#), Research Square, 2020  
Publication <1 %
- 
- 36 [etheses.whiterose.ac.uk](#)  
Internet Source <1 %
- 
- 37 [repositorio.ispa.pt](#)

## \*% detected as AI

AI detection includes the possibility of false positives. Although some text in this submission is likely AI generated, scores below the 20% threshold are not surfaced because they have a higher likelihood of false positives.

Caution: Review required.

It is essential to understand the limitations of AI detection before making decisions about a student's work. We encourage you to learn more about Turnitin's AI detection capabilities before using the tool.

### Disclaimer

Our AI writing assessment is designed to help educators identify text that might be prepared by a generative AI tool. Our AI writing assessment may not always be accurate (i.e., our AI models may produce either false positive results or false negative results), so it should not be used as the sole basis for adverse actions against a student. It takes further scrutiny and human judgment in conjunction with an organization's application of its specific academic policies to determine whether any academic misconduct has occurred.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How should I interpret Turnitin's AI writing percentage and false positives?

The percentage shown in the AI writing report is the amount of qualifying text within the submission that Turnitin's AI writing detection model determines was either likely AI-generated text from a large-language model or likely AI-generated text that was likely revised using an AI paraphrase tool or word spinner.

False positives (incorrectly flagging human-written text as AI-generated) are a possibility in AI models.

AI detection scores under 20%, which we do not surface in new reports, have a higher likelihood of false positives. To reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, no score or highlights are attributed and are indicated with an asterisk in the report (\*%).

The AI writing percentage should not be the sole basis to determine whether misconduct has occurred. The reviewer/instructor should use the percentage as a means to start a formative conversation with their student and/or use it to examine the submitted assignment in accordance with their school's policies.

### What does 'qualifying text' mean?

Our model only processes qualifying text in the form of long-form writing. Long-form writing means individual sentences contained in paragraphs that make up a longer piece of written work, such as an essay, a dissertation, or an article, etc. Qualifying text that has been determined to be likely AI-generated will be highlighted in cyan in the submission, and likely AI-generated and then likely AI-paraphrased will be highlighted purple.

Non-qualifying text, such as bullet points, annotated bibliographies, etc., will not be processed and can create disparity between the submission highlights and the percentage shown.



# Zahara Basharat

## Thesis

-  Quick Submit
-  Quick Submit
-  Bahria University

---

### Document Details

Submission ID

trn:oid::1:3447831391

Submission Date

Dec 18, 2025, 3:41 PM GMT+5

Download Date

Dec 18, 2025, 3:49 PM GMT+5

File Name

turnitin.docx

File Size

65.1 KB

45 Pages

8,568 Words

50,565 Characters