

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



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



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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—
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Table of Content

CHAPTER 1.....	15
INTRODUCTION.....	15
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
CHAPTER 2.....	22
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
CHAPTER 3.....	35
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	35
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
CHAPTER 4.....	41
RESULTS.....	41
CHAPTER 5.....	51
DISCUSSION.....	51
5.1 Limitations of the study.....	55
5.2 Implications of the study.....	57
REFERENCES.....	58
APPENDICES.....	63

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
α	Alpha Cronbach's Index of Internal Consistency
β	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)