

From High Standards to High Risk: Linking Parent Socialization to Problematic Drinking Through Perfectionism

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Project Overview

This study investigates the pathways from parental socialization practices to problematic drinking in emerging adults (ages 18-25), a developmental period marked by exploration and risk-taking (Arnett, 2000). To examine these relationships, we explored how parental expectations interact with perceived parental response styles in relation to two dimensions of perfectionism (perfectionistic standards and discrepancy). In turn, we examined how these dimensions of perfectionism are associated with alcohol-related problems in emerging adulthood through negative affect and drinking to cope.

Parent Socialization

Social Expectations Model: Suggests perfectionism emerges from contingent parental approval, where children internalize high expectations to gain love and avoid rejection (Flett & Hewitt, 2002).

Perceived Parental Response Styles:

- 1) **Parental Conditional Negative Regard (PCNR):** affection or approval is reduced when a child fails to meet expectations.
- 2) **Parental Conditional Positive Regard (PCPR):** affection or approval is elevated when a child succeeds in meeting parental expectations.
- 3) **Parental Contingent Punishment (PCP):** non-abusive consequences are specifically applied in response to a child's failure to meet expectations.
- 4) **Parental Unconditional Positive Regard (UCPR):** child feels consistently valued and loved regardless of their behaviors, successes, or failures.

Perfectionism and Drinking Outcomes

Perfectionistic Standards: The degree to which individuals set and strive for high personal goals.

Perfectionistic Discrepancy: The perceived gap between one's high standards and actual performance, often linked to self-criticism and distress.

Negative Affect: A general tendency to experience distressing emotions such as fear, guilt, or depression.

Coping Motives: Drinking to reduce negative emotions like stress, anxiety, or sadness. (Cooper, 1994).

Problematic Drinking: Alcohol-related consequences such as risky behavior and academic or social problems.

Results

- Moderation analyses (PROCESS Macro) were conducted to examine how parental response styles influenced the relationship between perceived parental expectations and perfectionism dimensions ($N = 331$).
- Supported with person-centered analysis.
- Tested path model examining effects of perfectionism on alcohol-related problems.

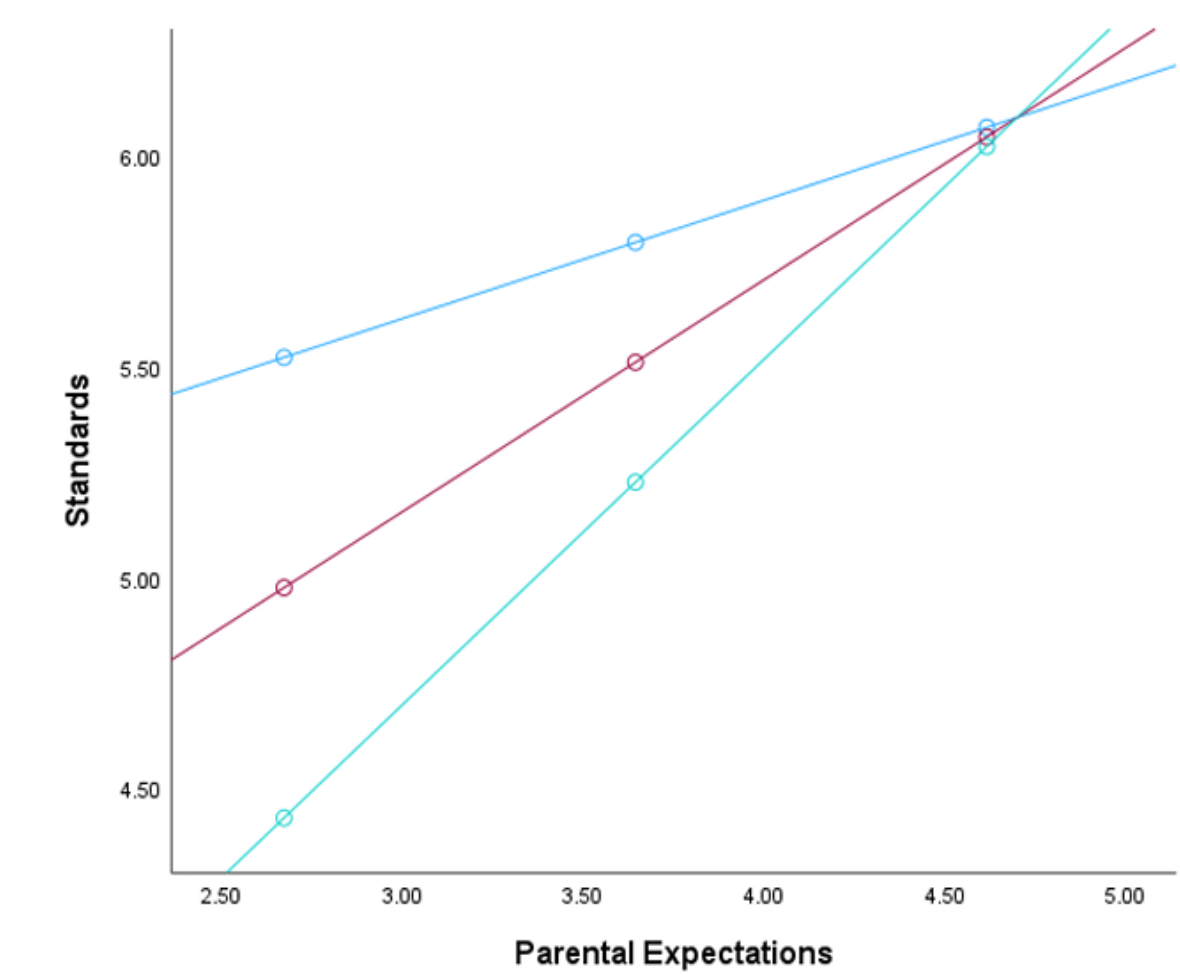


Figure 1. Simple slopes analysis of parental expectations on child standards at different levels of PCNR

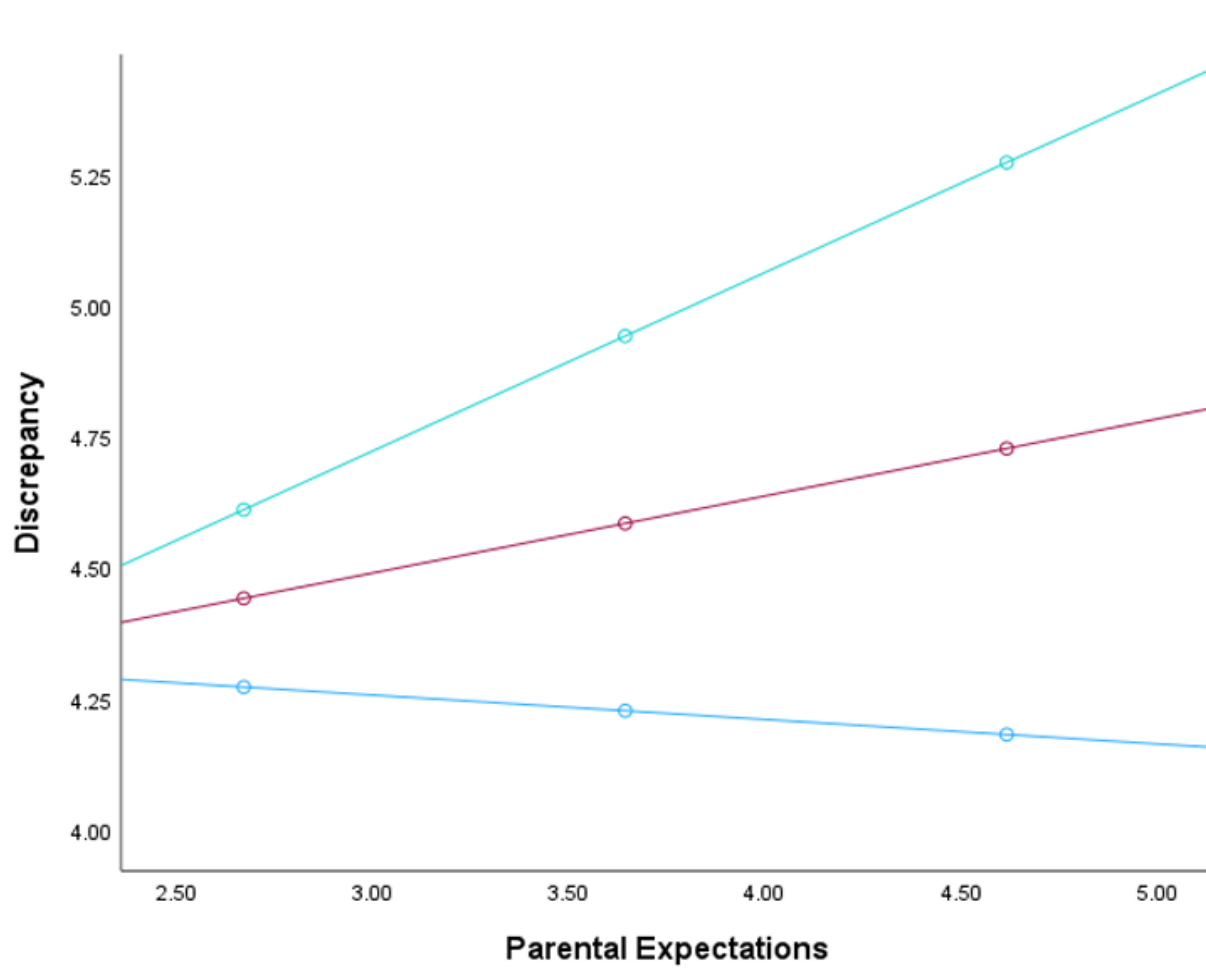


Figure 2. Simple slopes analysis of parental expectations on child discrepancy at different levels of PCNR

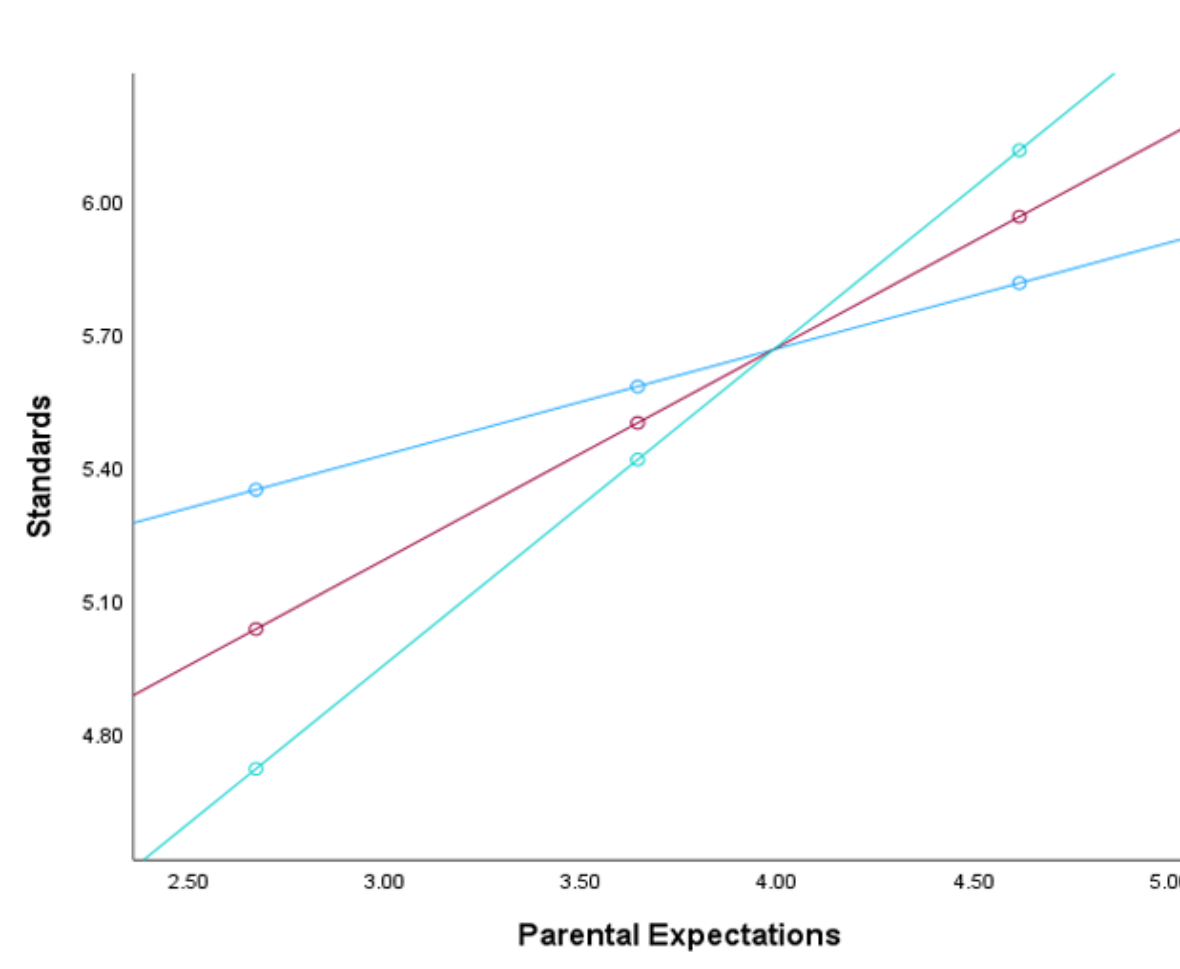


Figure 3. Simple slopes analysis of parental expectations on child standards at different levels of PCP

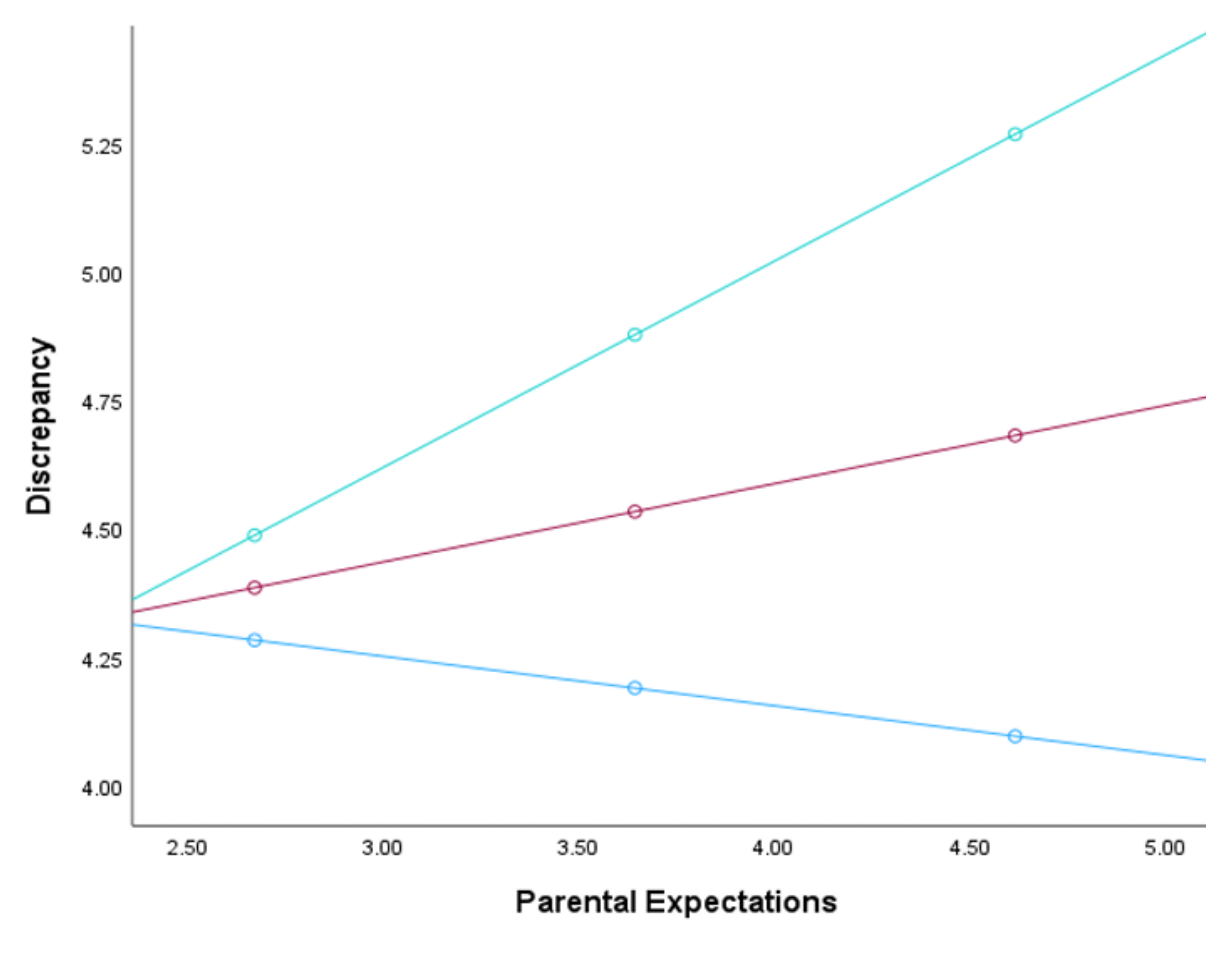


Figure 4. Simple slopes analysis of parental expectations on child discrepancy at different levels of PCP

	Maladaptive		Adaptive		$t(90)$	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
PE	3.98	1.07	3.70	1.13	1.17	.25	.03
PCNR	3.67	1.84	1.94	1.61	4.48	< .001	.98
PCPR	5.34	1.70	5.31	1.55	.07	.95	.02
PCP	4.56	1.88	3.35	2.00	2.88	.02	.63
UCPR	4.16	1.94	6.09	1.41	-4.96	< .001	-1.1

Table 1. T-Test analysis of parental response style scores between maladaptive (standards > 6, discrepancy ≥ 5.5) and adaptive perfectionists (standards > 6, discrepancy < 4).

*PE = Parental Expectations.

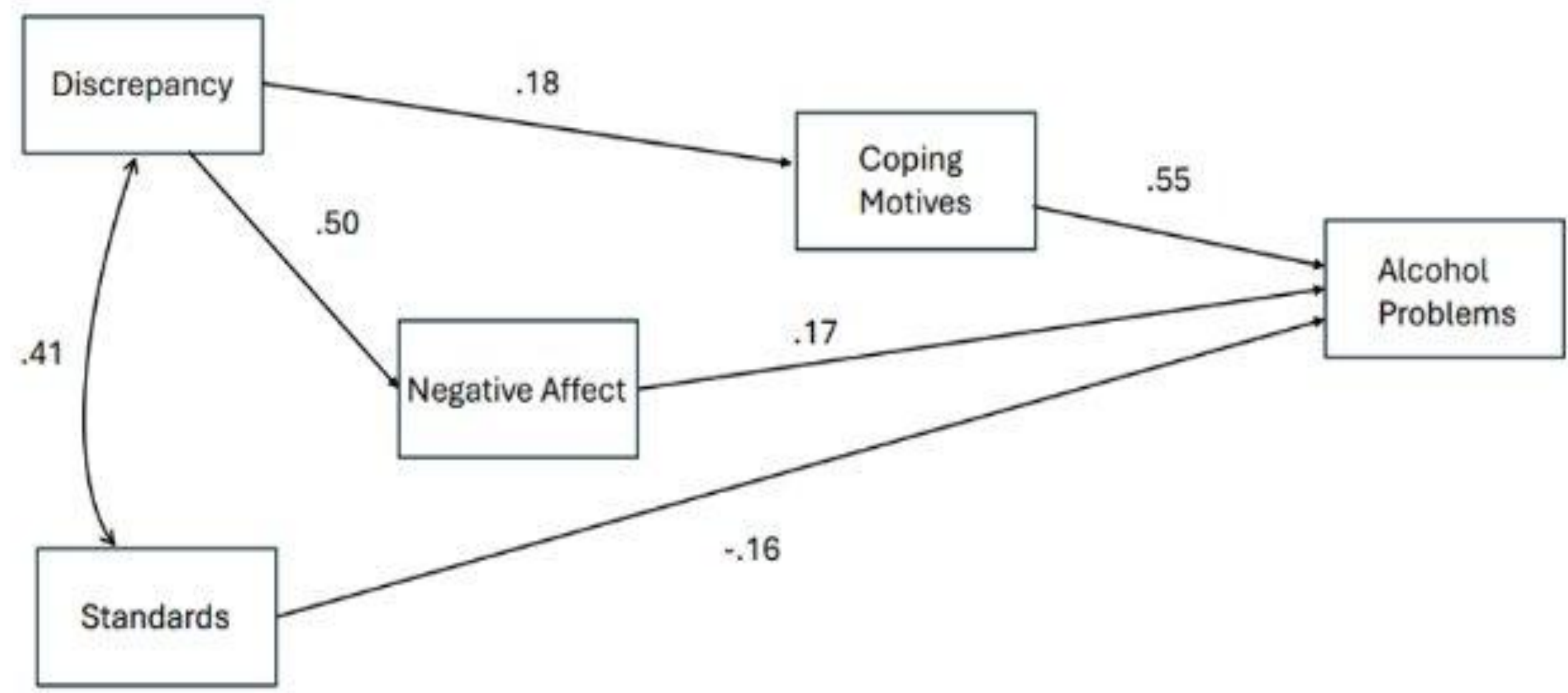


Figure 5. Results of the path model testing the effects of perfectionistic standards and perfectionistic discrepancy on negative affect, drinking to cope, and alcohol-related problems (AMOS 29.0). Only significant direct standardized effects at $p < .01$ are shown.

Discussion

- High parental expectations alone are not predictive of perfectionist outcomes.
- High expectations when coupled with high levels of PCNR and PCP in the academic achievement domain, were associated with maladaptive perfectionist tendencies in emerging adulthood.
- High expectations when paired with PCPR foster perfectionistic standards but does not necessarily amplify perfectionistic discrepancy.
- UCPR may prevent the development of perfectionistic discrepancy in the face of high parental expectations.
- When controlling for discrepancy, higher perfectionistic standards were found to be directly associated with a reduction in alcohol-related problems.
- Perfectionistic discrepancy indirectly contributes to problematic alcohol use through two distinct pathways (negative affect and coping).

Clinical Implications

- Parent intervention should highlight the importance of promoting unconditional positive regard and reducing conditional negative regard and contingent punishment to help caregivers foster an environment that encourages autonomous effort and stable self-worth.
- Prevention programs should implement perfectionism-informed interventions to target students experiencing academically triggered stress and self-doubt and focus on teaching adaptive coping.

References

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