

# The role of maternal psychological control and pressure on body image in a child's drive for thinness

## 1. Introduction

The drive for thinness (DFT), an indicator of disordered eating, is strongly predicted by body dissatisfaction (BD). In early adolescence, there are other predictors of DFT which rise from the mother-child relationship such as maternal psychological control (MPC) and the mother's pressure on the child's body image (MP).

## 2. Aim

This study aims to explain DFT of early adolescents by BD, MP and MPC.

## 3. Methods

**Sample** 191 Slovak adolescents (53.4% of girls,  $M_{age}=12.54$ ,  $SD=0.58$ ) and their mothers ( $M_{age}=40.45$ ,  $SD=4.71$ )

### Measures

Children's Body Image Scale (Truby & Paxton, 2002)

DFT subscale of Eating disorders inventory (Joiner & Heatherton, 1998),

Psychological Control Scale–Youth Self-Report (Barber, 1996)

Parental influence subscale (Keery et al., 2004)

### Statistical analyses

Structural equation modelling in AMOS

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## 4. Results

A hypothesized model was tested to explain DFT by PC and BD, associated with four sources of MP. The tested model did not fit the data well enough. A modified model, where three insignificant sources of MP were excluded, fitted the data well ( $SRMR=.06$ ,  $CFI=.95$ ,  $RMSEA=.04$ ,  $PCLOSE=.74$ ) and explained **22%** of the variance in DFT.

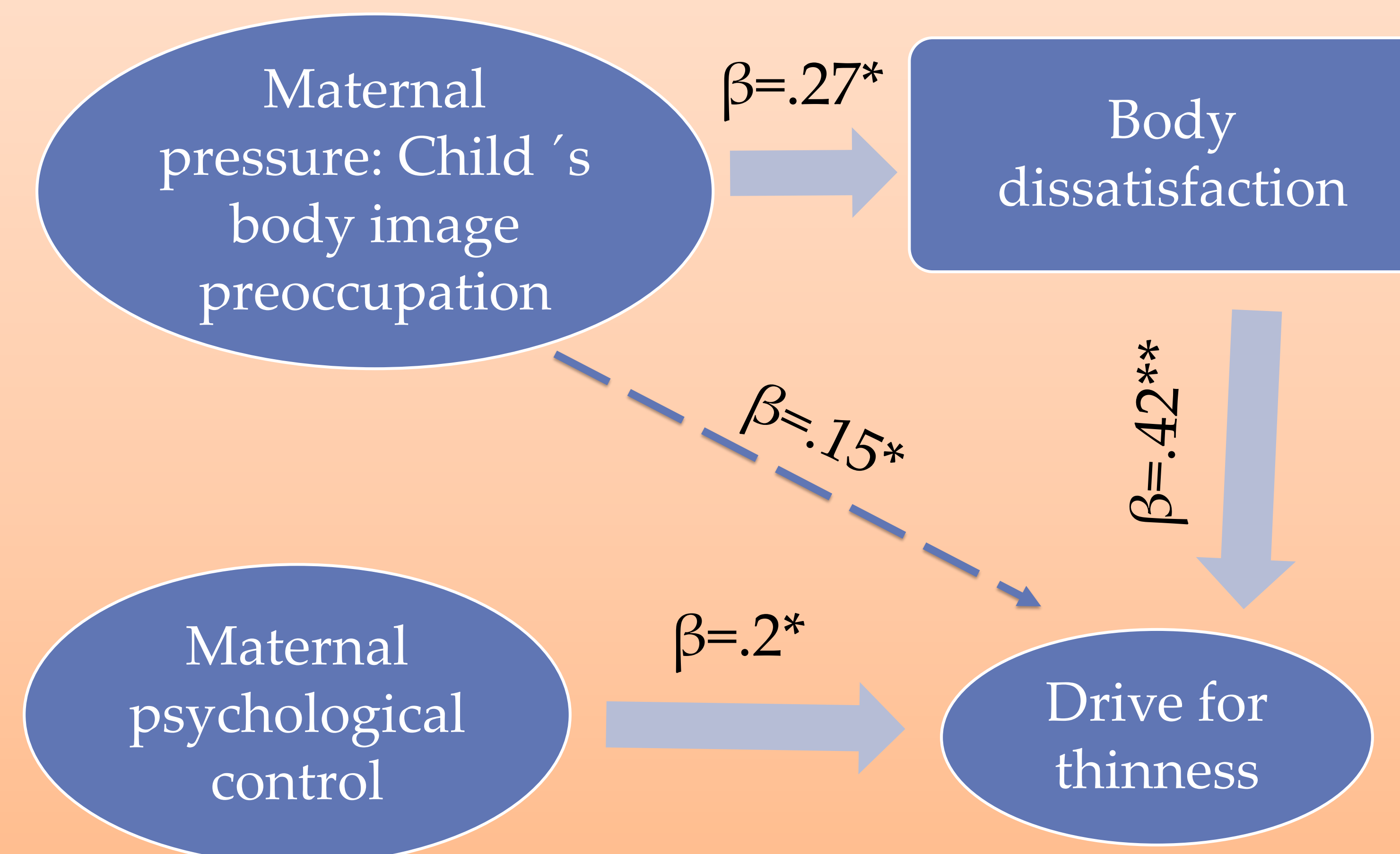


Figure 1. Model explaining drive for thinness among adolescents. Beta values, \*  $p<.05$ ; \*\*  $p<.001$

The model was statistically equivalent for both genders. DFT was associated with BD, PC and indirectly (through BD) with the source of MP – child's body image preoccupation (CBI). CBI was associated with BD (Figure 1).

## 5. Conclusions

The results point to the importance of BD, MPC and CBI, a factor reflecting **direct maternal pressure on the child's body image**, in explaining DFT among early adolescent boys and girls. Other sources of MP (reflecting the mother's concern about her own body image) were not significant in this context. BD and disordered eating prevention strategies for adolescents indicate a **respectful mother-child relationship, avoiding pressure and control**.