



# Autonomy in relation to alcohol use and motivation to alcohol use: A prevention perspective

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## Background

- The role of psychological factors in students' drinking and drinking patterns is very important not only for **targeting prevention** programs but also for the identification of those factors which might be **important for behavior change** (Kuntsche et al., 2010).
- Autonomy is a relatively new concept of the current theory in health psychology and its importance has been recognized in the process of **inducing as well as maintaining behavioral change** (Ng. et al, 2012).
- The aim of this study was to explore the **relationship between autonomy and alcohol use** among university students and test whether the **motivation to drink mediates** this relationship.

## Materials and methods

### Sample

- The data used in the analysis consisted of 719 students (Mean age = 21.25; SD = 1.99; 59% women) studying in Slovakia.

### Measures

- Autonomous functioning** was measured by the Index of Autonomous Functioning scale (Weinstein et al. 2012) which measures three aspects of inter-individual differences in the tendency to function in an autonomous way: Self-congruence/Authorship (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.80$ ) Interest-taking: (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.81$ ) Susceptibility to control (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.60$ ).
- Alcohol use** was assessed by the AUDIT (The Alcohol Use Identification Test) (Barbor et al. 2001). Two subscales were used measuring alcohol **consumption** ( $\alpha=0.80$ ) and **negative consequences** of alcohol use ( $\alpha=0.80$ ).
- Motivation** of alcohol use was measured by the DMQ-R (Drinking Motivation Questionnaire-Revised version) (Kuntsche & Kuntsche 2009). This measure consists of 20 items and identifies four types of motivation of alcohol use: **mood enhancement, social motivation, conformity and coping** ( $\alpha=0.70-0.90$ ).

### Statistical analyses

- The data were analyzed using regression analyses and bootstrapping procedures were used to test the indirect effects.

## Results

- The regression model revealed that **autonomy (Authorship/Self-congruence) was negatively related to alcohol use** when measured by the total score of AUDIT [ $\beta=-.174, p \leq .001$ ]. Further analysis showed that this relationship was found for both the components consumption [ $\beta=-.130, p \leq .001$ ] and alcohol related consequences [ $\beta=-.164, p \leq .001$ ].
- The observed effects were found to be **mediated by four motivations to drink**: mood enhancement, social motivation, coping and conformity (Figures 1 & 2).
- The remaining components **Interest-taking** and **Susceptibility to control** were **not** significantly related to alcohol use variables.

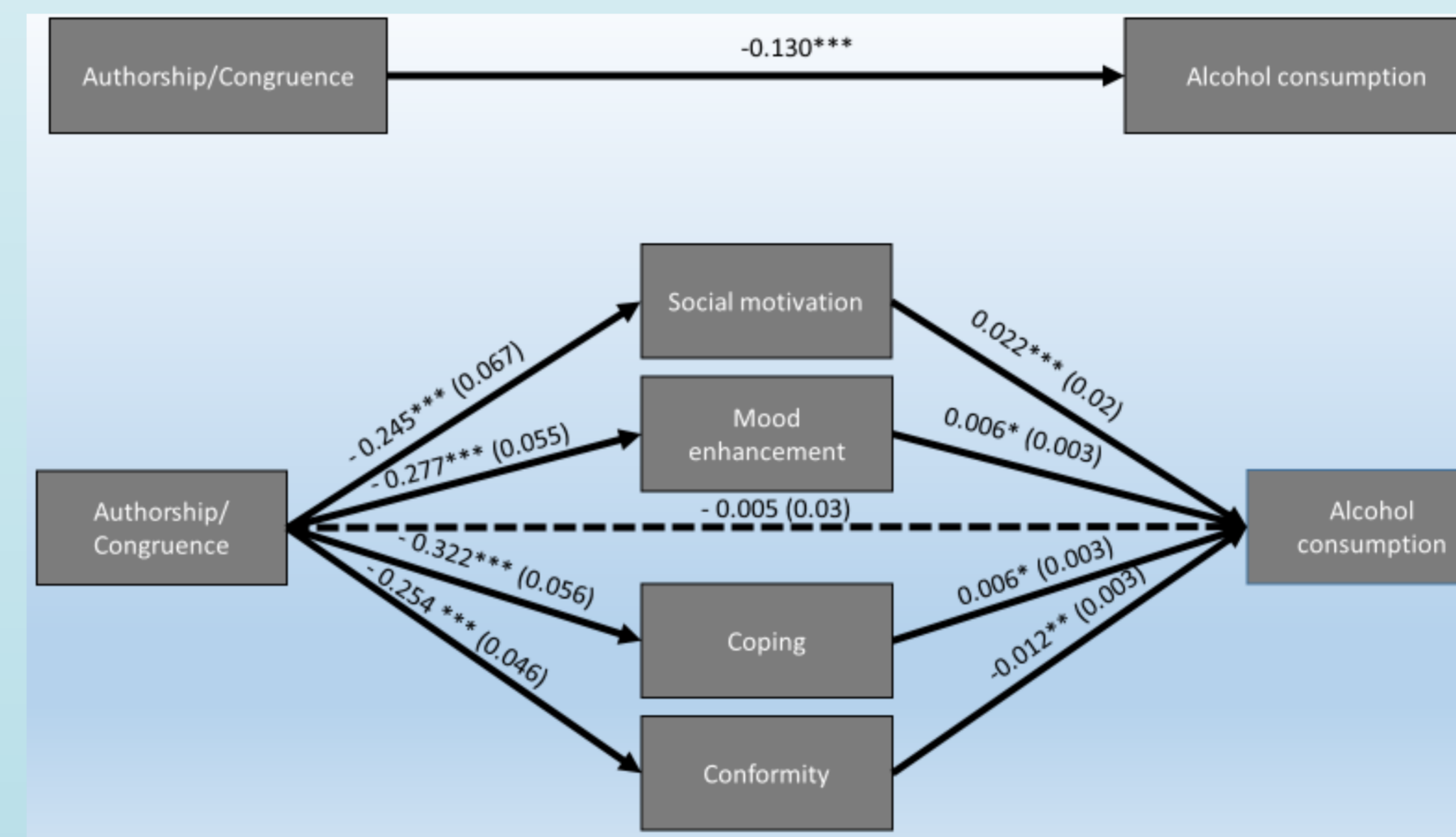


Figure 1 AUTONOMY- MOTIVATION- ALCOHOL USE

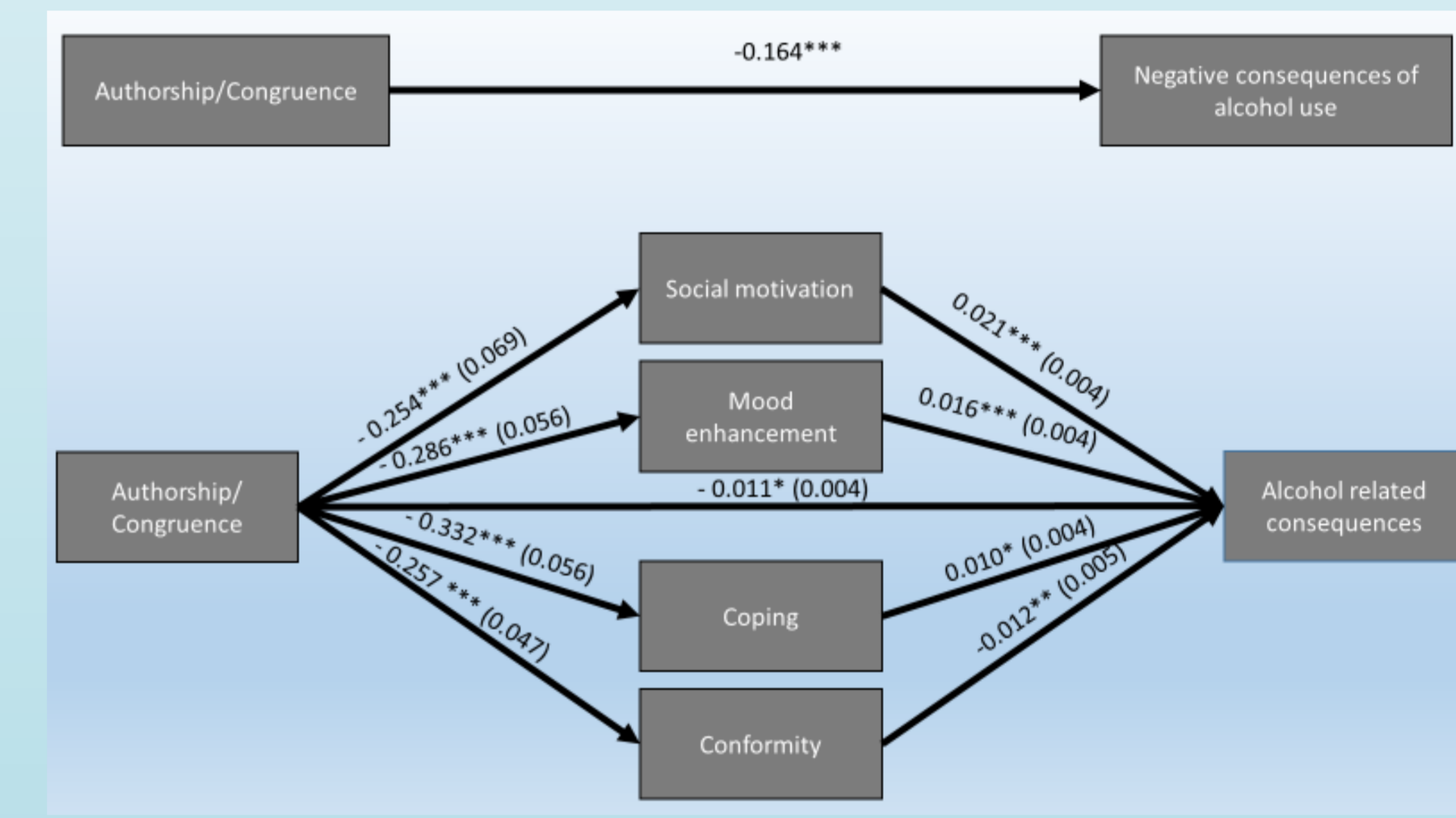


Figure 2 AUTONOMY- MOTIVATION- ALCOHOL RELATED CONSEQUENCES

## Conclusion

- Autonomy as a relatively new concept in health psychology should be recognized as a relevant factor in prevention research and prevention practice of alcohol use among university students.
- Pathways such as motivation to drink are important mediating agents and should be considered in prevention strategies.

## References

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