

## Introduction

- Modern society has become more individualistic and competitive, leading to higher levels of perfectionism in recent years (Curran & Hill, 2019, 2022).
- Research has showed that higher levels of perfectionism can result in social disconnection, which in turn leads to depression, as outlined by the Perfectionism Disconnection Model (Hewitt et al., 2006; Sherry et al., 2016).
- Competitiveness, a major cultural value in modern society, compels individuals to pursue and achieve more than others to gain high recognition. This drive for competitiveness can increase perfectionism and impact social interactions among individuals with higher levels of perfectionism (Curran & Hill, 2019; Moon et al., 2018).
- **The goal of this study was to explore the roles of social rejection and competitiveness in the relationship between perfectionism and depression (Figure 1).**

## Methods

- **Sample:** 346 students from a U.S. southeastern university
- **Measures:**
  - **Perfectionism:** 5 items were used from the self-oriented perfectionism subscale of the Big Three Perfectionism Scale (Smith et al., 2016)
  - **Competitiveness:** 4 items were used from the vertical individualism subscale in the Individualism and Collectivism Scale (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998)
  - **Social rejection:** 6 items were used from the rejection/exclusion subscale in the General Belongingness Scale (GBS) (Malone et al., 2012)
  - **Depression:** 20 items were used from the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977)
- **Statistical Analysis:** The moderated mediation model was tested using 5,000 bootstrap samples with SPSS PROCESS 4.2 (Hayes, 2017)

## Results

### Research Question 1 Mediation Effect

- Social rejection mediated the relationship between perfectionism and depression (Effect = .15 [95% CI (.08, .21)],  $se = .03$ ).
- That is, students with higher levels of perfectionism tend to perceive more social rejection, which leads to increased depression.

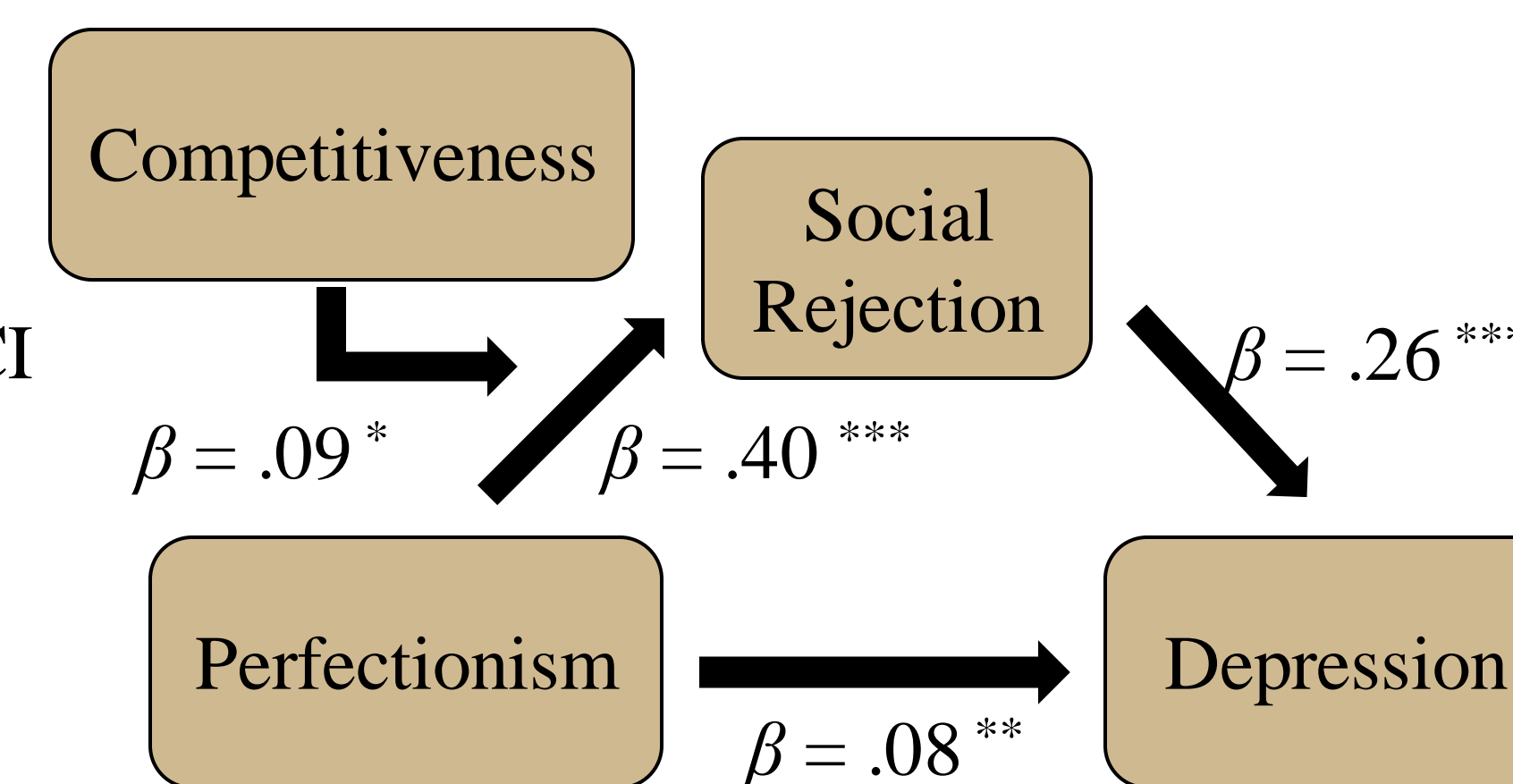


Figure 1. The Moderated Mediation Model  
\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Research Question 2 Moderation Effect (Figure 2)

- Competitiveness moderated the relationship between perfectionism and social rejection ( $\beta = .09$  [95% CI (.004, .18)],  $se = .04$ ,  $t = 2.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ).
- As students' levels of competitiveness increase, perfectionism leads to greater social rejection.
- That is, students with higher levels of perfectionism perceive more social rejection, compared to those with lower levels of competitiveness.

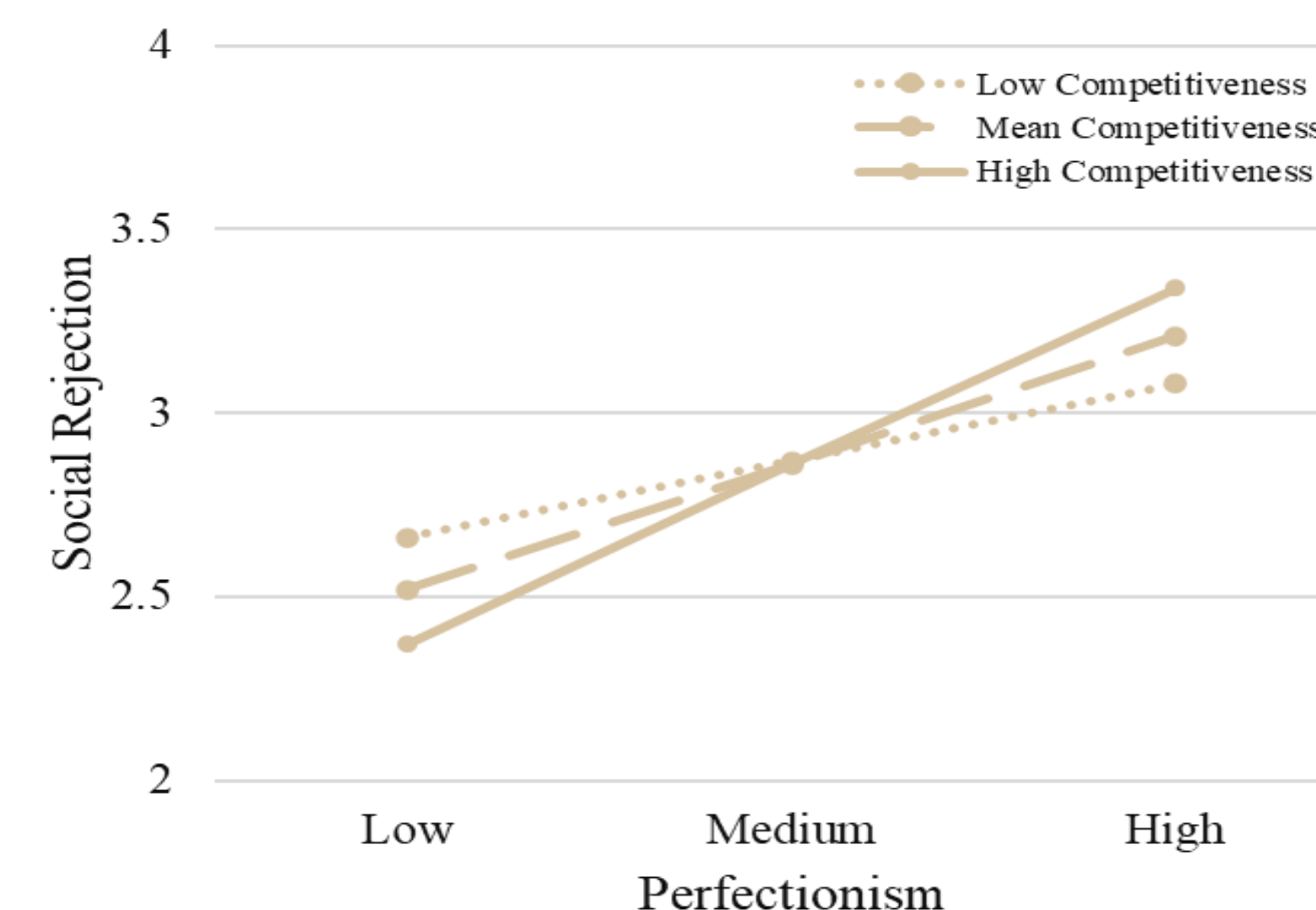


Figure 2. The Moderating Effect of Competitiveness in the Association between Perfectionism and Social Rejection

### Research Question 3 Moderated Mediation Effect (Figure 1, Table 1)

- Competitiveness significantly moderated the mediation model of perfectionism, social rejection, and depression (Index = .02 [90% CI: (.003, .05),  $se = .01$ ).
- The mediation effect of social rejection on the relationship between perfectionism and depression was more pronounced in students with higher levels of competitiveness.

Table 1. The Moderated Mediation Effect of Competitiveness in the Relationship between Perfectionism and Depression

	Mediation Effect	SE
Low Competitiveness (Mean - 1SD)	.06 [95% CI (.01, .11)]	.03
Mean Competitiveness	.10 [95% CI (.06, .15)]	.03
High Competitiveness (Mean + 1SD)	.14 [95% CI (.08, .20)]	.04

## Discussion

- Research has found that students with higher levels of perfectionism experience more depression through their increased perception of social rejection. This effect is even more pronounced in students who also exhibit stronger competitiveness.
- The results indicate that students with higher levels of perfectionism and competitiveness are more sensitive to interpersonal disapproval (Flett et al., 2014), which contributes to their feelings of depression.
- This study has important implications for clinical prevention and intervention in addressing mental health challenges associated with perfectionism, particularly in competitive young individuals. For example, clinicians should be encouraged to assess individuals' cultural beliefs about competitiveness to better understand the impact of their perfectionism on their social rejection and depression.

## Key References

- Curran, T., & Hill, A. P. (2019). Perfectionism is increasing over time: A meta-analysis of birth cohort differences from 1989 to 2016. *Psychological Bulletin*, 145(4), 410–429. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000138>
- Curran, T., & Hill, A. P. (2022). Young people's perceptions of their parents' expectations and criticism are increasing over time: Implications for perfectionism. *Psychological Bulletin*, 148(1-2), 107–128. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000347>
- Flett, G. L., Besser, A., & Hewitt, P. L. (2014). Perfectionism and interpersonal orientations in depression: An analysis of validation seeking and rejection sensitivity in a community sample of young adults. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 77(1), 67–85. <https://doi.org/10.1521/psyc.2014.77.1.67>
- Hewitt, P. L., Flett, G. L., Sherry, S. B., & Caelian, C. (2006). Trait perfectionism dimensions and suicidal behavior. In T. E. Ellis (Ed.), *Cognition and suicide: Theory, research, and therapy* (pp. 215–235). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/11377-010>
- Moon C, Travaglino G. A., & Uskul A. K. (2018). Social value orientation and endorsement of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism: An exploratory study comparing individuals from North America and South Korea. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02262>
- Sherry, S., Mackinnon, S., & Gaultreau, C. (2016). Perfectionists do not play nicely with others: Expanding the Social Disconnection Model. In F. Sirois, & D. Molnar (Eds.), *Perfectionism, Health, and Well-Being* (pp. 225–243). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-18582-8\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-18582-8_10)