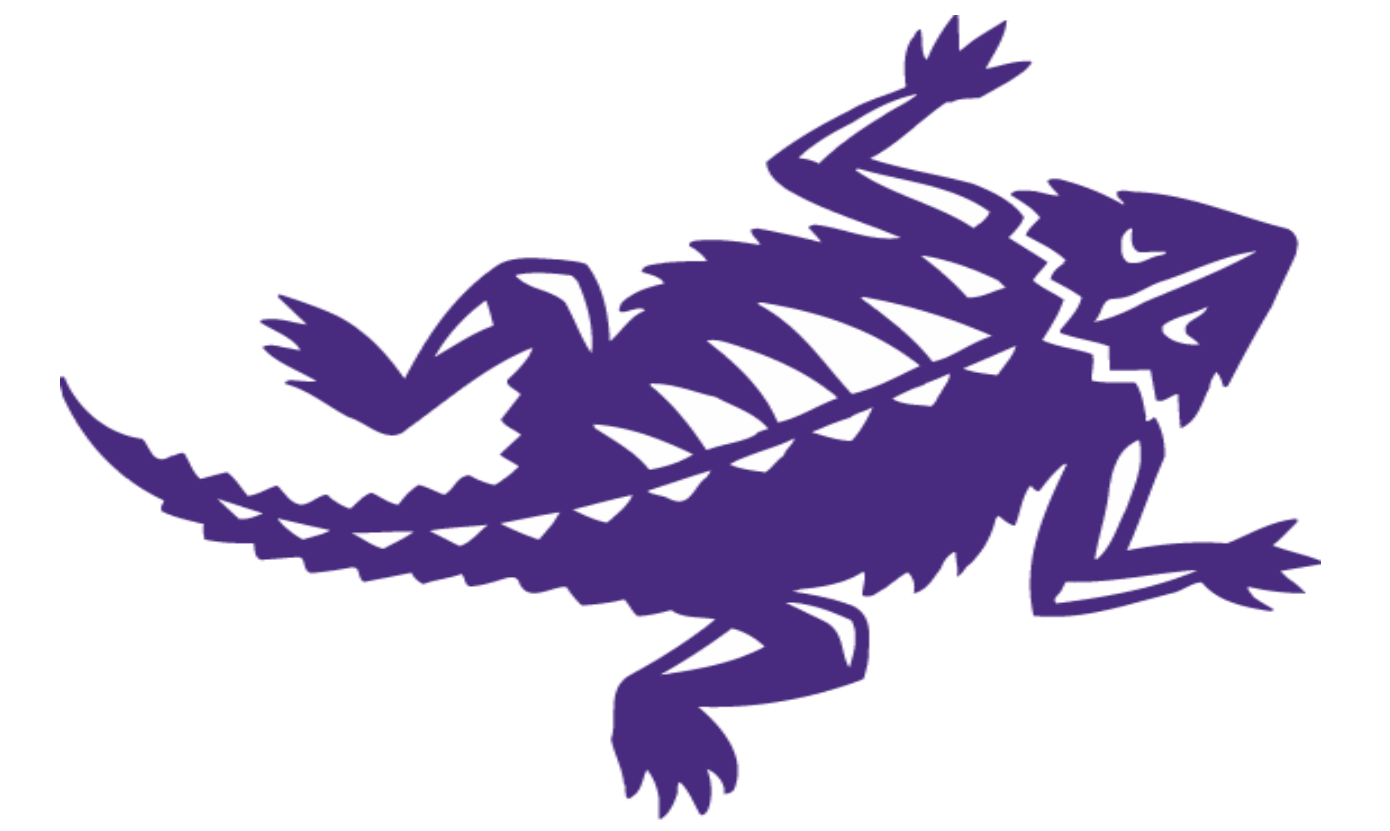




The Emotional Perception of Parental Drinking during Middle Childhood on Alcohol Consumption of Young Adults

Anastasiia Pavlova, Sarah Madison, Naomi Ekas

Texas Christian University



Introduction

- Among 18-24 years old, alcohol-related accidents have been identified as one of the leading causes of health problems and injuries (Hingson et al., 2005).
- Parents are an important factor in forming attitudes toward alcohol use. Children who are regularly exposed to their parents' drinking tend to drink more themselves and have an early onset of drinking behavior (Coombs et al., 1991). Exposure to parental drinking was found to be a stronger predictor of adolescent drinking than parental alcohol use (Smit et al., 2019).
- Parental drinking creates models of attitudes and expectancies toward alcohol consumption that were shown to promote drinking behavior later in life (Van Der Vorst et al., 2013).
- The recollection of alcohol-related childhood experiences (safe vs. unsafe) was associated with similar emotions they developed toward alcohol during childhood (Törrönen & Rolando, 2018).
- Parental sex impacts children differently. Zhang et al. (1999) found that paternal drinking increased male adolescent drinking, but maternal drinking had no effect. Additionally, children are more likely to imitate the behavior of same-sex adults (Bussey & Bandura, 1984). Maternal alcohol misuse was associated with higher alcohol use in female adult offspring, and paternal alcohol use disorder was related to more drinking in adult male children (Harburg et al., 1982).
- The current research investigates the retrospective childhood stories of parental drinking and the emotional perception of the drinking situations in middle childhood on the current drinking behavior of young adults.

Method

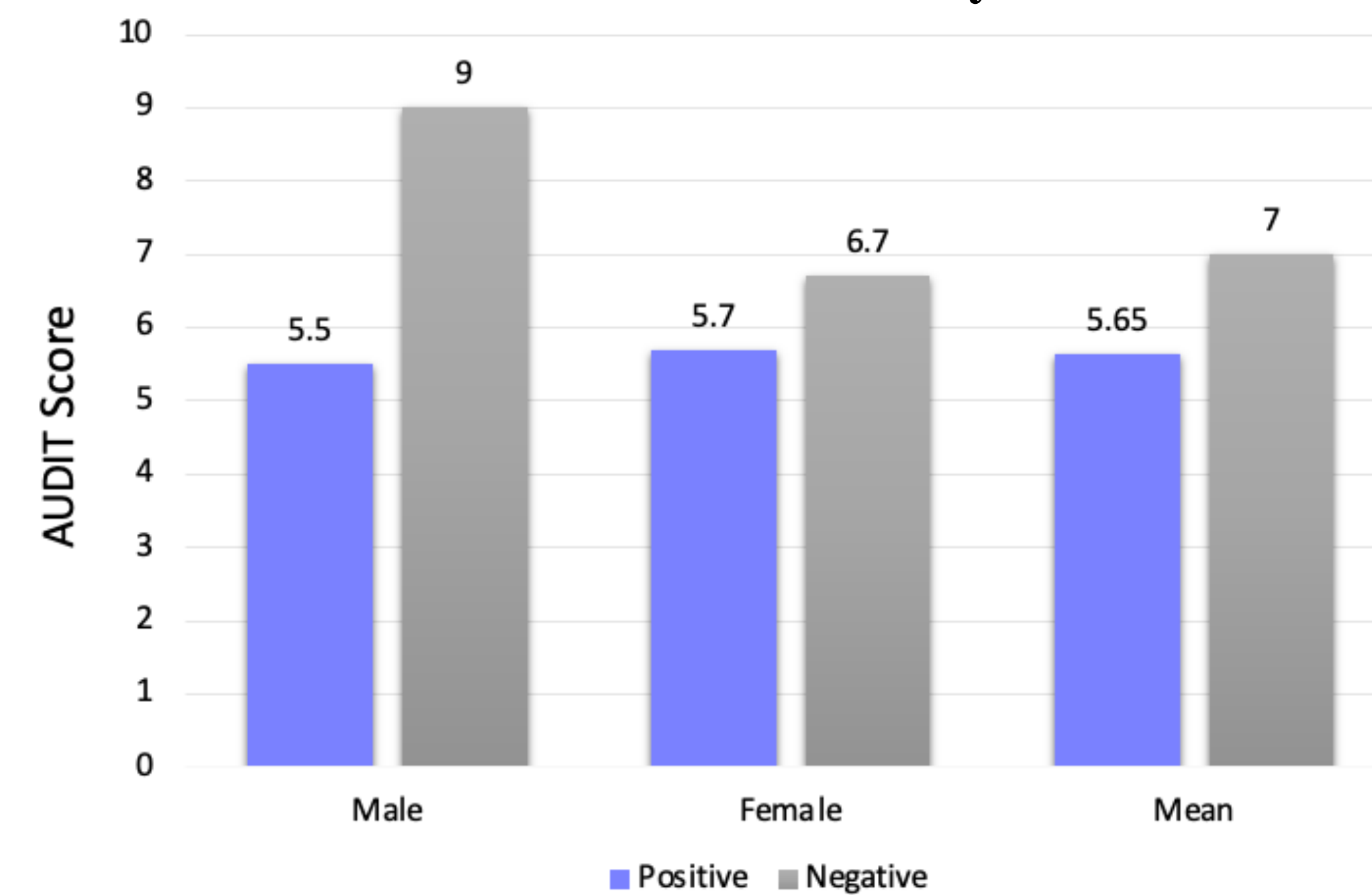
Participants: 201 undergraduate students (15.4% males, 82.6% females, 2% transgender) between the ages 18 and 33 ($M = 19.23$, $SD = 1.65$) with most participants being from high income households (61.8% \$80,000 - > \$500,000, 24.9% unknown). The students reported their racial/ethnic background as 76.6% European American, 11.9% Hispanic/Latino, 7.5% Asian, 3.0% Black).

Methods:

- Participants' alcohol consumption was measured using the self-reported, 10-item version of The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT; Saunders et al., 1993). A higher score on the scale indicates higher alcohol use. Cronbach's alpha in the current study was .807.
- Alcohol use of parents was measured through the 30-item Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (CAST; Jones, 1983). Participants answered yes or no to questions about feelings, behavior, and experiences related to parents' alcohol use for a father and a mother separately. In the current sample, the internal consistency was good (Cronbach's alpha = .947).
- Participants also retrospectively reported parental alcohol consumption by recalling a memorable or a typical episode from middle childhood (6-12 years) when one of the parents was consuming alcohol, as well as what they were feeling at that time (e.g., "Who was present?", "Would you describe the memory as emotionally positive or negative?"). Each participant recalled an episode for a mother and a father separately.

Results

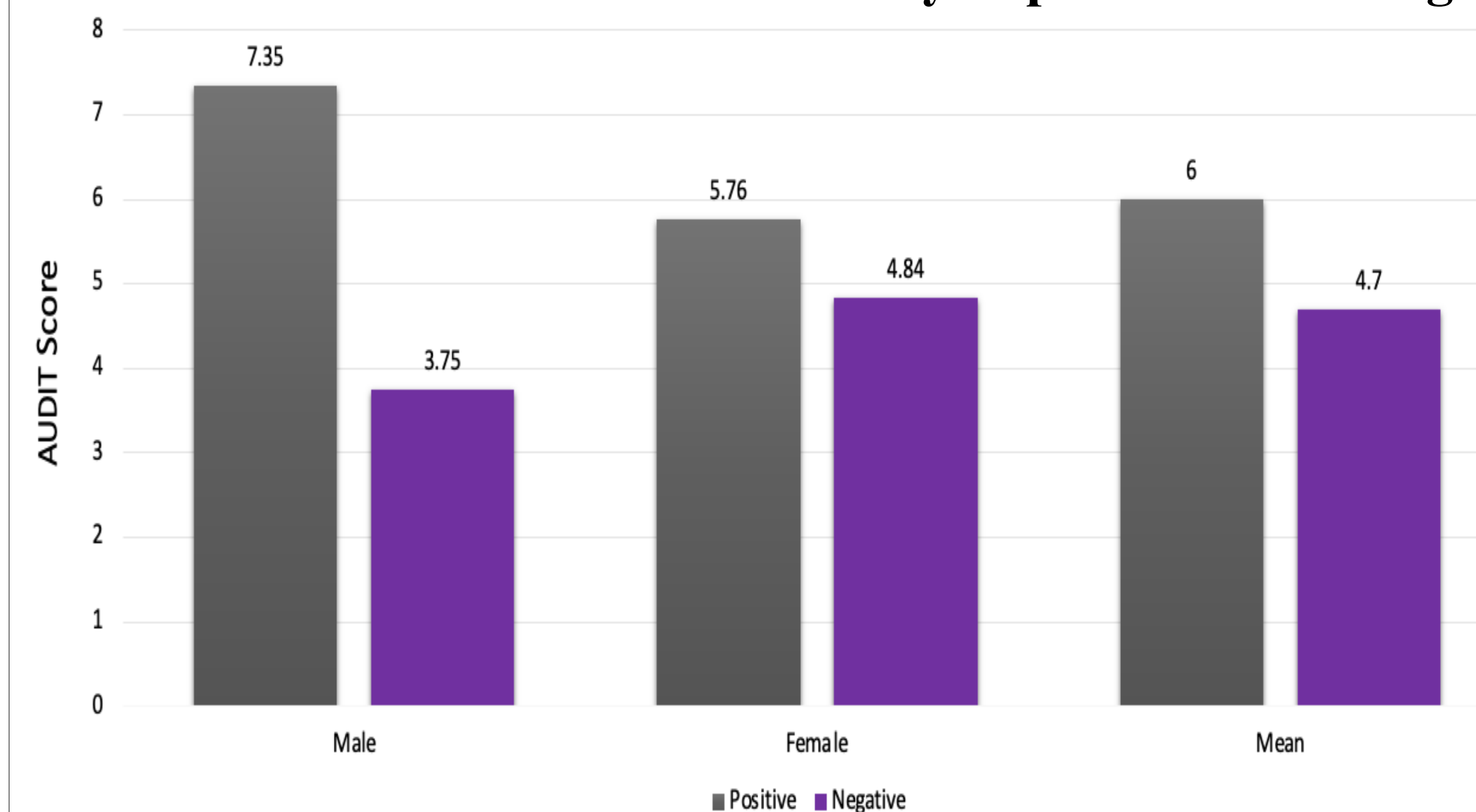
The memory of maternal drinking



Mother's memory ($N = 161$) of which 16 were ranked as negative ($N = 2$, male), 135 positive ($N = 27$, male).

- The results revealed no significant main effect of sex, $p = .535$, or memory type, $p = .176$. The effect was not qualified by the two-way interaction, $F(1, 157) = .554$, $p = .458$, $\pi^2_{\text{partial}} = .004$. Overall, these results show that the memory of maternal drinking behavior in middle childhood has no significant effect on drinking behavior in young adults.

The memory of paternal drinking



Father's memory ($N = 176$) of which 29 were negative ($N = 4$, male) and 149 as positive ($N = 23$, male).

- The analysis revealed that the effect of paternal memory trends toward statistical significance, $F(1, 172) = 2.991$, $p = .086$, $\pi^2_{\text{partial}} = .017$, with participants with positive memories related to their father's drinking reported drinking more than participants with negative memories. The effect was also non-significant for the two-way interaction, $F(1, 172) = 2.991$, $p = .306$, $\pi^2_{\text{partial}} = .006$. Overall, these results suggest that the emotional perception of a childhood memory of paternal alcohol drinking does not significantly impact the current drinking behaviors of young adults.

Discussion

- Participants with negative memory of paternal drinking tend to drink less than participants with positive memory.
- The memory of maternal drinking has no effect on drinking behavior in young adults.
- There were no relationship between sex of parents and participants on alcohol use.
- The future research is needed to confirm the results of the study with evenly distributed sample.

Limitations

- Skewed sample distribution.
- Self-reported data.
- No information about the quality of the relationship with parents.
- The unreliability of retrospective memories.
- No data on how often the similar experiences occurred during the childhood.

"I was sitting down at the dinner table with my entire family. I was 12. My little brother, mom and dad. It was evening time. My parents only drink wine with fancier dinners we would make. My parents like to drink red wine, and we were celebrating her (mother's) birthday over a steak dinner".

"I thought that my mother shouldn't order more wine bc she had to drive us home, and she was acting very tipsy, and I was embarrassed".

References

