

Emotion Dysregulation and Attachment Anxiety as Mediators of the Relationship Between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Social Health



GINETTE C. BLACKHART¹, SAMANTHA CASTLEBLANCO², & ALEXANDRIA N. DISMUKE¹

¹East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, USA

²Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina, USA



Introduction

• Few studies have examined the link between ACEs and indicators of social health.

• Aims of present research were to:

- 1) Establish a link between ACEs and four indicators of social health;
- 2) Determine whether emotion dysregulation and attachment anxiety mediate those relationships.

Hypotheses:

• ACEs are negatively related to positive indicators of social health (social well-being and interpersonal competence) and positively related to negative indicators of social health (rejection sensitivity and social interaction anxiety) through emotion dysregulation and attachment anxiety.

Method

• In all four studies, participants completed measures of ACEs, emotion dysregulation, and attachment anxiety.

• Measures of social health indicators included:

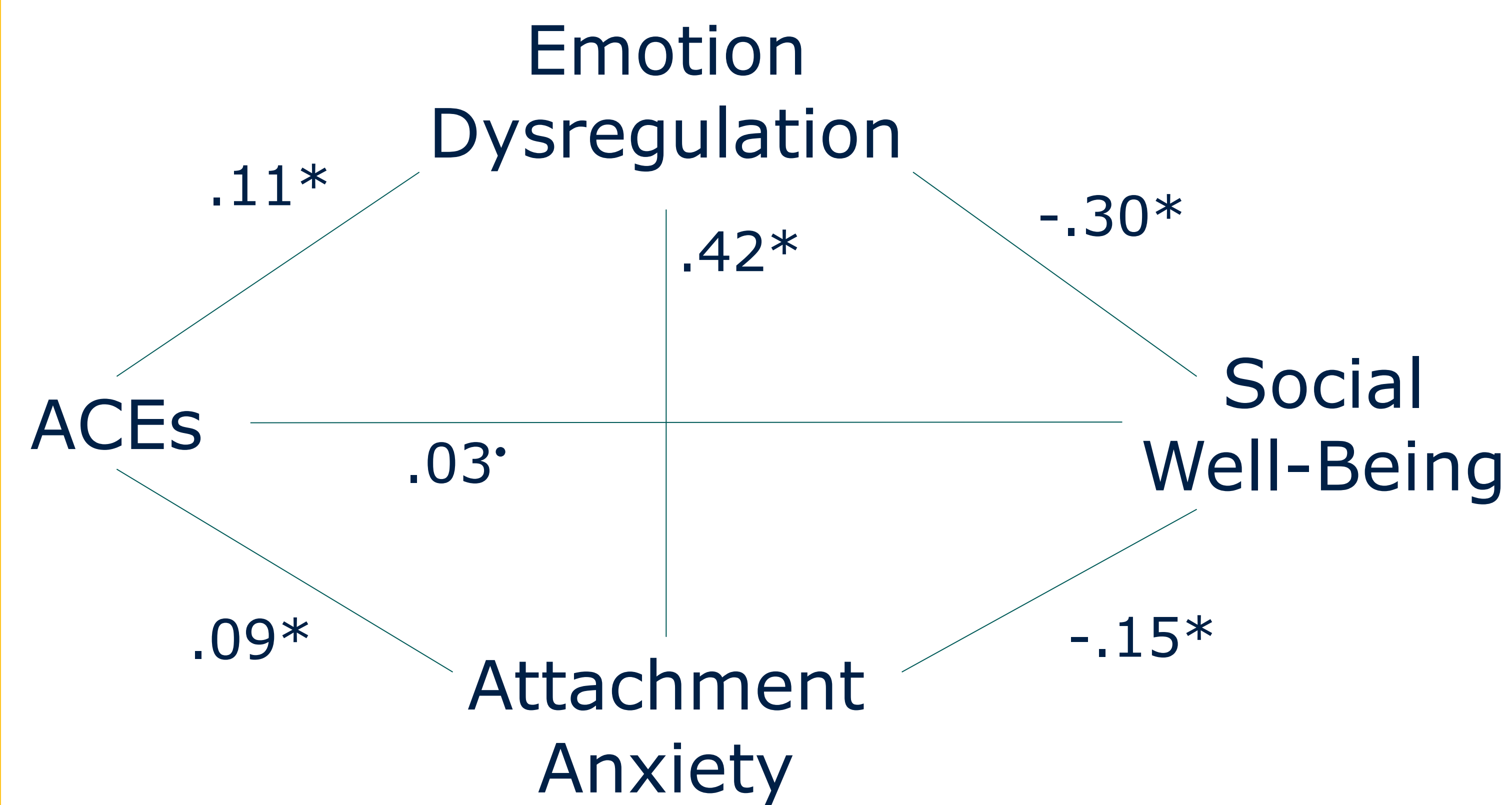
• Social Well-Being Questionnaire (Keyes, 1998) ($\alpha = .89$), which includes social integration, acceptance, contribution, actualization, & coherence ($n = 587$).

• Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire (Buhrmester et al., 1988) ($\alpha = .92$), which includes initiating relationships, self-disclosure, asserting displeasure with others' actions, providing emotional support, and managing interpersonal conflicts ($n = 683$).

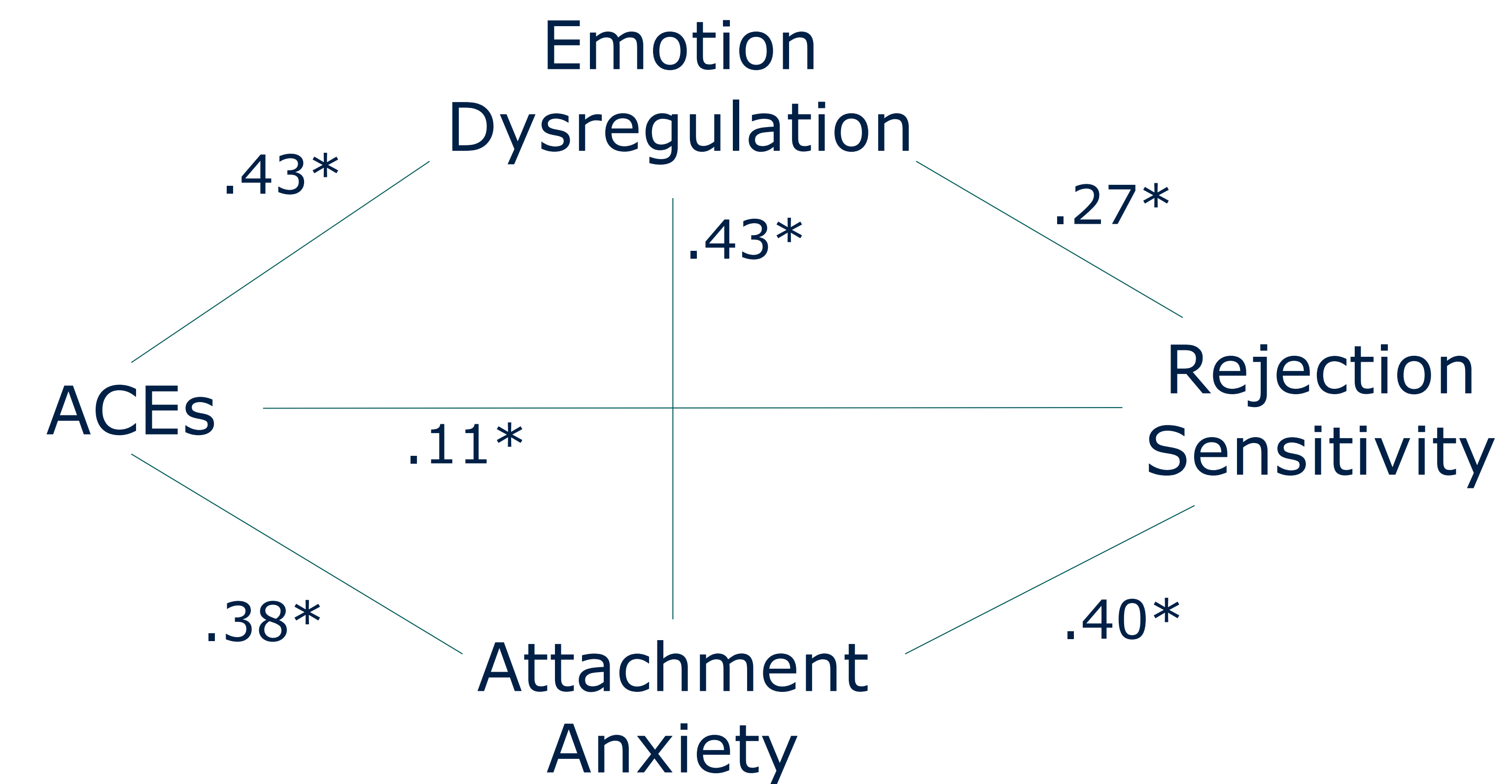
• Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, Adult Version (Berenson et al., 2009) ($\alpha = .86$) ($n = 1288$).

• Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (Mattick & Clarke, 1998) ($\alpha = .95$) ($n = 1752$).

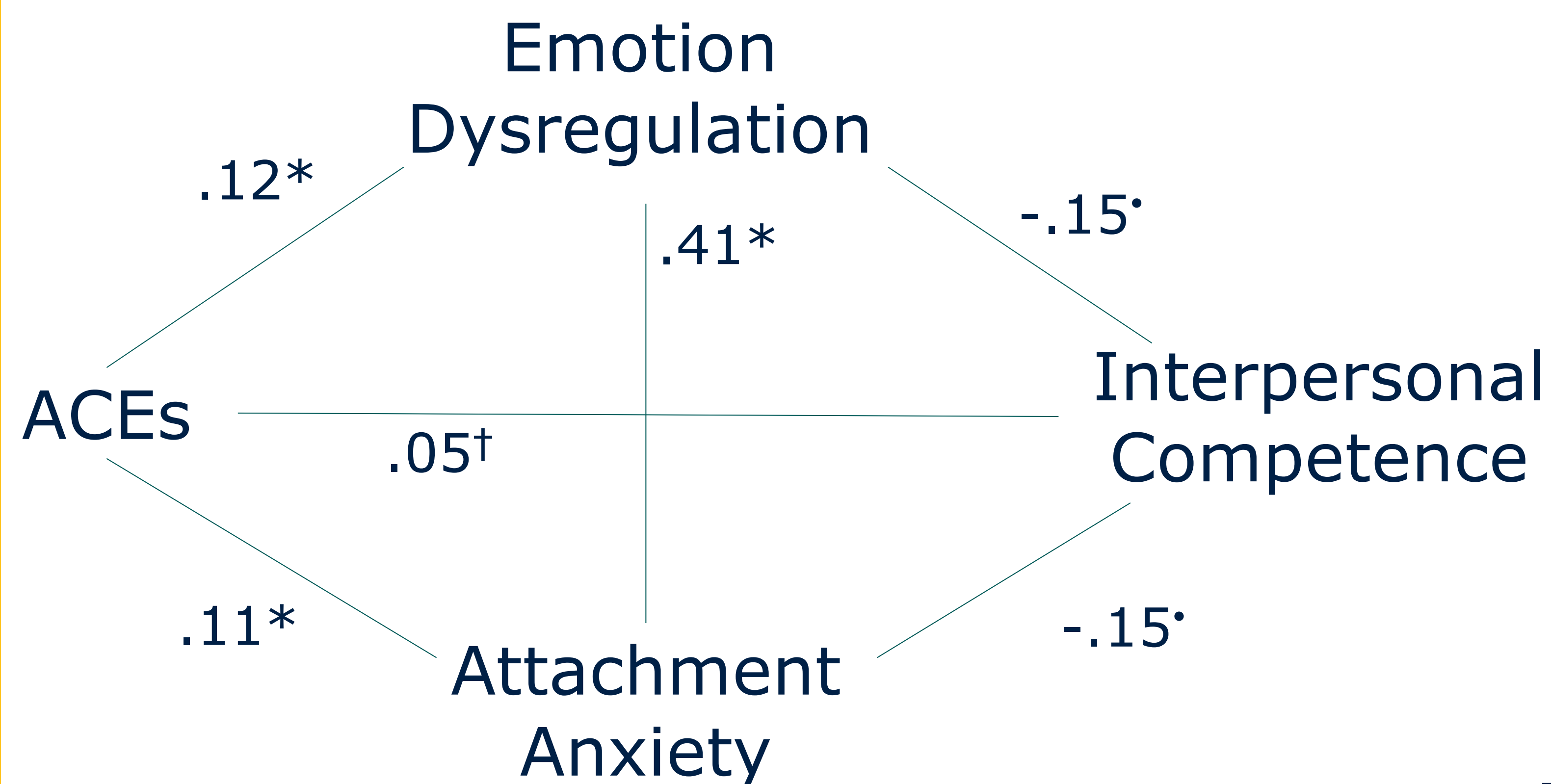
Results & Discussion



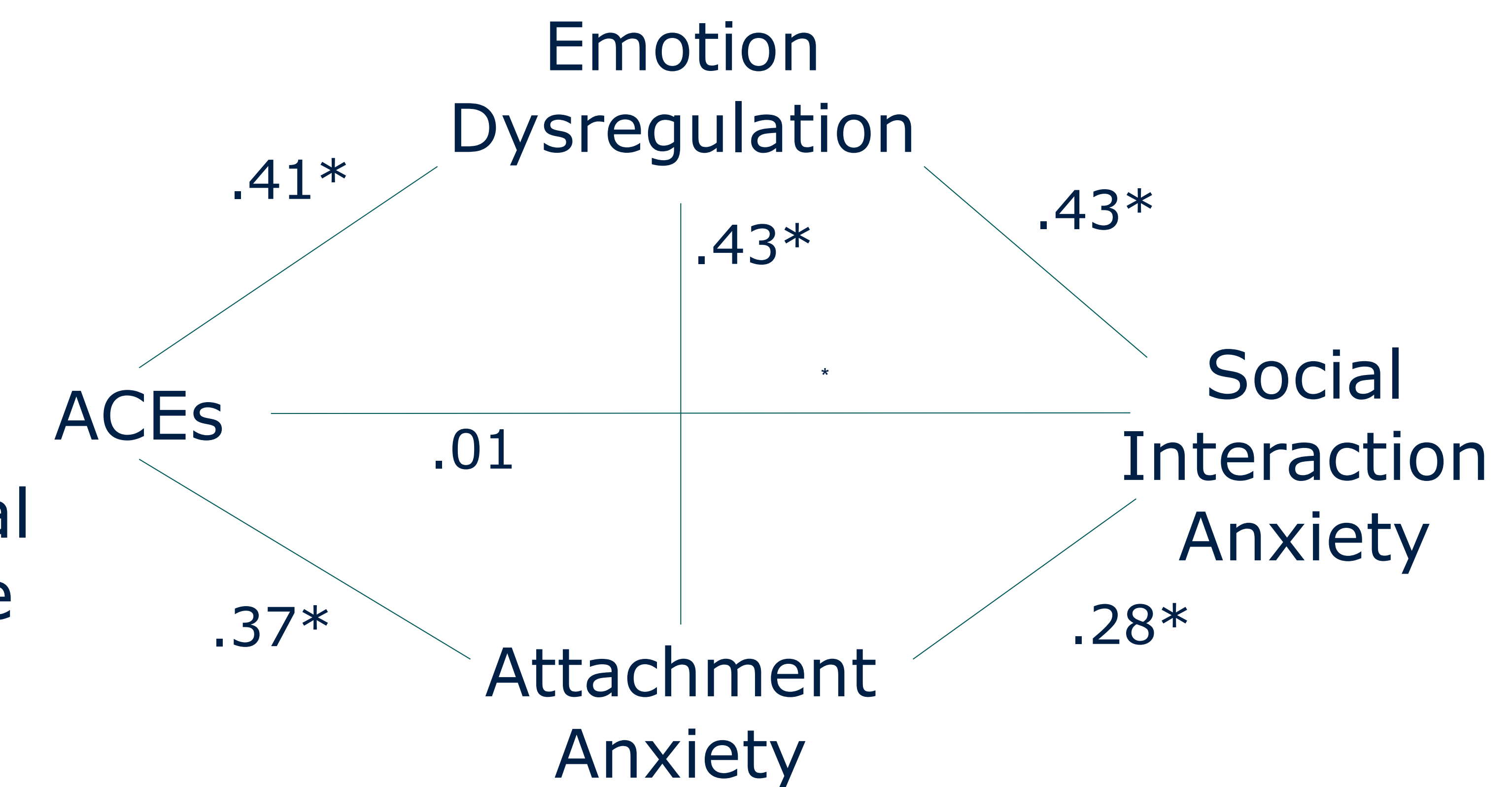
Direct effect: $z = -2.97, p = .003, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.047, -.011$
 Total indirect effect: $z = -8.08, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.057, -.035$
 Emotion dysregulation indirect effect: $z = -6.05, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.043, -.023$
 Attachment anxiety indirect effect: $z = -3.36, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.021, -.006$



Direct effect: $z = 4.66, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = .062, .158$
 Total indirect effect: $z = 14.65, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = .232, .313$
 Emotion dysregulation indirect effect: $z = 8.66, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = .092, .147$
 Attachment anxiety indirect effect: $z = 10.61, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = .126, .186$



Direct effect: $z = 2.35, p < .019, 95\% \text{ CI} = .005, .046$
 Total indirect effect: $z = -5.62, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.041, -.018$
 Emotion dysregulation indirect effect: $z = -3.08, p = .002, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.028, -.005$
 Attachment anxiety indirect effect: $z = -3.20, p = .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.023, -.005$



Direct effect: $z = -0.34, p < .74, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.046, .033$
 Total indirect effect: $z = 17.20, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = .248, .318$
 Emotion dysregulation indirect effect: $z = 13.16, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = .151, .208$
 Attachment anxiety indirect effect: $z = 9.90, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = .085, .129$

† $p < .05$; * $p < .01$; * $p < .001$

• Hypotheses supported; results consistent with prior research showing that ACEs predict poorer physical and mental health indicators, mediated by emotion dysregulation and attachment anxiety.

• Future research should further examine these relationships by including other indicators of social health as outcomes.

• Limitations include that cross-sectional data were collected online via self-report and that the samples largely consisted of white female college students within the U.S. These limit generalizability of results and causal interpretations.