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The Mediating Role of Sleep in the Associations of Adult Attachment and Self Disclosure in Romantic Relationships

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The Mediating Role of Sleep in the Associations of Adult Attachment and Self Disclosure in Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

Research has shown that adult attachment style predicts self disclosure in relationships (Chen, Hi, Shi, & Chen, 2019 as cited in Collins and Allard, 2007). Previous research has also pointed to a positive relationship between healthy attachment and well-being, as well as sleep quality (Escolas, Hildebrandt, Maiers, Baker, & Mason, 2013 via Verdecia, Jean-Louis, Zizi, Casimir, & Browne, 2009). The purpose of this study was to examine sleep as a possible mediator between attachment styles and self disclosure. The current sample consisted of 202 participants recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Results indicated that sleep quality (indicated by sleepiness and insomnia) mediated the relationship between attachment and self disclosure. Future research may explore the potential benefits of high sleep quality to those who demonstrate avoidant or anxious attachment styles, as it could increase self disclosure in relationships.

Introduction

- Attachment theory supports the idea that parental responsiveness equips children with knowledge about worldly expectations and how to handle distress. (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991 via Bowlby 1973)
- There are different types of attachment, such as secure, anxious ambivalent, and avoidant. Secure, or healthy attachment refers to individuals who are confident and secure when exploring new environment and in relationships. Individuals with an anxious ambivalent style demonstrate uncertainty and anxiety and tend to be more clingy individuals. Lastly, avoidant styles of attachment represent individuals who presuppose rejection from others and furthermore do not seek closeness. (Escolas, Hildebrandt, Maiers, Baker, & Mason, 2013 via Bowlby, 1998, Shaver, 2008)
- Previous research indicates a positive relationship between secure attachment and health factors, such as sleep, throughout life (Escolas, Hildebrandt, Maiers, Baker, & Mason, 2013 via Verdecias, Jean-Louis, Zizi, Casmir, & Browne, 2009)
- Self disclosure points to the execution of revealing personal thoughts and feelings. This has shown to positively influence sleep quality (Kane, Slatcher, Reynolds, Repetti, & Robes, 2014 as cited in Dahl, 1996)
- Previous literature indicates a relationship between adult attachment and self disclosure in relationships. Those who rate high on secure and anxious ambivalent attachment styles tend to disclose more. In contrast, those who rate high on avoidant attachment tend to disclose less (Mikulincer & Nachshon 1991)
- Ample evidence also suggests a relationship between sleep and self disclosure, such that self disclosure may reduce negative emotions that attribute to poor sleep quality (Kane, Slatcher, Reynolds, Repetti, & Robes, 2014 as cited in Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006, Pennebaker & Chung, 2011)

Methods

Participants: This sample included 202 adult individuals from sampled from Amazon Mechanical Turk.
Measures: Sleep Quality was measured by indicators of insomnia and sleepiness. **Insomnia** was measured using the DSM-IV Sleep 50 questionnaire $\alpha=.89$ (Spoomaker, Verbeek, Bout, and Clip 2005). **Sleepiness** was measured using the Wolfson and Carskadon (1998) Sleepiness scale $\alpha=.85$. Self disclosure was measured with two scales; the Self Disclosure Index, and a revised Emotional Self Disclosure Scale. **The Self Disclosure Index** was the first scale used $\alpha=.93$ (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1918). Emotional self disclosure was measured using a revised **Emotional Self Disclosure Scale** (Snell, Miller, & Belk, 2013). This scale measures the extent to which one discusses certain emotions with their partner. The first 30 questions from this scale were used. **Attachment Style** was measured using the Revised Adult Attachment Scale (Collins and Reed, 1990). This scale is divided with two dimensions; anxious attachment style ($\alpha=.25$) and avoidant attachment style ($\alpha=.71$).
Analyses: Mediated regression analysis was performed using the PROCESS macro v3.4 in SPSS (Hayes, 2009).

Mediation Models

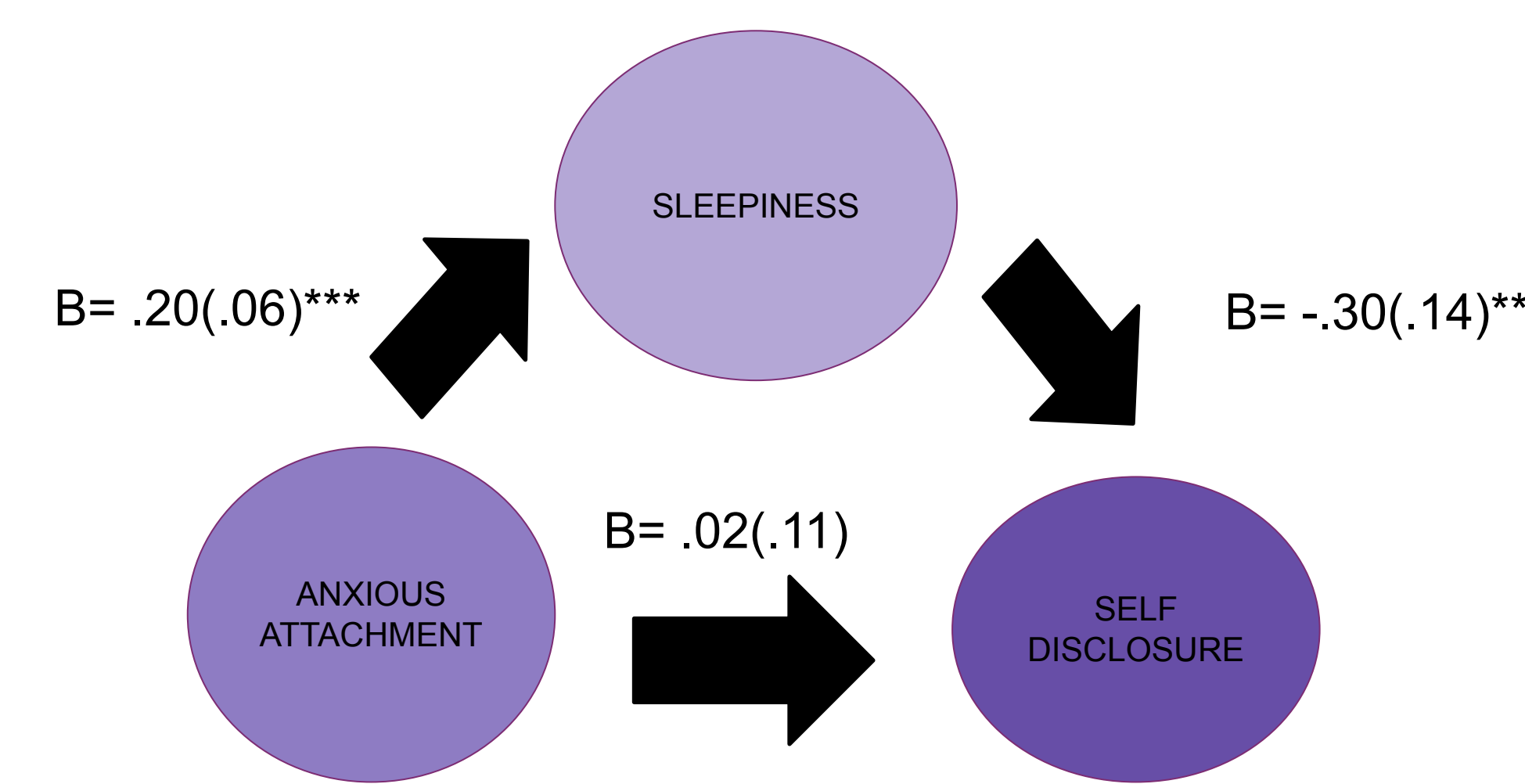


Figure 1. Indirect effect of overall sleep quality on the depression-stress link (Effect= -.0598, LLCI= -.1176, ULCI= -.0123).

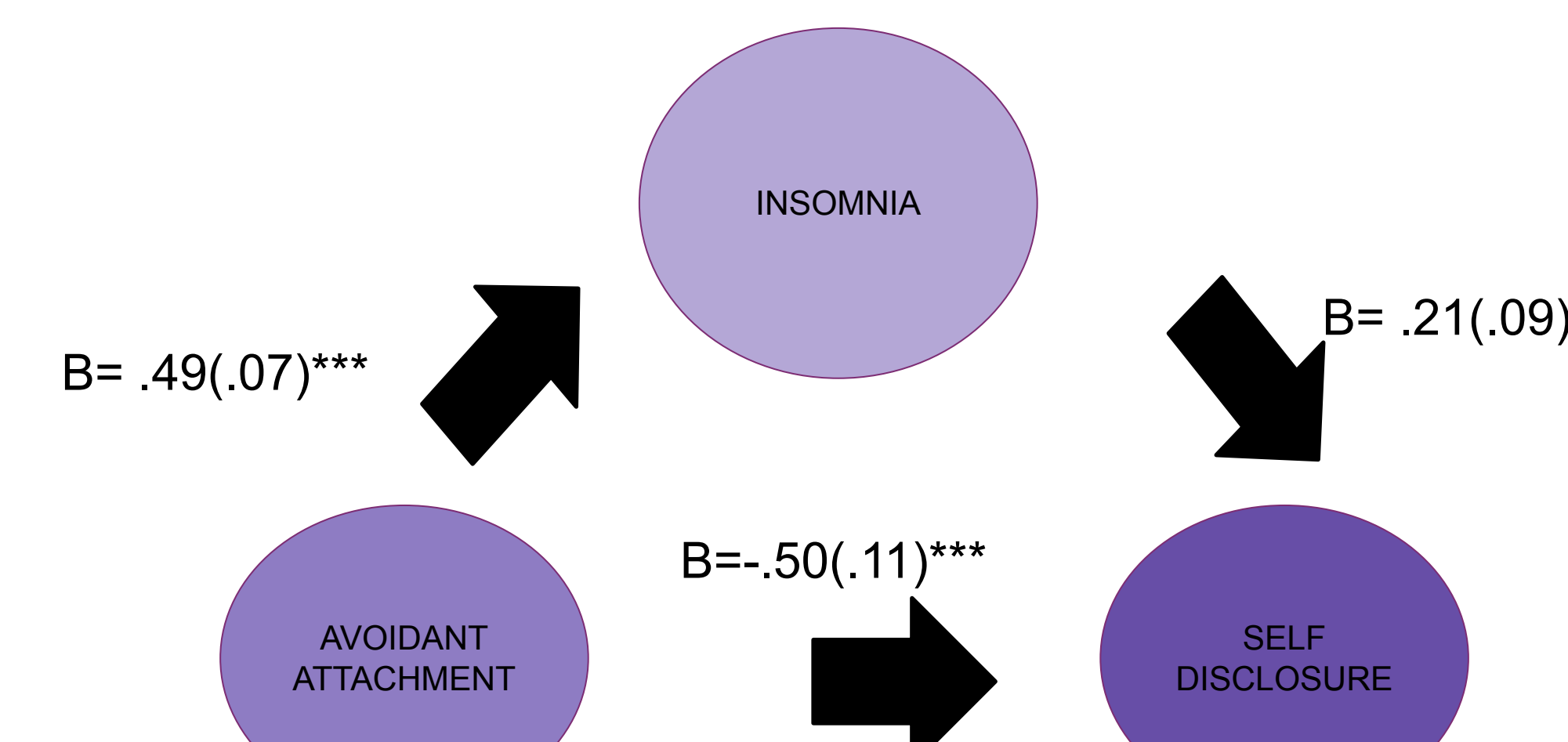


Figure 2. Indirect effect of Insomnia on the Avoidance Attachment and Self Disclosure link (Effect= .1049, LLCI = .0113, ULCI .2173).

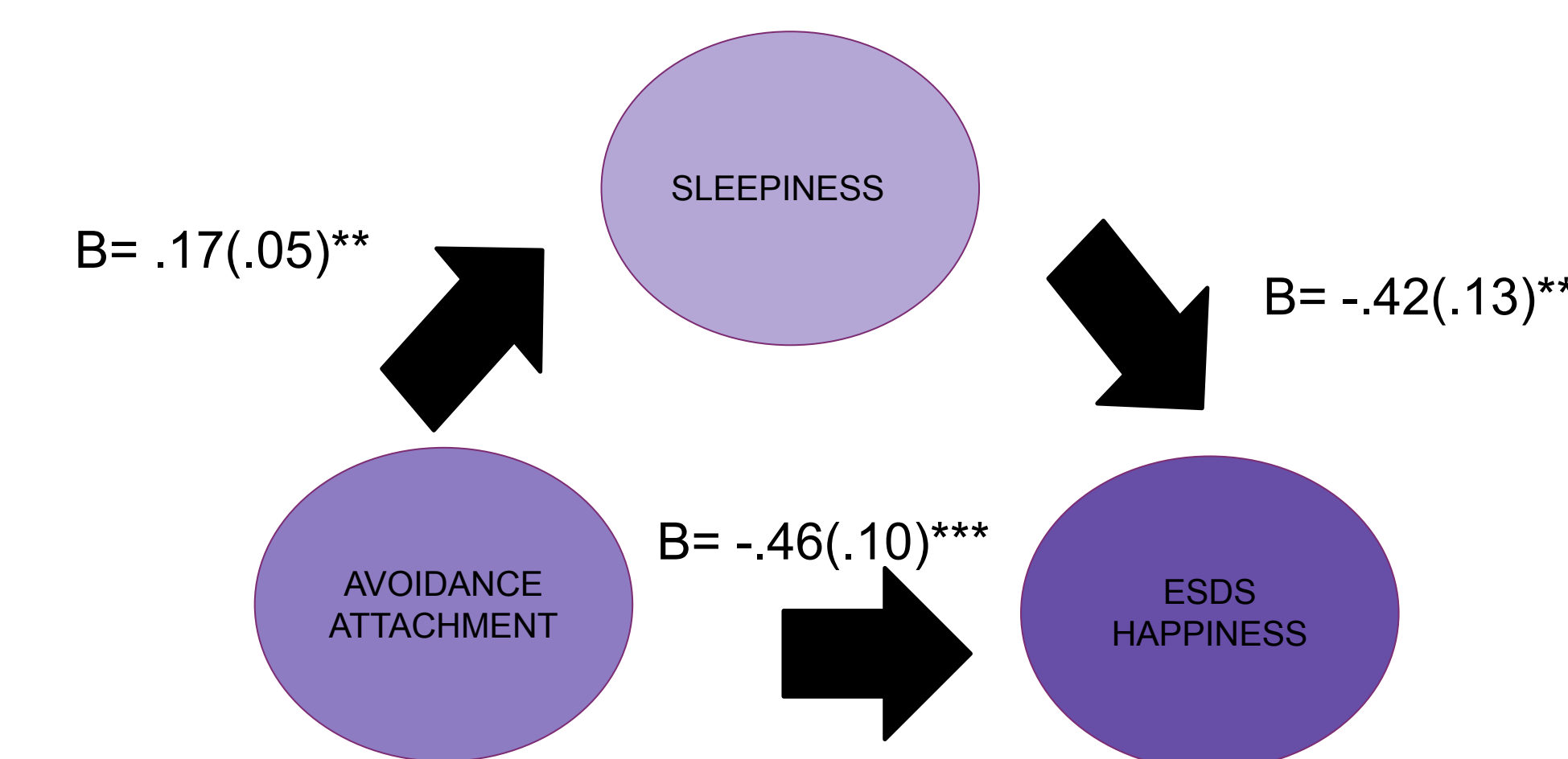


Figure 3. Indirect effect of sleepiness on the emotional self disclosure of happiness and avoidance attachment link (Effect= -.0707, LLCI= -.1340, ULCI= -.0185).

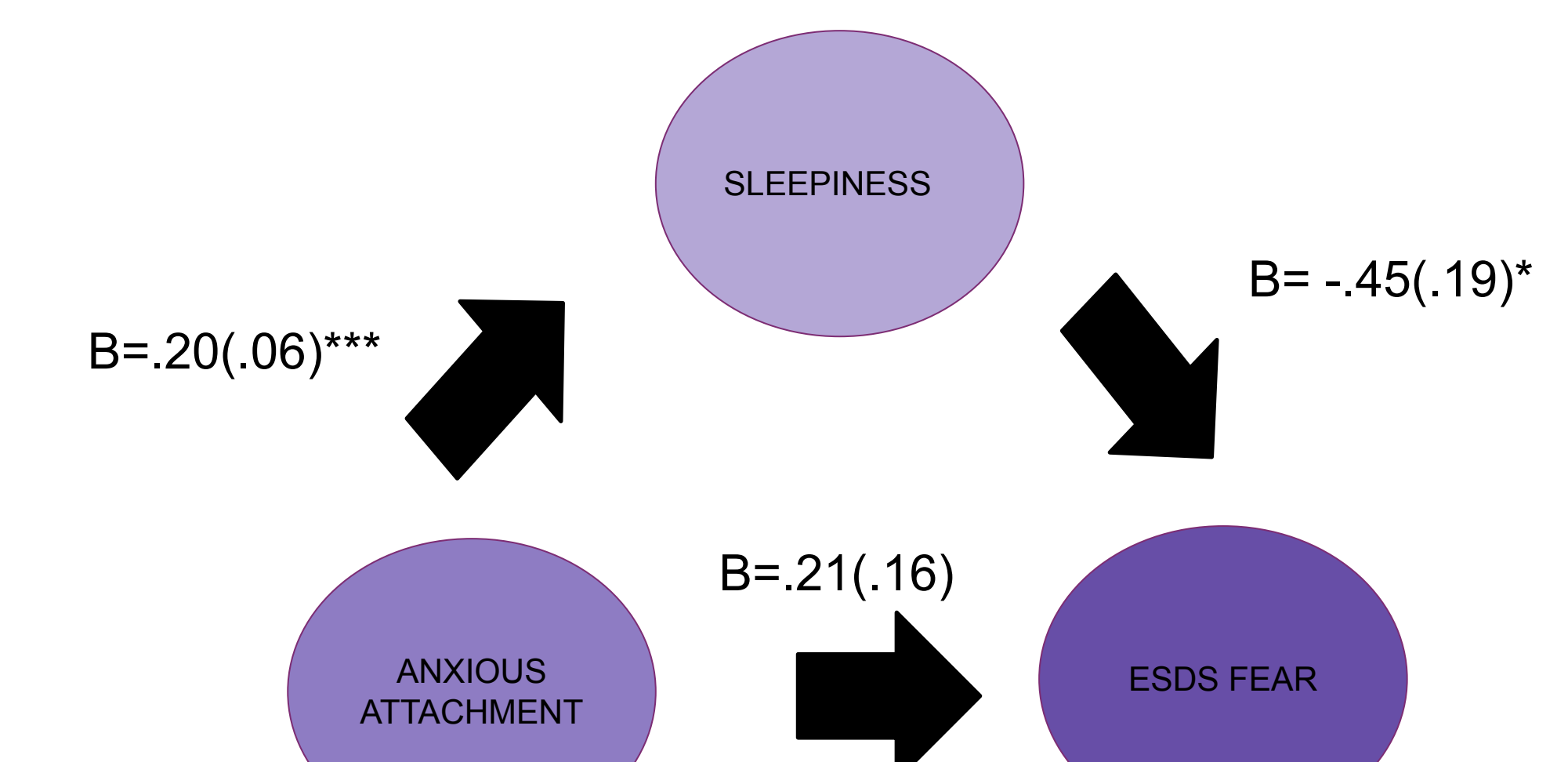


Figure 4. Indirect effect of sleepiness on the relationship between anxious attachment style and emotional self disclosure of fear. (Effect= -.0885 LLCI= -.1754, ULCI = -.0212).

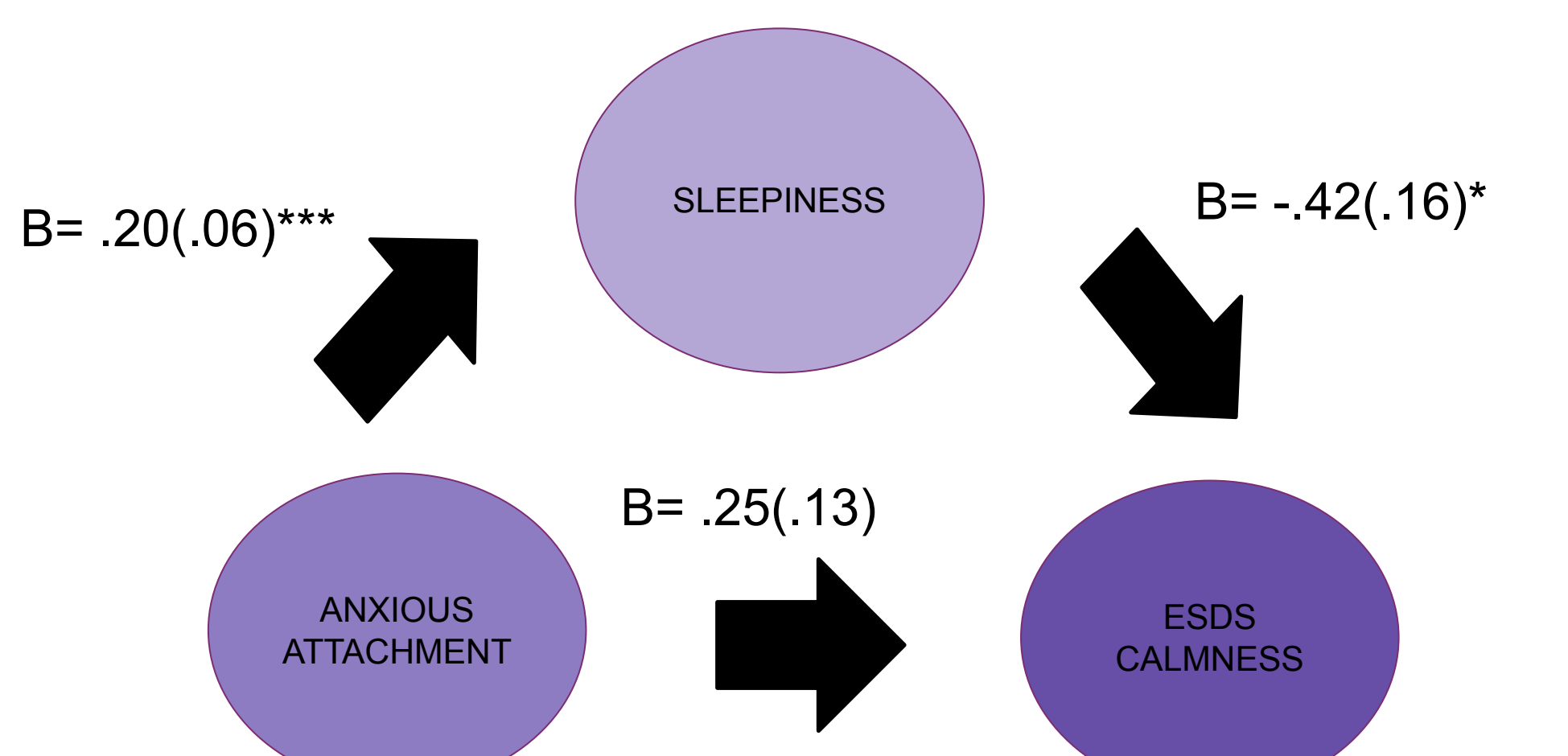


Figure 5. Indirect effect of sleepiness on the anxious attachment attachment style and emotional self disclosure of calmness relationship. (Effect= -.0827 LLCI= -.1559, ULCI = -.0234).

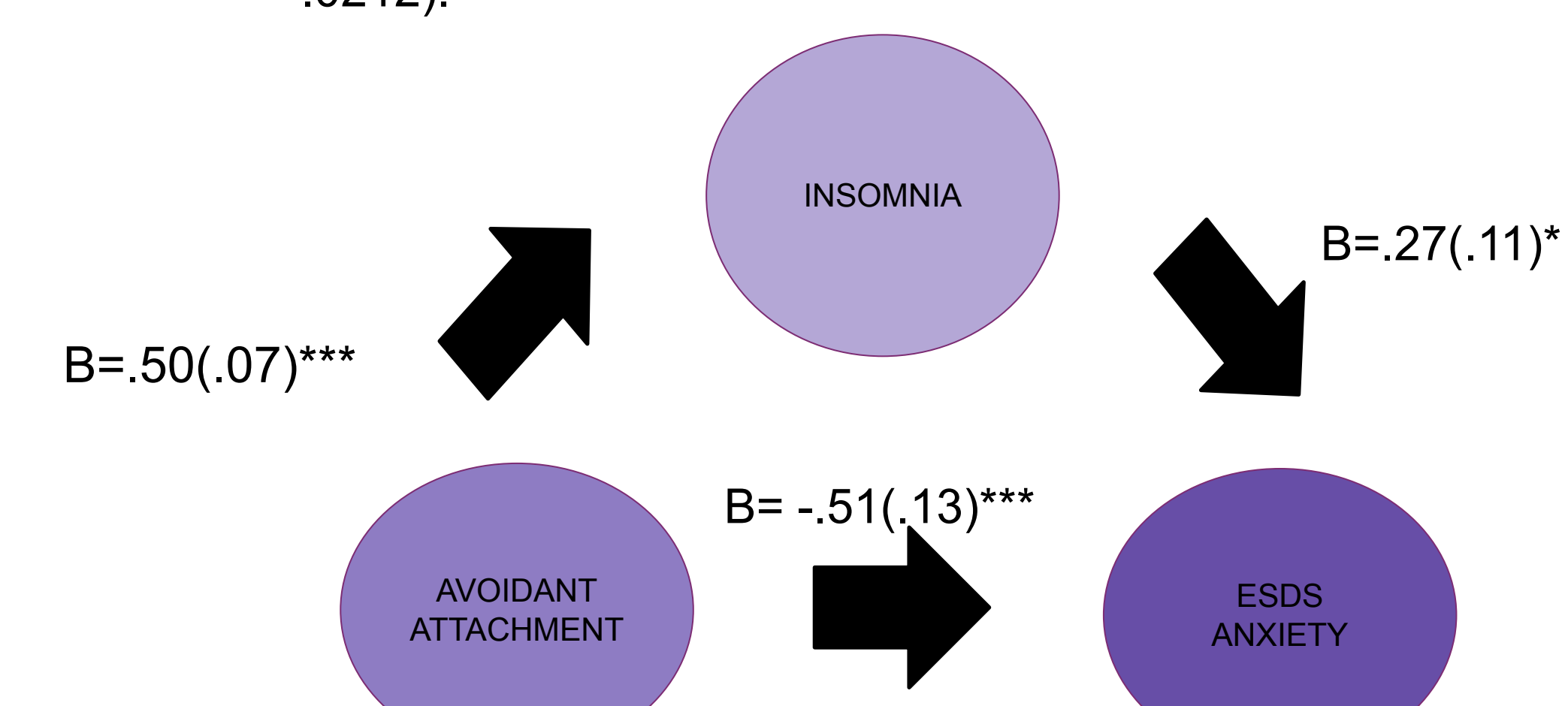


Figure 6. Indirect effect of insomnia on the avoidance attachment and emotional self disclosure of anxiety relationship. (Effect= .1326 LLCI = .0155, ULCI .2645).

Results

Figure 1 indicates a statistically significant mediation of sleepiness in the relationship between anxious attachment style and self disclosure.

Figure 2 reveals a statistically significant mediation of Insomnia on the avoidant attachment style and self disclosure relationship.

Figure 3 demonstrates a statistically significant mediation of sleepiness on the avoidance attachment style and the emotional self disclosure of happiness relationship.

Figure 4 indicates a statistically significant mediation of sleepiness on the anxious attachment style and emotional self disclosure of fear relationship.

Figure 5 suggests a statistically significant mediation of sleepiness on the anxious attachment style and emotional self disclosure of calmness relationship.

Figure 6 implies a statistically significant mediation of insomnia on the avoidance attachment and emotional self disclosure of anxiety relationship.

Discussion

Purpose: To explore the mediating role of sleep in the link between Attachment Styles and Self Disclosure.

Mediation Analyses

- Generally, those with the Anxious Ambivalent attachment style who experienced poor sleep quality engaged in less self disclosure.
- Those with the Anxious Avoidant attachment style who experienced poorer sleep quality also engaged in less emotional self disclosure of fear.

Conclusion: Results indicated that sleep quality mediated the relationship between attachment style and self disclosure.

Limitations:

- This was a self report measure
- Smaller sample size
- Poor reliability for the Anxious Ambivalent attachment style scale

Future Research:

- Should include a larger sample size
- Explore different types of relationships such as same-sex and transgender couples
- Objective measures of sleep patterns

References

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Hypothesis

The goal of the current study is to examine the mediating role of sleep quality (e.g. sleepiness, and insomnia) in the attachment style and self disclosure relationship.