



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

SWPA CONFERENCE

# Exploring the Relationship between Obesity and Suicide Behavior among Young Hispanic Females in The United States

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## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- **Dutton et al. (2013)** found that higher BMI reports had stronger correlations to suicidality.
- More body fat contributes to higher expressive symptoms of suicidality (**Dong et al., 2006; Wagner et al., 2013; Branco et al., 2016**).
- Findings indicated that suicidality and obesity were not associated with one another among women. They found that an obese young man or woman was less likely to have suicidal ideation than normal weighting counterparts (**Graham and Frisco, 2022**).
- Obese individuals with a BMI of 40 or higher had a **33%** prevalence rate of suicidal behavior among **females** compared to 13% among males (**Wagner et al., 2013**)
- Failed to indicate a relationship between suicidality and obesity (**Goldney et al., 2009; Zhang, 2022**).

# INFLUENCE

## **Hovey et al. (2024):**

- Found that depression, suicide ideation, and suicide attempts were significantly associated with obesity.
- Mediators (explanatory factors) include sleep problems, health problems, and personal appearance dissatisfaction.

## **Zayas & Pilat (2009)**

- Latinas face higher rates of suicidal behavior compared to other minority groups in the United States.

## VARIABLES

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

20% of all suicides from a 2019 report were associated with a physical health condition (Philips & Hempstead, 2022). In addition, suicide as a result of physical health was more common among women under 60 years of age.

### INSOMNIA/SLEEP QUALITY

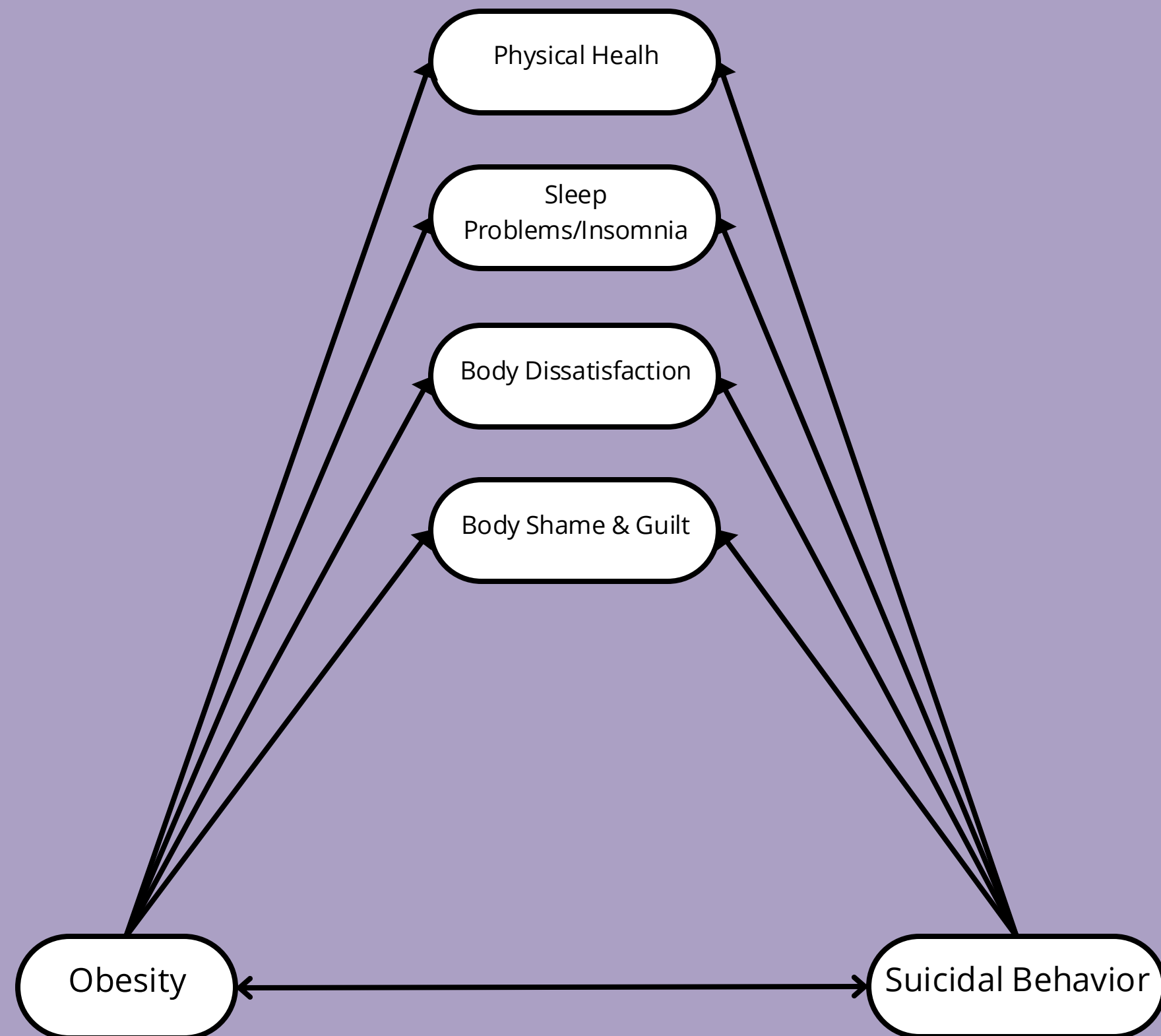
The severity of suicidal ideation has been attributed to the severity of insomnia among young adults (Bradford et al., 2022).

### BODY DISSATISFACTION

- Body dissatisfaction contributes to suicidal ideation (Lamis et al., 2010).
- Hispanic American women classified as obese reported higher rates of body dissatisfaction than normal and overweight participants (Cachelin et al., 2005)

### BODY SHAME & GUILT

Individuals classified as overweight or obese encounter body-related shame and guilt more than their average-weight peers (Conradt et al., 2007; Pila et al., 2013)



# HYPOTHESIS

- The relationship between obesity and suicide behavior will be significant among Hispanics.
- Higher BMIs will be associated with the following variables: body dissatisfaction, body shame, insomnia, physical health, and suicidal behavior.
- Body dissatisfaction, body shame, insomnia, and physical health should be significantly associated with suicidal behavior.
- Body dissatisfaction, body shame, insomnia, and physical health will significantly mediate the relationship between obesity and suicidal behavior.

# METHODS

- Participants were **209 Hispanic** Females (M age = 19.9; 100% females) ages 18 through 35
- Recruited via SONA used at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Individuals received course credit as compensation for their participation in the study.

## **Qualtrics Survey - Measures:**

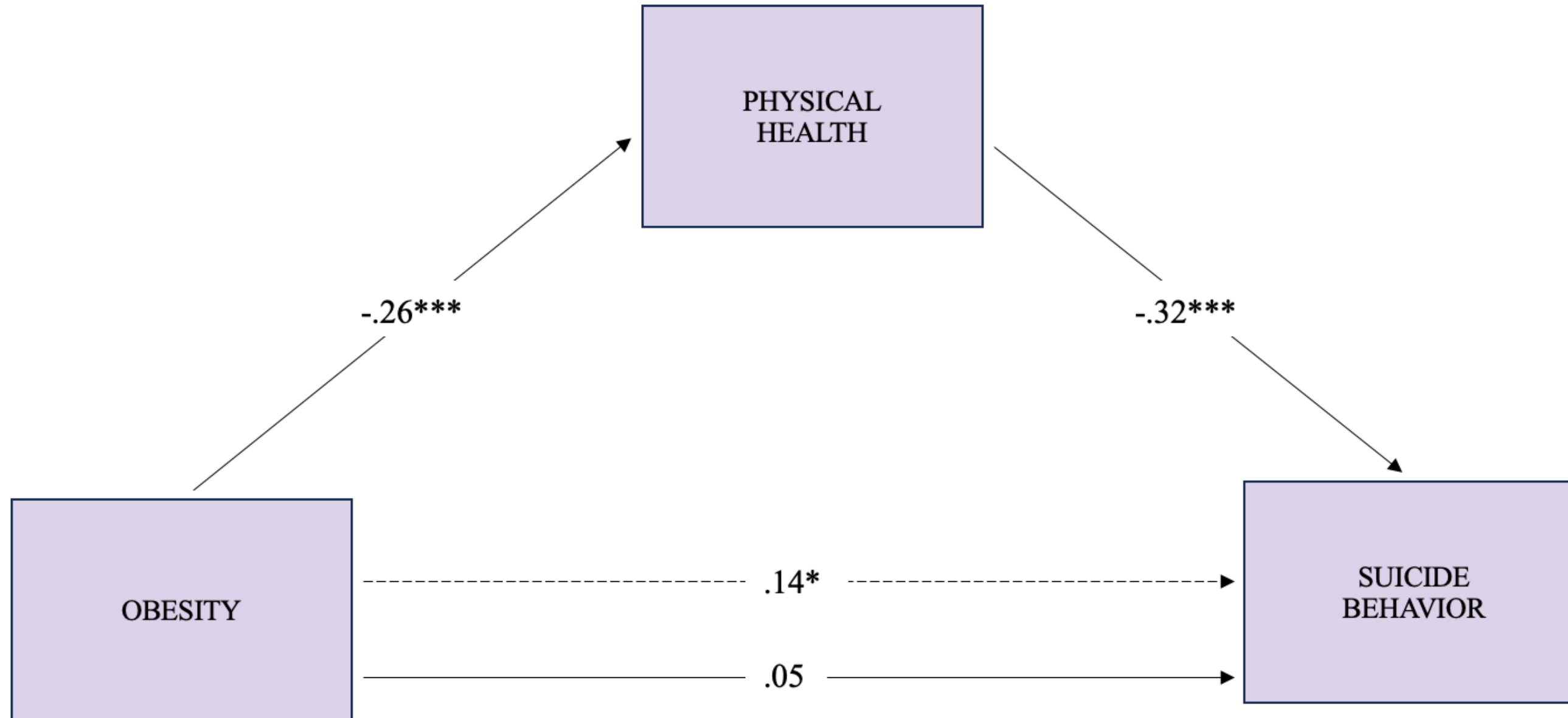
- *Demographics Questionnaire*
- *Body Mass Index (BMI)*
- *Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised (SBQ-R2)*
- *The Insomnia Severity Index (ISI)*
- *The Body Influence Assessment Inventory (BIAI) → Body Dissatisfaction*
- *Weight and Body-Related Shame and Guilt Scale (WEB-SG)*
- *The Short Form Health Survey (SF-36)*

## RESULTS: ANALYSIS

| Correlations between Variables                              |         |                      |                 |                    |          |
|---|---------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------|
|   | Obesity | Body Dissatisfaction | Physical Health | Body Shame & Guilt | Insomnia |
| 1. Obesity  | 1.00    |                      |                 |                    |          |
| 2. Body Dissatisfaction                                     | .29**   |                      |                 |                    |          |
| 3. Physical Health  | -.30**  | -.51**               |                 |                    |          |
| 4. Body Shame & Guilt                                       | .36**   | .83**                | -.45**          |                    |          |
| 5. Insomnia   | .13*    | .42**                | -.32**          | .36**              |          |
| 6. Suicidal Behavior  | .12*    | .40**                | -.32**          | .27**              | .33**    |
| ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). |         |                      |                 |                    |          |
| * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).  |         |                      |                 |                    |          |

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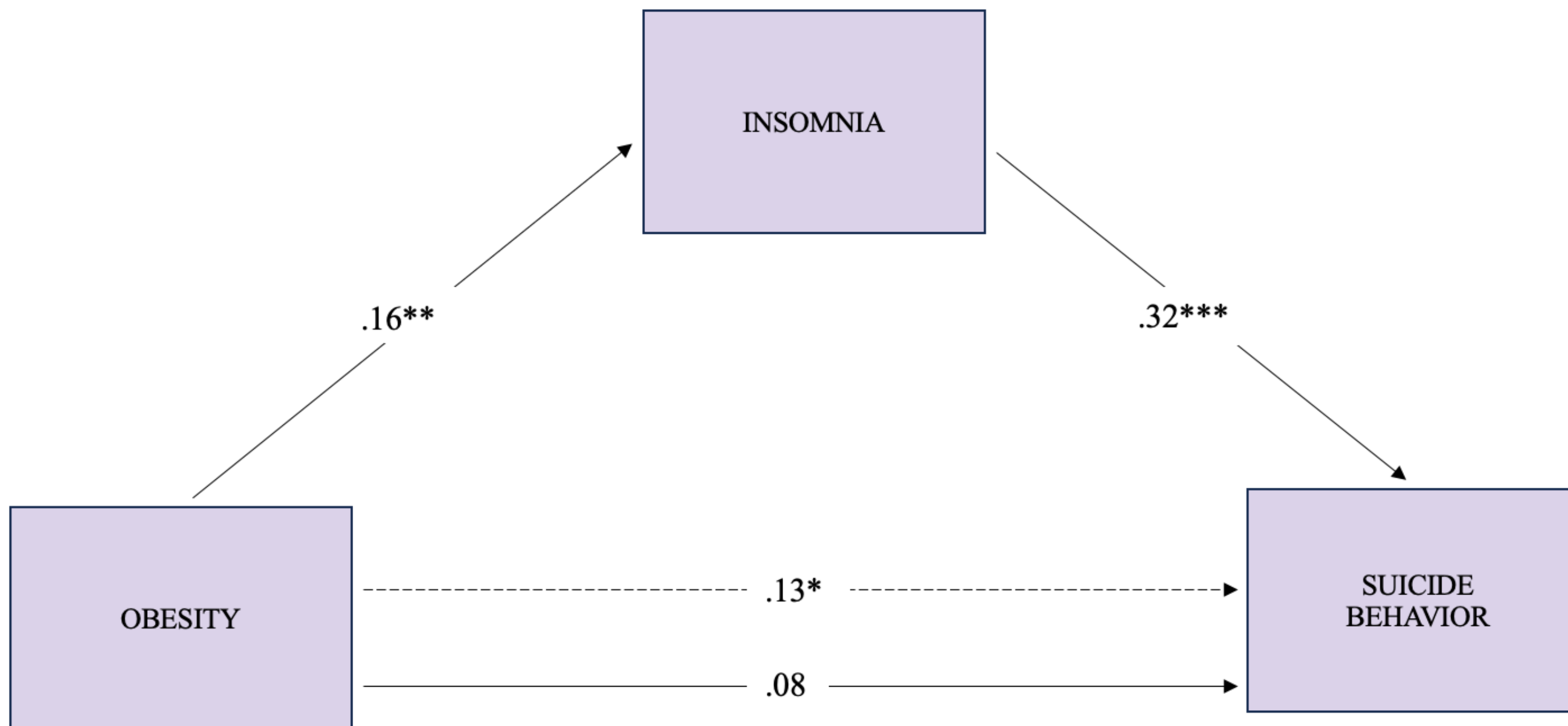
## RESULTS: ANALYSIS



*Notes:*  $N = 198$ . Above values are standardized beta coefficients. \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .0001$ . Obesity had a significant indirect effect on suicide behavior through physical health (standardized indirect coefficient = .0815; standardized 95% CI = .0284, .1451). The dotted arrow represents the direct effect of obesity on suicide behavior prior to bootstrapping.

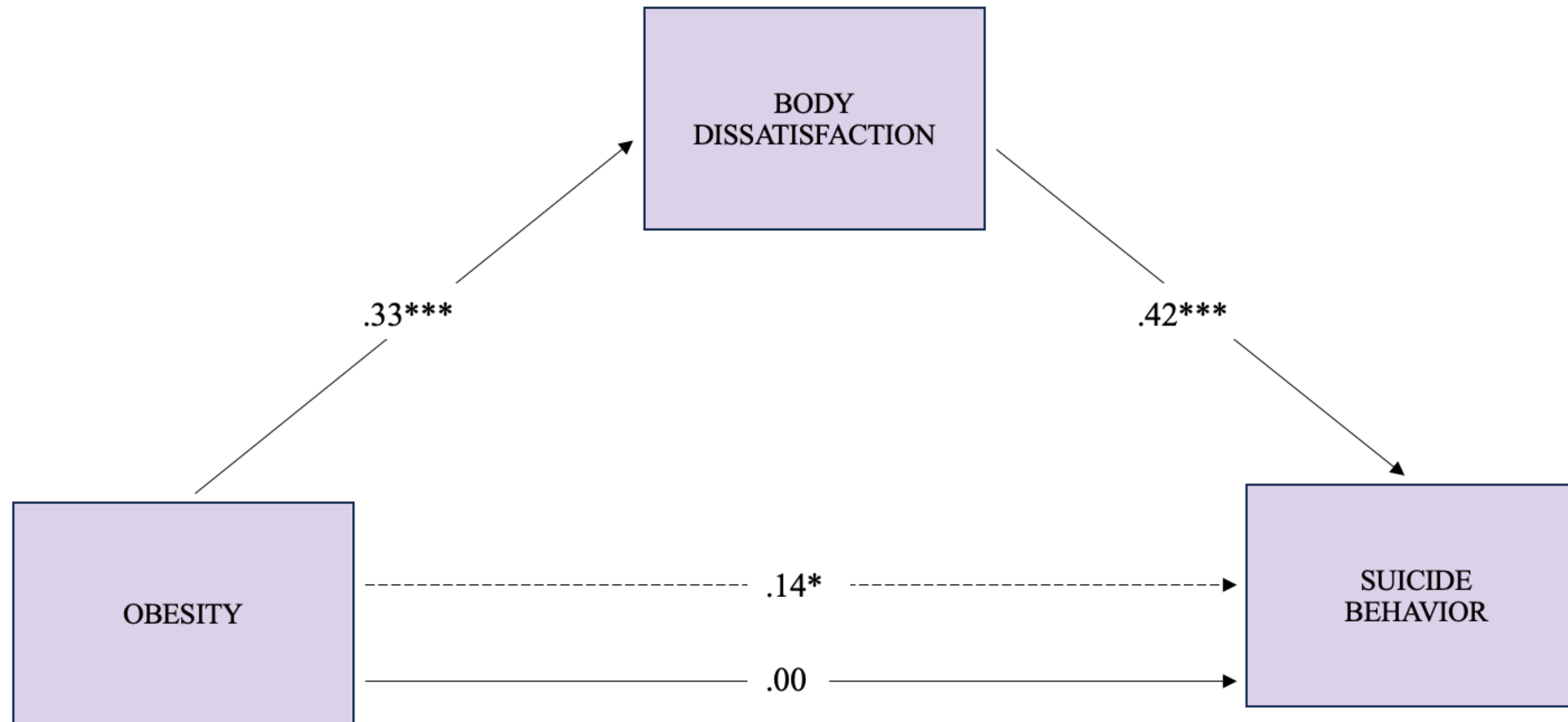


## RESULTS: ANALYSIS



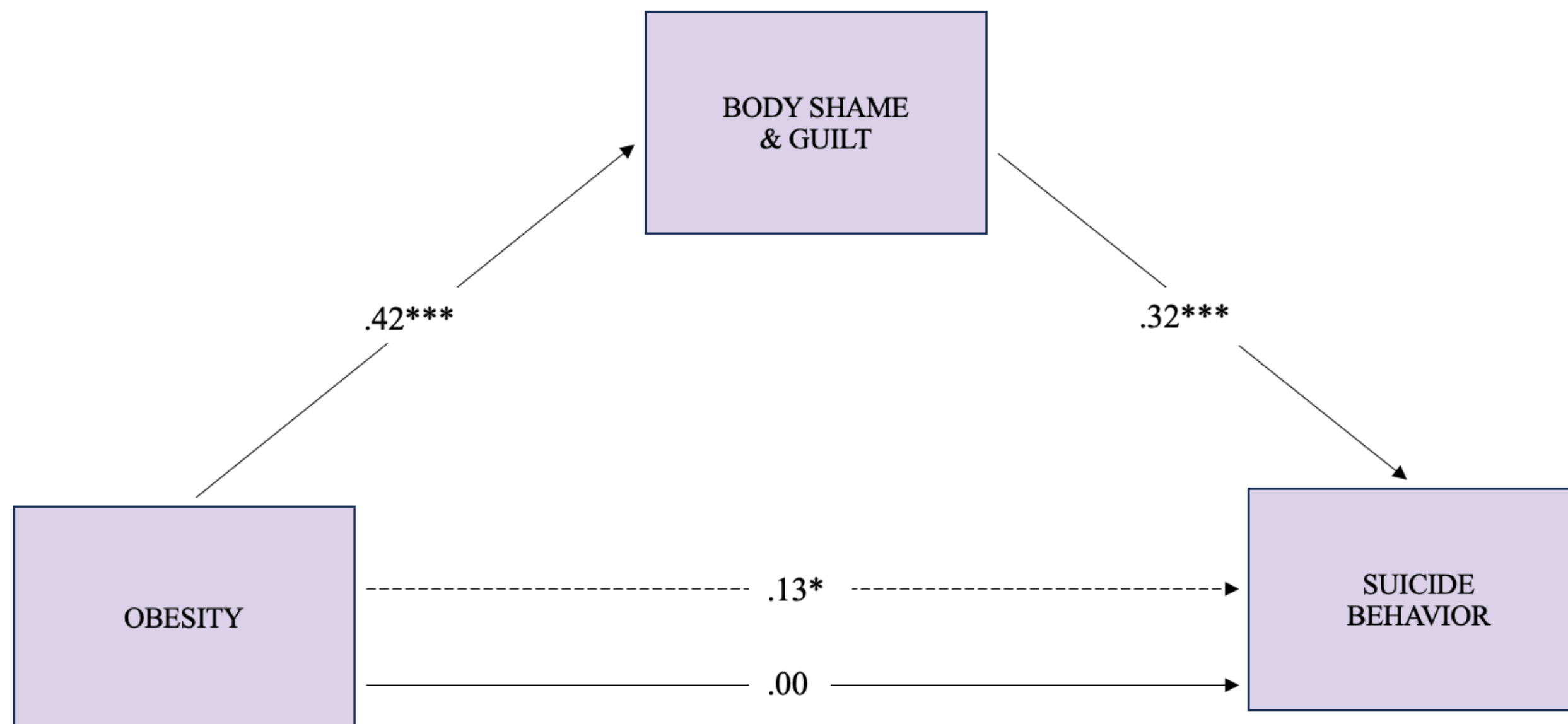
*Notes:*  $N = 196$ . Above values are standardized beta coefficients. \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .0001$ . Obesity had a significant indirect effect on suicide behavior through insomnia (standardized indirect coefficient =  $.0504$ ; standardized 95% CI =  $.0071$ ,  $.1089$ ). The dotted arrow represents the direct effect of obesity on suicide behavior prior to bootstrapping.

## RESULTS: ANALYSIS



*Notes:*  $N = 190$ . Above values are standardized beta coefficients. \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .0001$ . Obesity had a significant indirect effect on suicide behavior through body dissatisfaction (standardized indirect coefficient = .14; standardized 95% CI = .0663, .2223). The dotted arrow represents the direct effect of obesity on suicide behavior prior to bootstrapping.

## RESULTS: ANALYSIS



*Notes:*  $N = 189$ . Above values are standardized beta coefficients. \*  $p \leq 05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .0001$ . Obesity had a significant indirect effect on suicide behavior through body shame and guilt (standardized indirect coefficient = .13; standardized 95% CI = .0621, .2200). The dotted arrow represents the direct effect of obesity on suicide behavior prior to bootstrapping.

# CONCLUSION

- Our study attempted to understand the connection between obesity and suicide through mediators such as body dissatisfaction, body shame and guilt, physical health, and insomnia.
- This study adds to the scant research on suicide risk among Latina college students. In addition, research has shown that body dissatisfaction does not affect Latinas, yet our findings suggest otherwise.
- The findings suggest pathways for interventions to address factors involved in leading health problems such as suicidal behavior.
- Future research should generalize these findings to other ethnic groups (community and clinical sample) and consider including a wider age range among females and males.
- Limitations include self-reported BMIs

THANK YOU!

