



Maternal Attitudes and Psychological Adjustment During the Early Postpartum Period

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BACKGROUND

- Beliefs about motherhood are associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety in perinatal populations.
- When evaluating maternal well-being during the postpartum period, it is important to consider the mother's relationship with her infant in addition to psychological symptoms.
- Maternal psychopathology is associated with increased risk for impaired mother-infant bonding.
- The goal of this study was to assess the relationships among maternal attitudes, psychological symptoms and mother-infant bonding during the postpartum period.

METHOD

- New mothers were recruited online through social media (e.g., Facebook) and online forums for new parents (e.g., Mothering.com).
- All participants completed the study through an online interface. Eligibility criteria included:
 - Age 18-45
 - Mother of child age 6 months or younger
 - United States resident
- 230 eligible women initiated participation in the study; 191 (83%) completed all measures.
- Women completed the following measures:
 - Maternal Attitudes: Attitudes Toward Motherhood Scale (ATOM)
 - Depression: Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)
 - Anxiety: State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)
 - Mother-Infant Bonding: Mother-to-Infant Bonding Scale (MIBS) & Postpartum Bonding Questionnaire (PBQ); higher scores represent more impaired bonding.

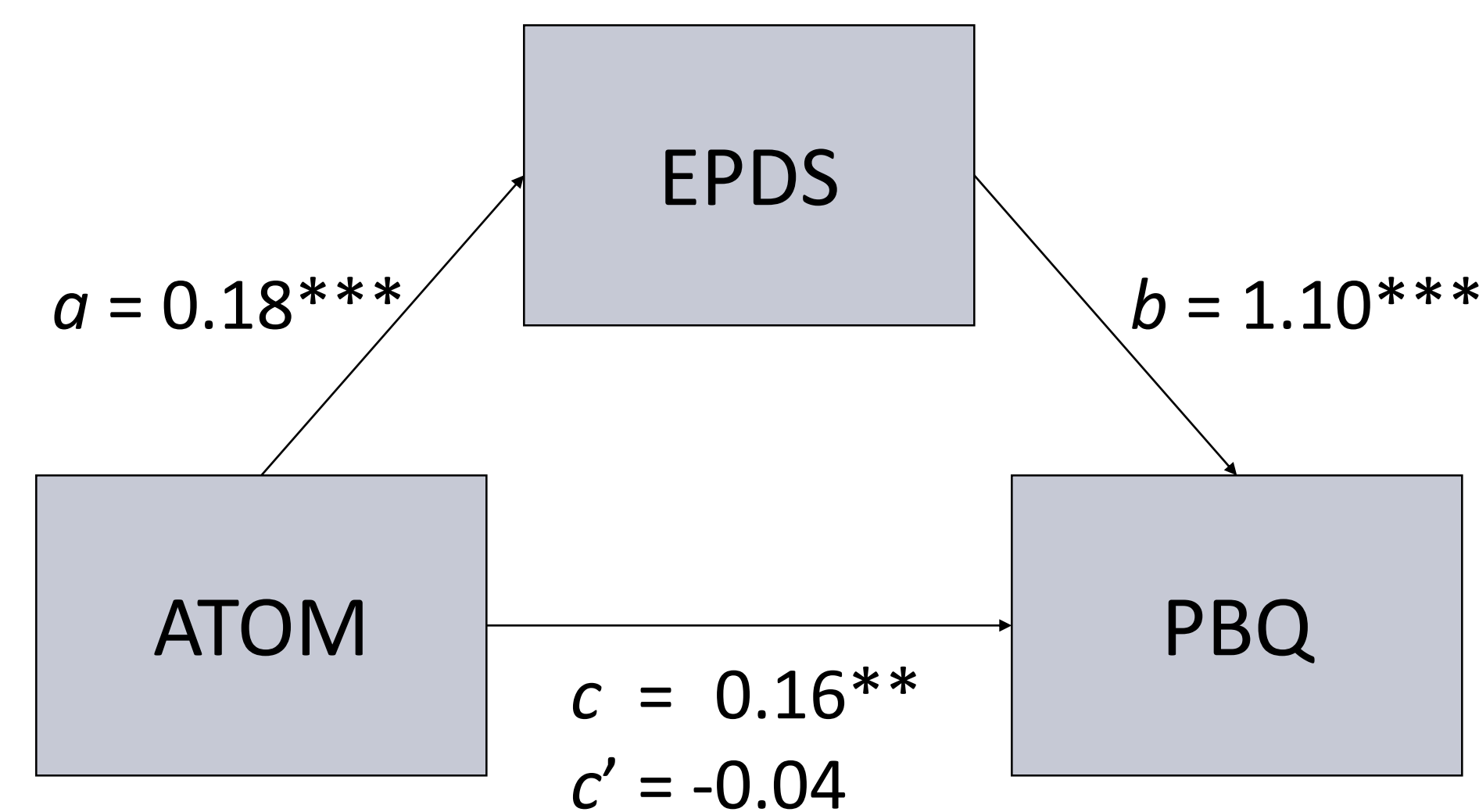
RESULTS

Table 1 Intercorrelations Among Primary Study Measures

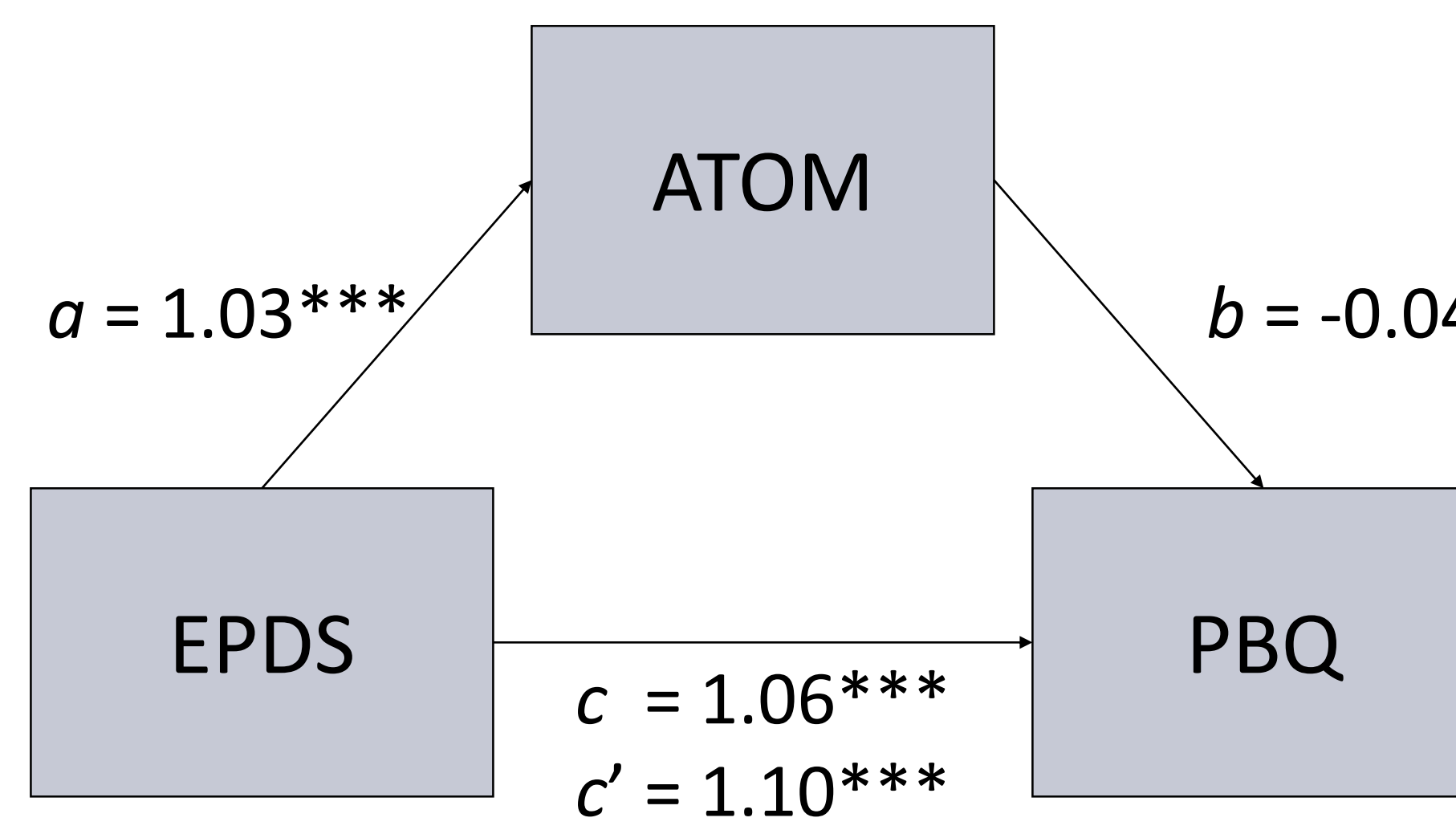
	ATOM	EPDS	STAI	MIBS	PBQ
ATOM	(0.86)				
EPDS	0.44***	(0.87)			
STAI	0.48***	0.79***	(0.96)		
MIBS	0.15*	0.44***	0.48***	(0.78)	
PBQ	0.22**	0.58***	0.59***	0.70***	(0.84)

Note. Internal reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) are presented in parentheses on the diagonal. As measures of mother-infant bonding (MIBS & PBQ) were not normally distributed, these variables were transformed (log & square root, respectively) prior to analyses.

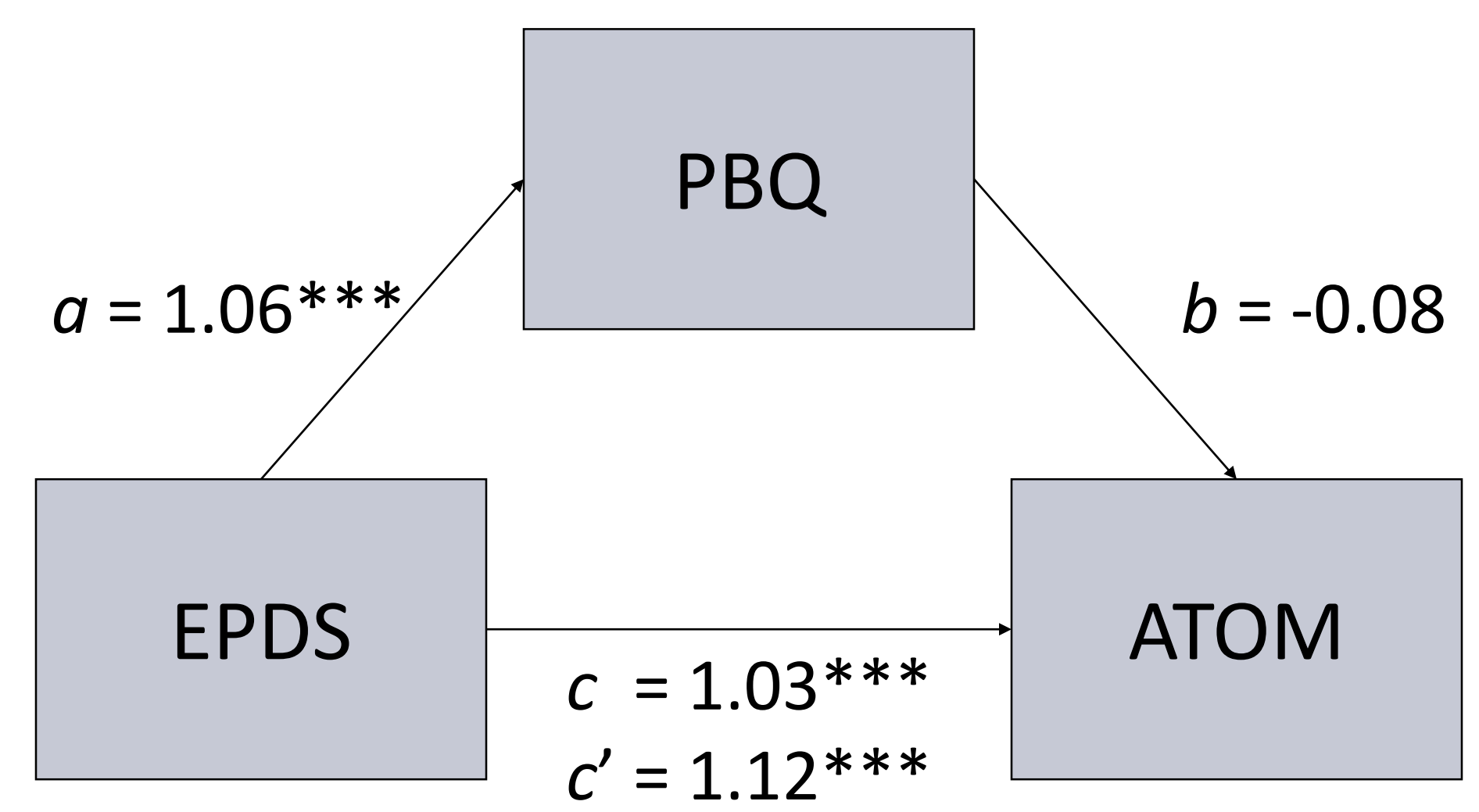
Model 1 Depression mediating maternal attitudes and bonding.



Model 2 Maternal attitudes mediating depression and bonding.



Model 3 Bonding mediating depression and maternal attitudes.



Model 4 Bonding mediating maternal attitudes and depression.

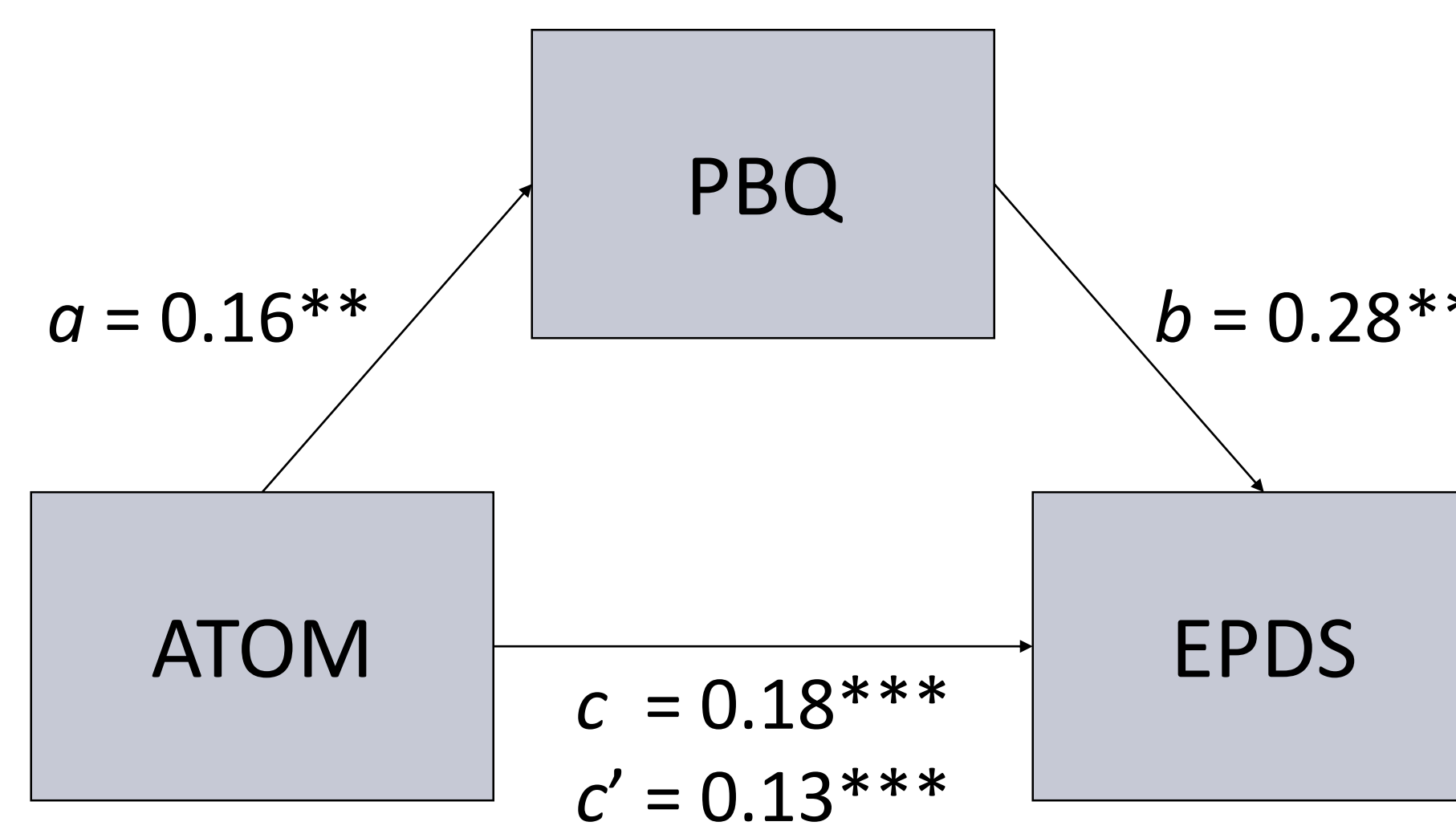


Figure 1 Comparison of mediation models representing the possible relationships among maternal attitudes, depressive symptoms and mother-infant bonding.

RESULTS Continued

Table 2 Multiple Regressions Predicting Mother-Infant Bonding

	PBQ	MIBS
	β	β
Sample	-0.01	-0.14*
Marital Status	0.03	0.02
Education	-0.26***	-0.21**
ATOM	-0.03	-0.03
EPDS	0.38***	0.20†
STAI	0.29**	0.31**
	Model R^2	Model R^2
	0.44***	0.29***

DISCUSSION

- Maladaptive maternal attitudes are associated with both psychological symptoms and impaired mother-infant bonding.
- The relationship between maternal attitudes and impaired bonding may be mediated by psychological symptoms.
- A major limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design. Longitudinal research is necessary to establish the temporal relationships among maternal attitudes, psychological symptoms, and bonding.
- When evaluating women's psychological well-being during the perinatal period, clinicians should assess beliefs about motherhood and the mother-infant relationship in addition to symptoms of depression and anxiety.