

# Sleep, Emotional Distress, and Psychological Flexibility among Postpartum Women

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## INTRODUCTION

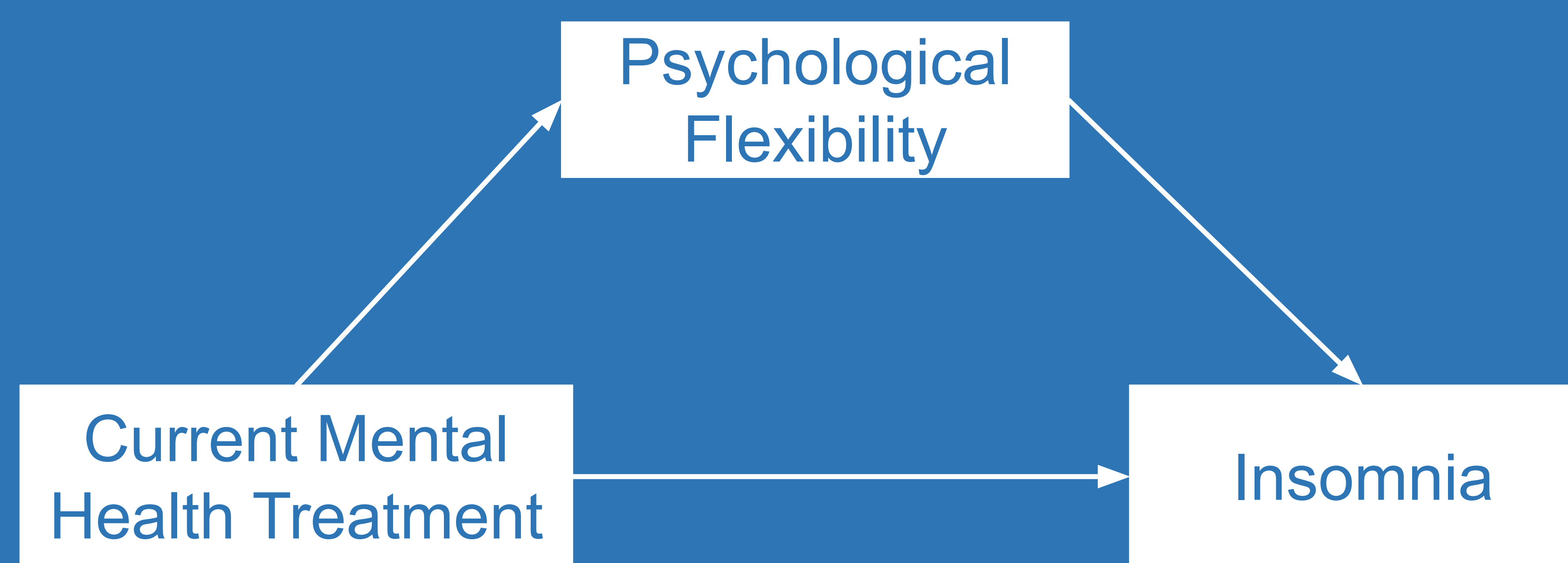
- ~50-60% of postpartum women experience insomnia
- Insomnia is a symptom and risk factor for postpartum depression, anxiety, and lower well-being
- In other populations, psychological flexibility reduces insomnia
- The impact of psychological flexibility on insomnia among postpartum women is unknown
- We aim to examine:
  - 1) Psychological flexibility as a mediator between mental health treatment and insomnia
  - 2) Relationships among insomnia, emotional distress, and well-being in new moms



## METHODS

- Postpartum women ( $N = 266$ ) participated in a quantitative, cross-sectional survey
- Participants reported:
  - Psychological flexibility (Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II)
  - Well-being, emotional distress, and insomnia (Inventory of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms)

Psychological flexibility explained relationship between mental health treatment and insomnia in postpartum women.



More insomnia symptoms were associated with increased emotional distress and lower well-being.

## RESULTS

- Mediation analyses revealed:
  - Mental health treatment was associated with more psychological flexibility ( $b = -7.54$ ,  $SE = 1.20$ ,  $CI = [-9.90, -5.18]$ )
  - More psychological flexibility was associated with less insomnia ( $b = 0.33$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $CI = [0.24, 0.43]$ )
  - Indirect effect of mental health treatment on insomnia through psychological flexibility was significant ( $b = -2.52$ ,  $SE = 0.44$ ,  $CI = [-3.43, -1.71]$ )
- Psychological flexibility explained the relationship between mental health treatment and insomnia
- More insomnia symptoms were associated with increased emotional distress ( $r = .534$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and worse well-being ( $r = -.397$ ,  $p < .001$ )

## DISCUSSION

- Psychological flexibility is an important intervention target as cognitive and behavioral rigidity may interfere with sleep during the postpartum period
- Targeting psychological flexibility may improve sleep outcomes in postpartum women
- Improving sleep outcomes could improve emotional distress and well-being
- Coupling behavioral sleep intervention with skills to enhance psychological flexibility could improve maternal, child, and family psychosocial outcomes

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