

BACKGROUND

- Depression is one of the most common mental health problems and the leading cause of disability worldwide, and extensive research has focused on understanding and treating depression.
- However, the number of people affected by it continues to rise, highlighting the urgent need to better understand the underlying mechanisms to develop more effective treatments.
- A reduced belief in an individual's ability to regulate emotions (i.e., low emotion regulation [ER] self-efficacy) may contribute to the development of depression, but the relationship between low ER self-efficacy and depression remains unclear.
- Unhelpful ER strategies such as avoiding negative feelings (i.e., avoidance) and not expressing emotions (i.e., suppression) are linked to both low ER self-efficacy and heightened depression, suggesting that these strategies may mediate the relationship between ER self-efficacy and depression.

OBJECTIVES

- The current study aimed to clarify the mechanism through which low ER self-efficacy is linked to depression by examining the mediating role of unhelpful ER strategies (avoidance, suppression).
- We hypothesized that lower ER self-efficacy would be associated with unhelpful ER strategies, which, in turn, would be associated with higher levels of depression.
- We also explored whether the results were driven by self-efficacy in regulating positive emotions versus negative emotions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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METHOD

- **Participants**
 - 510 college students (48.8% female)
 - 51.0% White, 34.3% Asian, 16.9% African American
 - $M_{age} = 19.03$ ($SD=1.52$), range=18-29
- **Measures**
 - Regulatory Emotional Self-Efficacy Scale (RESE)
 - Overall/positive/negative emotion regulation self-efficacy
 - Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)
 - Suppression Subscale
 - Brief Experiential Avoidance Questionnaire (BEAQ)
 - Inventory of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms (IDAS)
 - Dysphoria Subscale (cognitive & emotional symptoms of depression)
- **Data Analysis**
 - Descriptive statistics & Mediation analysis
 - PROCESS v. 5.0; SPSS

RESULTS

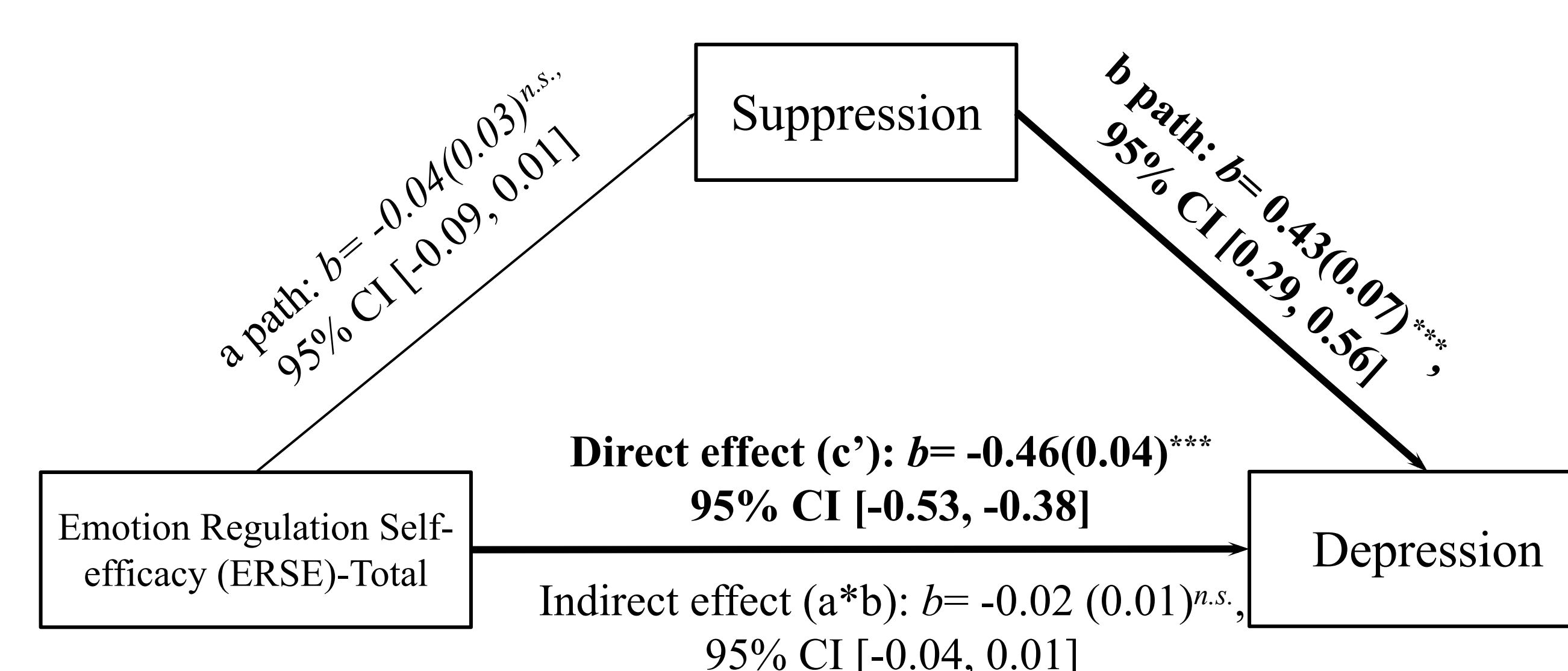
Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the study variables ($N=510$)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. ERSE-Total	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. ERSE-P	.59***	-	-	-	-	-
3. ERSE-N	.92***	.30***	-	-	-	-
4. Suppression	-.06	-.34***	.05	-	-	-
5. Avoidance	-.42***	-.26***	-.37***	.38***	-	-
6. Depression	-.46***	-.32***	-.42***	.27***	.50***	-
Mean	50.98	15.71	25.40	15.93	50.35	23.34
SD	9.41	3.12	6.05	5.35	11.70	9.68
Min.	22	5	8	4	16	10
Max.	75	20	40	28	85	50

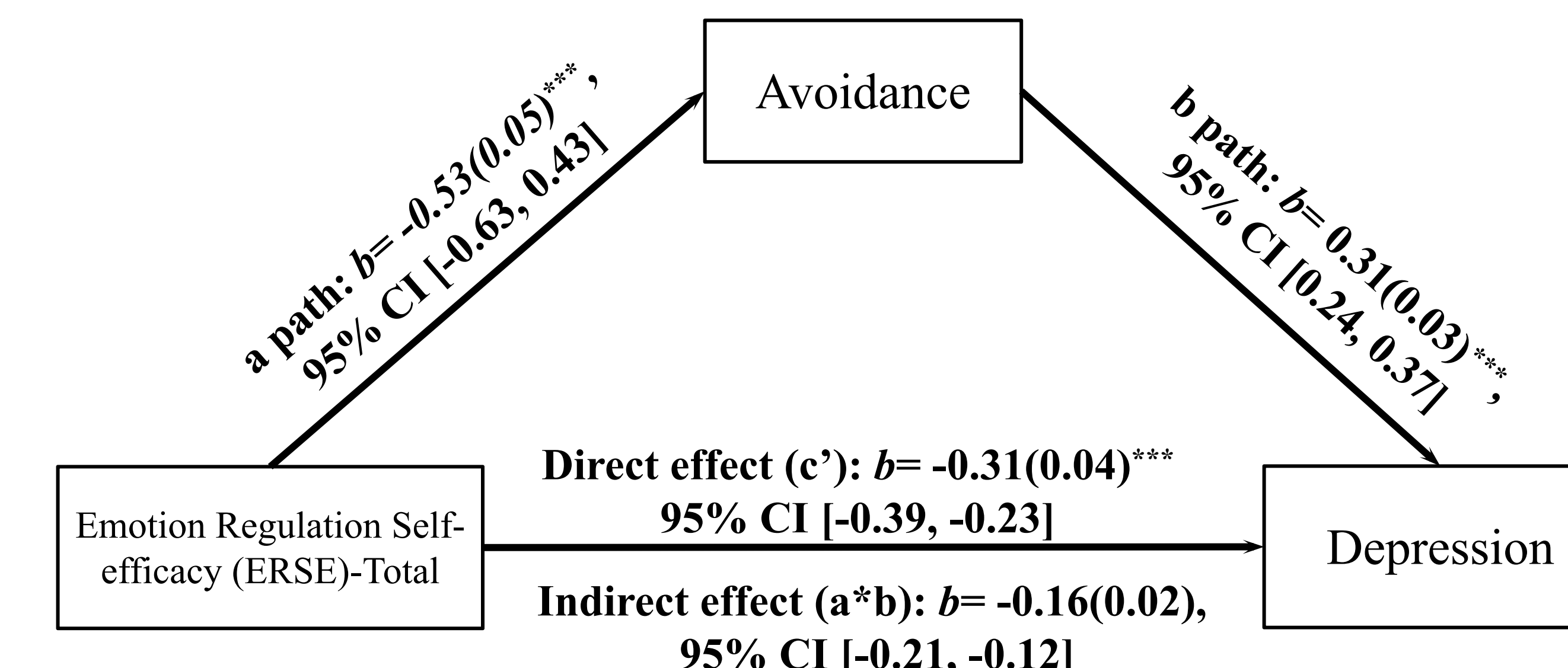
Note. ERSE = emotion regulation self-efficacy; ERSE-P = positive emotion regulation self-efficacy; ERSE-N = negative emotion regulation self-efficacy.
*** $p < .001$.

Figure 1. Indirect effects of emotion regulation self-efficacy (ERSE) on depression through unhelpful emotion regulation strategies

(a) Model testing the indirect effect of ERSE through suppression



(b) Model testing the indirect effect of ERSE through avoidance



Note. Only the results from the mediation analyses conducted to examine the indirect effect of overall ERSE are presented. Regression coefficients are presented with standard errors and 95% confidence intervals. Paths with significant effects are in boldface. The significance level of the indirect effect was determined by its confidence interval. Exploratory analyses focusing on positive and negative ERSE separately revealed that a) only positive ERSE had a significant indirect effect on depression through suppression, and b) ERSE had a significant indirect effect on depression through avoidance, regardless of emotional valence.
*** $p < .001$. n.s. = $p > .05$.

DISCUSSION

- As hypothesized, lower emotion regulation self-efficacy was associated with greater depression through avoidance.
- Interestingly, only positive emotion regulation self-efficacy (but not negative or overall) was associated with depression through suppression.
- The current study provides insight into the mechanisms through which low emotion regulation self-efficacy contributes to depression, suggesting that targeting avoidance in individuals with low emotion regulation self-efficacy may help reduce depression.
- Future research should replicate these findings and examine other emotion regulation strategies as potential mechanisms.

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