

The Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Anxiety: A Gender Comparison

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Abstract

Research has shown that people who struggle with anxiety frequently find themselves struggling with low self-esteem issues. The goal of the current study was to examine the relationship between anxiety and self-esteem based on gender. The current study consisted of 5,880 participants; 2,208 males and 3,672 females. The current study concluded that anxiety was negatively associated with self-esteem. The results indicate that people diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder, experience panic attacks, and have panic disorder, have significantly lower levels of self-esteem as compared to those who were not diagnosed with any anxiety disorder. The current study found no differences between self-esteem in men and women suffering from an anxiety diagnosis.



Introduction

Significance of Study:

The study of the relationship between low self-esteem and anxiety levels in men and women has been ongoing since the 1950s when scholars, such as Dana (1957), first discovered a heterogeneity of intelligence and presence of psychopathology in the relationship between anxiety and intelligence. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2017), it is more common for women to be diagnosed with anxiety disorders than men. Recent arguments contest the correlation between anxiety and depression, including educational stress, particularly among adolescents (Nguyen et al., 2019). Based on the data retrieved from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R), 23.4% of females experienced a type of anxiety disorder, whereas only 14.3% of males experienced it (National Institute of Mental Health, 2017).

Purpose of Study:

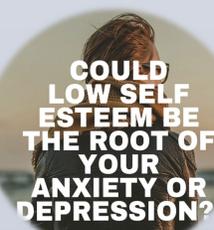
The purpose of this study is to improve knowledge on the relationship between low self-esteem and anxiety and the problems that anxiety causes among women as they seek to compete with men.

Research Question:

The research question for the current study is: What is the relationship between anxiety and self-esteem in men and women?

Hypothesis:

The hypothesis for this study is that there is a negative association between anxiety and self-esteem and that the relationship between self-esteem and anxiety will be greater in women than in men.



Literature Review

Erik Erikson Stages of Development Perspective:

Relating Erikson's stages of development theory with anxiety and self-esteem, the cognitive orientation model explains how the environment and one's world view influences an individual's anxiety levels.

Approximate Age	Psychosocial Crisis/Task	Virtue Developed
Infant - 18 months	Trust vs Mistrust	Hope
18 months - 3 years	Autonomy vs Shame/Doubt	Will
3 - 5 years	Initiative vs Guilt	Purpose
5 - 13 years	Industry vs Inferiority	Competency
13 - 21 years	Identity vs Confusion	Fidelity
21 - 39 years	Intimacy vs Isolation	Love
40 - 65 years	Generativity vs Stagnation	Care
65 and older	Integrity vs Despair	Wisdom

Effects of Age, Class and Gender on Self-Esteem:

Studies have found a positive correlation between age, class, gender, and self-esteem (Kaplan & Harrow, 2019).

Anxiety Among Men and Women:

Anxiety in men is not as commonly reported as in females. Bekker and Van Mens-Verhulst (2007) reported a correlation between gender roles and anxiety.

Personality and Anxiety Among Men and Women:

There is a positive correlation between locus of control, trait anxiety, and self-esteem (Pu et al., 2017).

Self-Worth, Anxiety and Low Self-Esteem:

The lack of self-worth contributes to low self-esteem, a lack of confidence, and the development of negative feelings and maladjustment (Tracy & Robins, 2013).

Social and Judicial Prejudice and Self-Esteem:

Distress from racism and anxiety over the future are the primary causes of depression among minority groups (Johnson, 2006).

The Influence of Social Status on Self-Esteem:

Various authors correlate work, marital status, and family stressors with anxiety and depression. People experiencing work overload have reduced job satisfaction, a trigger for anxiety and low self-esteem (Greguletz et al., 2019).

Methods

Research Design:

The original study is the Collaborative Psychiatric Epidemiology Surveys (CPES). The CPES aimed to collect information about the prevalence of mental health disorders, the impairments connected with these mental disorders, and their treatment patterns from the general population and minority groups in the United States (Alegria et al., 2016)

Sampling Method:

Participants of the original study included individuals age 18+ who resided in households in the United States, Alaska, and Hawaii, African-Americans, Afro-Caribbean, non-Hispanic White adults, Latinx, and Asian-American adults. A final sample size of 5,880 participants were used out of the 10,622 participants.

Data Collection:

The original data for the CPES surveys was collected from early 2001 through the end of 2003. The CPES surveys were conducted by the Survey Research Center (SRC) of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. Data for the CPES surveys were collected through computer-assisted personal interviews, computer-assisted telephone interviews, and telephone interviews.

Measures:

Independent Variable: The independent variable for the current study is anxiety. Examples of anxiety disorders included in this study are general anxiety disorder (GAD), panic attacks, and panic disorders

Dependent Variable: The dependent variable of the current study is self-esteem, defined by positive or negative orientation toward oneself and an evaluation of the respondent's worth or value.

Results

- An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing the mean self-esteem score of participants who were diagnosed as having general anxiety disorder to the mean self-esteem score of participants who did not have general anxiety disorder. A significant difference was found ($t(5878) = -11.40, p < .001$).
- An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing the mean self-esteem score of participants who had panic attacks to the mean self-esteem score of participants who did not have panic attacks. A significant difference was found ($t(5878) = -12.07, p < .001$).
- An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing the mean self-esteem score of participants who had panic disorder to the mean self-esteem score of participants who did not have panic disorder. A significant difference was found ($t(5878) = -11.11, p < .001$).

Table 2

Anxiety and Self-Esteem

		Mean Self-Esteem (SD)	Mean Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
General anxiety disorder (lifetime)	Yes	23.16 (5.55)	-3.01	-11.40	< .001
	No	26.17 (4.20)			
Panic attack (lifetime)	Yes	24.75 (4.97)	-1.63	-10.74	< .001
	No	26.38 (4.05)			
Panic disorder (lifetime)	Yes	22.97 (5.75)	-3.18	-11.11	< .001
	No	26.15 (4.20)			

Comparisons made using independent *t* tests.

Table 3

Anxiety and Self-Esteem by Gender

		Mean Self-Esteem (SD)	Mean Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
General anxiety disorder (lifetime)	Men	22.95 (5.47)	-0.30	-0.40	.688
	Women	23.25 (5.58)			
Panic attack (lifetime)	Men	24.77 (4.82)	0.03	0.12	.909
	Women	24.74 (5.04)			
Panic disorder (lifetime)	Men	23.27 (5.37)	0.41	0.48	.629
	Women	22.86 (5.90)			

Comparisons made using independent *t* tests.

Conclusion

- The study results support the position that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem levels and anxiety.
 - The results indicate that people diagnosed with GAD have significantly lower self-esteem levels compared to people who do not have GAD.
 - Similarly, people who experience panic attacks have significantly lower self-esteem levels compared to people who have not experienced panic attacks.
 - Additionally, the results indicate that people who have panic disorder have significantly lower self-esteem levels compared to people who do not have panic disorder.
 - This study also allows the determination of the various adverse effects associated with anxiety and low self-esteem as illustrated by the low quality of life and impairment of perspective towards life.
 - Results from this study related to gender comparison of men and women on anxiety and self-esteem did not correspond with previous research.
 - The results were not adequate to confirming Erikson's theory of development.
- Implications for Practice, Policy and Future Research:**
- Future studies should collect qualitative data on the present goals that the subjects are pursuing to evaluate the applicability of Erikson's theory.
 - Future studies could utilize primary data by issuing questionnaires to the respondents.
 - The study allows social workers to understand the relationship between anxiety and self-esteem as these are two of the most common mental health issues in the social work field.
 - Having a clear understanding of the correlation of anxiety and self-esteem in individuals will help social workers during interventions and advocating for people with mental health issues.

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