
The relationship between global self-esteem and fear-of-flying in adults.

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Introduction

- Research links low self-esteem (LSE) with elevated general anxiety.
 - Self-esteem a stable personality trait of self-worth.
 - Might global LSE also relate to particular phobias, such as a fear-of-flying?
 - An inverse relationship might validate a greater cognitive focus for phobia treatment.
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Origin of self-esteem (SE)

- Harmon-Jones, Simon, & Greenberg (1997) argue SE exists to manage terror/anxiety related to mortality: terror management theory.
 - Perceiving self as being a valuable part of community appears to relieve this terror.
 - Pyszczynski and others (2004) found boosting SE decreased anxiety associated with thoughts of mortality, electric shock.
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Hypothesis 1

- There is a significant inverse relationship between level of self-esteem and level of fear-of-flying.



Gender and self-esteem (SE)

- Pyszczynski and others (2004) assert that self-esteem is dependent upon social validation, social role fulfillment.
 - Women who have lower self esteem feel worse after seeing a picture of an attractive woman than women with higher self-esteem (Jones & Buckingham, 2005).
 - Waters & Moore (2002) determined that unemployment has a greater negative effect upon SE for men compared to women.
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Hypothesis 2

- Gender is a significant predictive variable in the relationship between self-esteem and fear-of-flying, by which male gender has higher predictive ability of the relationship between level of fear of flying and level of self-esteem.



Age and self-esteem (SE)

- Meta-analysis by Robins & Trzesniewski (2005) suggests SE is stable in lifespan.
 - Decrease in adolescence and in elderly.
 - Decreases associated with loss of control (relates to social role fulfillment).
 - Steady increase of SE from throughout adulthood until about age 70.
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Hypothesis 3

- Age is a significant predictive variable in the relationship between self-esteem, and fear-of-flying, by which older participants demonstrate a higher predictive ability of the relationship between level of fear of flying and level of self-esteem.



Methods

- 200 participants through Greenfield Online.
 - Reward: entry into cash sweepstakes.
 - Online survey of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), Flight Anxiety Situations Questionnaire (FAS). A demographics questionnaire.
 - Three FAS subscales: general flight anxiety, pre-flight anxiety, in-flight anxiety
 - All over 18 and all U.S. citizens.
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Results: population sample

- 171 valid responses
- 96 male participants (56.1%) and 75 female participants (43.9%).
- Age range: 18 to 74



Results: t-tests and correlations

- No difference between genders for SE, $t(169) = -.394$, $p = .694$.
 - Positive correlation between age and SE, $r(171) = .162$, $p = .034$.
 - Inverse correlation between SE and pre-flight anxiety scale, $r(171) = -.162$, $p = .03$.
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Results: correlation table

Intercorrelations for Given Study Variables
(N = 171)

	Age	Sex	RSES	FASG	FASP	FASI
Age	1.00	-.033	.162*	-.029	-.008	-.009
Sex	-.033	1.00	.030	-.241**	-.273**	-.269**
RSES	.162*	.030	1.00	.026	-.037	-.162*
FASG	-.029	-.241**	.026	1.00	.744**	.649**
FASP	-.008	-.273**	-.037	.744**	1.00	.891**
FASI	-.009	-.269**	-.162*	.649**	.891**	1.00

** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Results: gender differences

- Significant differences ($p < .001$) between gender for all three FAS subscales.
 - Women 2x as likely to have flying anxiety.
 - When gender controlled for (regression analysis), no-significant correlation between SE and in-flight anxiety for women, $r(171) = -.064$, $p > .05$
 - Highly significant correlation between SE and in-flight anxiety for men, $r(171) = -.272$, $p < .01$
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Results: regression analysis

Correlations Among Self-Esteem and
Fear-of-Flying Subscales Mediating for Gender

	FASG	FASP	FASI
RSES (Males Only; N = 96)	-.154	-.156	-.272**
RSES (Females Only; N= 75)	.139	.075	-.064

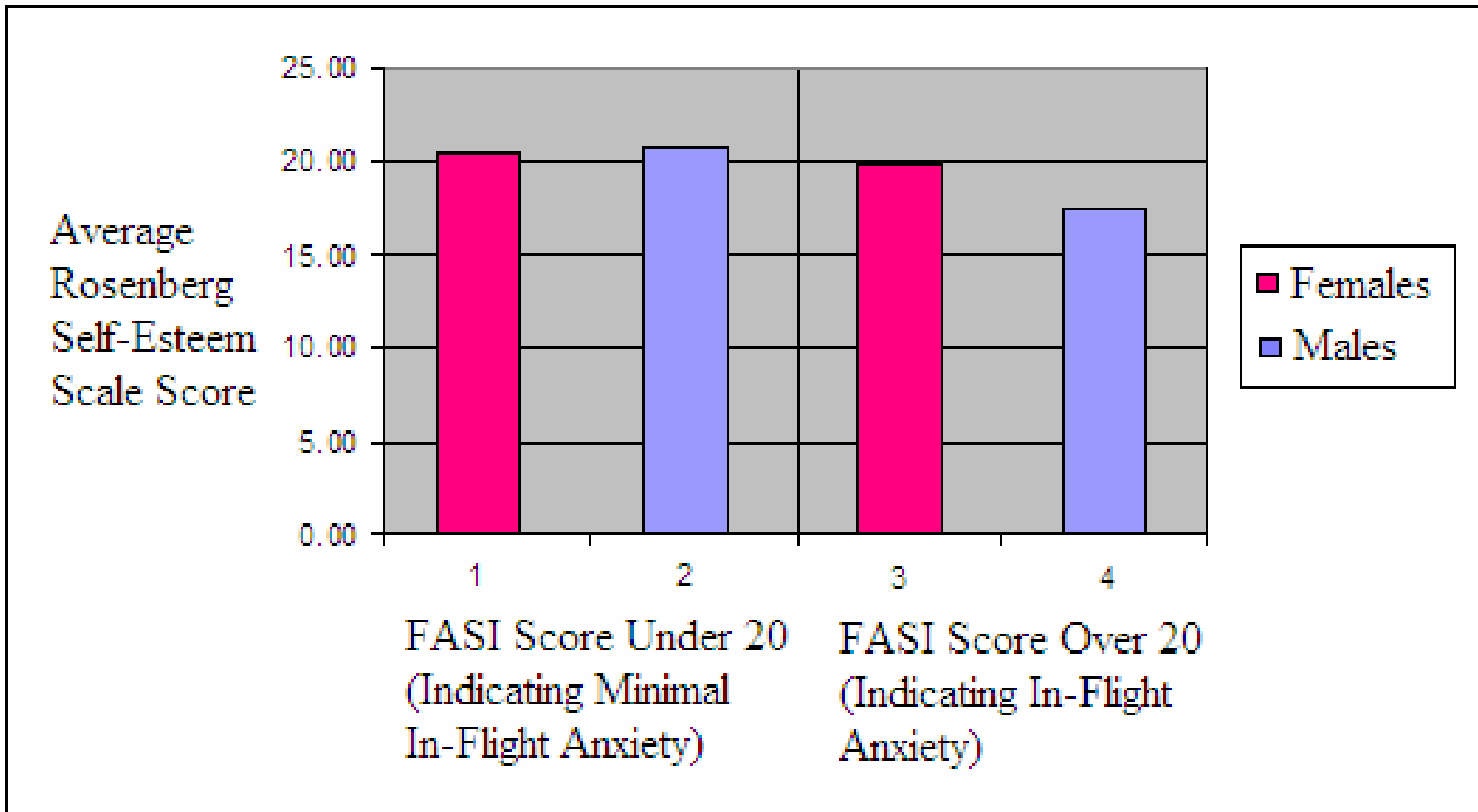
** Significant at the 0.01 level

* Significant at the 0.05 level

Correlation graph between men and women for self-esteem and in-flight anxiety.



Gender differences in self-esteem with high and low in-flight anxiety



Results: age differences

- Significant correlation between age and SE, $r(171) = .162, p = .034$
- No significant correlation between age and fear-of-flying in general ($r = -.029$), pre-flight anxiety ($r = .008$), or in-flight anxiety ($r = -.009$).



Results: hypothesis testing

- Hypothesis One receives partial support from the data. (SE x FAS)
 - Hypothesis Two receives support from the data, and the null hypothesis in Hypothesis Two is rejected. (SE x FAS), gender
 - Hypothesis Three does not receive support from the data and is rejected in favor of the null hypothesis. (SE x FAS), age
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Discussion: summary

- Inverse relationship between global self-esteem and in-flight anxiety for men only.
- In-flight stimuli better cues for reminder of mortality?
- In-flight anxiety may represent threat of gender role violation for men.



Discussion: limitations

- Only 8 participants (4.6%) over age of 60. No one under 18.
 - Over-representing 18-39 age group.
 - Paid participation; online participation.
 - Correlation, not causation. Direction between self-esteem and flying anxiety unknown.
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Discussion: future studies and therapy

- Gender differences in response to phobia treatment for behavioral and cognitive focus?
 - Self-esteem boosting for phobia treatment?
 - Same effects for other phobia types that threaten gender roles?
 - Cognitive focus on how flying phobia may threaten gender role for men.
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For more information



For more information & references:

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