

Anxiety and Self-Esteem Before and During a Global Pandemic

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Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic led to a fluctuation in anxiety and self-esteem (Matias et al., 2020).
- Anxiety is conceptualized as an emotional state that includes worry, nervousness, and apprehension while self-esteem is one's evaluation of self-worth (Matias et al., 2020).
- Past studies show ill-effects on mental health, such as raised anxiety rates, tend to increase in a population in which there is widespread state of panic (Jungmann & Witthoff, 2020).
- Mental Health America reported completion rate of their online anxiety self-screening tests increased by almost 20% since the beginning of February, showing people grew increasingly anxious amid the pandemic (Salari et al., 2020).
- Stockpiling food, panic buying, and consuming food rapidly, along with stressors such as a loss of income and feelings of instability, led to a general decrease in self-esteem during the pandemic (Chen et al., 2020).
- These studies suggested that anxiety levels would be greater in post-COVID individuals than pre-COVID, and self-esteem levels would be greater in pre-COVID than post-COVID individuals.

Current Study

- Amazon Mechanical Turk was used to collect data from participants (n=190) through a survey about dieting and body image.
- Participants: 190 individuals in the United States.
- Two groups: pre-COVID (n = 97, 55.7% male) & post-COVID (n = 93, 57.0% male).

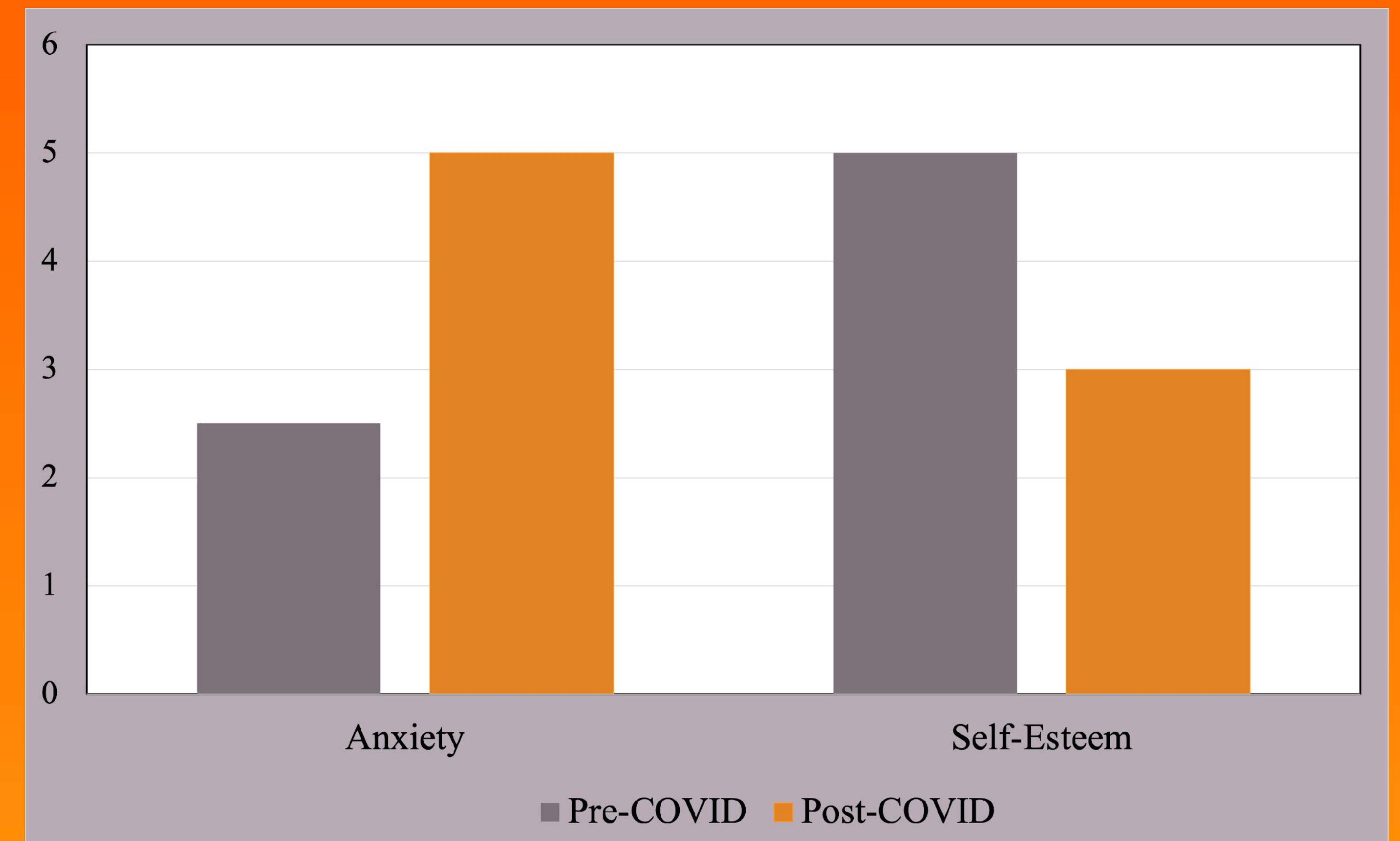
Materials

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire (GAD): used to measure anxiety level of participants (Spitzer et al., 2006).
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE): used to measure self-esteem of participants (Rosenberg, 1979).
- Different groups did not differ significantly on demographic variables.

Results

- Post-COVID individuals showed greater anxiety (M = 8.10 (4.43) compared to pre-COVID individuals M = 6.58 (5.17); $t(190) = -2.14, p = .034$)
- Pre-COVID individuals had better self-esteem M = 24.02 (4.51) compared to post-COVID individuals (M = 22.05 (6.59); $t(190) = -2.41, p = .018$)
- There were no differences in gender.

Figure 1: Differing Anxiety and Self-Esteem by Group



Discussion

- When looking at the data, it is important to note that there is no difference between genders.
- The t-tests show that pre-COVID individuals showed greater self-esteem than post-COVID individuals while post-COVID individuals showed greater anxiety than pre-COVID individuals.
- Anxiety became more prevalent as COVID ran its course while self-esteem was lowered between the two groups due to many factors brought on by the pandemic.
- Anxiety likely became more prevalent over the course of the pandemic due to the unknowns of the future and fear of becoming ill. Self-esteem likely was categorically lower between the two groups due to gaining weight, having a changed lifestyle, and losing income due to job changes.
- In conclusion, more research should be performed to further delve into the true causes of anxiety and self-esteem fluctuations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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