

Introduction

- Self-focus has been linked with multiple psychiatric disorders, including anxiety and depression^{1,2,3}.
- Anxiety is the most prevalent mental illness in the United States, with a lifetime prevalence of 33.7%⁴.
- Anxiety symptoms often co-occur with depressive symptoms; therefore depression and anxiety are often consolidated in research scenarios.
- Past studies have shown a positive correlation between negative self-focus and depressive symptoms^{1,2,3}.
- With anxiety prevalence on the rise, it is worthy of attention independent from depression.
- Anxiety is correlated with higher reports of self-focus and negative self-focus specifically³.
- This study will look at the relationship between anxiety and self-focus and negative self-focus.
- We will consider whether depression mediates the relationship between anxiety and negative self-focus, which has yet to be analyzed in the literature.

Predictions

1. Anxiety symptoms will be positively correlated with amount of self-focus.
2. Anxiety symptoms will be positively correlated with negative self-focus.
3. Depression symptoms will not fully mediate the relationship between anxiety and negative self-focus.

Methods

- A college sample of 188 students were recruited to complete the Sentence Completion Task (SCT) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI).
- The SCT is an open-ended language task that provides participants with “stems” (e.g., I am; I think), and participants complete the stems in ways that are meaningful to them⁵.
- Responses to the SCT are coded for focus (e.g. self, other, both, or neither) and valence (positive, negative, or neutral).
- The BAI is a 21-item questionnaire which assesses anxiety symptoms over the past month using a Likert scale⁶.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

- A partial Pearson’s Correlation was calculated in SPSS 26 to measure the relationship between BAI scores and self-focused responses on a SCT.

Table 1. Demographic Information

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	141	18	61	23.03	7.142
Sex	158	1	2	1.83	.378
BAI	183	0	47	13.12	11.541

Figure 1. Self-Focused Responses on SCT and BAI Score

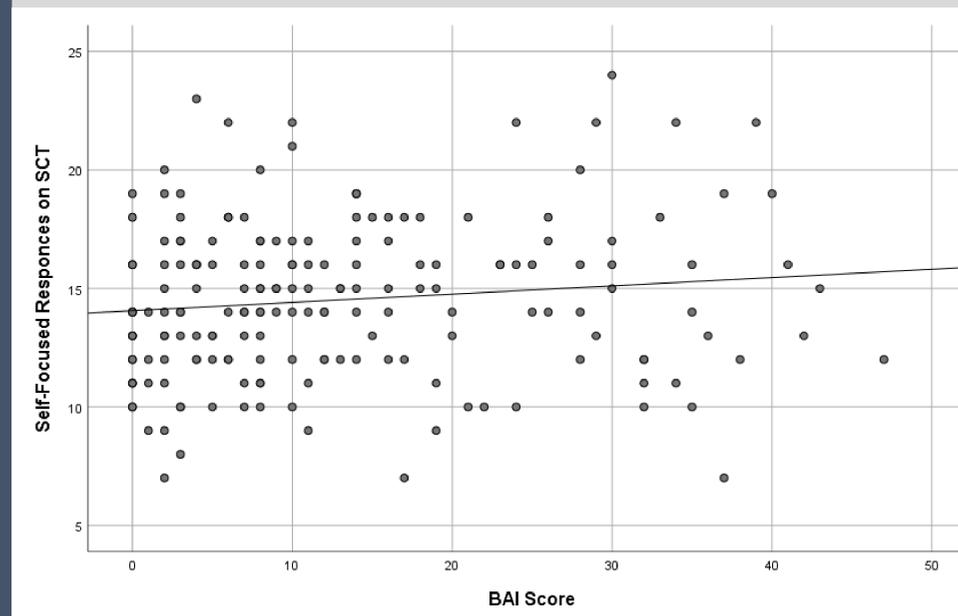
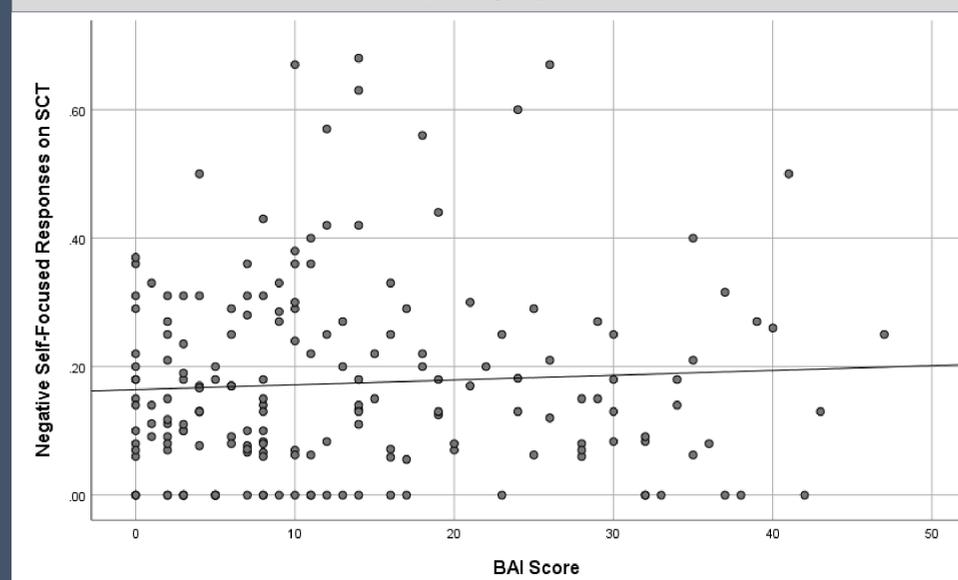


Figure 2. Negative Self-Focused Responses on SCT and BAI Score



STATISTICAL ANALYSES cont.

- Gender was controlled for due to the significant differences between male and female participants in anxiety symptoms.
- Correlations were run with a square root transformed BAI score because of the skewness of the data.

Results

- **Figure 1:** scatter plot representing the non-significant correlation found between BAI scores and self-focused responses, $r(155) = .121, p = .130$.
- **Figure 2:** scatter plot representing the non-significant correlation between BAI scores and negative self-focused responses, $r(155) = .071, p = .375$.

Discussion

- Our results argue that there may not be as strong of a relationship between anxiety and self-focus as previous data indicated^{1,2,3}.
- However, our sample of participants may have had data that were skewed toward normal levels of anxiety and lacked a wide distribution of anxiety scores.
- Since there was not a significant relationship between anxiety and negative self-focus, we did not assess whether depression mediated the relationship between anxiety and negative self-focus.
- Negative-self focus may be more closely related to other psychological symptoms, such as depression.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Given the prevalence and distressing nature of the symptoms, it is critical to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of anxiety.
- Future research could evaluate if a strong relationship exists between external-focused attention and anxiety.

References

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