

Self-Esteem and Disordered Eating in African American Youth

Carly Wagner, Samantha Ronderos, & Dawn Witherspoon, PhD

INTRODUCTION

Disordered Eating (DE)

- DE is a serious health concern in American youth
- DE is irregular eating behaviors like bingeing, fasting, purging, and other behaviors; these behaviors alone may not qualify for an eating disorder diagnosis (Pereira et al, 2007)
- 30% of girls and 15% of boys are engaging in DE behaviors (Campbell & Peebles, 2014)

Self-Esteem (SE)

- Low SE impacts the development of mental health disorders like depression (Stadelmann et al., 2017)
- Low SE is a significant risk factor in predicting DE (Espinoza et al., 2019)

However little research has focused on how SE impacts DE in AA

Aim

To learn how SE relates to DE behaviors in this understudied population

Hypothesis

Children with lower SE will exhibit more DE behaviors

METHOD

Participants

- Students enrolled in school-based obesity prevention RCT, *Challenge! Study*
- Primarily low-income, AA communities
- 235 male (50.6%) & female (49.4%)
- Mean age 13.3, range (11.08-16.09)

Measures

The Children's Eating Attitudes Test (ChEAT) (Smolak & Levine, 1993)

- Self-administered
- 26 items 4 subscales:
 - Bulimia (binge/purge)
 - Anorexia (dieting)
 - Food Preoccupation
 - Oral Control
- Scores above 20 indicate DE behaviors (0-78)

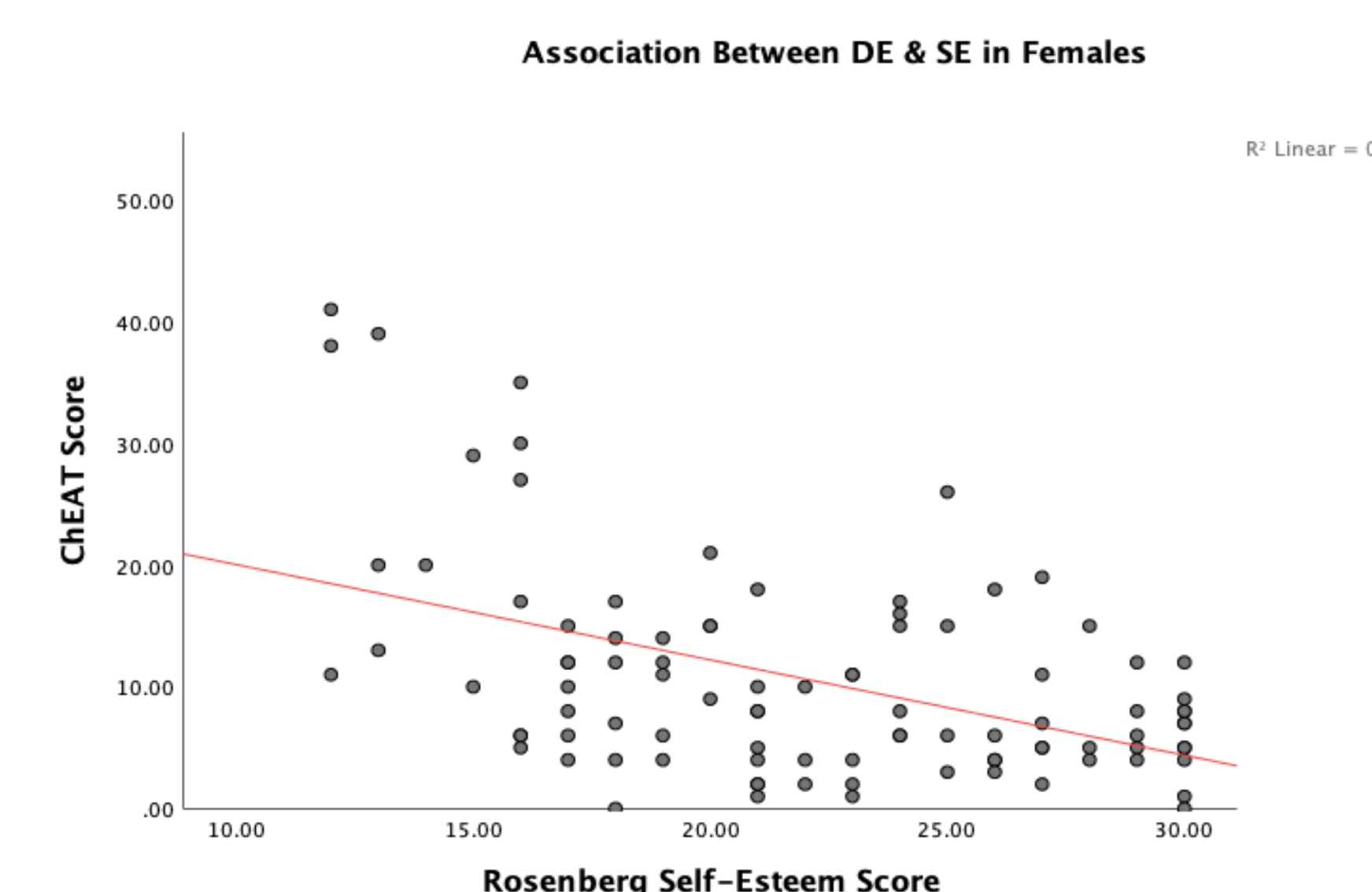
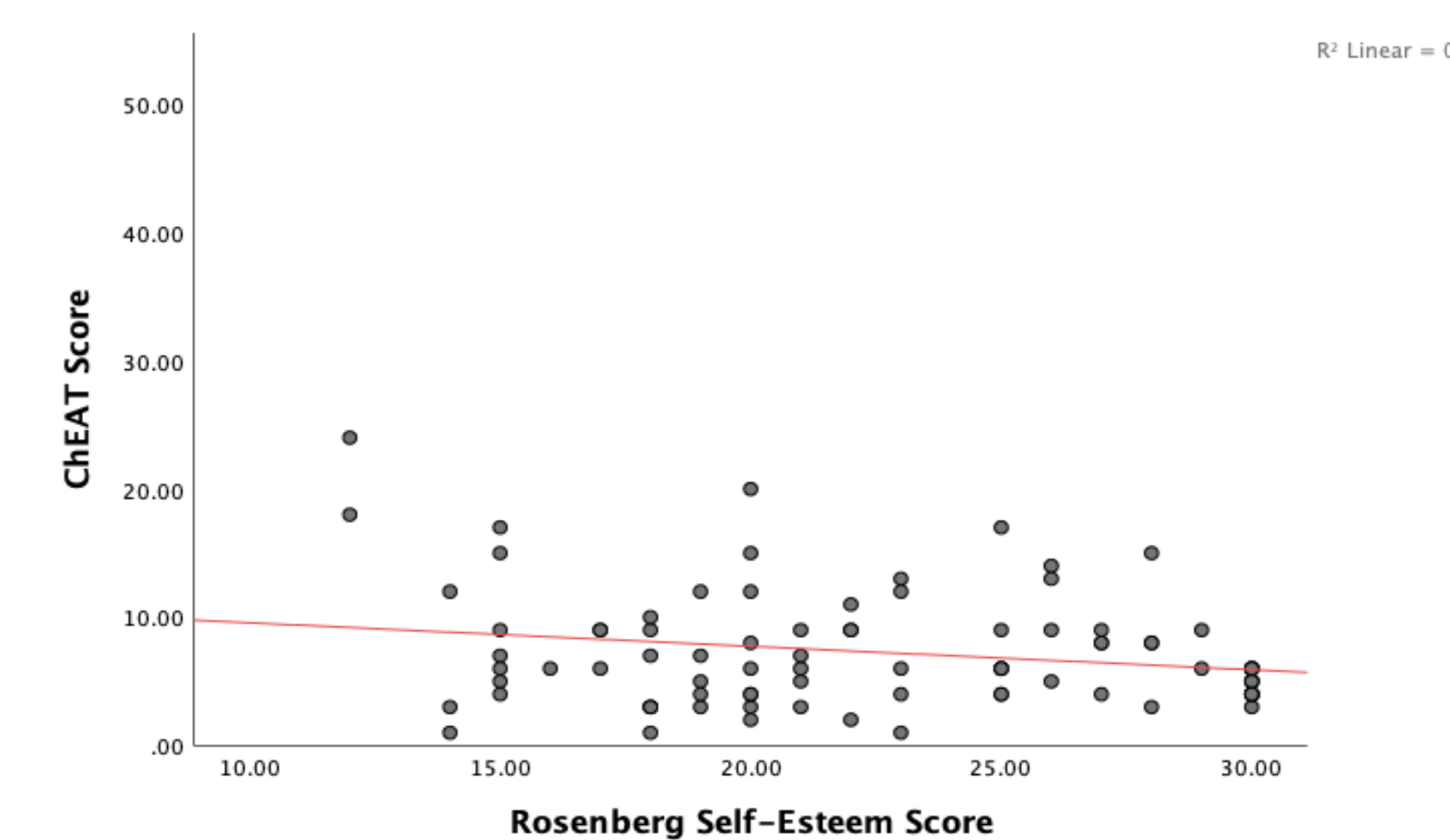
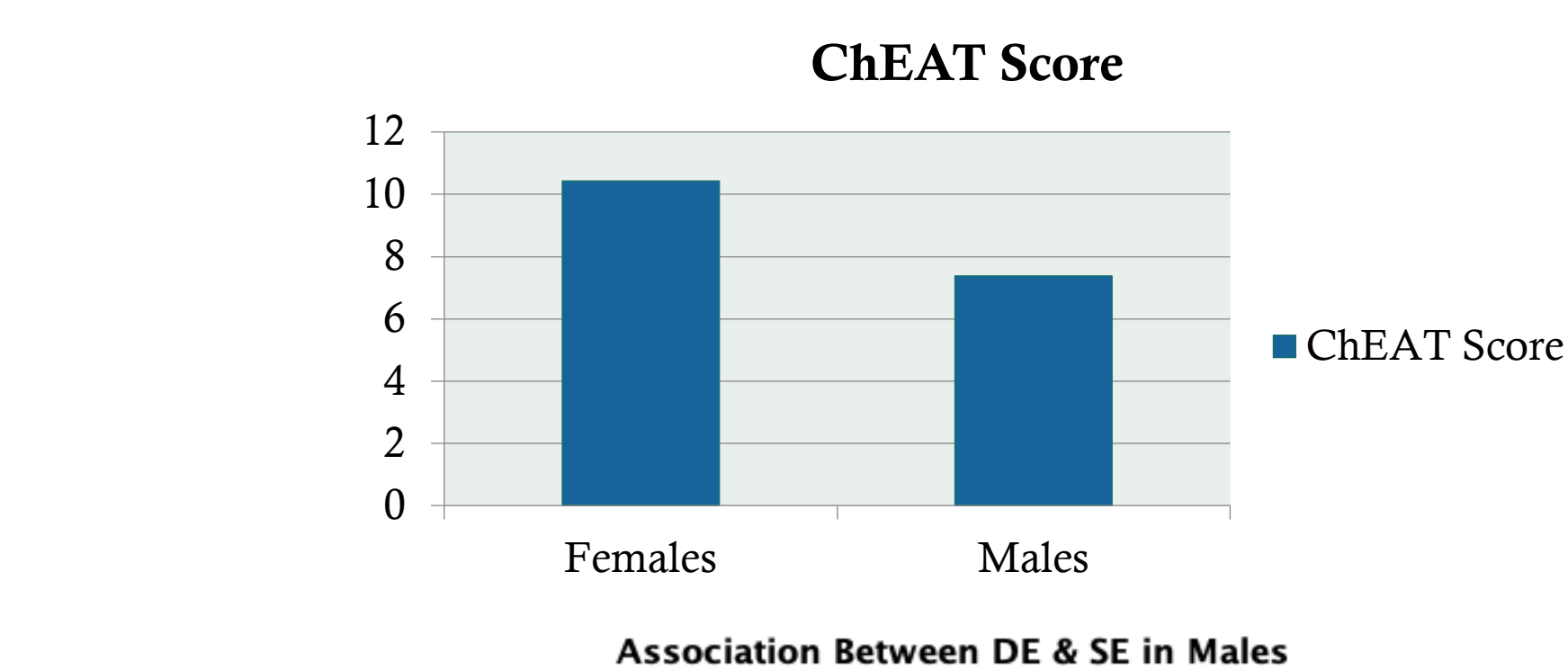
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES)

(García et al., 2019)

- Self-administered
- 10 items with a 4-point rating scale
- Low level SE (10-25), medium level SE (26-29), & high level SE (30-40)

RESULTS

- Girls had higher levels of DE than boys, $t(182) = -3.38, p < .001$
- Girls and boys did not differ in SE, $t(178) = .251, p = .802$
- Significant negative correlation between SE and DE, $r(182) = -.427, p < .001$
- **However this relationship between SE and DE was only significant for females**
 $r(93) = -.48, p < .001$



CONCLUSION

- Male and female AA youth did not differ in SE
- Females exhibited significantly more DE behaviors
- Females (4.5%) exhibited higher ratings of anorexia compared to males
- **For AA youth, SE was related to DE behavior only in females**

Limitations

- Measures were self-administered and possibly underreported
- Generalizability is limited to this population

Future Directions

- Future research should consider pubertal timing, as well as a more diverse population
- Consider relationship between DE, SE, and other psychosocial factors like anxiety and victimization
- Future research should emphasize parent feeding styles

