

INTRODUCTION

- Loneliness and social isolation are prevalent issues faced by adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), significantly impacting their mental health and overall quality of life (Grace et al., 2022).
- Research has shown that participation in group social skills training and social activity decreases feelings of isolation and loneliness within adults with autism spectrum disorder (Gantman et al., 2012).
- However, limited work has examined these effects in a community-based setting.

OBJECTIVE

This research project aimed to investigate the effectiveness of structured intervention groups in fostering a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of loneliness among autistic youth within the community.

HYPOTHESES

- Parent- and child-reported measures of social impairment (SRS-2) and loneliness (UCLA-3) will decrease from pre- to post- intervention.
- Child-reported measures of psychological flexibility (Psy-Flex) and belonging (GBS) will increase pre- to post- intervention.

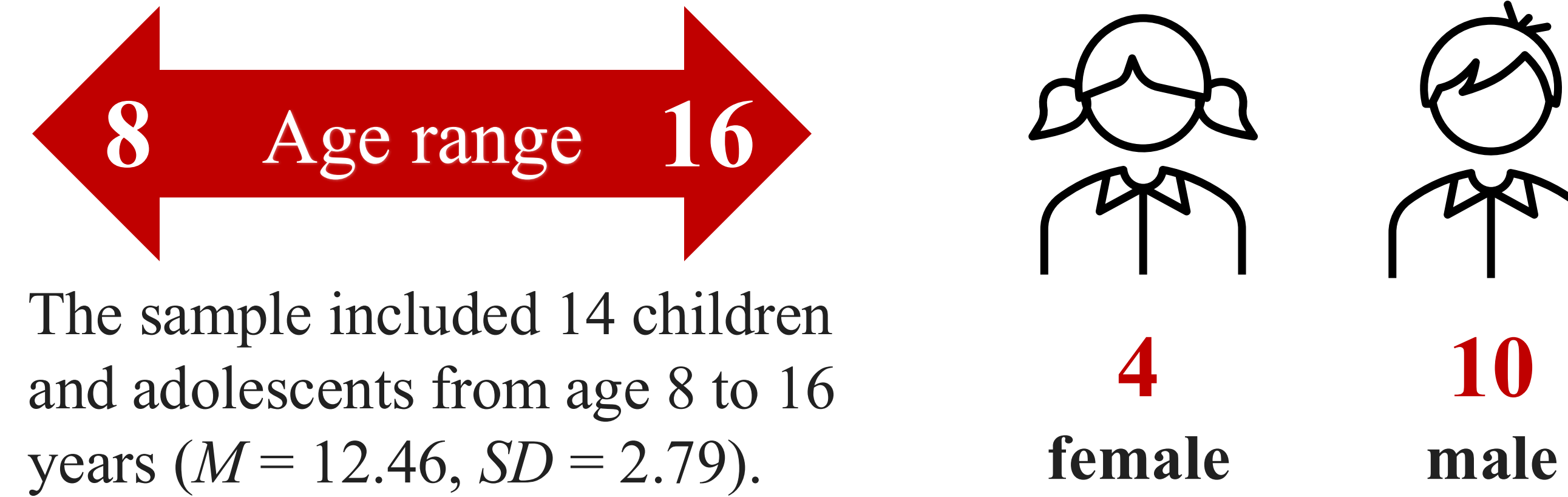
METHOD

- Participants engaged in an eight-week evidence based Sociodramatic Affective Relational Intervention (SDARI) program (Lerner & Mikami, 2012).
- The Social Responsiveness Scale-2 (SRS-2; Constantino & Gruber, 2012), UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3; Russell, 1996), Psy-Flex (Gloster et al., 2021) and General Belonging Scale (GBS; Malone et al., 2012) were completed prior to and following participation in the SDARI program.

REFERENCES

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PARTICIPANTS



RESULTS

Figure 1. Comparison of Mean Assessment Scores Pre- and Post-SDARI Group Intervention Program

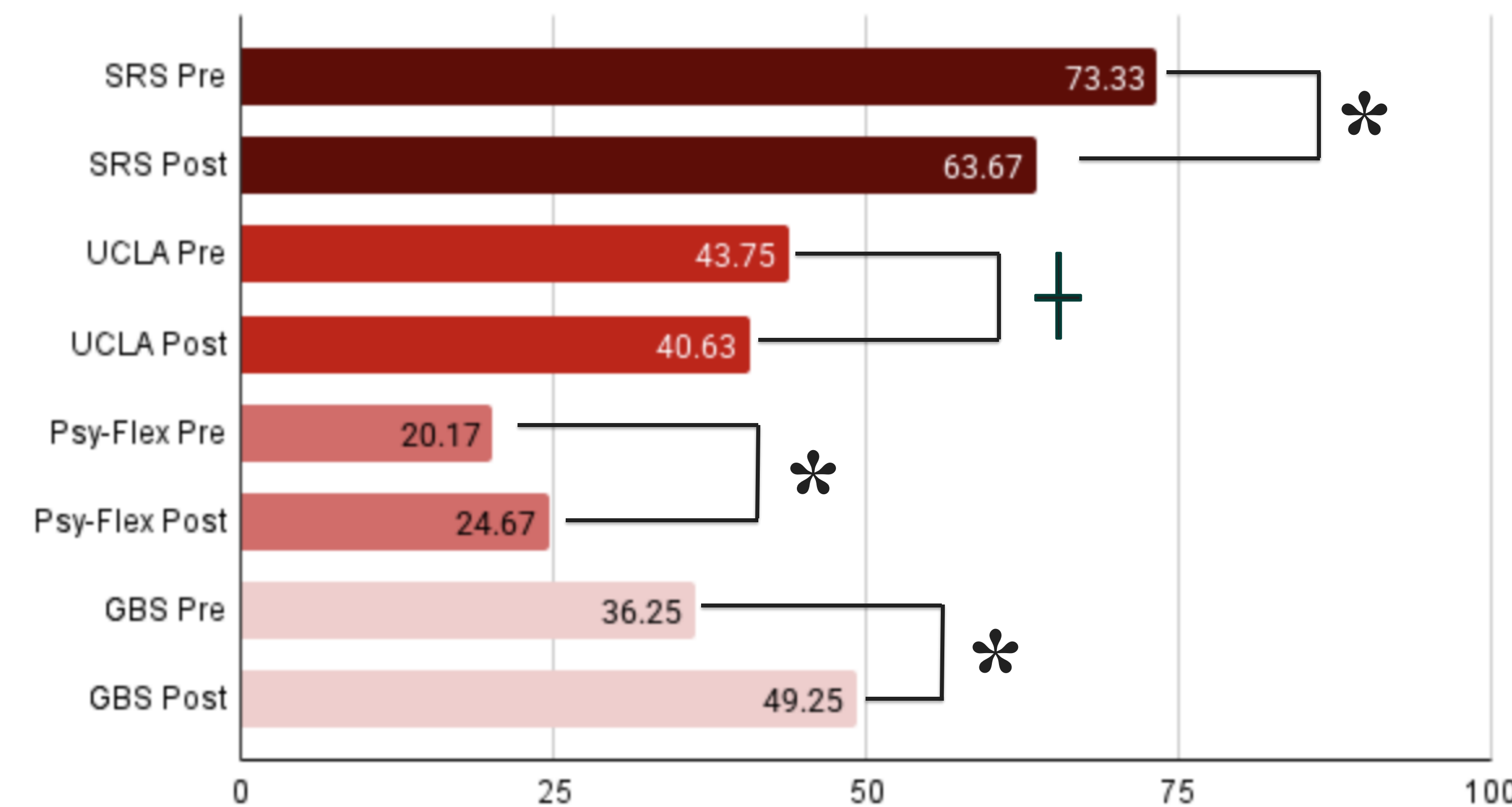


Table 1. Results of Paired-Samples *t*-Tests Comparing Pre- and Post-Intervention Means for Assessments of Interest

Assessment	<i>n</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
SRS-2	8	2.08	.036
UCLA-3	8	1.58	.079
PSY-Flex	6	-2.80	.019
GBS	8	-3.52	.004

Note. *t* and *p* reflect one-tailed test values.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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RESULTS



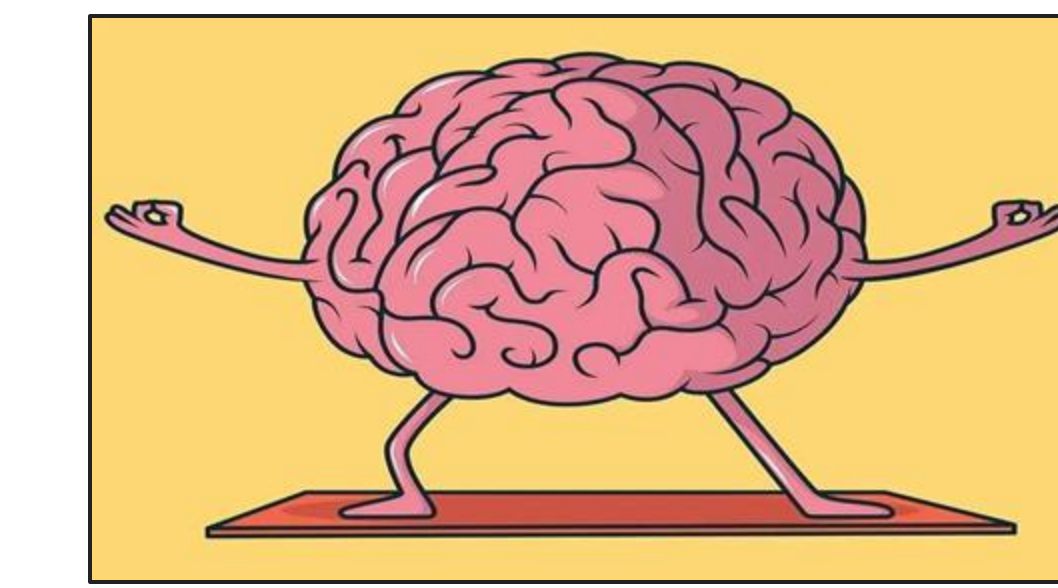
SDARI

Decrease in autism associated social impairment



SDARI

Moderate decrease in loneliness



SDARI

Increase in psychological flexibility



SDARI

Increase in general belonging

CONCLUSIONS

- Overall, findings support significant changes in Social Responsiveness Scale-2, UCLA Loneliness Scale, Psy-Flex, and General Belonging Scale scores following the eight-week SDARI intervention program.
- These data are a crucial first step in providing community mental health professionals with empirically based best practices for supporting feelings of social belonging and acceptance for autistic clients, improving care and overall quality of life.