Smart Fit Girls™ – Afterschool Program's Effect on the Emotional Health of Adolescent Girls

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Introduction

- 1 in 5 adolescents suffer mental health problems.[1]
- Adolescent girls disproportionately experience emotional health problems, in comparison to adolescent boys.[2]
- In 2021:
  - 41% of female high school students reported "poor mental health" within the past month.[1]
  - 57% of female high school students suffered from "persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness".[1]
  - 13% of female high school students "attempted suicide" within the past year.[1]
- Cultivating and strengthening self-compassion has been linked to positive mental health outcomes in adolescents.[3]
- There is a positive correlation between resistance training and improved psychosocial health.[2]
- The purpose of the Smart Fit Girls (SFG) program is to positively impact the emotional health of adolescent girls.

Aims/Hypotheses

Aim 1: To evaluate the impact of the SFG program on lowering levels of anxiety and depression within high school girls.

Hypothesis 1: SFG curriculum will reduce the girls' feelings of anxiety and reduced depression.

Aim 2: To evaluate the impact of the SFG program on improving self-compassion within the participants

Hypothesis 2: SFG curriculum will improve self-compassion within the participants

Methods

Sample (n=3)
- High school girls of color, recruited from WRAP (Winners Reaching Amazing Potential) in Long Beach, Ca

Study Design
- Pre-experimental design: 5-week program, 2x/week, 1 ½ hours in person
- Example lessons: anatomy, nutrition, media manipulation, positive self-talk, resistance training.

Procedures
- Pre and Post quantitative data collected via iPad, IRB-approved electronic self-report survey
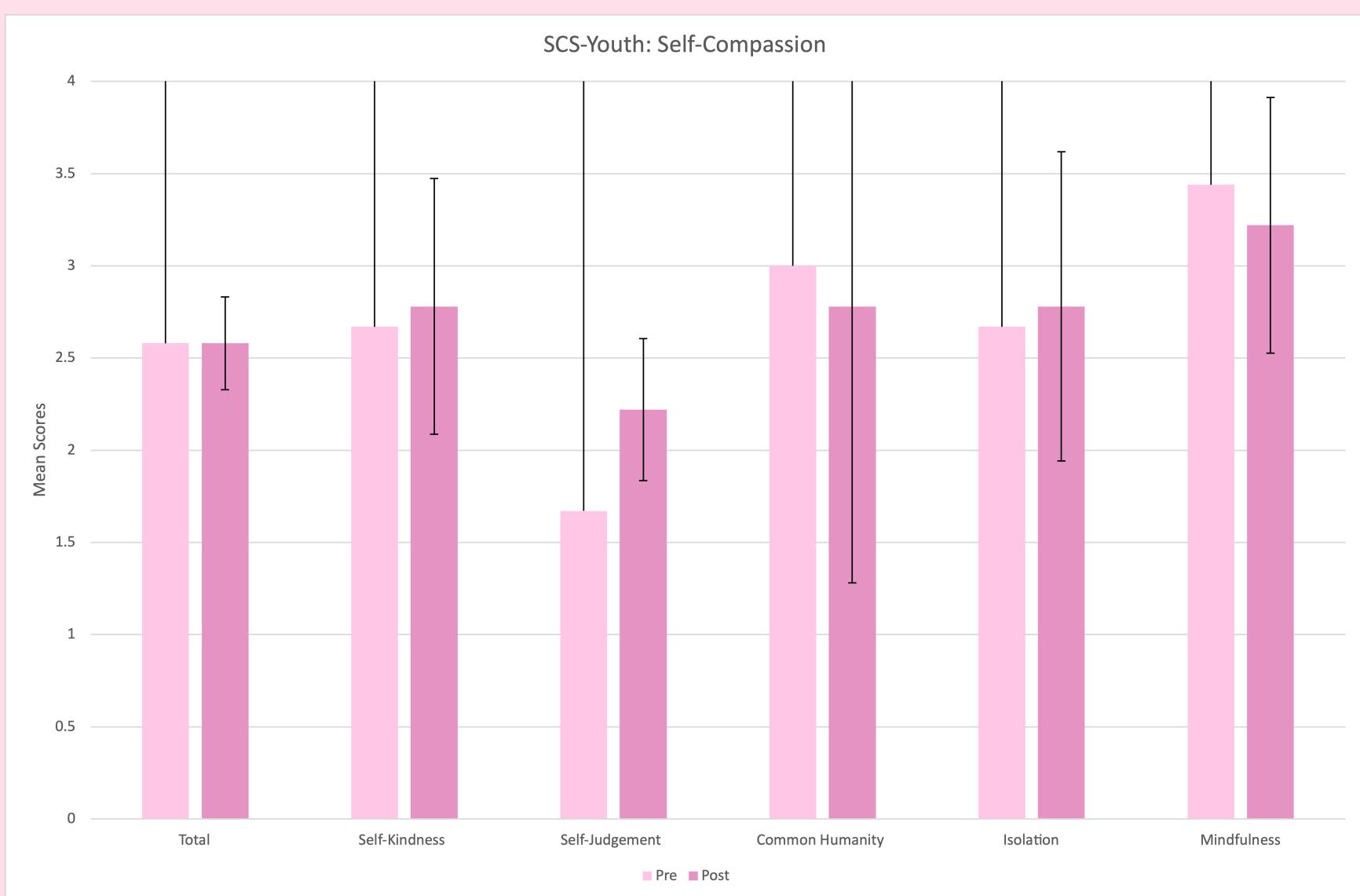- Parent consent and child assent

Measures
- The Four-Item Patient Health Questionnaire for Anxiety and Depression (PHQ-4): measures the frequency of feelings of anxiety and depression.[4] (e.g., Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge)
- The Seventeen-Item Self-Compassion Scale Youth Version (SCS-Youth) – measures the participant's level of self-compassion.[5] (e.g., I try to be kind and supportive to myself when I'm having a hard time)

Data Analysis
- SPSS v.28: Paired sample t-test, 0.05 significance level

Results

SCS-Youth: Self-Compassion

Results

- There were no significant improvements ($p<0.05$) in total anxiety and depression levels: pre (8.33±1.53) and post (9.0±3.0). However, there was a 7% reduction in feelings of anxiety and depression
- There were no significant improvements ($p<0.05$) in total self-compassion or any of the five subscales.
  - Self-kindness: pre (2.67±0.67) and post (2.78±0.69)
  - Self-judgement: pre (1.67±1.15) and post (2.22±0.39)
  - Common humanity: pre (3±1.15) and post (2.78±1.50)
  - Isolation: pre (2.67±0.58) and post (2.78±0.84)
  - Mindfulness: pre (3.44±1.02) and post (3.22±0.69)

Conclusion

- **Summary**: The SFG program did not significantly improve self-compassion, however the percent decrease in anxiety and depression is promising.
- **Limitations**: small sample size, based on self-report, post data collection time period
- **Future directions**: Future SFG programs should continue to administer the PHQ-4 and SCS-Youth scales and examine pre and post data differences.

Lessons Learned

- Quantitative data collection and analysis, how to review and utilize literature, importance of addressing psychosocial health among young girls

Acknowledgements

References