

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy in Social Anxiety. A randomized clinical trial investigating its effectiveness

Ariana-Lorena Gașpar¹, Lia-Ecaterina Oltean¹

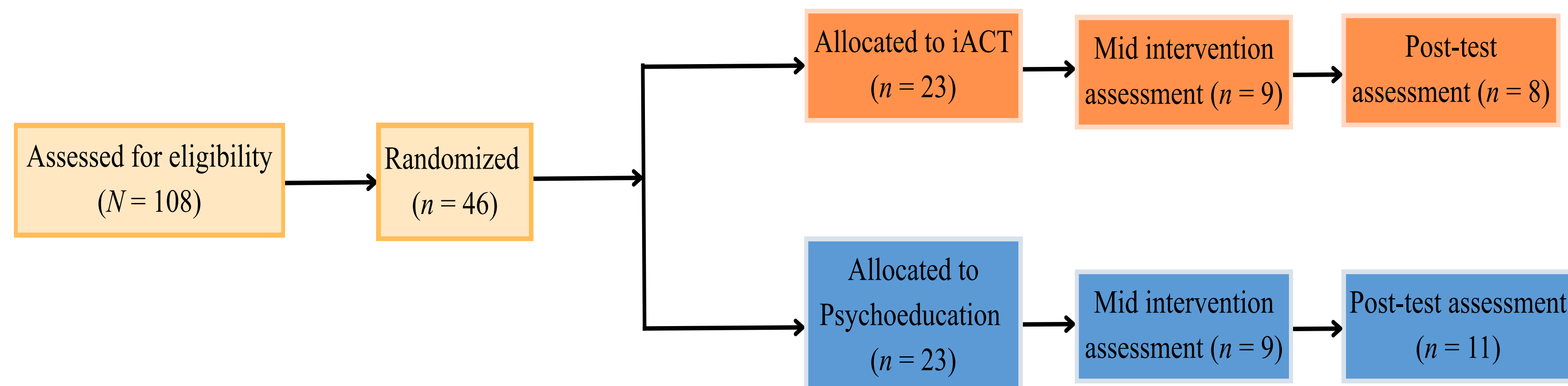
¹Department of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

BACKGROUND

- Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is a prevalent and costly mental condition that affects many adults. Current treatments such as CBT are effective but have important shortcomings (e.g., drop-out; Powell et al., 2019). Because of this, developing effective treatments is warranted. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) shows promising results in reducing social anxiety symptoms and shame. However, further research is needed, especially regarding change mechanisms.

METHODS

- $N = 46$, predominantly female (84.8%), highly educated (54.3%), aged between 19 and 43 years ($M = 25.70$).



RESULTS

Mixed ANOVA				
Variable	Interaction effect	Group effect	Time effect	
LSAS-SR	$F(1, 17) = 0.260$, $p = .617$	$F(1, 17) = 1.091$, $p = .311$	$F(1, 17) = 11.81$, $p = .003$	
EISS	$F(1,17) = 0.219$, $p = .646$	$F(1, 17) = 4.260$, $p = .055$	$F(1,17) = 8.950$, $p = .008$	
Mediation analyses				
Variable	<i>Indirect effect</i>	<i>Path a</i>	<i>Path b</i>	<i>Direct effect</i>
MPFI-24	CI [-5.244; 25.22]	$p = .250$	$p = .004$	$p = .836$
SCS	CI [-3.162; 25.23]	$p = .190$	$p = .106$	$p = .990$

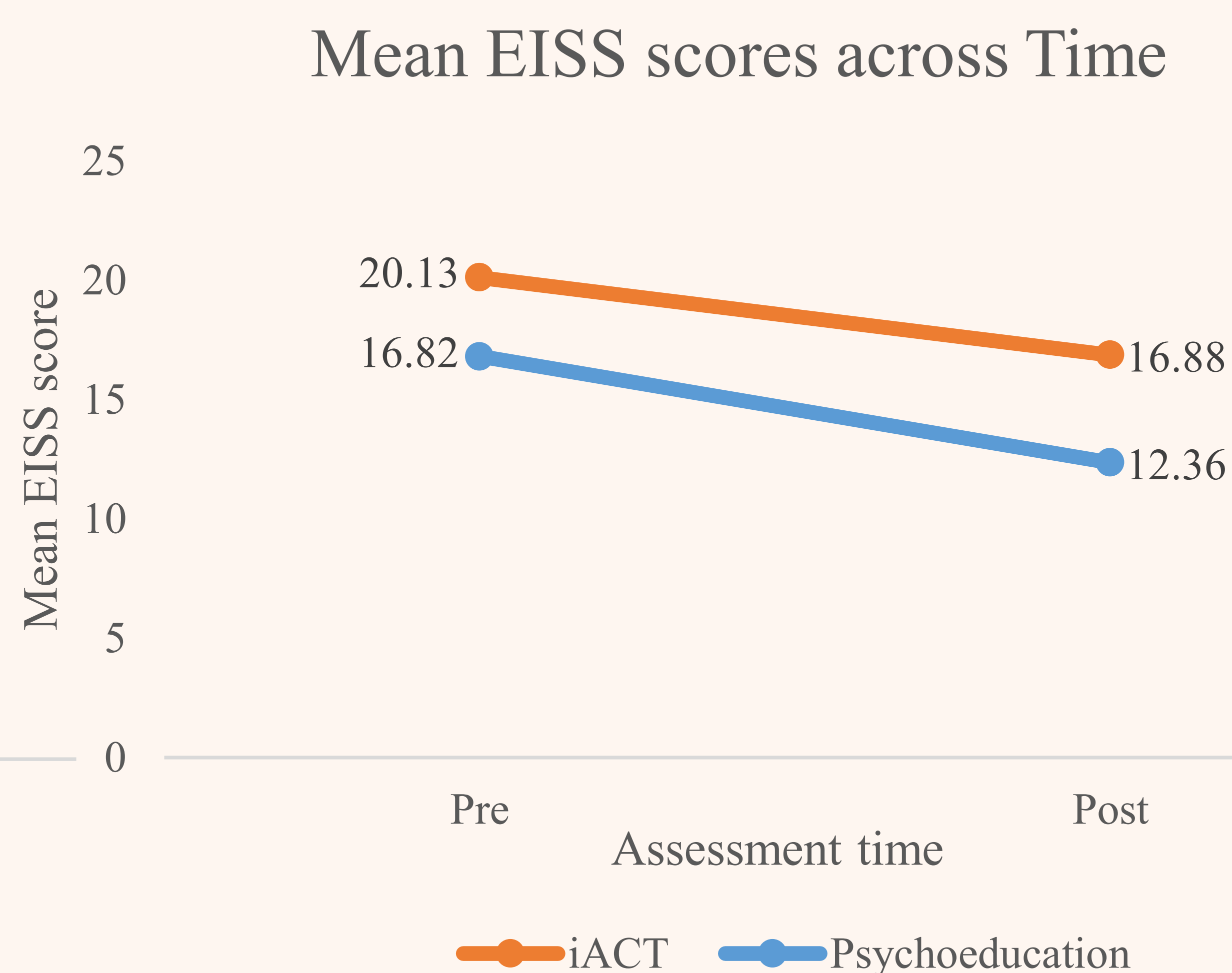
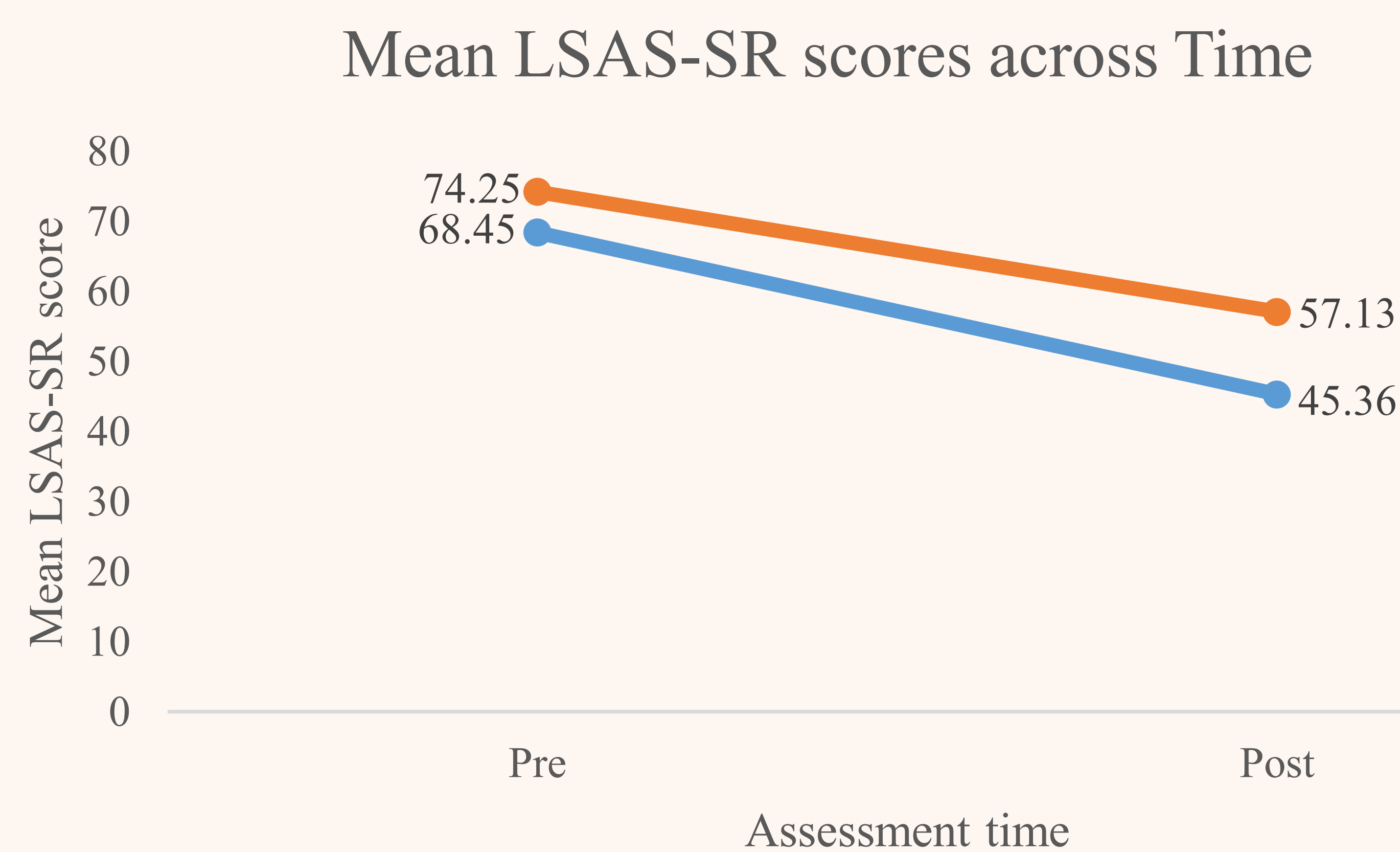
DISCUSSION

- These preliminary results indicate that two online, short (4 weeks) and easy to administer interventions might be effective in reducing social anxiety symptoms and shame.
- The absence of significant indirect effects highlights the need for further research on mechanisms of change.

Intervention effectiveness

Symptoms of social anxiety and shame decreased significantly over time, across conditions (iACT and Psychoeducation).

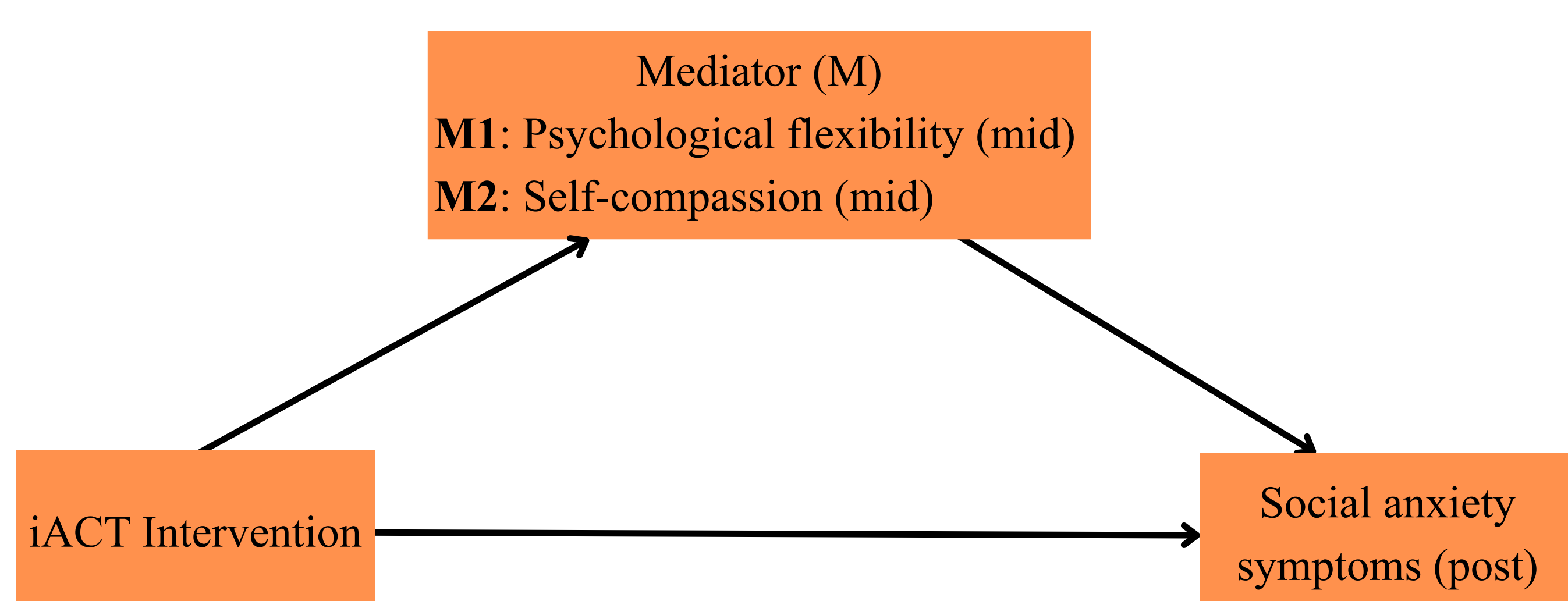
Findings were consistent across Completer and ITT analyses.



Mechanisms

— iACT — Psychoeducation

No indirect effects emerged, although greater psychological flexibility predicted lower social anxiety symptoms.



Note. Each mediator was tested in a simple mediation model.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

- The present study was an **RCT** investigating the effectiveness of an iACT intervention in comparison to an **active control** (Psychoeducation) and testing potential **change mechanisms**.
- Future studies could build on these findings by further investigating the observed effects in larger trials.

CONTACT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Email address: lorenaa.gaspar26@gmail.com

Supported by a Special Scholarship for Scientific Activity awarded by Babeș-Bolyai University through the STAR-UBB Institute. No conflicts of interest to declare.