

BackUp! A psychotherapeutic intervention for partners to people with acquired brain injury

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A manual based **virtual psychotherapeutic intervention is feasible and acceptable** for partners to people with acquired brain injury

1. Background

Emotional distress in partners is related to the fundamental life changes triggered by brain injury. However, supportive interventions are limited, and clinical experiences show partners can be difficult to engage in interventions despite a co-existing need for more supportive services.

2. Aim

To investigate the acceptability and feasibility of a manual based psychotherapeutic intervention (BackUp!©) delivered in an online format to partners to people with acquired brain injury.

Participants

Female (n)	5/5
Age (range)	40 - 65 years
Relationship (duration)	6.5 - 33 years
Time since injury (partner)	0.5 - 3 years
Children living at home (n)	4/5



5 partners to people with acquired brain injury were recruited for the pilot project

3. Methods

Participants were recruited from two in- and outpatient rehabilitation centres.

Participants completed self-report measures pre- and post-intervention:

- Well-being (WHO-5)
- Perceived stress (PSS)
- Self-compassion (SCS)

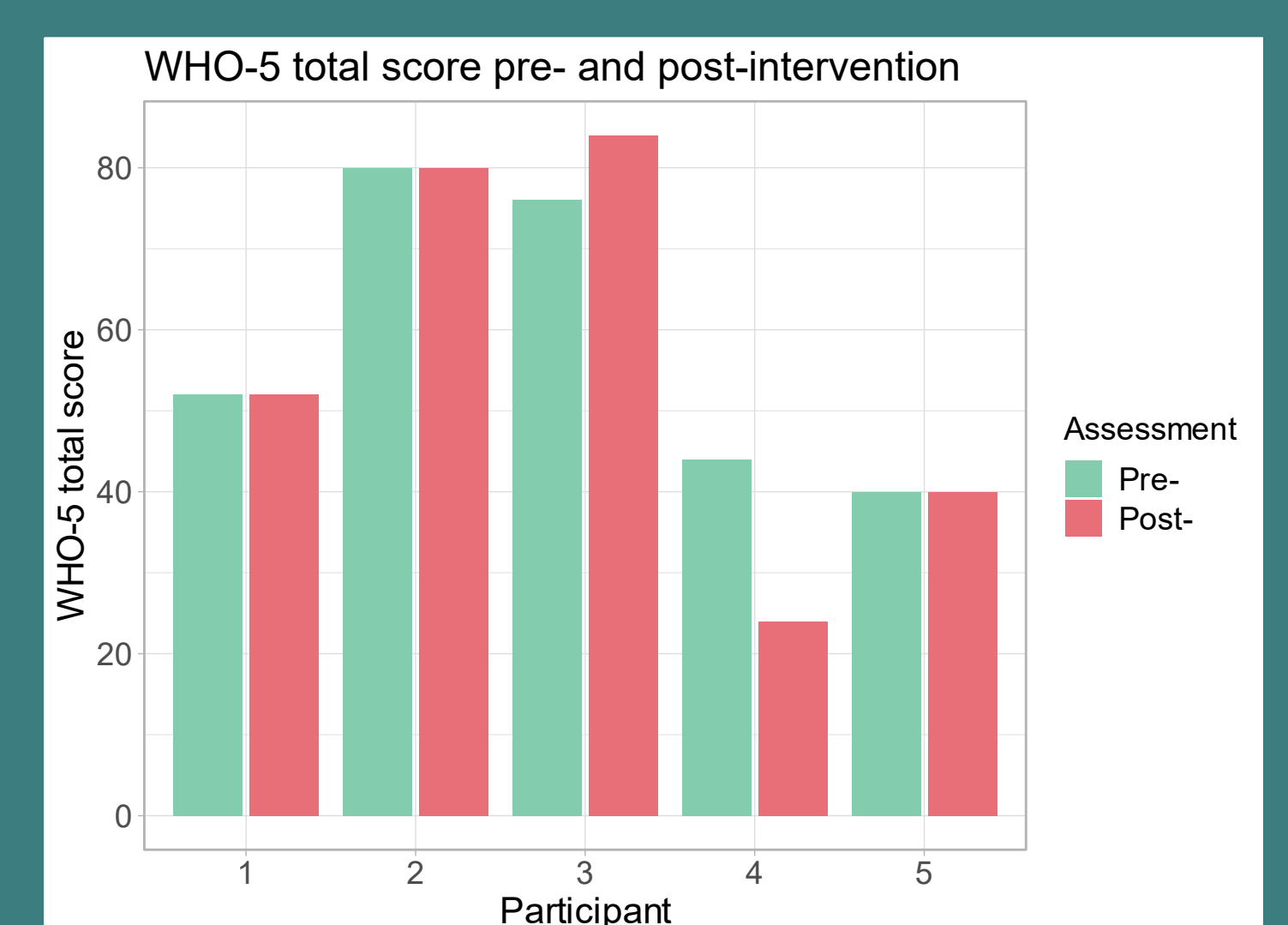
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants at the end of the study.

4. Intervention

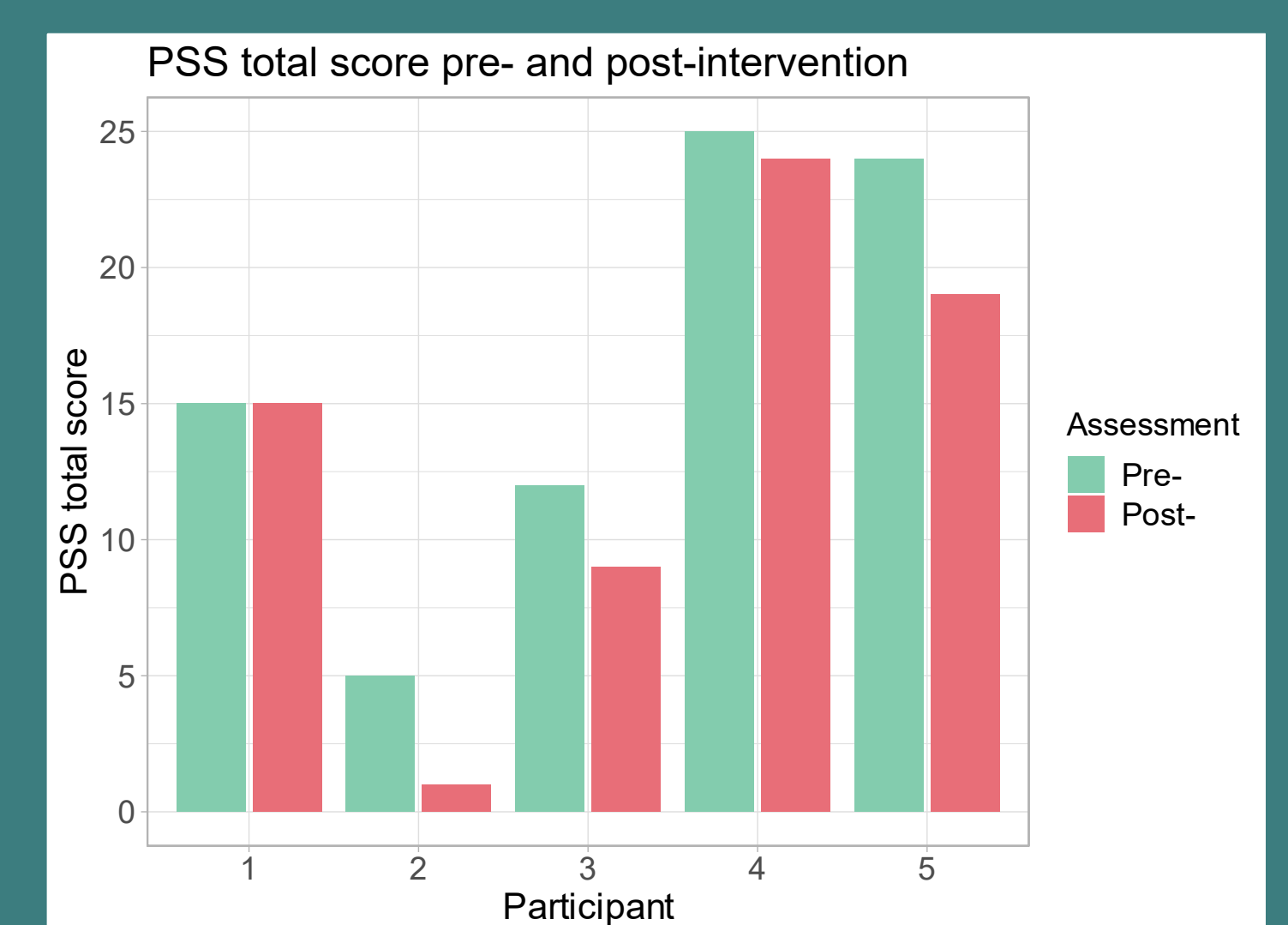
BackUp!© is based on third-wave cognitive behavioral therapy and narrative therapy.

Delivered in 6 weekly online sessions of 90 minutes with a specified theme.

- Session themes
1. Psychoeducation on brain injury
 2. Emotional reactions
 3. Cognition, behavior and emotion
 4. Self-compassion
 5. Relational changes
 6. Identity reconstruction



Total scores on WHO-5 Well-Being Index pre- and post-intervention (scores <50 indicate an increased risk of stress and depression).



Total scores on Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) pre- and post-intervention (scores >18 indicate a high level of stress).

5. Preliminary results and evaluation

Alleviation of loneliness: Participants shared that group participation alleviated loneliness and offered a space for self-care.

Dialogue versus exercises: Facilitated conversation rather than exercises were preferred by participants as the latter could be performed at home on an individual basis between sessions.

Recruitment and matching: Having things in common such as being a parent and partner were important to identify with and learn from each other.

Format: Online therapy requires specific skills from the therapist, and participants found small groups of 3-4 particularly rewarding.

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