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Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the skills-based *Adventures in Marriage (AIM)* program, developed by Live the Life, and its ability to improve relationship functioning. Findings showed that partner trust and affection, intimacy, conflict management, and high-risk conflict were significantly improved after participating in the marriage education program. The implications of this study extend to family policy, advocating for increased funding to support marriage education programs, as well as the value of skills-based couple relationship education programming. These initiatives are crucial for promoting family well-being and stability.

Introduction

Marriage education programming is an accessible tool for helping couples navigate the complexities of modern relationships. Previous literature has demonstrated the positive impacts of marriage education on improving marital relationship quality. The AIM program empowers couples with essential tools for navigating adversity and fostering enduring, healthy relationships. The program includes evidence-informed content and structured communication and conflict resolution skills, utilizing in-session and out-of-session skills practice supported by trained coaches. The AIM program “goes beyond” traditional marriage education by incorporating these innovative strategies during interactive workshops tailored to support the unique needs of couples.

Methods

Analyses: Paired Samples t-tests

Sample: The sample included 1,948 married different-sex couples who participated in a 12-hour skill-based AIM program and completed pre- and post-surveys.

Measures:

- 1) **Partner Trust/Affection:** 5 items were used.
- 2) **Partner Intimacy:** 3 items were included.
- 3) **Conflict Management:** 7 items were used for positive conflict management and 5 items were used for negative conflict management.
- 4) **High-Risk Conflicts:** 4 items were used to measure “Partner blame” and “I blame”.

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Results

1. **Partner trust and affection** exhibited substantial enhancement after participating in the AIM program, indicating a positive shift in emotional dynamics within couples.
2. **Partner intimacy** was significantly improved for couples who participated in AIM, contributing to a deeper emotional connection.
3. **Positive conflict management** behaviors significantly increased, and **negative conflict management** behaviors significantly decreased, demonstrating couples’ improved ability to resolve and manage conflict in a healthy way.
4. **High-risk conflicts** significantly dropped after participating in the AIM program, supporting healthier relationship behaviors.

Implications

1. The positive outcomes found in this study contribute to a broader understanding of the value of skills-based marriage education programs and emphasize their potential to foster resilient couple relationships in an ever-evolving societal landscape.
2. An emphasis on instructor-led interactive couple relationship education with coaching support is a promising practice for better-equipping couples with skills to improve healthy relationship behaviors.
3. This study also has important implications for family policy, as it further justifies the need for increased funding to support marriage education.

Acknowledgments

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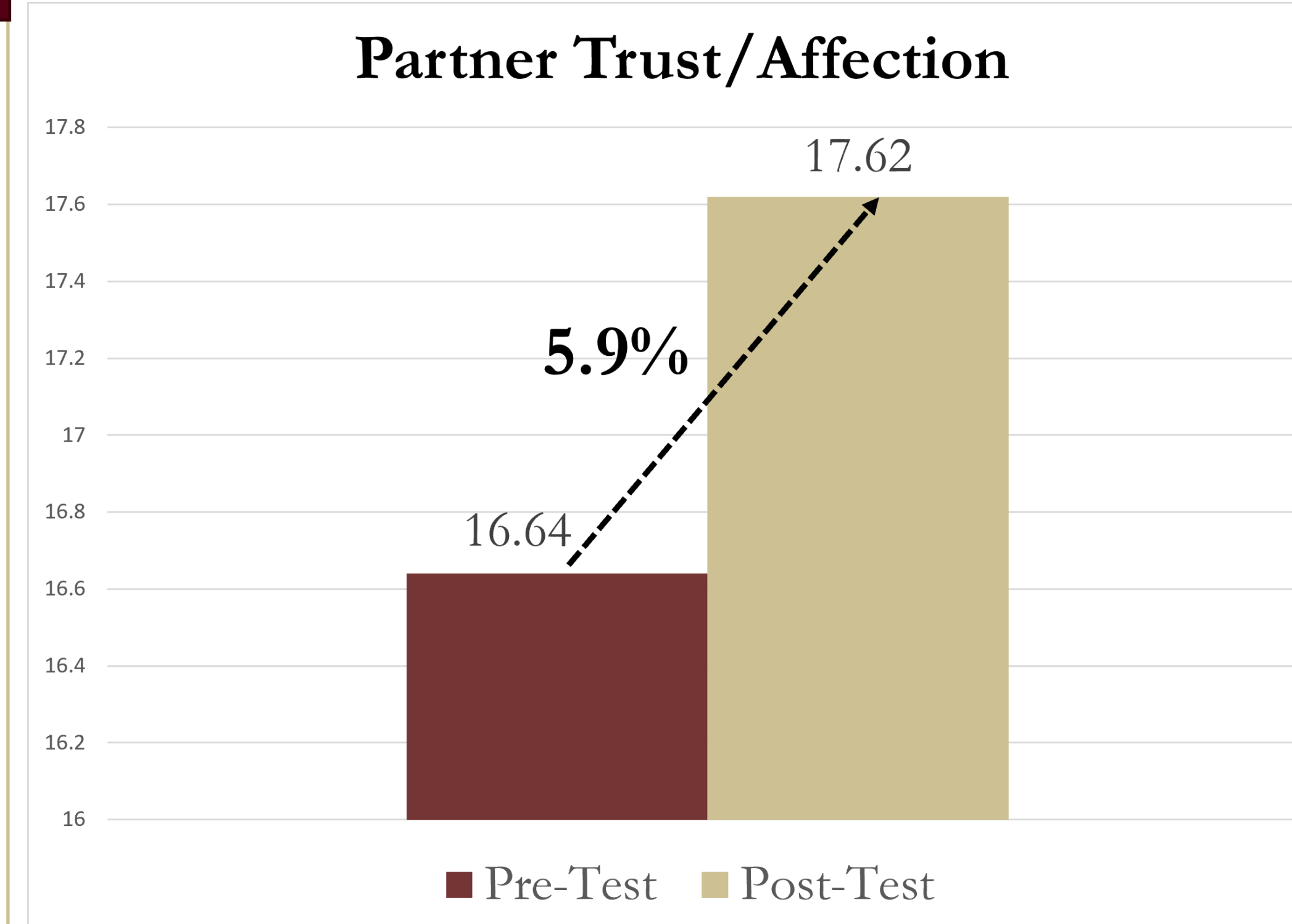


Figure 1. Partner Trust/Affection Mean Change ($t=-20.74, p<.001$)

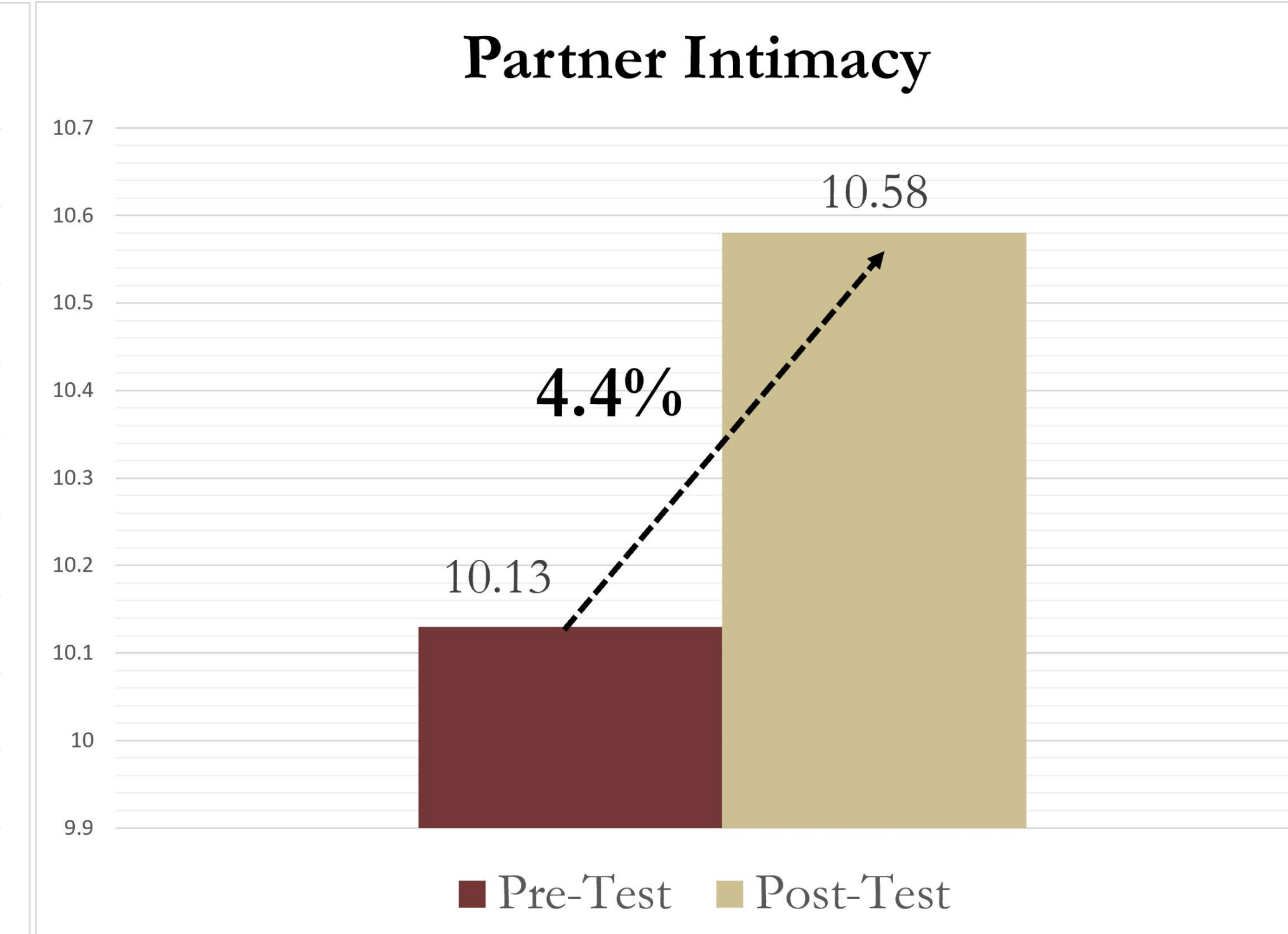


Figure 2. Partner Intimacy Mean Change ($t=-14.23, p<.001$)

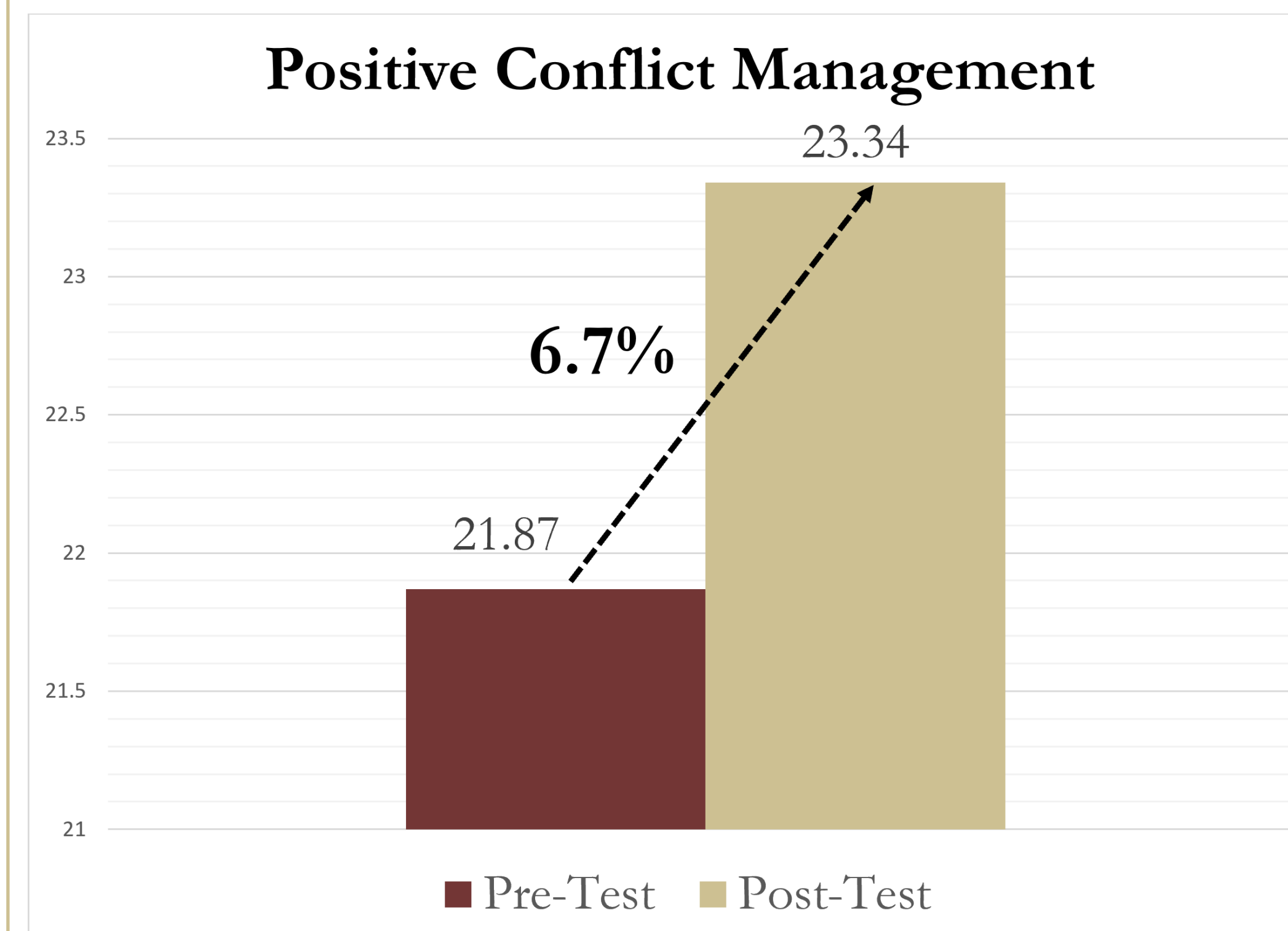


Figure 3. Positive Conflict Management Mean Change ($t=-20.91, p<.001$)

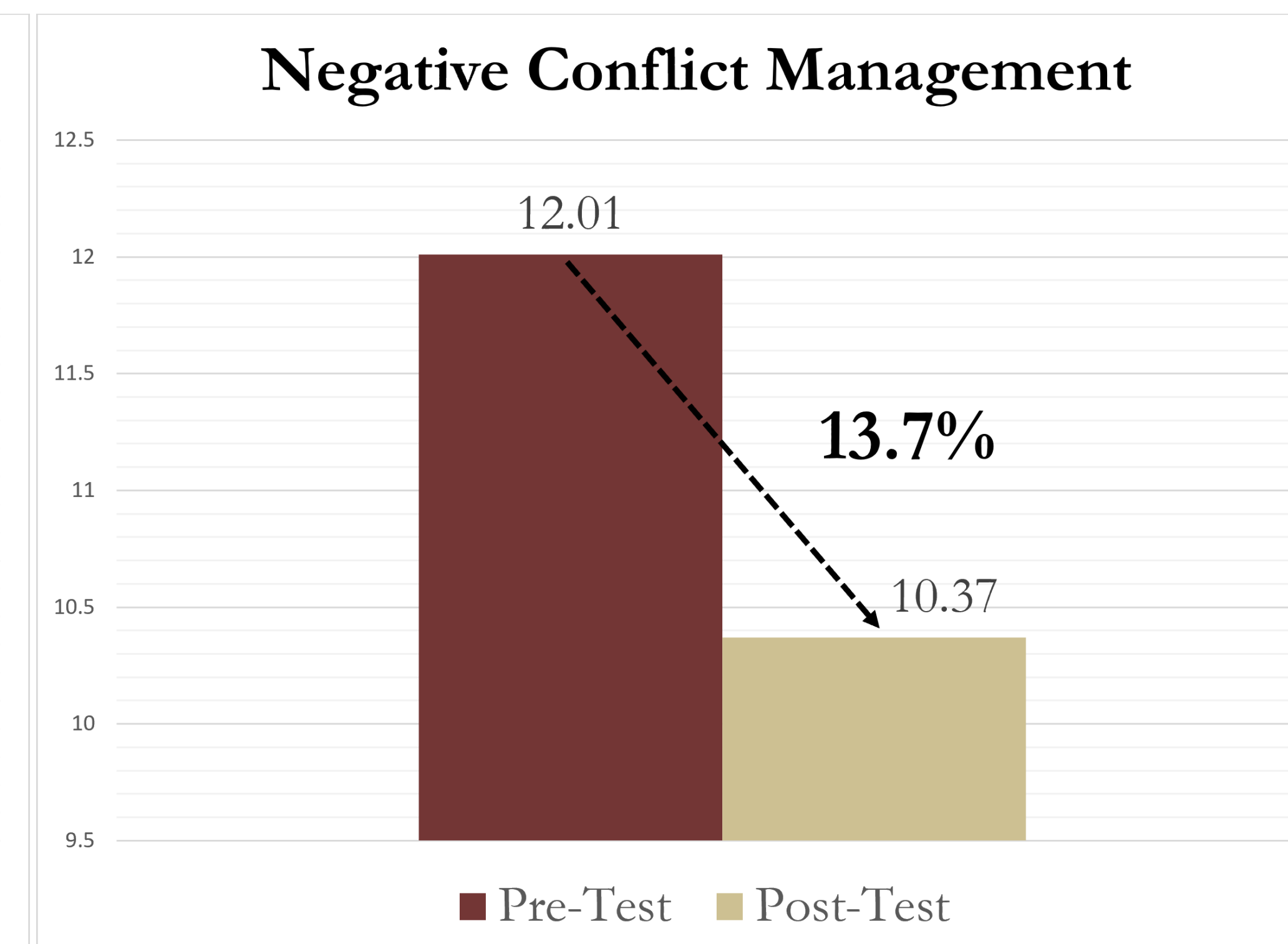


Figure 4. Negative Conflict Management Mean Change ($t= 24.89, p<.001$)

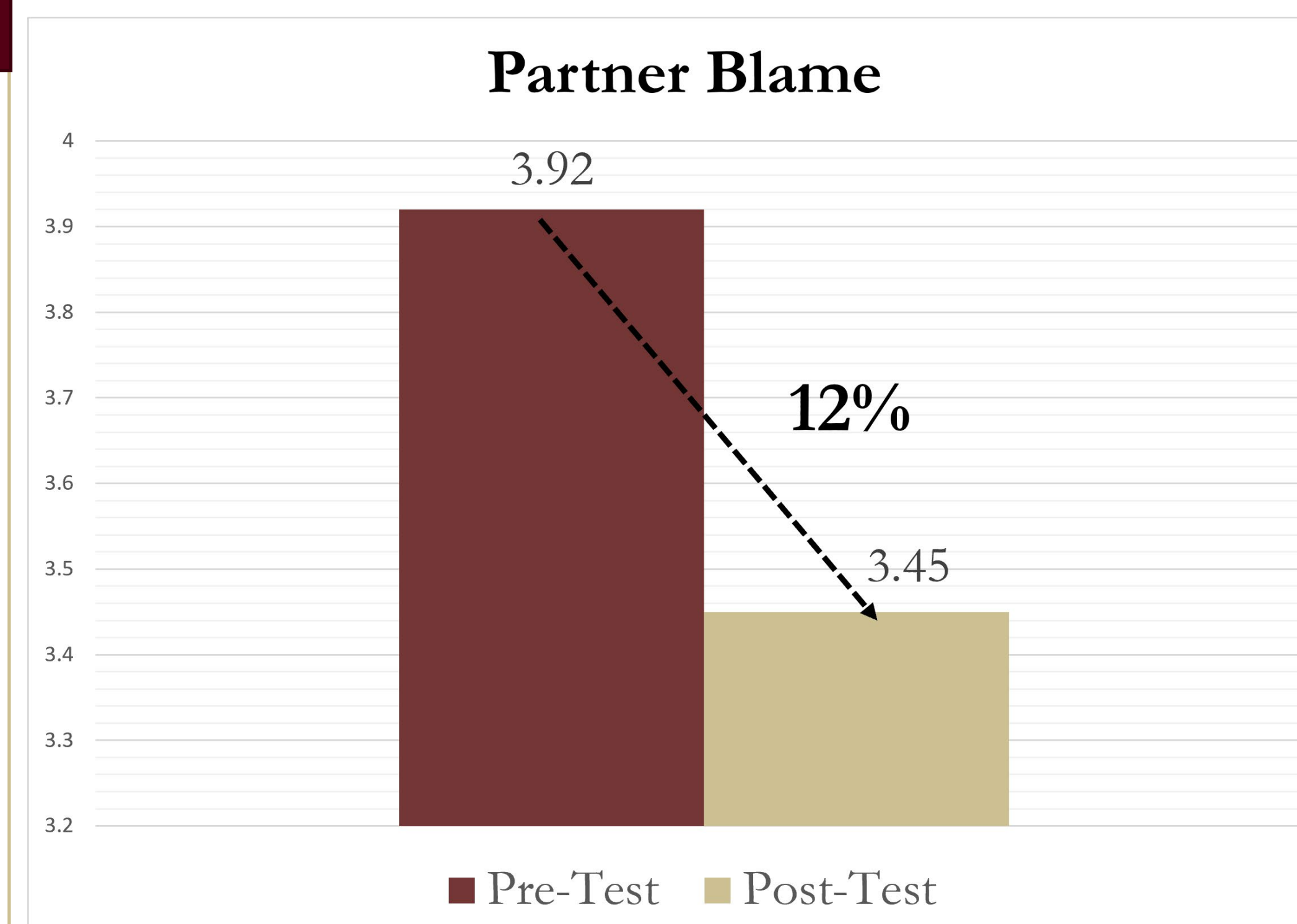


Figure 5. Partner Blame Mean Change ($t=15.63, p<.001$)

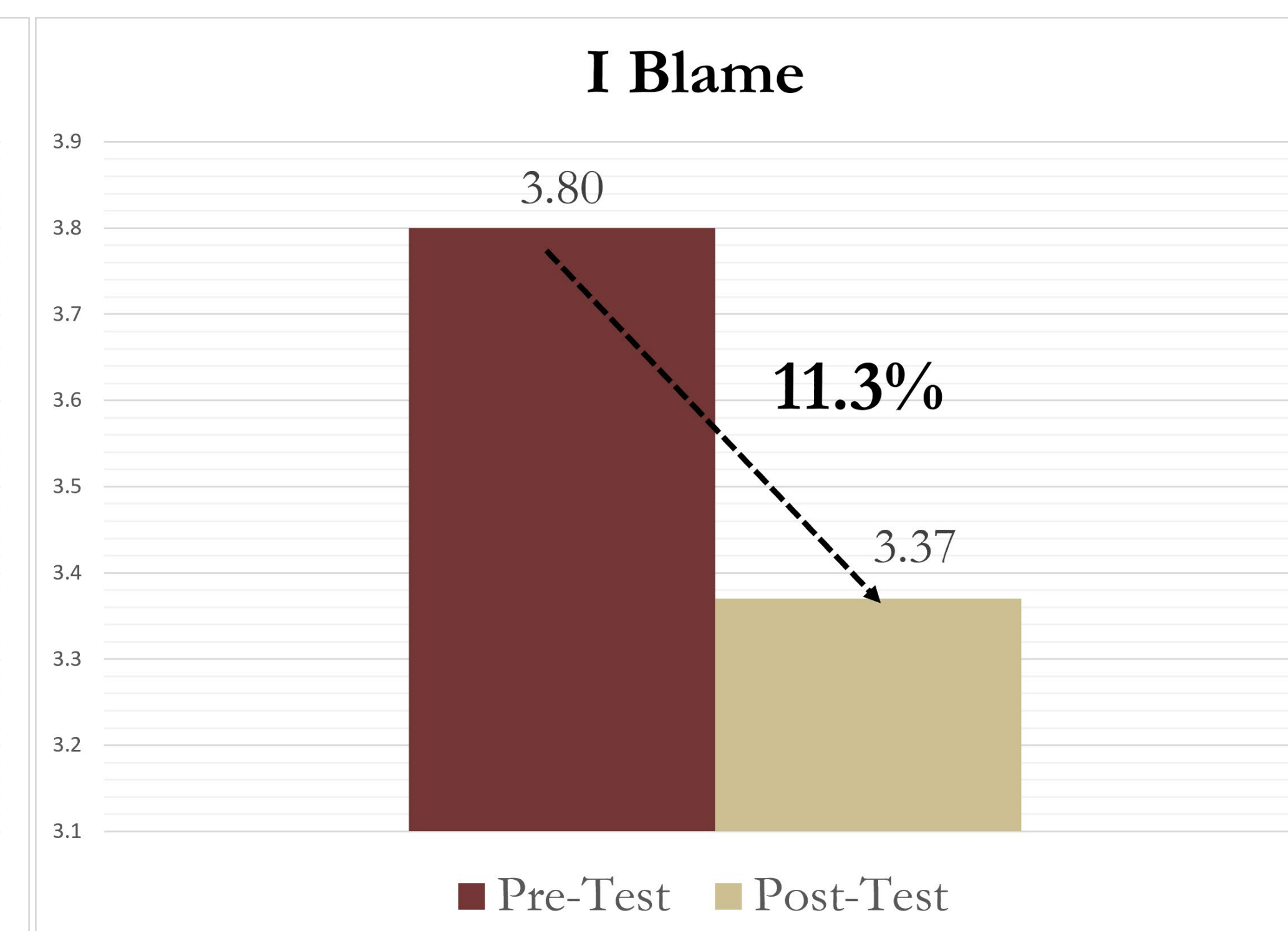


Figure 6. I Blame Mean Change ($t=14.67, p<.001$)