The Effectiveness of an Early Childhood Development Training Intervention for Caregivers of HIV-Affected Households in South Africa

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Introduction

- Early childhood development (ECD) is an essential phase for overall development in life.

- Children affected by HIV/AIDS are particularly vulnerable to deficiencies in ECD due to illness, ill or absent parents, & overcrowded orphanages.

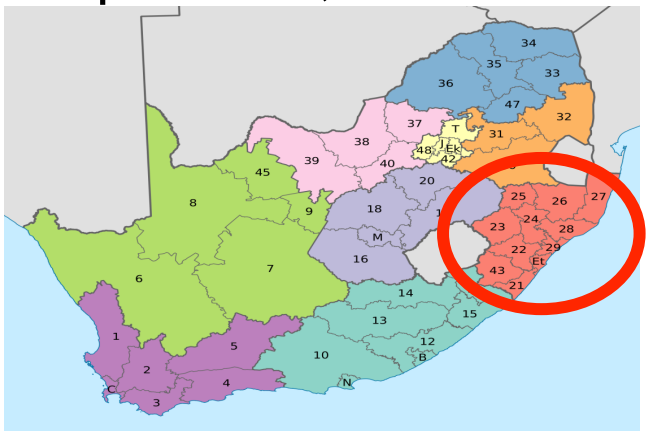
- South Africa has the highest numbers of HIV-infected and affected children worldwide.

- There is a lack of pre-school education in South Africa, with 70% of children not able to access formal ECD services.

- **Aim of study**: to evaluate the effectiveness of an ECD training intervention for caregivers in improving ECD for HIV-affected children.

Methods

- Intervention performed by social auxiliary workers (SAWs) in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa



antenatal HIV prevalence 40.1%

- SAWs performed regular home visits and assessed the household regarding factors affecting ECD.

- Caregivers counselled re parenting skills, early learning for children, health & safety, & nutrition.

- SAWs also assisted with securing child support grants, birth certification and provided counselling re immunization.

Primary outcomes

Home assessments were performed before and after the intervention by SAWs.

1. **Mother-child interaction assessment score (21 points)**
2. **Caregiver coping assessment score (36 points)**
3. **Hygiene and safety in the home assessment score (16 points)**.

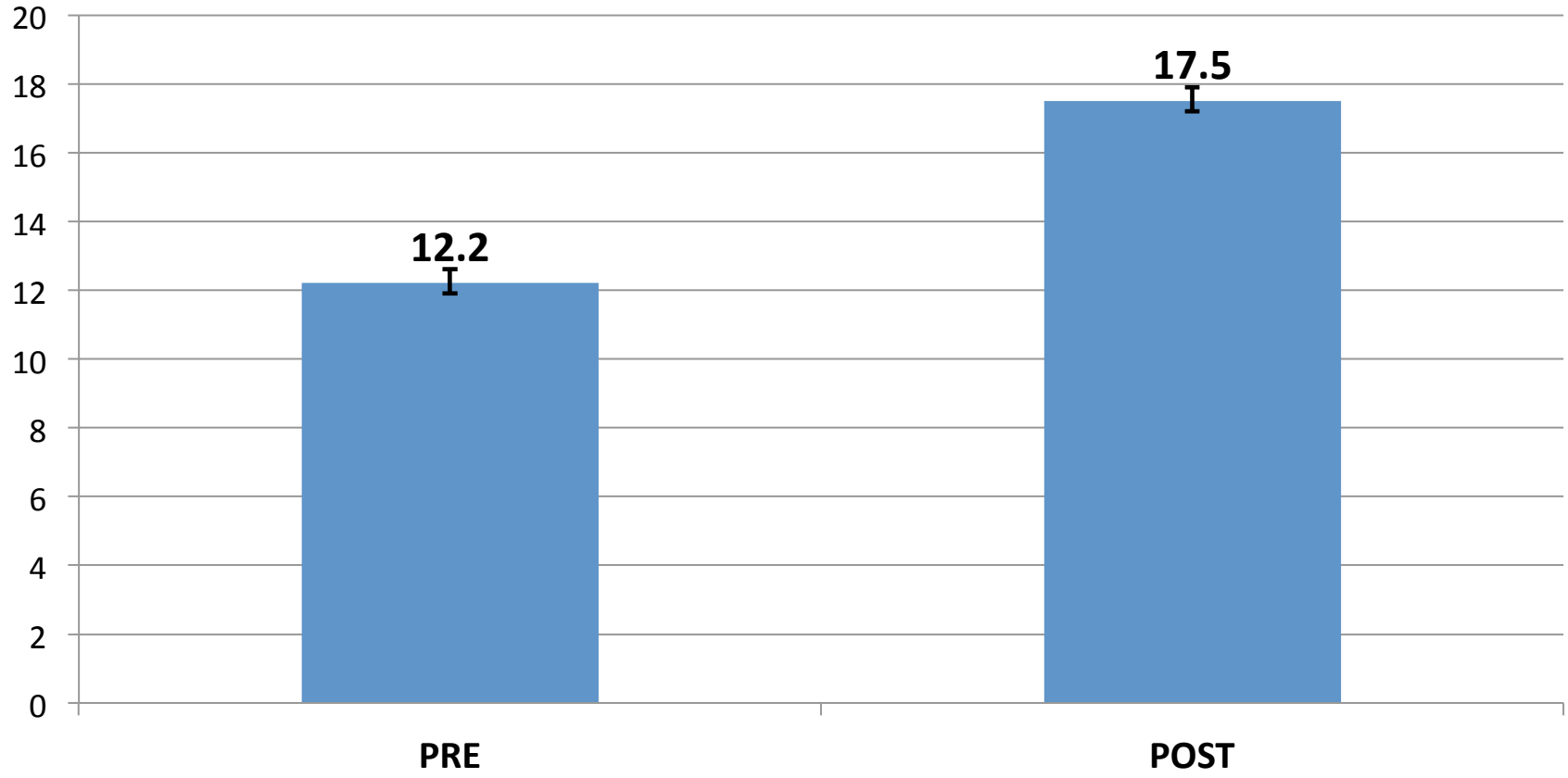
- **Secondary outcomes:**
  1. Children's immunization status,
  2. Receipt of birth certificates
  3. Receipt of child support grants
  4. Children's weight-for-age Z scores.

- Scores compared before and after the intervention (with the two-sample test of proportions and paired t-tests).

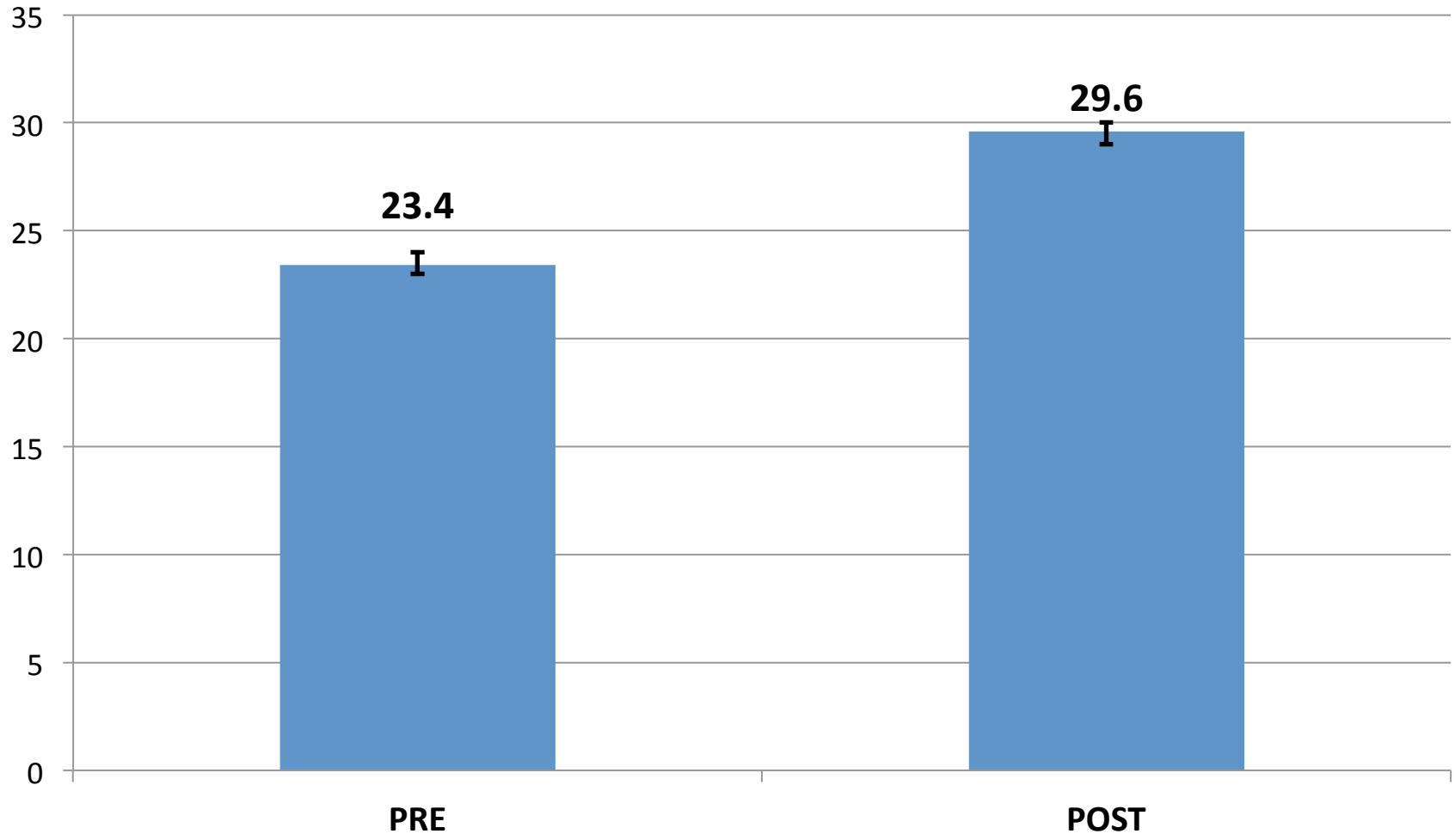
Results:

A total of 802 children from 593 carers were included

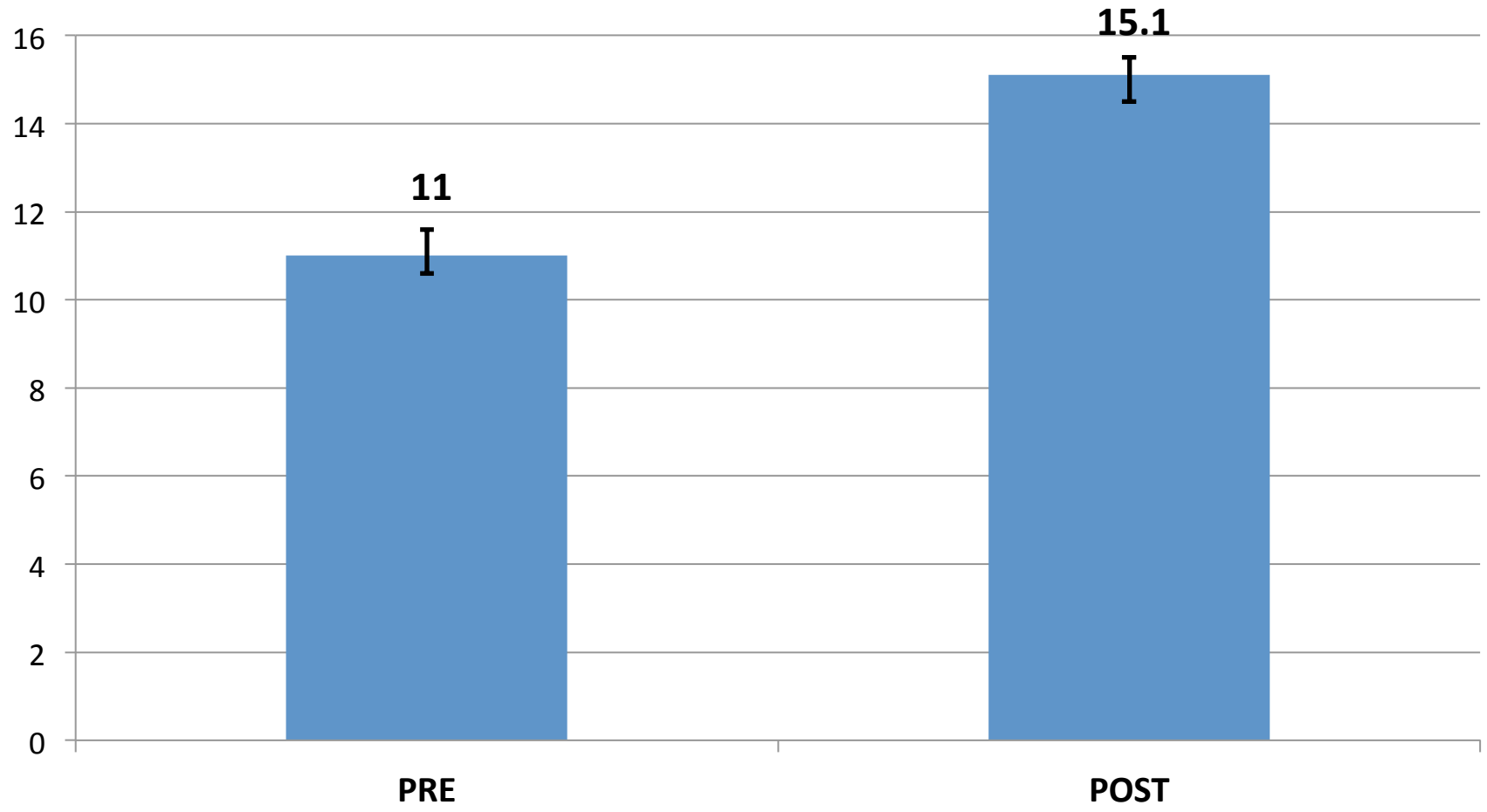
Mean mother child interaction scores
43% increase; P<0.0001



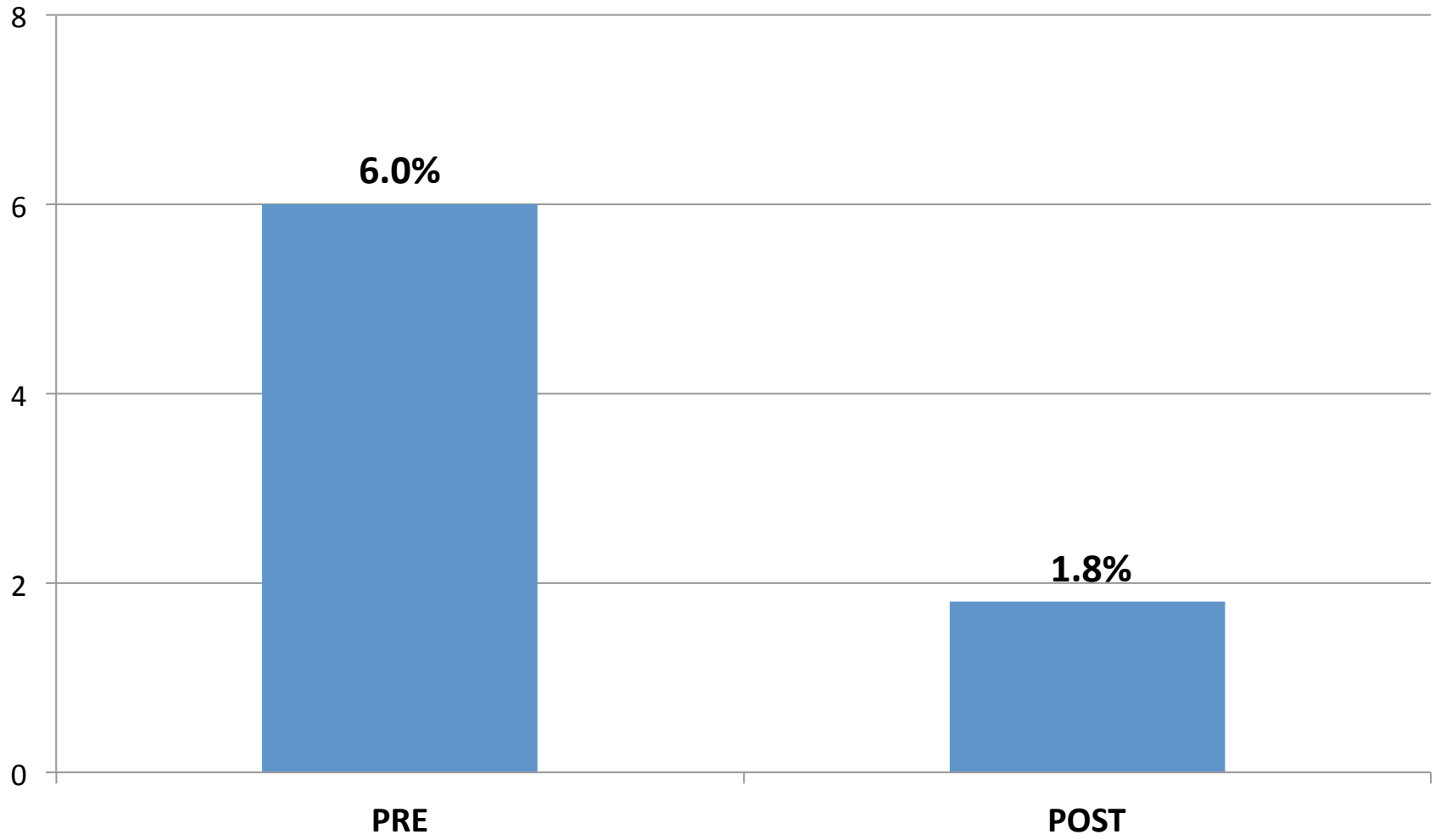
Mean carer coping score
26% increase; P<0.0001



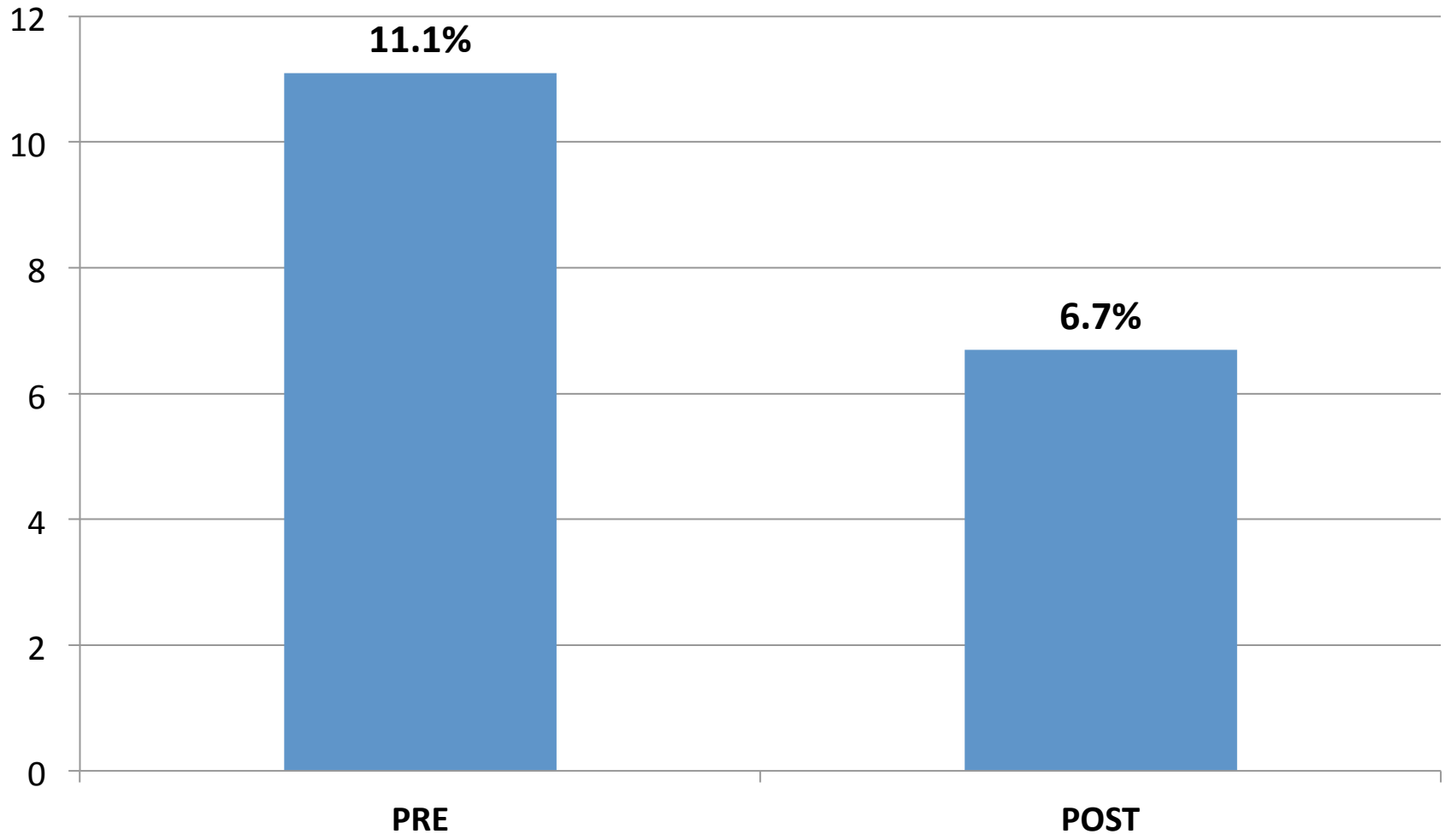
Mean home environment and safety scores
37% increase; P<0.0001



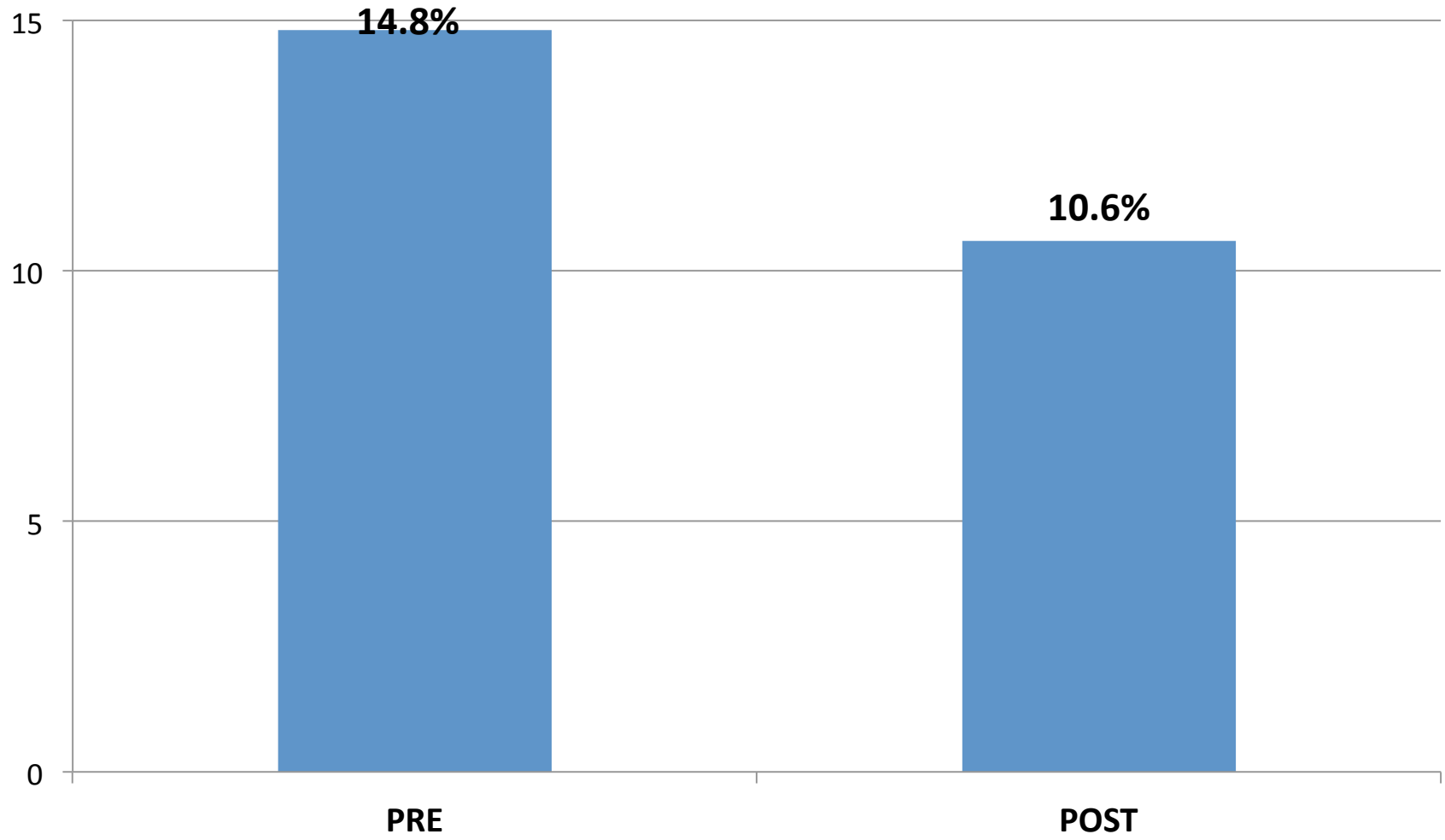
% children not fully immunized
70% improvement; P=0.033



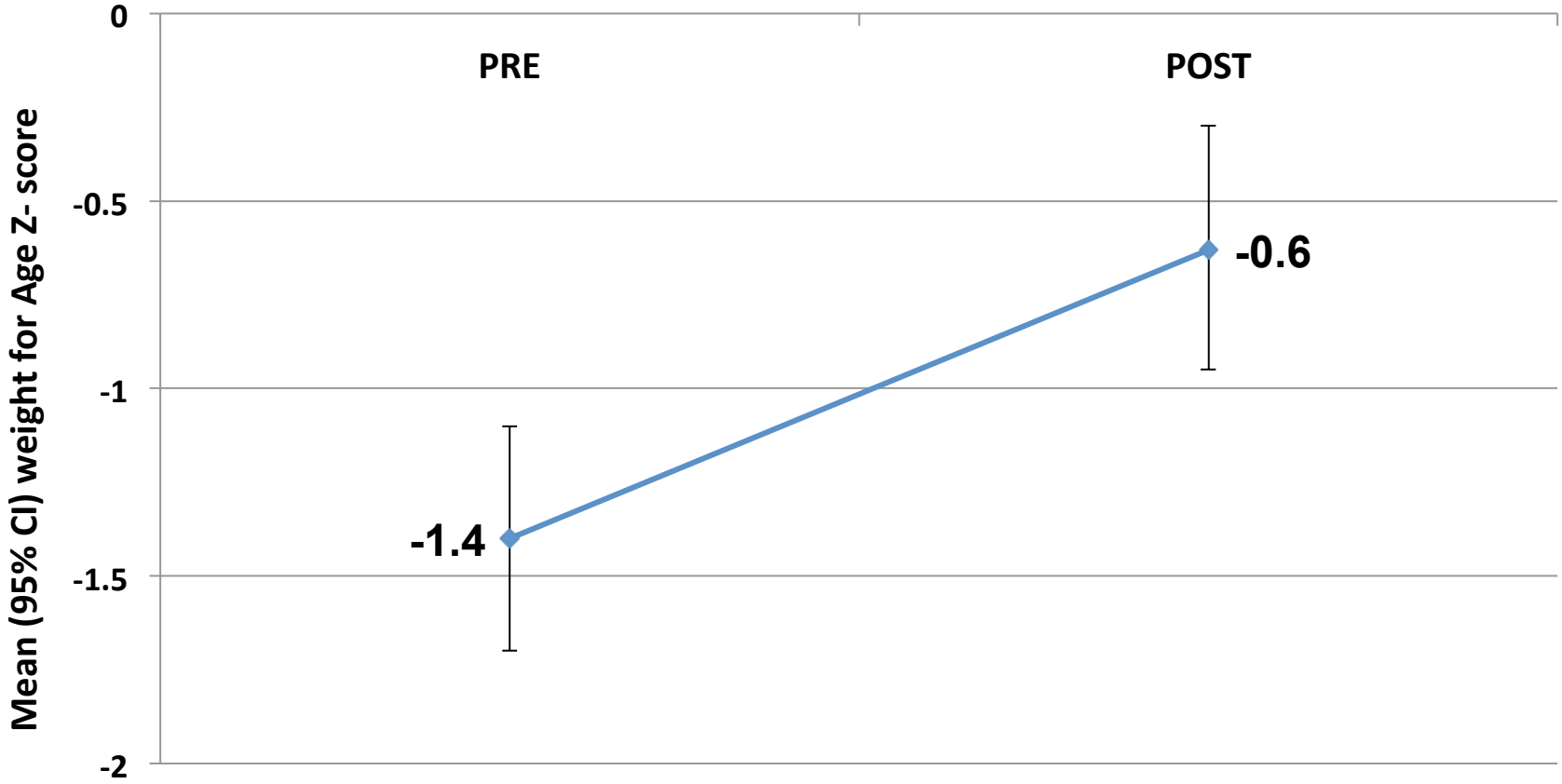
% children without birth certificates
43% improvement; P=0.035



% families not receiving child support grants
29% improvement; P=0.076



Mean weight-for-age Z-scores increased from 8th to 26th weight centile over a median of 6.5 months; P<0.0001



Proportion with moderate and severe underweight decreased from 34.6% to 20.2% (P=0.020)

Conclusions

ECD training for caregivers of HIV-affected children improved:

- mother-child interaction
- caregiver coping mechanisms
- hygiene and safety in the home

and:

- increased access to birth certification
- child support grants and immunizations
- reduced the proportion of children with moderate & severe underweight

Thank you

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