

The Y-Worri Pilot Project: e-couch Anxiety and Worry Program in Schools

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Background

- Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders diagnosed in adolescents.
- School-based anxiety prevention programs have the potential to improve the mental health of adolescents through the provision of cognitive and behavioural skills training and psychoeducation.
- The delivery of these programs via the Internet may be appealing to adolescents and schools due to their increased anonymity, confidentiality and ease of delivery.

Aim

- To undertake a feasibility trial of a self-directed Internet-based anxiety prevention program in an adolescent school-based population to ascertain its acceptability and potential effectiveness in reducing and preventing symptoms of anxiety.

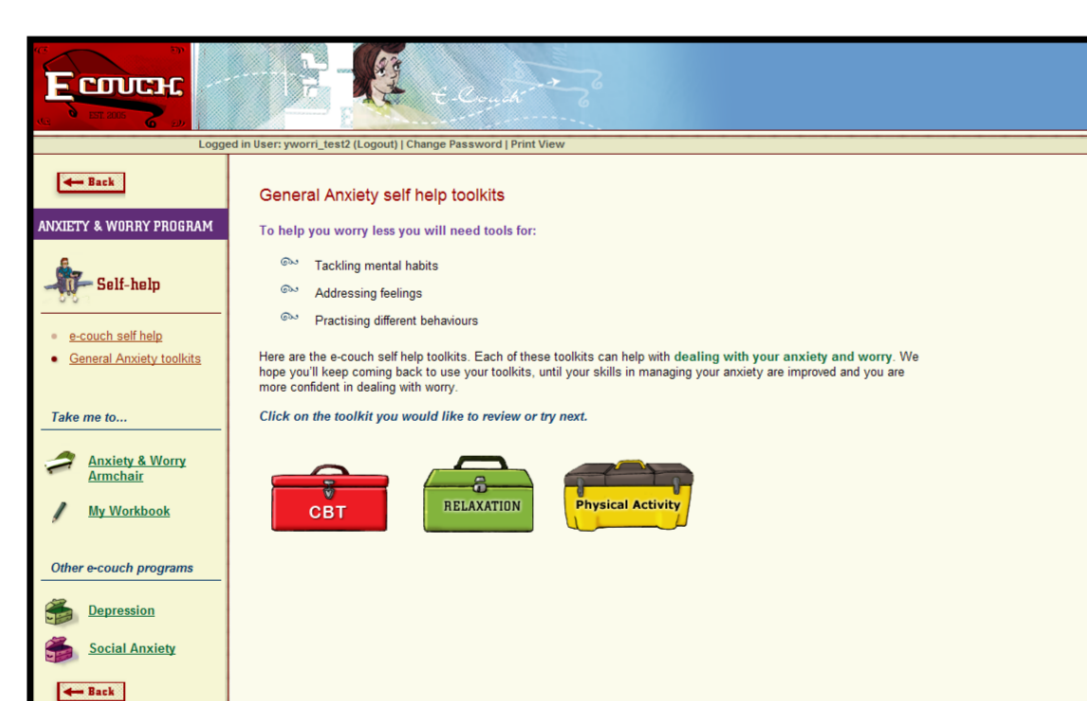
e-couch Anxiety and Worry Program

- The e-couch Anxiety and Worry program (www.ecouch.anu.edu.au) is a free, interactive Internet-based program designed to prevent and reduce symptoms of generalised anxiety.



- The program has four core components:

- **Psychoeducation**
- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy**
- **Relaxation**
- **Physical Activity**



- Each component of the program includes information, animated demonstrations, quizzes, and exercises.

Method

- A randomised controlled trial was conducted with 3 schools located in South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.
- 225 students (20% male and 80% female) aged between 13 and 17 years ($M = 15.00$ years, $SD = 1.08$) participated in the study.
- Classes within each school were randomly allocated to the intervention condition ($n = 123$), which received the e-couch Anxiety and Worry program over 6 weeks, or to the wait-list control condition ($n = 102$), which continued usual classroom activities.
- All participants were invited to complete a pre-intervention, post-intervention and 3-month follow-up questionnaire that included measures of generalised anxiety, anxiety sensitivity, and mental well-being.
- Mixed-model repeated measures ANOVA were used to assess the effect of the e-couch Anxiety and Worry program on generalised anxiety, anxiety sensitivity, and mental well-being.

Results

Generalised Anxiety

- The overall interaction of condition and occasion was not significant $F(2, 257.8) = 0.34, p > .05$.

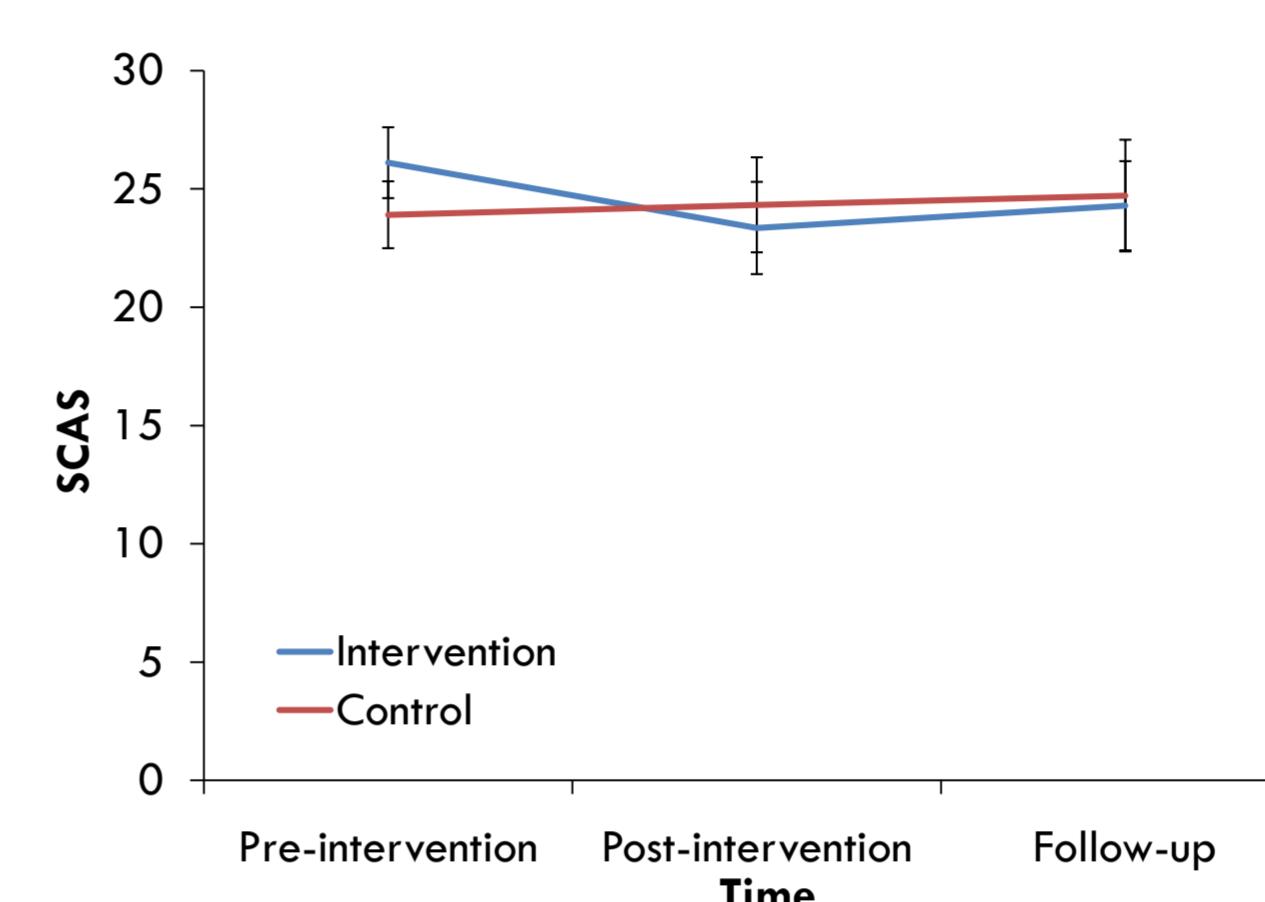


Figure 1. Observed mean SCAS scores.

Anxiety Sensitivity

- The overall interaction of condition and occasion was not significant $F(2, 272.8) = 0.97, p > .05$.

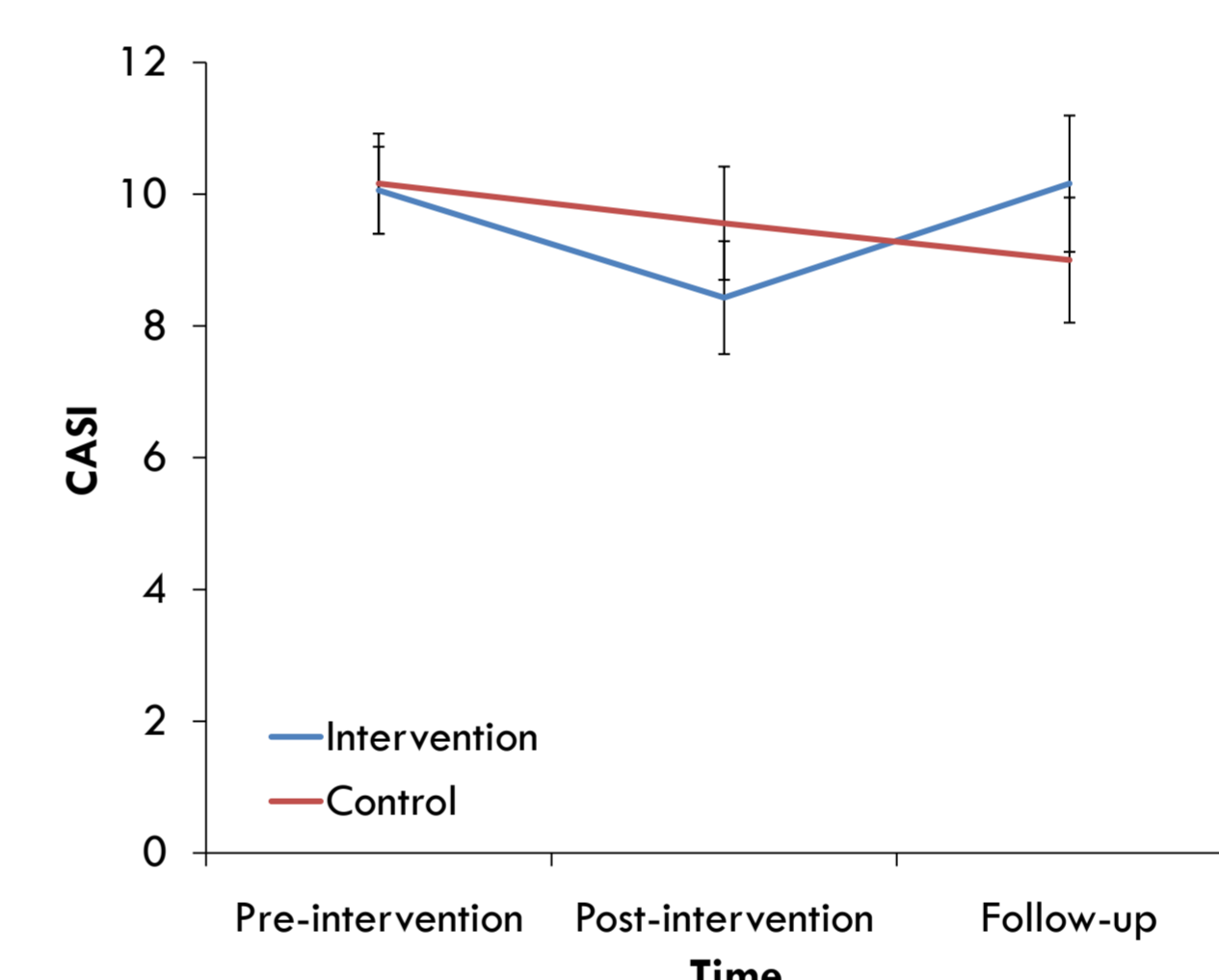


Figure 2. Observed mean CASI scores.

Mental well-being

- The overall interaction of condition and occasion was not significant $F(2, 270.5) = 1.92, p > .05$.

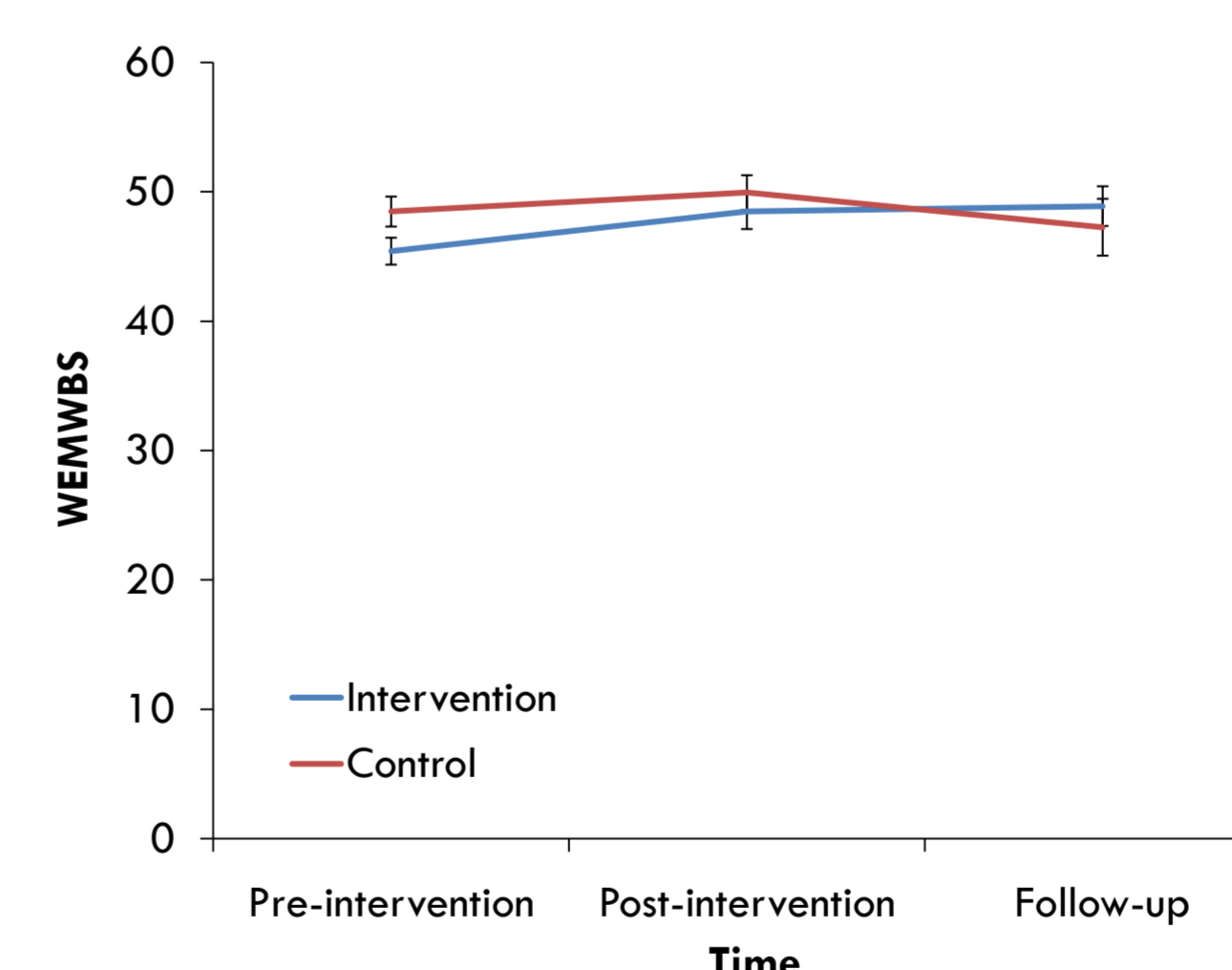


Figure 3. Observed mean WEMWBS scores.

Conclusion

- It is feasible to deliver the e-couch Anxiety and Worry Program in the classroom.
- The program was acceptable to staff and students, with ample time provided to complete the intervention each week.
- Based on the results of the current study, the proposed large-scale RCT will require a total sample size of at least 500 students to have sufficient power to detect intervention effects.
- Missing data was a significant problem in the current trial. Trial protocols will be reviewed to improve implementation and adherence.