



Triadic Dual Language Storybook Reading for Adjustment of Afghan Refugee Children



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Introduction

- Global displacement has exceeded 100 million (UNHCR, 2024), impacting children's development and family well-being (Murray, 2019).
- Refugee children face limited access to quality education, hindering critical aspects of their developmental domains (Slovodin et al., 2015)
- Maternal isolation and emotional distress negatively affect parenting and child outcomes (Akesson & Sousa, 2020; Eruyar et al., 2018; Wachter et al., 2022).
- Early interventions remain limited, as most target school-age and youth populations (Foka et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2023).
- Few family-centered, informal, and RCT-based interventions exist for refugee populations (Pontuga et al., 2022).

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to develop, implement, and evaluate a non-formal short-term dual language storybook intervention for Afghan children (ages 3-5) and their mothers to enhance social-emotional competence, second language acquisition, parent-child relationships, and family well-being.

Methods

Participant

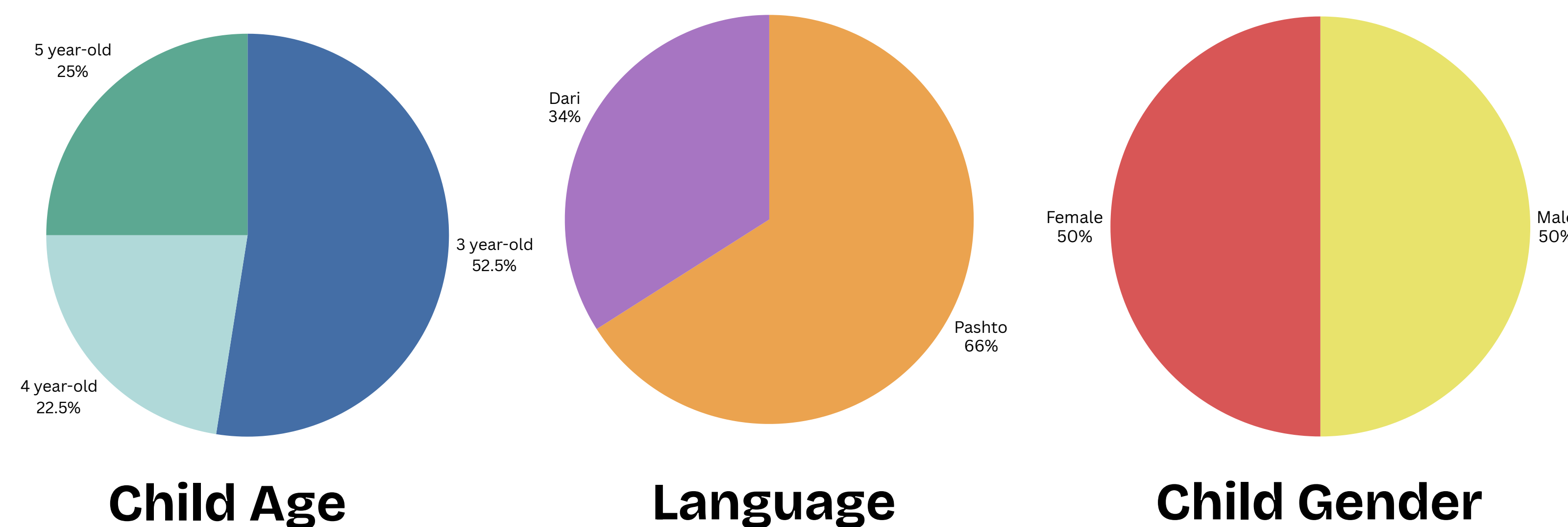
- 50 Afghan mother-child dyads (children aged 3 to 5)
- Intervention group: 27 dyads/control group: 23 dyads
- Mothers' mean age: 32.14 years old (SD = 5.65, range = 22 – 43 years old)
- Average time in the USA: 2.46 years (SD = .95, range = 1 – 4 years)
- Average number of children: 5.04 (SD = 2.15, range = 1 – 10 children)

Study Design

- Sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach
- Cluster randomized controlled trial (CRCT)

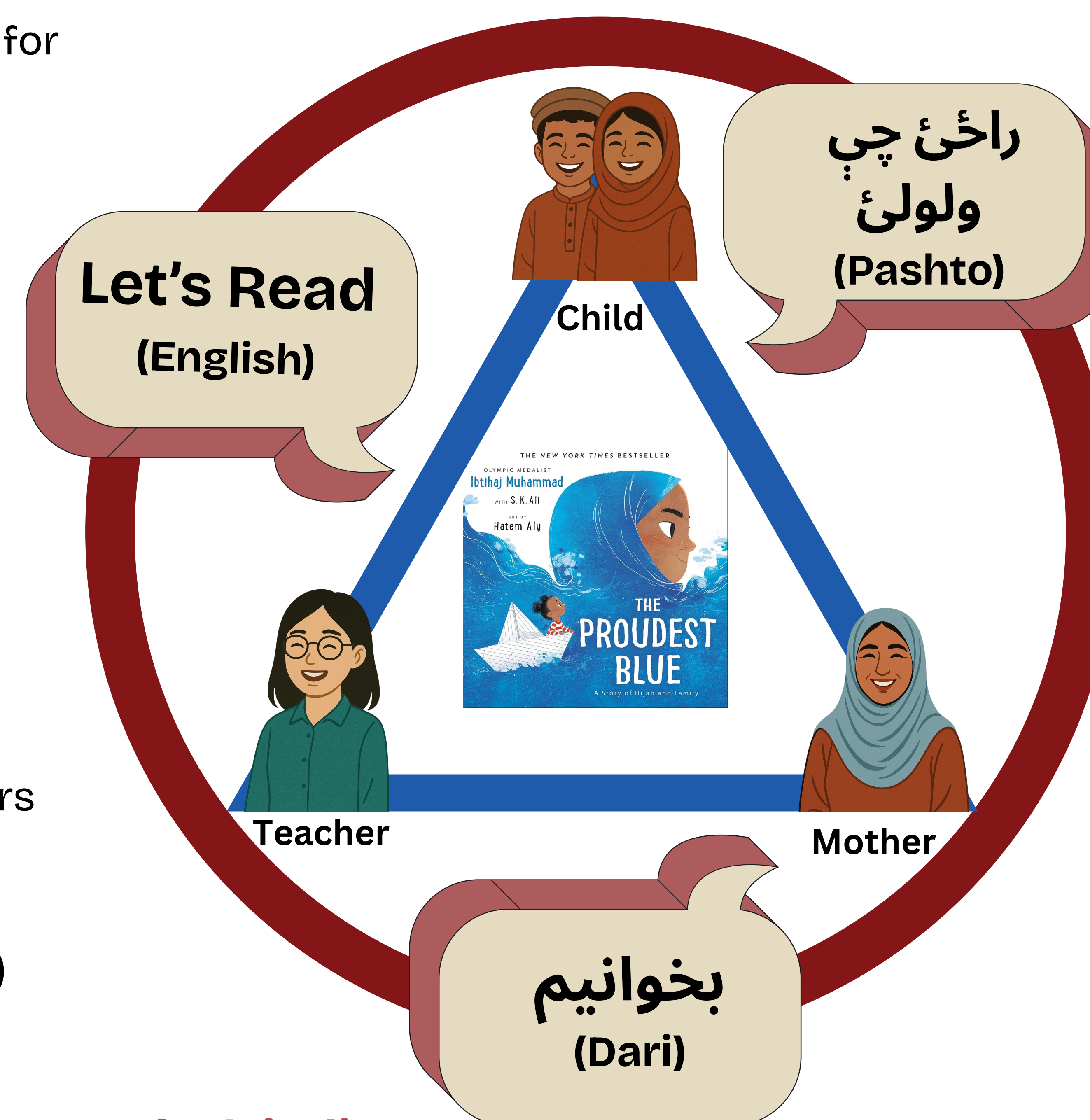
Data Analysis

- Quantitative Analysis: Independent samples t-test, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), mediation analysis
- Qualitative Analysis: Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006)



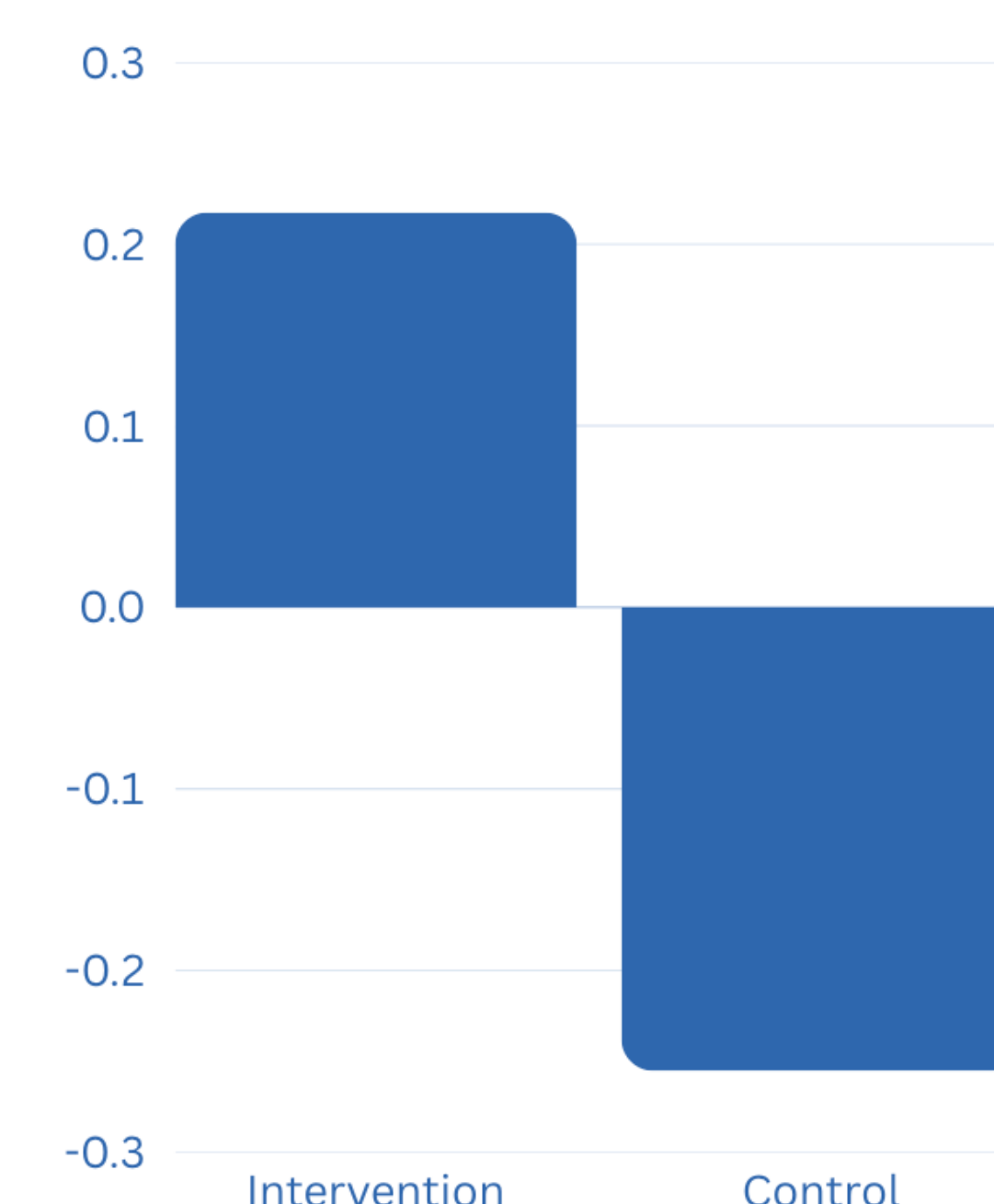
Description of Intervention

- 8-week intervention (40 minutes/class)
- Engaged in eight social-emotional skills targeted storybooks
- Engaged in a variety of storybook-based learning activities
- Provided 16 social-emotional skill targeted and culturally responsive dual-language storybook videos
- Provided weekly vocabulary flashcards and vocabulary support videos

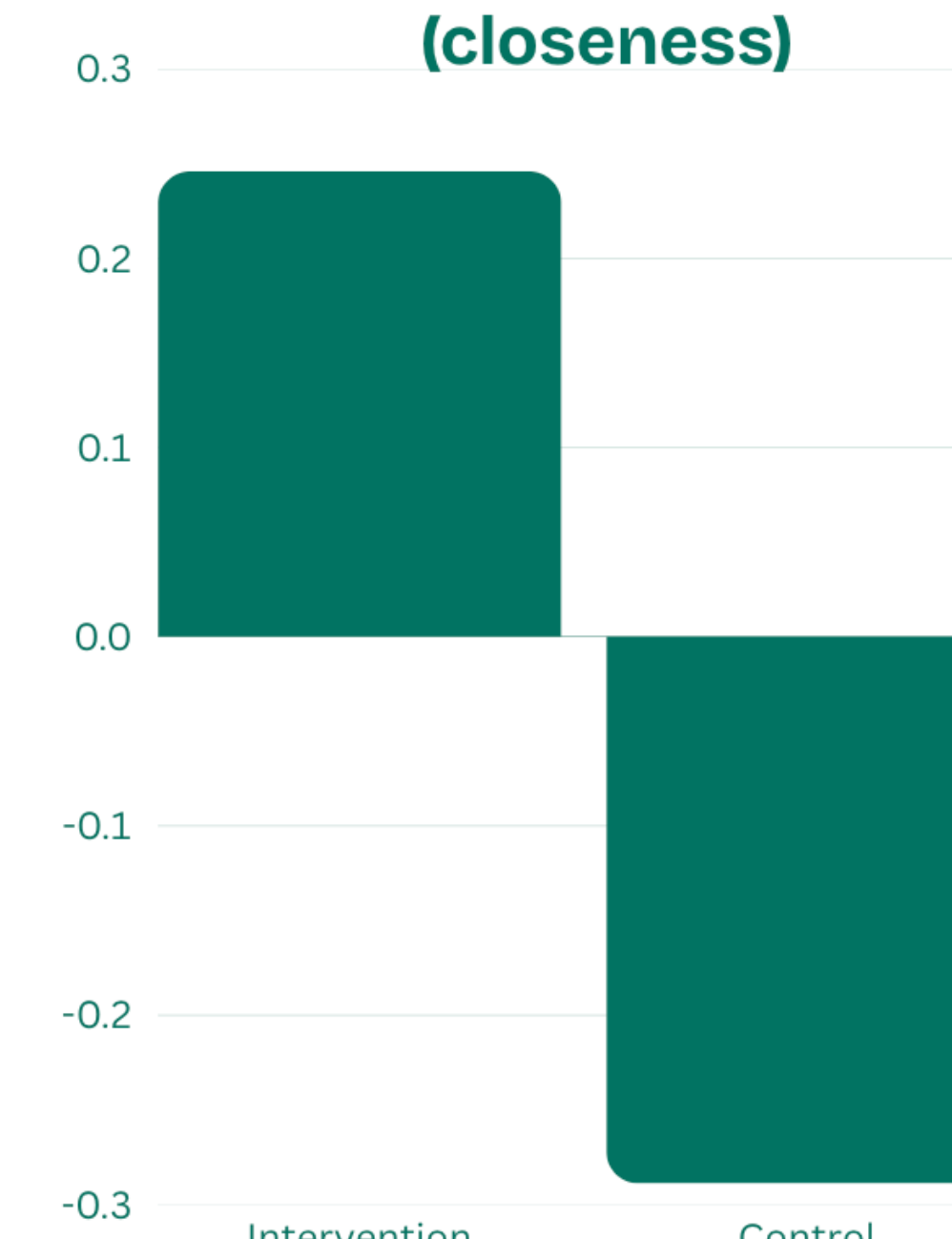


Results/Findings

Social-emotional competence



Parent-child relationship (closeness)



Results/Findings (Continued)

- However, the significant differences between the intervention and control groups were no longer evident after controlling for baseline scores and demographics.
- No significant indirect effects emerged for any mediators across the three outcomes.
- **Four themes** emerged from participants' experiences of the intervention:
- **Encountering Shared-Storybook Class for the First Time**
"It was my first time seeing storybooks." –Amina
- **Growing in Behavior, Language, and Emotional Expression**
"He (son) became more expressive. Saying 'I love you, Mommy, thank you, Mommy.'" –Shakila
- **Discovering New Ways of Parenting and Bonding**
"There are some positive changes. I learned a lot from the storybooks. There are good ideas in the storybook class that I use when I talk to my children." –Mursal
- **Emerging Enthusiasm for Learning**
"Now I see that my daughter is getting used to how a school works and what reading is through the storybook class. She's already prepared to go to school." –Nargis

Discussion and Implication

- Although not statistically significant, the intervention showed promising trends— improved emotion regulation, positive social behaviors, English use, and stronger mother-child relationships and responsiveness.
- Child-focused approaches alone may be insufficient; integrating maternal well-being and father involvement is critical for family-level outcomes.
- Findings suggest the importance of incorporating short-term, culturally responsive, family-centered interventions in non-formal settings for refugee families.
- Providing age-appropriate, simplified English books for both children and mothers with limited English exposure can enhance engagement and learning.
- Increasing funding for resettlement agencies and non-profits is critical to strengthening community-based support programs.