# African American Grandmothers Raising Grandchildren: Results of an Intervention to Reduce Caregiver Psychological Distress

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# Faculty Disclosure

- **Susan J. Kelley, RN, PhD, FAAN**
  - Conflict of interest: None
  - Employer: Georgia State University School of Nursing
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# Goal and Objectives

- Goal
  - Describe effective approaches to improving well-being of grandmothers raising children
- Objectives
  - Discuss international phenomenon
  - Describe intervention to decrease distress
  - Discuss results of interdisciplinary intervention to decrease distress
  - Describe which demographic groups benefit most from the intervention

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# Global Phenomenon

- Africa
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Orphans Vulnerable Children (OVCs)
- Eastern Europe
  - Labor migration, alcohol abuse
- China
  - "Left behind children"
- United States
  - Substance abuse, neglect

# Literature

- Increased depression/stress
- Chronic health problems
- Social isolation
- Inadequate resources
- Dealing with traumatized children/ behavior problems

# Method

- Design
  - Longitudinal, one year
  - Pre and post-test
  - Convenience sampling

# Procedure

- On-going research study
- Participants recruited from community
- IRB approval and informed consent
- Data collected in home prior to intervention

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# Sample

- 549 caregiving grandmothers
- Parent-absent households: 100%
- African American: 100%
- Predominantly low income
- Participant mean age: 56.27 years
- One-third > 60 years

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# Sample (cont'd)

- Mean number children raised:
  - 2.47 (range 1-8)
- Mean length time children in care:
  - 5.2 years (range < 1 to 16 years)
- Mean age grandchild:
  - 8.26 years (range four months to 18 years)
  - One-third (31.1%) ≤ 5 years old

# Intervention

- Interdisciplinary home/community-based
- Home visitation by RNs
- Social worker case management
- Support groups/parenting classes
- Early intervention
- Legal service referrals
- One year in duration

# Outcome Measure

- Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)*
  - 53 item, self-report measure of distress
  - 9 primary symptom dimensions
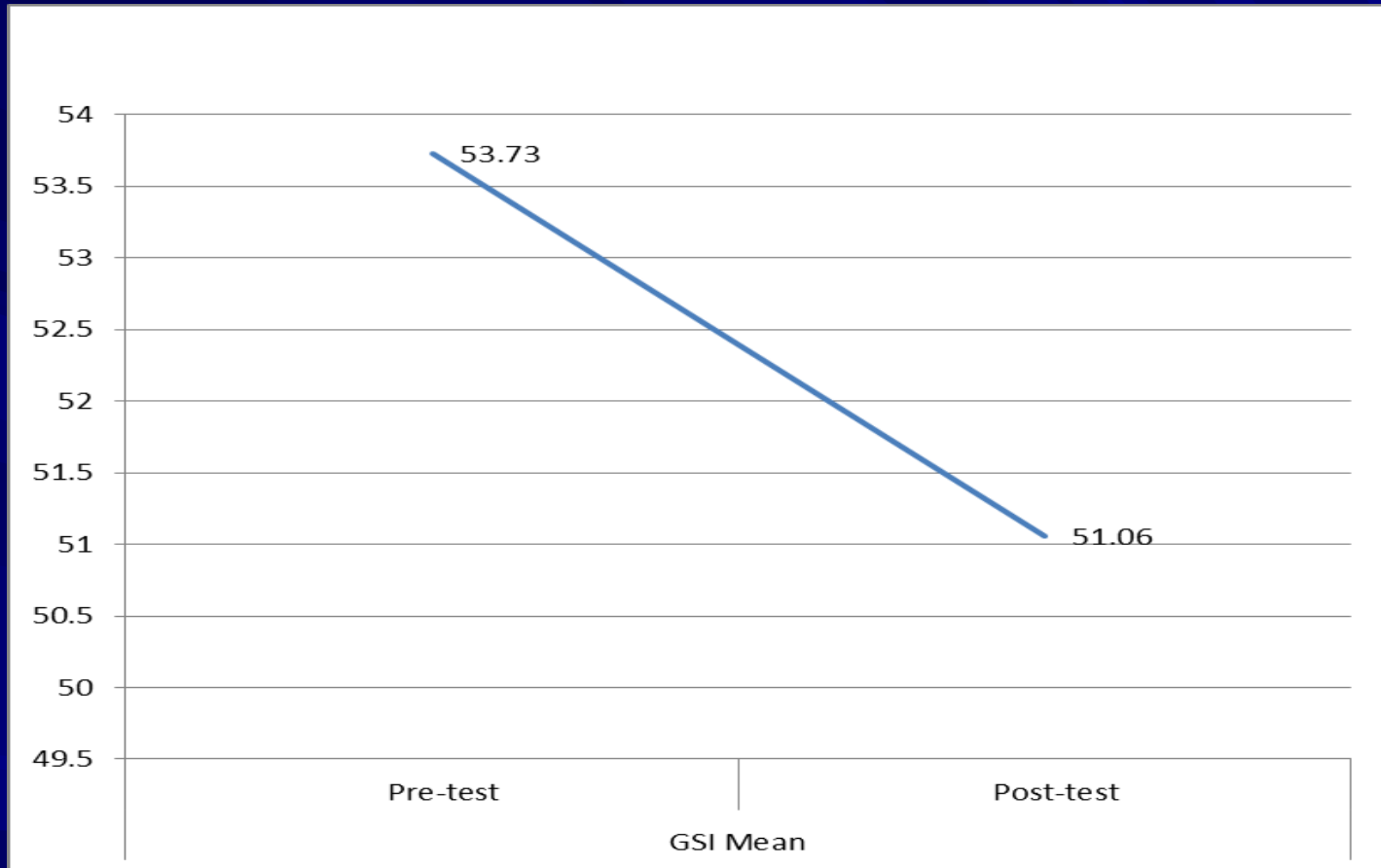  - Global Severity Index (GSI) summary measure of distress

*Derogatis, 1983

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# Analyses

- Descriptive statistics
- Paired t-tests
- Repeated measures analysis of variance (RM-ANOVA)
- Scheffé post hoc tests

# Results

| | Pretest Mean Score | Post-test Mean Score | F value | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| General Severity Index (GSI) | 53.73 (10.93) | 51.06 (10.59) | 34.56 | .000 |

# Overall GSI Change Over Time*



*$p < .001$

# Subscale Scores

| Subscales | Pretest Mean Score | Post-test Mean Score | t score | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Somatization | 55.67 | 54.36 | -2.91 | .004 |
| Interpersonal Sensitivity | 50.43 | 47.82 | -6.25 | .000 |
| Depression | 52.12 | 49.38 | -6.86 | .000 |
| Anxiety | 49.40 | 46.96 | -5.25 | .000 |
| Hostility | 50.53 | 48.82 | -3.65 | .000 |
| | | | | |

# Subscale Scores (cont'd)

| Subscales | Pretest Mean Score | Post-test Mean Score | t score | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Obsessive-compulsive | 53.37 | 51.46 | -4.15 | .000 |
| Phobic anxiety | 52.09 | 50.46 | -3.34 | .000 |
| Paranoid ideation | 56.46 | 54.29 | -4.91 | .000 |
| Psychoticism | 54.36 | 52.73 | -3.65 | .000 |

# GSI Changes Over Time By Age Group
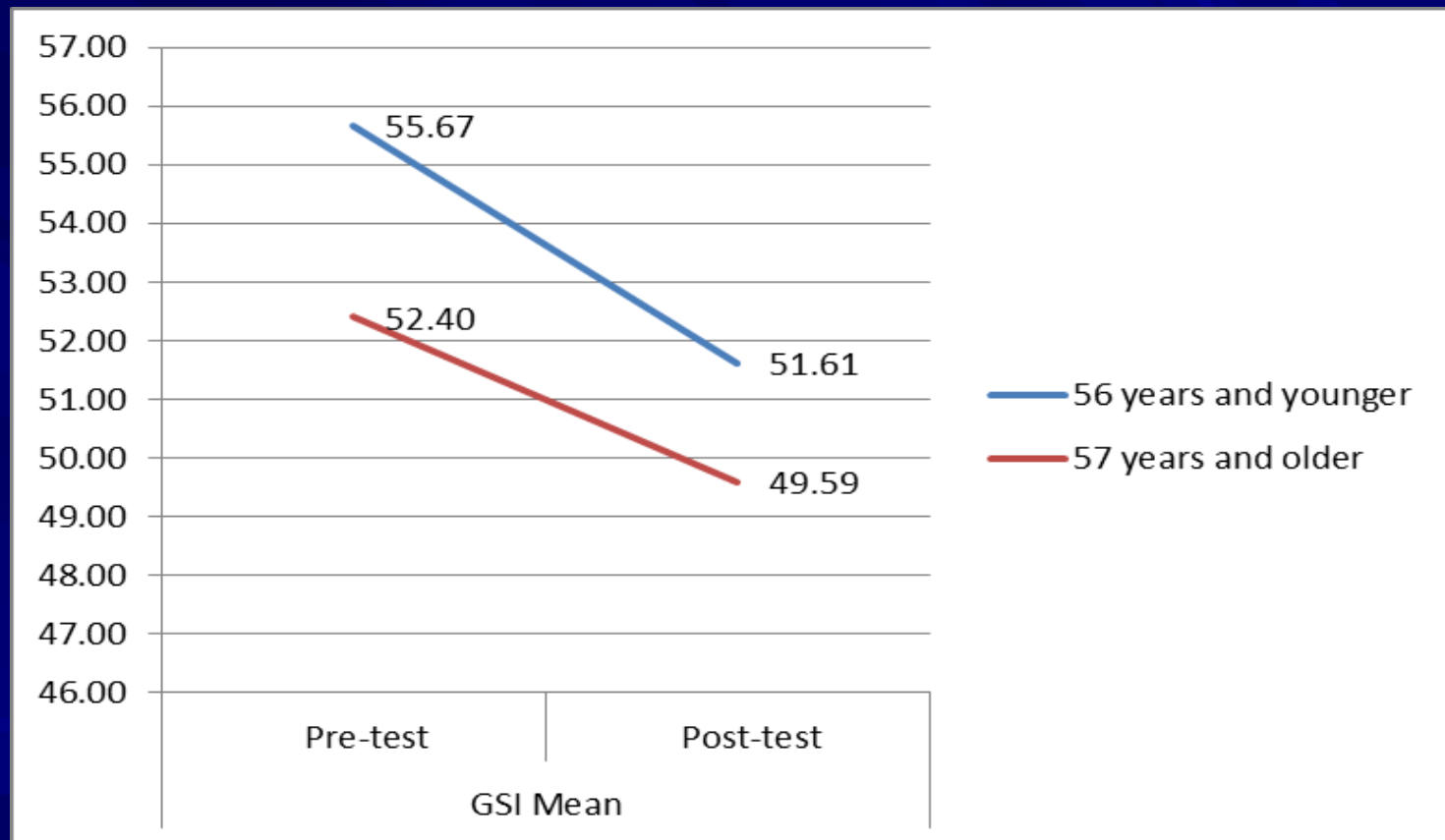


- Both groups decreased,  p < .001
- Younger age group greatest decrease,  p < .001
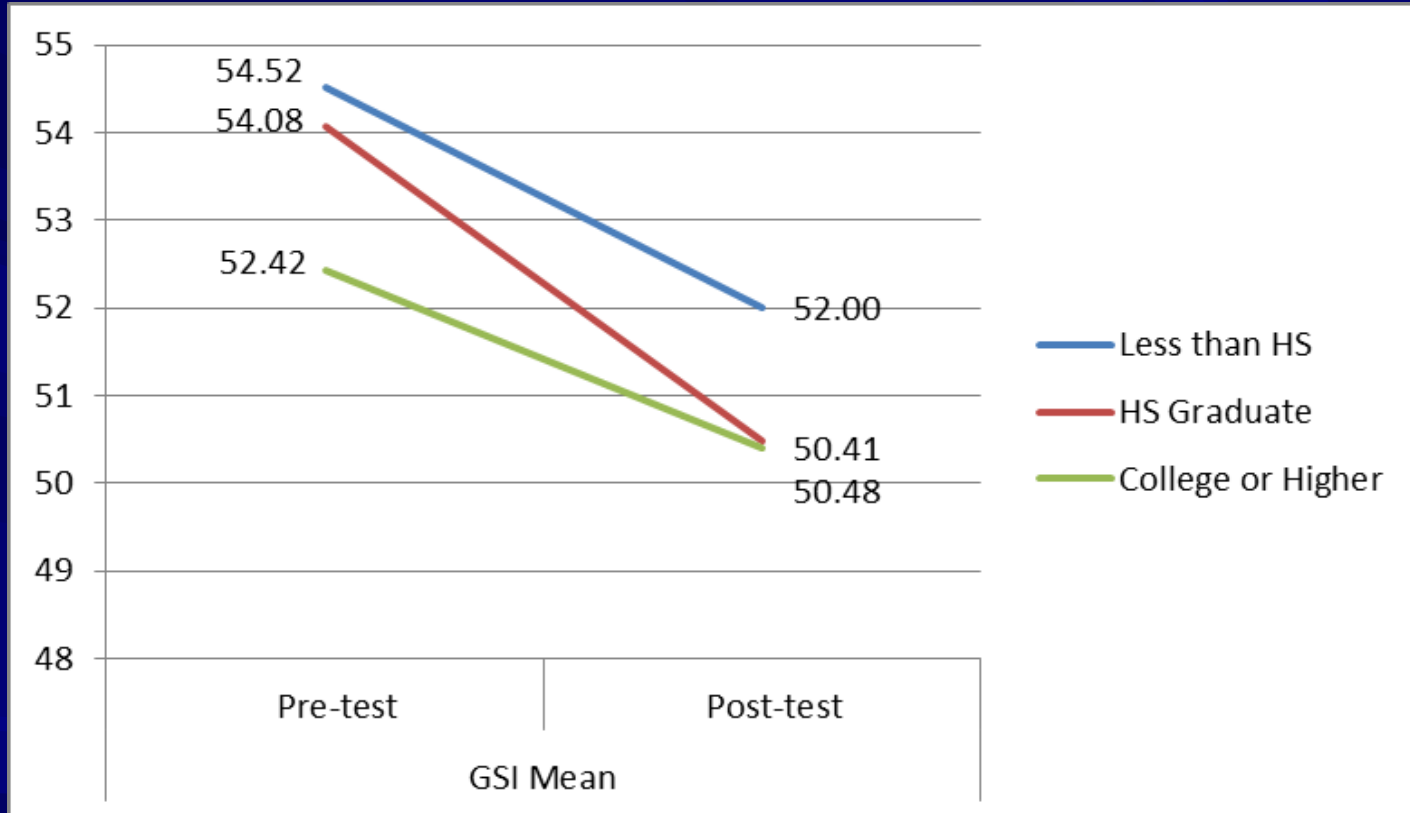
# GSI Changes Over Time By Employment Group
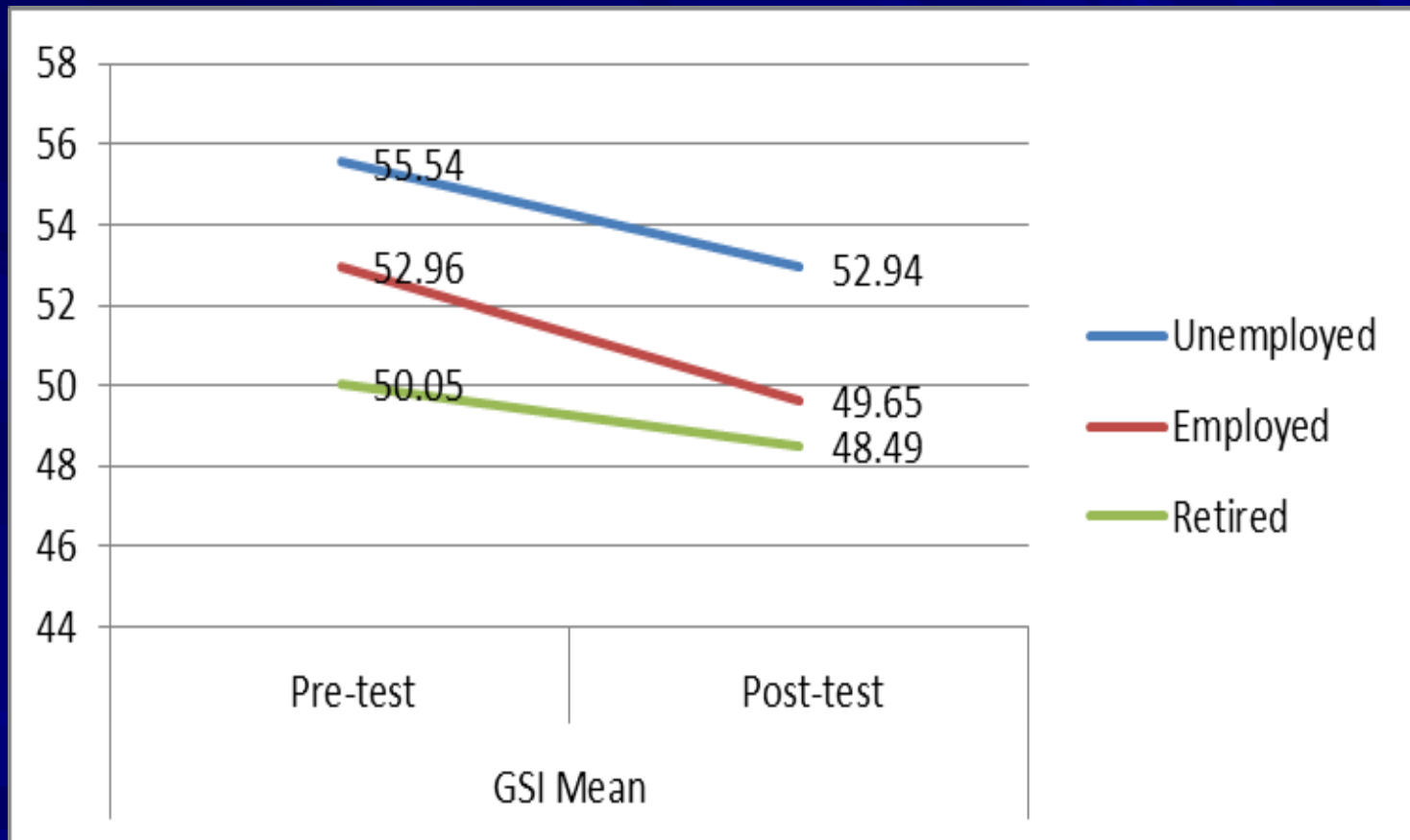


- All groups decreased over time, *p* < .001
- Employed group greatest decrease, *p* < .01

# GSI Changes Over Time By Marital Status
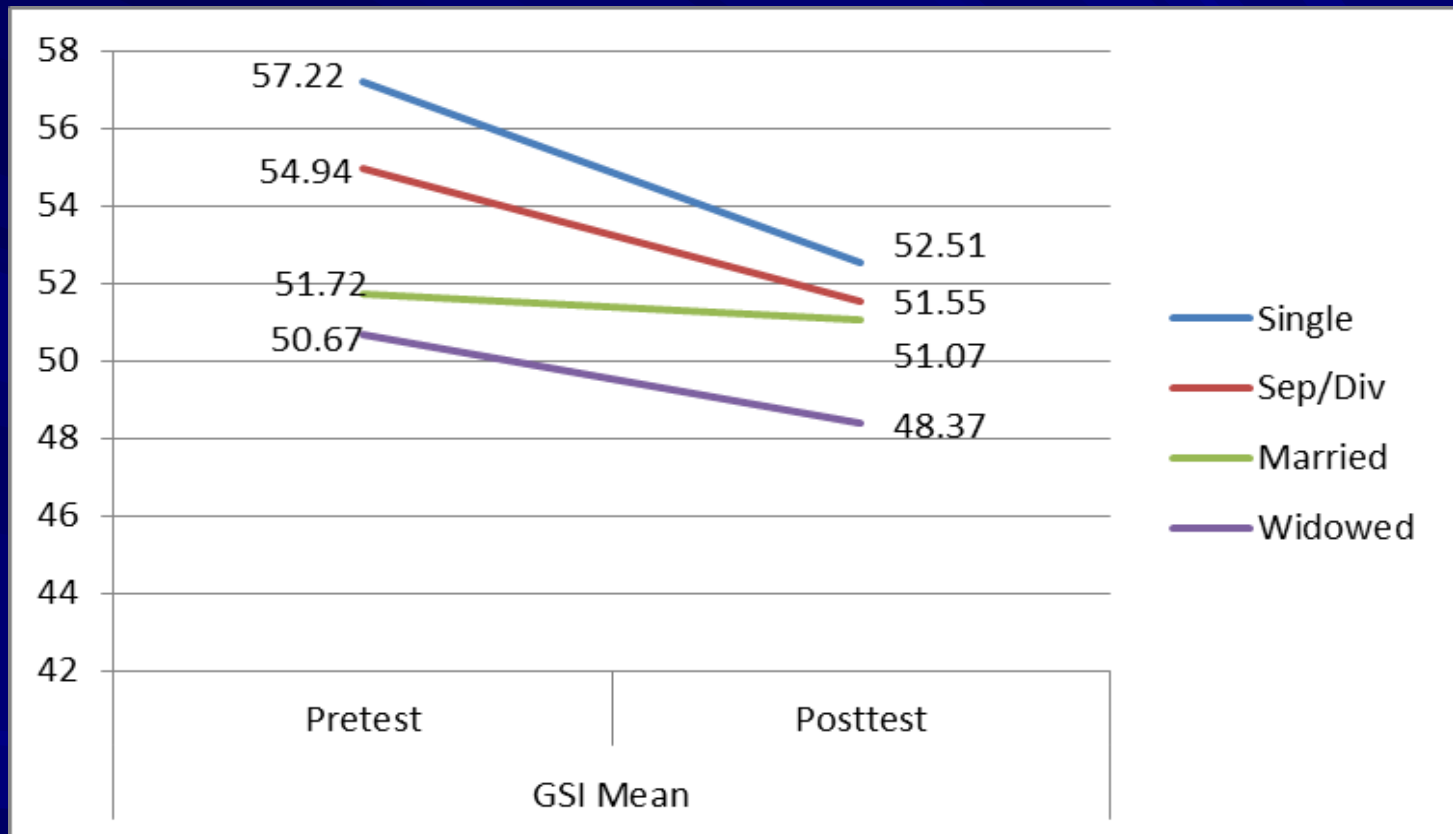


- Single, Sep./Div., Widowed groups decreased, $p < .001$
- Married group, NS
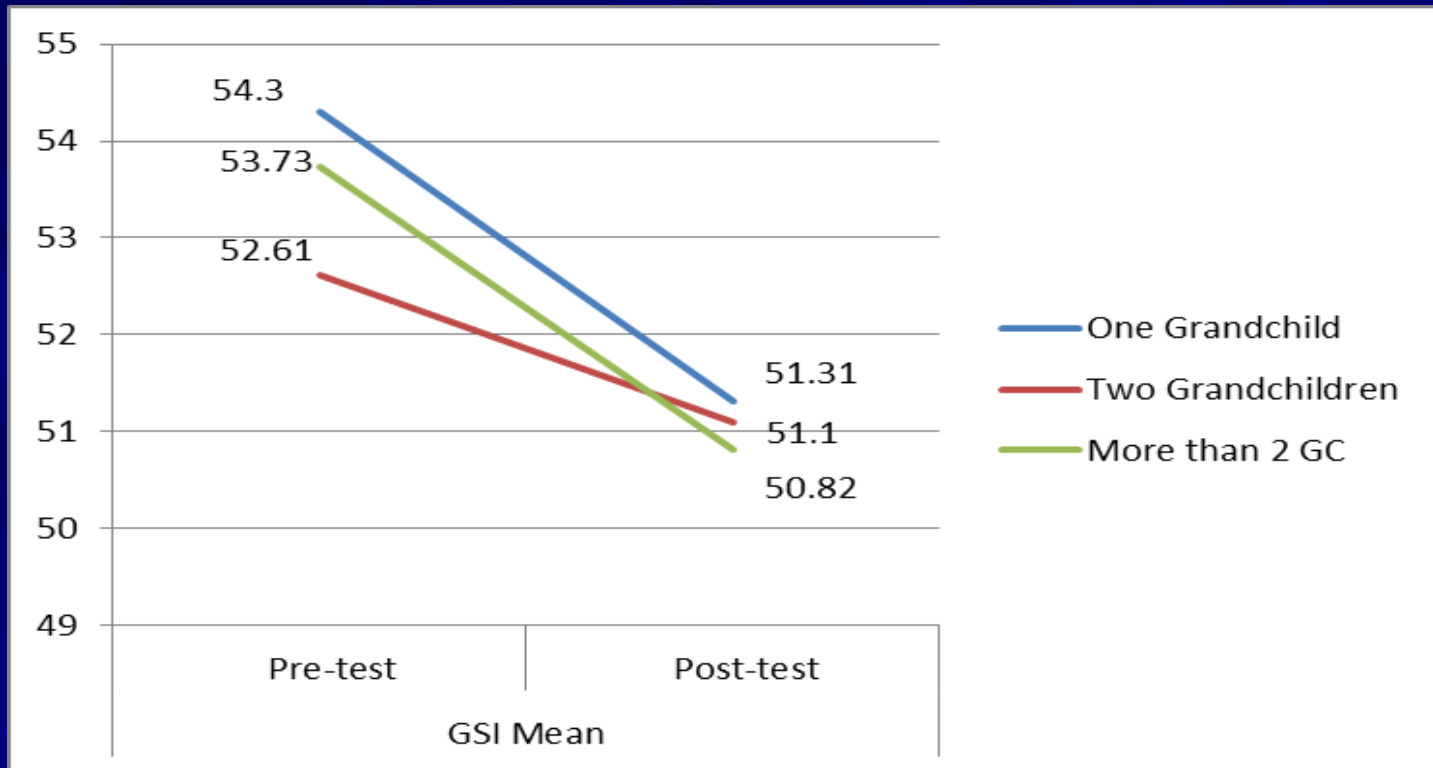- Single group greatest decrease, $p < .01$

# GSI Changes Over Time By Education Group



- All groups decreased over time, $p < .001$
- Greatest impact on HS graduate, $p < .001$

# GSI Changes Over Time By Number of Grandchildren



- All groups decreased over time, $p < .001$
- No significant differences in change among groups

# Conclusions

- Overall psychological distress levels decreased after the intervention

- All subscale scores improved

- Psychological distress post intervention most likely to improve if:
  - Younger (≤ 56 years old)
  - Employed
  - Single, separated/divorced, widowed

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# Discussion

- Improved distress could be result of intervention, time, or other factors
- If intervention, could be attributed to:
  - Improved social support
  - Improved access to resources
  - Improved physical health indicators
  - Referrals for behavioral health issues

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# Limitations

- Non-experimental design, lack of randomized control group
- Sample homogeneity: race, SES, location
- Reliance on self-report

# Practice and Policy Implications

- Interdisciplinary interventions needed:
  - Improve psychological well-being
  - Increase access to resources and support
- Public policy needed to improve benefits to custodial grandparents

# Project Healthy Grandparents
## www.gsu.edu/phg