

Exploratory project of a french adaptation of the PEERS® social skills program: ASD Teenagers participation and parent involvement

Background

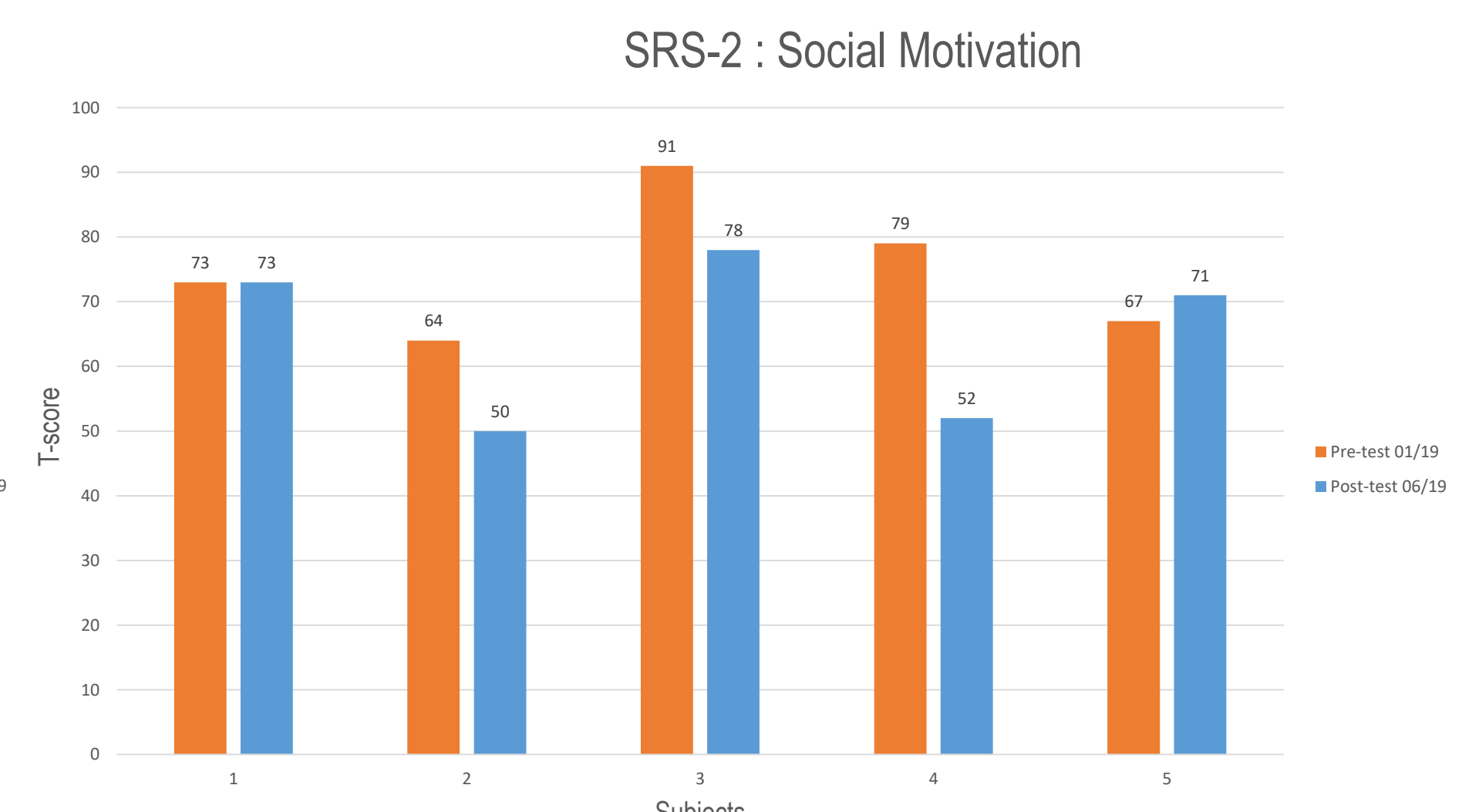
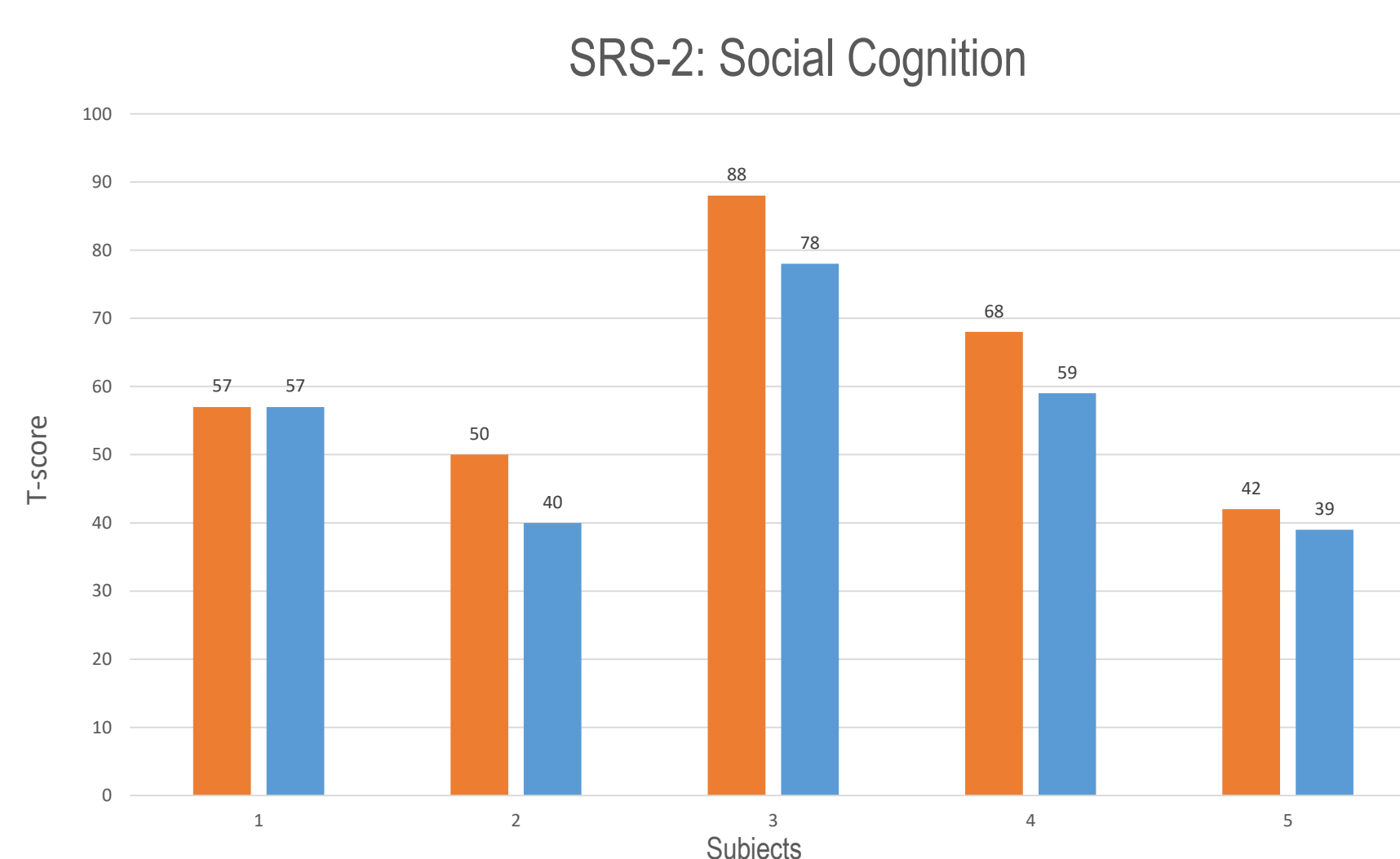
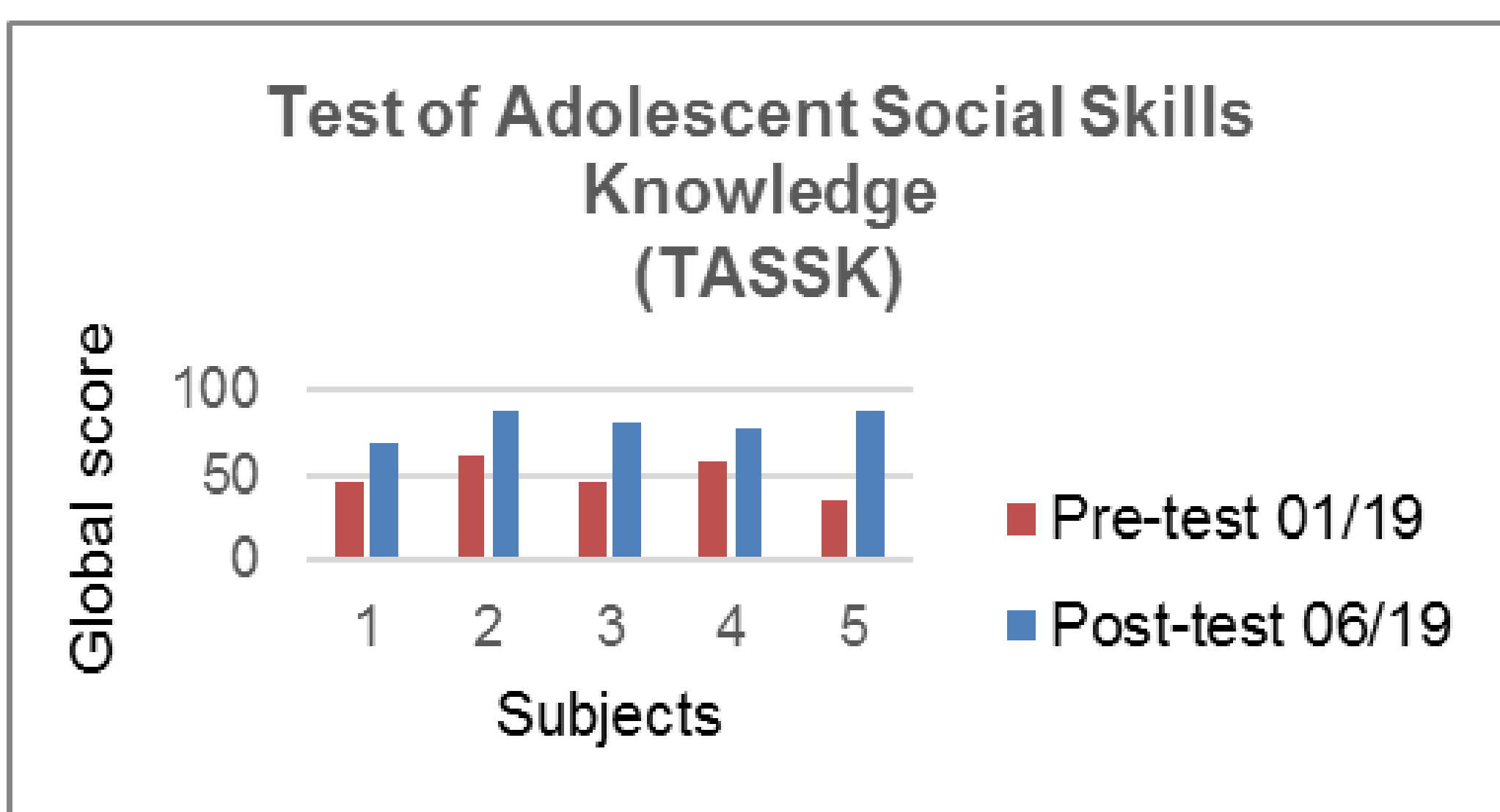
Improving social skills is a constant challenge for individual on the autism spectrum, especially in the teenage years and the transition to adult life. Social deficits is often a factor of being isolated from their peers and having mental health risks for depression and anxiety disorders (Volkmar, Reichow et McPartland, 2014). International consensus on best practices regarding social skills interventions in ASD agrees that psychoeducational interventions and cognitive behavioral techniques are essential. Social skills intervention services offered in French speaking countries are sparse and vary in their content, duration and objectives.

The Program for Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®, Laugeson et al., 2009; 2012), a parent-assisted social skills intervention for adolescents with ASD, has been found to be effective in 8 RCTs conducted across multiple sites (Hall, Leinert et Jacquez, 2018). While PEERS has been adapted for north American and Asian population, no known french adaptation of this program has been explored.

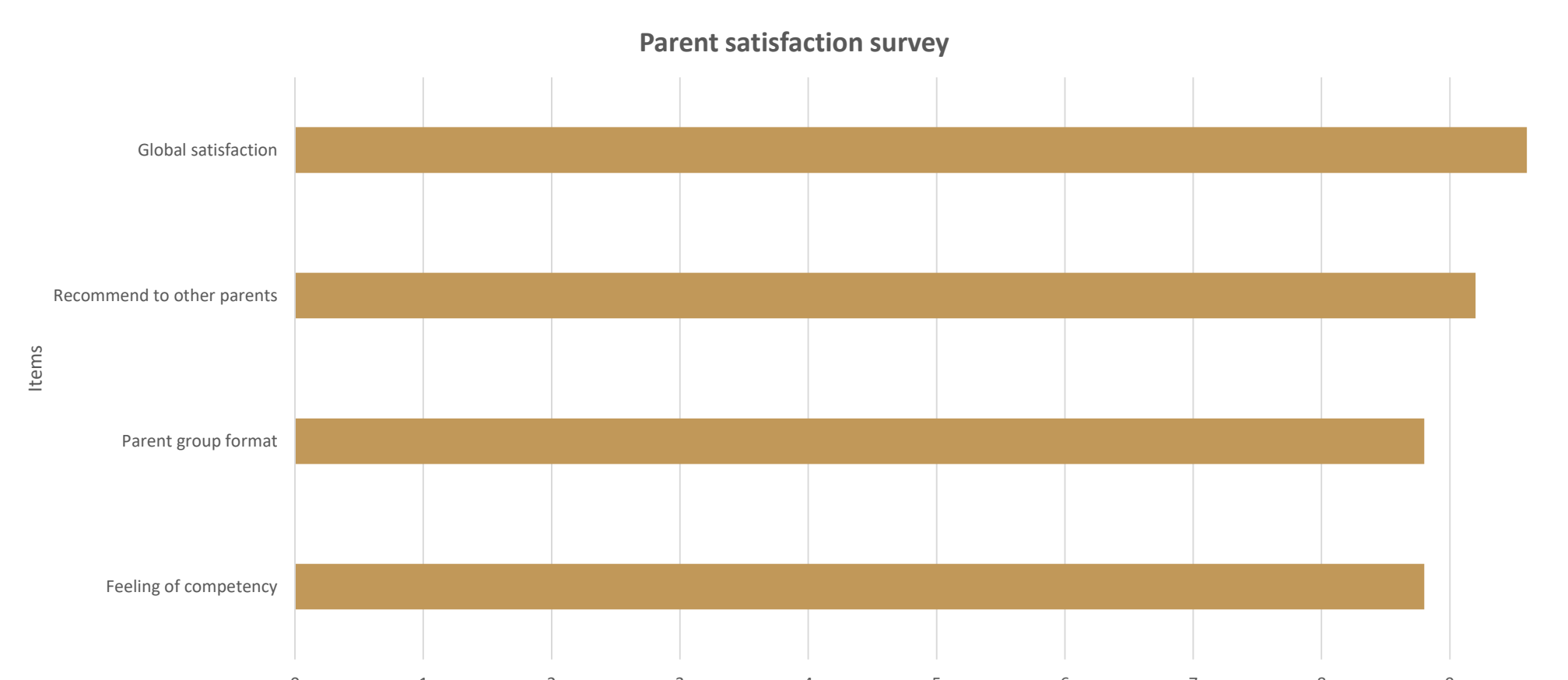
This program consist of 14 weekly sessions of 90 minutes of social skills training with teenagers (6 to 8 teenagers) on the autism spectrum while their parents are simultaneously receiving coaching sessions to offer them tools to support their child in generalizing these skills. Teaching, in this program, relies on the learning of concrete rules governing social codes and ecologically valid social skills, skills that are applicable in different everyday contexts.

Results

- **Increase in social knowledge:** our results, while being limited to the analysis of 5 subjects, join those of larger-scale research on increasing social (TASSK et SRS-2 social cognition) and social motivation (SRS 2- social motivation) in the adolescents that participated in the program.



- **Parent Satisfaction :** at the end of the intervention, the level of parents satisfaction is very good and they and they feel they are better equipped to continue to support their children's in their social skills.



Discussion

- This exploratory research is one of the first one to apply the PEERS program to a french speaking sample in Switzerland. On an important note, these results are strongly limited by the analysis of the results on 5 subjects with no control group.
- Our results, however, support the findings of previous studies and support the use of the PEERS program to improve social skills and the social cognitive process in adolescents with ASD.
- Improvements in social cognitive processes (e.g., cognition and social motivation) are encouraging results and suggest that participation in the PEERS program responds to fundamental social disabilities in adolescents with ASD.
- Our results show that this program meets the expectations of parents, who feel more equipped to support the improvement of their children's social knowledge.

Objectives

1. To translate and adapt in French the 14 sessions of the original PEERS Program.
2. To improve the teenagers social skills and support their parents in their role as social coaches with this structured and scientifically validated program.
 - regarding the teenagers with ASD: assess how this program affects the quality of socialization
 - regarding parents, we will examine how this program increase their feeling of competency in supporting their child's social skills.
3. To explore the possibility of replicating and adapting this program in a french speaking cultural context.

Method

Our exploratory project consist of conducting this program in french for a group of high functioning teenagers (n = 5; 4 boys, 1 girl; Mage = 17) on the spectrum integrated in the mainstream school system and their parents (n = 6; 33% fathers, 66% mothers), from january to june 2019.

Procedures pre and post-test:

Adolescents	Parents
- Friendship Qualities Scale	- Social Responsivness Scale-2 (SRS-2)
- Social Anxiety Scale - Adolescent	- Social Anxiety Scale - Parent
- Loneliness et Social Dissatisfaction scale - Adolescent	- Quality of Socialisation Questionnaire-Parent
- Test of Adolescent Social Skills Knowledge (TASSK)	
- Quality of Socialisation Questionnaire - Adolescent	

Future directions

- Conducting randomized control trials with larger sample size
- Establishing french speaking multi sites collaboration in the RCTs
- Develop an official and validated international french translation of the program manual.

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