

A one-year follow-up evaluation of a sexual-health education program for Spanish adolescents compared to a well-established program

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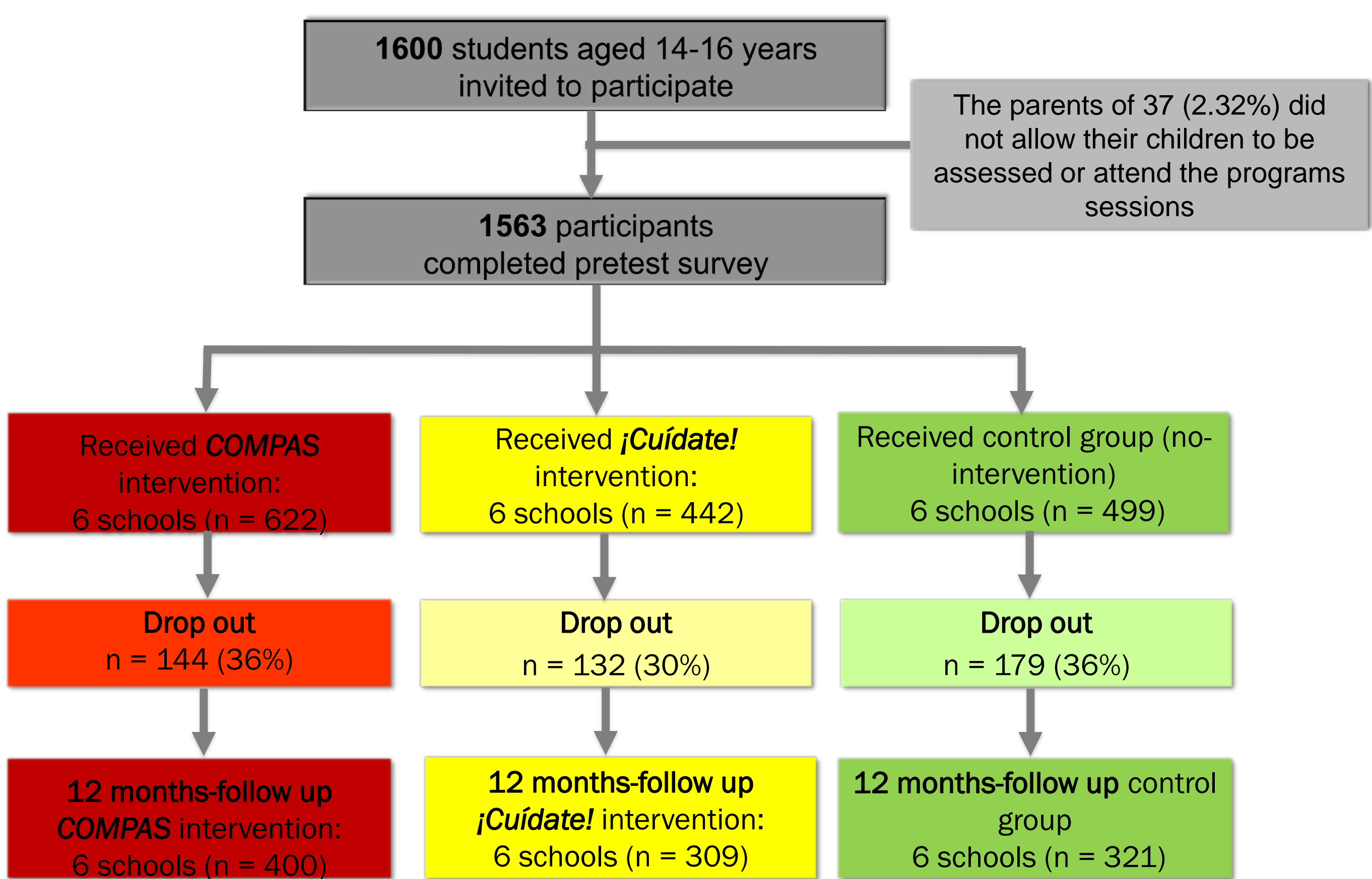
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Introduction and objective

Competencias para adolescentes con una sexualidad saludable (COMPAS) (Competencies for adolescents with a healthy sexuality), a protocol used to prevent HIV transmission among adolescents, is based on skills development. The program has been found to increase knowledge about HIV and other STIs, perception of the risk of having unprotected sex, self-efficacy and intention to engage in safer sexual behaviors, and favorable attitude towards HIV among adolescents in Spain.

This study evaluated the effects of *COMPAS* on adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, and sexual behaviors after a 12-month intervention period compared with an internationally evidence-based intervention (*¡Cuídate!*) and a waiting-list control group.

Methods



- Eighteen schools from five provinces of Spain (Alicante, Asturias, Castellón, Granada and Murcia) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions.
- Participants ($N = 1,563$; 34% attrition) were evaluated one week before and one year post-program implementation.
- Forty-eight percent were male (average age = 15.87, $SD = 0.88$).

Procedure

- Phase I: Pretest evaluation
- Phase II: Implementation of both programs:
 - COMPAS*
 - ¡Cuídate!*
- Phase III: 12-months follow up evaluation



Variables

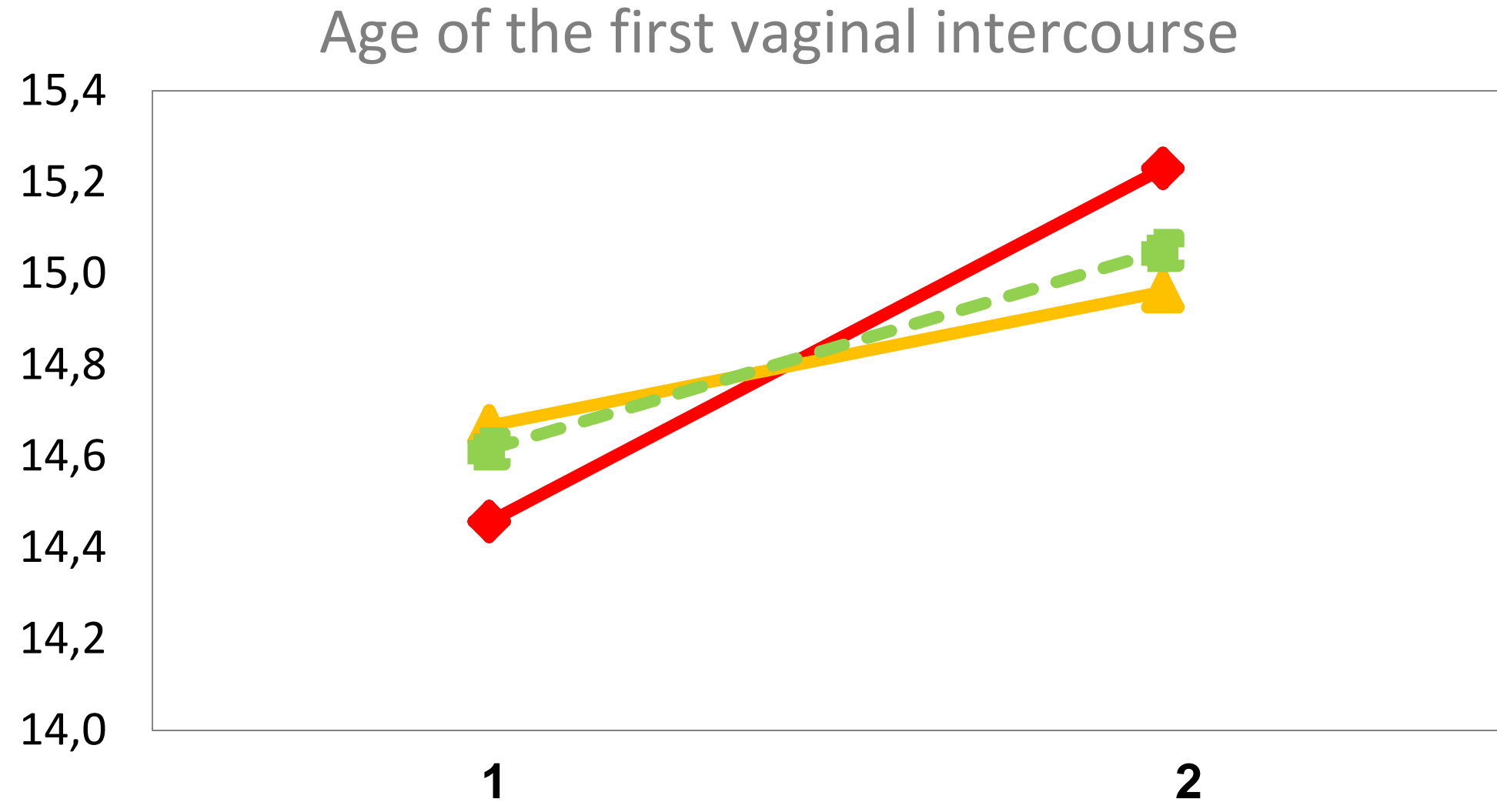
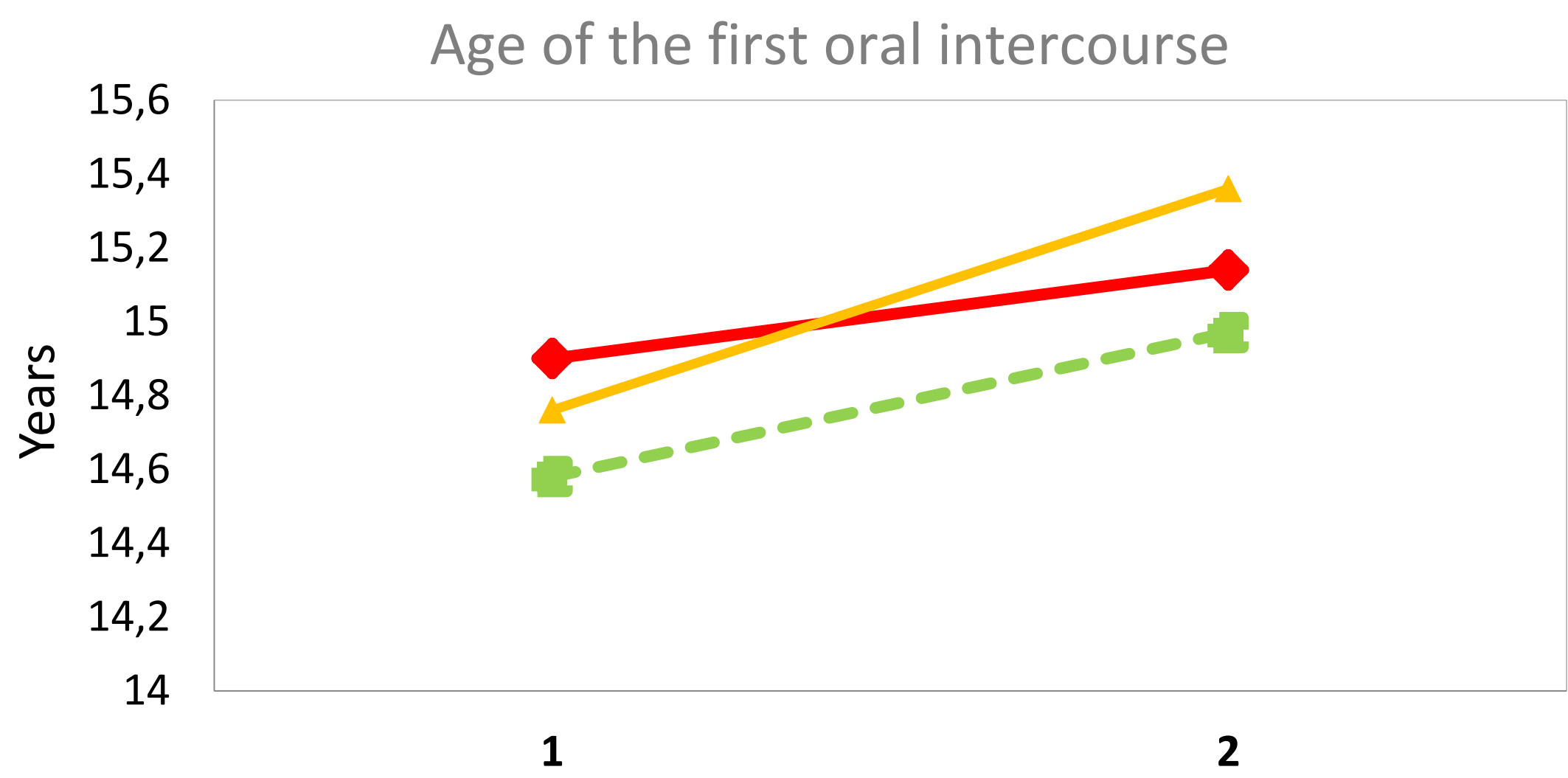
- Knowledge about sexually transmitted infections
- Attitudes related to HIV
- Perceptions of their peer's consistent condom use
- Intentions to use condoms
- Age of the first vaginal intercourse
- Age of the first oral intercourse

Data Analysis

The effects of both programs as measured by the outcome variables were analyzed using generalized estimating equations (GEE), adjusting the values for baseline differences in sex, age, and type of sexual experience. The school was the unit of randomization and the individual was the unit of analysis. Therefore, the school was controlled for in all of the analyses. Analyses were performed using SPSS v.22 program.

Results

- COMPAS* was as effective as the evidence-based program in increasing the adolescents' knowledge about sexually transmitted infections and in fostering favorable attitudes about condom use and people living with HIV/AIDS.
- COMPAS* was more effective than *¡Cuídate!* in increasing the adolescents' perceptions of their peer's consistent condom use and the age delay of their first vaginal intercourse.
- However, it was less effective in maintaining the adolescents' intentions to use condoms and in delaying the age of their first oral sex experience than *¡Cuídate!*
- COMPAS* was as effective as *¡Cuídate!* in delaying the age of the first sex among adolescents.



Conclusions

- After 12 months of implementation, the adolescents in the *COMPAS* intervention had more knowledge about HIV and other STIs, transmission routes, and condom use; more favorable attitudes towards condom use, despite barriers to using them; positive attitudes towards people living with HIV; and a perception that their peers used condoms consistently; and delayed vaginal sex to an older age compared with the CG.
- Overall, the effects of *COMPAS* were similar to those of *¡Cuídate!* at the one-year follow-up.
- In Spain, this is the first study to evaluate the effects of a school-based HIV-prevention program compared with an evidence-based intervention and a control group at a one-year follow-up.
- School programs to promote sexual health by providing information and skills development may delay the age of the sexual debut.

Reference

Espada, J. P., Morales, A., Orgilés, M., Jemmott III, J. B., & Jemmott, L. S. (in press). Short-term evaluation of a skills-development sexual education program for Spanish adolescents compared with a well-established program. *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

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