

## Background:

- ❖ *Skills for Life* (SFL) is one of the largest school-based mental health (MH) programs in the world, and a recent evaluation of SFL has provided evidence of significant improvements in behavioral and academic outcomes for participating students.<sup>1,2</sup>
- ❖ Another study of the program documented the association between measures of MH problems in first grade with psychosocial functioning in third grade and academic achievement in fourth grade.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Since recent studies have found a relationship between social determinants of health and psychosocial functioning,<sup>4,5</sup> the current study explored **the impact of social versus mental health** (MH) risks in predicting **academic outcomes** in a cohort of junior high school (sixth to eighth grade) students.

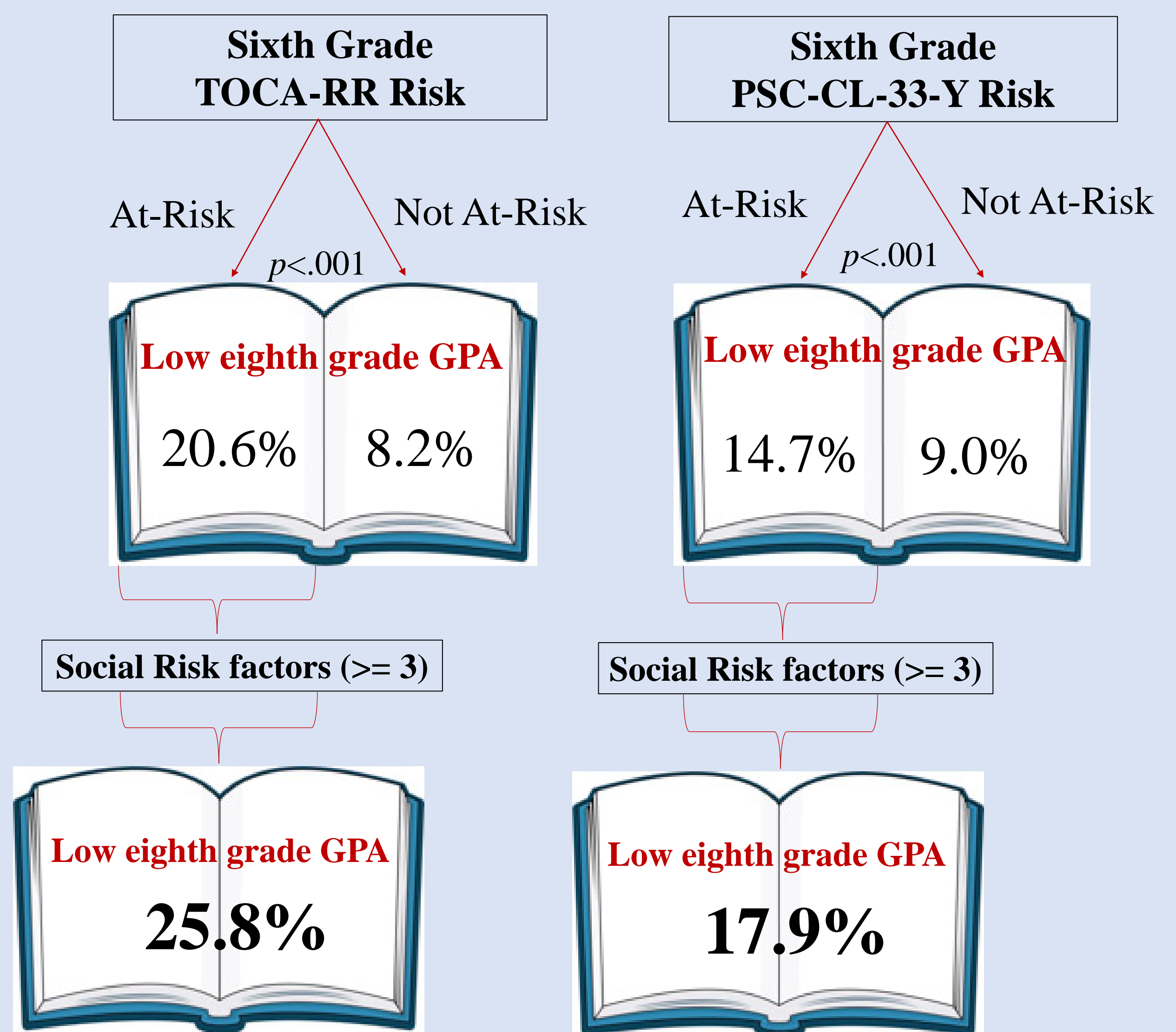
## Methods:

- ❖ **Participants:** Junior high school students (N=14,290) from schools participating in SFL
- ❖ **MH risk** as measured on the following screens:
  1. Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation-Re-Revised (**TOCA-RR**)<sup>2</sup>
  2. Pediatric Symptom Checklist-Chile-33 item Youth Self-Report (**PSC-CL-33-Y**)<sup>6</sup>
- ❖ **Six social risks** in sixth grade were investigated:
  1. **Father absence** (additional item on PSC-CL-33-Y)\*
  2. **Family social isolation** (additional item on PSC-CL-33-Y)
  3. **Family mental illness** (additional item on PSC-CL-33-Y)
  4. **Child chronic illness** (additional item on PSC-CL-33-Y)\*
  5. **Gender** (school records)\*
  6. **Family welfare participation** (Ministry of Education records)
- ❖ **Low grade point average (GPA)** in eighth grade (scoring in the lowest 16% of GPAs; < 16%) was investigated as the outcome measure

\*The three strongest individual sixth grade social risks that impacted eighth grade GPA

## Results:

- ❖ Students who scored at-risk on the **TOCA-RR in sixth grade were more than two times more likely to have a low GPA in eighth grade** compared to students with no risk (20.6% vs. 8.2%,  $p<.001$ ).
- ❖ Students who scored at-risk on the **PSC-CL-33-Y were also more likely to have a low eighth grade GPA** compared to students with no risk (14.7% vs. 9.0%,  $p<.001$ ).
- ❖ **Being at-risk on three or more of the six social risk factors significantly increased the likelihood of GPA risk from 20.6% to 25.8% for students with TOCA-RR risk and from 14.7% to 17.9% for those with PSC-CL-33-Y risk.**



## Conclusion:

- ❖ Although MH risk was the strongest predictor of academic risk, social risk factors also contributed to lower academic achievement two years later.
- ❖ This finding suggests that to improve poor academic performance, a comprehensive approach is required which includes both MH interventions and social supports.



## REFERENCES:

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