

The challenges of an Online Communication Course for Post Graduate Year 1 doctors during the COVID-19 pandemic

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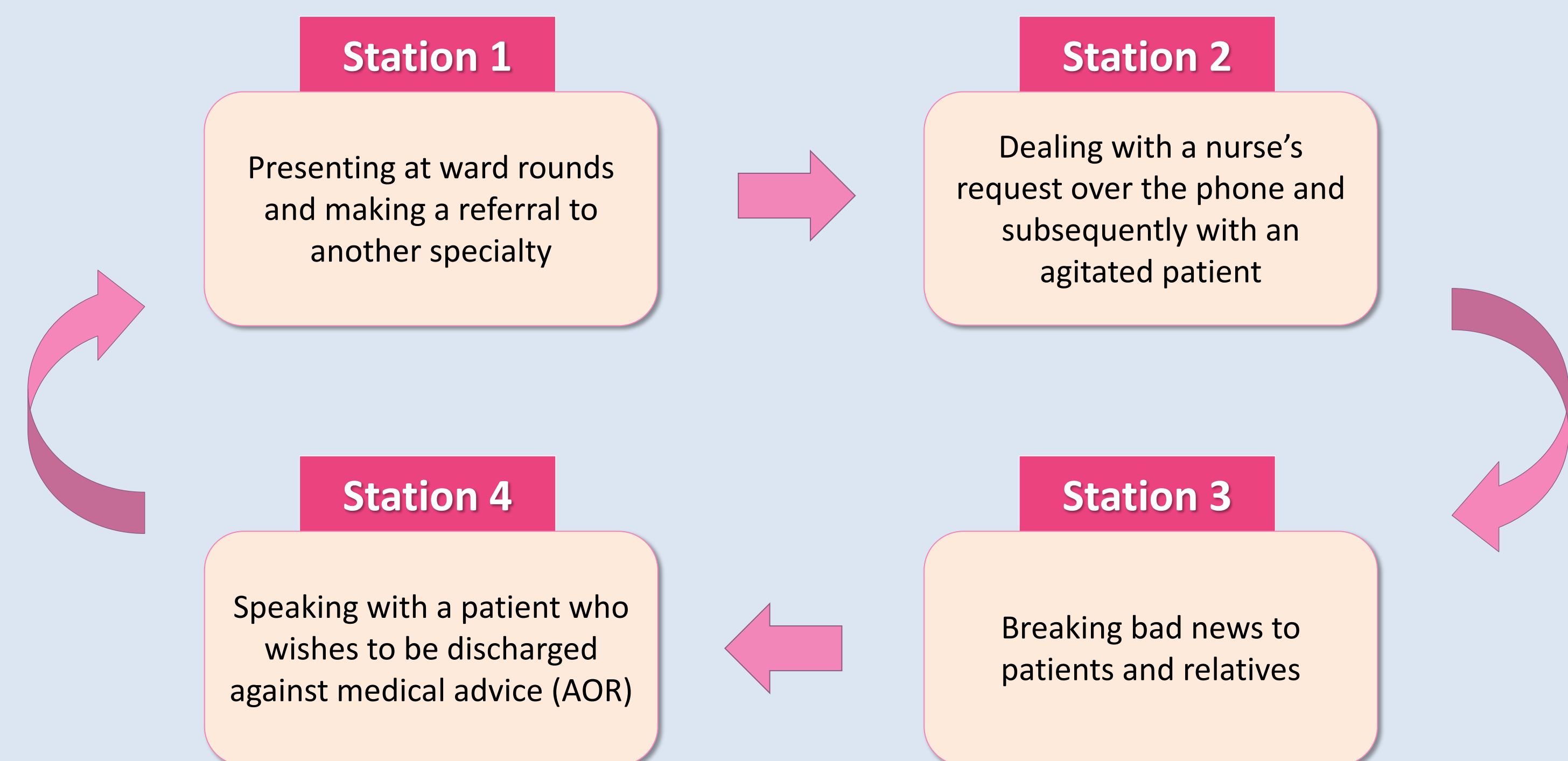


INTRODUCTION

- While medical knowledge and clinical skills are the core of a medical school curriculum, efficient and effective communication is equally important in the work of a junior doctor
- This study **aims** to assess the usefulness of an online communication course in preparing the graduating medical students for the roles and responsibilities of a post-graduate year 1 (PGY1)

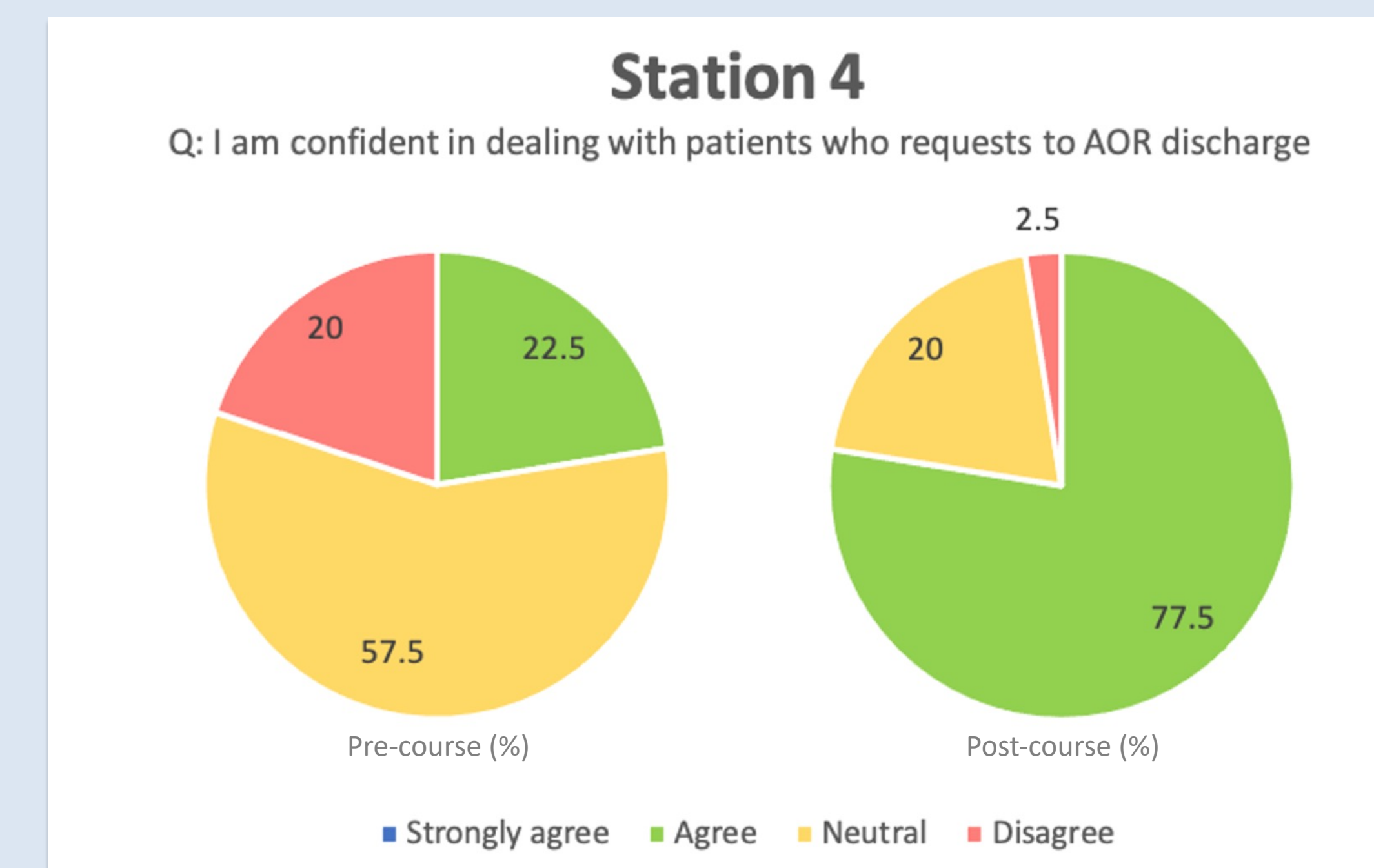
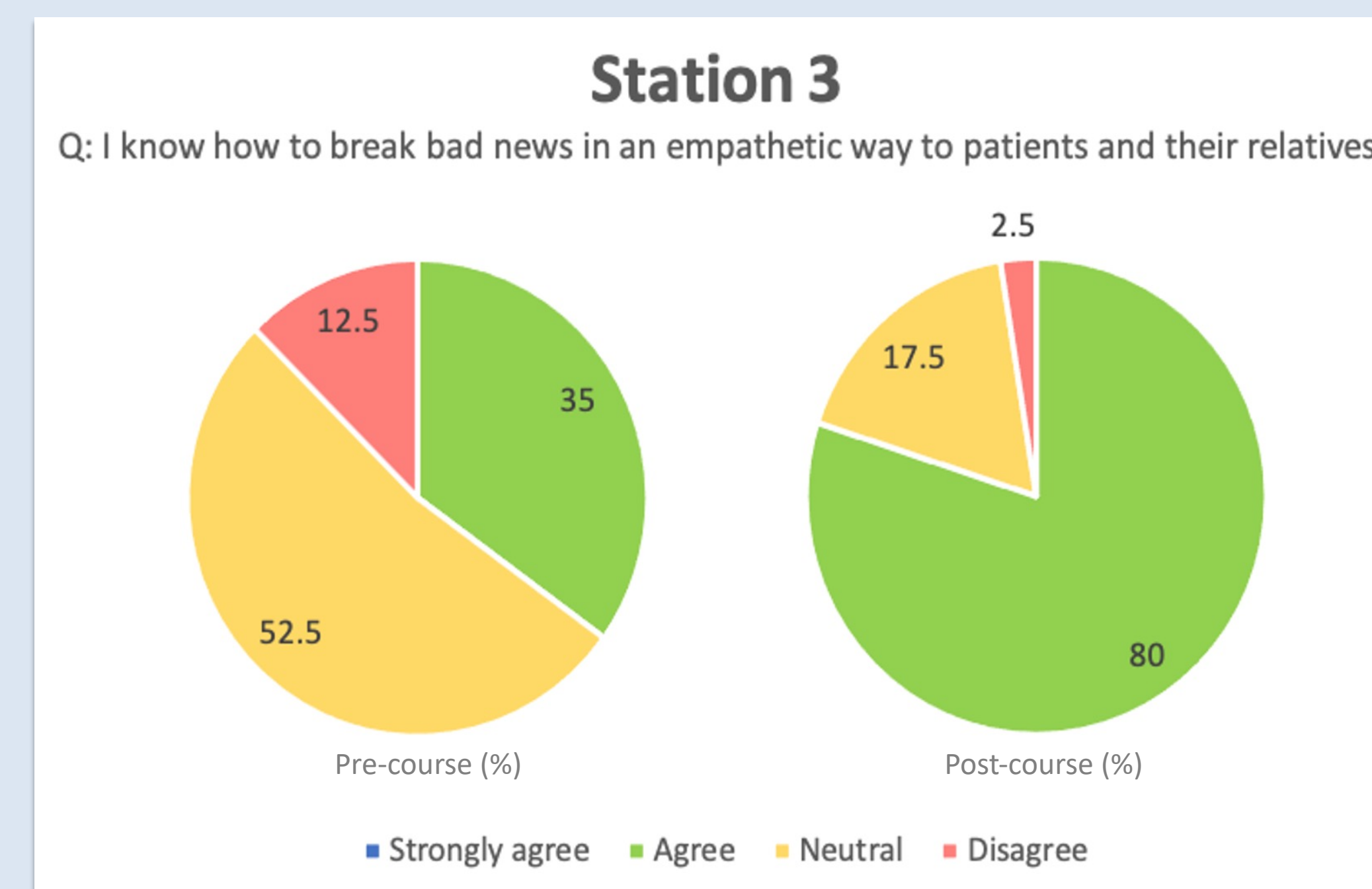
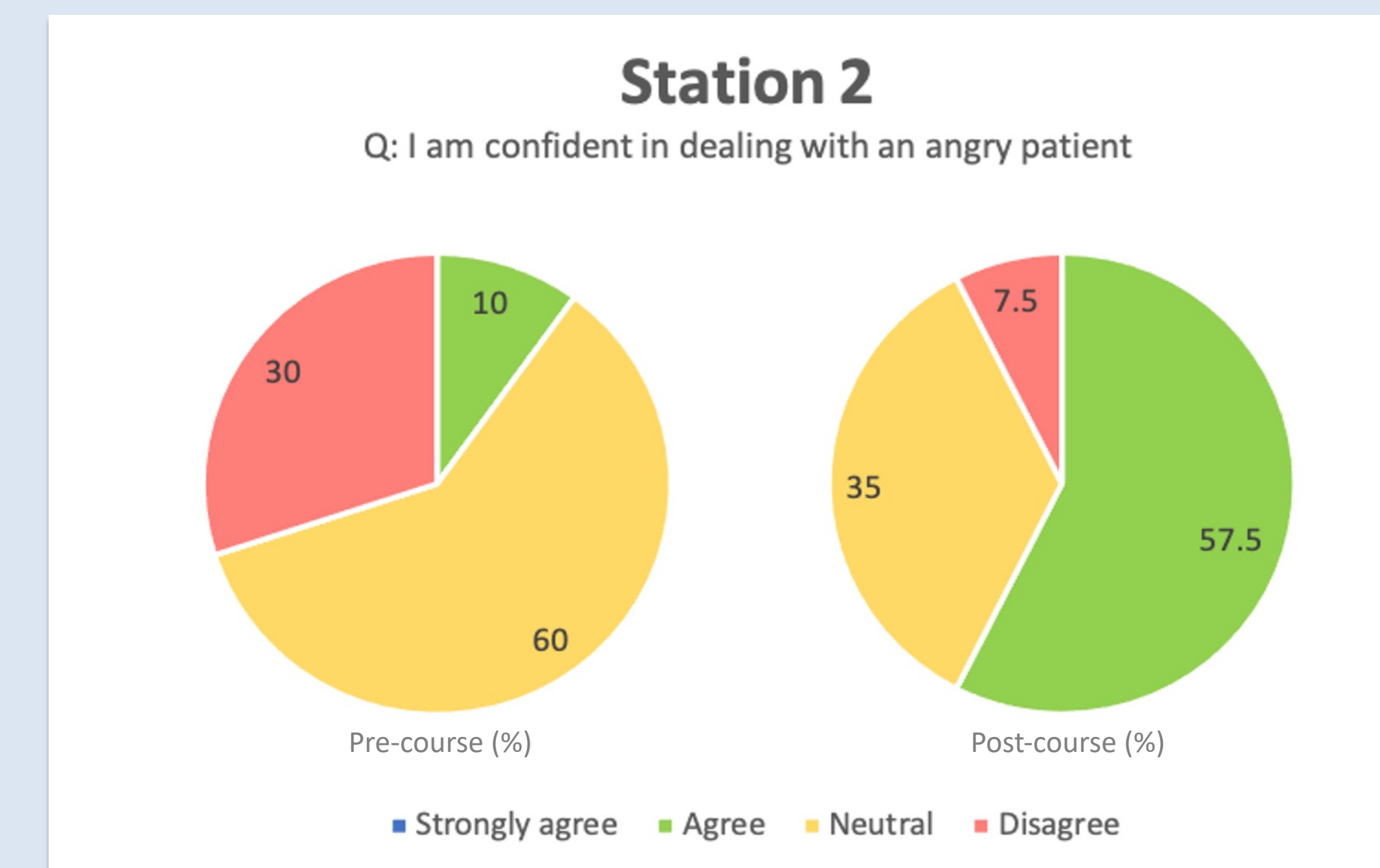
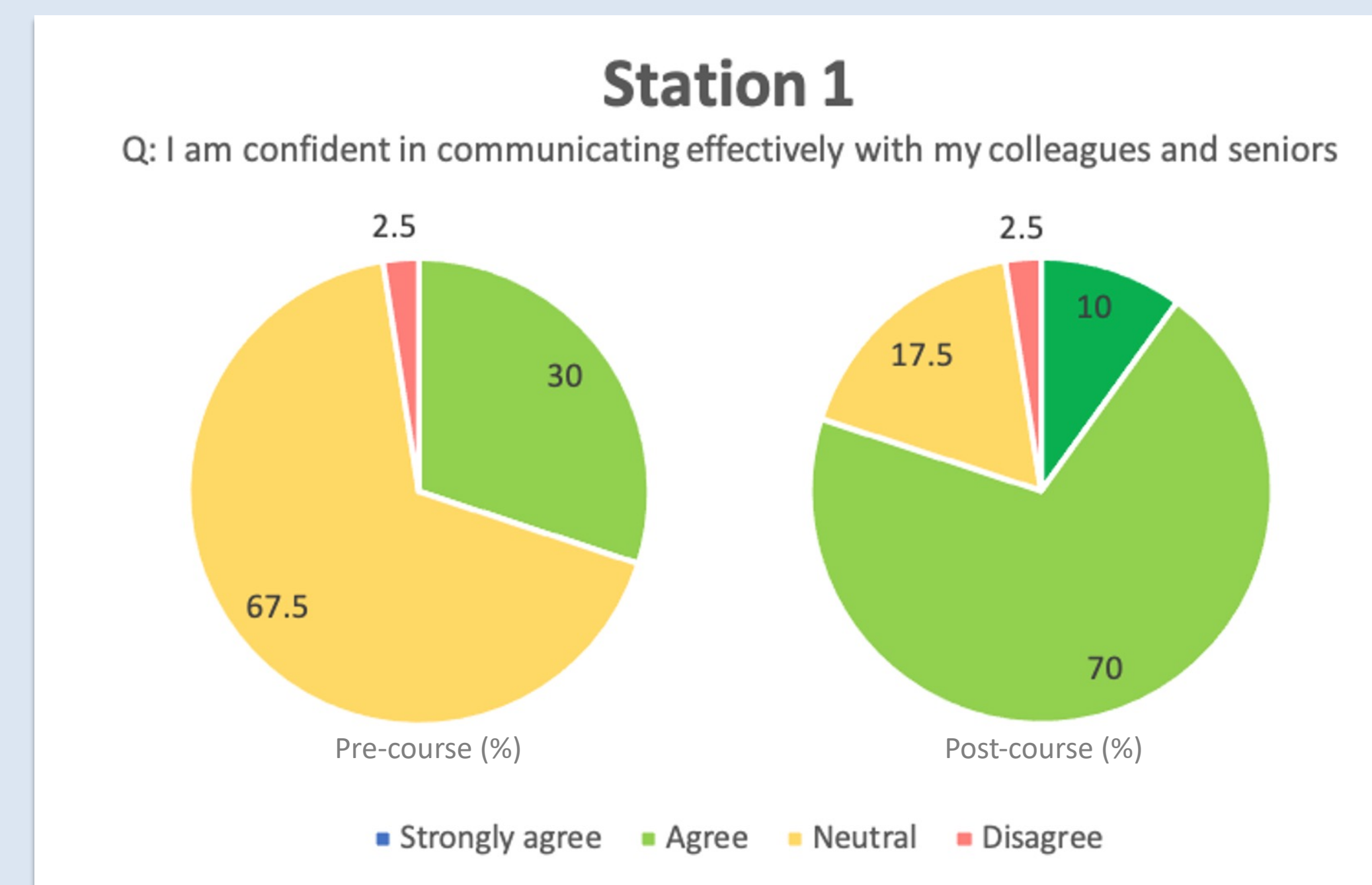
METHODS

- Communication course organised by SingHealth PGY1 Residency Programme (the Programme provides in-depth postgraduate medical training for current residents and incoming trainees)
- 40 incoming PGY1s, 5 facilitators and 4 role-players
- 4 case scenarios (8 PGY1s per station)
- 25 minutes per station (15 min role-playing, 10 minute feedback)
- A pre and post-survey was conducted to compare the students' confidence levels in dealing with the four scenarios



RESULTS

- Prior to the course, majority were neutral in dealing with the four specific communication scenarios
- Post-course, majority of the students were confident with the communication skills gained, as shown in the figures
- The overall positive results show that an online communication course can be conducive to learning, and 92.5% of students voted that they would recommend this course



DISCUSSION

The main **challenges** were:

- Limitation in non-verbal communication (body language and eye contact) as the interaction was virtual
- Online technical issues and connectivity
- Keeping other students engaged during the sessions, as only 1 student participated per station. To mitigate this, fellow students were encouraged to give feedback on their peers' attempt

- These challenges were also commonly reported in other communication courses that were conducted online^{1, 2}
- For future courses, the students who participated in the role-play could receive video recordings of the encounter for feedback³

CONCLUSION

An online communication course for incoming PGY1s, although challenging, is effective and can be successfully conducted

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