

**Caregiving, Loneliness, and Stress:
The Role of COVID-19**

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INTRO

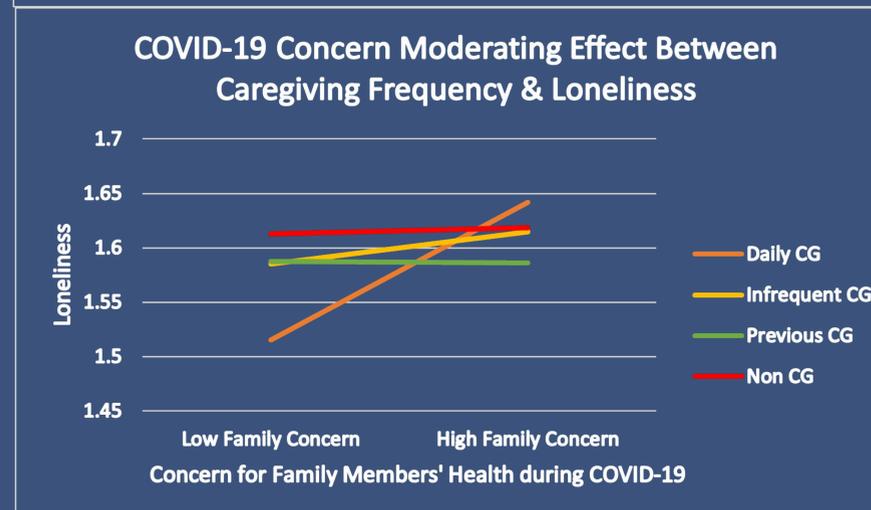
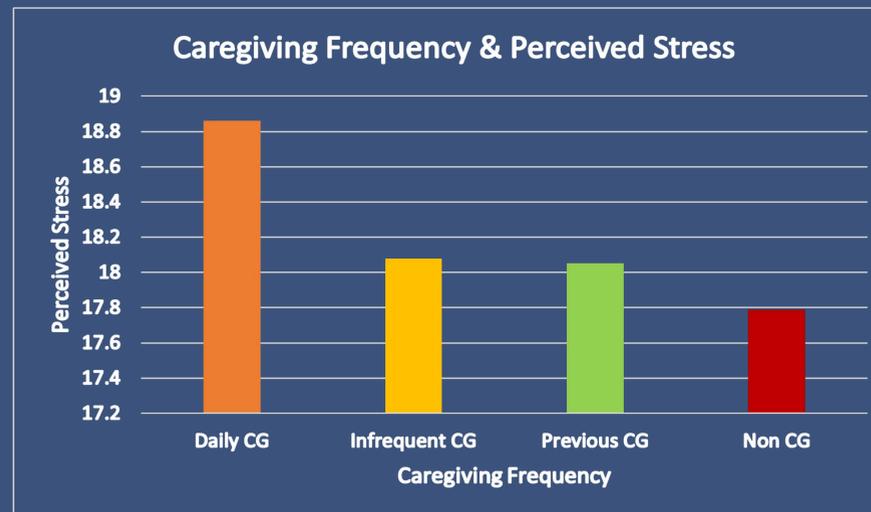
- Prior studies suggest **informal caregivers** are at risk for loneliness and distress. COVID-19 may pose challenges that exacerbate this risk.
- The current study examines the relationships between caregiving frequency, loneliness, perceived stress, and negative affect.
- Caregivers' COVID-19 concerns and impacts were also investigated as moderators
- *Hypothesis:* We anticipate magnified effects of these moderators among caregivers.

METHODS

1. *Participants:* Health and Retirement Study (HRS) COVID-19 project sample, N=2108 (mean age=69, SD=10.8)
2. *Measures:* Caregiving Frequency, COVID-19 related concerns & social disruptions, Perceived Stress Scale, Positive and Negative Affect Scale, UCLA Loneliness Scale; Tested with Moderation Analysis using SAS version 9.4
3. Covariates controlled for include age, gender, and health status

Frequency of Caregiving	N	%	Mean Age	SD
Daily	189	8.97	67.42	10.84
Less Frequent	208	9.87	65.18	8.69
Previous	272	12.90	68.12	10.51
Never	1439	68.26	70.28	10.36

COVID-19 related concerns about family members' health was significantly associated with loneliness among daily caregivers, but not among less frequent and non-caregivers.



RESULTS

- Higher concern about family members' health during COVID-19 was significantly associated with greater loneliness among daily caregivers ($p = .009$), but not among less frequent and non-caregivers.
- Daily caregivers reported significantly greater distress during COVID-19 compared to non-caregivers ($p=.036$).
- Previous caregivers reported higher distress than did non-caregivers, but only among those with low levels of concern about COVID ($p = .046$); there was no difference in distress at high levels of concern.
- Unexpectedly, daily caregivers who experienced fewer social disruptions due to the pandemic reported higher levels of loneliness ($p = .002$); however, the association was null for non-caregivers.

CONCLUSION

- COVID-19 appeared to exacerbate mental health disparities between participants who provided daily care to a disabled adult and those who had never served as a caregiver.
- Greater COVID-related concerns about family members' health further escalated daily caregivers' loneliness.
- Future research should identify and address challenges specific to frequent caregivers and highlight their need for additional resources during the pandemic.

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