

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

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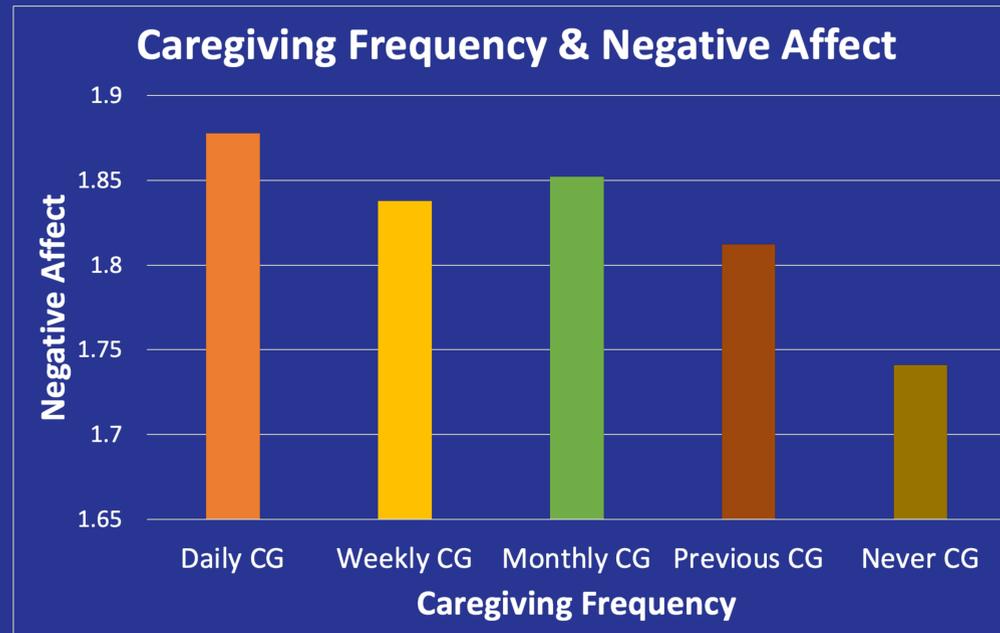
INTRODUCTION

- 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 impacts were also investigated as moderators
- *Hypothesis:* We anticipate magnified effects of these moderators among frequent caregivers.

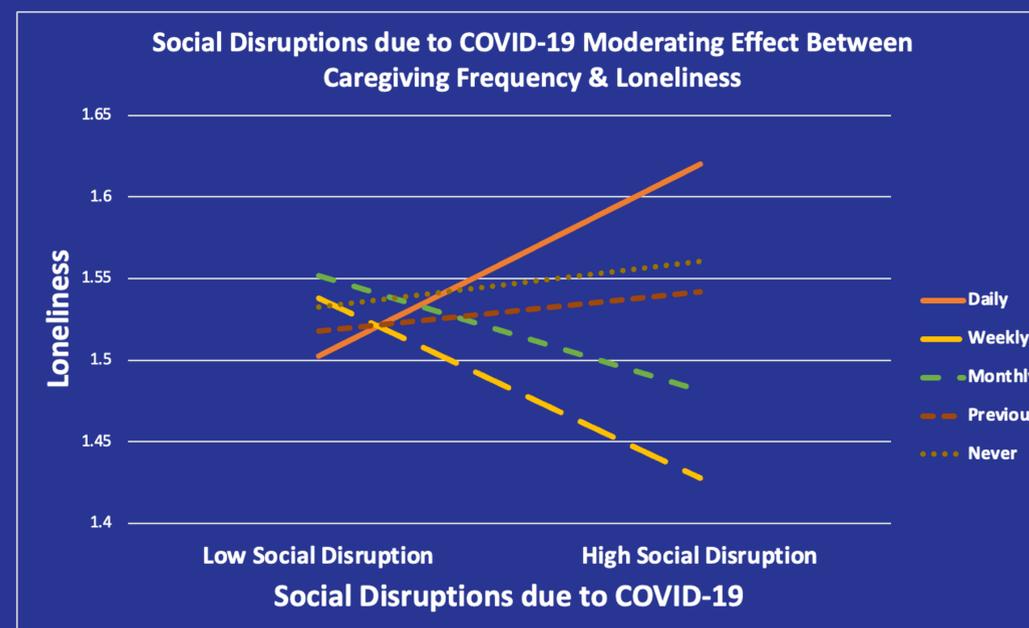
METHODS

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, health status, race, education, employment status, and outcome at prior wave

Frequency of Caregiving	N	%	Mean Age	SD
Daily	189	9.0	67.42	10.84
Weekly	104	4.9	64.35	9.12
Monthly	104	4.9	66.02	8.20
Previous	546	25.9	69.10	9.62
Never	1165	55.3	70.34	10.68

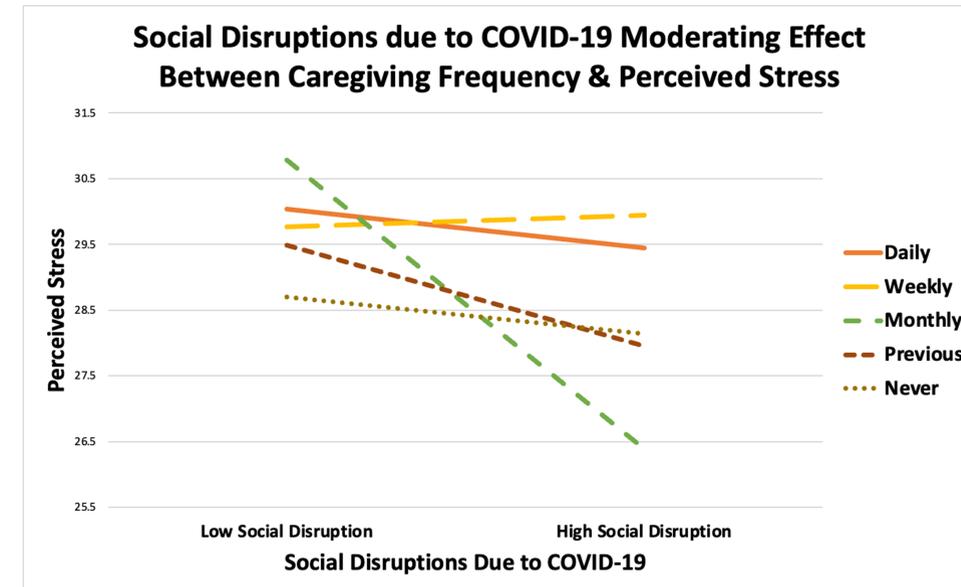


COVID-19 related social disruptions were significantly associated with higher loneliness among daily caregivers, but not among less frequent caregivers.



RESULTS

- Daily caregivers reported more loneliness than less frequent caregivers, but only among those with high social disruptions due to COVID-19 ($p = .046$); there was no difference in loneliness at low social disruption.
- Unexpectedly, monthly caregivers who experienced fewer social disruptions due to the pandemic reported higher levels of perceived stress ($p = .002$); however, the association was null for daily and non-caregivers.



CONCLUSION

- COVID-19 appeared to exacerbate mental health disparities between participants who provided daily care to a disabled adult and those who provide less frequent or no care.
- Findings suggest that frequent caregivers and less frequent caregivers are distinct groups that are differentially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Future research should explore these differences and identify caregiver need for additional resources during the pandemic.

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