

Positive and negative affect as potential mediators of the associations between positive social support and interactions on satisfaction during retirement

Kali Odd, Jonathan Bruce Santo, Andrew Burr
Department of Psychology, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Abstract

Social networks play a role in how retirees adjust to retirement and their overall well-being in retirement. However, the role that social interactions and satisfaction with social support play in retirement satisfaction have yet to be fully explored. As such, the current study examined the mediating role of positive and negative affect on the associations between satisfaction with support and positive and negative social interactions as predictors of retirement satisfaction among retired older adults. Data were collected from 433 older adults ($M_{age} = 59.20$, $SD = 5.21$; 51.5% female) in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The current findings illustrate that positive and negative social interactions as well as positive and negative affect play a role in retirement satisfaction, and that satisfaction with social support plays a role in the relationship between negative social interactions and negative affect. These findings may also have implications for interventions aimed to increase social integration of retirees.

Background

As the baby boomer population begins to retire, it has become crucial to study concepts such as retirement satisfaction, adjustment, and overall well-being during retirement as well as their contributing factors. Many studies have explored how individual factors (i.e., health) relate to retirement outcomes, but Froidevaux, Hirschi, and Wang (2016) also call for studies to explore how social factors (i.e., social support) relate to retirement outcomes. Retirees are more at risk to become socially isolated, and social isolation is associated with declines in physical and mental health (Greenfield & Mauldin, 2017). These researchers suggest that older adults need to maintain a strong, healthy, and varied social network which can lead to a number of positive outcomes such as improvement in cognitive functioning and health as well as decreases in depression and loneliness. Thus, social interactions and satisfaction of social support are some social factors that should be considered when studying retirees. The current study examined the mediating role of positive and negative affect on the associations between satisfaction with support and positive and negative social interactions as predictors of retirement satisfaction among older adults in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Methods

Participants consisted of 433 older adults ($M_{age} = 59.20$, $SD = 5.21$; 51.5% female, 48.5% male) that had participated in a longitudinal study in Montreal, Quebec, Canada exploring how individuals adjusted to life in retirement. Measures included items from the Retirement Satisfaction Inventory and were used to assess overall retirement satisfaction (3 items, $\alpha = .71$). Positive and negative affect were assessed using the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (20 items, $\alpha = .77$). Satisfaction with social support was assessed by individuals rating how satisfied they were with the support from others (10 items, $\alpha = .95$). Social interactions were assessed using items that looked at the frequency of positive social interactions (12 items, $\alpha = .85$) and negative social interactions (12 items, $\alpha = .92$). Structural equation modeling was used to explore the associations of interest (Figure 1).

Results

Results indicated that positive social interactions and positive affect were positively correlated with each other and with retirement satisfaction, and negative social interactions and negative affect were positively correlated with each other and negatively correlated with retirement satisfaction. Negative social interactions were negatively associated with positive affect. Positive affect and negative affect were negatively associated with each other. Satisfaction with social support was positively associated with positive affect and negatively associated with negative affect. Most interesting is that the positive relationship between satisfaction with social support and retirement satisfaction was no longer when the indirect effects of positive and negative affect were included.

Moreover, positive affect served as a partial mediator between positive social interactions and retirement satisfaction while negative affect served as a partial mediator between negative social interactions and retirement. Lastly, satisfaction with social support was found to moderate the relationship between negative social interactions and negative affect indicating that high negative social interactions were associated with more negative affect, and this was more true when satisfaction with social support was lower (Figure 2).

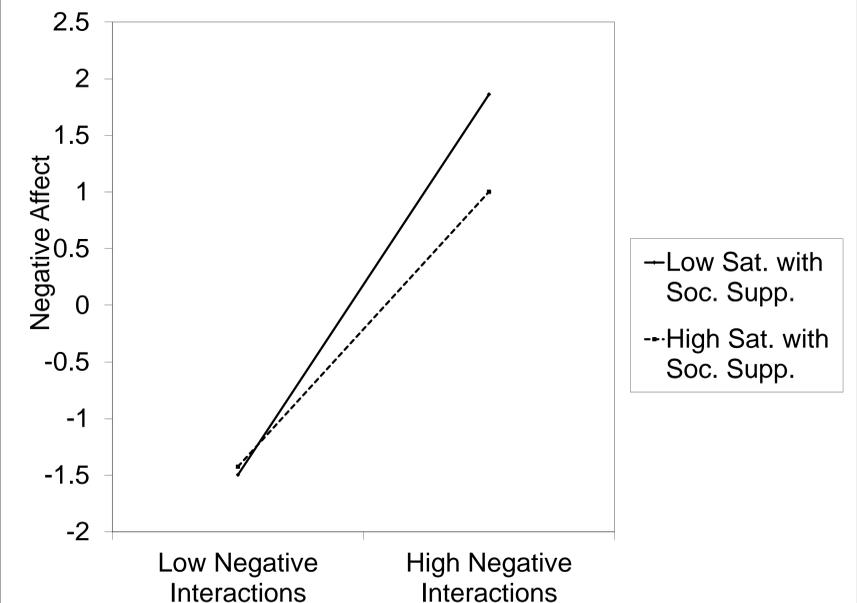


Figure 2. A line graph depicting the moderation of satisfaction with social support on negative social interactions and negative affect. High negative social interactions were associated with more negative affect, and this was more true when satisfaction with social support was lower.

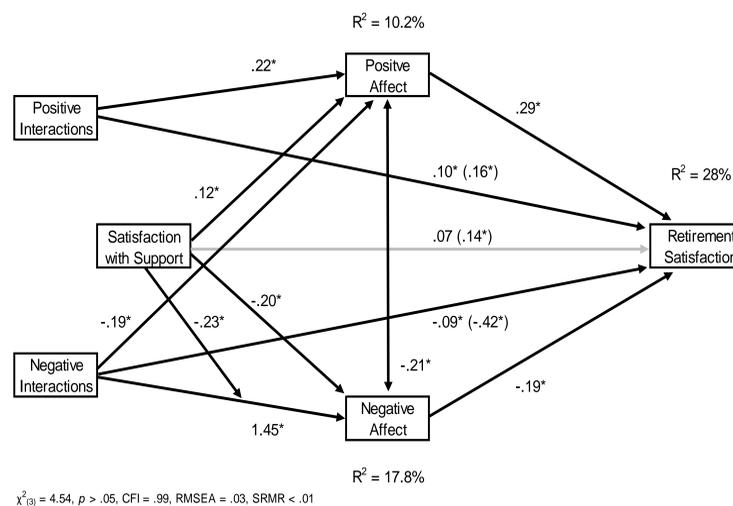


Figure 1. The final structural equation model. Values represent the unstandardized factor loadings, regression coefficients, correlations between the variables. Values in parentheses represent the direct association (without any mediators present). R^2 values are also included.

Conclusions

The findings support the notion that positive and negative social interactions as well as positive and negative affect play a role in retirement satisfaction. The relationship between negative social interactions and negative affect was stronger for retirees who were less satisfied with their social support. Future research may consider how these variables relate to other retirement outcomes such as retirement adjustment. The current results may also have implications for interventions aimed to increase social integration of retirees.

References

- Froidevaux, A., Hirschi, A., & Wang, M. (2016). The role of mattering as an overlooked key challenge in retirement planning and adjustment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 94*, 57-69. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2016.02.016
- Greenfield, E. A., & Mauldin, R. L. (2017). Participation in community activities through Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) Supportive Service Programs. *Ageing & Society, 37*, 1987-2011. doi:10.1017/S0144686X16000702