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Understanding the Drivers and Outcomes of Carer Recognition
among Working Carers of Ageing Relatives

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Overview

- Context: legislative and policy framework
- Importance of carer recognition
  - Nancy Fraser (2000): institutional recognition
- Current study
  - Hypotheses
  - Method
  - Findings
- Implications

Legislative and policy framework

- Legal/formal recognition of carers contained in:
  - Carer Recognition Acts,
  - Carer Action Plans, Policies
- This legislative recognition is often out of step with realities of carers personal experience of recognition during interactions with:
  - services
  - government bureaucracies
  - communities

Carer recognition

- Nancy Fraser (2000): focus on institutional recognition (status, value, inclusion)
  - recognition important through legislation and policy frameworks <u>but</u> recognition must be accompanied by attribution of resources providing access to shared opportunities to participate fully in social life (social connectedness, well-being)
  - recognition is relationally constituted in carers' everyday interactions with health, social care, welfare state and other institutions
  - carers are assigned (or not assigned) cultural value and opportunities for participation in social and economic life
- Dimensions of carer recognition
  - Visibility
  - Valuation
  - Validation

Current study

Explores _influences on perceived recognition_ of unpaid caring for an older adult(s) and _outcomes in the form of social connectedness and well-being_ among working carers

Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1**: Carer recognition is positively associated with: a) social connectedness and b) personal well-being

- **Hypothesis 2**: Employment disruptions are negatively associated with perceived carer recognition

- **Hypothesis 3**: Carer recognition mediates the relationship between employment disruptions and a) social connectedness and b) personal well-being

- **Hypothesis 4:** Difficulty navigating services is negatively associated with carer recognition

- **Hypothesis 5**: The relationship between employment disruptions and carer recognition is moderated by difficulty navigating care services

Conceptual Model
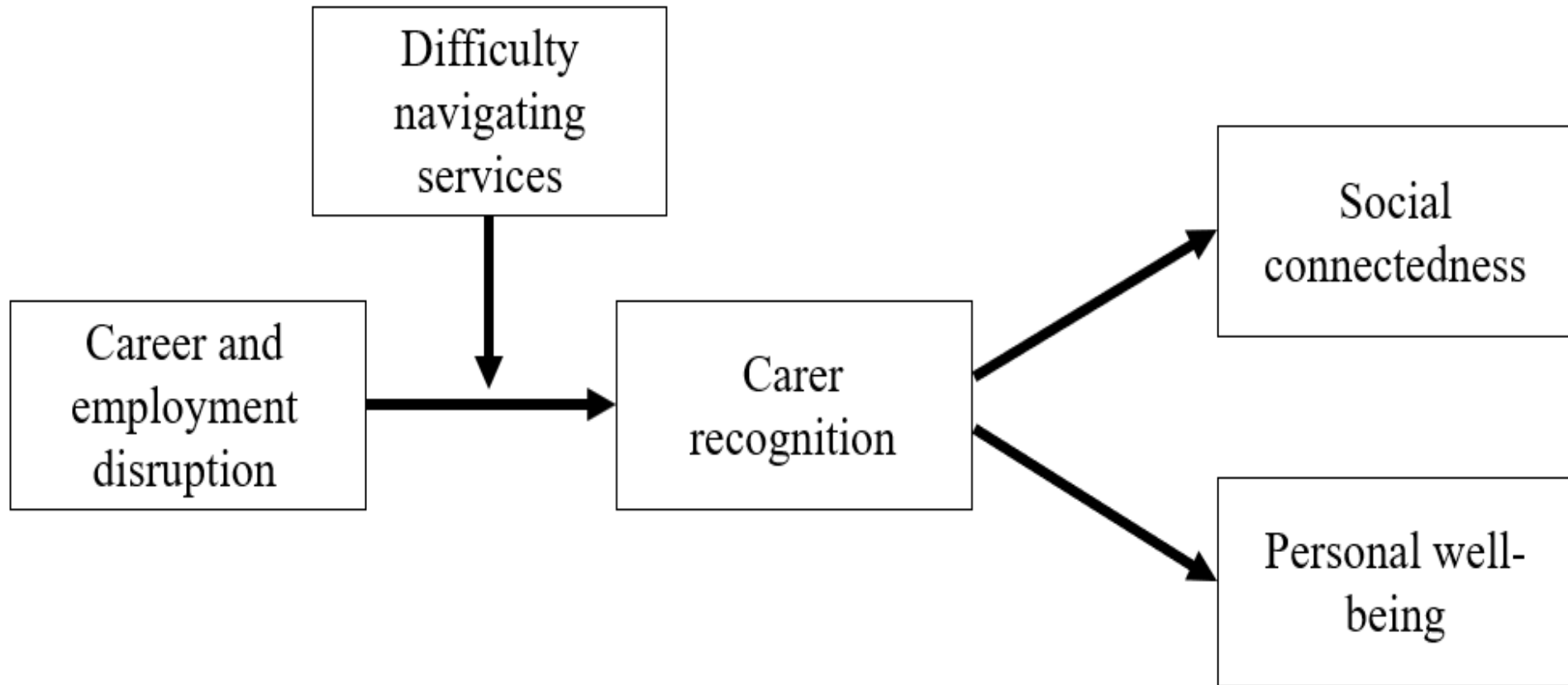
Method

- National Carer Survey

  - Administered Australia-wide, April-June 2020 by Carers NSW

  - Conducted online; paper surveys available via carer organisations

- Data: 6825 valid responses from carers (online 76.6%; paper 23.3%); majority (93%) had primary* responsibility in caring for a relative

- Current study (N=2447): subset of respondents who cared for an older person (aged 65+ years)

  - Survey items

    - demographics (e.g., carer's age, gender)

    - caring role (e.g., hours per week engaged in care responsibilities, number of recipients cared for, who cared for)

    - employment status (e.g., hours of employment per week, effects of care on employment)

*Provide most informal assistance to a person with one or more of the core activities of mobility, self-care and communication

Measures

- Employment disruptions
  - experienced specific career and employment related disruptions "as a result of your caring role" in relation to 10 issues (e.g., low confidence to apply for jobs, skill obsolescence, being less prepared to meet job demands, underemployment, reduction in work hours) - scale created ranging from 0 to 10

- Carer recognition
  - 3-item scale asking extent caring role recognised (Likert scale,1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) : "I feel that my caring role is recognised and valued by my community"; "I feel that my caring role is recognised and valued by service providers"; "I feel that my caring role is recognised and valued by the government"

- Difficulty navigating aged care services
  - challenges navigating aged care services (e.g., person cared for not eligible for required services, service received at a lower level than required, long waiting period to get assessed, long waiting period to access services, services required not available locally, no culturally appropriate services available

- Social connectedness
  - "During the past four weeks…" in relation to 6 items (e.g., "It has been easy to relate to others", "I felt isolated from other people" (reverse scored), "I had someone to share my feelings with", "I found it easy to get in touch with others when I needed to" (1 = Not at all, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = About half the time, 4 = Most of the time, 5 = Almost always)

- Personal well-being
  - eight-item scale (e.g., "how satisfied you are with … "Your standard of living", "Your health", "What you are achieving in life", "Your personal relationships", "How safe you feel", "Feeling part of your community", "Your future security", and "Your life overall" (5-point Likert scale)

- Control Variables
  - Caregiver age, gender, employment status, years of caregiving, hours of weekly care provided

Analyses

- Regression analyses to test effect of employment disruption(s) on carer recognition while controlling for other work- and care-related variables (employment status, care hours, care duration, and number of care recipients (Hypothesis 1)

- Moderated regression analysis to test the conditional effect of the difficulty navigating services (Hypothesis 2)

  - Interaction effects under two conditions relating to difficulty navigating services: high (one standard deviation above the mean) and low (one standard deviation below the mean)

Key findings
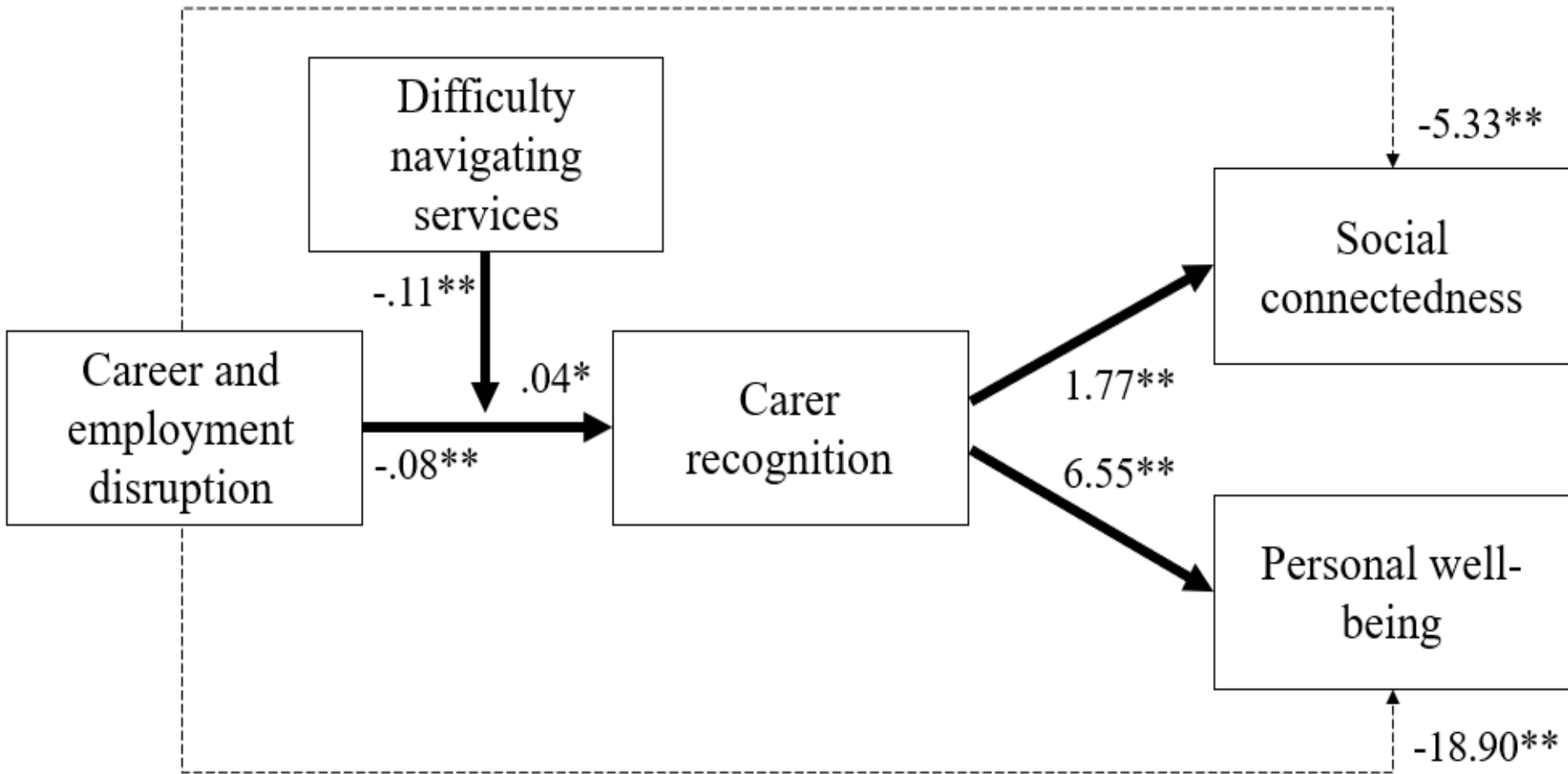
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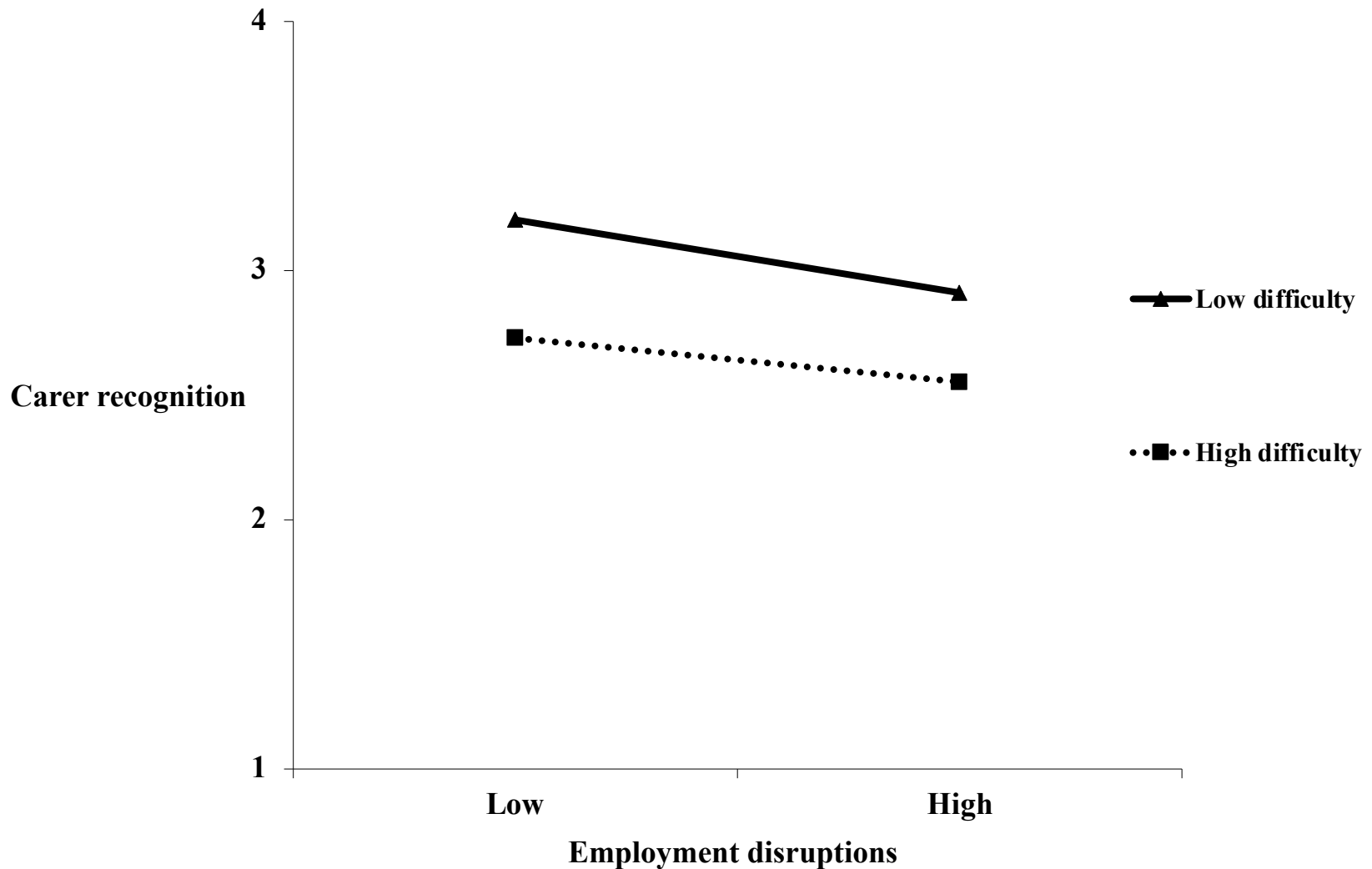
- Effects of control variables on carer recognition

  - Gender and care hours not related to carer recognition

  - Age positively related to carer recognition

  - Older working carers more likely to perceive they are recognised for caring

  - Caring duration and number of care recipients related to recognition

  - Longer duration and greater number of care recipients associated with lower levels of perceived recognition

- Support for the mediating role of carer recognition

- Difficulty navigating services moderated the relationship between career disruption and outcomes (social connectedness, well-being)

- Employees experiencing greater difficulties with aged care services reported lower community recognition of carer role and worse outcomes than employees with fewer difficulties with aged care services

Key findings

- Recognition by government, service providers and communities associated with better outcomes for social connectedness and personal wellbeing

- Carers who feel recognised are more likely to feel socially connected and satisfied with different aspects of life/life overall

- Carers with low work disruptions, and low difficulty navigating services, have high recognition

- Those with high disruptions and high difficulty navigating services, have low recognition

Implications (mature aged carers)

- Findings extend literature on mature aged carers and provision of care to older dependents.

  - The vast majority of research on carers has been undertaken without an explicit focus on the experience of carers at different points in the life cycle.

  - While specific areas of literature have developed around the unique experience of young carers (Carers NSW, 2020b), "sandwich carers" (DePasquale, 2016), and mature aged carers (Crespo & Mira, 2014; Jacobs, et al., 2015; Jacobs et al., 2017), these lines of investigation are still evolving and offer many important, but currently underexplored pathways for research.

- Findings suggestion opportunities for future research on mature aged carers:

  - Mature aged carers have a unique experience of caring as they are often involved in multiple roles (employment and eldercare)

  - Mature aged carers are likely to respond differently, and have different experiences of caring, than younger workers.

Implications (carer recognition)

- Findings extend research on carer recognition by situating it within a sequence in which carer recognition has both antecedents and outcomes

- Provides an explanatory pathway connecting:

  - Carer recognition with important outcomes (well-being, social connectedness) *and*

  - Points of influence (career disruption, aged care service experiences) that serve as points of intervention

Implications (predictors of carer recognition)

- Findings extend research by evaluating the separate and joint impact of key features of both employment (career and employment disruption) and eldercare (aged care services) domains.

- Prior research has tended to consider career disruptions as an outcome.

  - By considering employment disruptions as a predictor our findings underline the importance of employment to carer belief structures and suggest that efforts to understand carer beliefs about community caring related attitudes need to account for the employment experience.

  - By considering the experience of aged care services as a predictor, we identify how these services shape carer beliefs about community attitudes and thus, the need to incorporate an assessment of the aged care services in any examination of mature aged employees with eldercare responsibilities.

- We extend research on work and eldercare contextual influences by assessing their interaction

Implications (outcomes of carer recognition)

- Research that considers the employment experiences of carers has predominantly emphasised participation in employment as a near term outcome (e.g., work-caring conflict) or in terms of role participation (e.g., reduction in hours of work, exit from the workforce).

- Thus, relatively little is known about the effects of the disruption experienced by mature aged carers to their career.

- Our assessment of employment disruptions as a predictor variable:

  - Enables a consideration of the flow-on impact of carer disruptions to a carer's beliefs about community acceptance and to important outcomes that are of major relevance to carers in the form of social connectedness and well-being.

References

- Fraser, N. (2000). Rethinking recognition. New Left Review, 3, May/June.

- Fraser, N. (2007). Feminist politics in the age of recognition: A two-dimensional approach to gender justice. Studies in Social Justice, 1, 1, 23-35.