



Alzheimer's Caregiving and Meaning in Social Processes

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Introduction

Previous research has extensively demonstrated that Alzheimer's Disease (AD) has a variety of negative outcomes for the sufferer. We are interested in extending this research to the domain of social psychological processes by examining how the disease impacts the caregivers and family members of someone with AD. This is particularly intriguing to research because while much research has been done on the patients with Alzheimer's, not much has been done on how it impacts those around them. Extensive research has been done in the past showing that general forgetfulness, due to carelessness, is negatively correlated with meaning in life (King and Geise, 2011). This is relevant in our study because even when the cause of forgetfulness is organic (AD), there is still a negative correlation between meaning in life and being forgotten.

Hypotheses

Study 1:

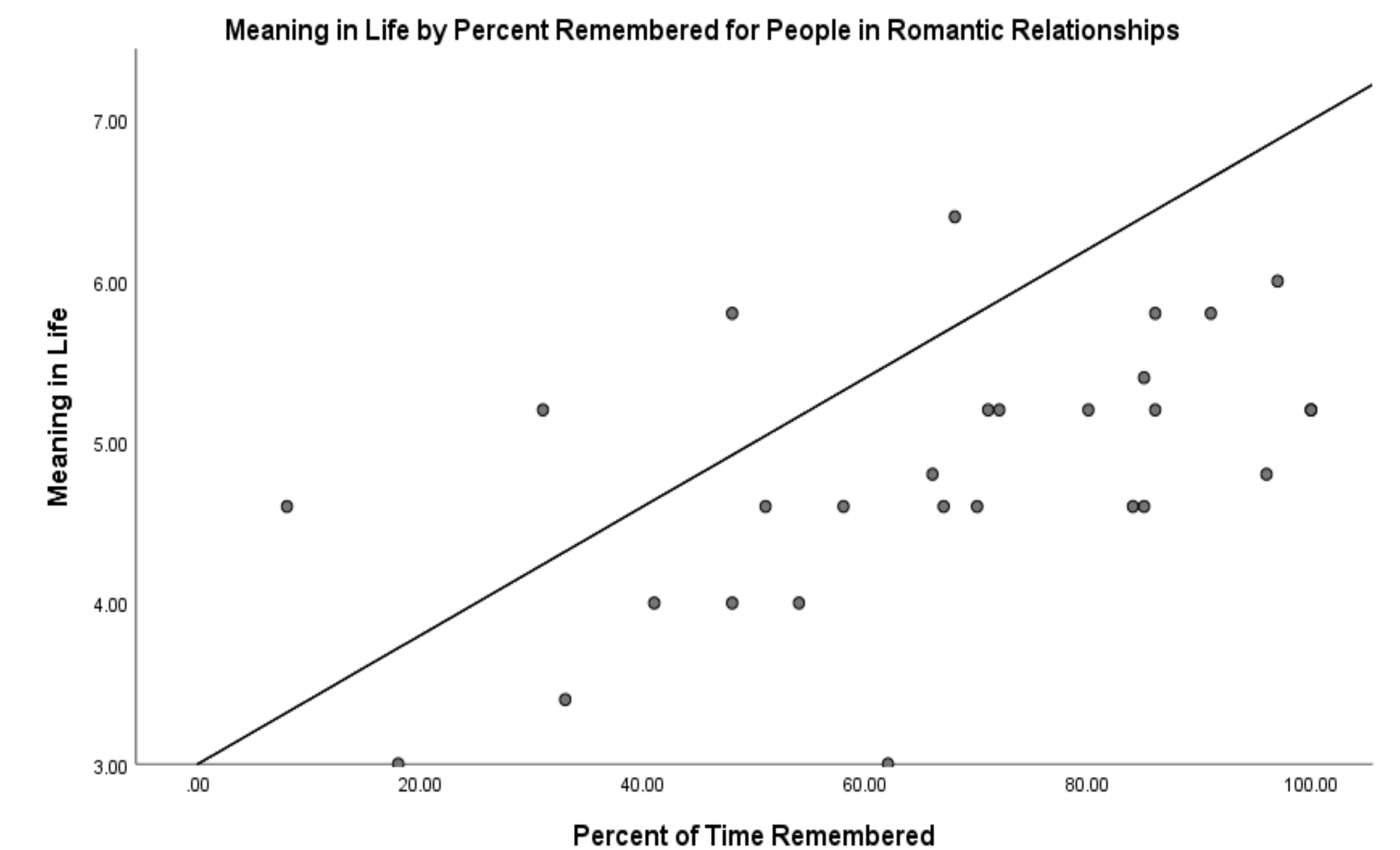
The purpose of study one was an exploratory analysis of the relationships between caregivers and Alzheimer's patients. We had no specific hypothesis.

Results

Study 1 Results:

During study one, we tested a variety of measures in order to be more familiar with the relationships between Alzheimer's Disease, caregivers, severity, forgetfulness, and meaning in life/well-being. As expected, Meaning in Life positively correlated with Satisfaction with Life ($r=.65, p<.001$) as well as Affect ($r=.49, p<.001$). Depression (CESD) negatively correlated with Meaning in Life ($r=-.24, p<.001$) and Affect ($r=-.5, p<.001$). Relationship to the person negatively correlated with Affect ($r=-.19, p<.05$). We didn't find any significant relationships between well-being and Alzheimer's Disease, so we split up our data by relationship to the person suffering from AD and found significant results. We found a significant positive relationship between Meaning in Life (MIL) and Percent of Time Remembered in romantic partners ($\beta=.51, p<.05$). Meaning in Life also marginally predicted Affect ($\beta=.41, p=.06$). All other relationships (parent, grandparent, friend, etc.) showed no significant correlations. To further analyze our data, we coded for intimacy and coping within our open-ended questions. There were no significant results found.

Figure 1. Correlations found in how often someone is remembered and MIL



Methods

Study 1:

Participants: 328 Amazon Mechanical Turk workers who know someone with Alzheimer's Disease.

Procedure: Participants were initially given a pre-screening survey, "Meaning in Social Processes", to screen out those who did not know someone suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. Following the prescreening, participants were asked a series of general questions about their relationship to the person with AD and how often they spent time together. Participants then completed the modified Big 5 Inventory, SWLS, MLQ, PA & NA measures, as well as the CES-D. After these measures were completed participants filled out the Alzheimer's Diagnostic Questionnaire, and answered further open-ended questions regarding the person with AD.

Discussion

Our findings show us that the type of relationship and closeness to a person with Alzheimer's Disease matter regarding their levels of depression and well-being. It seems to only show significant results with romantic partners. This could be due to the romantic partners seeing their partner impacted by the disease as an extension of themselves.

We plan on testing this theory in future replicating studies to find out if it is representative of the results.

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