

High Satisfaction with the Friendship Line among Older Adults experiencing Chronic Loneliness

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Background

- Loneliness is a known modifiable risk factor in clinical outcomes, but few studies examine long-standing, widely available interventions
- The Friendship Line (FL), created in 1973, is a nationally-available crisis and warmline service for older adults

Objective: use mixed-methods to evaluate how FL impacts older adults experiencing both occasional and chronic loneliness

Methods

Sample

- Demographics and qualitative data of older adult FL participants (n=68) were collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews with monthly follow-ups up to 6 months

Study Design

- Participants were categorized as daily versus non-daily callers
- We tested the association of **call volume** with **chronic loneliness**, defined as scoring 6+ points on 3-item UCLA Scale (Range: 0-9 points) at two or more time points
- Participants' free text responses in surveys and qualitative interviews of a purposive sample (n=12) were analyzed thematically

10-minute calls from the **free, nationally-available Friendship Line** can provide support for older adults experiencing either **occasional** or **chronic loneliness**

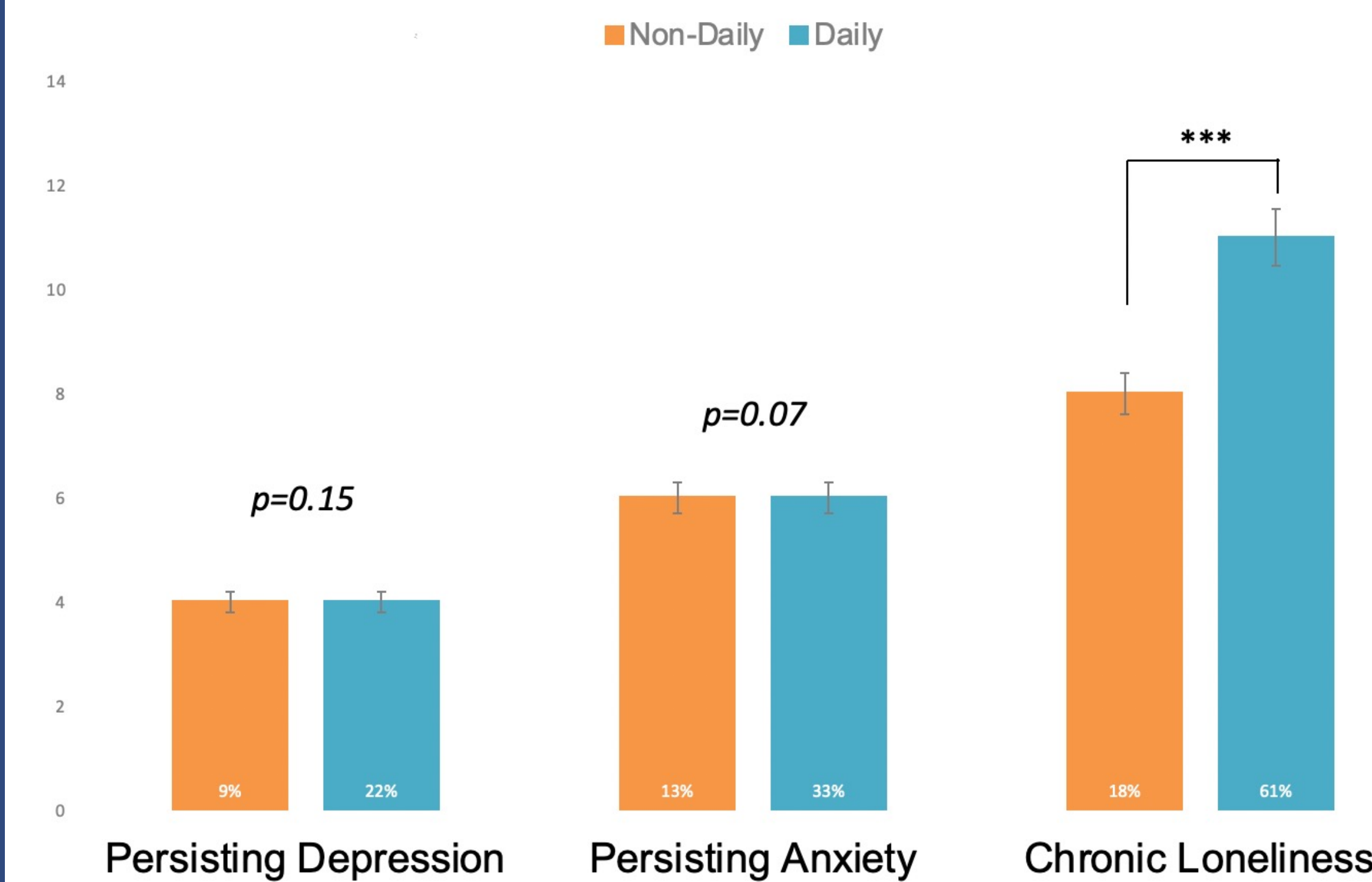
I could say Friendship Line helped me in-- It was like urgent care ... **it's like going to an urgent care** where right now you got to talk to someone
- age 72, Non-Daily



I rely on it, like I rely on food and water ... You can't believe how much Friendship Line helped me through my grieving process, which took me at least five years ... now, I **look more forward to (calling) like I called up one of my friends for real.**
- age 69, Daily

Results

- Daily callers were more likely to be chronically lonely, despite describing greater satisfaction with FL (90% vs 71%) and improved mental health (90% vs 38%) compared to non-daily callers



Conclusion

- FL is unique in offering both crisis support (hotline) and daily check-ins (warmline), allowing both acute and chronic needs to be addressed
- Warmlines are a promising intervention for those managing chronic loneliness
- Despite stably high levels of loneliness, qualitative data reveals praise and gratitude for FL's impact on participants' lives
- Future studies using more sensitive scales may better capture the different dimensions of loneliness that FL does or does not address

