

Seeing The Best In Others: Relations Between Positive Attribution Biases, Social Support Satisfaction and Resilience

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Introduction

Social interaction requires a diverse set of processing skills that help individuals understand the feelings and actions of others¹. Attribution biases can come into play when an individual interprets the intentions of another's ambiguous action. Past literature has predominately examined effects of negative attribution styles, where an individual interprets an ambiguous action as hurtful. Hostile or negative attribution biases have been correlated with fewer friendships, more mental health concerns, and increased rates of aggressive behavior². Far fewer studies, in contrast, have examined positive attribution biases, where an individual interprets an ambiguous action as kind or helpful³. The current project aimed to explore relations between positive attributions and resilience in emerging adults. We hypothesized that the relations between attribution style and resilience would likely be mediated by how satisfied an individual was with their social support network.

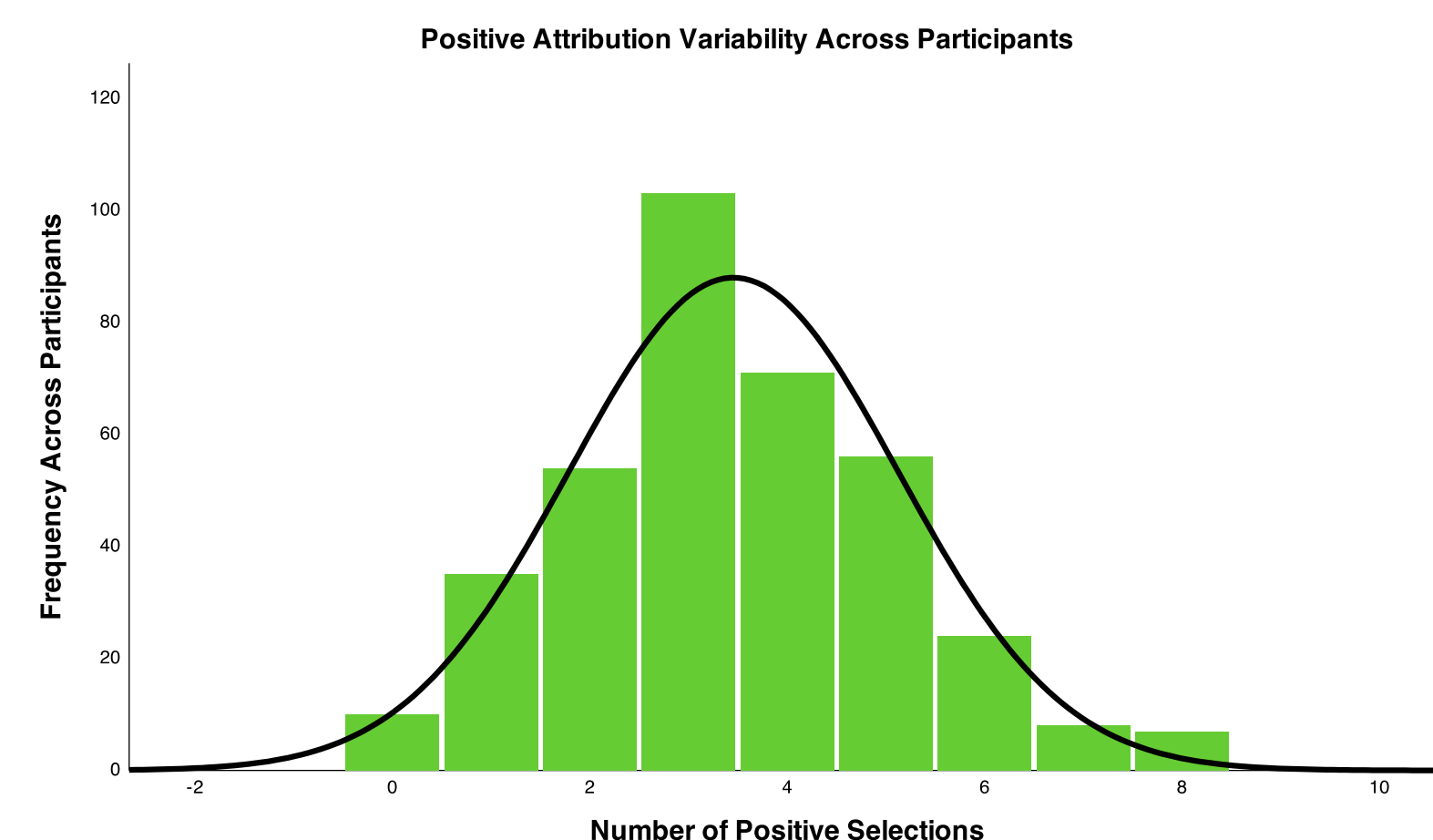
Methods

- Participants completed an online survey
- N=110 participants in a pilot survey
 - 48 men and 62 women
- N=826 participants in a replication survey
 - 561 Women, 200 Men, 10 Non-Binary
 - Aged 18-24
 - 41.7% Hispanic or Latino

Replication Survey

White/Caucasian	61.2%
Black/African American	10.9%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	8.8%
Mixed Race	5.3%
Asian	3.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.4%

Quantifying Positive Attribution Bias



- Participants responded to a forced-choice attribution item for each vignette.
- On average, participants selected a positive attribution three times ($M = 3.46$) across all ten vignettes.

Quantifying Social Support Satisfaction & Resilience

Resilience⁴

- Participants rated their own resilience (i.e., ability to adapt to adversity) across five dimensions (e.g., sense of self efficacy), where higher scores indicated higher resilience.
- 1–5-point Likert scale ranging from “not true at all” to “true nearly all of the time”.

Example Item:

“I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles”

Social Support Satisfaction⁵

- Participants rated satisfaction with the support they received from their networks across six dimensions (e.g., count on to care about you), higher scores indicated higher satisfaction.
- 1–6-point Likert scale ranging from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”.

Example Item:

“How satisfied are you with this help/support? Please answer even if you wrote “no one” above.”

Novel Social Vignettes

You are eating lunch with your friends at a restaurant. You get up to use the restroom and they start looking at you and whispering about something.

Why do you think they were whispering?

NEGATIVE

They were talking about how much they dislike you and they are glad you left the table.

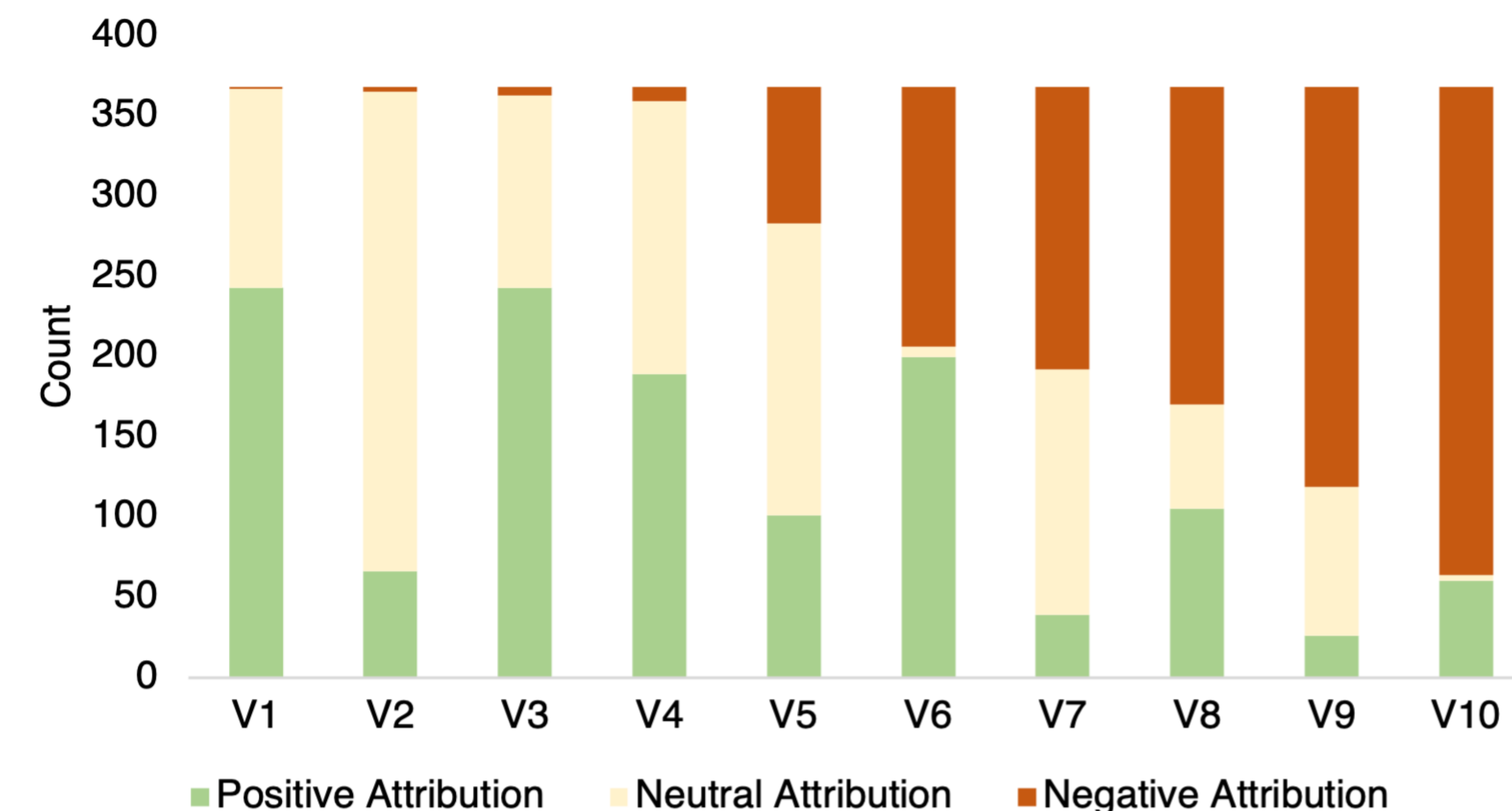
NEUTRAL

They were talking about their food and how they liked it.

POSITIVE

They were talking about how much they loved your outfit and were planning to tell you when you got back to the table.

Attribution Variability Across Novel Social Vignettes



Out of all of the explanations, which do you think is the **MOST** likely?

Mean Likert Ratings of Attribution Likelihood

	Likelihood Positive	Likelihood Neutral	Likelihood Negative
V1	4.22	3.89	1.37
V2	4.08	4.71	1.78
V3	4.46	4.22	2.06
V4	4.50	4.49	1.86
V5	3.95	3.95	3.13
V6	3.65	1.90	3.85
V7	2.67	3.60	3.64
V8	2.86	2.52	3.36
V9	2.71	2.80	3.93
V10	3.14	2.31	4.41

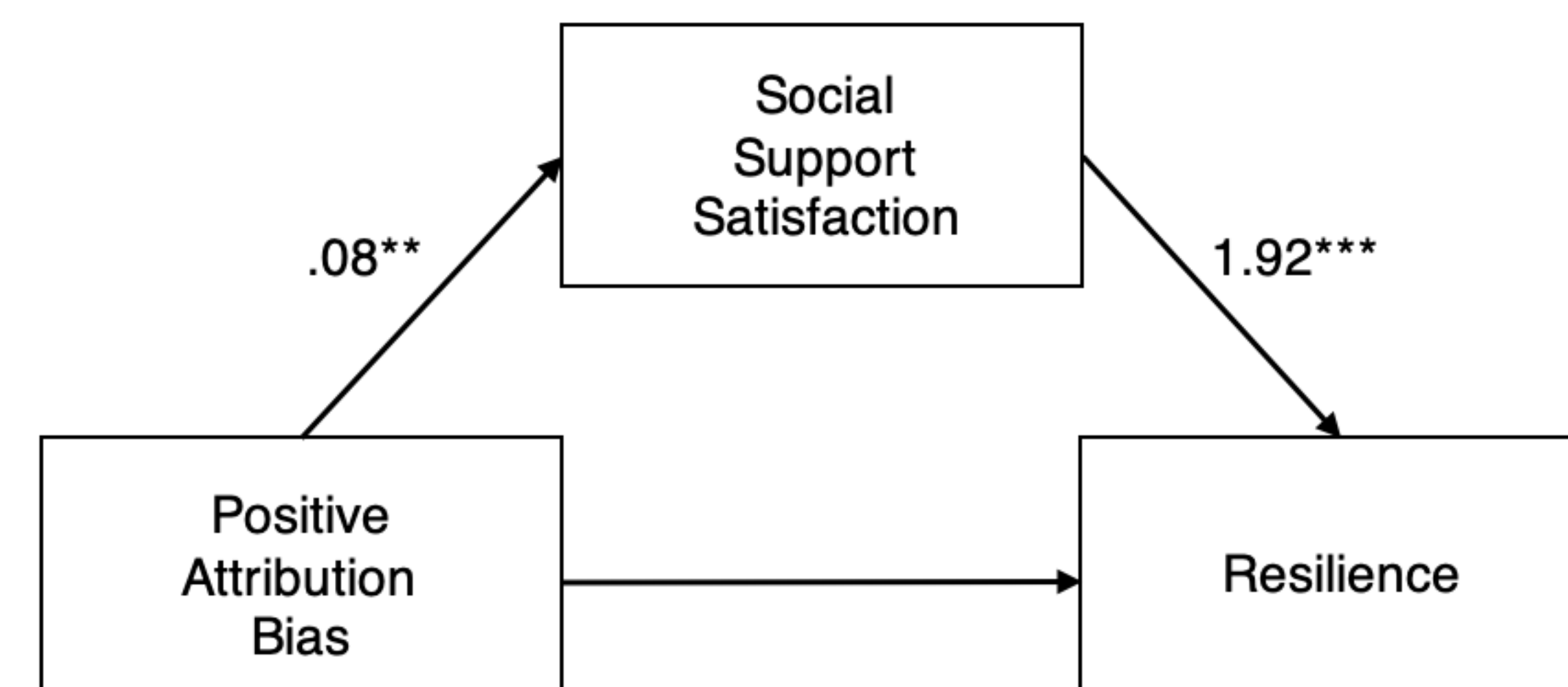
Results

Pilot Sample

- Bivariate correlations between the three variables of interest
 - Positive Attribution Bias & Resilience ($r(51) = .14$, $p = .32$).
 - Positive Attribution Bias & Social Support Satisfaction ($r(51) = .22$, $p = .12$).
 - Social Support Satisfaction & Resilience ($r(51) = .30$, $p = .03$).
- Underpowered for mediation analysis

Replication Sample

- Replication study design and analyses were preregistered through AsPredicted
 - The final sample included data from 368 adults (266 women, 84 men, 10 non-binary individuals) aged 18 to 24 years ($M = 18.98$ years, $SD = 1.04$).
- Results indicated that social support satisfaction fully mediated the link between positive attribution bias and resilience.
- No impact of age or gender on analyses
- Number of negative attributions was not related to social support satisfaction and did not serve as a significant mediator



Direct effect, $B = .34$, $p = .099$
Indirect effect, $B = .15$, 95% CI [.05, .28]

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Conclusions

- Social support satisfaction mediated the relation between positive attribution biases and resilience.
- Although the directionality of these relations cannot be identified with the current paradigm, one possibility is that positive biases lead individuals to perceive social support—even when it may not be present—which in turn bolsters their belief that they can cope with adversity.
- Negative biases were not correlated with social satisfaction and resilience. These results suggest that positive biases are not just formed in the absence of negative bias, but rather could serve as a unique protective mechanism for well-being.
- Future research should examine what factors contribute to positive biases and their prevalence in clinical populations.

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