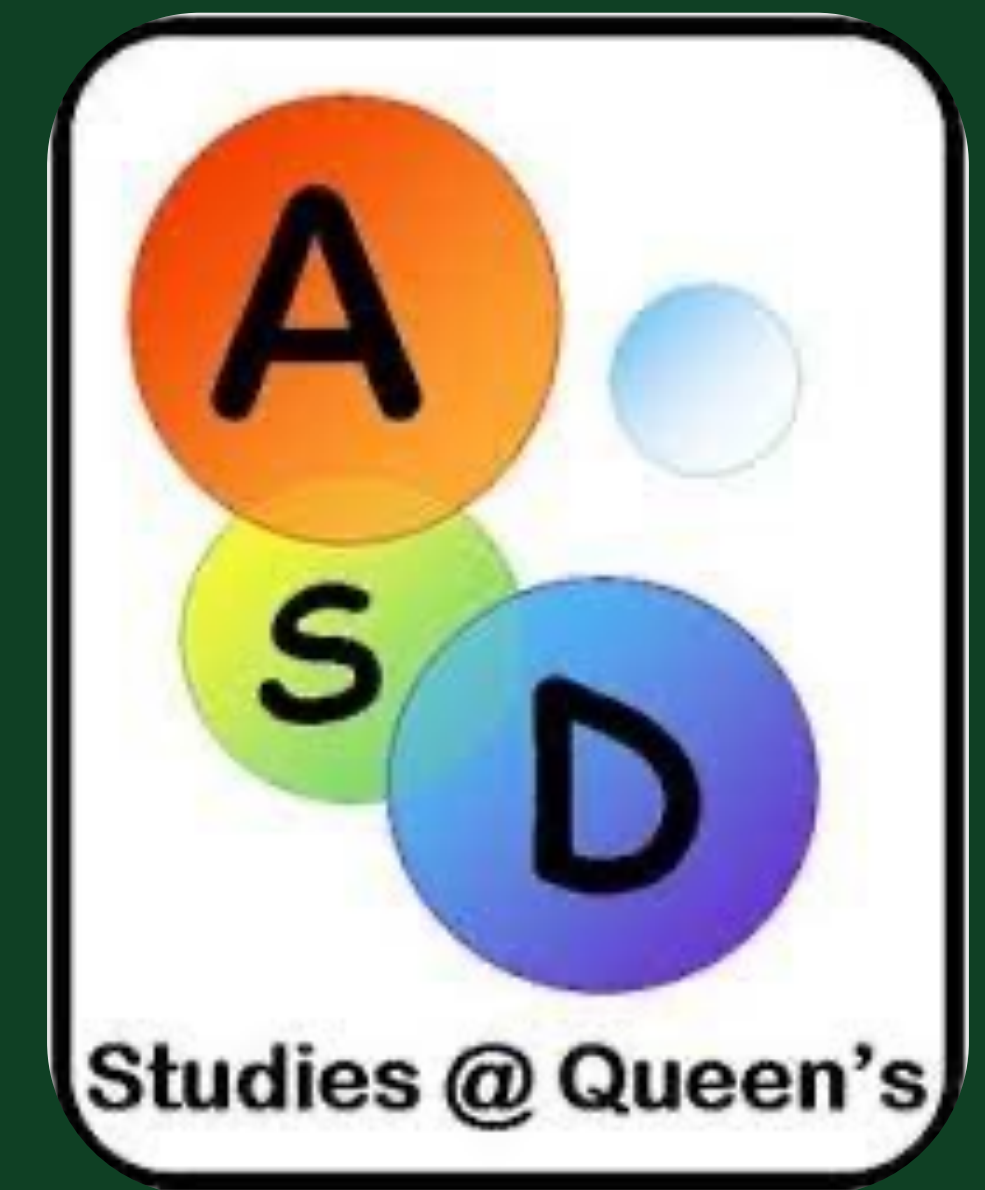


The moderating effect of social support: Experiences of affiliate stigma and depressive symptoms in caregivers of autistic children

by Kayla Gordon and Elizabeth Kelley, PhD
Queen's University



BACKGROUND

- Having an autistic child can be highly stigmatizing (Mitter et al., 2019)
- High levels of internalized stigma can lead to negative mental health consequences (Hayes & Watson, 2012)
- Depression occurs in higher numbers in parents with autistic children (Öz et al., 2020)
 - Depression is correlated with affiliate stigma (Zhou et al, 2018)
- Social support has been shown to reduce depressive symptoms (Park & Lee, 2022)

HYPOTHESES

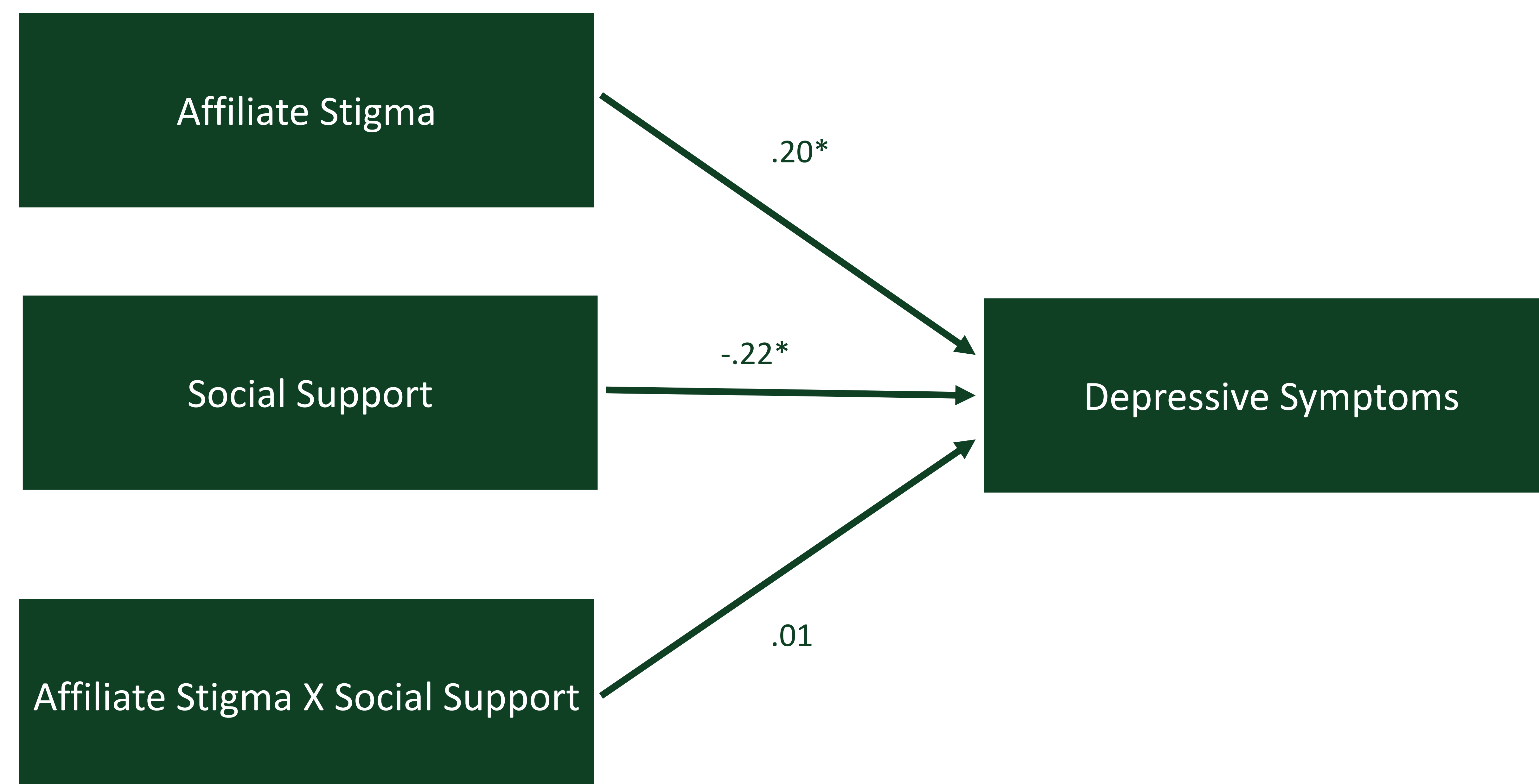
1. Affiliate stigma will be positively associated with depressive symptoms
2. Social support will be negatively associated with depressive symptoms
3. Social support will moderate the relationship between affiliate stigma and depressive symptoms

METHOD

- $N = 84$ caregivers of autistic children
 - 73 mothers, 10 fathers, 1 caregiver
 - 76.2% white
- Autism Quotient (Auyeung et al., 2008) or Modified Checklist for Toddlers – Revised (Robins et al., 1999)
- Family Stigma Questionnaire (Mitter et al., 2018)
- Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977)
- Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988)

Social support does not appear to reduce depressive symptoms related to the stigma experienced by caregivers of autistic children.

The Direct and Moderating Effect of Sigma and Support on Depressive Symptoms



Note * $p < .01$

RESULTS

Model 1:

- Accounts for 19.3% of the variance in depressive symptoms ($R^2 = .19, F(2, 81) = 9.663, p < .001$)
- Affiliate stigma positively relates to depressive symptoms
- Social support negatively relates to depressive symptoms

Model 2:

- Accounted for 1% more variance ($R^2 = .17, F(1, 80) = .69, p = .407$)
- Social support **does not** significantly moderate the relationship between affiliate stigma and depressive symptoms

DISCUSSION

- Affiliate stigma leads to negative mental health consequences
 - This finding can direct interventions towards reducing stigma in caregivers
- Social support is associated with reduced levels of depressive symptoms
 - Can social support interventions be effective?
- If social support does not moderate the relationship between affiliate stigma and depressive symptoms, what does?

LIMITATIONS

- Sample size
- Lack of fathers in sample

REFERENCES

