Exploring Mental Health Stigma: Associations Between Health History and Social Stigma

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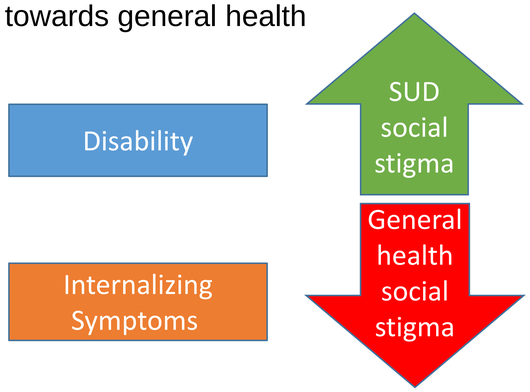
Background

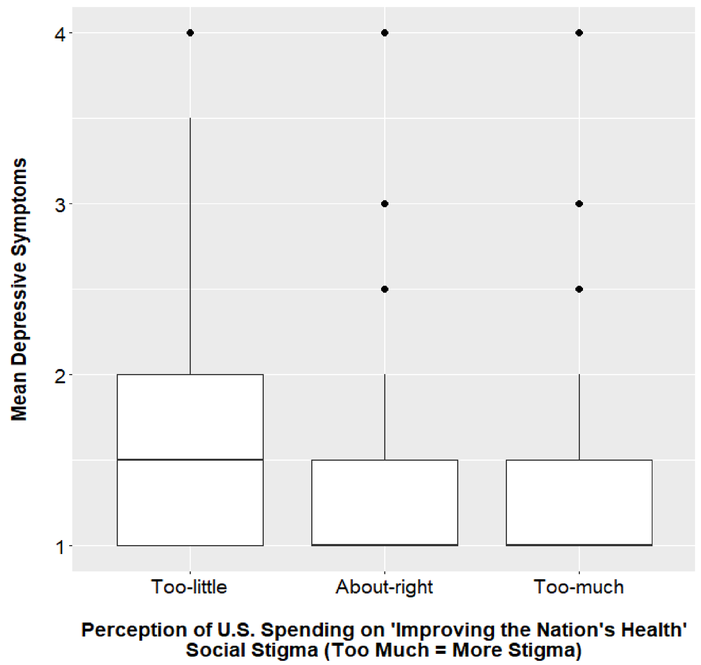
- Mental health stigma is defined as viewing yourself or someone else solely based on mental illness.
- SUD, marked by the inability to control or cut down on substance with impairment, is linked to negative health and well-being across the life course and is difficult to treat
- 46 million people, aged 12 or older, met the DSM-5 criteria this past year for substance use disorder (SUD).
- Depression and anxiety are less stigmatized by society in comparison to SUD
- Individuals with SUD face high levels of stigma (self, social, and institutional), due to due to the belief that addiction is a personal choice rather than an illness. This could explain low treatment engagement
- This project examines the contribution of individual health history (disability status, symptoms of anxiety and depression, drug use) on ratings of social stigma towards SUD and general health

Hypothesis

- Greater internalizing symptoms and self-reported disability will be associated with greater social stigma towards substance use but less stigma towards general health

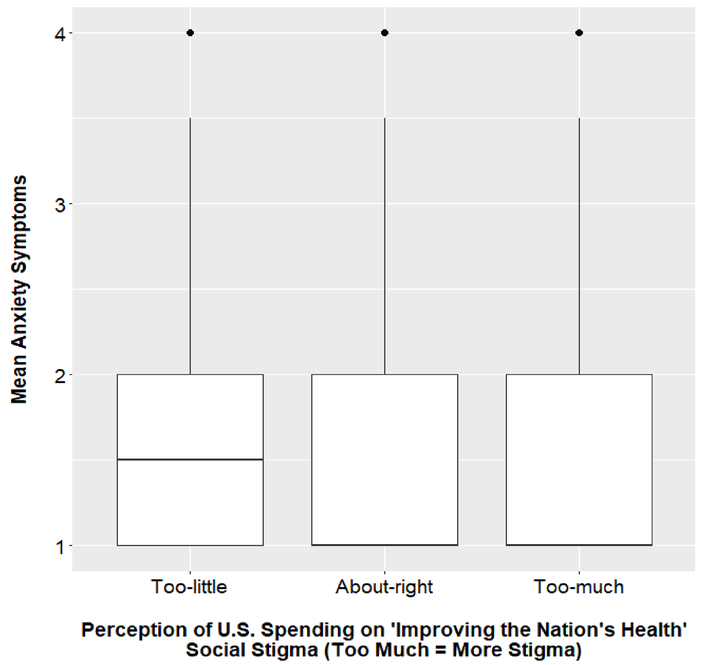


Depression and General health



A one-way analysis of variance indicates that the degree to which an individual believes that the U.S. is spending too little, too much, or about the right amount on national health is associated with their self-report of depressive symptoms

Anxiety and General health



A one-way analysis of variance indicates that the degree to which an individual believes that the U.S. is spending too little, too much, or about the right amount on national health is associated with their self-report of anxiety symptoms

Methods

- Data was sourced from the 2022 General Social Survey (GSS).
- Data included 3,544 participants (45.6% Male). Respondents were adults 18 or older in the United States in noninstitutional housing
- Chi squared tests, one-way ANOVAs with post0hoc Tukey tests, and bivariate correlations were used to test the hypotheses.
- DV = 5 questions; higher numbers = more stigma

Sample Question:

Does the U.S. spend too much, too little, or about the right amount on drug rehabilitation?

Results

- Only greater depressive and anxiety symptoms (but not disability) were associated with less social stigma towards general health ($F [2,948] = 8.90$, $p < 0.001$), ($p = 0.012$).
- No psychopathology symptoms (i.e., anxiety or depressive symptoms, substance use) were associated with stigma towards substance use.

Conclusion

- Leveraging the experiences of common mental health challenges (i.e., anxiety or depressive symptoms) can lead to reduced stigma surrounding SUD