

## **EN\_78253265 Research Introduction**

Social connections, such as family, friends, and community, are found to be important regarding health (Alegria et al., 2011). Evidence shows that people with more social connections can slow natural cognitive decline, have better immunity against certain diseases, and have a higher life expectancy (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2009). Additionally, social connections have been associated across gender and age groups with lower chronic disease mortality (Uchino, 2006), and it was shown to decrease the chance of developing coronary heart disease (Barefoot et al., 2005). Holt-lunstad et al. (2010) have shown through a meta-analysis that stronger social connections can increase the likelihood of survival by 50% compared to participants who did not have strong social connections. As many articles have stated the benefits of social connections in health, other articles show how the lack of social connections can be harmful. According to Holt-lunstad et al. (2015), It was found that social deficits can work as a prediction of a higher risk of death, and it is comparable with well-established risk factors for mortality. Another example is The Fredericks experiment, where babies were taken from their mothers and raised by nurses who could not speak or touch them, which caused the babies' death (RetroFuturista, 2024). This example shows how, even in infancy, networks need to be formed to help survival. Furthermore, exploring the relationship between social connection and physical health behaviors may provide more knowledge into how social connections related to mortality risk. Since social connections influence health, it is important to learn how it can affect healthy lifestyle behavior.

Health behaviors are actions to improve or keep good and balanced physical health, such as exercise and diet for an individual or a community member (Health Behaviors, n.d.). Strong social connections have been shown to influence and promote healthy behaviors (Cohen, 2004). Earlier literature has shown that social support from family and friends can promote physical activity (McNeill et al., 2006), and a healthy diet by increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables for adults (Shaikh et al., 2008). Although social networks can mostly have a positive influence on healthy lifestyle behavior, it can also have an adverse effect and instead promote

unhealthy behavior. For example, the spread of alcohol consumption increase is associated to larger social networks (Rosenquist et al., 2010). Additionally, depending on how close the familial relationship is, it is found that it can affect alcohol consumption in a positive or negative way (Zareei et al., 2022). However, some literature has shown that individuals with a higher number of familial relationships and therefore more support are more likely to consume more meat, Fast-food and sugary drinks in their diet but on the other hand, it has also shown that individuals with more friends have a higher fruit and vegetable intake and exercises more (Tamers et al., 2013). Moreover, there is a substantial amount of literature supporting the idea that social connections do influence healthy lifestyle behavior. Although there is a positive relationship shown, there are many people without access to a social circle. For example, immigrants live far from their families and friends, which accounts for a reduced social circle. Therefore, finding how social connection affects their health behavior is important.

...

According to the Government of the Netherlands, in 2023, 332,863 immigrants entered the Netherlands for study, relationship or asylum, which shows the importance of learning more about the relationship between social connections and health behavior in immigrants (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2024). For the non-western immigrant group in the Netherlands, individual background has a stronger association with family values than with family ties (Arends-Tóth & Van De Vijver, 2008), while Hispanics/Latinos have a strong emphasis on family and therefore have large family networks (Murillo et al., 2020). Therefore, our aim is to evaluate the extent to which familial relationships influence physical health behaviors in Latino/Hispanic and Asian immigrants in the Netherlands. We will explore whether cultural background influences the effect of social connections on behavior. We hypothesize that Latinos/Hispanics living in the Netherlands with strong familial relationships would be associated with a more positive influence on physical health behavior than Asians living in the Netherlands.