

# Stay Connected and Stay Healthy: Social Support Buffers the Negative Impact of Emotional Eating on BMI

**Anish Nagpal**

University of Melbourne

**Deepa Chandrasekaran**

University of Texas at San Antonio

**Rajagopal Raghunathan**

The University of Texas at Austin

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## **Abstract**

People cope with negative emotions in different ways, one of which is to consume food, i.e., emotional eating (EE). An alternative way is to affiliate with close-others and seek social support. To the extent that social support helps mitigate negative emotions, we propose that the tendency to engage in EE when experiencing stress to be attenuated among those who seek social support, and as such, be less susceptible to weight-gain. Or, more formally, we predict that the correlation between EE and BMI will be weaker among those with greater social support. In three studies conducted across five countries (USA, India, China, Indonesia, and Australia), and using different measures of social connectedness, we find that that although emotional eating, overall is positively correlated with BMI (health indicator), this relationship is attenuated among those with more (vs. less) social support.

**Keywords:** *emotional-eating; social-support; health*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour