

The association of social determinants and networking with inequalities in health services utilization among Jews and Arabs: Pilot study

Wasef Na'amnih¹, Rinat Cohen², Saif Abu mouch³, Manfred Green⁴, Khitam Muhsen¹

1 Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, School of Public Health, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel.

2 Department of Health Promotion, School of Public Health, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel.

3 Internal Medicine B department, Hillel Yaffe Medical Center, Hadera, Israel.

4 Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences, School of Public Health, Haifa University, Haifa, Israel.

1. Background

Gaps exist in health services utilization between Arabs and Jews in Israel; however, the contribution of social determinants to these disparities is not clear.



2. Objective

To construct and validate a tool for the assessment of social network among adults with a significant illness. We also explored differences between Arabs and Jews in utilizing social networks and support when using health services to cope with significant illness.

3. Methods

Based on the literature and consultation with experts, a questionnaire (Likert scale) was constructed to evaluate social network, support and networking.

The feasibility of questionnaire was tested among a small sample and it was modified accordingly until agreement on a final version was reached, including assessment of face and content validity.

A convenience sample of 74 adults aged ≥ 50 years with significant illness (e.g., cancer, heart disease, stroke) were interviewed face-to-face.

A factor analysis was performed to identify components of "social network" and internal consistency was assessed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

4. Results

The study included 45 Arabs and 29 Jews, with mean ages of 55.6 and 61.7 years, respectively.

The factor analysis identified several factors related to the structure and quality of social network in general and social network based on family members or friends.

Cronbach's alpha values of the constructed scales based on these factors were 0.757 and 0.744, respectively.

Table 1: Items included in the factor analysis on use of relationships for coping and treating health issues

Factor	Cronbach's alpha
Use of personal relationships	
Social relationships	0.712
Relationships in current or previous work	
Family relationships	
Use of impersonal relationships-protection	
Direct contact with position holder in the health system	0.631
Indirect contact with position holder in the health system	
Belonging to a particular community	
Protection	

4. Results – cont.

Figure 1: Use of relationships for coping and promoting health issues

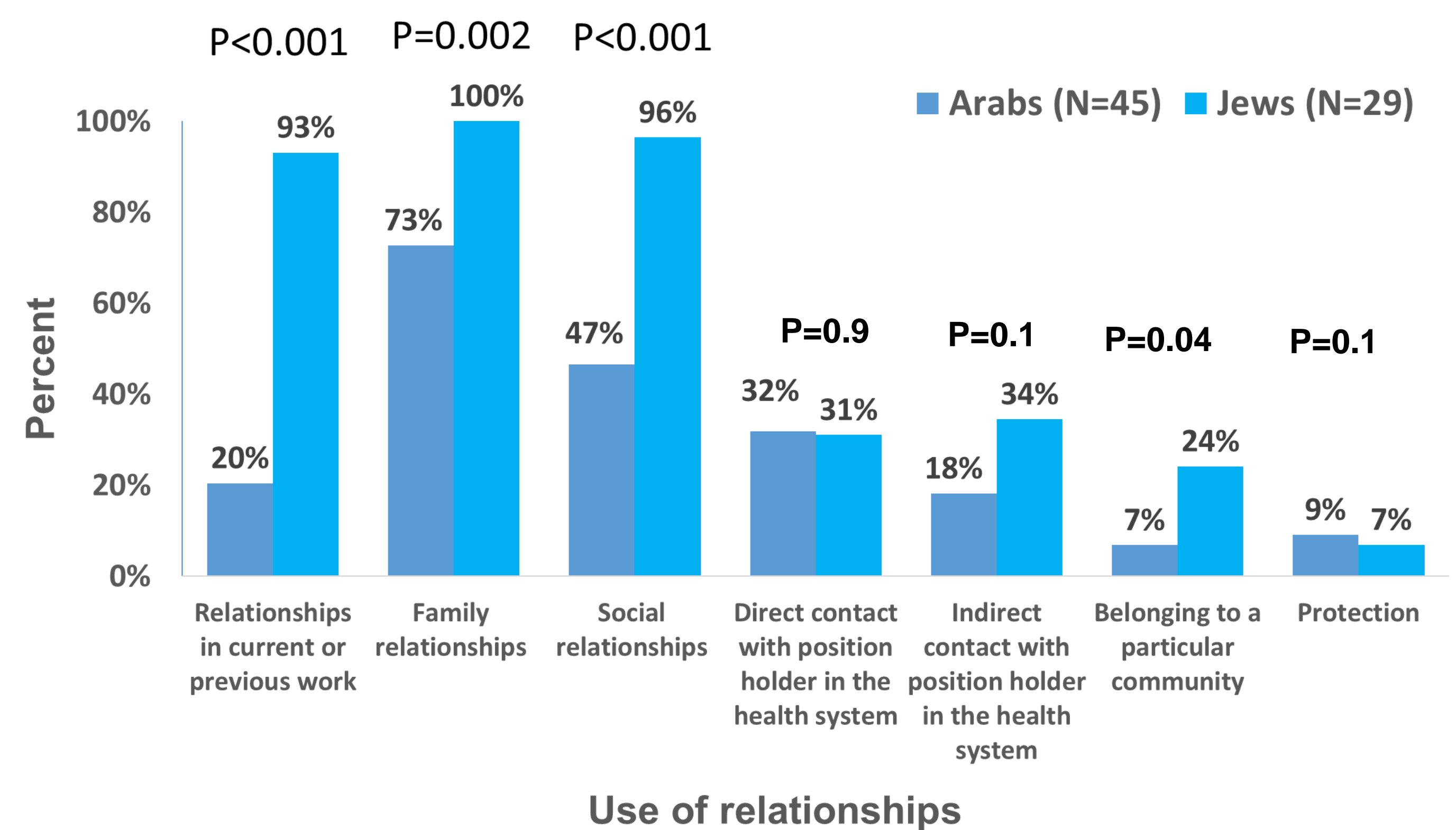
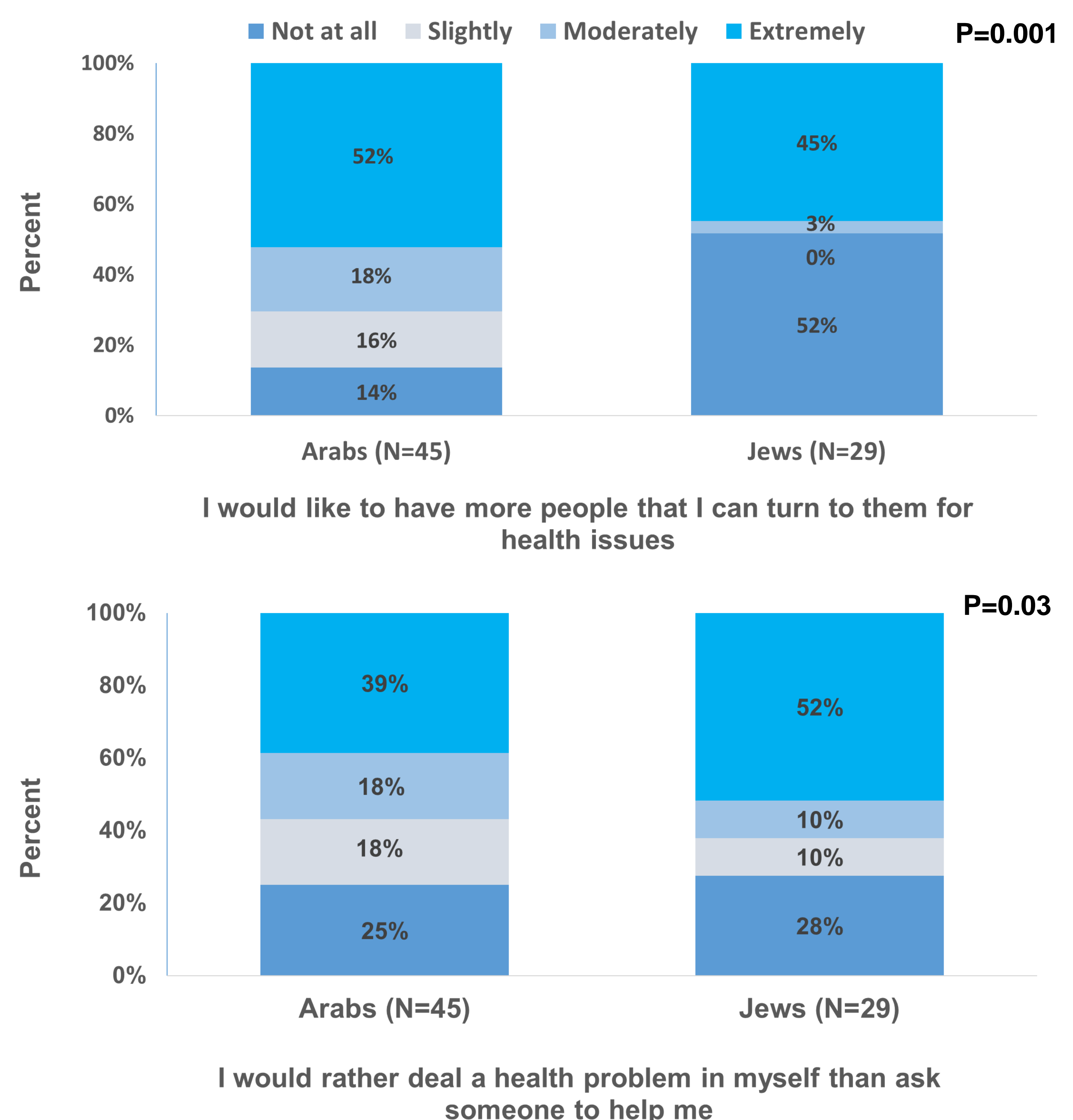


Figure 2: Social network for coping health issues



5. Conclusions

New scales were constructed to evaluate social network and networking to cope with significant illness, with high reliability.

Initial findings suggest differences between Arabs and Jews in utilization social network and networking in using health services.

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