



The experience of Hope among Italian undergraduate students

Laura De Pretto¹ · Oliver P. Mansilla² · Emanuele Russo³ · Shang-Hui Shin⁴ · Darlene Elizabeth Sin Yi Tan²

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Abstract

Psychological research on hope has mainly focused on its cognitive dimension. This qualitative study explores the relational, affective and behavioural features of hope with a sample of Italian university students, analysing their responses to open-ended survey questions that tap into the whole spectrum of the experience of hope, including fulfilled hopes, present hopes, and lost hopes. The findings suggest that the relational, affective, and behavioural features of hope are just as important as cognitive processes when it comes to people's experience of hope. Practical implications and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords Hope · Undergraduate students · Relational · Affective · Behavioural

Psychological research on hope initially focused primarily on its cognitive features (Snyder et al. 1991). Only later did an interest arise in the role of affect, behaviour and relationships on people's experiences of hope (Ward and Wampler 2010; Farran et al. 1995; Howell and Buro 2017). The cumulative effort has been fruitful in so far as hope has been found to relate with a number of important variables, such as life satisfaction (Munoz et al. 2017; O'Sullivan 2011), recovery from mental (Corrigan and Phelan 2004; Jacobson and Greenley 2001; Resnick et al. 2004; Park and Chen 2016) and physical (Cross and Schneider 2010; Halting and Heggdal 2012; Rasmussen et al. 2017) conditions, and academic performance (Feldman and Kubota 2015). Existing knowledge on cognitive, affective, behavioural, and relational features of hope are summarised below.

Data deposition information item

The data used in this paper has been deposited to the public data repository Zenodo.

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✉ Laura De Pretto
l.depretto@leedstrinity.ac.uk

¹ Leeds Trinity University, Leeds, England

² University of Nottingham Malaysia, Semenyih, Malaysia

³ Università degli Studi di Urbino "Carlo Bo", Urbino, Italy

⁴ Behavioral Science Research Center, Korea University, Seoul, South Korea

The Cognitive Features of Hope

The predominant psychological theorisation of hope is the one proposed by Snyder et al. (1991). Snyder conceptualises hope as a cognitive construct involving knowledge of the different ways to achieve one's hope (pathway thinking) and having the resolve to actualise it (agency). Although this model was eventually expanded to include emotions, these were viewed as an after-effect (Lopez et al. 2003).

From a philosophical perspective, Pettit (2004) views hope as either superficial or substantial. Superficial hope is desiring something to happen while also having the view that it may or may not actually happen, whereas substantial hope entails pursuing one's hope with the assumption that it actually has a good chance of being realised. For Pettit (2004), this characteristic of substantial hope protects a person from the possible shifts and turns that can occur as one goes about trying to realise a hope. Moreover, possessing a substantial hope necessitates not only having a desire for something to happen but also actively organising one's life to facilitate its fulfilment. Pettit's philosophical analysis of substantial hope supports the current direction of psychological research towards a more holistic conceptualisation of hope that taps into its emotional, behavioural, and interpersonal features (Farran et al. 1995; Scioli et al. 2011).

The Emotional Features of Hope

Farran et al. (1995) stresses the role of emotions as an "energizing force" that can sustain hope in challenging situations.

In other words, how strongly one feels about one's hopes can influence the whole spectrum of the hoping experience, from creation to fulfilment. Hope, being a goal-oriented experience, inevitably involves varying levels of emotions. Baumgartner et al. (2008) found that future-oriented emotions can motivate goal-oriented behaviours. They also noted that positive emotions have a strong influence on behaviour towards a desired future outcome.

Moreover, it has been shown that negative emotions can influence memory. Ochsner (2000) studied how affective events influence memory. He observed that people tend to have greater recall of memories of negative affect. Kensinger and Corkin (2004) also arrived at a similar result. It was revealed in their study that emotional information-processing, particularly emotional stimuli with negative valence, can enhance memory. Roseman et al. (1990, as cited in Bruininks and Malle 2005) pointed out that hope tends to flourish in situations that have a more negative valence. This is consistent with Baumgartner et al. (2008), who found that negative emotions can have a powerful influence on behaviour, particularly for future events that are viewed as having an undesired outcome. [Thus, to explore the affective features of hope, the study utilises the *situational valence* the participants experienced when they were devising their hopes by investigating whether such situations were present during the emergence of hopes in our sample.]

The Relational and Social Features of Hope

According to the philosopher Gabriel Marcel, hope is a communal experience that “involves the acts of sharing and participation within a human collective” (Jacobs 2005, p. 357). For Marcel, hope involves hoping for a shared future. These intersubjective elements of the experience of hope deserve more attention. One specific form of intersubjective hope that has been investigated is that developed in the relationship between therapist and client. For instance, Farran et al. (1995) studied the role of hope in couples' therapy and found that therapeutic relationships have the power to increase a person's level of hope. The therapeutic relationship can serve as a context for hope to develop, with the therapist's hopes shared with the client and also providing a source of motivation (Ward and Wampler 2010).

Howell and Buro (2017) made some headway on the broader relational aspect of hope by developing the Other-Oriented Hope Scale, and obtained preliminary support for its construct validity. Other studies have found that people who sought support from others or maintained strong interpersonal connections during challenging situations tended to experience higher levels of hope (Rand and Cheavens 2009; McDermott et al. 2017). Relational features, such as hopes being admired or validated by family, friends, or the wider

society, can facilitate the creation and fulfilment of hopes. Social admiration or support for one's hopes can increase motivation and competence while also enhancing the quality of social relations (Onu et al. 2016; Sweetman et al. 2013).

The Behavioural Features of Hope

To achieve a more well-rounded psychological understanding of hope, it is also vital to find out how it is manifested behaviourally. The present study focuses specifically on the participants' perception of how much control they have over realising their hopes. Bernard Weiner's Attribution Theory is a useful framework for studying the role of attribution to internal and external causes in the actualisation of hopes (Weiner 1985). Weiner states that a person's internal or external attribution of success or failure can influence their future behaviour. In particular, a sense of control over the causes of outcomes can help to explain how much effort a person is willing to invest towards achieving the fulfilment of a hope. Howell and Larsen (2015) posited that the determination of how much control a person has over outcomes is particularly significant in relation to hopes that are other-oriented, since the contributions and support of other people might be essential in their fulfilment.

Hope as a psychological construct has been often investigated using undergraduate student samples in relation to its role in affecting academic results and other education-related variables (In 2016; Hurley 2004; Seirup and Rose 2011; Thompson et al. 2014; Tripathi et al. 2015). A different stream of research has looked at students' hopes in wider terms, but not while considering hope as a psychological construct (Levine and Cureton 1998). In particular, academic research concerned with hope as experienced by Italian university students has been driven, in recent years, by the need to understand the effects on young people of the economic crisis that started there in 2008. As such, it has typically focused on the experience of distress and related changes in the socio-political attitudes of young people (Nocenzi 2012).

Our study makes a broader examination of the hopes of Italian undergraduate students, while analysing the components of hope as a psychological construct. This study further differentiates itself from the existing literature by taking a more holistic approach to understanding hope from the point of its creation to the point of its fulfilment or loss. In addition, it looks at Italian university students' experiences of three specific types of hopes: achieved hopes, present hopes, and lost hopes. The aim is to extend existing psychological knowledge on hope, and specifically to explore beyond the mainly cognitive conceptualisation proposed by Snyder et al. (1991). Although previous studies have probed hope's affective, behavioural, or relational characteristics (e.g., Lopez et al. 2003; Farran et al. 1995), this research differentiates itself by tapping

into the affective, relational, and behavioural features of hope in a single study. This study is oriented by the following research questions regarding the experience of hope:

- a) What are the affective features of hope?
- b) What are the social or relational features of hope?
- c) What are the behavioural features involved in fulfilling a hope?

Method

Design

This study has a qualitative design, and was carried out through thematic analysis of the participants' responses to open-ended questions about three types of hope (achieved, present and lost hopes). The classification scheme for this study was adapted from the model of enquiry proposed by Shin et al. (2013), with the last type of hopes called "lost hopes" instead of the original "failed hopes" to avoid implying any attribution of agency on the part of the participants.

Participants

Forty-six (46) Italian undergraduate psychology students were recruited through opportunity sampling: they were asked to take part in class, through their lecturer, and took part on a voluntary basis. Age of participants ranged from 20 to 27 years (96%). The remaining 4% were aged from 29 to 52 years. The sample comprised 78% females and 22% males. The majority (78%) were in their third year of study, while 11% were in their second year and the remainder were *fuoricorso* (enrolled in years subsequent to the expected years of course completion). 72% self-defined their socio-economic status as average, 14% as higher than average and 14% as below average. The study was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Melbourne, where one of the authors was based at the time of data collection.

Materials and Procedure

The specific dataset analysed in the present study was part of a wider dataset comprising participants from multiple countries and questions covering different aspects of the hope construct. In Italy, the data was collected in small groups during the academic semester, in a classroom environment at the end of lectures. Questionnaires (containing open-ended questions) were distributed to the participants, who were briefed on the purpose of the study and the structure of the questionnaire by one of the researchers, who remained present to answer any questions and to ensure that the participants did not rush in answering the questionnaire and provided in-depth accounts of their experiences. The questions had been previously developed and tested in a pilot study (Shin et al. 2013) conducted

by two of the authors on a sample of a similar age and educational level. The participants in the pilot study generally understood the questions well, and only minor amendments were made to the questionnaire with the aim of obtaining more in-depth and clearly classifiable data.

To prime participants to bring to mind specific hopes that they had held (rather than merely generic concepts of hope), the first question asked them to list three important hopes they had achieved in the past. Participants were then asked to choose the one achieved hope that they felt was the most important. Only then were participants asked further open-ended questions on what was done to fulfil this specific hope. Finally, demographic information was requested. All questions were developed in English first, and then translated and back-translated independently by bilingual speakers.

Analysis and Coding Process

Using the open-ended questions in the hope questionnaire, respondents were asked about their most important hopes in three categories (i.e., past achieved hope, present hope, and lost hope). A thematic analysis was conducted to address the research questions with themes related to the core issues concerning hope. Table 1 shows how the research questions were linked to specific open-ended questions in the survey. It illustrates how the survey questions (in the left column) led to the emergence of a number of main themes (in the right column), which in turn were mapped to the relevant research questions (spanning rows).

To address the first research question on the relational features of hope, the researchers focused specifically on

- the orientation of the hopes (towards the self, towards others, or related to a relationship with others);
- the goals contained within the hopes (what was being hoped for); and
- whether the hopes were shared and/or admired by others and what led to the creation of the hopes themselves.

This last point of focus, in particular, was informed by the open-ended question asking how the respondents started to hope for something. After a preliminary analysis of the data (following the iterative qualitative process suggested by Srivastava and Hopwood 2009), the researchers deemed that answers to this question were more informative in providing features linked with the relational dimension of hope. In line with the goals of the study, the results related to the origins of hopes are reported and discussed within the relational dimension.

To address the second research question, the study focused on the valence (positive, negative, or neutral) of the situation when the hope arose. The coding of valence was based on the respondents' descriptions of the situation that they were in when their hope emerged.

Table 1 Research Questions with Corresponding Open-ended Questions and Main Themes

Open-ended questions	Main themes
<p>What are the social or relational features of hope?</p> <p>What was the most important hope you have had in the past? What is the most important hope in your life now? Of all the hopes you have lost, which is the most memorable? Was/Is the hope shared with other people around you? Was/Is the hope shared across society in general? If yes, please describe. Was/Is this hope admired by other people? Why or why not? How did you get this hope/ Why did you start to hope for it?</p>	<p>Orientation Goal Hope as shared Hope as admired Origins</p>
<p>What are the affective features of hope?</p> <p>What was the situation at that time? (describe)</p>	<p>Valence of situation</p>
<p>What are the behavioural features of hope?</p> <p>How was this hope fulfilled? What has kept you hoping for it? What made you lose that hope? What did you do/have you done to fulfil this hope? Did/Does somebody else, or luck, help you to fulfil this hope? If yes, please describe the circumstances.</p>	<p>Outcome attribution (internal, external) Substantial and superficial hopes Support received and sought</p>

The third research question was addressed by focusing on how the participants explained the fulfilment (or loss) of their hopes. We looked into whether they attributed the outcome to themselves (internal) or to others (external), whether their hopes were superficial or substantial (according to the philosophical explanation of the terms), and into their experience of social support in the fulfilment of the hopes.

On the basis of the three research questions, three of the authors engaged in independent coding, which resulted in largely overlapping themes, that were subsequently finetuned. While reliability of coding warranted for quality of analysis (Boyatzis 1998), we also recognise researchers' subjectivity as a strength rather than a weakness in thematic analysis, as suggested by Gough and Madill (2012), especially thanks to the potential for rich reflexivity intrinsic to the abovementioned Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) iterative process. Two of the authors involved in the analysis are Italian, which could, on the one hand, help inform the understanding of the data, while, on the other hand, open the possibility of bias in data interpretation; however, possible biases were minimised by deep discussions with the other author involved in the analyses, which led to the merging of insider and outsider perspectives.

Results

Relational Dimension of Hope

Orientation As shown in Table 2, most of the participants described their achieved and present hopes as self-oriented. Lost hopes, on the other hand, were more other-oriented (refer to the selected quotes in Tables 3, 4, and 5 for examples of the distinction between the last two). Nevertheless, other-oriented hopes were observed in all three hope categories tapped in this

study (achieved, present, and lost). "Others" usually referred to family members, friends, or generalised others.

Goal Because the sample comprised university students, the achieved and present hopes mostly involved educational and professional goals. However, the participants also reported relational goals, especially for lost hopes.

Sharing and Admirability Hopes were perceived by the participants to be shared by family members and others, with some respondents also mentioning hopes being shared by society in general. Hopes that were perceived as positive or important were often also perceived to be admired by family, friends, and significant others.

Origins Hopes tended to arise in the context of career, education, or relationship concerns.

Affective Dimension of Hope

Negative situations were more salient in the formation of hopes, whether these were eventually achieved or lost. Present hopes tended to be more positive or neutral, although situations with negative valence were a feature of all three categories of hope.

Behavioural Dimension of Hope

Participants indicated that they achieved their hopes mainly thanks to internal qualities that allowed them to take the necessary steps. In contrast, the participants made more externally oriented attributions when hopes were lost. Most of the hopes were substantial in nature, even if they were eventually lost. Respondents also expressed having sought or received

Table 2 Summary of Main Themes and Sub-themes, in order of Frequency for each Hope Category

Sub-themes by hope category			
Main theme	Achieved	Present	Lost
Orientation	Self (32) Others/relational (14)	Self (37) Others/relational (8)	Others/relational (18) Self (14)
Goal	Professional/educational (23) Relational (17) Personal (4) Health-related (4)	Professional/educational (32) Relational (6) Personal (3) Societal (3) Environmental (3)	Relational (14) Professional/educational (9) Personal (4) Health-related (3) Societal (2) Environmental (1)
Shared with	Relationships (25) Society (9) Peers (2) Character (1)	Relationships (21) Society (14) Students (2) Relational significance (2) Peers (1)	Family (4) Others (4) Society (3)
Admirability	Positive value (15) Commonality/Shared (5) Relational significance (4) Character (4)	Positive value (19) Character (9) Commonality/shared (9) Relational significance (4)	Shared (7) Relational significance (5) Character (4) Positive value (4) Emotional reasons (1) Hard to understand (1) Not made known (2)
Origins	Career/education (18) Relationship (17) Personal (6) Interest (3) Health (2)	Career/education (19) Personal (7) Interest (4) Relationship (4) Society (4) Education (3) Environment (1) Health, family (1)	Relationship (13) Health/Family (7) Career/education (4) Personal (4) Society (1) Travelling (1)
Valence of situation	Negative (23) Positive/neutral (22)	Positive/neutral (25) Negative (16)	Negative (24) Positive/neutral (10)
Outcome attribution	Internal (39) External (11)	Internal (41) External (14)	External (23) Internal (8)
Substantial/ Superficial hope	Substantial (42) Superficial (3)	Substantial (39) Superficial (1)	Substantial (20) Superficial (4)
Support Received from	Family/others (36) Destiny/chance (2)	Family (14) Others (7)	Family (9) Others (5)
Sought from	Family/others (12) Others (5)	Family (16) Others (8)	Others (7) Family (5)

support from others to realise their hopes, most commonly from family members.

Discussion

Relational Features of Hope

Other-Oriented Hopes The present study supported the findings of previous studies on the existence of other-oriented hopes (Averill et al. 1990; Bruininks and Malle 2005; Howell and Buro 2017; Newton et al. 2014; Shin et al. 2013). Howell and Buro (2017) showed that, in previous research, other-oriented hopes accounted for between 8.7% (Averill et al. 1990) and 67% (Howell and Buro 2017) of all hopes. In the

present study, other-oriented hopes comprised 40 out of 123 total declared hopes (as can be seen in Table 2, across achieved, present and lost hopes), which accounts for 33% of the participants' hopes, situating our sample in the middle of the range.

Of lost hopes, most were intended for others rather than the self. A similar result was also obtained by Shin et al. (2013), who found that failed hopes were more frequently motivated by relational factors when compared to achieved or present hopes in a sample of Italian, South Korean, and Australian undergraduate students.

Hope Goals Most of the achieved and present hopes were directed towards professional or educational goals. This is not surprising given that the respondents were university students. The fact that the majority of the achieved hopes of our

participants were academic in nature seems to support the study by Feldman and Kubota (2015), who found academic hopes to predict academic performance. The next most frequently reported goals were those concerned with close relationships (romance, friendship, and family). This might be interpreted in relation to the age range of the participants. Erikson and Erikson (1998, as cited in Mansilla 2002) described young adults between 19 and 35 years old as generally at the stage of developing intimacy in relationships.

Sharing and Admirability of Hopes This study found that hopes were often shared by family members, close relations, or the society at large. This is consistent with Averill et al.'s (1990) assertion that hopes are contingent on their perceived social acceptability. It appears that the social aspects of hope include the perception of the hoper that their hopes are shared by other people in their lives or societies. Furthermore, Averill et al. (1990) pointed out that hopes might need to be perceived as something that other people would also view as desirable. This dimension may have an influence on the ability to pursue a hope or to increase the level of hope. A future predictive model of hope should consider including a measure of the acceptability of the hope. The lost hopes that were admired were also shared hopes, as well as tending to be other-oriented, as reported above. In contrast, achieved and present hopes were admired more for their intrinsic positive value and were more self-oriented (for sample quotes, refer to Tables 3, 4 and 5).

Context in the Creation of Hope A similar pattern was observed when it came to the contexts that led to the creation of hope. For both achieved hopes and present hopes, career- or education-related issues were foremost in the minds of the participants. These were closely followed by relationship concerns, which were more prevalent in lost hopes. This finding links the context to the dominant issues or concerns that paved the way to the creation of a hope. Roseman, Spindel, and Jose (1990, as cited in Bruininks and Malle 2005) showed that negative contexts can have an impact on the development of hopes. In the present study, the negative issues or concerns that preoccupied the participants (see Tables 3, 4, and 5) appear to have influenced the goals of the participants as their hopes first emerged.

The social context in the creation of hope was observed in all categories, but especially in lost hopes. Even though career or educational issues were more salient for both achieved and present hopes, the presence of relational issues highlights the social features of hope.

Affective Features of Hope

Averill et al. (1990) and Lazarus (1999) emphasised the importance of the emotional dimension of hope. They pointed

out that emotions are experienced in the context of uncertainty in fulfilling the hope's goals. Similarly, Farran et al. (1995) observed that hope serves as a motivating force that allows an individual to persist in the pursuit of their hopes even though achieving them might be improbable. However, insufficient research has been carried out to explain the impact that the valence of the situation has on the creation of, and the commitment to fulfil, a hope. Participants in this study described situations with a negative valence to be prevalent when their hopes emerged, and this was particularly salient in the case of lost hopes. This may be related to the perceived attribution of control experienced with the situation and the expectations of the likelihood of achieving the hoped-for outcome, especially for hopes that were relational in nature and required a contribution from others. Bruininks and Malle (2005) noted the impact of the emotions on a person's commitment to their hopes, especially when confronted with the possibility that there was little the person could do to realise the desired outcome. Emotions associated with a hope can play a major role in staying committed to achieving it. This is particularly salient in the context of relational hopes, since these involve action on the part of significant others in realising the goal. Bruininks and Malle further observed that the strength of one's hope may be linked to the perceived importance of the hope itself, despite the challenges faced in fulfilling it. This makes hope different from wishing or being optimistic; hope carries a stronger commitment, as it "is directed at outcomes considered less likely to occur, allowing less personal control, and having greater importance" (p. 349).

Behavioural Features of Hope

It appears that having a substantial hope (Pettit 2004) was not sufficient to influence the outcome. Most of the participants' hopes were substantial, regardless of achievement or loss. This finding seems to contradict Pettit's argument that "substantial hope [...] provides the agent with direction and control and makes success in the face of adversity much more probable than it would otherwise have been" (Pettit 2004, p. 165). However, when it came to the participants' attributions regarding the fulfilment of their hopes, there was a notable difference in terms of achievement or loss. For both achieved and present hopes, the participants provided attributions that were interpreted by the researchers as internal, while for lost hopes more external attributions tended to be given. Interestingly, this seems to be consistent with traditional psychological literature on self-serving attributional biases, which indicates that individuals have a tendency to attribute success to themselves and reject accountability in cases of failure (Greenberg et al. 1982), thus suggesting an at least implicit link between hope and agency in the participants' view.

This study found that the role of the family and close relations pervades almost the whole spectrum of the hoping experience – from its creation to its eventual fulfilment or loss. This is supported by the study of Ward and Wampler (2010) on hope and couple therapy. They found that the relational features of a hope have an effect on the strength of the hope.

Although hope has been viewed as a cognitive construct involving having (and knowing) the means and having a strong resolve to achieve it, other features of hope have been underemphasised. Hope differs from optimism (Snyder 2002), particularly due to the substantiality of hope. However, based on the findings of this study, there is a need to integrate social and relational, affective, and behavioural features to obtain a clearer understanding of the hoping experience.

Limitations and Implications of the Study

The findings of this study were based on a small sample of Italian university students and may not be representative of the larger population (Hanel and Vione 2016). In future research, it would be interesting to explore the hope experience in samples representative of the population, at the country level. Moreover, although the utmost care was taken to ensure inferences were re-evaluated to reflect the data's intended meaning, the choice of themes was based on the interpretation of the researchers. In addition, the result that most of the achieved (as well as present) hopes were related to educational outcomes – in contrast with lost hopes having more often a relational nature – might be biased by the fact that participants were people who had been successful in obtaining entry to a university degree.

There could also be, potentially, a gender bias in the results, given that the sample was predominantly female. According to traditional theories of gender role socialisation (Carter 2014), men's aspirations (and, by extension, hopes) are more likely to be career oriented, while women's aspirations and hopes are more likely to be oriented towards relationships. In line with this perspective, a predominately female sample could have led to an overemphasis of relational hopes. The analysis of gender differences in the experience of hope was not part of the research questions of the current study. However, in order to more deeply understand our results, and investigate whether the relational features of the hoping experience are indeed cardinal regardless of gender, a more gender-balanced sample should be sought in future research.

We decided not to collect data on participants' ethnicity, as this could be considered very sensitive and sometimes even unclear in the Italian cultural context (Ambrosetti and Cela 2015). However, not having this data leads to an

impossibility to understand the potential role of the impact of culture in the hoping experience of Italian students. Thus, we recommend to include ethnicity in future research on the experience of hope.

Notwithstanding the limitations listed above, the study was able to point out the importance of the social, affective, and behavioural elements in the experience of hoping. Although the hopes of the participants reflected their self-oriented concerns (e.g., career and education), their hopes also involved significant people in their lives. This was true of achieved past hopes and present hopes, and even more apparent in lost hopes. Future studies should consider this as a possible direction to take for reaching a deeper understanding of hope. Some psychotherapeutic approaches have already integrated hope-based therapies that highlight the importance of hope's relational dimension, starting with the relationship between the client and psychotherapist (Cheavens et al. 2006; Ward and Wampler 2010) and the less formal relational support from others (e.g., family and friends) as a means to strengthen hope (McDermott et al. 2017). The latter was found to be common among university students. On this basis, our results, especially if supported by focussed follow-up studies, could be usefully applied to inform policies or pedagogical practices around the importance of students/staff relations in the construction, maintenance and pursuit of students' hopes.

Moreover, the role of affect should be further clarified as a source of motivation and commitment to one's hope. It has been observed in this study that situations with a negative valence experienced during the creation of a hope were as salient as those with positive or neutral valences. It would be also worth investigating further how one's attribution of control plays a role in the pursuit of a hope.

Given that the study showed the preponderance of a relational orientation in hoping, especially in regard to hopes that have been lost, future studies based on predictive regression models should take into account relational variables relevant to the hoping experience. Previous studies have already highlighted the benefits of hope and the importance of strengthening people's hopes. This study posits that there is a need to expand our notion of hope by giving due attention to the importance of its relational, affective, and behavioural aspects alongside the impact that relationships have on people's hopes.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Appendix

Table 3 Selected Quotations Related to Past Achieved Hopes

Main theme	Sub-theme	Selected quotations
Orientation	Self	“To do well and graduate” “Be an independent woman”
	Others/Relational	“Family tensions resolved partially” “My grandfather overcame his sickness completely”
Goal	Professional/Education	“Attend studies” “Graduate in order to continue to study and become a psychologist”
	Relational	“To be with my mother” “Find a partner” “To find friends” “Have reached an interpersonal milestone”
	Personal	“To be more serene from the sentimental viewpoint”
	Health	“Recovered from eating disorder when I was an adolescent”
Shared with	Family/Close Others	“My parents also hope for my success”
	Society	“I believed the society is aware that all young people must take this step in order to distance from the family themselves”
	Peers	“Children that are growing are afraid of not succeeding tend to share the same fears.” “Shared with many teenagers”
Admirability	Character	“My determination was admired”
	Positive value	“Every child has the right to be with their mother”
	Relational significance	“Because the people who cares about me hope [for] my recovery”
	Character	“Because they saw my determination in confronting it”
Origins	Commonality/Shared	“Shared with friends” “Because it’s a hope that many people felt”
	Relationship	“Facing family issues”
	Career/Education	“Seeking career development” “I embark on this study as it has always been my passion to do this work since I was little.”
	Health	“Because I have suffered from an illness that prevented me from performing numerous activities”
	Interest	“Curiosity, desire to learn about other cultures”
Valence of situation	Personal	“For my personal happiness”
	Negative	“I lived with my mother and my brother. There were constant arguments and quarrels”
Outcome attribution	Positive/Neutral	“Had to start university and I was very happy for the event”
	Internal	“I studied with more commitment, have overcome the crisis”
Substantial/Superficial hope	External	“Thanks to people and favorable situations”
	Substantial	“I started training separately for many hours a day”
Support Received from	Superficial	“I started to save more money and change my lifestyle according to my goal”
	Family/Others	“My parents helped me by believing in me and did not underestimate me”
Sought from	Destiny/Chance	“By fate, I met the right person”
	Family/Others	“My parents”
	Others	“I have always pay attention to capable people: capable professors, people from which I could take example from”

Table 4 Selected Quotations Related to Present Hopes

Main theme	Sub-theme	Selected quotations
Orientation	Self	“Confirmation in professional field: establish a working career”
	Others/Relational	“Safety for my loved ones” “Get back with my ex-boyfriend”
Goal	Professional/Education	“Finding a job in my area of my study”
	Relational	“The wellbeing and health of my family”
	Personal	“Be happy as much as possible”
	Societal	“Go to Africa to volunteer”
	Environmental	“To go and live abroad”
Shared with	Society	“All hope for a happy future”
	Relationships	“Whole family shares” “My girlfriend shares my preferences”
	Students	“I believe that thousands of students are looking for a certain financial independence”
	Relational significance	“My parents are happy about me not being ‘mummy’s boy’ and leaving me now in total independence”
Admirability	Peers	“I think it is a quite common hope for the boys”
	Positive value	“For me and the well-being of others”
	Character	“Because although I failed for the first time and I hope to try again”
	Commonality/shared	“Many of my acquaintances believe this hope was founded because of the shared motivations”
Origins	Relational significance	“Everyone wants to be happy”
	Career/Education	“I have this hope because I want to study and become a child psychologist in the future”
	Personal	“I am in a period of turning point of my life”
	Interest	“I admired cognitive psychology and is association with the neurological component”
	Relationship	“The desire to have your own family derives from the fact that I experienced several shortcomings and I hope to fill them with my future family”
	Society	“Many African friends told me about the situation there and I have always wanted to help”
	Education	“Because I already wasted a year and I wanted to finish it soon”
	Environment	“I would like to give my children the opportunity to live in a different environment”
	Health/Family	“Mother’s sickness”
	Valence of situation	Positive/Neutral
Negative		“My mother’s sickness, sadness in the family”
Outcome attribution	Internal	“The fact that I’m committed to this hope”
	External/Neutral	“The support of parents and friends”
Substantial/Superficial hope	Substantial	“Study, commitment and willpower” “I have yet to realized even though I already visited Africa”
Support Received from	Superficial	
Sought from	Family	“My parents”
	Others	“Psychotherapist”
	Others	“My mother” “Acquaintances that works in the area”

Table 5 Selected Quotations Related to Lost Hopes

Main themes	Sub-themes	Selected quotations	
Orientation	Self	“Desire to become more independent”	
	Other/Relational	“Health and survival of my grandfather”	
Goal	Family/Relationships	“Hope for a job for dad”	
	Professional/Education	“Inability to enter the police force”	
	Personal	“By having a high self-esteem, without being heartened by others”	
	Health	“The life expectancy of a loved one”	
	Societal	“The death of Italian politics”	
	Environmental	“To go away from here”	
	Shared with	Family	“My mother would have wanted a new mate, but it did not happen.”
Others		“I supposed others think like me”	
Society		“Every citizen is entitled to have a security or a hope for the future”	
Admirability	Shared	“Others were also hoping”	
	Relational significance	“Mother and daughter should have a good relationship”	
	Character	“We admire those who lost their faith and still hopes”	
	Positive value	“My husband was very convinced of the chosen path”	
	Emotional reasons	“For emotional reasons”	
	Hard to understand	“Was hard to understand my situation”	
	Not made known	“Because no one knew”	
	Origins	Relationship	“Because I wanted a good relationship and continuous quarrels were tiring”
		Career/Education	“I did ballet and modern dance since I was 16 years old”
Health/Family		“Health decline, hope of improvement”	
		“Because I could lose my father”	
Personal		“Because it was my favorite subject”	
		“I was always sad and lonely”	
Society	“This hope was born from the moment the state has not given and will not give answers for the future of our young people”		
Valence of situation	Travelling	“I dream of travelling and to travel far”	
	Negative	“I was the scapegoat for the whole family”	
Outcome attribution	Positive/Neutral	“I had just graduated from high school and wanted to learn about the world”	
	External	“The current situation of indifference of the state to our problems”	
	Internal	“Understand that it is actually hard for me to live far away from my family. I tried and I failed”	
Substantial/ Superficial hope	Substantial	“Active and personal commitment in the social life”	
	Superficial	“Pray”	
Support Received from	Family	“I want to be a psychologist with the help of my mother”	
	Others	“My friend was in the same situation”	
Sought from	Others	“Acquaintances and institutions”	
	Family	“My father”	

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