

Hope & happiness: How are different aspects of hope and subjective wellbeing related?

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How we perceive the future can have a great impact on how we feel in the present. Even a currently positive situation is hard to bear when we know the future will be grim. Indeed, previous research has found that more optimistic and hopeful people have better mental health and are happier [1] [2]. However, both hope and happiness are multidimensional concepts, comprising emotion (i.e., anticipation and affect), cognition (satisfaction and expectation) and, to some degree, motivation. Yet, little is known about how different aspects of hope relate to different aspects of wellbeing. This study aims to get insight into these relationships. Cross-sectional data of a representative sample of the Dutch population is used. Wellbeing, life satisfaction, affect, flourishing and mental health are measured to study wellbeing. Hope is measured using the Adult Trait Hope Scale [3], the Life Orientation Test – Revised (measuring optimism) [4] and the Hopebarometer [5], which comprises seven domains of hope; cognitive, emotional, virtuous, social and spiritual hope, expectations, and trust. Analyses are still ongoing, but preliminary results show that positive expectations and optimism appear to be relatively poor predictors of most domains of wellbeing, whereas emotional hope is the best predictor of wellbeing. Flourishing and affect are more strongly related to all aspects of hope, and life satisfaction and mental health are least closely related. This could indicate that the more passive character of positive expectations contributes less to wellbeing than a more agentic hopeful disposition. Although relations between these different domains of hope and wellbeing differ, all found relations are positive and significant, indicating that how people perceive the future has an important impact on their wellbeing. Policies or interventions aimed at increasing wellbeing, would therefore benefit to consider the perceived future and sustainability of their efforts.

Figure 1: Pairwise correlations between different aspects of hope and wellbeing

	Cognitive hope	Emotional hope	Virtuous hope	Social hope	Expectations	Trust in future	Spiritual hope	Hope index	Optimism
Lifesatisfaction	0,5307	0,7067	0,415	0,328	0,2227	0,3249	0,102	0,5572	0,4272
Flourishing	0,6765	0,7406	0,6823	0,5125	0,2113	0,3513	0,1738	0,7219	0,4474
Affect	0,6313	0,6559	0,4409	0,2345	0,1139	0,1883	0,0396	0,472	0,4367
Mental health	0,4064	0,4952	0,2447	0,1979	0,1446	0,16	0,0442	0,3716	0,4313

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