

**Seeking Hope in Times of Darkness:  
Perceived Setbacks in Achieving Social Change Predict Enhanced Desire to Feel  
Hope among Disadvantaged Group Members**

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## **Abstract**

Within contexts of prolonged oppression and struggle for social change, in which hope is constantly challenged, do disadvantaged group members still *want to* feel hope? If so, does this desire translate into actual hope? We suggest that specifically when faced with setbacks in the struggle for social change, disadvantaged group members want to feel hope. We consider two competing hypotheses regarding the affective consequences of this desire: the emotion regulation literature predicts that emotional preferences are likely to generate emotional experiences, which means that motivation for hope should lead to increased hope. Alternatively, given that the context of oppression challenges the ability to feel positive about the future, the motivation to feel hope may not be enough to increase hope. We address these questions in a two-wave sample of 429 Palestinians living under military occupation in the West Bank. Our results suggest that particularly in the face of setbacks in their struggle, Palestinians want to feel hope for social change. Nonetheless, their experience of hope does not rise in line with this motivation. We discuss the implications of our findings for understanding motivated emotion regulation processes and hope in contexts of oppression.

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**Key words: Hope, emotion regulation, motivation, oppression, collective action**

*“It is hard to speak of hope at this time. That would look as if we were ignoring history and the present. As though we were looking at the future in severance from what is happening at this moment. But in order to live we must **invent** hope by force”*

~ Mahmoud Darwish, Palestinian poet

For marginalized populations struggling for justice, the ability to feel hope may hold unique significance. Hope, defined as the emotional state of believing that change is possible (Lazarus, 1991), not only strengthens the resilience of individuals under oppression, but may be imperative to maintain their commitment to the struggle for social change. The current work investigates hope in contexts that offer little scope for this emotion, specifically in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that has not seen tangible progress since the Oslo peace accords. While the vast majority of research has focused on the viewpoint of Israelis, the advantaged group in this conflict (e.g. Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, & Bar-Tal, 2008; Canetti et al., 2017; Halperin et al., 2010; Leshem, 2017; see also Punamaki & Suleiman, 1990), the present work sheds light on the perspective of Palestinians, who are marginalized within a daily reality of oppression, militarized occupation, and political unrest where hopelessness seems almost inevitable (see Dabbagh, 2004; Hobfull et al., 2012).

Considering the importance of hope within contexts of prolonged oppression and struggle for social change, how do disadvantaged individuals try to maintain their hope? Do they *want to* feel hope and, as in the above quote, even try to invent hope by force? And if so, does this desire translate into increased hope? To our knowledge, no research has examined these questions, despite their scientific and societal relevance. The current research aims to investigate the relationship between setbacks in social change, the motivation to feel hope, and hope, by integrating knowledge from research on emotion regulation, hope, and coping. We suggest that, specifically when faced with frustrating setbacks in their struggle, disadvantaged group members may have a stronger motivation to feel hope for social change.

This is because perceiving a possibility for change can help cope with negative circumstances and uncertainty about the future (Folkman, 2010). One interesting question that follows is how this motivation influences *actual* feelings of hope. We consider two different possibilities. Based on the idea that emotional preferences are an antecedent of emotional experiences (see Porat, Halperin, & Tamir, 2016; Pliskin, Nabet, Jost, Tamir, & Halperin, 2018), one possible prediction is that wanting to feel hope for social change should translate directly into the experience of hope. On the other hand, given that oppression challenges the ability to feel positively about the future (e.g. Khamis, 1998; Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir, & Zhao, 2013), wanting to feel hope may not be enough to arouse the emotion itself (at least not in the short term). In such contexts, in which injustice motivate efforts to promote social change, we were also interested in how motivation for hope and hope link to collective action in the face of setbacks.

### **Hope and Coping with Oppression**

Hope has been defined as an emotional state based on the appraisal that desired change is possible in the future, either as a result of one's own efforts or external forces (Lazarus, 1991; Bury, Wenzel, & Woodyatt, 2016; Leshem, 2017; Van Zomeren, Pauls, & Cohen-Chen, in press). As such, hope is associated with goal-setting and planning, increased cognitive flexibility and creativity, openness to new information, and mental exploration of novel situations (Breznitz, 1986; Snyder, 1994). Further, hope is thought to serve an adaptive function in dealing with challenges as it reduces stress and generates flexibility and more creative thinking about the situation (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000; Snyder et al., 1996). Accordingly, hope can be instrumental for disadvantaged group members because it facilitates coping with the daily threats and hardships produced by their disadvantage (e.g., poverty, oppression, violence, and trauma). Specifically, hope can help disadvantaged members make sense of their environment by reappraising stressors, thereby mitigate distress

and negative emotions (Lazarus, 1993). For example, previous research provides evidence that hopefulness plays a significant role in coping with past and ongoing mass trauma by stimulating positive thinking about the future, disputing catastrophic and exaggerated thinking, and facilitating meaning-making during (Antonovsky, 1979; Hobfoll et al., 2007; Lala et al., 2014; Pliskin et al., 2018).

Hope can also drive problem-focused coping that seeks to change external stressors (Lazarus, 1991, 1993). In context of social change, hope can motivate the disadvantaged group in efforts to end their oppression: when combined with a sense of efficacy, it can function as an action-oriented emotion that increases feelings of feasibility and drives goal-directed behavior (Bar-Tal, 2001; Stotland, 1969; Staats & Stassen, 1985; Snyder, 2002). Indeed, several recent studies demonstrate that hope motivates participation in collective action and social movements (Greenaway et al., 2014; Włodarczyk, Basabe, Páez, & Zumeta, 2017; Cohen-Chen & Van Zomeren, 2018). Taken together, these findings indicate that disadvantaged group members may see the hope as beneficial, as it offers them personal and collective instrumental benefits.

### **Do people want to feel hope even in the face of setbacks in contexts of oppression?**

Despite the potential instrumental benefits of hope for members of the disadvantaged group, hope for social change may be harder to generate when one's group is subject to domination and dehumanization by another group. The incompatibility between hope and the social reality becomes even larger when the group's conditions further deteriorate. Furthermore, as many intergroup conflicts are prolonged (Bar-Tal, 2013), the group's disadvantaged status and oppression may seem permanent, making it harder to see reality as dynamic. In light of these circumstances, it can be argued that when one's oppressive situation involves repeated setbacks and offers little scope for change, hope may feel like a

burden that disadvantaged group members actually wish to avoid, shying away from potential disillusionment in light of false and unrealistic expectations.

Nonetheless, we suggest that it is in these stressful situations that disadvantaged group members most need hope (Folkman, 2010). Drawing upon the emotion regulation literature (Gross, 1998; Halperin, 2014; Tamir, 2016), we expect that disadvantaged group members are motivated to be hopeful when faced with setbacks in the struggle. This is in line with research suggesting that individuals want to experience emotions from which they stand to benefit (Tamir, 2009; Tamir, 2016). Because hope is a coping resource that facilitates flexibility and positive feelings about the future, as well a galvanizing force for efforts to change unfavorable situations, it should be especially instrumental for coping with setbacks. Accordingly, we propose that in the face of such setbacks, the motivation for hope would be enhanced because disadvantaged group members want to avoid helplessness and defeat, and instead find a way to believe that change is possible despite adversity. The premise that disadvantaged group members' motivation to feel hope intensifies in the face of setbacks is in line with Lazarus's notion that people *try* to cling to hope through adversity, even when the chances of success are low, as hope provides the grounds for continuing engagement in life (Lazarus, 1999). To our knowledge, the notion that people try to cling to hope has not been empirically tested among disadvantaged groups in the context of prolonged oppression.

### **Does wanting to feel hope for social change translate into increased hope?**

If people do indeed want to feel hope for social change, even in the face of setbacks in their struggle, can they actually upregulate their hope in line with this motivation? Usually, the motivation to feel certain emotions can translate into the experience of that emotion, so if people are motivated to feel anger for example and given the right circumstances, they can subsequently intensify their anger (see Porat et al., 2016; Tamir et al., 2019). Accordingly, when disadvantaged group members want to feel hope for social change following setbacks,

their motivation should result in increased hope. Nonetheless, it may be possible that in this unique context the motivation to feel hope may not translate directly into enhanced hope, because the reality too strongly counteracts such emotional experience. Specifically, prolonged oppression engenders distress among individuals, impedes their cognitive capacity and self-efficacy, and disrupts communities' ability to provide their members with resources to cope with adversity (Harrell, 2000; Khamis, 1998; Mani et al., 2013). Put differently, when conditions worsen and setbacks occur, it is possible that the motivation to feel hope may be insufficient to increase hope forthwith. Under such circumstances, successfully up-regulating the emotional experience would require utilizing powerful emotion regulation strategies. Based on these lines of reasoning, we examine two competing hypotheses: 1) disadvantaged group members should experience increased hope in line with their motivation; and 2) despite an increased motivation for hope, the experience of hope is either unchanged or decreased, creating a gap between motivation for this emotion and its experience.

### **The Role of Motivation for Hope and Hope in Driving Collective Action**

Regardless of which of these two hypotheses receives support, we are interested in further exploring the effects of both motivation for hope and hope on collective action, as collective action is aimed at promoting group goals (van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). Thus, in the context of continuing setbacks in the struggle for social change, we were curious whether motivation for hope and/or hope experienced in its wake could affect collective action tendencies and drive continued action to advance goals despite the encountered setbacks.

It is likely that for collective action to occur in such situations of setbacks, disadvantaged group members need to have a sense of agency. Indeed, previous research has demonstrated that hope drives collective action when it is combined with beliefs about the efficacy of the group in achieving its goals (Cohen-Chen & Van Zomeren, 2018).

Accordingly, we sought to examine the relationships between the motivation for hope, hope,

and collective action among disadvantaged group members who have low or high efficacy beliefs, thus, aiming to better understand how these hope-related processes might drive continued efforts for social change.

### **Overview of the current research**

The current study aims to understand whether and how disadvantaged group members maintain their hope for social change in the face of setbacks within contexts of prolonged oppression. First, we suggest that specifically when faced with setbacks, disadvantaged group members may be even more motivated to feel hope, because of this emotion's potential to help them cope with these frustrating circumstances. Second, we examine two competing hypotheses: 1) disadvantaged group members should experience increased hope in line with their motivation, or 2) despite their motivation, disadvantaged group members' actual experience of hope will not increase because the reality counteracts such experience. Third, we wish to examine, through initial exploratory analyses, whether motivation for hope and hope can drive sustained collective action in the face of these setbacks.

To investigate these questions, we conducted a two-wave study among Palestinian residents of the West Bank. During the 1967 war, Israel occupied the Palestinian territories of West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, displacing 400,000 Palestinians, half of whom had been previously been displaced from Mandatory Palestine during the 1948 war that led to the establishment of Israel (Badil, 2004). The 1967 war prompted Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation that continues to this very day. The collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace processes at the turn of the millennium, the decline of the Palestinian struggle, and the challenges of life under militarized occupation have placed Palestinians in a state of insecurity, ambiguity, and uncertainty regarding their future. This context afforded us with an opportunity to study emotion regulation processes among disadvantaged group members whose hope is constantly challenged. It is important to note, however, that the politically-

sensitive nature of our chosen context projects onto research. Carrying out research in environments of militarized conflict and occupation requires negotiating various challenges, ranging from logistic barriers and mobility limitations, to difficulties in enlisting the cooperation of the target population due to issues of fear and mistrust (Cohen & Arieli, 2011).

## Method

### Participants and procedure

Participants were Palestinians living in the city of Ramallah and the surrounding areas in the West Bank, who were recruited by a local survey company (Near East Consulting) for face-to-face interviews.<sup>1</sup> The first wave was conducted in May 2018, during a period of relative calm, allowing us to assess all variables at baseline levels. Four hundred and fifty participants<sup>2</sup> (51% women,  $M_{age} = 33.9$ ) completed the first wave (T1). We collected data for a second wave (T2) six months later, during a period of escalation following two drive-by shootings carried out by Palestinians near illegal Israeli settlements. Two Israeli soldiers were killed in one of the shootings, and several settlers were wounded in the other. Subsequently, the Israeli army imposed a military closure on Ramallah, raiding residential neighborhoods and shutting down major checkpoints between it and surrounding cities. Almost all participants also completed T2<sup>3</sup> ( $n = 429$ , 50% women,  $M_{age} = 33.7$ ), and only these were included in the final analyses. In both waves, after obtaining their informed consent, the interviewer read to participants the questions and recorded their answers. Each interview

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<sup>1</sup> The survey company employed convenience sampling to recruit participants. Due to the sensitive socio-political content of the study, it was difficult to approach people randomly across a long period of time. Past experiences with research we had in the West Bank revealed that participants who are approached randomly showed reluctance to cooperate due to concerns and fear of being subject to political persecution by the Israeli army or the Palestinian Authority.

<sup>2</sup> Since this study was conducted as a part of a large study aimed at testing many different hypotheses, sample size was determined by a generic power analysis. We aimed to be able to detect small changes across time points ( $d = .2$ ) with high sensitivity (95% power at the  $p = .01$  level), a power analysis conducted in G\*Power indicated that a sample of 449 was required.

<sup>3</sup> The low dropout rate can be explained by the sampling method employed, which allowed for the establishment of trust between participants and survey personnel.

lasted around 40-60 minutes, and each participant received an anonymized identification code, allowing us to match T1 and T2 responses.

#### **Measures<sup>4</sup>**

Most measures (motivation for hope, hope, efficacy, and collective action intentions) were measured at both time points. Demographic variables were measured only at T1.

Perceived setbacks were measured only at T2, as they addressed setbacks encountered in the period between the two waves.

**Motivation for Hope.** Participants were asked: “Imagine you could have perfect control over your emotions. To what extent would you want to feel the following emotions?”. They then rated the extent to which they would want to feel several emotions, including “Hope for ending the occupation.” Participants responded on a scale ranging from “1 – Not at all” to “6 – To a very large extent.”

**Hope Experience.** Participants were asked: “To what extent do you feel each of the following emotions?” They then rated the extent to which they felt several emotions, including “Hope for ending the occupation.” Participants responded on the same scale used for the motivation item.

**Group Efficacy.** Three items measured group efficacy: “I believe that we Palestinians, as a group, can achieve our goals,” “I believe that we Palestinians, together, can end the occupation,” and “I believe that we Palestinians, together, can win the struggle against the occupation” (T1  $\alpha = .97$ , T2  $\alpha = .96$ ). Participants responded on a scale ranging from “1 – I do not agree at all” to “6 – I agree to a very large extent.”

**Collective Action Intentions.** Participants were asked about the degree to which they are personally willing to engage in each of the following actions: “Participating in demonstrations against the occupation,” “Participating in sit-ins against the occupation,”

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<sup>4</sup> This study was a part of a large-scale survey that investigated a number of research questions. We report relevant measures here and the full list of measures in the supplementary materials.

“Acting within social political movements against the occupation” (T1  $\alpha = .97$ , T2  $\alpha = .99$ ).

Participants answered on a scale ranging from “1 – Not willing at all” to “6 – Very much willing.”

**Demographic Questionnaire.** Participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire in T1. Items included gender, age, education, income, religion, religiosity, and profession.

**Perceived Setback in Goals.** In T2, participants were asked to assess the extent to which there had been setbacks in the preceding six months (i.e. since T1) in achieving the several goals that most Palestinians strive for in their struggle to end the occupation (Awrad, 2010): “Improving freedom of movement (decreasing checkpoints , issuing permits),” “Achieving recognition of and compensation for the historical and ongoing atrocities against Palestinians,” and “Securing the Palestinians refugees’ right of return” ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Participants answered on a scale ranging from “-3 - setbacks to achieving these goals” to +3 - progress towards achieving these goals,” with 0 reflecting no change. Since most of the sample (75%) perceived either setbacks or no progress towards achieving the goals, we reverse scored this variable and discuss it in terms of perceived setbacks. In addition, this distribution was bimodal rather than normal, with one mode around 0, indicating no progress, and another around 3 indicating high levels of setbacks (see Figure 1). Therefore, when analyzing the effects of this variable we considered the simple effects of the other variables at these two points. However, the results were unchanged when examining the simple effects among participants at +/-1 standard deviations from the mean.

## Results

The code used to analyze the data can be found at <https://osf.io/7bkty/5>. We began by examining the correlations between the main variables within each wave (see Table 1), and then moved on to investigate our main research questions.

### **Do people want to feel hope even in the face of setbacks in contexts of oppression?**

We investigated this question using a mixed-model analysis, where the effect of time was treated as a within-subject variable and perceived setbacks (centered at the mean) as a continuous between-subject variable. This analysis yielded a main effect of time on motivation for hope,  $b = 0.23$ , 95%  $CI = [0.07, 0.39]$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t(427) = 2.81$ ,  $p = 0.005$ , but no main effect of perceived setbacks. As predicted, the two-way interaction between time and perceived setbacks was significant,  $b = 0.23$ ,  $CI = [0.10, 0.36]$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(427) = 3.46$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (see Figure 1). Simple slope analysis revealed that when perceived setbacks were high (the higher of the two modes), there was a significant increase in participants' motivation for hope over time,  $b = 0.61$ ,  $CI = [0.34, 0.87]$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $t(427) = 4.46$ ,  $p < .001$ . When there was no perceived setback or progress (the lower of the two modes), however, this simple slope was nonsignificant,  $b = -0.08$ ,  $CI = [-0.33, 0.16]$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ,  $t(427) = -0.69$ ,  $p = .49$ .

### **Does people's experienced hope match their motivation, even in the face of setbacks?**

First, we conducted the same analysis, this time specifying hope instead of motivation for hope as the dependent variable. Neither time, perceived setbacks, nor their interaction yielded significant effects on hope experience ( $p$ 's  $> .20$ , see Figure 3). We also conducted a mixed-model analysis examining the relationship between time, motivation for hope (within subjects), and perceived setbacks (between subjects) (Time  $\times$  Motivation for Hope  $\times$  Perceived Setbacks) as interactive predictors for the experience of hope. This analysis yielded main effects for all three independent variables on hope experience,<sup>6</sup> as well as a two way

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<sup>5</sup> We hope to make all data accessible, pending approval of the funding agency, which is examining whether making this data publicly accessible is in keeping with their data protection policies.

<sup>6</sup> Time ( $b = 1.33$ ,  $CI = [0.65, 2.01]$ ,  $SE = 0.35$ ,  $t(427) = 3.80$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Motivation for Hope ( $b = 0.42$ ,  $CI = [0.33, 0.52]$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t(427) = 8.90$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Perceived Setbacks ( $b = 0.69$ ,  $CI = [0.27, 1.11]$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ ,  $t(427) = 3.24$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ).

interaction between motivation for hope and perceived setbacks,  $b = -0.14$ ,  $CI = [-0.23, -0.07]$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $t(427) = 3.63$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (see Figure 4). As predicted, motivation for hope only significantly predicted hope when perceived setbacks were low,  $b = 0.42$ ,  $CI = [0.32, 0.53]$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t(427) = 7.86$ ,  $p < .001$ . When perceived setbacks were high the relationship between motivation for hope and hope did not reach significance,  $b = 0.08$ ,  $CI = [-0.04, 0.21]$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t(427) = 1.32$ ,  $p = .19$ .<sup>7</sup> In other words, motivation for hope did not predict hope experience among individuals who experienced many setbacks towards achieving their group's goals.

### **Does motivation for hope and hope drive collective action?**

We conducted a mixed-model analysis, where the effect of time was treated as a categorical within-subject variable, motivation for hope (centered at the mean) was treated as a continuous within-subject variable, and group efficacy (centered at the mean) as a continuous between-subject variable, all predicting collective action intentions. The model (Time  $\times$  Motivation for Hope  $\times$  Group Efficacy) revealed a significant three-way interaction between time, motivation for hope, and group efficacy<sup>8</sup> on collective action intentions,  $b = 0.23$ ,  $CI = [0.13, 0.32]$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t(427) = 4.74$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (see Figure 5). Simple slope analyses revealed that when group efficacy was high (1 SD above the mean) among participants who were highly motivated to feel hope (1 SD above the mean), collective action intentions significantly increases over time,  $b = 0.82$ ,  $CI = [0.48, 1.16]$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $t(427) = 4.77$ ,  $p < .001$ . For those low in motivation for hope (1 SD below the mean), however, there was no change in collective action intentions across time,  $b = -0.01$ ,  $CI = [-0.44, 0.41]$ ,  $SE =$

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<sup>7</sup> This held true across time, i.e. the Time X Motivation for Hope X Perceived Setbacks interaction was not significant. However there was a significant Time X Motivation for Hope interaction ( $b = -0.31$ ,  $CI = [-0.45, 0.17]$ ), such that the relationship between motivation for hope and hope was weaker in time 2 ( $b = 0.11$ ,  $CI = [0.001, 0.22]$ ) than in time 1 ( $b = 0.42$ ,  $CI = [0.33, 0.52]$ ).

<sup>8</sup> There were also significant main effects of motivation for hope ( $b = 0.25$ ,  $CI = [0.16, 0.34]$ ) and efficacy ( $b = 0.13$ ,  $CI = [0.03, 0.24]$ ), as well as a two way interaction between time and efficacy ( $b = 0.26$ ,  $CI = [0.13, 0.38]$ ), indicating that collective action increased over time for those high in efficacy ( $b = 0.40$ ,  $CI = [0.16, 0.35]$ ), but decreased for those low in efficacy ( $b = -0.30$ ,  $CI = [-0.53, -0.06]$ ).

0.22,  $t(427) = -0.07$ ,  $p = .95$ . Conversely, when group efficacy was low (1 SD below the mean) among participants who were highly motivated to feel hope there was a significant decrease in collective action intentions over time,  $b = -0.76$ ,  $CI = [-1.11, -0.42]$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $t(427) = -4.32$ ,  $p < .001$ . Finally, for those low in motivation for hope, collective action intentions did not change over time,  $b = 0.17$ ,  $CI = [-0.15, 0.49]$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ,  $t(427) = 1.05$ ,  $p = .29$ . In sum, motivation for hope predicted collective action intentions, perhaps suggesting that participants were attempting to use collective action to address their desire for hope. However, this relationship only appeared among those high in efficacy, indicating that collective action is relevant to addressing hope motivations mainly for those who feel their group has can affect some sort of change.

We tested a similar model replacing motivation for hope with hope (Time  $\times$  Hope  $\times$  Group Efficacy), and the three-way interaction was no longer significant,  $p = .44$ . The new analysis yielded only significant main effects of time ( $b = 0.25$ ,  $CI = [0.08, 0.41]$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t(427) = 2.88$ ,  $p = .004$ ) and hope ( $b = 0.22$ ,  $CI = [0.13, 0.30]$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $t(427) = 5.25$ ,  $p < .001$ )<sup>9</sup> on collective action intentions. This suggests that the increase in collective action intentions over time was driven by motivation for hope, rather than hope, which may be in accordance with our finding that a desire for hope does not in fact enhance hope.

### General Discussion

In contexts of ongoing oppression, in which efforts for social change frequently encounter setbacks, the ability of disadvantaged group members to experience hope is constantly challenged. This investigation sheds interesting new light onto the questions of whether disadvantaged members want to feel hope for social change despite the dispiriting conditions and whether they indeed fulfill this desire. Our findings provide evidence that

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<sup>9</sup> In addition, we found the same a two way interaction between time and efficacy ( $b = 0.35$ ,  $CI = [0.22, 0.47]$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t(427) = 5.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ) that appeared in the earlier analyses, indicating that collective action increased over time for those high in efficacy ( $b = 0.71$ ,  $CI = [0.48, 0.95]$ ), but not for those low in efficacy ( $b = -0.30$ ,  $CI = [-0.46, 0.01]$ )

setbacks in the struggle for social change actually increase people's motivation to feel hope, implying that they are on some level aware of hope's benefits for coping. Nonetheless, we also find that this increased motivation for hope does not immediately translate into similarly higher levels of hope. Furthermore, our findings indicate that even though the motivation for hope might not generate hope, it can still drive collective action if it emerges alongside a sense of efficacy.

### *Theoretical implications*

Taken together, our findings have important implications for the study of emotion regulation, hope, and coping (Gross & John, 2003; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007; Van Zomeren et al., in press). The current examination links these lines of research, indicating that disadvantaged group members are motivated to feel hope in the face of frustrating circumstances, perhaps in an attempt to avoid hopelessness. Nevertheless, even though previous research suggests that people get what they want in the sense that their motivation drives a concordant emotional state (see Porat et al., 2016; Tamir et al., 2019), we show that this is not necessarily the case for disadvantaged group members. Specifically, our work illuminates the role of power relations and status in emotion regulation processes by demonstrating that even if disadvantaged group members have the will to experience hope, they may not have the resources to realize this will. In other words, their repeated experience of setbacks may create a boundary condition for experiencing hope, even when this emotion is desired. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that depleted resources impede individuals' capacity to cope with trauma, especially where proper psychosocial resources for rebuilding hope for the future are lacking (Hobfoll, 1998, 2007). At the same time, our exploratory investigation indicates that the desire to feel hope drives some disadvantaged group members to engage in efforts to fight oppression. This pattern emerged only among those with a high sense of group efficacy, confirming previous findings that

collective agency is pivotal for collective action (Cohen-Chen & van Zomeren, 2018; Van Zomeren et al., in press). This also raises an interesting possibility that disadvantaged group members might be using collective action as an emotion regulation strategy, meaning as way to increase their hope in line with their motivation (Goldenberg, Halperin, van Zomeren, & Gross, 2015).

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Despite these interesting findings, this research has several limitations. First, due to the unique sample, residing under military occupation within an atmosphere of suspicion, distrust and fear of being subject to political repression, we used a convenient rather than random sampling method, thereby limiting the findings' generalizability. Furthermore, while our results indicate that there is gap between disadvantaged group members' motivation for and experience of hope when they face setbacks, we cannot conclusively determine whether or how they bridge this gap. While this investigation offers exploratory evidence that some people may use collective action to regulate their hope, our data cannot indicate to what extent this strategy is successful. Future research could benefit from examining whether disadvantaged group members do indeed feel more hopeful after participating in collective action. It would also be important to explore other strategies that people use to close gaps between their motivation and actual emotional experience.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, this work sheds light on the experience of Palestinians living within a daily reality of oppression and militarized occupation. Nonetheless, and especially when they perceive setbacks in the struggle for social change, disadvantaged group members try to cling to hope. While this desire for hope does not immediately translate into increased hope experience, at least some people act on this motivation for hope by engaging in collective action for social change. All in all, this research demonstrates the extraordinary resilience of

marginalized groups and highlights one of the mechanisms by which they maintain their struggle for social change.

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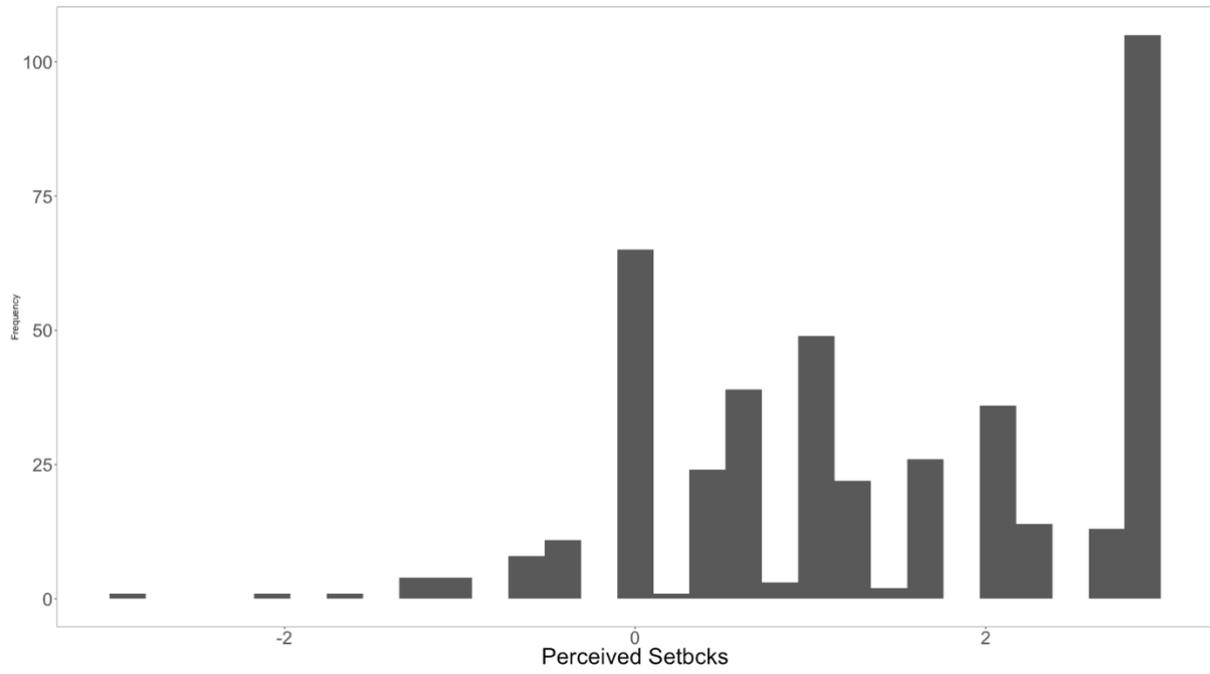
Table 1

*Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals*

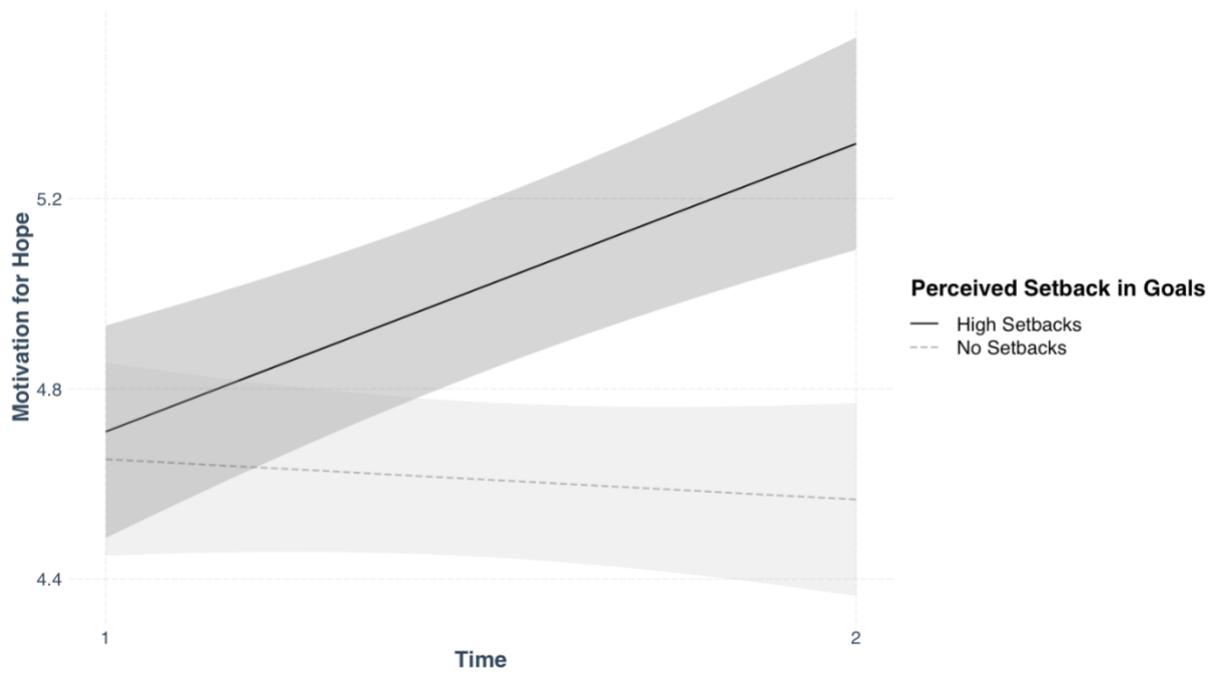
| Variable                                 | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     |
|--|----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Perceived Setbacks (Time 2)           | 1.38     | 1.24      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 2. Motivation for Hope (Time 1)          | 4.68     | 1.52      | .02   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 3. Hope (Time 1)                         | 4.08     | 1.71      | -.03  | .39** |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 4. Efficacy (Time 1)                     | 4.21     | 1.35      | -.02  | .46** | .42** |       |       |       |       |       |
| 5. Collective Action Intentions (Time 1) | 2.84     | 1.54      | .06   | .30** | .33** | .33** |       |       |       |       |
| 6. Motivation for Hope (Time 2)          | 4.91     | 1.37      | .23** | .28** | .13** | .09   | .15** |       |       |       |
| 7. Hope (Time 2)                         | 3.96     | 1.54      | .02   | .09   | .27** | .15** | .12** | .12*  |       |       |
| 8. Efficacy (Time 2)                     | 4.42     | 1.36      | .09   | -.02  | .12*  | .27** | .11*  | .26** | .19** |       |
| 9. Collective Action Intentions (Time 2) | 3.05     | 1.80      | .23** | .13** | .24** | .23** | .43** | .21** | .22** | .37** |

*Note.* *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. \* indicates  $p < .05$ . \*\* indicates  $p < .01$ .

**Figure 1.** Distribution of Perceived Setbacks

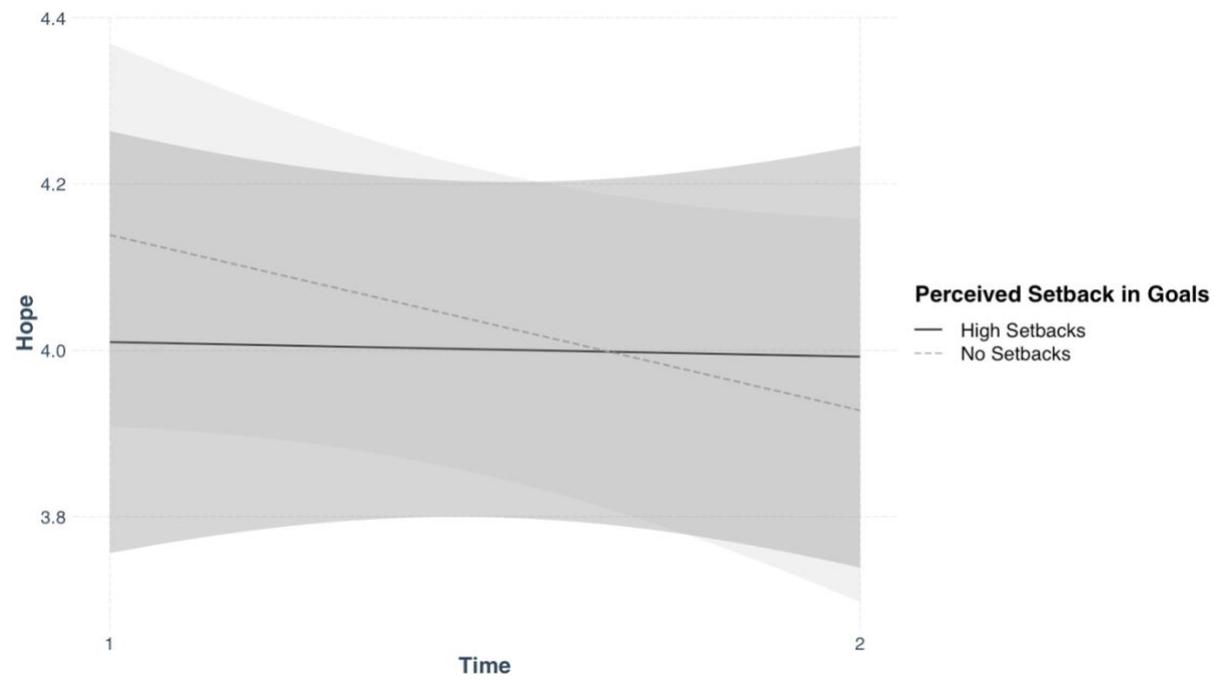


**Figure 2.** Effects of Perceived Setback in Goals on Motivation for Hope over Time



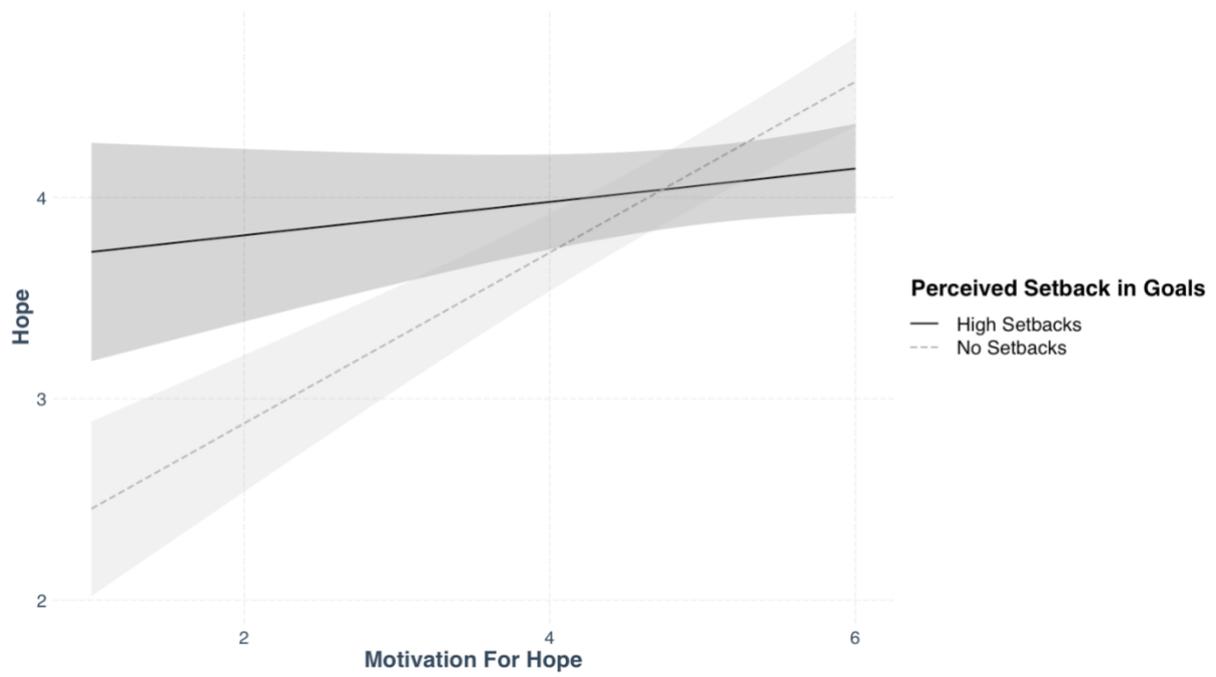
*Note.* Shaded areas reflect 95% confidence intervals.

**Figure 3.** Effects of Perceived Setback in Goals on Hope over Time



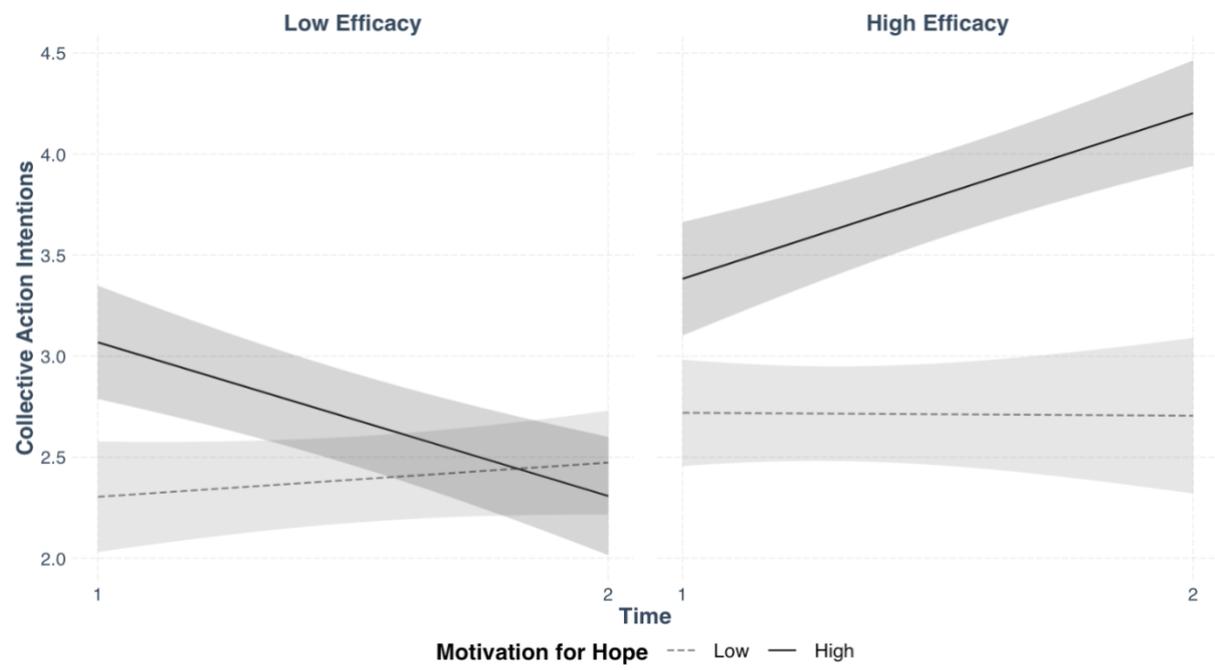
*Note.* Shaded areas reflect 95% confidence intervals.

**Figure 4.** Interaction between Motivation for Hope and Perceived Setbacks on Hope



*Note.* Shaded areas reflect 95% confidence intervals.

**Figure 5.** Interaction between Motivation for Hope and Group Efficacy on Collective Action Over Time



*Note.* Shaded areas reflect 95% confidence intervals.