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Longitudinal relationship between affective well-being and life events: two-wave study

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Backgound: As proposed in Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions may lead to better life outcomes, and favourable life events. In this study we examine whether affective well-being predict the change in frequency of subsequent life events reported a year later. Methods: The data were collected from the first two waves of the longitudinal research project on well-being and life events in Croatia (CRO-WELL-project). At the first wave (time 1), the initial sample consisted of N=5031 participants. At the second wave (time 2) sample consisted of N=2460 participants aged 19-78. In both waves participants assessed affective well-being by The Scale of positive and negative experience and reported how much they experienced positive and negative emotions over the last month. They reported the occurrence of life events over the year using check-list of 28 positive and 28 negative life events. Personality and demographic variables were controlled in analyses.

Findings: The regression analyses were employed for predicting the frequency of life events at time 2, while controlling for their levels at time 1. Results showed that above and beyond personality and demographic variables, more positive emotions longitudinally predicted an increase in frequency of positive events, while more negative emotions longitudinally predicted an increase in frequency of negative events after the one-year follow-up.

Discussion: The findings highlight the differential role of positive and negative emotions in relationship with frequency of life events. The positive long lasting impact of positive emotions on frequency of positive events is in accordance with the broaden-and-build theoretical framework.