

## Sustainable Living: Breaking the Power of Expectation

Ekuban Charles Aaron Adams <sup>1\*</sup>, Fye Sheikh Omar <sup>2</sup>

Amrita School for Sustainable Futures, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kollam, India

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the impact of human expectation on interpersonal relationships and societal harmony, specifically in expectation-driven systems prevalent in regions like Africa and other developing countries. Previous research has primarily focused on the theoretical aspects of this issue, overlooking the perspectives of individuals themselves. Therefore, this study is significant because it aims to explore the transformative potential of adopting minimal expectations in fostering healthy relationships and facilitating peaceful coexistence among individuals. The methodology used involves an in-depth analysis of public opinion, using a rigorous random sampling technique to collect data from WhatsApp conversations. A comprehensive sample of 213 WhatsApp users was selected, and data was collected through WhatsApp polls. Additionally, the study utilizes mathematical principles to strengthen its arguments and enhance the analytical framework. The findings highlight the role of human expectation as a catalyst for conflicts, bitterness, jealousy, and even interpersonal violence. Developing countries often emphasize reciprocity in social interactions, which amplifies challenges and discord when one party fails to fulfill their obligations. In conclusion, achieving sustainable living requires promoting mutual appreciation and focusing on the positive aspects of human existence. By transcending the negative consequences of excessive expectations, individuals have the potential to contribute to establishing harmonious relationships and enhancing societal well-

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being. Effective recognition and management of expectations are critical factors in realizing these goals.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, in the context of human relationships and communication, the following questions arise when one is distressed: Do you expect certain things from your partner, children, friends, family members, co-workers, or employer/employees? Do you notice that when your expectations are not met, you feel resentful, disappointed, hurt, frustrated, or angry? These questions bring attention to the issue of expectation, which has contributed to the chaos of life and unhealthy living. It has greatly affected sustainable human relationships, the environment, and livelihoods. One key element hindering the peace of nations worldwide, which has not been taken seriously, is expectation. It has a wide range of influence, touching every aspect of life: from home to church, shrines, husband to wife, dating, home to workplaces, children to parents, and more. It has triggered wars and mayhem, strained relationships, increased the rate of suicide, and caused disturbances in marketplaces, chieftaincy disputes, political uprisings, and non-peaceful communities or societies. Expectations control the subconscious mind, leading to the formation of various plans and evil actions.

Expectations may start small but can quickly become uncontrollable. Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) calls on nations to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths by the end of 2030 (UN, 2015). However, a close examination of our lives reveals that despite having the right education, people still need to be informed about the impact of expectations on their lives. With 2030 approaching, how can we promote sustainable development through peaceful living and coexistence? It is against this backdrop that this paper aims to demonstrate that having zero expectations can foster sustainable and peaceful coexistence among humans. The study seeks to prove that having zero expectations leads to sustainable living and to examine the effect of expectations on people's lives. The writer personally experienced this and believes it is important to remind people of the importance of reducing expectations to maintain good health. Additionally, the writer comes from a place where unexplained killings occur, suspecting that they may be the result of unfulfilled expectations.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Generally, in the court of public opinion, expectation is seen as believing that something is going to happen or believing that something should happen in a certain way in the future. Again, the literal meaning of the word "expectation" is to anticipate or look forward to something happening in the future. It comes from the Latin word "expectation," or "expectation" which means "an awaiting." When we have an expectation, we have a belief or assumption that something will happen or be certain in the future. The Cambridge Dictionary (2023) explains that expectation is the feeling that good things are going to happen in the future, and whether this good thing will come from an individual or not is the issue. People also expect something (blessings, protection, etc.) from their deities of belief. From this statement, expectation can be given a religious and human connotation but can also be looked at in the social and psychological. By religious connotation, people expect blessings, goodies, wealth, etc. from whatever supreme being or deity they believe in. (Brañas-Garza et al., 2017) They also expect blessings and prayers from their spiritual leaders and are prepared to sacrifice whatever it takes to have the aforementioned prospects manifest in their lives. This has pushed many into engaging in the use of spiritual artefacts and the killing of both animals and humans to receive some blessings, so to speak. When all these aforesaid expectations do not become a reality, it results in the withdrawal from society, and the perpetuation of evil to a very large magnitude. (Do & Giang, n.d.)

Social refers to a mix of our culture Frustration becomes the other of the day, which has the propensity to simulate negative outcomes, manifesting a rippling effect on all facets of human life. Unfulfilled expectation produces anger, acrimony, and a rancorous atmosphere (Hyde et al., 2009; Khmil & Popovych, 2019)

### **2.1 The Pygmalion Effect**

The Pygmalion effect is a psychological concept that highlights the significant impact of positive or negative expectations on individual or group performance. Nikolopoulou, K. (2023)

The Pygmalion effect refers broadly to the effects of interpersonal expectations, that is, the finding that what one person expects of another can come to serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy. These effects of interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecies have come to be called Pygmalion effects in general, and especially so when the interpersonal expectancy effects occur in an educational context. (Al Maalouf et al., 2023)

The Pygmalion effect holds significance in both academic and practical contexts. For instance, if a manager firmly believes in the capabilities of their team, that team is likely to surpass a group managed by someone with contrasting beliefs, even if both teams possess equivalent skills.

When an individual makes promises to people and fails to honour his promises because of what others might have told them manifests the Pygmalion effect. Again, the Pygmalion effect shows how expectations exert influence over our actions. This phenomenon arises as we tend to internalise the judgments bestowed upon us by others, causing us to strive to align with those judgments, regardless of whether they are favourable or unfavourable.

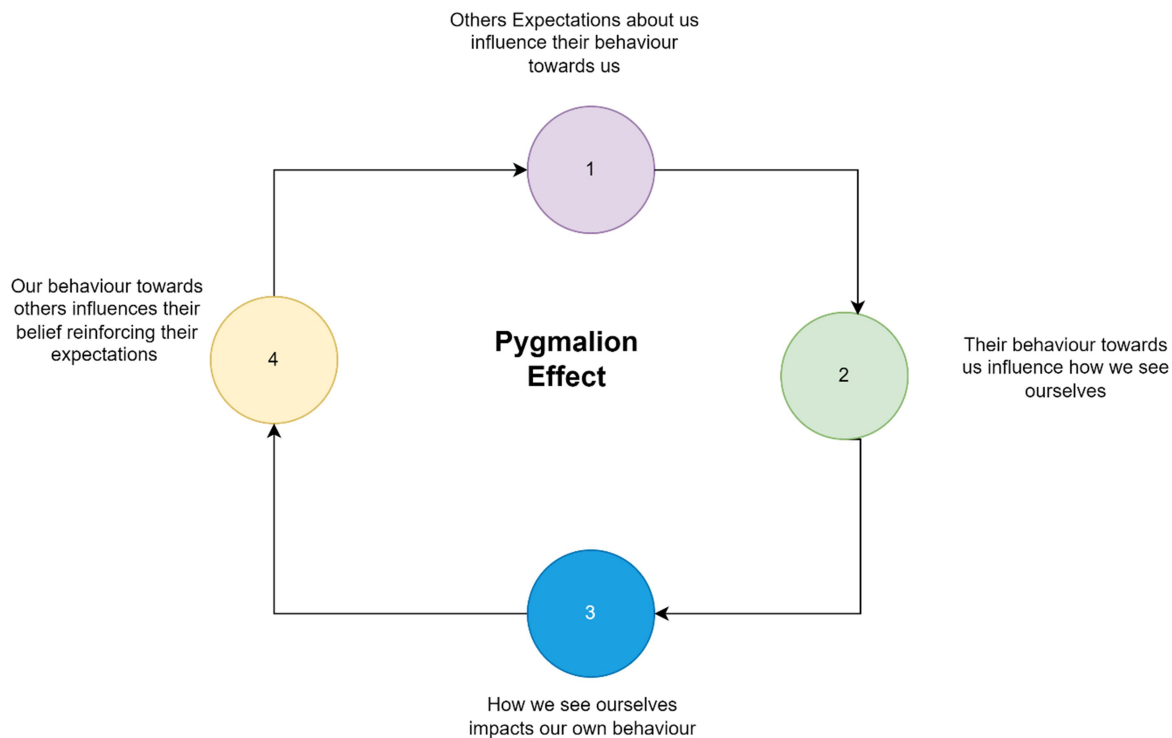
The Pygmalion effect operates cyclically:

The expectations others hold about us shape the way they behave towards us.

Their behaviour towards us, in turn, shapes our self-perception.

Our self-perception then impacts how we conduct ourselves.

Our conduct towards others affects their beliefs, thereby reinforcing their initial expectations.



**Figure (1) The Pygmalion Effect Cycle**

The Pygmalion effect has implications in different situations:

While this phenomenon typically operates unconsciously, it can also be intentionally applied to facilitate the development of others, such as students, employees, or athletes. For instance, coaches who communicate high expectations to athletes can motivate them to achieve greater success in their sport.

Understanding the Pygmalion effect can help individuals, families, and relationships recognise how their attitudes and expectations towards their subordinates can impact them. An individual's biases can influence their expectations of others and unfairly label them based on stereotypes.

Moreover, the Pygmalion effect can have an impact on entire groups and organisations. It can shape the overall atmosphere within departments, establishing either a culture of low expectations or the opposite.

It is natural for every human being to expect a kind gesture from someone who has received the same from the same person. This human practice has generated a lot of controversy and chaos when something that ought to have happened to the other party vanishes. Many people hatch different kinds of thoughts, plans, and notions about people they have helped, and when it comes to their turn to help, they now decide otherwise. Gradually, this attitude of humans has become a microcosm of human living, crushing good human relationships, sustainable human living, and peaceful co-existence. Many people in societies around the world, particularly Ghana, have suffered from expectations, resulting in various degrees of brutality occurring during elections, public festivals, and the like. (Nikolopoulou, 2023)

**Credition**

The credition model suggests that beliefs are formed through neural mechanisms that involve perceiving external information and subjectively valuing it based on personal significance. This, in turn, influences an individual's decision-making behavior (Seitz et al., 2018). Belief formation primarily occurs in a preverbal manner and includes memory functions that store and retrieve established beliefs (Seitz et al., 2022). Therefore, beliefs are essential representations of imaginative and emotional content that connect an individual's past experiences to their future actions. It is worth noting that individuals can reflect on and express their beliefs explicitly, using statements like "I believe..." (Oakley and Halligan, 2017; Seitz and Angel, 2020). By doing so, they convey their certainty or trust in their held beliefs to others.

Belief, as a primary source of expectation, arises from neuropsychological functions that overlap with, but are distinct from, those involved in cognition and emotion (Angel and Seitz, 2016). However, until recently, there was a lack of precise terminology to describe the complex "believing process" in everyday language, philosophy, and cognitive science. To address this terminological challenge and facilitate interdisciplinary discussions, the term "creditation" emerged (Angel, 2013a). Initially, the concept of creditation focused on understanding religious experiences from an anthropological perspective and gradually expanded to encompass broader aspects of "religiosity" (Angel, 2013b). It's worth noting that the term "creditation" refers to the believing process that includes both religious and secular beliefs. The term is derived from the Latin word "credere," meaning "to believe," aligning with other psychological constructs such as cognition (derived from Latin "cogitare," meaning "to think" or "to reflect") and emotion (derived from Latin "movere," meaning "to move"). The creditation model proposes that normal belief is intricately interconnected with cognitive and emotional processes, although it involves overlapping but distinct neuropsychological functions (Sugiura et al., 2015; Angel, 2016). This raises the question of how the interaction of belief with cognitive and emotional processes can be conceptualized. In order to articulate the notion of "violation of expectation" within the framework of the creditation model, it is necessary to delineate certain fundamental features of the model itself. It should be noted that, for the purposes of this presentation, we assume the creditation model as an established framework, despite ongoing scientific investigations into the nature of the belief process (reference). Thus, for the purposes of this paper, the credibility model is considered sufficiently robust, drawing support from various fields of research. Furthermore, we posit that a violation of expectation occurs when an unexpected event disrupts a previously established mental state that had engendered a strong belief or confident feeling. It is important to emphasize that the belief process leading to the formation of a firm belief or confident feeling belongs to the past. In contrast, the violation of expectation involves a momentary event that contradicts the probabilistic expectation based on the outcome of the belief process, which pertains to future events

### **Rumination**

Rumination arises as a consequence of the cascading impact of depressive cognitions. This cognitive process entails a persistent and involuntary fixation on negative emotions, distress, and their causes and consequences, thus amplifying their detrimental effects. The iterative and pessimistic nature of rumination not only serves as a precursor to the onset of clinical conditions like depression and anxiety but also exacerbates existing psychopathological states.

Rumination frequently engenders emotional distress and, in its severest form, it can act as a catalyst for the manifestation of psychopathological disorders such as depression and anxiety. The repetitive and negative characteristics of rumination compound the likelihood of developing depression or anxiety while simultaneously deteriorating preexisting conditions. In the context of individuals experiencing a depressive mood, rumination is linked to a greater tendency to recall negative past events, interpret current situations negatively, and have a bleak outlook on the future. This preoccupation with personal problems also hinders problem-solving abilities and limits cognitive flexibility. Even in individuals without clinical depression or anxiety, rumination can significantly contribute to negative emotions. As a result, this creates a cycle where heightened rumination increases emotional distress, thereby reinforcing the inclination to continue ruminating.



**Figure 2:** *The Basic Idea.* (n.d.)

This figure explains the circular nature of our repetitive thoughts that generate rumination causing all the expectations that individuals have.

Rumination encompasses two pivotal sub-components that contribute to its complex nature:

1. Reflection: This cognitive process involves introspectively revisiting a past event to gain insight into the associated emotions and facilitate emotional processing and understanding.

2. Brooding: Recognized as a significant facet of rumination, brooding entails a persistent preoccupation with the negative emotional consequences stemming from a situation, whether it pertains to the past or present.

The scientific exploration of rumination owes much to the pioneering work of psychologist Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, whose influential contributions have been bolstered by the collective efforts of numerous researchers in the field. This concerted research endeavour has granted rumination on the status of a fundamental mechanism linking stress, alongside other depressive factors, to the development and maintenance of psychopathological disorders.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The paper employs a methodology grounded in public opinion analysis taken from WhatsApp conversations at random and writings and augments its argument with some mathematical underpinnings. Data was collected from WhatsApp polls. WhatsApp-based social media surveys serve as the primary instrument for gauging public sentiment regarding the subject of expectations.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**4.1 Sample Profile:** The research employed a stratified random sampling approach to select 213 participants from a total population of 454 WhatsApp users, accounting for 47% of the entire population. Participants were randomly selected without recourse to location but being a user of WhatsApp. The sample size comprised 40 participants aged 41-50 (the experienced group), 126 participants aged 31-40 (the actively experiencing group), and 47 participants aged 18-30 (the inexperienced group).

The study employed a confidence level of 95% and a sampling error of 5%.

e's (1967) formula was used to calculate the sample size as shown below.

$$\begin{aligned} &= \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \\ &= \frac{454}{1 + 454(0.05)^2} \end{aligned}$$

= 213



**N** is population size (that is total number of participants)

**n** is the required sample size; and

**e** is sampling error (which is 5%).

**Table (1)** Shows the stratum of participants.

Stratum	No. of staff category proportion (Nh)	Sample Size (NH) per Participant Category
18-30	85	47
31-40	268	126
41-50	101	40
Total	454	213

Source: *Primary data (2023)*

## Descriptives

### Gender

**Table 2: Frequencies for Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Per cent
Males	133	62.441
Females	80	37.559
Total	213	100.000

Source: *Primary data (2023)*

The finding indicates that 133 (62.4%) of the respondents were males while 80 (37.6%) were females. It therefore means that most of the respondents were males. This indicates that most of the males had a strong interest in expectations and probably were the most vulnerable than women.

### Age

**Table 3: Frequencies for Age**

Age	Frequency	Per cent
18-30yrs	47	22.066
31-40yrs	126	59.155
41-50yrs	40	18.779
Total	213	100.000

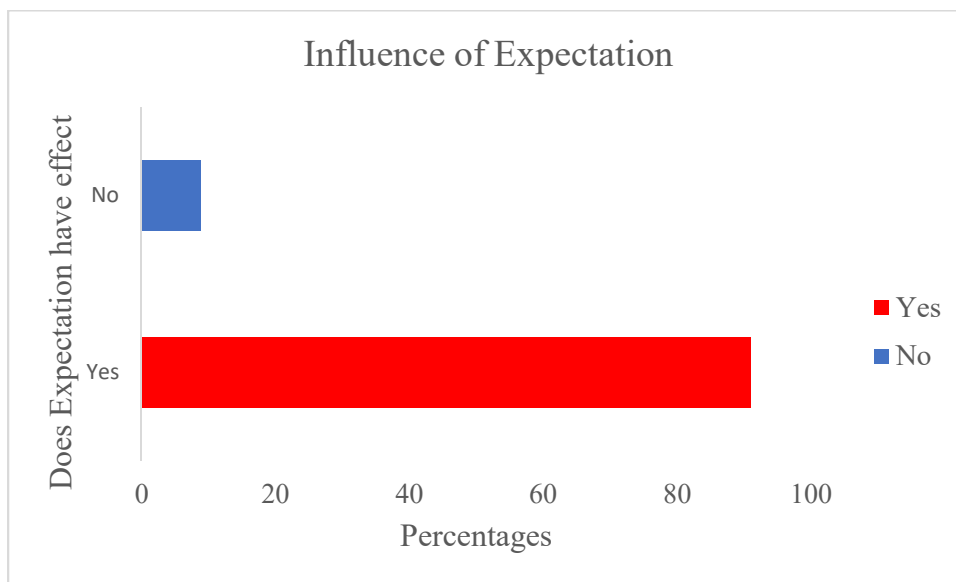
Source: *Primary data (2023)*

From above, 22.1% of the respondents were between 18 – 30 years, 59.2% were between 31 – 40 years, and 18.8% were between 41 – 50 years. This implies that there was a fair representation of the population as almost all age brackets were represented, and the data reflected the views of the entire population.

**Table 4:** Influence of expectation

Does expectation have a negative influence on people	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	194	91.080
No	19	8.920
Total	213	100.000

Source: *Primary data (2023)*



**Figure 3 Percentages of respondent influence of expectation**

Most of the respondents expressed a belief in the adverse impacts of expectations on individuals rather than positive effects. Specifically, 91.1% responded affirmatively (Yes), signifying their opinion that expectations have a negative influence on people, while only 8.9% responded negatively (No). This seeks to suggest that many people are usually affected when their expectations are not met.

**Table 5:** Frequencies for what happens when expectations are not met

<b>What happens when expectations are not met</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Disappointment	77	36.150
Angry	73	34.272
Sad	20	9.390
Palpitations	43	20.188
Total	213	100.000

Source: *Primary data (2023)*

The table above highlights that a significant number of individuals experience disappointment when their expectations from others are not fulfilled. Moreover, a considerable portion of the respondents mentioned that unmet expectations can lead to internalized anger, which has the potential to manifest at any moment.

**Table 6:** Frequencies for Unfulfilled expectation

<b>Do you believe greater problems emanate from unfulfilled Expectations</b>	<b>Frequency Per cent</b>	
Yes	190	89.202
No	23	10.798
Total	213	100.000

Source: *Primary data (2023)*

Table 7 underscores the idea that significant human issues originate from unwarranted expectations. The data clearly illustrates that respondents overwhelmingly answered "Yes" at 89.2%, while the "No" responses accounted for 10.8%.

### 4.1 Probability Exposition

In the context of probability theory and statistics, the term "expectation" is used to refer to the predicted value of a random variable, which is a measure of what we can expect to happen based on the underlying probability distribution.

Expectation is the anticipated value of a random variable derived from its probability distribution. In simpler terms, it represents the mean value of a variable that we anticipate over the long term, considering the probabilities linked to various potential results. In mathematical terms, if an event never occurs, the expectation is zero.

$$\begin{aligned}
 E[x - \mu]^2 &= E[x^2 + 2x\mu + \mu^2] \\
 &= E[x^2] - 2\mu E[x] + \mu^2 \text{ but } E[x] = \mu \\
 &= E[x^2] - E[x^2] \\
 &= 0
 \end{aligned}$$

The above analogy presents a metaphoric situation where which individuals must allow their expectations of others to approach zero. This will help them become free of any problems or malicious thinking. Expectations approaching zero will lessen most health conditions that befall many individuals as they

Happiness grows in direct proportion to my acceptance and inverse proportion to my expectations. I disagree with the statement that expectations are inversely proportional to happiness. This can be plotted in the graph below. If we plot happiness on the y-axis and expectation on the y-axis based on the above hypothesis, the curve looks like the following.

Our happiness or disappointment is a function of the relationship between expectations and reality. When our expectations exceed the reality that we experience, then we are disappointed. The inverse occurs when reality exceeds our expectations, and we experience happiness.

$$HD = f(Expectation)$$

Here:

*H* is happiness or disappointment,

E is the relationship between expectations and reality,

According to this perspective, any alteration in expectations, whether heightened or diminished, can potentially induce a corresponding change in emotional states such as happiness or disappointment. The notion posits that a state of absolute contentment can be achieved by maintaining a stance of zero expectations, while conversely, harbouring excessively lofty expectations may only yield minimal happiness.

This proposition implies that an individual's level of happiness can be evaluated on a continuum, with an absence of expectations or exceedingly high expectations resulting in a state of negligible happiness. Conversely, optimal levels of happiness can be attained when expectations are reasonable and attuned to reality.

Consequently, it is imperative to cultivate the ability to effectively manage expectations, rather than attempting to suppress or allow them to spiral out of control, as it can be a pivotal determinant in enhancing overall life satisfaction. By striking a balance and fostering realistic expectations, individuals can strive to maximize their potential for happiness and avoid the potential misery that unfettered and unrealistic expectations can entail.

Anger, as a complex emotion, demonstrates a strong correlation with the realm of expectations. It stems from an intrinsic desire for equitable treatment, dignity, and kindness in interpersonal interactions, not only for ourselves but also for our loved ones. When these anticipated standards are not met, the resultant emotional response often manifests as anger due to the experience of being hurt. In this context, anger can be understood as an emotional reaction to unfulfilled expectations (Carlson et al., 2022).

Primarily, expectations exert unparalleled influence over the fabric of our reality, permeating not only our own experiences but also extending their effects to those around us. Within the realm of self-fulfilling prophecies, the beliefs and anticipations we hold significantly shape the trajectories of individuals, including ourselves. Empirical research provides substantial evidence for this phenomenon, revealing distinct patterns that emerge when we invest faith in someone or something:

- Acts of kindness become intrinsically linked to our treatment of those in whom we harbor these expectations, in stark contrast to our interactions with individuals we anticipate might falter in meeting these expectations.

- Opportunities for success tend to flourish in the presence of those we hold high expectations for, while we may consciously or unconsciously limit such opportunities for individuals, we fear may not meet our expected standards.
- When engaging with those for whom we have high expectations, our communication is characterized by more constructive and relevant feedback, in contrast to the less specific guidance offered to others.
- Our commitment to mentoring and supporting individuals intensifies when we believe their potential warrants our investment and involvement.

This intricate interplay of expectations finds resonance in the concept of the "Nocebo Effect," wherein doubts and negative expectations serve as precursors to failure. Expectations, as research reveals, possess a remarkable ability to shape and influence both our emotional and physical experiences (Faasse et al., 2018). What we anticipate holds considerable sway over what manifests in our lives. Studies illustrate the remarkable feats accomplished by highly trained weightlifters who firmly believe in the efficacy of performance-enhancing substances. Similarly, individuals who adopt taller, more attractive avatars in virtual reality environments tend to adopt behaviours commonly associated with these physical attributes. These examples underscore the profound impact that our expectations exert upon our self-concept and the narratives we weave about the world around us.

**Opinion 1:** Human expectation is a driving force in our lives. It's what motivates us to set goals, work hard, and strive for success. Having high expectations can lead to greater achievements, while low expectations can limit our potential. It's crucial to strike a balance and set realistic expectations to achieve a fulfilling and successful life."

**Opinion 2:** Expectations can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they can inspire us to reach for the stars, but they can also lead to disappointment and stress when reality falls short of our expectations. Managing and adjusting our expectations is a life skill that can lead to more happiness and contentment."

**Opinion 3:** Our perspectives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds all have a significant impact on human expectations." What one person expects from a situation may be very different from what another person expects. It's essential to recognize and appreciate these differences to foster understanding and empathy in our interactions with one another."

## CONCLUSION

The pervasiveness of expectations and their detrimental impact on human development, both on individual and societal levels, remains largely unrecognized and unaddressed. Expectations permeate the various relationships we forge, including those with our parents, partners, children, friends, and family. Often, expectations manifest in the form of assumptions such as expecting our loved ones to intuitively understand our emotions or mandating unconditional compliance with our wishes. This critical examination underscores the centrality of expectation as the primary obstacle to meaningful progress in life and the root cause of frustration experienced by individuals (AlMalouf, et al.,2023).

Unveiling the Power of Expectations aims to delve into the intricacies of this fundamental aspect of human cognition. By acquiring profound insights into the dynamics of expectations and mastering effective strategies for their management, individuals can enhance their decision-making abilities, nurture healthier interpersonal relationships, and embark on a path of self-fulfilment. This overview provides a limited glimpse into the multifaceted nature of this subject, calling for further exploration of the extraordinary potential inherent in understanding and harnessing the power of expectations (Branas et al., 2017).

In the pursuit of sustainable living, it becomes imperative for humanity to foster mutual appreciation and adopt a mindset that emphasizes the positive aspects of human existence. By consciously striving to avoid the pitfalls of negativity fuelled by unrealistic expectations, individuals can contribute to their personal growth and the betterment of society as a whole.

To successfully manage expectations, several principles must be adhered to. Firstly, individuals should undertake a process of introspection to discover their expectations, encompassing their hopes, dreams, and life aspirations. This self-reflection allows for a thorough evaluation of which expectations hold significance.

Additionally, one must acknowledge the inherent limitation of controlling the thoughts, words, and actions of others, leading to a release of expectations imposed by external sources. Establishing realistic and attainable goals is also crucial, as setting unrealistic expectations often results in disappointment. (Branas et al., 2017)

Practising self-compassion is an essential aspect of expectation management, recognizing and accepting personal mistakes and setbacks with kindness and understanding. Emphasizing the importance of living in the present moment, rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future, facilitates the letting go of expectations and promotes a more fulfilling life. Effective communication and setting clear boundaries with others prevent the encroachment of external expectations on personal choices and lifestyle, fostering mutual understanding in relationships and finally, surrounding oneself with individuals who genuinely love and accept who they are helps maintain authenticity and reduces reliance on external expectations (Khmi; et al., 2019).

In summary, individuals must recognize their agency in shaping their own lives and not feel obligated to fulfill the expectations of others. Detaching from external pressures enables a path to authenticity and fulfillment, as unrealistic expectations perpetuate feelings of inadequacy and hinder personal growth. Addressing and managing unrealistic expectations is integral to maintaining mental well-being and mitigating potential sources of frustration, disappointment, low self-esteem, anxiety, and conflicts within relationships (AlMaalouf et al., 2023).

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### **Declarations**

The authors declare that there are no competing interests.

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