

Role of Someone's Expectations in Their Well-Being

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AIM

The purpose of this research is to examine the role of someone's expectations from themselves and others in their well-being.

Rationale

Our expectations are our guides to how we want things to turn out. Expectations can be divided into two categories: what we anticipate from others and what we expect from ourselves. And how we manage those expectations has a significant impact on how we perceive our experiences and how we achieve our objectives. People gain from having a goal and being driven to work toward it; thus having high expectations can be beneficial. Expectations may appear to be harmless, but this is not always the case, and people can occasionally go too far. For example, having low expectations might lead to underachievement in life or allowing people to control you. As a result, you may believe that having high expectations is the best option for you; nevertheless, while having high expectations can occasionally lead to success, it is crucial to recognize when they can become a problem.

Well-Being

Happiness is one of the most important goals in life for humans. Several scientific areas are interested in happiness to help people achieve it. Happiness in a broad aspect is defined in terms of Well-Being.

Well-Being is multi-dimensional. Psychology literature accepts two perspectives of well-being: Hedonic and Eudaimonic (Keyes et al., 2002; Ryan and Deci, 2000). In scientific psychology, hedonic well-being has emerged as subjective well-being, and eudaimonic well-being emerged as psychological well-being.

Subjective well-being means evaluating the own positive and negative affections and life satisfaction of individuals (Diener, 2000). People who have a high degree of subjective well-being experience happy feelings regularly and negative sensations infrequently. They are very content with their lives and have a high level of subjective well-being. On the other hand, psychological well-being is related to personal growth, self-acceptance, positive relationships and purpose in life (Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

Expectations and Well-Being

Expectations are important for motivation and well-being. Study shows that among adolescents, positive expectations toward the future are important for the subjective well-being of individuals (Eryilmaz, 2011; Iovu et al., 2018). However, when our expectations are not met, expectations might have a negative impact on our well-being. How we react to the success or failure of expectations (emotional response) also significantly impacts well-being.

Expectations from others affect the quality of the relationship between people. According to (Thomas et al., 2017), "The quality of family relationships, including social support (e.g., providing love, advice, and care) and strain (e.g., arguments, being critical, making too many demands), can influence well-being through psychosocial, behavioural, and physiological pathways."

Another crucial aspect of expectation that is missing from psychology literature is "how the expectation of results during a work influence the result of that work and our subjective well-being". This aspect can be shaped into what we expect from ourselves, but this needs separate investigation because of its impact on short term expectations (after completion of the work). In *Bhagavad Gita* such works are termed as "*Nishkama Karma*" (Ganeri, 2007). The following verse from Bhagavad Gita throws light on the given aspect (Bhaktivedanta and Prabhupada, 1972),

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥

which translates to

You have the right to work only but never to its fruits.

Let not the fruits of action be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction.

Objective

Life is full of ups and downs. And not all our expectations need to be fulfilled. The project focuses on the role of different aspects of expectations on the productivity and well-being of an individual. The study is done for the general case of expectation without any constraint like age or disease.

Major Objectives of the study are:

- Correlation between the importance of expectation for future and motivation, satisfaction and subjective well-being.
- Emotional Response in different scenarios when we have and don't have expectations and when they are met and not met.

- Impact of failing higher expectations on subjective and psychological well-being of an individual.
- Productive way to do work (should we expect results or not?)
- How are relationship dynamics (quality of relationship and expectations) with close ones shaped by expectations and how they influence our subjective well-being?

I hypothesized a positive effect of having expectations on satisfaction, and greater satisfaction would lead to positive subjective well-being. However, failed higher expectations would lead to negative subjective and psychological well-being (level of impact is subject of the study). Regarding expectation from others, it is hypothesized that having no expectation from others is better than having expectations for bonding and happiness. And for expectation from work, I am with the verse from Bhagavad Gita; we shouldn't expect results.

Method

A correlation and experimental method based study was done to analyze the role of various aspects of expectations on well-being.

Participants

The study isn't limited to expectations in certain conditions/cases but covers expectations in a general case that applies to everyone. Hence the data was collected from various internet-based sources to include diversity in the participants.

Complete response was collected from 35 participants. 22 participants were male, and 11 participants were female, while 2 participants preferred not to disclose their gender.

The majority of students (57%) were between 19 and 21 years of age. The distribution of age is 23.97 ± 8.77 years.

Survey

The survey consisted of a short demographic questionnaire and two sections. The demographic questionnaire was accompanied by a short description explaining the purpose of the survey and the consent clause.

The first section consisted of questions themed on "Expectations from ourselves and work", and the second section consisted of questions themed on "Expectations from others".

Measures

Scales of Well-Being

Scales of Psychological Well-Being was developed by Ryff (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) in order to evaluate psychological well being. It consists of 6 subscales. Among them, "purpose of living" has an internal coefficient of consistence of 0.90. Hence, "Meaning of Life" or purposeful living was used to measure the psychological well-being of the participants.

Emotional response (in terms of happiness/sadness) was used to measure subjective well-being.

Measurement of Expectations

Expectations were measured by simply presenting the participants with different scenarios of expectation and no expectation and recording subjective well-being and needed data.

The following questions were presented to assess the correlation between expectation, satisfaction and subjective well-being:

- Level of Satisfaction with expectations and achievements.
- Importance of Expectations for Future.
- Importance of Expectations for motivation.
- Scale of Subjective Well-being.

Then participants were presented with the following cases and assessed the emotional response in them to find the cases with positive impact and one with negative impact:

- Had Expectations, and expectations got fulfilled.
- Had Expectations, but expectations did not get fulfilled.
- Had no expectations, and something good happened.
- Had no expectations, and something bad happened.

Then participants were presented with the case of failed higher expectation, and subjective and psychological well-being were recorded.

Measurement of Work and Productivity

Participants were presented with different cases:

- When they were so invested and interested in their work that they didn't care for the result? (Gave their best into the present).
- When they focused more on the result than work.

And the productivity (how was the result) and subjective well-being (emotional response) were recorded.

Measurement of Expectation from others

Subjective Social variable (Tan and Tay, 2015) is used to assess the quality of social relationships. In particular, the term "bonding" was used to describe the feeling and quality of a relationship between two persons.

Participants were presented with the following cases:

- Expected something from their close one, and that got fulfilled.
- Expected something from their close one, and that did not get fulfilled.
- Didn't expect anything from someone, yet he/she gave them something they wanted.
- Didn't expect anything from someone, and neither did you get anything.

and subjective well-being (happy/sad), quality of relationship (increased/decreased) and effect on expectations (increases/decreased) were recorded.

All the non-binary data were recorded using the 5-point Likert Scale (Joshi et al., 2015).

Analysis

Convenience sampling was used while selecting participants. No criteria were used for selecting participants.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the survey. The subjects were not under any pressure; they voluntarily filled out the survey.

In the data collected, a score of 3 indicates neutral response, whereas greater than 3 indicates response on the positive side and less than 3 indicates response on the negative side.

In the study, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to study the correlation in the following cases:

- to find the correlation between future, expectations, satisfaction and correlation.
- to find the correlation between subjective well-being, quality of relationship and effect on expectation in different cases in "expectation from others".

For analysis of case based study as follows:

- emotional response to different cases of expectations
- expectation from work

- expectation from others

experimental method was used. However, for analysis, the participants were not divided into control and experimental group, but the events associated with different cases were divided into control and experimental groups. This was done because a single participant can have experienced more than one case, and the number of participants was small for the study. The details of the experimental method (independent variable (IV) and dependent variable (DV)) are elaborated for each case based study along with the result.

Results

Expectation from Ourselves

Expectation and Future

The mean satisfaction of participants is 2.63 ± 0.90 , suggesting that people are a little less satisfied with their achievement. But at the same time, the mean "importance of expectation for future" is 3.91 ± 1.01 , suggesting that expectations from the future are important. Also, the mean motivation score is 3.6 ± 1.29 , indicating that expectations are important for motivation. The mean subjective well-being is 2.6 ± 1.00 , indicating that people are a little sad about all this.

Inter-correlation of relationship between expectation and future is given in Table 1.

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Importance of Expectations for Future	1			
2. Expectations as motivation	0.413	1		
3. Satisfaction	0.578	0.333	1	
4. Subjective Well-being	0.208	0.168	0.660	1.000

Table 1: Correlation between expectation and future

From Table 1, it is clear that there is a significant positive relationship between "importance of expectations for future" and "satisfaction with achievements" ($r = 0.578$). People who have expectations from the future are more satisfied with their achievements. However, we have a lesser significant positive relationship between "the importance of expectations in future" and "subjective well-being" ($r = 0.208$), suggesting that it matters little if we expect or not for being happy. However, there is a significant positive relationship between "satisfied" and

”positive emotion” ($r = 0.660$), i.e. people who are satisfied with their achievement are happier. Motivation isn’t very significantly correlated with other variables.

Therefore, we need to have expectations from the future to be satisfied with our achievements and need to be satisfied with our achievements to be happy. But what if we have expectations beyond our limit? In the next section, we explore the same topic.

Expectations beyond your limit

According to the data, 91.4% participants had expectations beyond their limit, and they did not meet their expectations. The average emotional response of the participants is 1.72 ± 0.73 , which tells that this had a negative impact on the participants’ subjective well-being. Also, the average purposefulness of the participants is 2.63 ± 1.2 , which tells that this had a negative impact on the psychological well-being of the participants; however, the impact is not very significant as the average is close to the neutral point (3). Therefore, although failing to achieve higher expectations makes you very unhappy, it doesn’t void you of your purpose significantly.

Emotional Response to Expectations

The experimental method with multiple independent variables was used for analyzing the data.

IV1 → Expectations

Control Group (IV1a) → didn’t have expectations

Experiment Group (IV1b) → have expectations

IV2 → Fulfillment

Control Group (IV2a) → No fulfillment (didn’t receive anything)

Control Group (IV2b) → Fulfillment (received something)

	IV1a (No Expectations)	IV1b (Had Expectations)	Mean
IV2a (No Fulfillment)	2.31 ± 0.76	1.91 ± 0.74	2.11
IV2b (Fulfillment)	4.34 ± 0.84	4.14 ± 1.00	4.24
Mean	3.33	3.02	

Table 2: Mean emotional response in different groups

According to table 2, fulfillment is a significant variable in deciding whether subjective well-being is positive or not. No fulfillment (didn’t receive anything) results in the negative subjective well-being of an individual. Also, the result indicates that people who had no expectations have better subjective well-being than those who had expectations. People who had no expectations

are happier than those who had expectations when they received something and less unhappy when they didn't receive anything.

Thus, having no expectations and fulfilment are beneficial for our subjective well-being; however, fulfilment is a major deciding factor.

Expectation from work

The experimental method with a single independent variable was used for analyzing the data.

IV → Focused on result.

Control Group (IVa) → Didn't focus on result.

Experiment Group (IVb) → Focused on result.

Dependent Variables → Quality of Result and Subjective Well-Being.

	IVa (Didn't Focus on result)	IVb (Focused on result)
Quality of Result	4.10 ± 0.79	3.21 ± 0.94
Subjective Well-Being	3.95 ± 0.84	3.03 ± 1.21

Table 3: Mean of dependent variables for both groups

According to Table 3, although both cases have a positive or neutral effect on subjective well-being and quality of result, the quality of result, as well as subjective well-being, was greater when people focused more on work rather than work. Hence, we should be focusing on work and not on the result.

Another interesting result in this aspect is that there was a more significant positive relationship between quality of result and subjective well-being in case participants focused on work (0.72) compared to when they focused on the result ($r = 0.65$).

Expectation from others

The experimental method with multiple independent variables was used for analyzing the data

IV1 → Expectations

Control Group (IV1a) → didn't have expectations

Experiment Group (IV1b) → have expectations

IV2 → Fulfillment

Control Group (IV2a) → No fulfillment (didn't receive anything)

Control Group (IV2b) → Fulfillment (received something)

Dependent Variable to study:

- Bonding with the person.
- Subjective well-being.
- Expectations with the person.

	IV1a (No Expectations)	IV1b (Had Expectations)	Mean
IV2a (Didn't receive anything)	3.03 ± 0.58	2.45 ± 1.00	2.74
IV2b (Received something)	4.18 ± 0.81	4.06 ± .85	4.12
Mean	3.61	3.255	

Table 4: Mean of "Bonding" in different groups

	IV1a (No Expectations)	IV1b (Had Expectations)	Mean
IV2a (Didn't receive anything)	3.12 ± 0.69	2.09 ± 0.88	2.61
IV2b (Received something)	4.42 ± 0.75	4.41 ± .78	4.42
Mean	3.66	3.25	

Table 5: Mean of Subjective Well-Being in different groups

	IV1a (No Expectations)	IV1b (Had Expectations)	Mean
IV2a (Didn't receive anything)	3.03 ± 0.58	2 ± 0.90	2.52
IV2b (Received something)	3.36 ± 0.77	3.79 ± 0.81	3.58
Mean	3.20	2.90	

Table 6: Mean of Expectation Change in different groups

According to Tables 4, 6 and 5, fulfillment is the major factor determining the dependent variables. No fulfillment results in a negative effect on the bonding, subjective well being and expectations. However, the effect of fulfillment is smaller for expectation change as compared to subjective well-being and bonding.

In case of no fulfilment, when having expectations negatively impacts the dependent variables, having no expectations has neutral behaviour. Also, in the case of fulfilment, having no expectations shows more positive impact than having expectations on bonding, indicating that bonding is strengthened when participants receive a gift from someone from whom they had no expectation. There is no difference in subjective well-being when something is received between expectation and no expectation. Receiving gifts caused a similar level of happiness in both cases. However, the expectation is increased more in the case when the participant already had expectations and they got fulfilled than when they did not have any expectation but they received something. But the overall effect of expectations and no expectation is different on expectation change is different because of neutrality in case of no expectation, no fulfilment.

Thus although fulfillment (on which an individual has no control) is the major determining factor for bonding and subjective well-being, having no expectation has more positive effect on bonding and subjective well-being and expectations.

Correlation between Bonding, Subjective Well-Being and Expectations in different scenario

Variables	1	2	3
1. Bonding	1		
2. Subjective Well Being	0.425	1	
3. Expectation Change	0.463	0.371	1.000

Table 7: Correlation between dependent variables when expectation were fulfilled

Variables	1	2	3
1. Bonding	1		
2. Subjective Well Being	0.592	1	
3. Expectation Change	0.767	0.726	1.000

Table 8: Correlation between dependent variables when expectation were not fulfilled

Variables	1	2	3
1. Bonding	1		
2. Subjective Well Being	0.314	1	
3. Expectation Change	0.641	0.435	1.000

Table 9: Correlation between dependent variables when there was no expectation, yet something was received

Variables	1	2	3
1. Bonding	1		
2. Subjective Well Being	0.442	1	
3. Expectation Change	-0.009	0.673	1.000

Table 10: Correlation between dependent variables when there was nothing expected and nothing was received

We see that bonding, expectation and subjective well-being are positively correlated among themselves in all cases (except the case of no expectation and no fulfilment). This shows that a positive bonding will cause an increase in subjective well-being and expectations, whereas a negative bonding will cause a decrease in subjective well-being and expectations. This correlation can be interpreted for different cases as well.

However, correlation in case of no fulfilment is greater than the case of fulfilment, indicating that bonding, subjective, expectation change are more correlated in negative aspect as compared to positive aspect, i.e., a negative bonding causes more sadness than a positive bonding would cause happiness. Similarly a negative bonding will cause more decrease in expectation than a positive bonding would cause increase in expectation. Similar correlation can be interpreted for all other cases.

Discussion

The Objective of the study was to investigate the role of different aspects of expectations on the productivity and well-being of an individual. The study findings suggest that expectations from the future are important, and one needs to be satisfied with their achievements to be happy. However, the data collected tells us that only 31.4% felt sad because they did not have any expectations. Also, people with no expectations tend to be a little more happier than those who have expectations. Hence, it is not necessary that someone should feel negative if they have no expectations. Another important finding of the study in this respect is that failing in achieving higher expectations harm our emotional well-being more than our psychological well-being. So, if we could control our emotions, then overcoming a failure would be easier.

As hypothesized, focusing more on work than the result is more productive in terms of subjective well-being and result. However, according to data, 85.7% of participants have done work focusing on results, whereas only 60% of participants have done work while giving their best to work. Hence, we need to give our best to the present and not on thinking about the result.

The fulfilment of desires significantly shapes the quality of a relationship but we don't have control on this variable. People who have no expectations tend to be happier when they receive something they need and neutral when they do not receive anything compared to those who had expectations. Having no expectations strengthened the bond more than having expectations.

The study has certain limitations, especially, lesser number of participants and uncontrolled survey on the internet. The study did not cover the probabilities of occurrence of various cases presented in the study, which are essential for genuinely predicting the significance of these cases.

To conclude, these results of the study indicate that while expectations are important for the future, we should not base our happiness on them and not feel sad when expectations are not achieved because our psychological well-being isn't significantly affected. And having no expectations from others is the key to a better quality of relationship. The results also emphasize the need to focus more on the present rather than thinking about the future.

Appendix

Questionnaire.pdf → contains the questions asked in the survey.

Original Data.xlsx → contains the raw data received from the survey.

Data Analysis Spreadsheet.xlsx → is the spreadsheet in which analysis is done.

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