

## **Reflections of Satisfaction and Expectations in Parental Life**

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### **Abstract**

Life satisfaction is the target of every parent and person. Every parent has this expectation while constituting the family. Life satisfaction is the evaluation of one's life as a whole, not simply one's current level of happiness. A popular definition of life satisfaction examines "Life satisfaction is the degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of his/her life as a whole. In other words, how much the person likes the life he/she leads" (Veenhoven, 1996). Ellison and Gay define life satisfaction as a cognitive assessment of an underlying state of thought to be relatively consistent and influenced by social factors (Ellison & Gay, 1990). Life satisfaction is a global evaluation rather than one that is grounded at any specific point in time or in any specific domain. However, life satisfaction mostly depends up on the subjective life expectations. Where the expectations are unmet, the life satisfaction is un-actualized. This article is a search in to the relationship and mutuality between life expectations and life satisfaction, especially of the life of the parents. All parents who take up the responsibility of a family life will have various expectations on the life partner, happenings in life, children, emotional status and the environment that they are linked in. The researcher followed a descriptive research design using simple random sampling method. The response from 300 parents from all over Kerala shows that there is definite relationship between actualized life expectations and life satisfaction.

**Key words:** Life satisfaction, life expectation, parents, family, happiness

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## **1. Introduction:**

The human being is the only animal capable of formulating reasonable expectations about future. Family composition, size, leadership, diversity, type of work, hours of work, and communication patterns have been changing during the past century, especially since 1960 (Meyers, 2005). What distinguishes human beings from all other animals is their ability to think about the future and to do so in a non-mechanical way. The human brain, in addition to making predictions about an immediate, local and personal future, is the only one that is able to formulate reasoned expectations regarding its own future situation (Gilbert & Procter, 2006). The actualization of the expectations increases substantially one's current life satisfaction, whereas the correlation is negative if the expectations are unmet. Expectations refer to specific areas such as work, income, leisure time, housing or health, the results are also as expected. In other words, their expectations and experiences of the same is analyzed in terms of actualization of their life satisfaction. The positive expectations about these specific domains of life substantially increase the individuals' current satisfaction and negative expectations will give the reverse effect. The expectations of parents translate them the holders of multiple responsibility of building up a family, nurture the children and form the basic unit of the society because of the role it plays in generation of human capital resources and the power that is vested in it to influence individual, household, and community behavior (Sriram, 1993).

Married life is not a theoretical one, it is an experience. The nuances of married life is not abstract but a concrete experience. It has to be lived and experienced. In family life the parents need laughter, humor, fun. They need to be serious and responsible; they need love, care, attention, peace and calm. They need arguments, adjustment tolerance, freedom, liberty and togetherness. They need money, saving and spending. These needs are expectations too. The parents will have expectations regarding all these. The mismatching of these expectations can bring dissatisfaction and the matching of this definitely will bring satisfaction. Newman points out that many parents have dreams and hopes for their child before he is even born not a bad thing in and of itself but these dreams can turn into expectations that are too high and unattainable and lead to an overemphasis on perfection. The child may feel powerless or like a

failure if he is unable to live up to these expectations, or he may give up easily and not even attempt to excel.

## **2. Review of Literature**

According to Daniel Gilbert, professor of Psychology at Harvard University, the meaning of happiness is “anything we pleased” (Gilbert, 2009). It is a more transitory construct than life satisfaction, and can be triggered by any of a huge number of events, activities, emotions or thoughts. Verhoeven put forward the theory that happiness is relative (Verhoeven, 1991). The theory that happiness is relative is based on three postulates: (1) happiness results from comparison, (2) standards of comparison adjust, (3) standards of comparison are arbitrary constructs. Caner (2015), in his article ‘Happiness, Comparison Effects, and Expectations in Turkey’ denotes about higher income as the determinant of happiness. The study indicate that favorable income comparisons and expectations of future household income are correlated with a higher level of happiness. According to the research conducted on the validity of life satisfaction scales, one of the main measurements is based on preferences and values of people (Diener, Inglehart & Tay, 2013). Though we share the same world, we can barely share the same value since we experience things and view life differently. Studies of Cohn et al (2009) shows that positive emotions can contribute to the satisfaction in life. Johnson and Krueger (2006) opine that income and education are shown to increase life satisfaction, but this is mainly because they are so highly valued in the world we live in today.

One of the most popular theories of well-being is the PERMA model developed by Martin Seligman, one of the “founding fathers” of positive psychology (Seligman, 2018). His model is based on the idea that there are five main factors that contribute to well-being: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments. This model successfully explains differences in well-being, but it often fails to truly capture life satisfaction because it is more objective and less customizable based on what each individual values. Life satisfaction measures are generally subjective, or based on the variables that an individual finds personally important in their own life.

Parental expectations help nurture your child's sense of self-esteem and encourage healthy development (Seifert, 2018). Expectations on the children about clean room, cooking, studies, career, avoiding bad companies, extra-curricular activities are part of parental nurturing. When expectations are set unrealistically high or, on the other hand, ridiculously low children's

personalities and sense of self-worth are negatively affected. Understanding the outcome and finding a balance is key to promoting healthy development in children. At the same time, psychologist Newman (2001) discusses the thought process and dangers that come from placing unrealistic expectations on your child in her book "Parenting an Only Child: The Joys and Challenges of Raising Your One and Only." The American Academy of Pediatrics (2001) says that setting realistic expectations for the child ones that aren't too low or too high, help him develop competence and a healthy sense of self-worth. Healthy expectations encourage and allow a child to do well without putting pressure on him. Realistic expectations also include the acceptance of mistakes along the way, helping a child to understand setbacks as a normal part of life. It requires, security and trust in the relationship with parents and gains a sense of independence and responsibility.

## **Objectives**

The following are the objectives of this study:

1. To know the extent of expectations of the parents in the family.
2. To know what are the happenings counter to expectations
3. To know whether the parents are satisfied in their family life
4. To know the relationship between the life satisfaction and life expectations

## **3. Methodology**

Research methods denotes the technique and practices that the investigator used in the execution of research processes. The present study focused on expectations and satisfaction of the parents in Kerala state, India. The researcher followed a descriptive research design using simple random sampling method to collect the data from selected parents from Kerala state. "it is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing" ( Yazgan & Sahin, 2018). One of the parents who have two or more children of at least 13 years of old from 300 families are selected. To extract the socio-demographic data, detailed questionnaire developed by the researcher is used. After the data collection, data verified and analyzed with suitable statistical tools.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

An analysis of the expectations and satisfaction of the parents in the family life is so essential due to the increasing number of broken families, substance abuse, divorce on unreasonable grounds, increased depression of the spouse, maladjustments, high suicide rates in spite of higher literacy rate, increased child crimes, illiteracy of parenting and the like in Kerala. This study examines important aspects of life expectations, satisfaction of life in the pursuit of family roles and responsibilities through a structured questionnaire and survey. Socioeconomic status has been demonstrated to be a significant predictor of parents' educational aspirations and expectations for their children (Singh et al., 1995).

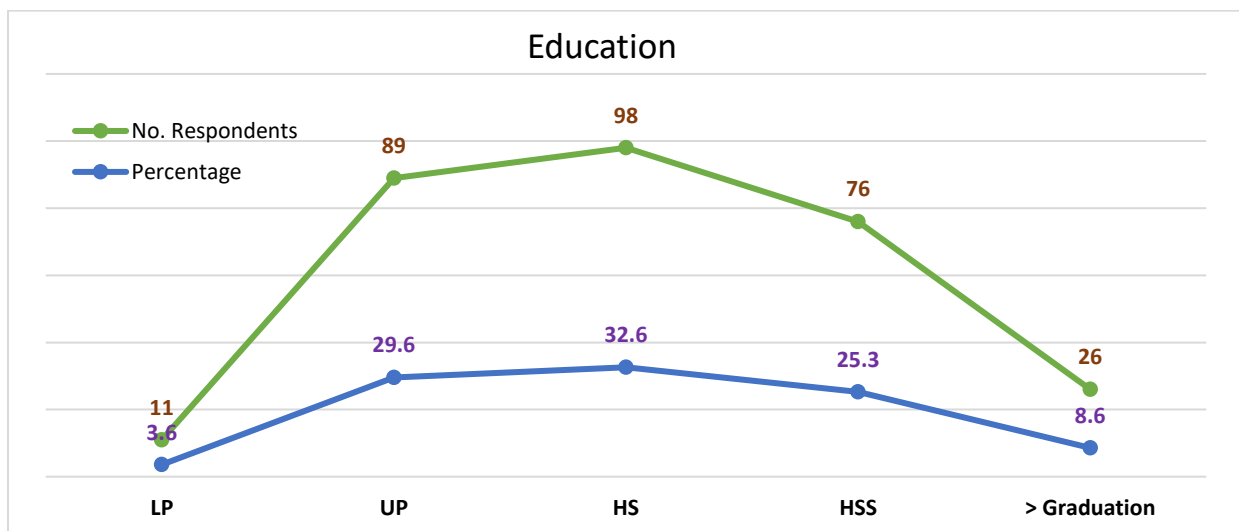
**Table No.1: Distribution of the Respondents by their Socio-demographic Characteristics**

Characteristics		Frequency Total participants-300	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	135	45
	Female	165	55
Age	<30	24	08
	30-40	81	27
	40-50	147	49.3
	>50	48	16
Religion	Hindu	107	35.6
	Christian	41	13.6
	Muslim	152	50.6
Locale	Rural	215	71.6
	Urban	85	28.3

The Table No.1 discloses the fact that, male parents constitute 45% and female parents comprises of 55%. The age of the parents reveals that 49.3% of the parents belong to the age group of 40 to 50, 27% belongs to the age group of 30-40, 16% belong to the category of above 50 and 8% belongs to less than 30. The average age of the males in this group was 42.5 years (S.D =7.02), ranging from 24 to 58. The religious factor shows that 50.6% are Muslims, 35.6%

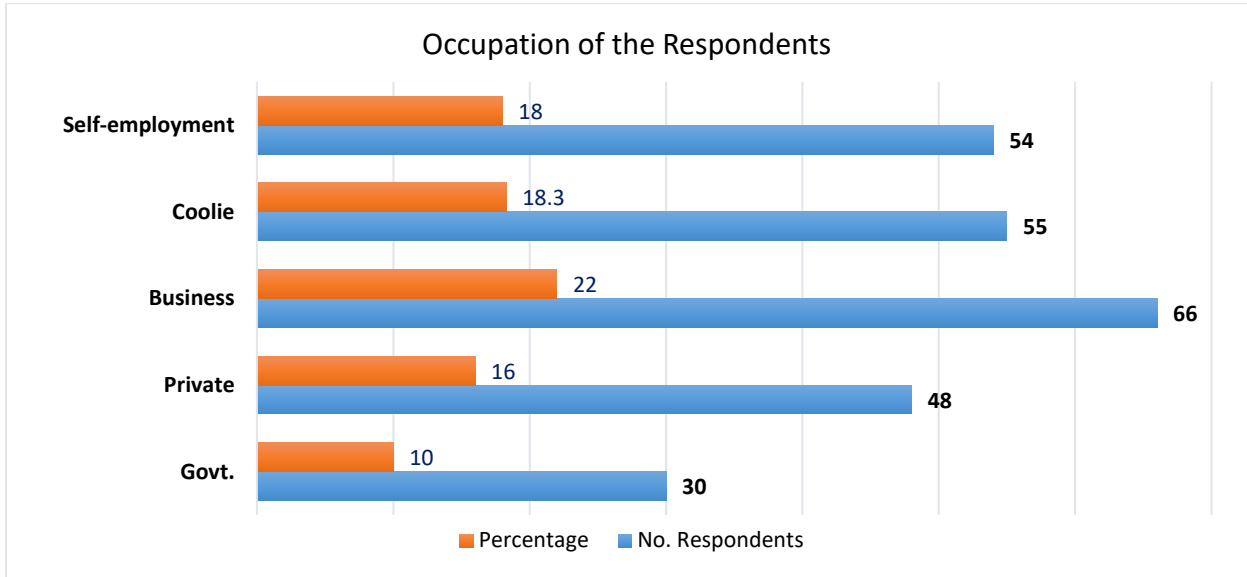
are Hindus and 13.6% comprises of Christians. About the locale the parents belong to is rural setting for the majority, i.e., 71.6% and urban setting is 28.3%.

Results of the certain studies indicate that, although the total and direct effects of age are trivial, age is an important moderator of the effects of marital status, income, health, and social support upon life satisfaction (George et al, 1985)



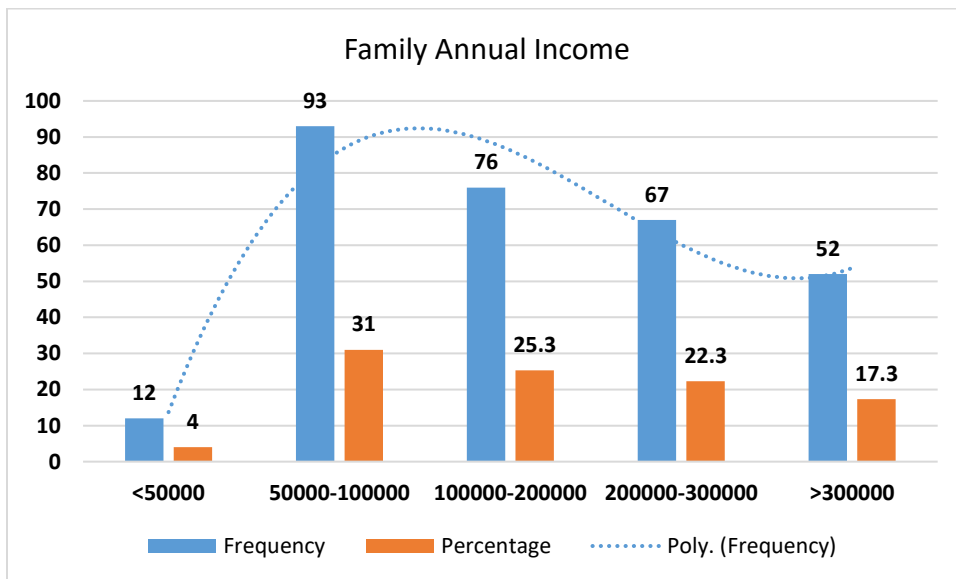
**Figure 1: Educational Profile of the Respondents**

The figure-1 gives a picture about the educational profile of the respondents. Parental practices and disrespects to education impact a child’s probability of being defective to break in continuing education after 16. The Department of Education’s longitudinal study of young people in England (LSYPE) recently found that 90% of 13 year olds whose parents are in “higher managerial and professional occupations” plan to continue with school, compared to 67% whose parents have “routine occupations”. In this study, 32.6% of the respondents have high school education, 29.6% have upper primary education, 25.3% have higher secondary School education and no one is illiterate.



**Figure 2: Occupational Status of the Respondents**

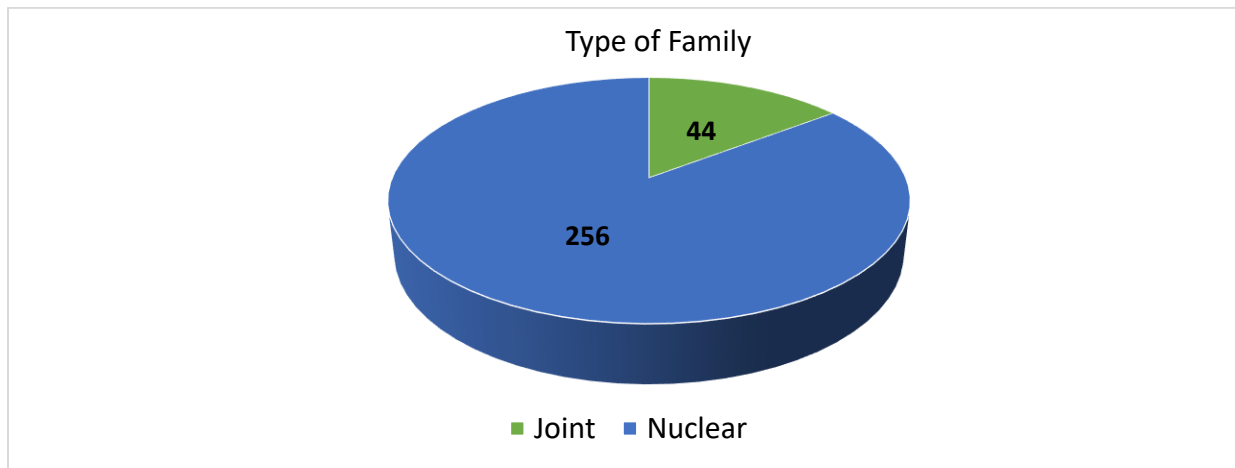
In figure-2, regarding the occupation, it reveals that 22% that is the majority engages themselves in business, 18.3 are coolie workers, 18% are gaining their income from self-employment and 16% have private jobs, while 15.6% engaged in other occupations. The implication of such an occupational distribution in the study area shows the poor or average income levels of the family.



**Figure 3: Family Annual Income of the Respondents**

Family annual income of the respondents shown in figure-3 put forth reality that, 31% belong to the category of 50 thousand to one lakh, 25.3% have between one to two lakhs, 22.3% have two

to three lakhs and 17.3% is having more than three lakhs. While ambitions are usually high among children these days, their parents' socioeconomic background governs stance on feat in life. According to research by the Prince's Trust, 26% of young people aged 16 to 24 from poor homes felt that "people like them don't succeed in life. There is abundant evidence that individuals with richer social networks or more social capital enjoy great life satisfaction (Bradburn, 1969; Putnam, 2000; Diener and Diener, 2009).



**Figure 4: Family Type of the Respondents**

Figure-4 gives a clear picture of type of the family in the study area comprises of 85.3% are nuclear families and 14.6 are joint families. It indicates that, major share of respondents is belonging to nuclear family.

**Table No.2: Actualization of the expected life partner**

Response	Father	Mother	Total
Yes	101 (74.8%)	92 (55.7%)	193 (64.3%)
No	34 (25.1%)	73 (44.2%)	107 (35.6%)
Total	135 (100.0%)	165 (100.0%)	300 (100.0%)



The table No.2 shows that, 74.8% of the fathers and 55.7% of the mothers actualized the expected Life Partner, whereas, 25.1% of the fathers and 44.2% of the mothers did not actualize the expected Life Partner. A study named life partner and life satisfaction of the entrepreneur by Shoubaki and Stephan (2018) states that that the family can contribute largely to how individuals feel about their lives. In particular, their research suggests that the life partner influences the individual's life satisfaction differently depending on various variables especially their occupation (employed or self-employed). While administering the Chi-square test, the calculated Chi-Square value (19.864, p=.000) is greater than table value. It indicates that, majority of both fathers and mothers actualized their expected life partner.

**Table No. 3: Did anything happened in the family life contrary to your expectations**

Response	Father	Mother	Total
Yes	72 (53.3%)	108 (65.4%)	180 (60%)
No	63 (46.6%)	57 (34.5%)	120 (40%)
Total	135 (100.0%)	165 (100.0%)	300 (100.0%)

Table No.3 explains that 53.3% of the male parents and 65.4% of the female parents had something happened contrary to their expectations in the family life. In the case of 46.6% of the male parents and 34.5% of the female parents, nothing has happened against their expectation in the family life. There exists no significant association in the happenings in the marital life based on the gender of the parents, since, the calculated Chi-Square value (.000, p=.993) is lesser than table value. What is almost expected is happening in their life.

**Table No. 4: Various happenings in the family contrary to the expectations**

Happenings	Mother	Father	Total
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Incompatible partner	43 (26%)	34 (25.1%)	77(25.6%)
Children with bad conduct	37 (22.4%)	25(15.1%)	62(20.6%)
Broken family relations	48(29%)	43(26%)	91(30.3%)
Poor economic situation	47(28.4%)	23(17%)	70(23.3%)

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Ill health	72(43.6%)	56(41.4%)	128(42.6%)
Unstable job	36 (21.8%)	21(15.5%)	57(19%)
Unacceptable family environment	21(12.7%)	18(13.3%)	39(13%)
Other	35(21.2%)	22(16.2%)	57(19%)

Table No. 4 explains the various happenings in the family contrary to the expectations of the parents. Regarding incompatible partner 25.6% of the parents, express the fact that they have incompatible partner in marital life, 20.6% opined that they have children with bad conduct as against their expectation of children with good character and 30.3% of parents are of opinion that their family is having broken relationships. Related to ill health 42.6% view that they have health problems in the family. Answering about job nature 19% of the parents said that their job is unstable and 13% is of opinion that they have an unacceptable family environment and 19% have other happenings and events contrary to their expectations. It is conceivable that parents who have lower levels of education and higher amounts of negative self-feelings may hold lower expectations for their children.

The happenings in the family are various events and experiences that are contrary to the expectations. This study proves that happenings in the family that are not in tune with the expectations will definitely lead to the dissatisfaction in life. Table No. 5 discloses the fact that 42% of the parents are dissatisfied in life, which is due to the aftermath of various events and experiences contrary to the expectations in life.

**Table No. 5: Satisfaction in the Family Life**

Response	Father	Mother	Total
Yes	80(59.2%)	94(56.9%)	174(58%)
No	55(40.7%)	71(43%)	126(42%)
Total	135(100%)	165(100%)	300(100%)

Table No. 5 explains that 58% of the parents are satisfied with the family life, while 42% are not satisfied with their family life. Here the female parents are more unsatisfied (42%) than the male parents (40.7%). Logically speaking, women are more dissatisfied than the men in the

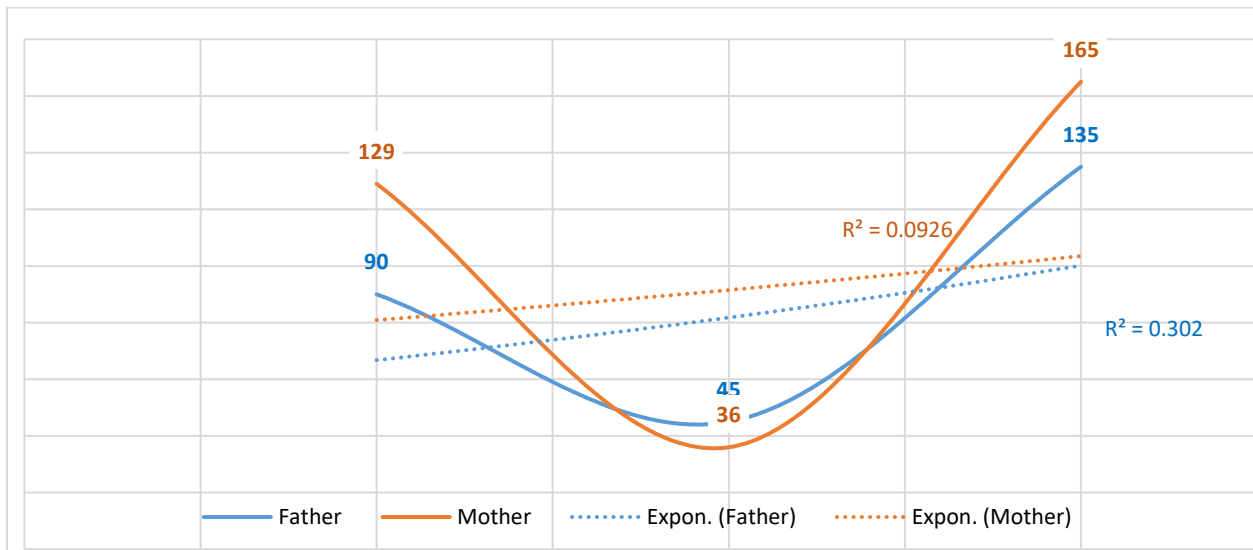
family. There exists no significant association in the satisfaction in the family life based on the gender of the parents, since, the calculated Chi-Square value (3.584,  $p=0.058$ ) is lesser than table value. Gender wise discriminations are not there in the family life with respect to satisfaction in family life. Both parents are experiencing almost similar kind of satisfaction in family life.

**Table No.6: Healthy Relationship with family and friends**

Response	Father	Mother	Total
Yes	90(66.6%)	129(78.1%)	219(73%)
No	45(33%)	36(21.8%)	81(27%)
Total	135(100%)	165(100%)	300(100%)

Table No. 6 reveals the fact of healthy relationship with family and friends. 73% of the parents have a healthy relationship with the family and friends, while, 27% do not have a healthy relationship with family and friends. Here the male parents are more in number (33%) than female parents (21.8%). Maintaining healthy relationships with the family members and friends is important and vital for a meaningful family life. There exists significant association in the healthy relationship with family and friends based on the gender of the parents, since, the calculated Chi-Square value (3.161,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .075.000$ ), is greater than table value. Mother parents have more sensible healthy relationship with family and friends. It accounts 78.1% than 66.6% of the male counterpart.

Figure - 5



**Figure 5: Healthy Relationship with Family and Friends**

The figure-5, reveals that, 27% of the parents do not have a healthy relationship with friends and family, will certainly a leading factor to dissatisfaction. Satisfaction and relationship are the two sides of the same coin. Where there is strong and staunch relationship there will be utmost satisfaction in life even if there lacks many material things and assets. Gowen, (2011) in a study ‘Healthy relationships. Focal Point: Youth, Young Adults, & Mental Health. Healthy Relationships explains that ‘a healthy relationship between two people provides them with opportunity to grow, share themselves and form a bond that enhances the self and the other. The book by Blieszner, Rosemary on Generations do remind us of the friendships are the treasure to keep us healthy and happy. Another research by Young and Kleist (2010) indicates the relationship process of couples consisting of a circular relationship where one’s perceptions influence one’s expectations and how one interacts. When interactions meet the expectations in the relationship, the interactions confirm and strengthen the perceptions.

**Table No. 7: Positive Perspective and Purposeful Existence in Life**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>Mother</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	104 (77%)	132(80%)	236(78.6%)
No	31(22.9%)	33(20%)	64(21.3%)
Total	135(100%)	165(100%)	300(100%)

Table No. 7 exposes the truth about positive perspective and purposeful existence in life. Here the table is self-explanatory that 78.6% of the parents have a positive perspective and purposeful existence. However, 21.3% of the parents do not have a positive perspective and purposeful existence in life. A positive perspective helps one to cope more easily with the daily affairs of life. It brings optimism into your life, and makes it easier to avoid worries and negative thinking. A positive perspective for parents will add to the satisfaction in life. This is because, positive perspectives will have reasonable expectations in life. Reasonable expectations will make life satisfied and happy.

**Table No.8: Emotional Status of the family**

Emotional status	Father	Mother	Total
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Hope	112(82.9%)	119(72.1%)	231(77%)
Joy	91(67.4%)	102(61.8%)	193(64.3%)
Fear	39(28.8%)	44(26.6%)	87(29%)
Anxiety	25(18.5%)	62(37.5%)	87(29%)
Despair	32(23.7%)	47(28.4%)	79(26.3%)
Any other	22(16.2%)	31(10.3%)	53(17.6%)

Table No.8 speaks of emotional status of the respondents. 64.3% have hope, 64.3% have joy, 29% have fear, 29% are anxious and 26.3% are desperate and 17.6% falls under any other category in the emotional status. It is evident from the table that mothers are more emotional than their counterparts. They are the most affected parties in the family.

**Table No. 9: Realistic Life Goals**

Response	Father	Mother	Total
Yes	102(75.5%)	113(68.4%)	236(78.6%)
No	33(24.4%)	52(31.5%)	85(28.3%)
Total	135(100%)	165(100%)	300(100%)

Table No. 9 shows the fact about the realistic life goals of the parents. Out of 300 parents, 78.6% of the parents have realistic life goals and 28.3% do not have realistic life goals. Realistic life goals are the guiding principles (McAleese & Hargie, 2004) to move forward with hope in life. Absence of life goals will make life idle and meaning less. A person trained to set the life goals shall perform in life in a better way and can motivate others who are around him/her.

**Table No. 10: Engaged in Life with Meaningful Activities**

Response	Father	Mother	Total
Yes	113(83.7%)	144(87.2%)	257(85.6%)

No	22(16.2%)	21(12.7%)	43(14.3%)
Total	135(100%)	165(100%)	300(100%)

Table No. 10 reveals of the engagement in life with various activities. The table shows that 85.6% of the parents are engaged with various activities in life, whereas, 14.3% are not engaged in life. A life engaged with meaningful activities is a life worth contributing to self and the society. A study by Eakman (2013) examined a theoretical model in which meaningful activity fulfills basic psychological needs and contributes to meaning in life. Hence, engagement in meaningful activities will definitely add to life satisfaction, as far as the present study concerned and proposed.

## 5. Suggestions

The researcher in the light of the findings of the study proposes the following suggestions for the actualization of a better society with parents having realistic expectations and life satisfaction.

1. Unrealistic expectations about the life partner will make the life of parents desperate. Here the parents and the youth aspiring for marriage are to be trained by the agencies concerned like Department of Social Justice, Family and Child Welfare, in realistic expectations about the life partner and marital life and marital life as a whole.
2. The parents are to be trained in soft skills, like problem solving, setting of realistic life goals, decision-making, communication, healthy relationship building, positive perspective and purposeful life existence in life and emotional maturity formation, as there is chances of many happenings and instances in the family life against expectations.
3. Family renewal and enrichment programmes could be planned and executed by the agencies concerned.
4. A monitoring cell is the need of the hour, analyzing the family court issues and cases of broken family and the similar happenings
5. Online and off-line short term and long-term courses on parenting are be developed, disseminated for the aspirants of marital life, young couples and parents.

6. There should be a system to assess the satisfaction level of the parents and couples in family life in regular intervals which will contribute to the life as a whole.
7. Parents and couples' clubs could be initiated to share the replicable models in marital and family life to motivate each other and disseminate the replicable models.
8. Researches in the fields of family development and enrichment programmes are to be encouraged to maintain continued renewal in the family and marital life related to the fast changes in the society.

## **6. Conclusion**

The present study being an analysis of the expectations and satisfaction of the parents in the family reveals that, parents strive to achieve life satisfaction through various expectations, as every human being does. Though many parents succeed, but many fail due to many reasons like unrealistic expectations, unexpected happenings in the family life, unhealthy relationship with family and friends, un awareness about life satisfaction and life expectations and the due to lack of trainings and proper timely guidance in the trifle situations. The result of this research becomes so important as we observe the increase in the number of broken families, substance abuse, divorce on unreasonable grounds, increased depression of the spouse, maladjustments, high suicide rates in spite of higher literacy rate, increased child crimes, illiteracy on parenting and the like in Kerala. This study examined important aspects of life expectations and satisfaction of life in the pursuit of family roles and responsibilities through a structured questionnaire and survey.

The study revealed that all parents in the study had an expectation about the partner and they were so curious about the same. That is why all the parents responded to the question and 25.1% male parents and 44.2% female parents didn't actualize the life partner. This means from the beginning of their family life a major dissatisfaction factor arises as a stumbling block. For 53.3% male parents and 65.4% of the female parents there are many happenings contrary to the expectations like incompatible partner, children with bad conduct, broken family relations, poor economic situations, ill health, unstable job, unacceptable family environment. This also shows the extent of their expectation as the first objective poses. The final result shows that 58% of the parents are satisfied in their family life, whereas 42% are not satisfied in their family life, which means their life is furthered with major dissatisfaction. Hence, the study unveils the fact that

mismatch of life expectations contribute to life satisfaction, which is a necessity for happiness of life and making the persons rich in contributing to the society and nation as a whole. Therefore, social scientists, educators, policy makers, Government and Non-Governmental agencies concerned and the parents themselves are to be vigilant up on the awareness creation, knowledge dissemination, policy making and above all the actualization of this principles of life expectations and life satisfaction factors for actualizing a better society.

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