

# Male and female expectations in a relationship

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Relationships are an integral part of human beings especially given the fact that human beings are social beings who need love, care and recognition. The quality of relationship couples as well as members of the opposite sex have, has been found to have an impact on one's health (Jamieson, 1998). Human beings show the need for affection and healthy relationships from an early age in life. As early as childhood, toddlers get attracted to their mothers or caregivers. This makes the toddler to feel threatened if separated from the parents.

Surprisingly, this attraction to people and the need for 'others' never change and goes on in life throughout all the developmental stages. As early as the adolescence developmental stage, boys and girls exhibit feelings of attraction to each other. Although some go into denial and opt to suppress the feelings for the opposite sex, the attraction and the craving for the other sex is usually very high. Eventually many realize that female-male relationships are inevitable.

Questions as to what expectations both parties have for each other as well as from the relationship are to date a subject for debate. There are many expectations each party expects of the relationship and the expectations are largely shaped by environmental conditions although the role played by genetical factors cannot be underestimated. Most of the expectations however arise out of social and cultural influence.

As men and women grow up, they are taught by the society on how to carry themselves in relationships as well as what to expect from their partners. While some societies expect relationships to remain autonomous, in the past

society played a very crucial role. In some societies, males expect women to bear them children for purposes of posterity. In such relationships, a female is respected on the basis of her ability to sire children for the man.

Any female who is not capable of siring children is discriminated against and treated with dishonor. As such, a barren woman risks being branded an outcast and a social misfit. In some cultures, the man expects sexual satisfaction from the woman they are in a relationship with. Women who cannot sexually satisfy their men are abused and in some cases divorced or neglected. Modernity has changed the expectations men expect of women and vice versa, as the focus in relationship shifts from the need for procreation to the need for caring and loving partners.

Fidelity ranks highly in relationships. According to (Jamieson, 1998) 80% females in relationships consider fidelity as the most important factor in relationships with 40% of the females saying that they would quit a relationship if they found out a partner was cheating on them. 90% of men consider fidelity as the most important factor in relationships compared to 80% of women who consider fidelity as the most important factor.

Asked on whether they would quit a relationship on basis of unfaithfulness of a partner, 85% of the men said that they would quit a relationship on the basis of fidelity. The study concluded that, fidelity ranks highly amongst expectations in female and male relationships. Other factors, which the study found to form basis of expectations in a relationship, include; care, love, financial support, sexual satisfaction as well as respect (Jamieson,

1998). While the above expectations apply to both men and women, some expectations are cited more often by males than females and vice versa.

For instance, females in relationships are more likely to expect financial support or help from their male partners. This can be explained in a number of ways but most importantly, cultural and social factors are at play here. In most societies, women were purposely seen as useful only for reproductive jobs (which are not salaried) (Jamieson, 1998). By being subjected to heavy work loads such as cultivation in family gardens, most women especially housewives were left with no steady source of income and were therefore left with no choice but to depend on males with whom they had entered into relationships for financial help. This puts females at a disadvantage in a relationship as they are wrongly viewed as dependent on their men.

In some cases males end up dominating over the females on this basis as males take the role of 'breadwinner' and the females that of 'caregivers'. This labeling takes place regardless of the fact that, the woman is also a 'breadwinner' in the sense that the domestic chores the woman is allocated such as looking after children as well as taking the children to school are important but it is the society which has chosen to give them less prominence. Therefore, women's reproductive work is not considered as work and is considered as less important by the society and the men in particular.

Variations in male-female expectations in a relationship also result from cultural beliefs. In some communities, women are labelled as the weaker sex. Such categorization leads to variation in roles and expectations. With

exception of very few relationships, females and males are not equal in a relationship. In most cases, male dominance is manifested in relationships.

Females are expected to be submissive and to give in or compromise their opinions or decisions in cases where important decisions are to be made affecting the relationship. In other relationships, female dominance is experienced. This is usually common in cases where women have financial independence and therefore have a fallback position. For such women, moving out of relationships for reasons such as abuse in the relationship by the partner or irreconcilable differences existing between partners in the relationship is the common response.

In female dominated relationships, expectations for both parties are likely to be different from those of a male dominated relationship. In such relationships, males expect financial support from the women. Males also expect sex from the females but they are more likely to adhere to consensual terms or the decisions of the female. In female dominated relationships, females expect obedience from the male especially in cases whereby the females are the providers (Jamieson, 1998).

Females in such relationships also expect other needs of a relationship such as respect, love, and care. For most relationships, expectations change from time to time and also on the prevailing conditions. Loss of a job for either the male or the female partner may influence the balance of power in the relationship. For instance, if the male has been the decision maker in a relationship and ends up losing the status of a bread-winner, expectations

for the females are affected especially due to the fact that most expectations are pegged on financial ability of either partner.

## Conclusion

Female and male relationships are complex and understanding of expectations both male and females have of each other is a daunting task. The fact that relationships are both dynamic and situational further complicates the nature of relationships. However, as discussed in the main body of this paper, social, environmental and cultural factors influence greatly what females and males expect out of a relationship.

## Reference

Jamieson, L. (1998) *Intimacy. Personal Relationships in Modern Societies*, Cambridge: Polity Press.