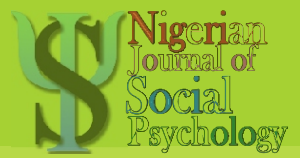


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# Marital Conflict among Couples: The Roles of Spousal Support and Unfulfilled Expectations

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## Abstract

*Typically, unfulfilled expectations are sources of marital conflicts that seem to influence marital relationships. Unfulfilled expectations are associated with marital conflicts. Earlier studies, however, revealed that spousal support showed positive effects on marital satisfaction. Our study seeks to better understand why and when spousal support reduces the negative effects of unfulfilled expectations and marital conflicts. Specifically, we test the relationship of unfulfilled expectations with marital conflict as moderated by spousal support. We tested our assumptions in a field study that involved data collected with 494 participants drawn from University of Nigeria Nsukka in Enugu state of Nigeria. The measures consist of Marital Problems Questionnaire (MPQ), Marital Expectations Questionnaire (MEQ), Supportive Spouse Interaction Questionnaire, and demographic variables. Hayes Macro Process was used to test the hypotheses. Participants were 494 couples from Nsukka metropolis consisting of 128 males and 366 females (age range = 17–32 years;  $M = 21.36$ ;  $SD = 2.67$ ). Results from Hayes Macro Process confirmed that unfulfilled expectations were not significantly associated with marital conflict. Spousal support was negatively associated with marital conflict, showing the higher the spousal support the lesser the marital conflict. Additionally, spousal support did not moderate the relationship between unfulfilled expectations and marital conflict. Our study helps to better the understanding that spousal support serves as a protective factor to marital conflict such that as couples support each other, the possibility of marital conflicts are reduced and offers implications on how intervention should be focused on increasing spousal support in marital relationships among couples.*

**Keywords:** spousal support, unfulfilled expectation, marital conflict, couples

## Introduction

Conflicts are among the most important determinants of the quantity and quality of relationships among people living together (Asadi et al, 2016). Conflicts are caused by inconsistent goals or interests and their different evaluations of life issues among parties (Asadi, et al, 2016). Conflicts can be necessary and valuable for the evolution of a marriage (D'Souza et al, 2013).

Marital conflict involves tension between couples as they navigate their roles (Tolorunleke, 2014). Marital conflict is a struggle between a husband and wife, sometimes involving other household members, stemming from differing needs, ideas, beliefs, or values. Addressing these conflicts is crucial for healthy relationships (Cummings & Olugbenga, 2018; Tasew & Getahun, 2021). Marital conflict often arises from disagreements and differing opinions in intimate relationships and often leads to considerable frustration (Meyer & Sledge, 2022;

Gautam et al., 2021). However, when handled poorly, these disagreements often lead to damaging behaviors, marital disruptions with adverse effects (Meyer & Sledge, 2022), such as emotional detachment, separation, and even divorce (Mahapatra, 2012; Wahyunia et al., 2024).

Marital conflict is likewise established to have a connection with psychological distress (Li et al., 2016; Majani et al., 2023), depression (Kumar et al., 2022), anxiety and eating disorders (Owen et al., 2023), thereby leading to poorer health conditions (Asadi, et al, 2016) and increases the odds of certain diseases, such as heart disease (Asadi et al., 2013; Asadi, et al., 2016) as well as cancer and chronic pains (Dildar et al., 2013).

Furthermore, high level of marital conflicts can be detrimental to family life in different ways. For instance, it may decrease the performance of the parents and the compatibility of the children and increase conflicts among all family members (parents and children as well as between siblings; Asadi, et al, 2016; Donagh et al., 2023; Kalil et al., 2023). Evaluation of the effects of conflicts in marriages on the physical and psychosocial health of children has indicated that such conflicts adversely affected the emotional safety of children. In general, such conflicts exert negative effects on the children and result in their insecure attachment to parents (Asadi et al., 2013).

Unresolved marital conflict has tremendous negative impacts on interpersonal relationship, psychological suffering (Wilson et al., 2024), mental health (Wilson & Novak, 2022), physical health (Lawrence et al., 2019), and family health (Wahyunia et al., 2024). The potential risk factors of marital conflicts are money, housework, sex, work, children, in-laws, religion, friends, alcohol and drug usage, recreation, extra-marital affairs and decision making. The occurrence of conflict event among couples is varying from occasionally, once or twice a month, or continuing for many days.

Marital conflict is prevalent in many African countries, including Ethiopia (Tasew & Getahun, 2021), Malawi (Reniers, 2003) and Nigeria (Chinawa et al., 2024). Prueksaritanond (2015) and Tasew and Getahun (2021) have reported that 89.3% of couples experienced conflict, which is higher than the prevalence of couple conflict in a previous study from Spain (80%). In Prueksaritanond's study, spousal conflict occurred every month (up to 1-2 events per month), and every week, it was found in approximately six out of ten couples (59.1%). These findings suggest that marital conflict is a common issue worldwide and highlight the importance of addressing this issue to promote healthy and sustainable relationships.

Marital conflict is marked in different forms like partner battering, spousal exploitation, sexual abuse, marital negligence, incest, rape, subtle struggle for control between the couple and other abusive behaviours and also caused by barrenness, forced marriage, incompatibility, communication gap, interference by in-laws, finances, infidelity, sex of children, lack of appreciation etc (Osarenren, 2013; Tasew & Getahun, 2021). Major and several sources of marital conflict have been identified as violent behaviours of husbands, lack of cooperation in the family, inability to spend enough time together, issues related to children and other families, lack of effective communication, and financial problems (Tiruwork (2015); Meaza (2014); Getahun (2021).

Marital conflict with the alarming concerns goes further than the individuals who dissolve the marital union. Children and other relatives of the couples are the immediate victims who share the potential consequences and exposed to various psychosocial problems (Narayan et al., 2021; Tasew & Getahun, 2021). Additionally, conflicts in marriages produce various

individual, family, physical, and mental consequences (Ivie et al., 2020). They can result in depression, anxiety, and eating disorders and others (Owen et al., 2023).

Marital conflict is a phenomenon that has put the institution of marriage at a crossroad, with failure in expectations regarding financial problems, alcohol, and drug abuse were the main causes of conflict in marriages (Patrick et al., 2020). Previous studies have linked marital conflicts to unfulfilled expectations (Laner & Russell, 2015). In addition, several studies support the link between unfulfilled expectations and marital conflicts (Mastari et al., 2019). The role of unfulfilled expectations is evident in giving rise to marital conflict (Ali et al., 2019). Unfulfilled expectations are sources of marital conflicts through the active role of rational thus initiating marital burnout.

Unfulfilled expectations have been conceptualized as a deprivation of desirable things to which one feels entitled (Reynolds & Baird 2010). These unfulfilled expectations are frequently categorized by disagreements, tension, or hostility and results from differing opinions, interests, needs, or goals (Randall & Bodenmann, 2009). Common conflict topics that romantic couples deal with include communication, personal or partner habits, household chores, finances, and parenting (Meyer & Sledge, 2022). The negative mental health effect of unfulfilled expectations has been confirmed in empirical studies across different research fields to predict mental distress (Carr et al., 2018). In a relationship, when promised rewards are not delivered, dissatisfied partners are likely to withdraw in such relationship.

Unfulfilled expectation is evidenced in lack of sexual satisfaction, intimacy, in-law influence, social media, and distant marriage with poverty generating crisis and conflicts that are unfavorable to marital relationships such as desertion, negligence, malicious beating, child abuse, abscondment, assault, disobedience and several other features in martial relationships (Eremie & Adonye-Abbey, 2019). Some psycho-social factors revealed there is a relationship between unfulfilled expectation and marital conflict through communication, personality, family and friends, and financial management (Benyamina et al., 2018). Unfulfilled expectations were found to be associated with lower relationship satisfaction, investment, commitment and higher quality of alternatives while in a romantic relationship (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2017).

Spousal support refers to the help, advice, understanding, and the like that spouses provide for one another. Support plays a critical role within romantic relationships in general, as well as within marriages specifically (Acitelli, 2016; Cutrona & Suhr, 2014). Spousal support possibly plays a significant role in marital health outcomes. Fulfillment with the spouse's support is a crucial factor of marital quality. Spousal support within marriage is more strongly associated with marital satisfaction and general well-being for younger and middle-aged wives than husbands (Julien & Markman, 2011).

Two forms of spousal support (emotional and instrumental) have been conceptualized and empirically tested (Adams et al., 2016). Emotional support includes empathic understanding and listening, affirmation of affection, advice, and genuine concern for the welfare of the partner. Instrumental support is tangible help from the partner in household chores and childcare. Increased spousal support is shown to be associated with lower levels of work-family conflicts (Aryee et al., 2019; Burke & Greenglass, 2019; Erdwins et al., 2001; Rosenbaum & Cohen, 2019), higher levels of psychological well-being (e.g., Ganster et al., 1986), greater life satisfaction (LaRocco et al., 1980), and better marital adjustment (Frone et al., 2012; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1971). Instrumental spousal support eases the burden of family demands and enables individuals to devote more time to work and other areas, whereas emotional spousal support enhances feelings of self-efficacy both at home, at work

and at other engagements (Parasuraman et al, 2016). Erickson (2013) found that emotional support from the spouse was a stronger predictor of marital well-being than instrumental spousal support (e.g., housework or childcare). Other researchers concurred that spousal support was particularly influential in reducing conflicts in marriage (Adams et al., 2016; Thomas & Ganster, 2015).

Benyamina et al., (2018) findings revealed that unfulfilled expectations of a spouse's behavior stem from communication specifically, problems with comfortably exchanging emotional information and personality problems referred to unfulfilled expectations of a spouse's behavior. Patrick et al., (2020) observed that marital conflict is a phenomenon that has put the institution of marriage at a crossroad with findings revealing that unfulfilled expectations regarding financial problems, alcohol, and drug abuse were the main causes of marital conflict. Symbolic Interactionism was adopted as the theoretical framework because it emphasizes how individuals acquire meanings for events through social interaction with others and this shapes their expectations about how one should behave. Through such meanings, they shape their expectations for marriage and when these expectations are not met, conflicts results.

Whereas prior research has concentrated and supported the link between unfulfilled expectations and marital conflicts, but there appears to be no or insufficient research current research on the factors that enhance or reduce the relationship between unfulfilled expectations and marital conflicts. Though there are evidence of studies that showed social support moderating the predictive role of mental health variables and marital satisfaction. It is on the bases of these extant literatures reviewed so far that this study states its hypotheses. Our approach provides a comprehensive viewpoint integrating together social and psychological resource opinions.

Nigeria presents an interesting setting to study the relationship between unfulfilled expectations, spousal support and marital conflicts. Earlier studies (Israel, 2021) observed that sources of marital conflict in Nigeria seems to be high and related to unfulfilled expectations in the areas of infidelity and sex, and spousal instrumental support in the area of distribution of house chores. This observation may have implications for struggles that stumble upon marital relationships. For example, scholars (Eremie & Adonye-Abbey, 2019) observed that unfulfilled expectations are confirmed in low sexual satisfaction, closeness, in-law relations, social connectedness and distance marriage. These conflicts are detrimental to marital relationships suggesting that there may be high tendencies for couples to experience marital conflicts such as desertion, negligence, malicious beating, child abuse, abscondment, assault, disobedience and several other feature in martial relationship (Eremie & Adonye-Abbey, 2019). Yet, there are scarcity of data on unfulfilled expectations, spousal support and marital conflicts in Nigeria in comparison to North America, Europe, and Asia where most of the studies on marital conflicts relations were conducted (Bahire et al. (2020). Extending research that is nearly exclusively based on American, Asian, and European samples (e.g., Jaffar et al., 2019; Dillon et al., 2018) to other contexts is necessary.

Although, there are studies that address the negative effects of unfulfilled expectations on marital conflicts (Finkel et al., 2013; Bradbury, 1998; Bühler et al., 2021) which may weaken the fulfilling connection over time, essentially if couples do not effectively resolve conflict. By challenging resources related in our study, we advance the understanding of how spousal support might serve as boundary conditions (moderator) for the detrimental effect between unfulfilled expectations and marital conflicts. In addition, the study involved participants who were either presently or previously in marital relationship, selected from a variety of

organizations in Southeast Nigeria. The study therefore is one of the few attempts at understanding marital conflicts, unfulfilled expectations and the boundary conditions and detrimental effects served by spousal support in a cultural environment (Nigerian environment) different from North America, Europe, and Asia. Hence, the following hypotheses:

1. Unfulfilled expectations will be significantly associated with marital conflicts among couples.
2. Spousal support will be significantly associated with marital conflict among couples.
3. Spousal support will moderate the relationship between unfulfilled expectations and marital conflicts among couples.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Participants**

Participants were 494 couples (male=128; female=366) with age ranging from 17 to 32 years ( $M = 21.36$ ,  $SD = 2.67$ ). They were drawn from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Four hundred and fifteen (84.0%) of the participants were Christians, 65 (13.2%) were Muslims, 10(2.0%) were traditionalists, and 2 (.4%) belonged to another religion. In terms of ethnicity, 404 (81.8%) were Igbo, 66 (13.4%) were Hausa, and 24 (4.9%) were Yoruba. By religion, 462 (83.7%) were Christians, 74 (13.4%) were Muslims, 11(2.0%) were African traditionalists, and 3(0.5%) belonged to other religious groups. On marital status, 474 were married (96%), 11 (2.2%) were separated, 4 (.8%) were divorced, and 5 (1%) were widowed.

### **Instruments**

We used three measures in the study: The Marital Problems Questionnaire (MPQ), Marital Expectations Questionnaire (MEQ) and Supportive Spouse Interaction Questionnaire (SSIQ).

#### ***Marital Problems Questionnaire (MPQ)***

The Marital Problems Questionnaire (MPQ), a 31-item measure, was developed by Douglass & Douglass (1995) to assess the marital conflicts in both clinical and research setting (Çabuk et al., 2017). This instrument has shown strong correlations with other commonly used measures of marital adjustment (Douglass & Douglass, 1995). Each item on the scale was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (this area almost never (less than once a year) causes conflict) to 4 (This problem causes weekly conflict). Some of the items are: “Partner's friends”, “Partner's family”, “Partner's friends of opposite sex”, “Partner's job”. Douglass & Douglass, (1995) reported a reliability of 0.93. For the present study, we obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.82.

#### ***Marital Expectations Questionnaire (MEQ)***

The Marital Expectations Questionnaire (MEQ), a 10-item measure, was developed by Ngazimbi (2009), based on the Epigenetic Model of Marital Expectations (Juvva & Bhatti, 2006). Each item on the scale was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (unfulfilled) to 5 (fulfilled). Some of the items are: “Love and affection”, “sex and intimacy”, “companionship”, “joint decision-making”. Ngazimbi (2009) reported a reliability of 0.54 to 0.82. For the present study, we obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.81.

### ***Supportive Spouse Interaction Questionnaire (SSIQ)***

The Supportive Spouse Interaction Questionnaire (SSIQ), a 5-item measure, was developed by Mickelson et al. (2006), an adaptation of the Schuster et al. (1990). Each item on the scale was measured using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (a lot). Some of the items are: “How much your spouse understands the way you feel about things?”, “how much you can you depend on your spouse to be there when you really need them?”, “how much your spouse shows concern for your feelings and problems?”, “how much you can trust your spouse to keep their promises to you?” Mickelson et al. (2006) reported a reliability of 0.76 to 0.84. For the present study, we obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.79.

### **Procedure**

The research was carried out at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The participants in the study were couples and full-time employed staff in University of Nigeria Nsukka. The inclusion criteria for participation were that the participants had been married for a minimum of three months, above 18 years, has lived with spouse at least three months at the time of the study, and volunteered to participate in the study. Ten graduate students of psychology collected the data as part of their research experience assignment. The graduate students who served as research assistants recruited participants from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The research assistants approached the participants with an introduction letter that included information on the study seeking participants’ consent to take part in the study. A total of 550 participants who agreed to participate in the study were first handed over the study booklet for survey by the research assistants and they followed up on the same set of participants that they recruited to collect the completed questionnaire directly from them. The participants completed the English version of the survey. We collected data on demographic variables, marital conflict, unfulfilled expectation, and moderator (spousal support) at approximately one-month interval. The research assistants at the various collection times were responsible for handing over of the study booklets to the participants and the collection of completed surveys (in a sealed envelope) from the participants they recruited. Participants did not receive any incentive for taking part in the study except that we verbally expressed gratitude to the participants, and depending on their preference. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. At the end of survey collection, we had 550 usable data. Out of this number distributed to the participants, forty-three were lost due to misplacements from the participants while thirteen out of the five hundred and seven surveys remaining that were not correctly filled, were discarded. Our final sample consisted of 494 participants (overall response rate of 89.81%).

### **Design/Statistics**

The Hayes regression-based PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to analyze the data collected for the research. The robust PROCESS macro for SPSS is favored over ordinary regression analysis (Hayes, 2013). PROCESS performs regression-based path analysis and produces product terms to investigate interaction effects, centering predictor variables automatically before analysis. The Hayes PROCESS is currently the most widely accepted approach for moderation tests (see Onyedire et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2020). If a product term (that is, the interaction of predictor and moderator) was significant, it meant that in the presence of the moderator(s), the link between the relationship variable (e.g., spousal support) and the criterion variable (marital conflicts) was either stronger or weaker (e.g., unfulfilled expectation).

## Results

**Table 1: Mean, Standard deviation and correlations of demographic factors, spousal support, unfulfilled expectation, and marital conflict**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1 Gender	-	-	-			
2 Age	21.36	2.67	-.09	-		
3 Spousal support	14.28	5.06	.15**	.04	-	
4 Unfulfilled expectation	25.64	5.61	.13**	-.01	.87***	-
5 Marital conflict	62.54	25.06	-.00	-.02	-.36***	-.31***

Note. \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female)

**Table 2: Hayes PROCESS macro results for predicting marital conflict by unfulfilled expectation and spousal support.**

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	95%CI	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>
Unfulfilled expectation (UE)	-.47	-.79	.427	[-1.64, .69]	.13	24.96 (3, 490)
Spousal support (SS)	-2.70	-2.81	.005	[-4.58, -.81]		
UEXSS	.03	1.04	.297	[-.03, .09]		

Note: *CI* = Confidence Interval

In **Table 1**, the mean, standard deviations and correlations of demographic factors, spousal support, unfulfilled expectation, and marital conflicts were shown and tabulated. Gender was not associated with age ( $r = -.09$ ) and marital conflict ( $r = -.00$ ) but positively associated with spousal support ( $r = .15$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and unfulfilled expectation ( $r = .13$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Age was not associated with any variable, spousal support was positively associated with unfulfilled expectation ( $r = .87$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and negatively associated with marital conflict ( $r = -.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Unfulfilled expectation was negatively associated with marital conflict ( $r = -.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

In **Table 2**, unfulfilled expectation was not significantly associated with marital conflict ( $\beta = -.47$ ). Spousal support was negatively associated with marital conflict ( $\beta = -2.70$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The interaction of unfulfilled expectation and spousal support was not significant ( $\beta = .03$ ), indicating that spousal support did not moderate the relationship between unfulfilled expectation and marital conflict.

## Discussion

The primary goal of our study was to examine the moderating role of spousal support in the relationship between unfulfilled expectations and marital conflict among couples. The result showed that unfulfilled expectation was not associated with marital conflict. Thus, hypothesis one was rejected. Our study result is contradictory with the findings from previous studies (Benyamina et al., 2018; Eremie & Adonye-Abbey, 2019; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2017) who found that unfulfilled expectations increased the tendency at which couples engaged in conflict. This shows that unfulfilled expectation is not a factor that determines the presence or absence of marital infidelity. Well assumed, unfulfilled expectation neither reinforced nor



reduced marital conflict. Such that those couples that experience marital conflict are not experiencing that because of unfulfilled expectation and vice versa. The possible reason why this happened this way could be because of the demographic. Females were more than males in the present study and based on the culture, females are expected to always speak good of their husbands. Therefore, it is possible to not have all the expectations and still be having marital conflict yet not disclose it. Hence, that mindset could influence the outcome of the present finding.

Furthermore, our findings demonstrated that spousal support negatively predicted marital conflict among couples, confirming the second hypothesis. This finding is in agreement with previous findings (e.g., Alipour et al., 2019; Bahire et al., 2020; Sabiha & Erdal, 2015) who stated that not being of support to one's spouse increased the rate at which they have conflict. Other researchers concurred that spousal support was particularly influential in reducing conflicts in marriage (Adams et al., 2016; Thomas & Ganster, 2015). Those couples who support their partner more are going to experience less marital conflict than those who support little. And those who support little are going to experience less conflict than those who do not support at all. More so, it seems like those couples who receive support from their partners have also derived some sort of satisfaction that reduced the tendency at which they will engage in conflict. Worthy of note is that spousal support is an important ingredient in lowering marital conflict. Thus, couples must pay attention to how much of support they have been to their partner. To further help, couples can even be of help to themselves by explaining to their partners how they want to be supported. A link exists between spousal support and marital conflicts.

Also, our study has confirmed Ambaye (2019) and Sabiha and Erdal (2015) assertion that couples in Nigeria who engage in spousal support through positive and supportive communication, upholding interest, affection, gratitude and apologies communication as means to amicably reduce the odds for Marital conflicts. This also implies that spousal support is acting as a protective factor to marital conflict, such that, when there is support among couples, the rate at which they will experience conflict will be low. So, the inhibiting factor in the present study is spousal support. Therefore, when spousal support is present in a marriage, there will be more marital bliss or reduced conflict than those marriages that spousal support is lacking. That is to say that, spousal support acts as a buffer to marital conflict among couples such that, the more the spousal support, the more the buffer, and the less the marital conflict experienced.

Finally, the result further showed that spousal support did not moderate the relationship between unfulfilled expectation and marital conflict among couples. Thus, the third hypothesis was rejected. That is to say, spousal support neither strengthens the relationship between unfulfilled expectation and marital conflict nor lessens it. As such, this seems to be an astonishing finding. However, it could be argued that the present study contradicted the work of Israel (2021) who found that though marital conflict was common to all families, yet, spousal support was instrumental in either strengthening it or lowering it. It was therefore empirically established that lack of spousal support could strengthen marital support in the presence of unfulfilled expectation. This implies that the coming of spousal support on the assumed existing relationship between unfulfilled expectation and marital conflict among couples did not change the direction of that relationship nor strengthen or weaken it

## **Limitations**

Our study, however, has some limitations. The small sample size of 494 and the study location (being limited to only Nsukka) appear to limit the generalizability of this conclusion. Future research samples should be more extensive, and the scope of data collection should be increased to encompass more sections of Nigeria. In addition, there seem to be more females than males in the present study. Possibly, this is a significant limitation that could influence the result. Future studies need to address this issue. Also, a cross-sectional study cannot infer causality between variables. Our findings showed that unfulfilled expectation did not have significant relationship with marital conflict. Future research on this topic has a compelling case to be made. Furthermore, the study design can be improved by including other psychological variables exploring the different dimensions of spousal support. As a result, it can be used to investigate further and back up the current study's findings, which found that spousal support did not moderate the relationship between unfulfilled expectation and marital conflict among couples. In future studies, using a longitudinal technique to determine the etiology of an effect could be beneficial.

## **Suggestions for Further Studies**

Future studies should increase sample size and also extend data collection to other regions in Nigeria. Future studies should also look at a longitudinal approach to studying this such that causal inference can be made. They should also look at spousal support based on their different dimension such that it would be clear which of them was able to predict and moderate and in what direction.

## **Conclusion**

Though marital conflict was collective to all families, yet, spousal support was influential in reducing it. Even if marital conflict is not limited to unfulfilled expectations, spousal support plays a critical role in influencing couples to steer through their disagreements and differing opinions suitably. To protect themselves from marital conflict, couples should support their partner more with either instrumental or emotional support or both, so as to derive some variety of satisfaction that reduced the tendency at which marital conflict occurs. Marriage Counselors should enlighten couples with counsels that raise the effectiveness of their interventions on couple's mutual spousal support. Thus, this sets a positive attitude and helps couples feel appreciated and supported.

Finally, unfulfilled expectation did not predict marital conflict while spousal support negatively predicted it. Although, spousal support did not moderate the relationship between unfulfilled expectation and marital conflict, spousal support is a factor that inhibits the likelihood of marital conflict increasing among couples. Thus, when spousal support is present in a marital relationship, there will be increased either marital harmony or reduced conflict than those marriages that spousal support is lacking.

### *DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT*

*The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.*

## ETHICS STATEMENT

Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s), and minor(s) legal guardian/next of kin, for the publication

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