



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# AFFECTION AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AS FACTORS OF CHANGE IN THE PERSONALITY TRAITS OF SPOUSES IN LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS IN THE REALITY OF CABINDA WOMEN

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## ARTICLE INFO

**Article History**

Received 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

Received in revised form

17<sup>th</sup> December, 2024

Accepted 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2025

Published online 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2025

**Keywords:**

Women, Personality, Ethics, Affection, Satisfaction, Spouses and Relationship

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## ABSTRACT

Over the years, the woman's role in society has stood out in the direction of upward progression. These highlights boosted his social, family and cultural position. On the other hand, the current situation presents spouses with ethical and moral challenges that interfere with their coexistence experiences and personality traits. This work aims to verify the implications of marital coexistence on affective changes, ethical principles and personality traits in a group of women in long-term relationships. The study was carried out from February to March 2023 on women in a relationship of 5 years or more, by filling out a questionnaire that assessed affectivity, ethical principles and personality traits taking into account the experiences of coexistence conjugal. Data were collected through conventional sampling and analyzed using SPSS statistical software. 110 women from different social strata participated in this study, aged between 38 and 42, the majority of whom had been together for more than 20 years. The results demonstrate that variables such as affectivity, ethical principles and personality traits are among the factors with the greatest weight in the Component Matrix. It was also found that there is a statistically significant association between affection, ethical principles and personality traits of the spouses. Fidelity behavior is correlated with marital satisfaction. Changes in personality patterns are related to emotional expression and ethical principles. Most of the women interviewed state that in long-term relationships, ethical principles and affection can produce significant changes in the spouses' personality traits and increase marital satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the role of women in society has highlighted an upward progression. These advances transformed the social role of women, making them heroines, courageous and fearless (Cavalcanti, 2022). In this line of thought Barros (2013), he states that we are living in a new historical moment that places women in a new social, family and cultural place, where they assume a new perspective in dealing with the dilemmas of the marital life cycle. Despite the problems and conflicts faced, they assume power and authority, although they are often criticized, they are also highlighted as protagonists in family and professional contexts. However, the challenges of modernity brought with them risks and opportunities. Where the theme of trust is established in the bonds of kinship and friendship, becoming the main axis of the interaction of human beings in different areas, mainly in the emotional sphere in which the parties are emotionally involved, respecting past experiences to shape the present and envision the future. In this sense, when human interaction is shaped by rewarding experiences, human beings end up shaping personality traits, namely the way they act, behave and interact with the purpose of adjusting their "self" to a given situation. The light of these arguments (Bilac, 2012) shows us that it is in the daily conduct of individuals that identity and intimacy are shaped and transformed. Therefore, the experiences lived in marriage, family and work are reflective and produce changes in personality traits and in the

construction of married life. According to Carter e McGoldrick (1995), regarding affective relationships, the authors argue that the duration of a relationship is less important than the intensity with which it is lived, since the years lived may not have conferred positive emotional expressions capable of to exert influence on the way of being of others. In this sense, for the experiences of marital relationships to be rewarding, the couple must previously establish an emotional contract and ethical agreements at the beginning of the marriage and make updates over time with the aim of producing changes in the structure of the relationship itself and in the lives of the spouses. To this end, it is essential to develop sensitivity and the ability to listen to each other at increasingly deeper levels, reflected in the learning that is processed and improved in the couple's experience as a potential for the spouses' personal growth, which promotes recreation daily rules, joint projects and constructive ways of interacting (Tavora, 2009). This work aims to verify the implications of marital coexistence on affective changes, ethical principles and personality traits in a group of women in long-term relationships in the reality of Cabinda. To support the research objective, the following research hypotheses were tested:

H<sub>1</sub>: The partner's degree of satisfaction in relation to the changes achieved in coexistence experiences is associated with the spouse's loyalty behavior.

H<sub>2</sub>: The partner's willingness to listen to his wife is closely linked to personality patterns associated with affective display, emotional

expression, character, wives' satisfaction in relation to changes in the spouses' personality as well as ethical principles linked to dialogue and attitudes post-dialogue;

H<sub>3</sub>: The degree of satisfaction of wives with the changes produced in their spouses' personality is associated with changes in ethical principles linked to frequency of dialogue, post-dialogue attitudes, honesty, respect, courage, obedience, delicacy and humility.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Sample:** This is a cross-sectional descriptive study, carried out with a sample of 110 female participants, living in the city of Cabinda, selected from intentional non-probabilistic sampling. For inclusion, the following criteria were taken into account: Being married or living together for a period of no less than five (5) years and being the only wife in the marital relationship principles.

**Data collection:** Data were collected in February and March 2023. Before applying the final version of the questionnaire, a previous version was prepared that served as a pilot experience to consolidate the final version. Questionnaire was created consisting of four dimensions: Socio demographic characterization; Experiences of coexistence in the relationship.

**Data Analysis:** The information collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20). The descriptive analysis was carried out using frequencies and measures of central tendency and inferential statistics with correlation tests between variables, adopting the significance level  $p=0.01$ . The Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.778, which allowed measuring the degree of reliability of the questionnaire, proving that it has good internal consistency. Component Matrix was used to establish the main factors associated in this study. All ethical principles of research were safeguarded, guaranteeing the confidentiality of responses and signing of informed consent. The hypothesis where verified with correlation matrix between the dependent and independent variables implied in the hypothesis, and consider the correlation or variables association at 1% and at 5% of significance level.

## RESULTS

The results of the investigation showed that the study participants are mostly between the ages of 38 and 42, are legitimately married, have completed higher education, are administrative employees and have been in a marital relationship for more than 20 years. Regarding the experiences of coexistence in the relationship, the women participating in this investigation characterize the relationship as being very good, they report that the partners changed their behavior a lot depending on the length of time they lived together, and these changes fundamentally affect the way they behave. Furthermore, women consider the degree of satisfaction in the changes achieved in relation to the experiences of living with their partners to be positive, according to (Table 1). In relation to the changes produced in personality patterns, the results highlight the way of thinking as the personality pattern that changes most during married life. On the other hand, partners report that their partner has changed a lot in terms of their willingness to listen, affection and emotional expression. They also say that, compared to the beginning of the relationship, the partners changed a lot in terms of character, partly due to religious influence. These changes are reflected in the satisfaction they show in relation to the changes achieved in the partner's personality, as illustrated in (Table 2). The trend of opinion regarding the changes achieved in ethical principles shows that in the marital relationship dialogue is frequent and after dialogue, attitudes tend to change a lot. In relation to ethical principles, women are unanimous in responding that, compared to the beginning of the relationship, it is true that there have been changes in the partner linked to justice, discipline, honesty, obedience, respect, courage, fidelity, delicacy and humility according

to (Table 3). According to the sequential order of the component matrix mentioned in the Table 4, the results show which variables belong to each factor: Component 1 (satisfaction regarding the changes achieved in personality, frequency of dialogue and ethical principles linked to justice, discipline, honesty, respect, courage, obedience, delicacy and humility); component 2 (changes in behavior associated with time spent together, willingness to listen, display of affection, emotional expression, assessment of character in comparison to previous years and post-dialogue attitudes); component 3 (satisfaction regarding the changes achieved through the coexistence experience and loyalty behavior); component 4 (personality aspects that verified changes in the partner and influences on the partner's behavioral changes); component 5 (characterization of the relationship taking into account the length of time together) and finally component 6 (aspects in which the partner changed considerably over time together) as shown in (Table 4).

The results of the Pearson Correlation test ( $r$ ) demonstrate an extreme co-variation of the variables, as the  $r$  value illustrates significant associations between them. When analyzing the data about the experiences acquired during the partners' time together, the results above show us that, for the level of significance 0.01, there is a statistically significant correlation between the partner's degree of satisfaction in relation to the changes achieved in the experiences coexistence and the spouse's faithful behavior. Nevertheless, the certification and proof of the research hypothesis, the correlation value ( $r = -.476^{**}$ ) proves that there is a strong negative association between the time spent together and the partner's faithful behavior. It can therefore be inferred that the loyalty variable plays an important role in the marital relationship as it influences the partners' degree of satisfaction. This correlation is inversely proportional because the more faithful the partner, the greater the wife's satisfaction and vice versa, as shown in (Table 5).

The data regarding the partner's availability variable to listen to his wife are closely linked to personality patterns associated with affective display, emotional expression, character, wives satisfaction in relation to changes in the spouses' personality, as well as ethical principles linked to the dialogue and post-dialogue attitudes. Thus, the results illustrate strong positive associations, proving that the more partners listen to their wives, the greater the changes achieved in dialogue, post-dialogue attitudes, affective, emotional conduct and character, also correlating with the wife's satisfaction in what concerns changes in the spouse's personality traits according to the results of the  $r$  value in (Table 6). With regard to the analysis of the wives' satisfaction variable in relation to the changes produced in the spouses' personality, the results show a statistically significant association between the wives' degree of satisfaction with the changes produced in the spouses' personality traits and the ethical principles linked frequency in dialogue, post-dialogue attitudes, honesty, respect, courage, obedience, delicacy as well as humility.

## DISCUSSION

An important fact to highlight in this study is the fact that all participants have been in the relationship for more than 20 years, which in a way increases the confidence in the results taking into account the aspects of change achieved in these relationships. This data is also referenced in several studies on long-term marital relationships, which point to the variable length of relationship as a preponderant element in the changes achieved in the spouses' personality patterns (Silva, Scorsolini-Comin and dos Santos 2017; Alves-Silva, Scorsolini-Comin and dos Santos, 2016). Another aspect to be highlighted in this research is related to the fact that women consider that the coexistence in the relationship is very good and that the partners have changed their behavior a lot depending on the length of time they have been together. As Alves-Silva, *et al* (2016) states when considering that love is a dynamic process and is subject to changes brought about by coexistence and the routine that is built over the period of marriage. The partners add that the changes observed

fundamentally affect the way they behave. Since individual behaviors undergo changes throughout the marriage as support to face the fluctuations of everyday life, in favor of marital well-being conjugal (Silva, *et al.* 2017 and Quissini and Coelho, 2014). The similarity of the results found, the authors mentioned above are unanimous in stating that, women consider the degree of satisfaction in the changes achieved in relation to the experiences of living with their partners to be positive.

Regarding personality traits and satisfaction with change, it is worth highlighting that the changes produced in the way of thinking, willingness to listen, affective demonstration, emotional expression and character, constitute fundamental pillars for the reconstruction of personality during the course of married life, thus corroborating the thought of Tavora, (2009) which highlights the effects of the ability to listen to each other at deep levels, as a potential for personal growth for spouses. On the other hand, Gouveia, Albuquerque, Clemente and Espinosa (2002) show the affective-emotional expression, as an element that ensures the couple's union. The changes achieved in the spouses are also reported by the partners as being influenced by religion, a fact strongly defended in the literature as a pillar in the consistency and quality of lasting relationships. In general, researchers seek explanations about how people choose partners, based on personality traits and religion (Gonçalves *et al.*, 2018; Gomes, Gouveia, Silva Júnior, Coutinho and Santos 2013; Porreca, 2019). Furthermore, satisfied couples reiterated the importance of their religious beliefs in the difficult times they went through (Norgren *et al.*, 2004).

Among the couples interviewed, it was also found that dialogue is frequent and that after dialogue, the partner's attitudes tend to change a lot. Clearly, this result supports the concept that dialogue favors rewarding interpersonal relationships between spouses (Gouveia *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, compared to the beginning of the relationship, the women interviewed highlighted that there were changes in the ethical principles linked to justice, discipline, honesty, obedience, respect, courage, fidelity, delicacy and humility. These results corroborate data from studies on ethical values and personality, which highlight the mediating role of ethical values in personality traits and their importance in attributes for building a married life (La Taille, 2000; Gomes *et al.*, 2013). As well as the behaviors manifested by the applicability of ethical principles as mentioned Porreca (2019), which highlights the fact that the marital relationship becomes safer, stronger and more cohesive between couples when ethical values are upheld.

In this investigation, it was proven that the partner's degree of satisfaction in relation to the changes achieved in their coexistence experiences are associated with the spouse's fidelity behavior. In marital relationships, fidelity has been highlighted as one of the main reasons for marital satisfaction, as it is observed that marriage transforms throughout the family life cycle and assumes considerable levels of satisfaction over the years of coexistence (Porreca, 2019; La Taille, 2000; Norgren, de Sousa, Kaslow, Hammerschmidt and Sharlin 2004). It was proven in this study that the partner's willingness to listen to his wife is closely correlated with personality traits, affective display, emotional expression and character. Availability to listen provides a direct relationship with spouses' satisfaction in the sense that, when the ability to listen increases, the levels of interaction and marital satisfaction are better, because empathy promotes interaction, dialogue, affectionate demonstration and emotional expression (Gouveia *et al.*, 2002; Silva *et al.*, 2017; Sardinha, Falcone and Ferreira, 2009). A correlation was also demonstrated between the partner's willingness to listen to his wife and her satisfaction with the changes achieved in personality traits, as found Monengo e Teodoro (2011), in his study on satisfaction in marital relationships. The ethical principles related to dialogue and post-dialogue attitudes correlate with the willingness to listen to the extent that active listening works as an empathy tool that shapes attitudes in relation to behavioral behaviors expressed through ethical values (La Taille, 2000). Which is why it is believed that moral values contribute to choosing a partner (Gonçalves *et al.*, 2018).

Finally, it was possible to prove in this investigation that the degree of satisfaction of wives with the changes produced in the personality of their spouses is associated with changes in ethical principles. As mentioned La Taille (2000), changes in personality are a necessary condition for changes in ethical principles regarding respect, courage and generosity. On the other hand, fidelity, honesty and delicacy are also highlighted by Norgren *et al.* (2002), as principles associated with changes in personality traits. According to Silva *et al.* (2017), when the partner admits his imperfections, he appears humble, improving the quality of the marital bond, which is reflected in the transformation of personality traits.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this investigation allowed us to conclude that the length of the relationship constitutes a preponderant factor in the changes achieved in the spouses' personality traits, in the partners' degree of satisfaction in relation to personality traits and ethical principles. After years of living together, it is possible for spouses to produce positive changes that are reflected in the reconstruction of their personality. After years of marital life, the partner's loyalty is seen as an extremely fundamental component in the marital relationship as it influences the partners' degree of satisfaction. This implies that the more faithful the spouse is, the greater his wife's satisfaction will be in relation to the changes achieved in the experiences of married life. However, in long-term relationships the ability to listen actively is closely related to personality traits, affective display, emotional expression and changes in character, thus promoting more frequent dialogue. Satisfied partners tend to demonstrate that the changes seen in their spouse's behavior are fundamentally based on religious influence and the way they behave. Regarding the changes produced in personality, it is worth highlighting that ethical principles were those that had the most impact on the transformations observed by partners during the experiences of married life, as they were reported as important pillars in the satisfaction obtained through changes in personality traits and in the affectivity. This time, it was possible to confirm the research hypotheses in this study and assume that the spouses' satisfaction is related to the changes produced in the spouses' personality, ethical principles and affective display. In other words, according to the results of the investigation, it is possible to affirm that, in the reality of Cabinda, women consider that ethical principles, affection and personality traits are variables that impact the experiences of long-term marital relationships.

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APPENDIX  
TABLES OF THE RESULTS

Table 1. Experiences of coexistence in the relationship

	N	Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>				Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Trend of opinion
		Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Mode			
b1_Characterization of the relationship with time together	110	,765	3,24	3,00	4	2,907	,000	Very good
b2_Change in partner's behavior over time together	110	,548	2,58	3,00	3	4,051	0,000	Quite
b3_Aspects in which your partner has changed considerably over time together	110	,761	2,35	2,00	2	2,548	,000	Way to behave
b4_Degree of satisfaction with the changes achieved through the coexistence experience	110	,347	2,91	3,00	3	5,566	0,000	Positive

Source: field research, adaptation by the authors, 2023

Table 2. Changes achieved in personality

	N	Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>				Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Trend of opinion
		Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Mode			
c1_Personality aspects in which you noticed changes in your partner	110	1,232	2,54	3,00	4	2,129	,000	Way of thinking
c2_Characterization of your partner's willingness to listen to you	110	,744	2,82	3,00	3	3,205	0,000	It changed a lot
c3_effective characterization of your partner's behavior	110	,760	2,97	3,00	3	3,011	,000	It changed a lot
c4_Emotional characterization of your partner's behavior	110	,808	2,91	3,00	3	2,758	,000	It changed a lot
c5_Comparative assessment of your partner's character over the years	110	,851	2,97	3,00	3	2,804	,000	It changed a lot
c6_aspects that influenced changes in your partner	110	1,608	3,15	4,00	4	2,601	,000	Religious influence
c7_Degree of satisfaction with the changes achieved in your partner's personality	110	,507	2,98	3,00	3	4,345	0,000	Satisfied

Source: field research, adaptation by the authors, 2023

Table 3. Changes achieved in ethical principles

	N	Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>				Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Trend of opinion
		Standard. Deviation	Mean	Median	Mode			
d1_Evaluation of dialogue during the relationship with your partner	110	,552	2,55	3,00	3	3,903	0,000	Frequent
d2_Assessment of your partner's actions after the dialogue	110	,732	2,82	3,00	3	3,317	0,000	It changed a lot
d3_1_The partner became fairer compared to the beginning	110	,923	2,75	3,00	3	2,760	,000	It is true
d3_2_The partner has become more disciplined compared to the beginning	110	1,110	2,72	3,00	3	2,767	,000	It is true
d3_3_The partner became more honest about the beginning	110	1,018	2,75	3,00	3	2,847	,000	It is true
d3_4_The partner became more faithful compared to the beginning	110	3,084	2,95	3,00	3	3,757	0,000	It is true
d3_5_The partner became more respectful compared to the beginning	110	1,043	2,94	3,00	4	2,543	,000	It is true
d3_6_partner became more courageous compared to the beginning	110	,981	3,01	3,00	3	2,726	,000	It is true
d3_7_Partner became more obedient compared to the beginning	110	1,006	2,85	3,00	3	2,738	,000	It is true
d3_8_The partner became more delicate compared to the beginning	110	,995	2,96	3,00	3	2,727	,000	It is true
d3_9_The partner became more humble about the beginning	110	1,043	3,06	3,00	4	2,735	,000	It is true

Source: field research, adaptation by the authors, 2023

**Table 4. Component Matrix**

Component Matrix	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
c7 Degree of satisfaction with the changes achieved in your partner's personality	,492	,206	-,069	-,276	,003	,470	
d1 Evaluation of dialogue during the relationship with your partner	,460	,191	-,096	-,441	,090	,386	
d3 1 The partner became fairer compared to the beginning	,657	-,165	-,121	,125	-,127	-,171	
d3 2 The partner has become more disciplined compared to the beginning	,694	-,252	-,154	-,036	,182	-,167	
d3 3 The partner became more honest about the beginning	,695	-,297	-,020	,055	,001	-,053	
d3 5 The partner became more respectful compared to the beginning	,782	-,293	,013	,091	-,023	,076	
d3 6 partner became more courageous compared to the beginning	,621	-,324	-,031	-,097	,105	-,236	
d3 7 Partner became more obedient compared to the beginning	,796	-,296	,056	,031	-,028	-,065	
d3 8 The partner became more delicate compared to the beginning	,699	-,227	,087	-,102	-,237	,154	
d3 9 The partner became more humble about the beginning	,785	-,257	-,050	,134	-,101	,061	
b2 Change in partner's behavior over time together	,187	,380	-,311	,248	,360	-,134	
C2 Characterization of your partner's willingness to listen to you	,318	,729	,103	-,052	,124	-,076	
C3 effective characterization of your partner's behavior	,367	,637	,214	,028	,003	-,320	
C4 Emotional characterization of your partner's behavior	,380	,641	,125	,059	-,330	-,213	
c5 Comparative assessment of your partner's character over the years	,444	,591	,052	-,087	-,277	-,113	
d2 Assessment of your partner's actions after the dialogue	,430	,526	-,268	-,157	-,084	,235	
b4 Degree of satisfaction with the changes achieved through the coexistence experience	,123	,063	-,791	,360	-,030	,081	
d3 4 The partner became more faithful compared to the beginning	,312	-,174	,702	-,169	,176	-,116	
c1 Personality aspects in which you noticed changes in your partner	,173	,078	,167	,709	-,179	,115	
c6 aspects that influenced changes in your partner	,097	,050	,321	,341	-,119	,197	
b1 Characterization of the relationship with time together	,365	,190	-,034	,082	,749	-,063	
b3 Aspects in which your partner has changed considerably over time together	,100	,167	,427	,395	,281	,464	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>25,810</b>	<b>13,091</b>	<b>7,923</b>	<b>6,272</b>	<b>5,420</b>	<b>4,786</b>	<b>63,302</b>

Source: field research, adaptation by the authors, 2023

**Table 5. Correlation matrix between the coexistence experiences vs spouse's loyalty**

	b4 Degree of satisfaction related to the changes achieved through coexistence experiences	d3 4_ The partner has become more faithful compared to the beginning
b4 Degree of satisfaction related to the changes achieved through coexistence experiences	1	
d3 4_ The partner has become more faithful compared to the beginning	-,476**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: field research, adaptation by the authors, 2023

**Table 6. Variables associated with willingness to listen**

	c2_Characterization of your partner's willingness to listen to you	c3_Effective characterization of your partner's behavior	c4_Emoional characterization of your partner's behavior	c5_Comparative assessment of your partner's character over the years	c7_Degree of satisfaction in the changes achieved in your partner's personality	d1_Evaluation of dialogue along the way in your relationship with your partner	d2_Assessment of your partner's actions after the dialogue
c2_Characterization of your partner's willingness to listen to you	1						
c3_effective characterization of your partner's behavior	,527**	1					
c4_Emoional characterization of your partner's behavior	,537**	,549**	1				
c5_Comparative assessment of your partner's character over the years	,470**	,510**	,544**	1			
c7_Degree of satisfaction with the changes achieved in your partner's personality	,283**	,237*	,175	,233*	1		
d1_Evaluation of dialogue during the relationship with your partner	,248**	,102	,217*	,248**	,365**	1	
d2_Assessment of your partner's actions after the dialogue	,394**	,321**	,391**	,463**	,362**	,388**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: field research, adaptation by the authors, 2023

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