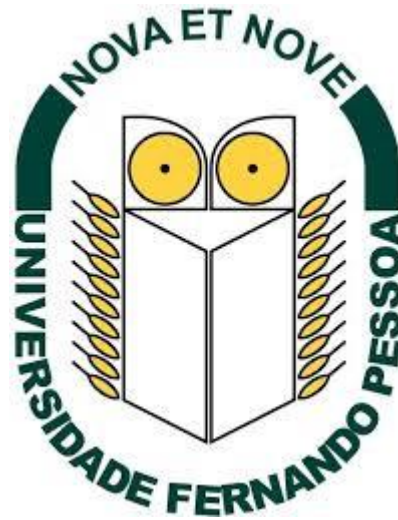


Sara Pinto Pires



**The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love**

Universidade Fernando Pessoa

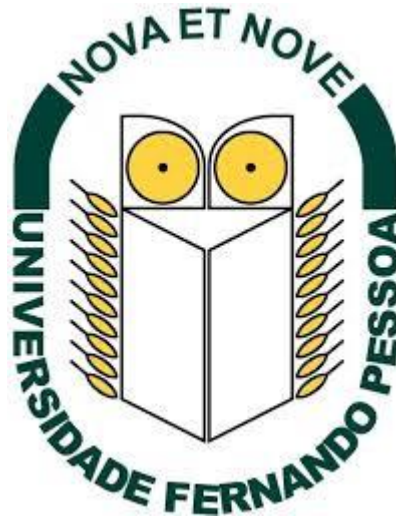
Faculdade de Ciências Humanas e Sociais

Porto, 2023

# The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

Sara Pinto Pires



**The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love**

Universidade Fernando Pessoa

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas e Sociais

Porto, 2023

The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

**The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love**

Sara Pinto Pires

Master's Dissertation presented to the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of Fernando Pessoa University, as part of the requirements for obtaining the master's degree in clinical and health Psychology, under the supervision of Professor Carla Fonte PhD.

### Resumo

A personalidade é uma grande parte de quem somos, moldando a forma como pensamos, comportamos e reagimos às situações do quotidiano (Allport, 1961). Quando está em causa a análise da natureza humana, o amor é uma das dimensões mais prementes, sendo uma fonte de inspiração e esperança desde o início dos tempos (Kapusta et al., 2018). Sabe-se que os seres humanos apresentam uma necessidade básica de ter relações interpessoais, mas para alguns não é fácil envolverem-se, comprometerem-se e manterem relações íntimas, e parecem não ter esta capacidade individual para amar (Hazan & Shaver, 1992; Kernberg, 2011). Embora a personalidade, o amor e as relações tenham sido estudados exaustivamente, persiste a necessidade de realizar estudos científicos que incluam o estudo da personalidade e a capacidade de amar em conjunto.

Dada a importância que as relações desempenham nas nossas vidas, e o facto de que problemas e dificuldades associados a relações românticas serem cada vez mais frequentes em consultas psicológicas podendo ser um fator de risco para problemas do foro mental, é crucial ter uma melhor compreensão da capacidade para amar e do papel que a personalidade desempenha nessa capacidade individual. Neste âmbito, o principal objetivo do estudo que se apresenta é analisar o papel dos “Cinco Grandes Traços de Personalidade” (Extroversão; Amabilidade; Conscienciosidade; Neuroticismo e Abertura à Experiência) na capacidade para amar, numa amostra portuguesa constituída por 839 participantes entre os 18 e os 74 anos. A recolha de dados foi efetuada através de um questionário sociodemográfico, do Big Five Inventory (BFI) e do CTL- Inventory (CTL-I). Os principais resultados sugerem que a amostra apresenta níveis altos de amabilidade, baixos níveis de estabilidade emocional e altos níveis de capacidade para amar. Nesta amostra, as mulheres apresentam níveis mais elevados de amabilidade e interesse pelo outro, e os homens são mais emocionalmente estáveis. Os participantes que estão envolvidos numa relação íntima apresentam-se como mais conscienciosos, extrovertidos e apresentam uma melhor capacidade para amar. Também foi possível perceber que aqueles que têm filhos são mais extrovertidos, conscienciosos, emocionalmente estáveis e apresentam níveis mais baixos de capacidade para amar. Os divorciados apresentam os níveis mais baixos de capacidade para amar e os solteiros apresentam os níveis mais altos, sendo estes últimos, descritos como menos conscienciosos e emocionalmente estáveis quando comparados com os casados, divorciados e viúvos. As pessoas com relações mais

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

curtas tendem a ser menos conscienciosas e a apresentar uma tendência neurótica, relatando níveis mais elevados de permanência da paixão sexual, as que têm relações mais longas são as que apresentam menor capacidade para amar, já quem apresenta uma maior satisfação com a relação, são as pessoas mais extrovertidas, amáveis e emocionalmente estáveis e estas apresentam também uma maior capacidade para amar. Indivíduos que apresentam uma maior capacidade para amar começam mais cedo as suas relações e à medida que a idade aumenta a capacidade para amar tende a diminuir. Por último, foi encontrada uma associação positiva entre os cinco grandes traços e as dimensões da CTL, e quatro dos traços da personalidade (amabilidade, abertura à experiência, estabilidade emocional e extroversão) parecem ter um contributo modesto como preditores da capacidade de amar, sendo a amabilidade o fator de predição mais forte.

**Palavras-Chave:** Personalidade, Big Five Inventário, Capacidade para Amar, CTL Inventário, Relações românticas.

### **Abstract**

Personality is a big part of who we are, shaping the way we think, behave, and react to everyday situations (Allport, 1961). When it comes to the analysis of human nature, love is one of the most urgent dimensions, being a source of inspiration and hope since the beginning of times (Kapusta et al., 2018). It's known that Humans have this basic need for interpersonal relationships but for some, is not easy to engage and maintain committed and intimate relationships and seem not to have this individual capacity to love (Hazan & Shaver, 1992; Kernberg, 2011). Although personality, love and relationships have been widely studied, there is still a need for scientific studies that include the study of personality and the capacity to love together.

Given the importance that relationships play in our lives, and the fact that problems associated with relationship difficulties are often seen in consults and can be a risk factor for mental health problems is crucial to have a better understanding of one's capacity to love and what kind of role personality plays in it, that it's the main objective of the present study, to analyse the role of the Big Five Personality traits (extraversion; agreeableness; conscientiousness; neuroticism; openness to experience) in the Capacity to Love in a Portuguese sample of 839 participants between ages 18 and 74. Data collection was carried out using a sociodemographic questionnaire, The Big Five Inventory (BFI) and the CTL - Inventory (CTL-I). The main results suggest that the sample presents high levels of agreeableness, low levels of emotional stability, and high levels of capacity to love. In this sample, females show higher levels of agreeableness and interest in the other, and males are more emotionally stable. The participants who are involved in an intimate relationship are also more conscientious, extroverted, and present a better capacity to love. It was also possible to understand that those who have children are more extroverted, conscientious, emotionally stable, and present lower levels of capacity to love. Divorced people present the lowest capacity to love, and singles present the higher levels of CTL, being also described as less conscious and emotionally stable when compared to married, divorced, and widowed. Those with shorter relationships tend to be less conscious and present a neurotic tendency, having more levels of permanence of sexual passion, the ones with the longest relationships are the ones with less capacity to love. People with more capacity to love start their relationships early in life and as for relationship satisfaction, extroverted, agreeable, emotionally stable people tend to be

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

more satisfied with their relationships presenting a higher capacity to love, and as age increases the capacity to love tends to decrease. Finally, a positive association was found between the big five traits and the CTL dimensions, and four of the personality traits (agreeableness, openness to experience, extraversion and emotional stability) seem to have a modest contribution in predicting the capacity to love, with agreeableness as the strongest predictor.

**Keywords:** Personality, Big Five Inventory, Capacity to Love, CTL Inventory, Romantic Relationships

**Acknowledgements**

“There's a universal truth we all have to face whether we want to or not. Everything eventually ends. As much as I've looked forward to this day, I've always disliked endings. The last day of summer. The final chapter of a great book. Parting ways with a close friend. But endings are inevitable. Leaves fall. You close the book. You say goodbye. Today is one of those days for us. Today we say goodbye to everything that was familiar, everything that was comfortable. We're moving on. But just because we're leaving, and that hurts... There are some people who are so much a part of us they'll be with us no matter what. They are our solid ground, Our North Star, and the small clear voices in our hearts that will be with us... always.” (Molly C. Quinn: Alexis Castle).

To my Parents.

To the five.

To my Family.

To my Friends.

To my Academic Advisor.

And to those who inspire me every day.

Thank You.

**Table of Contents**

Resumo .....	IV
Abstract.....	VI
Acknowledgements .....	VIII
Introduction .....	1
Chapter I - Theoretical Framework .....	2
1. Personality: Definition and characterization .....	3
1.1. Personality Theories .....	4
2. The Capacity to Love – Theory and Concepts .....	10
2.1. Theories of Love.....	10
2.2. Erikson’s Eight Stages of Man .....	13
2.3. Attachment Perspective .....	14
2.4 The Capacity to Love – CTL.....	17
2.5. Personality & The Capacity to Love .....	22
Chapter II- Empirical Study .....	23
3. Method.....	24
4. Results.....	29
5. Discussion.....	44
6. Conclusion.....	49
References .....	52

**Table of Tables**

Table 1. The Big Five Traits and the Facets .....	5
Table 2. Sternberg' Kinds of Love .....	12
Table 3. Adult patterns in relationships .....	16
Table 4. Kernberg's Dimensions of The Capacity to Love.....	18
Table 5. Sociodemographic Data of the sample.....	25
Table 6. Sociodemographic characterisation of the sample according to current/past relationship .....	26
Table 7. Characterization of the Big Five factors in the sample .....	30
Table 8. Characterization of the CTL Inventory dimensions in the sample .....	30
Table 9. Male and Female differences in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions .....	31
Table 10. Differences between being or not being involved in an intimate relationship in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions.....	32
Table 11. Differences between having or not having children in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions .....	33
Table 12. Differences between Marital Status in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions .....	34
Table 13. Differences between Relationship Length in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions .....	35-36
Table 14. Differences between Age of first relationship in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions .....	36-37
Table 15. Differences between Relationship Satisfaction in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions .....	38

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

Table 16. Differences between Age Classes in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions .....	40
Table 17. Analysis of the relationship between the Big Five and the CTL in the sample.....	42
Table 18. Personality Traits that predict the CTL.....	43

**Table of figures**

Figure 1. The Triangular Theory of Love.....11

## Introduction

When we talk about human nature, love is one of the first things that jumps into our minds. Poets, philosophers, artists and religious, love has been a source of inspiration and hope since the beginning of times, going across time and cultures (Kapusta et al., 2018). For many, finding a partner to love and be loved, and being able to establish a satisfying and long-lasting mature romantic relationship is the ultimate life goal (Fletcher et al., 2015). Happiness, sadness, anger, jealousy, fear, *Love* can make us feel it all.

For some reason, some fail to obtain that ideal love. Literature found married people are happier and experience more satisfaction than those who have never been married, that are divorced or are widowed. It shows that happy and stable relations have a positive contribution to both mental and physical health and can be a protective factor. Problems and difficulties associated with romantic relationships are often seen in psychological consults and can be a risk factor for mental health problems such as depression and anxiety (Kapusta et al, 2018; Fletcher et al., 2015). And if the ability to engage in healthy, committed, and intimate relations is related to psychological health, the incapacity to engage and maintain committed and intimate relationships is associated with emotional distress and with pathological narcissism (Kapusta et al., 2018). According to the attachment perspective, humans have basic needs that can only be obtained through social relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1992) this can explain why relationship problems can have such an impact on mental health and well-being, reinforcing the importance of a better understanding of love and relationships.

And if the capacity to love is part of who we are so is personality, shaping the way we think, behave, and react to everyday situations (Allport, 1961). Personality, love, and relationships have been studied for years and theorists can tell that they are correlated in many aspects, but there is a lack of research exploring personality and the capacity to love together. Since love and relationships play such an important role in our lives it is crucial to have a better understanding of one's capacity to love and study love and relationships from a more dynamic functional perspective.

That is the main goal of this project, to study the role of personality in the capacity to love and explore possible relations between the two constructs, the Big Five Personality Traits and The Capacity to Love Dimension

**Chapter I - Theoretical framework**

## 1. Personality: Definition and characterization

*Personality.* “n. the enduring configuration of characteristics and behaviour that comprises an individual’s unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns. Personality is generally viewed as a complex, dynamic integration or totality shaped by many forces, including hereditary and constitutional tendencies; physical maturation; early training; identification with significant individuals and groups; culturally conditioned values and roles; and critical experiences and relationships. Various theories explain the structure and development of personality in different ways, but all agree that personality helps determine behaviour.” (APA, Dictionary of Psychology).

Personality can be defined as a stable but dynamic organisation of individual characteristics expressed in the form of behaviours, thoughts and feelings which define a person (Allport, 1961).

According to some theories, personality can be determined by factors such as heredity, development, early learning, life experiences, cultural contexts, and life events that can affect the way one thinks, feels, and behaves, contributing to personality development (Asselman & Specht, 2020).

Personality begins to develop in the first years of life during infancy and continues to shape itself until adolescence and early adulthood (Brito Costa et al., 2016). During infancy, it is already possible to observe differences in the behaviour of infants, these biologically based differences are called "temperament", and some believe that in the same way as love, which we will discuss later, the early experiences given by caregivers, attachment styles and other events during this developmental period can have a fundamental role in the development of personality (Brito Costa et al., 2016).

Characteristics such as values, motivations, interests, plans, views of the world and of the self, emotional patterns, and aptitudes will shape major life tasks, and personality can also play an important role in the probability to experience, or not, some

major life events, as move with someone else or get married (Asselman & Specht, 2020; Czerniawska & Szydło, 2021).

### 1.1. Personality Theories

Hippocrates in 400 a.c first introduced what can be considered the first personality theory, he suggested four fundamental personality types (temperaments): *1. Sanguine; 2. Melancholic; 3. Phlegmatic 4. Choleric*; since then, several theories of Personality have emerged: from the Psychoanalytic Perspective, of Freud, Erikson, and Jung; The Humanistic Perspective of Maslow and Rogers; Bandura with the Social Cognitive Perspective; The Cognitive Behavioural perspective and finally, the Trait Perspective, from Eysenck, Cattel, McCrae and Costa (Batista & Neto, 2019). All these perspectives played a fundamental role in understanding the personality construct, but for this project, The Big Five Model, of McCrae & Costa (1987), originating from the Trait Perspective will be our central guideline.

Although personality is still a subject of discussion and divergence in the literature there is one thing that theorists agree on. There are personality traits that are stable and permanent properties of an individual and even if an individual's personality can become more mature, there are some fundamental traits that don't change over time (Brito Costa et al., 2016).

The Trait Theory defends that personality is a combination of individual traits that are stable over time and that can change among individuals, influencing their behaviour and impacting an individual's response to daily situations, habits, humour, and thoughts (Suldo et al., 2014) with traits being the basic components of personality that holds one's individual characteristics (Czerniawska & Szydło, 2021).

Being one of the most accepted models of personality is the culmination of several years and perspectives from different authors, in 1936, Allport and Odbert undertook an examination of language, used to describe personality attributes, this project was a massive influence on Cattel's research through the following years, culminating in a system. In 1963, Norman created a system shaped by five factors (1. surgency; 2. agreeableness; 3. consciousness; 4. emotional; 5. Culture.) In 1970, basing his system on factor-analytic studies, Cattel created a very complex theory with sixteen primary factors

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

and eight second-order factors. In 1957 and 1992, Eysenck proposed a biological/trait model of personality with three big traits (*Neuroticism; Extroversion; Psychoticism*) since this theory has a bipolar dimension, every trait had a direct opposite (*Emotion Stability; Introversion; Self-control*) (Digman, 1990). Basing their research on the previous authors, Costa and McCrae managed to establish the trait theory with the Big Five Model.

The Big Five Model has been used to predict individual differences in different contexts and is considered the principal approach to explain the personality trait structure (Roccas et al., 2002). Being an endogenous theory, it defends that personality development is shaped by biological factors and then the maturation of those biological predispositions, believing that it will influence the individuals' probability to experience certain major events, such as romantic relationships (McCrae & Costa, 2008).

Costa and McCrae (1987) created the Big Five Model, a descriptive hierarchic theory defending that personality should be divided into five big traits: Extraversion; Agreeableness; Conscientiousness; Neuroticism/Emotional Stability; Openness to Experience) each one consisting of six facets, represented in (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*The Big Five Traits and the Facets - Costa & McCrae, 1992*

<b>The Big Five Traits</b>					
<u>Facets</u>	<b>Extraversion</b>	<b>Agreeableness</b>	<b>Conscientiousness</b>	<b>Neuroticism/ Emotional Stability</b>	<b>Openness to Experience</b>
<b>1</b>	Warmth	Modesty	Order	Depression	Fantasy
<b>2</b>	Assertiveness	Altruism	Self-discipline	Anxiety	Values
<b>3</b>	Gregariousness	Compliance	Achievement Striving	Hostility	Ideas
<b>4</b>	Positive Emotions	Trust	Competence	Vulnerability	Aesthetics
<b>5</b>	Activity	Tendermindedness	Deliberation	Impulsiveness	Feelings
<b>6</b>	Excitement Seeking	Straightforwardness	Dutifulness	Self- Consciousness	Actions

**Extraversion** is a social dimension that includes both interpersonal and temperamental traits. Individuals scoring high on extraversion are described as outgoing, lively, fun, and friendly (Costa & McCrae, 1987), and according to literature, women tend

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

to score higher on warmth, gregariousness, and positive emotions, as men score higher in assertiveness and excitement seeking (Costa et al., 2001; Weisberg et al., 2011). Individuals scoring low are quiet, inhibited, and submissive (Holland & Roisman, 2008) and even if extroverted people are highly social and truly appreciate being in others' company that doesn't necessarily mean they are more likeable or that other people like them more (Costa & McCrae, 1987). Literature found that extraversion is linked with positive relationship variables, including, better relationship satisfaction especially in married couples, marital success, and a high level of intimacy in both men and women (Malouff et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2000). Other reports show the exact opposite, linking extraversion with lower satisfaction, marital instability, and divorce in men. There are also reports that extraverted people are likely to be single, but not because they want to (Apostolou & Tsangari, 2022) this can be explained by the fact that even if extraverted people are interested in forming romantic relationships, they don't trust the partner acceptance to engage in those relationships ((Nofle & Shaver, 2006).

**Agreeableness** is often described as the “nice” trait, agreeable individuals tend to be thoughtful, kind, and supportive, and other people tend to trust them, whereas disagreeable people are impolite, stubborn, and aggressive, making it hard for others to involve with them (Holland & Roisman, 2008). Literature findings presented agreeableness as a women's traits, characterizing them as more nurturing, altruistic and tender-minded than men, of all five traits is also the one with the most gender differences (Costa et al., 2001; Weisberg et al., 201; Chapman et al., 2007). Literature found that higher levels of agreeableness are positively linked with better relationship satisfaction in dating couples and marital stability (Malouff et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2000; Donnellan et al., 2004) as lower levels are linked with problematic outcomes and breakdowns, divorce, and less satisfaction in the relationship (White et al., 2004; Holland & Roisman, 2008).

**Conscientiousness** is a dimension based on duty and that is represented in individuals with a high sense of responsibility and organization, conscientiousness individuals also tend to have a better capacity to regulate negative emotions, whereas non-conscientious ones are usually seen as irresponsible and unreliable, and that will translate into their relationships, being more likely to be unfaithful and feel depressive emotions (Holland & Roisman, 2008; Gibson et al., 2016; Biesen et al., 2022). Conscientiousness

people enter their relationships in a more committed way and tend to choose relationships big in warmth and care (Cotter & Kerschner, 2018). But literature showed inconsistencies, presenting positive relations with satisfaction in dating couples, relationship outcomes and length, relationship stability, quality, and health, reporting that conscientiousness people tend to engage in more stable and long-lasting relationships (Malouff et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2000; Cotter & Kerschner, 2018) and to be more sexually satisfied, both men and women. There are also inconsistencies considering gender differences, with women scoring higher in some facets as order, self-discipline, and dutifulness, with no consistent results across cultures (Costa et al., 2001; Weisberg et al., 2011). On the other hand, there are some studies finding nonsignificant associations with this trait (Winterheld & Simpson, 2018; White et al., 2004; Holland & Roisman, 2008).

**Neuroticism** translates into emotional instability as neurotic individuals are described as anxious, moody, self-conscious worried and tend to be insecure in relationships and in life, experience more depressive symptoms and negative thoughts, being more likely to use non-adaptative coping styles, and have hostile reactions, finding it hard to deal with problem-solving situations, that will make them feel more emotional distress than other people (Costa & McCrae, 1987) according to literature, women tend to score higher than men in this trait, especially in anxiety (Costa et al., 2001; Weisberg et al., 2011). Emotionally stable individuals are flexible and tend to have a great self-control of their emotions and actions, experiencing more positive thoughts and coping skills (Holland & Roisman, 2008; Gibson et al., 2016; Biesen et al., 2022). It is reported as the most consistent predictor of relationships outcomes, findings showed that higher levels of neuroticism were associated with negative relationship variables, like relationship breakdown and divorce, shorter relationships, violence and less relationship satisfaction in both dating and married couples and both women and men (White et al., 2004; Holland & Roisman, 2008). This could be explained by the fact that neurotic individuals are more likely to criticize, have a more defensive attitude and express their contempt, which can have a negative impact on the relationship, and neuroticism is also thought to be correlated to pathological love (Malouff et al., 2010; Cotter & Kerschner, 2018; Safdar & Dasti, 2015).

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

**Emotional stability** has been positively associated with relationship quality and satisfaction, and low levels of conflict and abuse between partners (Malouff et al., 2010; Winterheld & Simpson, 2018; Robins et al., 2000 cite in Holland & Roisman, 2008). These studies reflect the same ideas represented by Kernberg that neurotic individuals present difficulties to fall and maintain in love (Kernberg, 2011).

**Openness to experience** represents the desire for new things, and reflects individuals who are inventive and creative, having a special skill to imagine, they are also portrayed as intelligent people by others and themselves, that can be explain by their intense curiosity to experience new things and with the knowledge they recollect from their experiences (Costa & McCrae, 1987; Holland & Roisman, 2008). Of the five traits, openness is probably the less understood one and that is also reflected in the literature as openness seems to be very low correlated to relationship satisfaction and outcomes (Watson et al., 2000). Most studies' findings showed that its negatively related to marital stability and satisfaction, and others suggest that general openness is related to decrease relationship length. Open people are less likely to marry (Jokela et al., 2011), overall people scoring high on this trait tend to be less committed to relationships and have more unconventional types of relationships, being more likely to choose to be single and to be unfaithful, this can be explained by the lack of empathy and trustful that is often seen in open people, but again, there are not any strong correlations in any of the studies to show clarity (Schwaba et al., 2019; White et al., 2004; Apostolou & Tsangari, 2022; Gibson et al., 2016).

In a longitudinal study, that examined how personality traits can influence a romantic relationship and if that influence is consistent over time and across relationship partners results suggest a high level of stability in the influence of personality on romantic relationships. The study interviewed the participants at ages 18 and 26 about relationship aspects such as quality, conflict, and abuse, showing significant levels of rank-order stability, even when the participants were in different relationships. In conclusion, individuals who were in happy and non-abusive relationships at age 21, tend to also be at age 26, again, even if they are in different relationships and those relationships also improved over time during adulthood. In terms of the effect of personality on relationships, it showed that people who are aggressive, stress-reactive and alienated tend to have maladaptive relationships that get worse during their 20's, as people who are

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

positive emotionally and under constraint tend to be in happier and non-abusive relationships improving their relationships over time. Concluding that the personality traits showed in adolescence can be predictor of the direction of intimate relationships during early adulthood (Robins et al., 2002).

With so many studies about personality and relationships dimensions there are some inconsistencies in the literature, this can be related to the fact that studies on the big five and relationships have rarely considered the personality of the individual's partners, and that can influence the relationships outcomes, satisfaction and length (Winterheld & Simpson, 2018) as other authors also defended that in a relationship is not only important one's individual personality but also the personality of the person you are with as the partner's personality can shape the individual's relationship experiences and have an impact on the outcome of the relationship (Robins et al., 2002). Some studies about similarity hypothesis defend that the partner's attraction and relationship adjustment are higher when the partner's personality is similar, with findings suggesting that individuals tend to select partners with similar personalities, but that for the length and success of the relationship the intimacy and commitment, that is built with time in order to explore the other and their relationship plays a fundamental aspect in those outcomes, proposing that even if similar personality traits between the couple can bring more harmony and less conflict into the relationship there are other factors that also contribute for the success of the relationship as intimacy, commitment and interest in the other's plans, both part of the capacity to love construct that we will see further (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2007; Odilavadze et al., 2019; Oliveira et al., 2021).

We can conclude that according to the literature, Personality plays a very important role in romantic relationships, influencing their outcomes, satisfaction, and length, but as we see previously, other dimensions should be taking in consideration.

## 2. The Capacity to Love – Theory and Concepts

For a better understanding of “The Capacity to Love” seems fundamental, a brief introduction involving some concepts such as Love and its Theories, Erikson’s stages of Development and Attachment Perspective.

### 2.1.Theories of Love

*Love.* “*n.* a complex emotion involving strong feelings of affection and tenderness for the love object, pleasurable sensations in his or her presence, devotion to his or her well-being, and sensitivity to his or her reactions to oneself. (...) love takes many forms, including concern for one’s fellow humans (brotherly love), parental love, erotic love, self-love, and identification with the totality of being (love of God) (...)” (APA, Dictionary of Psychology).

In the scientific area, love has been studied for years from different perspectives, but without an agreement on “One Theory of Love”. From a psychological perspective, there are some important theories we should consider.

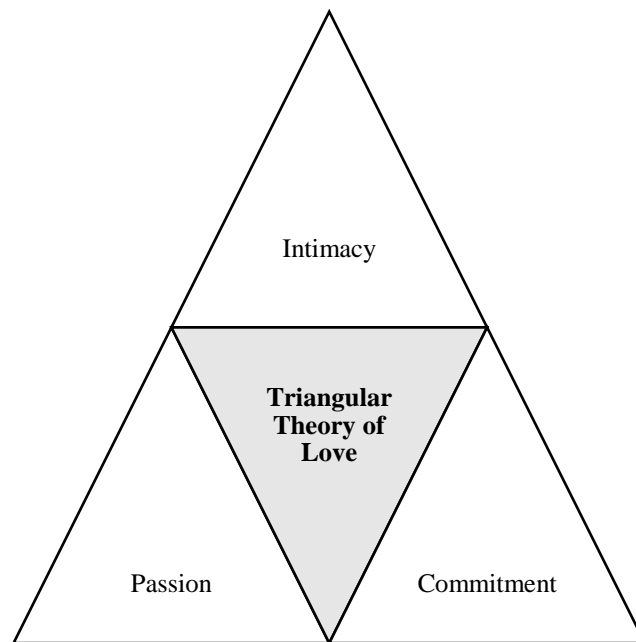
Rubin tried to explain some aspects of love, like some romantic attributes, and focus is research in defining Liking and Love (Rubin, 1970).

Lee defined six love styles focusing on a taxonomical structure that was divided into three Primaries and three Secondaries love styles that would express the way people experienced romantic relationships: Primaries: 1. **Eros**; 2. **Ludus**; 3. **Storge**; Secondaries: 4. **Mania** (*eros and ludus*); 5. **Agape** (*storge and eros*); 6. **Pragma** (*ludus and storge*) (Lee, 1977).

But it was Sternberg in 1986, that created the first established empirical theory of love, with the «Triangular Theory of Love». He defended that love had three fundamental components that could be understood as forming a triangle. 1. *Intimacy*; 2. *Passion*; 3. *Decision/Commitment*.

**Figure 1**

*The Triangular Theory of Love*



*Adapted from (Sternberg, 1986)*

***Intimacy*** represents feelings of closeness, connectedness, bondedness, and warmth in the relationship.

***Passion*** represents the drives that lead to romance including physical attraction, and sexual satisfaction.

***Decision/Commitment*** represents the decision of loving somebody else, and the commitment to maintain that love (Sternberg, 1986).

The three dimensions could be comprehended on their own, or in combination to form what Sternberg called “Kinds of Love” as shown in (Table 2): 1. *Nonlove*; 2. *Liking*; 3. *Infatuated Love*; 4. *Empty Love*; 5. *Romantic Love*; 6. *Companionate Love*; 7. *Fatuous Love*; 8. *Consummate love* (Sternberg, 1986).

**Table 2**  
*Sternberg' Kinds of Love*

<i>Kind of love</i>	<b>Component</b>		
	<b>Intimacy</b>	<b>Passion</b>	<b>Decision/ Commitment</b>
<b>1. Nonlove</b>	-	-	-
<b>2. Liking</b>	+	-	-
<b>3. Infatuated Love</b>	-	+	-
<b>4. Empty Love</b>	-	-	+
<b>5. Romantic Love</b>	+	+	-
<b>6. Companionate Love</b>	+	-	+
<b>7. Fatuous Love</b>	-	+	+
<b>8. Consummate love</b>	+	+	+

Note (+) component present; (-) component absent.  
Adapted from: Sternberg, 1986

*Nonlove* would be the absence of the three components, which characterized most of our relationships, simple and casual interactions that don't have any part of love. *Liking* was used to describe the feeling of intimacy, often seen in a friendship relationship, with feelings of union, closeness, and warmth. *Infatuated love* was described as "love at first sight", Sternberg described this type of love, full of passion as «quick to arise and quick to disappear» but defended that it can last a long time under the right circumstances. *Empty love* was based only in the decision to love someone, Stenberg believed that we could spot that kind of love in stagnant relationships that over time lost the other two components, or at the beginning of one. *Romantic love* was composed by intimacy and passion, where romantic lovers don't felt just physical attraction to one another but were also emotionally bonded. *Companionate love* could be described as a long-term committed friendship, that could appear in marriages or relationships in which physical attraction is off or faded with time. *Fatuous Love*, where passion and compromise meet. Stenberg believed it is fatuous because the commitment was made taking into consideration only the passion, as intimacy is something that takes time to develop. Finally, *Consummate love*, which is also described as *complete love* and is where all the components meet. For most individuals is considered the «goal», and according to Sternberg it could be easier to obtain than to maintain, requiring the friendship that comes with intimacy, the attraction of passion, and the trust of commitment, it takes time and effort to maintain, and sometimes people only realise that it's already gone when it is too late (Sternberg, 1986).

In the dominium of love styles (Ahmetoglu et al., 2009) examined the association between personality factors, Sternberg love dimensions and relationship length. Results showed that Agreeableness was associated with all three love dimensions, this can be explained as higher agreeable people are likely to positively perceive others and find it easy to make social interactions. Agreeable individuals tended to be more comfortable engaging and maintaining romantic relationships that are characterized by *intimacy* and *passion*.

The results also showed a link between Conscientiousness, *intimacy*, and *commitment* this can be explained by the fact that conscientious individuals have a sense of duty and have an intrinsic motivation to work in their relationships, using their personal characteristics of responsibility and self-control to maintain their relations, reflecting on a greater commitment with their partners (Ahmetoglu et al., 2009).

Extraversion by itself was positively linked with *passion*, as extrovert people are more likely to communicate love and have more emotions related to passion than feelings. High levels of Neuroticism were not linked with any of Sternberg's dimensions of love, these results reinforce that some individuals, especially the ones with pathological neuroticism don't have the capacity to fall in love, engage and maintain committed love relationships (Ahmetoglu et al., 2009).

All these love theories were immensely important to establish love styles in a descriptive and perspective form, permitting us to comprehend love and relationships in a more structured way, but these theories did not consider any etiological dimensions, which translates into a lack of love concepts that study and consider these different dimensions.

### **2.2. Erikson's Eight Stages of Man**

Other aspect that is thought to be important for the Capacity to Love is Erikson's, 1950 Stages of Psychosocial Development inspired by Freud's theory of psychosexual development, includes eight stages of one's development that start at birth and continue through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood: 1. Trust Vs. Basic Mistrust; 2. Autonomy Vs. Shame and Doubt; 3. Initiative Vs. Guilt; 4. Industry Vs. Inferiority; 5. Identity Vs. Role Diffusion; 6. Intimacy Vs. Isolation; 7. Generativity Vs. Stagnation; 8. Ego Integrity Vs. Despair. The stages are sequential, and they are influenced by biological,

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

psychological, and social dimensions. For every stage is expected a certain resolution of two opposite conflicts, the positive outcome of those conflicts will then emerge in successful individual development, and a negative resolution of the conflict will emerge in unsuccessful individual development (Erikson, 1963).

From all the eight stages, there are a few that seem particularly important for CTL development, including: *Trust Vs Basic Mistrust* where the infant should develop a sense of security and trust towards the world and others, if not, the infant can develop feelings of insecurity and mistrust. *Autonomy Vs Shame and Doubt* is also thought to be important to create a sense of independence and self-sufficiency in the child, an unsuccessful resolution could develop a sense of incapacity to do things on their own. *Initiative Vs. Guilt* is a stage about guidance, support, and encouragement, so the child can invest in their interests and still have support when fail, this should provide a sense of trust in the exploration of new things and abilities. *Identity Vs Role Diffusion* this stage is fundamental for the formation of the ego identity, including one's values, expectations, and aspirations, is considered an important factor for the development of the CTL because is a special stage for «fall in love» and developing the confidence to form strong bonds with others. The *Intimacy Vs Isolation* stage is considered important because of the ongoing development of identity, the right resolution of this stage should bring the capacity to being comfortable with intimate relationships and to share their identity and intimacy with others if fail to do so, people can develop a feeling of discomfort and incapacity to form bonds, translating into loneliness and isolation, the virtue present in this stage is *love* (Erikson, 1963). In conclusion, it is believed that the right resolution of this stages would form a solid foundation so that one can find and shape his identity, and with that be ready to share it with others, engaging and investing in relationships (Erikson, 1963).

### **2.3. Attachment Perspective**

For a better understanding of the Capacity to Love construct is important a brief explanation of “The Attachment Theory” that emerges with Bowlby's work “Attachment and Loss” which explains the nature of the child's tie with his mother, separation anxiety and the process of mourning (1969, 1973, 1980), the main goal of his work was to explain how children become emotionally attached to their parents or caregivers, showing

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

emotional distress when separated from them, he believed that this would permit to characterize human beings since the early stage of life (Bowlby, 1969).

Based on his and other's research, Bowlby formed three propositions:

1. When an individual is confident that an attachment figure will be available to him when he needs and desires, he will be less prone to feel intense or chronic fear and insecurity than an individual who doesn't believe that his caregiver will be available to him in times of need.
2. Feelings of confidence and trust in the attachment figures or the lack of it, are developed over a sensitive period, the "years of immaturity" (infancy, childhood, and adolescence). And the kind of beliefs and expectations that are being developed in those years tend to persist through the rest of an individual's life.
3. Finally, is proposed that the experiences of receptiveness and responsiveness of the attachment figures that individuals live during infancy till adolescence are authentic reflections of the experiences they had during those years (Bowlby, 1973, p. 235).

Based on those same propositions, Hazan and Shaver, 1987 suggested that this theory could be used in adult romantic relationships to understand individual differences expressed in feelings and behaviours. Having the Bowlby attachment theory in mind and Ainsworth three category typology of an infant's pattern of attachment Hazan and Shaver created three *Adult Patterns in Relationships* (Table 3): *Avoidant - Anxious-ambivalent - Secure* (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

**Table 3**  
*Adult patterns in relationships:*

<b>Pattern</b>	<b>Pattern description</b>
<i>Avoidant</i>	“I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.”
<i>Anxious-Ambivalent</i>	“I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn’t really love me or won’t want to stay with me. I want to get very close to my partner, and this sometimes scares people away.”
<i>Secure</i>	“Secure. I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them. I don’t often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.”

*Adapted from* (Shaver & Brennan, p.536, 1992)

In the process to conceptualize love as an Attachment, the results of their study showed there were «*differences in love experiences, mental models, and other domains*» the *avoidant* lovers experienced love with a high fear of intimacy, controlled by feelings of jealousy and emotional instability and think that’s hard to find a person to fall in love with, some studies showed positive correlations with neuroticism, pointing difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Avoidant people were also correlated with some facets of openness, as they tend to be less warm and less open to feelings (Shahrazad et al., 2015). The *anxious-ambivalent* lovers experienced love as an obsession, again with feelings of jealousy and emotional instability, a love characterised by desire and a very strong need for both reciprocal union, and sexual attraction, this lover usually thinks that is easy to fall in love, but at the same think they believe it’s difficult to find a person that they can really fall in love for, studies results revealed that some conscientiousness and some facets of openness were also correlated with anxious-ambivalent lovers, people high on this attachment style were less open to values and were associated with a bigger need for close relationships as showing dependency on their partners. *Secure* lovers experienced love in a trusting, happy, friendly way, presenting a high capacity to show feelings of empathy, and a better understanding of the other, translating into emotional stability and had the belief that feelings could vary in intensity during a relationship but, that in some love relationships, the love never fades. Secure lovers also tended to have longer relationships than lovers with other types of attachments, and those relations also tended to endure longer than others (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Studies reports that secure attachment style

shows the desire to engage in an intimate relationship, experiencing a balance of closeness, autonomy and dependency, being less neurotic and more extroverted than insecure people, and more agreeable than avoidant ones (Nofle & Shaver, 2005; Shaver and Brennan, 1992).

The overall results of their study supported the possibility of an attachment theory perspective of romantic love. Suggesting “(...) that romantic love is an attachment process (a process of becoming attached), experienced somewhat differently by different people because of variations in their attachment histories.” (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 511)

As we previously saw, the attachment perspective plays an important role in one’s personality, as (Shaver & Brennan, 1992; Nofle & Shaver, 2006), found that attachment styles have important associations with some personality traits, the attachment patterns are also thought to have a big impact on the development of the Capacity to Love.

### **2.4 The Capacity to Love – CTL**

The Capacity to love is described as a concept involving a multi-component approach and is the “ability to engage in, invest in, and sustain a committed romantic love relationship” (Kapusta et al, 2018, p. 2).

All the components of the concept are shown to be important factors for successful romantic relationships, and they reflect aspects of psychological development. From Kernberg’s approach (2011), there are ten different dimensions that compose the Capacity to Love construct, represented in (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
*Kernberg's Dimensions of The Capacity to Love (2011):*

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Dimension description</i>
<i>Falling in love</i>	Described as an enchantment for the other, an admiration for their physical, sexual, and emotional characteristics. The general feeling is passion.
<i>Interest in the life project of the other</i>	Interest in the life project of the other, their history, values, ideas aspirations and feelings.
<i>Basic Trust</i>	Capacity to trust, to be empathic and to be comfortable expressing vulnerability and depending on another.
<i>Capacity for authentic forgiveness</i>	The capacity to forgive, ask for forgiveness and start over under adversities.
<i>Humility and gratitude</i>	Humility and gratitude for the other, the love and experiences lived together.
<i>A common ego ideal as a joint life project</i>	A genuine interest in the other's personality, values, life and the commitment for a joint life.
<i>Mature dependency as opposed to power dynamics</i>	Being comfortable in relaying on someone else, excluding feelings of insecurity and inferiority by asking for help.
<i>The permanence of sexual passion</i>	The permanence of sexual desire and sexual activity through the relationship.
<i>Acceptance of loss, jealousy, and boundary protection</i>	The understanding that mature love should be reciprocal and accepting that the other is free and that at any time the relationship can end.
<i>Loss and mourning</i>	The mourning process that is expected with the death or separation of the loved one.

For Kernberg the capacity to fall and remain in love will translate into the successful development of two stages: The first being the early capacity for sensuous stimulation of erotogenic zones that is related to the later capacity of establishing an object relationship, this state requires a successful establishment of Ego Identity and the capacity for object relationships. The second, is related to the full early genital enjoyment and eroticism of an object relation as a sexual identification, requiring a successful overcoming of *oedipal* conflicts (Kernberg, 1974, 1977, 2011).

Being the Capacity to love the ability to *engage* in a romantic relationship it's expected that the person is open to engage in a relationship, in other words, to fall in love.

Kernberg believed that in the state of «falling in love» is expected an initial idealization of the other, described as an enchantment of both physical and sexual

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

personality characteristics, and a will for emotional and sexual closeness involving various contexts. Then as time pass, this idealization of falling in love begins to change into a more realistic view of the other, that includes both good and bad characteristics and then, through the initial stage of the relationship, with the moments and experiences shared by the couple, giving them more knowledge of the other's emotions, sexuality, values, and the ultimate feeling of gratitude, this will change the stage of falling in love, into «being in love» that is considered the foundation for a good stable relationship. What Kernberg found is that could be a problem for a lot of people, especially narcissistic ones that present an incapacity to fall in love (Kernberg, 2011).

*Basic trust* is an essential component of the capacity to love, which translates into the ability to trust in the partner's capacity for empathy, this includes being open about one's weaknesses, conflicts, and imperfections, asking for help and being understanding of one's doubts in themselves, with the constant sense of trust that the other will comprehend and accept, and the belief that showing one's vulnerability will not negatively affect the love for one another (Kernberg, 2011).

This can be explained by Erikson's model of psychosocial development and by attachment theory which highlights that the basic trust established in the first caregiving relationships may be a significant factor for identical feelings of safeness in adult love relationships, reflecting the role and importance of early life experiences in future love relationships (Bowlby, 1969; Hazan & Shaver 1987; Zayas et al., 2011). This ability is present in a secure attachment, and it is also related with openness and honesty that need to be reciprocal in order to provide the couple with a sense of identity and contribute to personal and relational growth. So, if we look at CTL from a development perspective, the individual's capacity to love may be the culmination of one's experiences in the early years of life by caregiving relationships, that continue to be shaped through adolescence and adulthood (Zayas et al., 2011; Fraley & Roisman, 2015).

Another part of the capacity to love is the ability to *invest* in a relationship, this could be influenced by some childhood and adolescent development achievements following Erikson's (1963) development perspective as *Autonomy - Initiative – Identity*, the successful development of these stages is seen as contributing to the skill to invest in relationships that can bring negative feelings as disappointment, loss, and separation. In

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

reciprocal love, is expected that the other will respond to the love and commitment that is given, in case the other is not capable of responding to those feelings, it needs to be accepted and begins a mourning process with the end of a relationship. If a good development of the stages occurs that should translate into a non-guilt situation and one should be able to talk about the problems, and negative feelings of hurt without any words and attitudes of aggression and blame, in these situations people need to use their capacity to forgive. The same can be translated into the feeling of jealousy, which is a normal protective function, but in a mature love relationship, it should not be a synonym for feelings of insecurity, inferiority, or blame (Kernberg, 2011).

The acceptance of loss is an important part of one's capacity to love, being part of the commitment to love another person, having in mind and accepting that the other's feelings, thoughts and decisions are not in one's power to control, people who don't have this competence to tolerate feelings of pain, *loss and mourning* can find it hard to invest in mature love relationships, making this one of the most important abilities in the capacity to love construct, and something that can be hard to achieve (Kernberg, 2011; Kapusta et al, 2018).

Another important stage of development is Erikson's Intimacy VS Isolation, which has a big role in early adulthood where is being developed the ability to be *genuinely interested in the life of the beloved one* sharing life interests and goals with another, being aware of the partner's emotional experiences, history, ideals, values, and aspirations, all of these social skills are immensely important in any type of relationship, and is expected that if this stage has an unsuccessful resolution the intimacy will not develop in a healthy way, leading to isolation and poor relationships, making intimacy a big factor for de CTL (Erikson, 1963; Kernberg, 2011; Collins & Srouffe, 1999). This requires going through a process of identification with the beloved person so that the other's interests and values also become part of one's life. In other words, intimacy is not only the valorisation of the partner's needs but also a total acceptance of vulnerability that can be expressed in the possibility of relating and depending on another, having in mind, and accepting that life is uncertain, and things can change in the relationship (Kernberg, 2011; Collins and Srouffe, 1999). This possibility of vulnerability, dependence and trust in others should evoke feelings of *gratitude* for their existence and the love that is received, felt and lived but for some people being vulnerable and depending on other's

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

could feel like a loss of autonomy creating a sense of insecurity and anxiety. These patterns are present in individuals that had a negative outcome of Erikson's stages and in avoidant and anxious attachment styles, reflecting relations weak in connection, intimacy and emotional commitment (Erikson, 1963; Kernberg, 201; Kapusta et al, 2018). Intimacy relies at least upon two people (the couple), and it culminates in the fusion of two different identities, so the need for a *common ego ideal* as part of a joint life project is essential as an aspect of the CTL, it represents the commitment to be dedicated to a love relationship that will change and impact one's life, presenting genuine curiosity and interest in the other person's personality, plans and projects. This process needs to be established by the couple throughout their relationship, and as Sternberg (1986) believed is something that takes time to create, reflecting the constant work that needs to be done to sustain a long and healthy love relationship (Kernberg, 2011).

Another important and difficult aspect is the need for *permanent sexual passion* in a mature love relationship, the ability to maintain passionate love through time, by adjusting the sexual interests and needs of the couple that could change over the course of the relationship, and the capacity to accept both physical and emotional changes, needs, imperfections, desires, fears, feelings, and boundaries that maintain the erotic/sexual love, is thought to be the most difficult part to maintain in a long romantic relationship (Kernberg, 2011).

In conclusion, it's thought that a certain development from an early age, with the right resolution of Erikson's stages together with the formation of a secure attachment style, can provide the child with the right experiences to promote and build into their personality certain beliefs, feelings and then behaviours that can give them a greater capacity to love, and consequently more healthy and stable relationships in their adulthood.

### **2.5. Personality & The Capacity to Love**

Love and romantic relationships have been studied exhaustively, but regarding the Personality and the Capacity to Love and Personality no studies were found in the literature review.

A better understanding of one's capacity to love is important to gain some clarity about one's functioning systems and with that, making it an important tool to promote a better individual psychological health while also being important to promote the health of the relationship itself. Given the importance that relationships play in well-being (Feeney & Collins, 2015) the CTL can play an important role in studying those relationships in a more detailed way, helping identify problems and difficulties in romantic relationships.

The absence of studies between the two constructs is the central motivation for this investigation, the major goal of this project is to understand what kind of role personality can have in the individual's capacity to love. This will possibly permit a deep understanding of CTL, and hopefully open doors for new directions in investigating romantic relationships, given the importance of love and the human need to "belong to something" (White et al., 2004) and the impact of quality relationships in lives, making it crucial to study those possible links.

**Chapter II- Empirical Study**

In this chapter will be presented the research objectives, followed by a description of the sample, the instruments used for the data collection and the procedures, subsequently, the results are presented, followed by the discussion and conclusion.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research Objectives**

The present study has a quantitative nature, and the main objective of is to understand what kind of role personality has in the individual's capacity to love, so the specific objectives of this study include:

- 1) Characterize the sample in terms of The Big Five Traits;
- 2) Characterize the sample in terms of The Capacity to Love dimensions;
- 3) Analyse differences in socio-demographic variables in relation to The Big Five traits and The Capacity to Love dimensions;
- 4) Analyse the relationship between the Big Five Traits and the Capacity to Love dimensions;
- 5) Analyse the Traits of personality that predict the Capacity to Love

#### **3.2. Sample**

The sample for this study was collected online and consists of 839 participants, 179 (21.3%) male and 660 (78.7%) female, with a predominance of females. The age of the participants varies between 18 and 74 years old, with an average age of 34.47(SD=13.65) Regarding marital status, 490 (58.4%) of the sample are single, 270 (32.2%) married, 71 (8.5%) divorced and 8 (1.0%) are widow. Most participants have no children 508 (60.5%), with only 331(39.5%) having one or more children (Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Sociodemographic Data of the sample*

<i>Sociodemographic data</i>	
<b>Sample N = 839</b>	
<b>Variable</b>	<b>N (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	17(21.3%)
Female	660 (78.7%)
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single	490 (58.4%)
Married	270 (32.2%)
Divorced	71 (8.5%)
Widow	8 (1.0%)
<b>Children</b>	
No	508 (60.5%)
Yes	331 (39.5%)
<b>Profession</b>	
Employed	440 (52.4%)
Unemployed	66 (7.9)
Retired	20 (2.4%)
Student	243 (29.0%)
Student-Workers	70 (8.3%)
<b>Academic qualifications</b>	
6° grade	11 (1.3)
9° grade	35 (4.2)
12° grade	332 (39.6%)
Bachelor	310/36.9)
Master	132 (15.7%)
PhD	19 (2.3%)

Most of the sample is currently in an intimate relationship 643 (76.6%) and 196 (23.4%) are not in an intimate relationship. Also, most of the sample refers to their actual or previous relationship as heterosexual 780 (93.0%) and 59 (7.0%) homosexual. In terms of relationship length, the average of the sample is 10.87 (SD=11.40) years, and the

The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

average of age for their first relationship is 16.25 (SD=3.03). Regarding their satisfaction in the relationship, in a scale from 1 to 5 the average of the sample is 4.11 (1.00).

**Table 6**

*Sociodemographic characterisation of the sample according to current/past relationship*

<b>Sample N = 839</b>			
		<b>n (%)</b>	<b>M (Sd)</b>
<b>I am currently involved in an intimate relationship</b>	No	196 (23.4%)	
	Yes	643 (76.6%)	
<b>If you answer no in question 1, how did the relationship end?</b>	My initiative	85 (10.1%)	
	My partner's initiative	51 (6.1%)	
	Both initiative	48 (5.7%)	
	Missing	655 (78.1%)	
<b>The relationship in question was heterosexual or homosexual?</b>	Heterosexual	780 (93.0%)	
	Homosexual	59 (7.0%)	
<b>What kind of relationship did you have/had with that person?</b>	Dating	460 (54.8%)	
	Marriage	249 (29.7%)	
	Non-marital partnership	98 (11.7%)	
	Missing	32 (3.8%)	
<b>For how long did/do you maintain this relationship?</b>	0 – 1	128 (15.3%)	
	2 – 5	249 (29.7%)	
	6 -10	124 (14.8%)	10.87(11.40)
	+ 10	269 (32.1%)	
	Missing	69 (8.2%)	
<b>To what extent do you feel/ felt satisfied with that relationship? (From a scale of 1 to 5).</b>	1	18 (2.1%)	
	2	40 (4.8%)	
	3	153 (18.2%)	4.11 (1.00)
	4	251 (29.9%)	
	5	377 (44.9%)	
<b>At what age did you first start dating? (Age groups: 0-13; 14-18; 19-25; 26-46)</b>	0 – 13	81 (9.7%)	
	14 – 18	636 (75.8%)	16.25 (3.03)
	19 – 25	115 (13.7%)	
	26 – 46	7 (0.8%)	

### **3.3. Instruments**

For this study, there were used several instruments with the objective of recollecting different data.

#### **3.3.1. Sociodemographic Questionary**

The first part of the questionnaire contained 15 questions, with the purpose of characterising the individuals regarding age, gender, the environment where they lived, nationality, profession, current/previous profession, socio-economic level, academic qualifications, household family, children and how many, marital status, and sexual orientation. The second part contained questions related to the current/past relationship and intended to characterise the sample at that level.

#### **3.3.2. Big Five Inventory (BFI) – Portuguese version**

The Big Five Inventory was developed by John, Donahue, and Kentle (1991) with the purpose of assessing the dimensions of personality according to the Big Five model (Costa & McCrae, 1987). The BFI is composed of 44 items, answered according to a Likert-type response scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), which assesses the personality traits belonging to each of the five dimensions:

- Extraversion, includes eight items (11, 16, 21, 26, 31 and 36);
- Agreeableness, with nine items (2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37 and 42);
- Conscientiousness, consists of nine items (3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38 and 43)
- Neuroticism/Emotional Stability, by eight items (4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34 and 39);
- Openness to Experience consists of ten items (5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 41 and 44).

In the study of the psychometric properties of the instrument for a sample of Portuguese athletes, (Brito-Costa et al, 2015) the internal consistency, factor structure, temporal stability, and criterion validity were confirmed. The internal consistency results of the subscales for the Portuguese version were (.64) for extraversion; (.52) for agreeableness, (.70) for conscientiousness, (.69) for neuroticism/emotional stability and (.61) for openness to experience, these Cronbach's alpha values are lower than the ones in the original validation.

### **3.3.3 Capacity to Love Inventory (CTL-I) - Portuguese version.**

Kapusta et al., (2018) created the CTL inventory, to construct the Capacity to love concept. Like we saw previously this concept involves components such as the capacity for involvement, investment, and the ability to maintain a love relationship, reflecting critical aspects of psychological development that play an important role in romantic relationships (Kapusta et al.,2018).

The Inventory of the capacity to love (ICA-I) (Kapusta et al., 2018) (Appendix C) is a 41-item questionnaire answered on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree). The questionnaire allows the calculation of a total value and a value for each subscale with the mean values.

This instrument was created based on the components identified by Kernberg (2011), explained in the theoretical framework, which served as a guide in the development of a psychometric scale capable of measuring the capacity for love (Kapusta et al., 2018). Following factor analysis of the initial 70 items that constituted 8 dimensions, Kapusta et al. (2018) confirmed 41 items that constitute the following six subscales:

- Interest in Other (sum of the mean of items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 e 7);
- Basic Trust (sum of the mean of items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16);
- Gratitude (sum of the average scores of items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23);
- Common Ego Ideal (sum of the mean of items: 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31);
- Permanence of Sexual Passion (sum of the mean of items: 32 and 33);
- Loss and Mourning (sum of the mean of items: 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 e 41);

Items: 7, 13, 15, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41 should be inverted when rated.

The results of the instrument validation revealed adequate longitudinal values of longitudinal invariance, test-retest reliability and internal consistency.

In the original version, Cronbach's alpha for the total scale is .90, with the values of the subscales ranging between .67, and .90, across the dimensions (Kapusta et al., 2018). In this study it was used the Portuguese research version of Fonte et al. (2021).

In the first pilot validation study for Portugal Cronbach's alpha for the total scale is 0.93 and of the subscales the values ranged between 0.72, and 0.88, suggesting a valid construct.

### **3.4. Procedure**

This study is part of a Research Project under the scientific coordination of Professor Carla Fonte, entitled “WE.LOVE.LIFE.CHALLENGES - The role of the capability to love and the autotelic personality in promoting well-being and mental health" for which a positive opinion was obtained from the ethics committee of Fernando Pessoa University.

The sample of participants was recruited online, and the questionnaires used in this study were adapted for digital support and spread online with the goal of obtaining as much data as possible.

The participants were informed and clarified about the purpose of the study, the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers. An informed consent was obtained, and participants marked an X in the option they choose: (*I accept to participate in this study, and I have been informed of its characteristics* or *I do not wish to collaborate in this study*). The questionnaires were available for response in a link created through Google Docs.

Data collection was carried out informatically and non-randomly using the Snowball method. The data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 27). Considering the objectives of this specific study, were used different tests as descriptive analyses, difference analyses, association analyses and regression analysis (*t*-test; Anova; Pearson Correlation and Linear Multiple Regression).

### **4. Results**

Considering the objectives defined above, the main results will be presented here.

**1) Characterize the sample in terms of the Big Five Traits**

Regarding the Big Five, we can see that the sample scored high in all the Big Five Traits, scoring the minimum and maximum values in every trait, except for *Agreeableness* which presents a higher minimum and higher mean. *Emotional Stability* had the lowest mean, showing that the sample had a neurotic tendency (Table 7).

**Table 7**

*Characterization of the Big Five factors in the sample*

<b>Sample N = 839</b>				
<i>Big Five Traits</i>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Sd</b>
<b>Extraversion</b>	1.00	7.00	4.94	1.60
<b>Agreeableness</b>	1.50	7.00	6.06	0.93
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	1.00	7.00	5.61	1.20
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	1.00	7.00	3.84	1.49
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	1.00	7.00	5.55	1.15

**2) Characterize the sample in terms of the CTL dimensions**

In relation to CTL, all six dimensions showed high values, attending to maximum and minimum values in the dimensions. The dimension *Loss and Mourning* presents the lowest mean and *Interest in the other* the highest. In general, the sample presented a high Capacity to Love (Table 8).

**Table 8**

*Characterization of the CTL inventory dimensions in the sample*

<b>Sample N = 839</b>				
<i>Capacity to Love Dimensions</i>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Sd</b>
<b>Interest in the other</b>	1.29	4.00	3.53	0.37
<b>Basic Trust</b>	1.22	4.00	3.32	0.50
<b>Gratitude</b>	1.00	4.00	3.47	0.48
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	1.38	4.00	3.40	0.48
<b>Permanence of sexual passion</b>	1.00	4.00	2.86	0.76
<b>Loss and mourning</b>	1.00	4.00	2.73	0.44
<b>CTL-total</b>	8.63	24.00	19.34	2.20

**3) Analyse differences in socio-demographic variables in relation to the Big Five traits and the CTL dimensions.**

The results showed that there were significant differences regarding the Gender variable, between Male and Female participants in some of the Big Five Traits as agreeableness  $t(837) = -3.94, p < .001$ , conscientiousness,  $t(837) = -3.46, p < .001$ , and emotional stability,  $t(837) = 3.91, p < .001$ , and in the CTL dimension interest in the other,  $t(837) = -2.19, p = 0.02$ , with the female group showing higher levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness and interest in the other, and Male showing higher levels of emotional stability (Table 9).

No significant differences were found between the genders and the remaining traits of The Big Five and the CTL dimensions (Table 9).

**Table 9**

*Male and Female differences in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions*

	Gender		<i>t</i> (837)
	Male ( <i>n</i> = 179)	Female ( <i>n</i> = 660)	
	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	
<i>Big Five Traits</i>			
<b>Extraversion</b>	4.90 (1.62)	4.96 (1.61)	-0.42
<b>Agreeableness</b>	5.80 (1.02)	6.13 (0.90)	<b>-3.94***</b>
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	5.30 (1.40)	5.69 (1.13)	<b>-3.46***</b>
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	4.23 (1.42)	3.74 (1.49)	<b>3.91***</b>
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	5.54 (1.10)	5.55 (1.17)	-0.09
<i>Capacity to Love Dimensions</i>			
<b>Interest in the other</b>	3.48 (0.38)	3.55 (0.37)	<b>-2.19*</b>
<b>Basic Trust</b>	3.30 (0.49)	3.34 (0.50)	-0.84
<b>Gratitude</b>	3.45 (0.50)	3.48 (0.48)	-0.72
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	3.38 (0.47)	3.41 (0.49)	-0.76
<b>Permanence of Sexual Passion</b>	2.86 (0.74)	2.87 (0.77)	-0.24
<b>Loss and mourning</b>	2.77 (0.45)	2.72 (0.45)	1.20
<b>CTL-total</b>	19.24 (2.05)	19.38 (2.24)	-0.76

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

Regarding differences between being or not being currently in an intimate relationship at the level of the Big Five traits and CTL dimensions, there were found statistically significant differences between being in a relationship at the level of extraversion,  $t(837) = -2.55, p = .011$ , conscientiousness,  $t(837) = -2.87, p = .004$ , interest in the other,  $t(837) = -6.53, p < .001$ , basic trust,  $t(837) = -9.35, p < .001$ , gratitude,  $t(837) = -9.11, p < .001$ , permanence of sexual passion,  $t(837) = -2.35, p = .019$ , loss and mourning,  $t(837) = -2.34, p = .020$ , and CTL-total,  $t(837) = -8.62, p < .001$ .

Participants who were involved in an intimate relationship showed higher values of these dimensions of the Big Five and the Capacity to Love than those who were not currently involved in an intimate relationship (Table 10).

**Table 10**

*Differences between being or not being involved in an intimate relationship in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions.*

<b>“I am currently involved in an intimate relationship”</b>			
	<b>No(n = 196)</b>	<b>Yes(n = 643)</b>	
	<b>M(Sd)</b>	<b>M(Sd)</b>	<b>t (837)</b>
<i>Big Five Traits</i>			
<b>Extraversion</b>	4.69 (1.59)	5.02 (1.61)	<b>-2,55*</b>
<b>Agreeableness</b>	6.08 (0.88)	6.06 (0.95)	0,38
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	5.40 (1.23)	5.68 (1.19)	<b>-2,87**</b>
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	3.78 (1.51)	3.86 (1.48)	-0,67
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	5.47 (1.13)	5.58 (1.17)	-1,14
<i>Capacity to Love</i>			
<b>Interest in the other</b>	3.39 (0.41)	3.58 (0.35)	<b>-6,53***</b>
<b>Basic Trust</b>	3.05 (0.50)	3.41 (0.47)	<b>-9,35***</b>
<b>Gratitude</b>	3.18 (0.55)	3.57 (0.43)	<b>-9,11***</b>
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	3.17 (0.49)	3.47 (0.46)	-8,11
<b>Permanence of Sexual Passion</b>	2.76 (0.71)	2.90 (0.78)	<b>-2,35*</b>
<b>Loss and mourning</b>	2.67 (0.44)	2.75 (0.45)	<b>-2,34*</b>
<b>CTL-total</b>	18.21 (2.10)	19.69 (2.12)	<b>-8,62***</b>

*Note: \*p <0.05    \*\*p <0.01    \*\*\* p <0.001*

There were found statistically significant differences between having or not having children at the level of the Big Five traits, extraversion,  $t(837) = -2.87, p < .004$ ,

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

conscientiousness,  $t(837) = -4.86, p < .001$ , emotional stability,  $t(837) = -5.18, p < .001$  and the Capacity to Love dimensions, interest in the other,  $t(837) = 4.51, p < .001$ , basic trust,  $t(837) = 4.16, p < .001$ , gratitude,  $t(837) = 2.97, p = .003$ , common ego ideal,  $t(837) = 4.67, p < .001$ , permanence of sexual passion,  $t(837) = 5.72, p < .001$ , loss and mourning,  $t(837) = -2.01, p = .045$ , and CTL-total,  $t(837) = 4.96, p < .001$ . Participants who have children presented higher levels of extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability and loss and mourning, while those who do not have children presented higher levels of interest in the other, basic trust, gratitude, common ego ideal, permanence of sexual passion and Capacity to love (CTL-total), (Table 11).

**Table 11**

*Differences between having or not having children in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions.*

	Children		<i>t</i> (837)
	No ( <i>n</i> =508)	Yes ( <i>n</i> =331)	
	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	
<i>Big Five Traits</i>			
<b>Extraversion</b>	4.82 (1.67)	5.14 (1.50)	<b>-2,87**</b>
<b>Agreeableness</b>	6.04 (0.93)	6.09 (0.93)	-0,72
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	5.45 (1.23)	5.86 (1.13)	<b>-4,86***</b>
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	3.63 (1.44)	4.17 (1.51)	<b>-5,18***</b>
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	5.53 (1.14)	5.59 (1.19)	-0,72
<i>Capacity to Love</i>			
<b>Interest in the other</b>	3.59 (0.32)	3.46 (0.43)	<b>4,51***</b>
<b>Basic Trust</b>	3.39 (0.48)	3.24 (0.48)	<b>4,16***</b>
<b>Gratitude</b>	3.52 (0.48)	3.41 (0.48)	<b>2,97**</b>
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	3.47 (0.48)	3.30 (0.48)	<b>4,67***</b>
<b>Permanence of Sexual Passion</b>	2.99 (0.48)	2.69 (0.48)	<b>5,72***</b>
<b>Loss and mourning</b>	2.71 (0.48)	2.77 (0.48)	<b>-2,01*</b>
<b>CTL-total</b>	19.65 (0.48)	18.88 (0.48)	<b>4,96***</b>

Note: \* $p < 0.05$  \*\* $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Regarding marital status, significant differences were found in the level of the big five traits conscientiousness,  $F(3,835) = 6.27, p < .001$ , and emotional stability  $F$

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

(3,835) = 12.41,  $p < .001$ , and in the CTL dimensions interest in the other,  $F(3,835) = 8.97$ ,  $p < .001$ , basic trust,  $F(3,835) = 7.46$ ,  $p < .001$ , gratitude,  $F(3,835) = 5.85$ ,  $p < .001$ , common ego ideal,  $F(3,835) = 8.13$ ,  $p < .001$ , permanence of sexual passion,  $F(3,835) = 10.09$ ,  $p < .001$ , and CTL total,  $F(3,835) = 8.55$ ,  $p < .001$ , (Table 12).

Gabriel's post-hoc test showed that the level of conscientiousness is significantly lower among single people when compared to married or divorced people and that single people were less emotionally stable than married or divorced people (Table 12). In the Capacity to love dimensions, Gabriel's post-hoc showed that divorced people reported significantly less interest in the other, and lower levels of gratitude than the married or single in the sample. Single people showed more levels of basic trust, common ideal, permanence of sexual passion and general Capacity to Love (CTL-total) when compared to the divorced or married (Table 12).

**Table 12**

*Differences between Marital Status in The Big Five and the CTL dimensions.*

	Marital Status				<i>F</i> (3,835)
	Single	Married	Divorced	Widow	
	(n=490)	(n=270)	(n=71)	(n=8)	
	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	
<i>Big Five Traits</i>					
<b>Extraversion</b>	4.86 (1.67)	5.08 (1.56)	5.01 (1.38)	4.88 (1.36)	1.13
<b>Agreeableness</b>	6.05 (0.94)	6.06 (0.94)	6.15 (0.90)	6.19 (0.84)	0.28
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	5.47 (1.23)	5.78 (1.16)	5.96 (1.06)	5.69 (1.31)	<b>6.27***</b>
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	3.60 (1.44)	4.08(1.47)	4.51 (1.60)	4.63(1.41)	<b>12.41***</b>
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	5.51 (1.15)	5.59 (1.17)	5.71 (1.24)	5.25 (0.71)	0.90
<i>Capacity to Love</i>					
<b>Interest in the other</b>	3.59 (0.34)	3.50 (0,38)	3.37 (0.46)	3.45 (0.42)	<b>8.97***</b>
<b>Basic Trust</b>	3.39 (0.49)	3.27 (0.50)	3.14 (3.14)	3.39 (0.23)	<b>7.46***</b>
<b>Gratitude</b>	3.52 (0.47)	3.46(0.47)	3.27 (0.61)	3.46 (0.36)	<b>5.85***</b>
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	3.46 (0.47)	3.33 (0.48)	3.22 (0.50)	3.53 (0.39)	<b>8.13***</b>
<b>Permanence of Sexual Passion</b>	2.99 (0.77)	2.69 (0.74)	2.75 (0.72)	2.94 (0.42)	<b>10.09***</b>
<b>Loss and mourning</b>	2.70 (0.47)	2.78 (0.41)	2.77 (0.43)	2.83 (0.49)	2.48
<b>CTL-total</b>	19.64(2.15)	19.02 (2.19)	18.51 (2.31)	19.60(1.73)	<b>8.55***</b>

*Note:* - Gabriel's Post Hoc test - *The mean difference is significant at <0.05. \*\*\* The F value is significant at <0.001*

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

Differences were found between relationship length and the Big Five Traits, conscientiousness,  $F(3,766) = 3.40$ ,  $p = .018$ , emotional stability,  $F(3,766) = 8.25$ ,  $p < .001$ , and the CTL dimensions, interest in the other,  $F(3,766) = 3.56$ ,  $p = .004$ , basic trust,  $F(3,766) = 5.15$ ,  $p = .002$ , gratitude,  $F(3,766) = 3.57$ ,  $p = .014$ , common ego ideal,  $F(3,766) = 7.50$ ,  $p < .001$ , permanence of sexual passion,  $F(3,766) = 6.34$ ,  $p < .001$ , and CTL-total,  $F(3,766) = 5.78$ ,  $p < .001$ , (Table 13).

Gabriel's post-hoc test demonstrated that the people that were or are in an intimate relationship for more than ten years (+10), presented more levels of conscientiousness and emotional stability than those who had been in a relationship for two to five years (2-5) or six to five (6-10).

People that were or are in an intimate relationship for more than ten years (+10) presented less interest in the other and less permanence of sexual passion than those who had been in a relationship for two to five years (2-5) or six to five (6-10), and less basic trust and general Capacity to love (CTL-total) than those who have been in a relationship for two to five and six to ten years.

Statistically significant differences were also found with Gabriel's Post-Hoc, which showed that people in a relationship for (2-5) years had more gratitude and a higher common ego ideal than those in a relationship for more than 10 years (Table 13).

**Table 13**

*Differences between Relationship Length in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions.*

	Relationship Length				<i>F</i> (3,766)	
	<i>Years</i>	0-1	2-5	6-10		+10
		(n=128)	(n=249)	(n=124)		(n=269)
	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	M(Sd)		
<i>Big Five Traits</i>						
<b>Extraversion</b>	4.89(1.61)	4.89(1.66)	4.88(1.74)	5.08(1.47)	0.83	
<b>Agreeableness</b>	5.96(0.97)	6.00(1.00)	6.06(0.89)	6.15(0.87)	1.57	
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	5.47(1.22)	5.52(1.26)	5.67(1.05)	5.80(1.17)	<b>3.40*</b>	
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	3.55(1.55)	3.66(1.45)	3.79(1.40)	4.20(1.53)	<b>8.25***</b>	
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	5.50(1.15)	5.45(1.21)	5.58(1.11)	5.63(1.15)	1.12	

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

### *Capacity to Love*

<b>Interest in the other</b>	3.57(0.33)	3.57(0.35)	3.56(0.35)	3.47(0.42)	<b>4.44**</b>
<b>Basic Trust</b>	3.33(0.49)	3.40(0.49)	3.39(0.51)	3.24(0.52)	<b>5.15**</b>
<b>Gratitude</b>	3.46(0.47)	3.53(0.47)	3.52(0.46)	3.40(0.52)	<b>3.57*</b>
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	3.41(0.45)	3.50(0.47)	3.43(0.48)	3.30(0.50)	<b>7.50***</b>
<b>Permanence of Sexual Passion</b>	3.01(0.74)	2.95(0.78)	2.88(0.78)	2.71(0.75)	<b>6.34***</b>
<b>Loss and mourning</b>	2.70(0.48)	2.70(0.48)	2.77(0.43)	2.78(0.40)	1.92
<b>CTL-total</b>	19.48(2.00)	19.65(2.24)	19.54(2.18)	18.89(2.30)	<b>5.78***</b>

Note: Gabriel's Post Hoc test - *The mean difference is significant at < 0.05*

\* $p < 0.05$  \*\* $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* $p < 0.00$

Regarding the age of the first relationship, significant differences were found between age groups and some Capacity to Love dimensions, interest in the other, basic trust and capacity to love. It was also possible to observe in the dimension's common ego ideal,  $F(3,835) = 2.52$ ,  $p = < .057$ , and permanence of sexual passion,  $F(3,835) = 2.16$ ,  $p = < .091$ , a certain tendency, although is not statistically significant.

Gabriel's Post Hoc test revealed that the people who started dating between age (19-25) show less interest in the other than those who started dating at (0-13) and (14-18) as well as a lower Capacity to Love (CTL-total) than those who started dating between age (0-13). The ones who had their first relationship between ages (0-13) presented a higher basic trust than those who had their first relationship between the ages (14-18), (19-25) and (26-46) (Table 14).

**Table 14**

*Differences between Age of first relationship in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions.*

	Age of First Relationship				<i>F</i> (3,835)	
	<i>Years</i>	<b>0 – 13</b>	<b>14-18</b>	<b>19-25</b>		<b>26 – 46</b>
		<b>(<i>n</i>=81)</b>	<b>(<i>n</i>=636)</b>	<b>(<i>n</i>=115)</b>		<b>(<i>n</i>=7)</b>
	<b>M(Sd)</b>	<b>M(Sd)</b>	<b>M(Sd)</b>	<b>M(Sd)</b>		
<i>Big Five Traits</i>						
<b>Extraversion</b>	5.12(1.48)	4.95(1.60)	4.82(1.74)	4.50(1.68)	0.76	
<b>Agreeableness</b>	6.17(0.75)	6.07(0.93)	5.95(1.06)	5.57(1.02)	1.64	
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	5.55(1.08)	5.62(1.22)	5.61(1.22)	5.36(1.25)	0.19	
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	3.64(1.45)	3.86(1.47)	3.80(1.63)	4.93(0.67)	1.84	
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	5.59(1.07)	5.59(1.14)	5.33(1.32)	5.50(0.96)	0.16	

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

### *Capacity to Love*

<b>Interest in the other</b>	3.61(0,30)	3.55(0.36)	3.44(0.45)	3.53(0.41)	<b>3.56*</b>
<b>Basic Trust</b>	3.52(0.47)	3.32(0.50)	3.26(0.53)	3.03(0.38)	<b>5.57***</b>
<b>Gratitude</b>	3.58(0.45)	3.47(0.48)	3.45(0.52)	3.35(0.36)	1.67
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	3.53(0.52)	3.40(0.48)	3.35(0.51)	3.39(0.38)	2.52
<b>Permanence of Sexual</b>	2.84(0.84)	2.90(0.74)	2.73(0.82)	2.50(0.71)	2.16
<b>Passion</b>					
<b>Loss and mourning</b>	2.78(0.40)	2.73(0.44)	2.72(0.51)	2.66(0.44)	0.45
<b>CTL-total</b>	19.87(2.05)	19.36(2.17)	18.95(2.48)	18.46(0.92)	<b>3.15*</b>

*Note:* Gabriel's Post Hoc test - *The mean difference is significant at < 0.05.* \* $p < 0.05$  \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

In the analysis of the results, statistically significant differences were found regarding the levels of relationship satisfaction in The Big Five traits extraversion,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , agreeableness,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , conscientiousness,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , and emotional stability,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , and in all of the Capacity to love dimensions, interest in the other,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , basic trust,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , gratitude,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , common ego ideal,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , permanence of sexual passion,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , loss and mourning,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , CTL-total,  $F(4,834) = 7.50, p < .001$ , (Table 15).

Gabriel's Post-Hoc test demonstrated that the level of extraversion and conscientiousness is higher in those who rated their relationship satisfaction as a 5 than in those who rated their relationship satisfaction as 3. On the other hand, the level of Agreeableness is lower in those who rated their relationship satisfaction as 2 than those who rated their relationship as a 4 or 5. Those who rated their relationship satisfaction as a 3 showed lower levels of emotional stability than people who rated their relationship satisfaction as a 4 or 5 (Table 15).

Gabriel's Post-Hoc test revealed that the group that rated their relationship satisfaction as a 5 tended to report higher levels of interest in the other, basic trust, gratitude, common ego ideal, permanence of sexual passion and a general Capacity to love (CTL-total) than those who rated their relationship satisfaction as 1, 2, 3 or 4. As for loss and mourning, people who rated their relationship satisfaction as a 3 showed lower levels than who scored their satisfaction as a 4 or 5 (Table 15).

The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

**Table 15**

*Differences between Relationship Satisfaction in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions.*

	Relationship Satisfaction					F(4,834)
	1 (n=18)	2 (n=40)	3 (n=153)	4 (n=251)	5 (n=377)	
	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	M(Sd)	
<i>Big Five Traits</i>						
<b>Extraversion</b>	4.89(1.80)	4.74(1.75)	4.62(1.55)	4.98(1.58)	5.08(1.61)	<b>2.46*</b>
<b>Agreeableness</b>	5.75(1.00)	5.59(1.13)	5.94(1.01)	6.08(0.88)	6.16(0.89)	<b>4.98***</b>
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	5.61(0.92)	5.39(1.11)	5.41(1.18)	5.55(1.27)	5.76(1.18)	<b>3.10*</b>
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	3.78(1.20)	3.43(1.69)	3.47(1.53)	3.97(1.41)	3.96(1.49)	<b>4.19**</b>
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	5.53(1.05)	5.45(1.09)	5.40(1.24)	5.58(1.17)	5.60(1.13)	0.95
<i>Capacity to Love Dimensions</i>						
<b>Interest in the other</b>	3.29(0.45)	3.24(0.44)	3.29(0.40)	3.51(0.30)	3.70(0.30)	<b>54.67***</b>
<b>Basic Trust</b>	2.81(0.57)	2.76(0.54)	2.91(0.44)	3.28(0.41)	3.62(0.34)	<b>120.33***</b>
<b>Gratitude</b>	2.98(0.48)	2.93(0.59)	3.09(0.47)	3.43(0.41)	3.74(0.33)	<b>103.78***</b>
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	2.83(0.57)	2.88(0.59)	3.04(0.44)	3.36(0.39)	3.66(0.35)	<b>97.54***</b>
<b>Permanence of Sexual Passion</b>	2.33(0.79)	2.48(0.96)	2.58(0.74)	2.78(0.66)	3.12(0.73)	<b>23.28***</b>
<b>Loss and mourning</b>	2.73(0.44)	2.79(0.52)	2.62(0.44)	2.76(0.43)	2.75(0.45)	<b>2.93*</b>
<b>CTL-Total</b>	16.97(2.49)	17.08(2.14)	17.52(1.94)	19.13(1.70)	20.58(1.70)	<b>109.87***</b>

*Note:* Likert scale: 5 - Very satisfied; 4 - Somewhat satisfied; 3 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 2 - Somewhat dissatisfied; 1 - Very dissatisfied. Gabriel's Post Hoc test - *The mean difference is significant at < 0.05 \*p < 0.05 \*\*p < 0.01 \*\*\*p < 0.001*

Differences were found between Age Classes (1 (18-24); 2 (25-29); 3 (30-34); 4 (35-39); 5 (40-44); 6 (45-49); 7 (50-54); 8 (55-59); 9 (60-74)) and the Big Five Traits, conscientiousness,  $F(8,828) = 4.09, p = <.001$ , emotional stability  $F(8,828) = 7.95, p = <.001$  and the CTL dimensions, interest in the other,  $F(8,828) = 9.21, p = <.001$ , basic trust,  $F(8,828) = 8.46, p = <.001$  gratitude,  $F(8,828) = 5.88, p = <.001$ , common ego ideal,  $F(8,828) = 7.05, p = <.001$ , permanence of sexual passion  $F(8,828) = 8.54, p = <.001$ , and CTL-total  $F(8,828) = 8.80, p = <.001$  (Table 16)

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

Gabriel's Post Hoc test demonstrated that class 7 showed higher levels of conscientiousness than classes 1 and 3 whereas class 9 showed higher levels of emotional stability than classes 1, 2, 3 and 8 (Table 16).

Results showed that class 9 presented less interest in the other than classes 1, 2, 3 and six, as for gratitude class 7 showed less gratitude than classes 1, 2, 3 and 6. Class 1 presented more basic trust than classes 7, 8 and 9, and more common ego ideal and permanence of sexual passion than classes 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Finally, class 1 also showed more Capacity to Love in general, than Classes 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 (Table 16)

**Table 16**  
*Differences between Age Classes in the Big Five and the CTL dimensions*

Age Classes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	F(8,828)
	(n=322) M(Sd)	(n=89) M(Sd)	(n=70) M(Sd)	(n=59) M(Sd)	(n=60) M(Sd)	(n=85) M(Sd)	(n=68) M(Sd)	(n=41) M(Sd)	(n=43) M(Sd)	
<i>Big Five Traits</i>										
<b>Extraversion</b>	4.77(1.68)	4.87(1.76)	5.24(1.58)	4.82(1.57)	5.03(1.59)	5.15(1.57)	5.16(1.47)	4.99(1.33)	5.23(1.37)	1.34
<b>Agreeableness</b>	6.08(0.92)	6.08(0.79)	5.96(0.98)	5.93(0.99)	5.81(1.07)	6.21(0.94)	6.18(0.84)	6.01(1.02)	6.27(0.83)	1.49
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	5.45(1.21)	5.63(1.17)	5.39(1.14)	5.50(1.32)	5.47(1.36)	5.79(1.21)	6.10(0.92)	6.01(0.97)	6.00(1.24)	<b>4.09****</b>
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	3.44(1.35)	3.88(1.50)	3.80(1.33)	4.03(1.54)	4.08(1.68)	4.26(1.54)	4.20(1.51)	3.78(1.41)	4.94(1.43)	<b>7.95****</b>
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	5.47(1.14)	5.57(1.19)	5.55(1.07)	5.38(1.32)	5.76(1.06)	5.59(1.25)	5.82(1.16)	5.52(1.10)	5.70(1.12)	1.19
<i>Capacity to Love Dimensions</i>										
<b>Interest in the other</b>	3.63(0.28)	3.55(0.36)	3.56(0.35)	3.43(0.45)	3.51(0.36)	3.57(0.37)	3.34(0.51)	3.43(0.37)	3.29(0.40)	<b>9.21****</b>
<b>Basic Trust</b>	3.46(0.44)	3.35(0.53)	3.27(0.57)	3.31(0.49)	3.29(0.50)	3.31(0.47)	3.04(0.59)	3.20(0.35)	3.05(0.50)	<b>8.46****</b>
<b>Gratitude</b>	3.58(0.43)	3.48(0.46)	3.48(0.54)	3.42(0.49)	3.45(0.45)	3.47(0.45)	3.19(0.62)	3.43(0.47)	3.29(0.52)	<b>5.88****</b>
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	3.53(0.44)	3.45(0.48)	3.34(0.49)	3.31(0.52)	3.32(0.47)	3.34(0.46)	3.17(0.57)	3.29(0.47)	3.25(0.46)	<b>7.05****</b>
<b>Permanence of Sexual Passion</b>	3.11(0.74)	2.96(0.75)	2.65(0.73)	2.64(0.78)	2.67(0.83)	2.77(0.70)	2.64(0.76)	2.63(0.68)	2.60(0.61)	<b>8.54****</b>
<b>Loss and mourning</b>	2.69(0.48)	2.71(0.44)	2.71(0.43)	2.80(0.48)	2.77(0.44)	2.76(0.42)	2.78(0.42)	2.81(0.35)	2.86(0.42)	1.43
<b>CTL-Total</b>	19.99(1.90)	19.50(2.28)	19.01(2.28)	18.91(2.32)	19.01(2.33)	19.22(2.13)	18.15(2.50)	18.79(1.99)	18.34(2.02)	<b>8.80****</b>

Note: Age was separated by classes following the WHO guidelines: 1 (18-24); 2 (25-29); 3 (30-34); 4 (35-39); 5 (40-44); 6 (45-49); 7 (50-54); 8 (55-59); 9 (60-74).  
 \*\*\* p < 0.001. Gabriel's Post Hoc test - The mean difference is significant at < 0.05.

**4) Analyse the relationship between the Big Five Traits and the CTL dimensions.**

In the analysis of the relationship between the Capacity to Love dimensions and the Big Five, statistically significant positive correlations were found between extraversion and interest in the other,  $r = .14, p = <.001$ , basic trust,  $r = .16, p = <.001$ , gratitude,  $r = .14, p = <.001$ , common ego ideal,  $r = .13, p = <.001$ , loss and mourning,  $r = .13, p = <.001$ , and CTL total,  $r = .14, p = <.001$ .

Statistically significant positive correlations were found between agreeableness and all CTL dimensions: interest in the other,  $r = .20, p = <.001$ , basic trust,  $r = .17, p = <.001$ , gratitude,  $r = .14, p = <.001$ , Common ego ideal,  $r = .22, p = <.001$ , permanence of sexual passion,  $r = .16, p = <.001$ , loss and mourning,  $r = .15, p = <.001$  and CTL-total,  $r = .24, p = <.001$ .

There are also statistically significant positive correlations between openness to experience and every CTL dimension: interest in the other,  $r = .14, p = <.001$ ), basic trust  $r = .14, p = <.001$ , gratitude,  $r = .11, p = <.001$ , common ego ideal,  $r = .15, p = <.001$ , permanence of sexual passion,  $r = .13, p = <.001$ , loss and mourning,  $r = .22, p = <.001$ , and CTL-total,  $r = .21, p = <.001$ .

Conscientiousness shows statistically significant positive correlations with interest in the other,  $r = .10, p = .002$ , basic trust,  $r = .13, p = <.001$ , gratitude,  $r = .08, p = .011$ , common ego ideal,  $r = .13, p = <.001$ , loss and mourning,  $r = .15, p = <.001$ , and CTL total,  $r = .14, p = <.001$ .

Finally, emotional stability shows statistically significant positive correlations with basic trust,  $r = .14, p = <.001$ , gratitude,  $r = .07, p = .026$ , common ego ideal,  $r = .11, p = .001$ , permanence of sexual passion,  $r = .10, p = .003$ , loss and mourning,  $r = .35, p = <.001$ , and CTL total,  $r = .18, p = <.001$ .

No correlations were found between extraversion,  $r = .04, p = .161$ , and conscientiousness,  $r = .05, p = .108$ , with permanence of sexual passion, and with emotional stability,  $r = .06, p = .055$ , and interest in the other (Table 17).

**Table 17**

*Analysis of the relationship between the Big Five and the CTL dimensions in the sample*

<b>Big Five &amp; Capacity to Love</b>					
<b>Sample (n= 839)</b>					
	<b>Extraversion</b>	<b>Agreeableness</b>	<b>Conscientiousness</b>	<b>Emotional Stability</b>	<b>Openness to Experience</b>
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>R</i>
<b>Interest in the other</b>	.14**	.20**	.10**	.06	.14**
<b>Basic Trust</b>	.16**	.17**	.13**	.14**	.14**
<b>Gratitude</b>	.14**	.14**	.08*	.07*	.11**
<b>Common ego ideal</b>	.13**	.22**	.13**	.11**	.15**
<b>Permanence of sexual passion</b>	.04	.16**	.05	.10*	.13**
<b>Loss and Mourning</b>	.13**	.15**	.15**	.35**	.22**
<b>CTL-Total</b>	.16**	.24**	.14**	.18**	.21**

Note:\*\* The correlation is significant at 0,01 (two-tailed). \*The correlation is significant at 0,05 (one-tailed)

### **5) Personality traits that predict the Capacity to Love**

Multiple regression was calculated to assess the predictive potential of Big Five personality traits for the dependent variable CTL. The results were explored using the *stepwise* method, and it was found that the trait “Conscientiousness” did not have a significant contribution to the model and was subsequently removed.

Of the five dimensions of the Big Five, four show a significant effect on CTL, "Agreeableness", "Openness to experience", "Emotional stability" and "Extraversion" with an  $R = 0.318$  and an  $R^2 = 0.101$  [ $F_{(4, 834)} = 23.459, p = 0 < 0.001$ ].

The results show us that there is statistical significance, and the R-value indicates that the overall contribution of the four personality traits to the prediction of the capacity to love is modest.

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

“Agreeableness” is the predictor with the largest contribution to the estimation of the capacity for love, explaining 19.1% ( $p < 0.001$ ), followed by "Emotional stability" and "Openness to experience" with a contribution of 10.3% ( $p = 0.003$ ) and 9.9% ( $p = 0.010$ ), respectively. Extraversion" had a contribution of 8.9% ( $p = 0.016$ ) (Table 18)

**Table 18**

*Personality Traits that predict CTL*

Sample ( $n= 839$ )						
Effect	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
						<i>LB - UB</i>
<b>Constant</b>	14.38	0.54		26.56	0.000	13.32 - 15.44
<b>Agreeableness</b>	0.45	0.08	0.19	5.56	0.000	0.29 - 0.61
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	0.19	0.07	0.10	2.59	0.010	0.05 - 0.33
<b>Emotional Stability</b>	0.15	0.05	0.10	2.97	0.003	0.05 - 0.25
<b>Extraversion</b>	0.12	0.05	0.09	2.41	0.016	0.02 - 0.22

Note: The trait “Conscientiousness” was removed from the model as it is not significant.

## 5. Discussion

A discussion of the most significant results is presented, considering the results obtained above and the defined objectives of the study.

Considering the characterization of the sample in terms of the Big Five Traits, **Objective one** it was possible to verify that the sample revealed high levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness, followed by openness to experience, extraversion, and emotional stability. Regarding the low levels of emotional stability, we can consider that the sample has a neurotic tendency. In what concerns the characterization of the sample in terms of the Capacity to Love **Objective two**, it was possible to verify that the sample presented high levels of capacity to love, presenting particularly elevated levels of interest in the other, and low levels of capacity for loss and mourning.

In relation to differences in socio-demographic variables in relation to The Big Five traits and The Capacity to Love Dimensions **Objective three**, it was possible to verify the existence of statistically significant differences in all the socio-demographic variables that were studied.

There is a statistically significant difference between **gender** regarding personality traits, with women showing more (agreeableness and conscientiousness) than men, while men showed more emotional stability than women. These results are in line with literature findings that also report women as more agreeable, and scoring higher in some conscientiousness facets, with men being more emotionally stable, as women tend to have a more neurotic tendency (Costa et al., 2001; Weisberg et al., 2011; Chapman et al., 2007). Regarding the CTL dimensions, statistically significant gender differences were only found in the (interest in the other), where women presented higher levels when compared to me. These results may be explained by the fact that "interest in the other" is a dimension that is strongly related to empathy, altruism, dedication and concern for the other and his/her well-being, and these values are also found in people that are highly agreeable, which could explain why women are stronger on this dimension.

In what concerns **being in an intimate relationship**, statistically significant differences were found at several levels, with those in an intimate relationship being more conscientious and more extroverted, this can be explained by the fact that conscientious people have a tendency to be more committed to a relationship (Cotter & Kerschner,

2018), as for extroverted people, these results don't go in line with some of the literature findings that say extraverted people are likely to be single (Apostolou & Tsangari, 2022). The participants who are in an intimate relationship presented higher levels of the CTL dimensions (interest in the other, basic trust, gratitude, permanence of sexual passion, loss and mourning a CTL-total), showing that the participants who are not in an intimate relationship have less capacity to love. These results corroborate the ones found by Busch and Kapusta (2017), which demonstrate that women who were in intimate relationships showed higher levels of capacity to love when compared to women who were not in a relationship.

**Having or not having children** also shows to be statistically different, those who have children tend to be more extroverted, conscientious and emotionally stable and have more capacity for loss and mourning when compared to those who don't have children, in the other side, those without children presented higher levels of interest in the other, basic trust, gratitude, common ego ideal, permanence of sexual passion and CTL-total showing more capacity to love.

Statistically significant differences are also meaningful regarding **marital status** and the big five traits conscientiousness and emotional stability. Results showed that single people tend to have lower levels of these traits when compared to married, widowed, and divorced participants, this can be explained by the fact that non-consciousness people are not committed to relationships, being more unreliable and because of that being more likely to be single, and as Kernberg (2011) believed and previously referred in the literature review, neurotic individuals do not have the capacity to fall in love and engage in romantic relationships, which will eventually lead into being single. In the CTL dimensions, results showed that widowed people have the highest levels of (common ego ideal), as singles and widows showed higher levels of (basic trust), and when compared with widowers, marrieds and divorcees, singles also presented higher levels of (interest in the other, gratitude, permanence of sexual passion, and CTL- total). Divorced people presented the lowest levels of Capacity to love, and even though there are a lot of factors and variables that can lead to divorce, these results could suggest that low levels of capacity to love could be considered one of these variables.

Regarding the differences between the **length of the relationship**, statistically significant differences were found for the four groups and the personality traits (conscientiousness and emotional stability), with those who have been in a relationship for 1 year or less tend to be less conscientious and emotionally stable than those who have been in a relationship for 2-5 years, 6-10 and more than 10 years. This can be explained by the results found in literature, that report non-conscientious people as unreliable and less committed, being more likely to be unfaithful, and that conscientious people tend to engage in more long-lasting relationships (Malouff et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2000; Cotter & Kerschner, 2018; Holland & Roisman, 2008; Gibson et al., 2016; Biesen et al., 2022). As for the neurotic people (low in emotional stability) these results are also in line with the literature, that also reports neurotic individuals as more likely to have shorter relationships (White et al., 2004; Holland & Roisman, 2008) and with Kernberg (2011) belief that neurotic individuals present difficulties in maintain love relationships. In terms of the dimensions of CTL, those who have been in a relationship for more than 10 years have the lowest scores on all dimensions of CTL when compared to the other groups, maybe these low scores can explain why some relationships are so difficult to maintain through time. Those who have been dating for one year or less showed the highest levels of common ego ideals and permanence of sexual passion within the groups and share the same levels of interest in the other as those who have been dating for 2 or 5 years. These results are also aligned with literature, which defends that the permanence of sexual passion is the most difficult part to maintain in a long-lasting relationship (Kernberg, 2011). These results can be considered a reflection of today's world especially where people tend to be so self-centred and find it hard to be committed to others and to relationships.

No statistically significant differences were found between the **Age of First relationship** and the Big Five traits but were found differences regarding the CTL dimensions (interest in the other, basic trust, and CTL-total). The results showed that those who start dating earlier presented higher levels in these dimensions, concluding that the more capacity to love, the earlier one starts dating. These results are in line with the general idea of capacity to love since people with little CTL will not have the same capacity to engage with others, since they do not have the basic confidence and the

intimacy that is necessary to feel safe to form and to invest in these relationships, consequently making them to have later romantic relationships.

Regarding **relationship satisfaction**, on a scale of 1 to 5, most participants were very satisfied with their relationship (5) and differences within the big five were found, results showed that participants who were more satisfied with their current or past relationship are more extraverted, agreeableness, and also tend to be more emotionally stable, and openness seems to be very low correlated to relationship satisfaction, as no significant differences were found. This results are also reported in the literature review (Malouff et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2000). As for CTL, as expected the ones who are more satisfied with their current or past relationships are the ones who presented higher values in all CTL dimensions, except for loss and mourning. Having in mind that relationships involve at least two individuals, and that are a lot of factors that can influence relationship satisfaction, these results seem present CTL as a strong variable to help determine relationship satisfaction.

Statistically significant differences were found between the Big Five traits conscientiousness and emotional stability in relation to **Age**. The results indicated that these two traits tend to have higher levels as age progresses, being in line with the following literature (Roberts et al., 2006; Soto et al., 2011; Donnellan & Lucas, 2008) that reports conscientiousness as a trait that tends to gradually increase across the life span, while neuroticism decreases, as people become more emotionally stable. Age differences were also found in the dimensions of the CTL, where the capacity to love tends to decrease as age increases, in all dimensions except loss and mourning, maybe this means that loss and mourning is a dimension that takes time to develop or that people just stop caring and consequently are not affected in a way that these loss and mourning feelings are negatively affecting them. These results again show that the hardest part about a romantic relationship is maintaining it across the life span and that people are possibly not using their personal experiences to invest in those relationships.

It is important to make an observation, during the statistical analysis it was possible to understand that age could be influencing these three variables “having or not having children” “marital status” and “relationship length” being that those who have children, who are married and who have longer relationships are also older, so the

following questions remain: “Do participants have lower levels of CTL because they are married or because they are older?” “Does CTL decrease over time because relationships are longer or because people get older?” and “Do those who have children have lower levels of CTL because they have children or because they are older?”.

The **fourth objective** - to analyse the relationship between the Big Five Traits and the dimensions of the capacity for love - showed a positive association between them, and of the five traits, agreeableness and openness to experience showed an association with all the dimensions of the capacity for love, extraversion and conscientiousness showed a positive association with all the dimensions of the CTL except for permanence and sexual passion, and emotional stability showed an association with all the dimensions except for interest in the other. The results obtained allow us to confirm our alternative hypothesis that the Big FIVE are positively correlated with CTL.

Considering the **fifth Objective** - Analyse the traits of personality that predict the Capacity to Love - the results indicated Agreeableness as the strongest trait as a predictor of CTL followed by Openness to Experience, Emotional Stability and Extraversion. Conscientiousness proved to be the weakest personality trait and was removed from the model for that reason, showing no predictive value in CTL. In general, the four of the big five traits showed to have a modest contribution to predicting the Capacity to Love. These results may be explained by the fact that CTL is a multidimensional construct, involving various dimensions and for that, all the dimensions play a significant but not decisive role.

Both the correlations (fourth objective) and regressions (fifth objective) present the trait *agreeableness* as the most strongly correlated and the strongest predictor. These results show agreeableness as a trait that can have a positive influence on romantic relationships, as literature reports (Ahmetoglu et al., 2009) that this trait is positively associated with all the Sternberg three love dimensions, *Intimacy*, *Passion*, and *Commitment*.

## **6. Conclusion**

The following conclusion allows us to summarise the main results of the present study, followed by a critical reflection, on its contributions, limitations, and suggestions for future investigations.

The results suggested that the sample in this study presented high levels of agreeableness and low levels of emotional stability, thus presenting some neurotic tendencies, and globally the sample presented high levels of Capacity to love.

The female participants showed higher levels of agreeableness and interest in the other and lower levels of emotional stability than the males.

People who are more conscientious and extroverted are more likely to be involved in an intimate relationship, and the ones involved in a relationship also presented a more general capacity to love.

Extroverted, conscientious, and emotionally stable people are more likely to have children. Having or not having children also proved to be a variable that influences the CTL, as people with one or more children presented lower levels of capacity to love.

In relation to marital status, it was possible to verify that singles are less conscious and emotionally stable and are the ones who presented a higher capacity to love when compared with married, widowed, and divorced people, the last ones being who present the lowest capacity for love.

Non-conscious people and with a neurotic tendency (low on emotional stability) tend to have shorter relationships. Those who have the longest relationship length tend to have less capacity to love when compared to the other groups with less length, and the participants who are dating for a year or less present more permanence of sexual passion. It was also found that the sooner people start dating more capacity to love they present.

Personality seems not to influence the age that the participants had their first relationship, the same is not reflected in the CTL as those who start dating earlier presented higher levels of capacity to love.

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

Extraverted, agreeable, and emotionally stable people tended to be more satisfied with their actual or previous relationship, this group also presented higher levels of capacity to love, and in all dimensions of CTL except loss and mourning.

Older people are presented as more conscious and emotionally stable, and age seems to have an impact on the capacity to love in the way that as age increases the capacity to love tends to decrease in all dimensions of the CTL except loss and mourning.

The results of this study showed that the big five traits and the capacity to love are correlated, showing a positive association between them, of the five big traits, agreeableness, and openness to experience showed an association with all the CTL dimensions.

As for the contribution of personality to predicting the CTL, the results showed that only four big traits agreeableness, openness to experience, emotional stability and extraversion have a modest contribution to predicting the capacity to love, being agreeableness the strongest predictor, and consciousness proved to be the weakest of the five, presenting no contribution.

With regard to the limitations of this study, the difficulty in accessing the scientific information available on the Capacity to Love construct, due to the limited information available on the topic should be highlighted, and it was necessary to use, for example, scientific information on romantic relationship. The opposite happened with the Personality and the Big Five, as the abundance of information made it difficult to collect and synthesise information.

It should also be noted that the process of data collection, online and by self-answer, can promote some limitations such as too many types of response that make it difficult to create statistically significant groups and responses based on personal perception and on the socially desirable. Another detail that should be highlighted is the length of the questionnaire used, that may also have had some influence on the responses due to its great length, as the data collected was used not just for this line of investigation but for the entire “WE.LOVE.LIFE.CHALLENGES” scientific project.

As this was an exploratory study, some variables were not considered (e.g., attachment styles, the influence that personality and the partner's capacity to love may

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

have on the participants' CTL) and that could have been important for a better understanding of the result, would be interesting to include these in future studies. Another aspect that should be considered in the future is the "Age" variable, not only to understand the influence of age in some of the sociodemographic variables mentioned previously but also to bring more clarity as to why the age factor has such a negative impact in one's individual capacity to love.

However, this work may contributed to increasing scientific knowledge in this area and open doors to new studies that allow a better understanding of the Capacity to Love and its role in romantic relationships, as well as the influence of personality in these two constructs, and in the same way, understand how the CTL inventory can be an important tool in clinical practice, as a source of psychological evaluation, providing a better clarification of some of the difficulties, limitations and capacities presented by some patients regarding their intimate relationships and given the role that psychological development plays in the construction of personality and the capacity to love, as early life experiences are proven to play an important role in one's adult life, would also be important to understand if and how this capacity to love can be developed in future generations as a way to diminish these difficulties.

Therefore, research in this area may be relevant not only to increase scientific knowledge on the capacity to love but also for clinical practice and to understand on a different level some of one's functioning systems that can be important to promote not only the individual's psychological health but the health of romantic relationships itself.

## References

Ahmetoglu, G., Swami, V., & Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2009). The Relationship Between Dimensions of Love, Personality, and Relationship Length. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39(5), 1181-1190. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-009-9515-5>

Allport, G. W. (1961). Pattern and growth in personality.

Apostolou, M., & Tsangari, S. (2022). Why people are single: The Big Five as predictors of involuntary singlehood. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 186, 111375. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111375>

Asselmann, E., & Specht, J. (2020). Taking the Ups and Downs at the Rollercoaster of Love: Associations Between Major Life Events in the Domain of Romantic Relationships and the Big Five Personality Traits. *Developmental Psychology*, 56(9), 1803-1816. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001047>

Barelds, D. P., & Barelds-Dijkstra, P. (2007). Love at first sight or friends first? Ties among partner personality trait similarity, relationship onset, relationship quality, and love. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 24(4), 479-496. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407507079235>

Batista, T. M., & Neto, D. D. (2019). *Dicionário de Psicologia*. Edições Sílabo.

Biesen, J. N., Roddy, M. K., & Doss, B. D. (2022). The role of five-factor model personality traits in a web-based relationship improvement program. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000221>

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and Loss Attachment*, Vol. 1. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and Loss. Separation*. Vol. 2. New York: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss: Loss: Sadness and depression*. Vol. 3 New York: Basic Books.

Brito Costa, S., Bem-Haja, P., Moisaio, A., Alberty, A., Vicente Castro, F., & De Almeida, H. (2016). Psychometric properties of Portuguese version of Big Five Inventory (Bfi). *International Journal of Developmental and Educational Psychology*. Revista INFAD de Psicología, 1(2), 83. <https://doi.org/10.17060/ijodaep.2015.n2.v1.325>

Busch, I., & Kapusta, N. D. (2017). Evaluation of capacity to love, depression, and anxiety in women according to their relationship status. *European Psychiatry*, 41(S1), s900-s900. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.eurpsy.2017.01.1839>.

Chapman, B. P., Duberstein, P. R., Sörensen, S., & Lyness, J. M. (2007). Gender differences in five factor model personality traits in an elderly cohort. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 43(6), 1594-1603. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.04.028>

Collins, A., and Sroufe, L. A. (1999). "Capacity for intimate relationships: a developmental construction," in *Development of Romantic Relationships in Adolescence*, eds W. Furman, B. B. Brown, and C. Feiring (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press), 125–147. doi: 10.1017/CBO9781316182185.007

Costa, P. T., Terracciano, A., & McCrae, R. R. (2001). Gender differences in personality traits across cultures: Robust and surprising findings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(2), 322-331.

Cotter, K. A., & Kerschner, B. J. (2018). Personality and health: Impacts of romantic relationship characteristics. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 120, 40-46. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.08.023>

Czerniawska, M., & Szydło, J. (2021). Do values relate to personality traits and if so, in what way? – Analysis of relationships. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 14, 511-527. <https://doi.org/10.2147/prbm.s299720>

Digman, J. M. (1990). Personality structure: Emergence of the five-factor model. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 41(1), 417-440. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.ps.41.020190.002221>

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

Donnellan, M., Conger, R. D., & Bryant, C. M. (2004). The Big Five and enduring marriages. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 38(5), 481-504. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2004.01.001>

Donnellan, M. B., & Lucas, R. E. (2008). Age differences in the Big Five across the life span: Evidence from two national samples. *Psychology and Aging*, 23(3), 558-566. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012897>

Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and Society*, 2nd Edn. New York, NY: Norton.

Feeney, B. C., & Collins, N. L. (2015). Thriving through relationships. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 1, 22-28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2014.11.001>

Fletcher, G. J., Simpson, J. A., Campbell, L., & Overall, N. C. (2015). Pair-bonding, romantic love, and evolution. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(1), 20-36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614561683>

Fonte, C., Ferreira, M. & Campos, C. (2021). Inventário de Capacidade para Amar: estudo piloto de adaptação e validação para Portugal. Manuscrito submetido para publicação.

Fraley, R. C., & Roisman, G. I. (2015). Do early caregiving experiences leave an enduring or transient mark on developmental adaptation? *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 1, 101-106. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2014.11.007>

Gibson, K. A., Thompson, A. E., & O'Sullivan, L. F. (2016). Love thy neighbour: Personality traits, relationship quality, and attraction to others as predictors of infidelity among young adults. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 25(3), 186-198. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjhs.253-a2>

Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(3), 511-524. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.52.3.511>

Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (2006). Measuring respect in close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 23, 881-899.

Holland, A. S., & Roisman, G. I. (2008). Big Five personality traits and relationship quality: Self-reported, observational, and physiological evidence. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 25(5), 811-829. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407508096697>

Huston, T. L., & Houts, R. M. (1998). The psychological infrastructure of courtship and marriage: The role of personality and compatibility in romantic relationships. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 114–151). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511527814.006>

Jokela, M., Alvergne, A., Pollet, T. V., & Lummaa, V. (2011). Reproductive behavior and personality traits of the Five Factor Model. *European Journal of Personality*, 25, 487–500. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.822>

Kapusta, N. D., Jankowski, K. S., Wolf, V., Chéron-Le Guludec, M., Lopatka, M., Hammerer, C., Schnieder, A., Kealy, D., Ogrodniczuk, J. S., & Blüml, V. (2018). Measuring the capacity to love: Development of the CTL-inventory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01115>

Kernberg, O. F. (1974). Mature Love: prerequisites and characteristics. *J. Am. Psychoanal. Assoc.* 22, 743–768. doi: 10.1177/000306517402200402

Kernberg, O. F. (1977). Boundaries and structure in love relations. *J. Am. Psychoanal. Assoc.* 25, 81–114. doi: 10.1177/000306517702500104

Kernberg, O. F. (2011). Limitations to the capacity to love. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 92(6), 1501-1515. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-8315.2011.00456.x>

Lee, J. A. (1977). A typology of styles of loving. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 3(2), 173-182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014616727700300204>

Malouff, J. M., Thorsteinsson, E. B., Schutte, N. S., Bhullar, N., & Rooke, S. E. (2010). The five-factor model of personality and relationship satisfaction of intimate partners: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 44(1), 124-127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2009.09.004>

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

McCrae, R. R., & Costa Jr, P. T. (2008). The five-factor theory of personality.

McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (1987). Validation of the five-factor model of personality across instruments and observers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(1), 81-90. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.52.1.81>

Noftle, E. E., & Shaver, P. R. (2006). Attachment dimensions and the Big Five personality traits: Associations and comparative ability to predict relationship quality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(2), 179-208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2004.11.003>

Odilavadze, M., Panjikidze, M., Martskvishvili, K., Mestvirishvili, M., & Kvitsiani, M. (2019). The role of personality and love style in marital satisfaction: Does similarity matter? *Current Issues in Personality Psychology*, 7(4), 288-297. <https://doi.org/10.5114/cipp.2020.91436>

Oliveira, J. J., Castro do Nascimento, A. M., & Araújo Lopes, F. (2021). Influence of personality, attachment and mate value on heterosexual and non-heterosexual romantic relationship satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 183, 111128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111128>

Roberts, B. W., Walton, K. E., & Viechtbauer, W. (2006). Patterns of mean-level change in personality traits across the life course: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.1.1>

Robins, R. W., Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. E. (2002). It's not just who you're with, it's who you are: Personality and relationship experiences across multiple relationships. *Journal of Personality*, 70(6), 925-964. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.05028>

Roccas, S., Sagiv, L., Schwartz, S. H., & Knafo, A. (2002). The Big Five personality factors and personal values. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(6), 789-801. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167202289008>

Rubin, Z. (1970). Measurement of romantic love. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 16(2), 265.

Safdar A., & Dasti, R. (2015). Personality and Pathological Love Among Young Adults. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 41(2), 206-216.

Schwaba, T., Robins, R. W., Grijalva, E., & Bleidorn, W. (2019). Does openness to experience matter in love and work? Domain, facet, and developmental evidence from a 24-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Personality*, 87(5), 1074-1092.

Shahrazad W., Kadir, N. A., Omar, F., & Halim, F. W. (2015). Relationship Between Personality Traits, Attachment Styles and Life Satisfaction Among Adolescents. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, (2), 55-64.

Shaver, P. R., & Brennan, K. A. (1992). Attachment styles and the "Big Five" Personality traits: Their connections with each other and with romantic relationship outcomes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18(5), 536-545. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167292185003>

Soto, C. J., John, O. P., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2011). Age differences in personality traits from 10 to 65: Big Five domains and facets in a large cross-sectional sample. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(2), 330-348. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021717>

Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review*, 93(2), 119-135. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295x.93.2.119>

Suldo, S. M., R. Minch, D., & Hearon, B. V. (2014). Adolescent life satisfaction and personality characteristics: Investigating relationships using a five factor model. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 16(4), 965-983. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-014-9544-1>

Watson, D., Hubbard, B., & Wiese, D. (2000). General Traits of Personality and Affectivity as Predictors of Satisfaction in Intimate Relationships: Evidence from Self- and Partner-Ratings. *Journal of Personality*, 68(3), 413-449. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.00102>

## The Role of Personality in The Capacity to Love

Weisberg, Y. J., DeYoung, C. G., & Hirsh, J. B. (2011). Gender differences in personality across the ten aspects of the Big Five. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2(178). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2011.00178>

White, J. K., Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (2004). Big Five personality variables and relationship constructs. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37(7), 1519-1530. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2004.02.019>

Winterheld, H., & Simpson, J. (2018). Personality in Close Relationships. In A. Vangelisti & D. Perlman (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships* (Cambridge Handbooks in Psychology, pp. 163-174). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781316417867.014

Zayas, V., Mischel, W., Shoda, Y., & Aber, J. L. (2010). Roots of adult attachment. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 2(3), 289-297. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550610389822>

### Web Content

<https://dictionary.apa.org/personality>

<https://dictionary.apa.org/love>