

# Perception Of Communication In Marriage: The Role of Emotional Intelligence And Gender Schema

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the current study was to examine the correlates and determinants of perception of marital communication. The role of emotional intelligence and gender schema were examined. The data were collected from 71 married couples, aged 23-71 years ( $M_{age} = 41.60$ ,  $SD = 12.76$ ). Perception of communication in marriage was assessed with the Marital Communication Questionnaire by Kaźmierczak and Plopa (2008). Gender schema was measured with the Sex-Role Inventory by Kuczyńska (2012). Ability emotional intelligence was assessed with two performance tests, the Emotional Intelligence Scale – Faces and the Emotion Understanding Test. Trait emotional intelligence was measured with the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale. The results indicated that perception of communication in marriage is, above all, associated with trait emotional intelligence and gender schema. There were also gender differences in the perception of the spouse's communication in marriage associated with their psychological characteristics. The husbands' psychological characteristics affected the wives' perception of the husbands' communication, whereas the husbands' perception of the wives' communication was not associated with the wives' psychological characteristics.

## KEYWORDS

marital communication  
emotional intelligence  
emotional abilities  
gender role  
gender schema

## INTRODUCTION

Communication in marriage relates to verbal and nonverbal exchange of information between spouses. Not only words creating the content of the information are important, but also the nonverbal message accompanying the spoken words, like tone of voice, look, facial expression. Nonverbal information during the communication process influences the interpretation of spoken verbal information (Kaźmierczak & Plopa, 2008). Marital communication is a process that can be described in three dimensions: support, involvement, and depreciation (Kaźmierczak & Plopa, 2006, 2008). Support relates to showing respect for the spouse, appreciating them, and showing interest in their problems and needs. A supportive spouse takes care of the partner both in difficult moments and everyday situations. Involvement is defined as the ability to create a sense of understanding and closeness, and the ability to express feelings. An involved spouse is attentive to the partner, and tries to prevent routine and conflicts in marriage. Depreciation is conceptualized as a tendency towards aggressive behaviors towards the spouse and the need for taking control of his or her partner. A depreciating spouse attempts to dominate the partner and often violate their sense of dignity.

Communication in marriage can be considered as a cognitive process. Earlier studies showed that cognition affects the perception of spouse communication and spouses' responses to each other (Epstein et al., 1987; Halford & Sanders, 1988). Many psychological characteristics may play an important role in the quality of the relationship between spouses and the perception of each other. Psychological characteristics that may affect communication in marriage are emotional intelligence and gender schema.

## Schema-Based Information Processing

A schema is a cognitive structure that plays an important role in perception and organization of information about the self, the others, and the world around (Bem, 1981). Schemas contain generalized information on the individual's experiences and knowledge. They are used to structure and give the meaning to incoming information. Schemas

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are sources of data and are bases for problem solving and anticipation (Taylor & Crocker, 1981). They facilitate paying attention to and remembering of schema-congruent information (Mor & Inbar, 2009). Thus, information processing based on schema is selective (Bem, 1981). Schemas enable quick processing of information that is schema-relevant. However, schema-based information processing may lead to biases and information loss caused by its selectiveness (Taylor & Crocker, 1981). Individuals differ in their readiness to process information based on schema. Some individuals may be aschematic (Markus et al., 1982).

## Gender Schema and Perception of Communication in Marriage

Bem (1981) proposed the gender schema theory which describes the sex-typing process. Independent of biological gender, children can shape sex-specific self-concepts and create gender schema. Based on the gender schema theory, four gender schemas (psychological genders) are distinguished: masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated (Bem, 1974, 1981). Masculine individuals have more strongly shaped masculine characteristics than feminine ones. They process and integrate information based on the masculine schema. Feminine individuals have more strongly shaped feminine characteristics than masculine ones. They use the feminine schema for processing and integrating of information. Androgynous individuals are characterized by both masculine and feminine characteristics and use schema for both genders to process and integrate information. Undifferentiated individuals are nonschematic and do not refer to gender schema in processing and integrating information. They have weakly shaped both feminine and masculine characteristics. As gender schema and biological gender are not associated, there are distinguished masculine men and women, feminine men and women, androgynous men and women, and undifferentiated men and women.

Gender schema can play an important role in adjustment and behavior. Bem (1974, p. 155) pointed out that “a narrowly masculine self-concept might inhibit behaviors that are stereotyped as feminine, and a narrowly feminine self-concept might inhibit behaviors that are stereotyped as masculine, a mixed, or androgynous, self-concept, might allow an individual to freely engage in both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ behaviors.” Earlier studies showed that differences in adjustment are associated with gender schema. For instance, Yelsma and Brown (1985) showed that the perception of marital conflict management is related to gender schema. Androgynous individuals describe themselves as being able to manage conflicts deal constructively, whereas the undifferentiated individuals report themselves as having little conflict management skills.

Based on earlier studies and Bem’s gender schema theory, it can be expected that gender schema will be associated with both the perception of own communication with one’s spouse as well as the perception of the spouse’s communication.

## Emotional Intelligence and Perception of Communication in Marriage

Emotional intelligence can be considered as a set of abilities or a personality trait (Petrides & Furnham, 2000, 2001). Ability emotional intelligence

is defined as a set of cognitive abilities that refer to emotional information processing (Mayer et al., 2016) and refers to maximal performance (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Ability emotional intelligence includes four main emotional abilities (branches): emotion recognition, utilization of emotion in thinking and decision making, emotion understanding, and reflective emotion management (Mayer et al., 2016). Two of these four abilities, emotion recognition and emotion understanding, were considered in the current study. These emotional abilities can play an important role in perception of communication in intimate relationships.

Trait emotional intelligence relates to the self-reported perception of own emotional competency (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2014). Trait emotional intelligence refers to typical performance and can be also called “emotional self-efficacy” (Petrides & Furnham, 2003).

Both ability emotional intelligence and trait emotional intelligence play an important role in close interpersonal relationships. Higher trait emotional intelligence enables empathic perspective-taking and self-monitoring in social situations, fosters cooperation with the partner, and is associated with marital satisfaction (Schutte et al., 2001). Trait emotional intelligence is also a predictor of communication in marriage (Zmaczyńska-Witek et al., 2019) and fosters the development of satisfying interpersonal relationships (Parker et al., 2021). Ability emotional intelligence, especially the emotion management ability, may influence the perception of the quality of daily social interactions and may be helpful for successful self-presentations in social interactions (Lopes et al., 2004). Earlier studies suggest that not only the level of ability emotional intelligence of an individual is important for the quality of intimate relationships, but also its level in both partners. When both partners in the couple are low in ability emotional intelligence, they perceive their relationship in a more negative way compared to couples in which at least one partner has high ability emotional intelligence (Brackett et al., 2005).

## The Current Study

The aim of the current study was to examine the relationship between communication in marriage and psychological characteristics: emotional intelligence and gender schema. The following hypotheses were verified:

1. The perception of marital communication is associated with emotional intelligence, masculinity, and femininity. The perception of own and the spouse’ support is positively associated with own emotional intelligence and femininity and is negatively related to masculinity. The perception of own and the spouse’s involvement is positively associated with emotional intelligence and femininity. The perception of own and the spouse’s depreciation is positively associated with masculinity and is negatively related to emotional intelligence and femininity.
2. The perception of the spouse’s communication in marriage is associated with the spouse’s emotional intelligence, masculinity, and femininity. More emotionally intelligent spouses are perceived as more supportive and involved, and less depreciating. More feminine spouses are perceived as more supportive and less depreciating. More masculine spouses are perceived as more depreciating and less supportive.
3. The perception of communication in marriage is associated with gender schema. Feminine and androgynous individuals perceive high-

er own and spousal support and involvement. Masculine individuals perceive higher own and spousal depreciation.

The significant predictors of the perception of own and the spouse's communication in marriage were also examined in the current study.

## METHOD

### Participants

Seventy-one married couples (71 women and 71 men) from Poland participated in the study. Participants were 23–71 years old ( $M = 41.60$ ,  $SD = 12.76$ ). The women were 23–71 years old ( $M = 40.44$ ,  $SD = 12.46$ ) and the men were 24–71 years old ( $M = 42.76$ ,  $SD = 13.03$ ). The women and men did not significantly differ in age ( $t = -1.086$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Marriage duration was 1–47 years ( $M = 16.00$ ,  $SD = 12.74$ ).

### Measures

#### PERCEPTION OF COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE

Perception of communication in marriage was assessed with the Marital Communication Questionnaire (MCQ) by Kaźmierczak and Plopa (2008). The MCQ has two versions: the first measures the perception of own communication (self-reported behaviors) and the second measures the perception of the spouse's communication (description of the spouse's behaviors). Each version consists of 30 items and scores are computed on three main scales: support (10 items), involvement (9 items), and depreciation (11 items). Participants indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*) how often they behave towards their spouse in a given way (self-report) and how often their spouse behaves towards them in a given way (description of the spouse's behaviors). For the self-report version, the reliability coefficient for the support scale is .91, .85 for the involvement scale, and .87 for the depreciation scale. For the spouse description version, the reliability coefficient for the support scale is .93, .87 for the involvement scale, and .91 for the depreciation scale.

#### GENDER SCHEMA

Gender schema was assessed with the Sex-Role Inventory by Kuczyńska (2012). The Sex-Role Inventory is based on Bem's gender schema theory and consists of 35 items. Scores are computed on two scales: femininity (15 items) and masculinity (15 items). Based on the results on both scales, the gender schema is assessed. Participants give their answers on a 5-point Likert-type scale indicating how much each of the given trait describes them. The internal consistency reliability coefficient for the masculinity scale is 0.78 and .79 for the femininity scale.

#### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence was measured with two performance tests, the Emotional Intelligence Scale – Faces (SIE-T; Matczak et al., 2005) and the Emotion Understanding Test (TRE; Matczak & Piekarska, 2011), and one self-report questionnaire: the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale

(SEIS; Schutte et al., 1998) in the Polish adaptation of Ciechanowicz, Jaworowska, and Matczak (Jaworowska & Matczak, 2008).

The SIE-T measures facial emotion recognition ability and is based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) concept of ability emotional intelligence. It consists of 18 color photographs of male and female faces. Six emotion names are listed for each photo and participants decide if each of the listed emotions is expressed or not on the face. They indicate one of the answers: expressed, not expressed, difficult to say (for an example item, see Laskowska et al., 2015). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is .81 for adult females and .85 for adult males.

The TRE measures emotion understanding ability and is based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) concept of ability emotional intelligence. The TRE consists of five parts containing six items each. In Part 1, participants sort four given emotions in order from weakest to strongest. In Parts 2–5, they select one answer from a given set of four. In Part 2, they indicate the opposite emotion to the given one. In Part 3, they choose the emotion that is the component of the given emotion. In Part 4, they select the emotion that appears in the described situation. In Part 5, they indicate the conditions under which the given emotional reaction will most likely appear in the described situation. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  range from .78 to .80 in adult women and from .83 to .84 in adult men.

The SEIS is a self-report questionnaire based on the first model of emotional intelligence proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The SEIS is used as a trait emotional intelligence measure. It consists of 33 items. Participants indicate how much they agree with each sentence using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *definitely disagree*, 5 = *definitely*

### Procedure

The study was conducted individually. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. Participants were informed that the study concerned communication in marriage. They received verbal and written instructions on how to complete the tests and the questionnaires. Participants were also asked to read all instructions in the test booklets. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants before the study began. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics and Gender Differences

$t$  tests were used to assess gender differences in the measured variables (see Table 1). Statistically significant gender differences were found for four variables. Women received higher scores on perceived own depreciation ( $d = 0.34$ ), emotion understanding ability ( $d = 0.35$ ), and femininity ( $d = 0.79$ ). Men achieved higher masculinity scores ( $d = 0.67$ ).

These findings suggest the women and men generally do not differ in their perceptions of own and the spouse's communication. The only significant difference was the depreciation scale: women reported higher own depreciation than men. The result indicating higher emotion understanding ability in women than men is in accordance with

**TABLE 1.**

Descriptive Statistics of the Measured Variables

Variable	Total sample		Women		Men		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
SUP-O	41.63	5.94	42.07	6.24	41.18	5.64	.889
INV-O	32.32	5.88	31.41	6.16	33.24	5.47	-1.872
DEP-O	23.12	6.84	24.27	6.47	21.97	7.10	2.020*
SUP-S	39.43	7.62	39.08	7.79	39.77	7.48	-.538
INV-S	30.17	6.70	31.06	6.54	29.28	6.78	1.587
DEP-S	22.22	8.29	21.11	7.73	23.32	8.73	-1.598
TEI	124.17	12.93	125.61	12.39	122.71	13.39	1.331
ER	70.57	10.49	70.91	10.52	70.24	10.53	.373
EU	17.37	4.21	18.08	4.24	16.64	4.08	2.056*
FEM	56.02	6.61	58.46	6.23	53.58	6.08	4.731***
MAS	50.64	8.34	48.00	8.42	53.28	7.43	-3.962***

Note. SUP-O = perception of own support; INV-O = perception of own involvement; DEP-O = perception of own depreciation; SUP-S = perception of spouse's support; INV-S = perception of spouse's involvement; DEP-S = perception of spouse's depreciation; TEI = trait emotional intelligence; ER = emotion recognition ability; EU = emotion understanding ability; FEM = femininity scale; MAS = masculinity scale.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .

earlier studies. Many studies showed that women received higher scores in emotional intelligences tests (Maczak & Piekarska, 2011). The gender differences in femininity and masculinity observed in the current study overlap with earlier researches (Kuczyńska, 2012).

## Correlates of Perception of Communication in Marriage

Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficients were calculated to verify Hypothesis 1 and examine the correlates of the perception of marital communication in the total sample (see Table 2). Although Hypothesis 1 did not concern the associations with marriage duration, the correlation coefficients between marital communication and marriage duration were also calculated. The perceptions of own and the spouse's support and involvement

were positively related to trait emotional intelligence and femininity. Additionally, the perception of own involvement was positively associated with masculinity. Negative correlations were observed between the perception of own and spouse's involvement and marriage duration, own depreciation and trait emotional intelligence, and between the perception of the spouse's depreciation and emotion recognition ability.

According to Hypothesis 2, it was expected that the perception of the spouse's communication will be associated with the spouse's psychological characteristics. Pearson's  $r$  coefficients were calculated to verify this hypothesis (see Table 3). The husbands' perception of their wives' communication was not related to the wives' psychological characteristics. However, the wives' perception of their husbands' communication was associated with the husbands' psychological characteristics. The husbands' trait emotional intelligence and femininity were negatively correlated with their depreciation perceived by their wives. The husbands' support and involvement perceived by their wives were positively associated with their femininity.

**TABLE 2.**Pearson's  $r$  Coefficients Between Perception of Marital Communication and Other Measured Variables in the Total Sample

	Perception of own communication			Perception of spouse's communication		
	SUP	INV	DEP	SUP	INV	DEP
TEI	.55***	.46***	-.22**	.36***	.27**	-.13
ER	.08	.09	-.09	.14	.13	-.21*
EU	.00	-.12	-.07	.11	.13	-.13
FEM	.46***	.39***	-.04	.26**	.37**	-.13
MAS	.16	.29***	.13	.14	.09	.13
MDUR	-.08	-.25**	.00	-.15	-.28***	.10

Note. SUP = support; INV = involvement; DEP = depreciation; TEI = trait emotional intelligence; ER = emotion recognition; EU = emotion understanding; FEM = femininity scale; MAS = masculinity scale; MDUR = marriage duration;  $n = 138-142$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .

## Gender Schema and Perception of Marital Communication

In order to verify Hypothesis 3 that perception of marital communication is associated with gender schema, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated (see Table 4). Gender schema was distinguished based on the medians on both the femininity and masculinity scales. Scores on or above the median on femininity scale and below the median on masculinity scale indicated femininity. Scores on or above the median on masculinity scale and below the median on femininity scale indicated masculinity. Scores on or above the median on both femininity and masculinity scales indicated androgyny. Scores below the median on both femininity and masculinity scales indicated an undifferentiated gender schema.

**TABLE 3.**

Pearson's *r* Coefficients Between Perception of Spouse's Communication and Spouse's Psychological Characteristics

Husband's psychological characteristics	Wife's perception of husband's communication ( <i>n</i> = 70–71)			Wife's psychological characteristics	Husband's perception of wife's communication ( <i>n</i> = 68–71)		
	SUP	INV	DEP		SUP	INV	DEP
TEI	.04	.18	-.32**	TEI	.17	.12	-.14
ER	.00	-.04	-.08	ER	.13	.16	-.09
EU	.13	.01	-.11	EU	.17	.03	-.14
FEM	.36**	.39***	-.30*	FEM	-.05	.11	.01
MAS	-.11	.08	.05	MAS	-.02	-.01	.16

Note. SUP = support; INV = involvement; DEP = depreciation; TEI = trait emotional intelligence; ER = emotion recognition; EU = emotion understanding; FEM = femininity scale; MAS = masculinity scale.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .

**TABLE 4.**

Gender Schema and Perception of Marital Communication

		Gender schema				<i>F</i>	Tukey's HDS tests – significant differences
		U <i>n</i> = 37	M <i>n</i> = 31	F <i>n</i> = 32	A <i>n</i> = 42		
SUP-O	<i>M</i>	39.30	39.74	43.84	43.38	6.269***	
	<i>SD</i>	5.50	6.47	4.33	5.97		
INV-O	<i>M</i>	30.24	31.32	33.50	34.00	3.600*	A > U
	<i>SD</i>	5.98	5.08	5.63	5.99		
DEP-O	<i>M</i>	22.49	24.48	21.72	23.74	1.079	
	<i>SD</i>	5.87	7.92	7.51	6.22		
SUP-S	<i>M</i>	37.95	37.45	40.69	41.24	2.307	
	<i>SD</i>	5.47	8.10	9.19	7.20		
INV-S	<i>M</i>	28.84	27.68	32.19	31.64	3.774*	F > M
	<i>SD</i>	5.90	6.27	6.64	7.06		
DEP-S	<i>M</i>	20.84	26.65	20.97	21.12	4.022**	M > U, F, A
	<i>SD</i>	7.75	9.17	8.96	6.50		

Note. SUP-O = perception of own support; INV-O = perception of own involvement; DEP-O = perception of own depreciation; SUP-S = perception of spouse's support; INV-S = perception of spouse's involvement; DEP-S = perception of spouse's depreciation; U = undifferentiated; M = masculinity; F = femininity; A = androgyny.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .

Statistically significant differences were observed in the perception of own support and involvement, and in involvement and depreciation perceived by the spouse. Feminine and androgynous individuals described themselves as more supportive compared to masculine and undifferentiated individuals. Androgynous spouses reported higher own involvement compared to undifferentiated individuals. Feminine individuals perceived their spouses as more involved compared to masculine individuals. Masculine individuals perceived their spouses as more depreciating compared to feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated individuals.

## Determinants of Perception of Communication in Marriage - Regression Analyses

The statistically significant predictors of communication in marriage were examined using linear regression analyses. Gender, femininity, masculinity, trait emotional intelligence, emotional abilities, and marriage duration were entered as predictors of perception of own and spouse's communication in marriage (see Table 5). Results showed that the higher perception of own support was determined by higher own femininity and trait emotional intelligence. Higher perception of own involvement was predicted by male gender, higher own femininity, trait emotional intelligence, and shorter marriage duration. Determinants

**TABLE 5.**

Hierarchical Regression for Sex, Femininity, Masculinity, Trait Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Abilities and Marriage Duration as Predictors for Perception of Marital Communication in the Total Sample

Predictor	Perception of own support			involvement			depreciation		
	$\beta$	R2	F	$\beta$	R2	F	$\beta$	R2	F
		.37	10.446***		.39	11.766***		.22	5.182***
Gender	.12			.29***			-.37***		
FEM	.29**			.32***			.00		
MAS	-.10			-.03			.46***		
TEI	.45***			.32***			-.44***		
ER	.10			.12			-.04		
EU	-.02			-.14			-.13		
MDUR	-.05			-.22**			.06		
Predictor	Perception of own support			involvement			depreciation		
	$\beta$	R2	F	$\beta$	R2	F	$\beta$	R2	F
		.19	4.192***		.23	5.516***		.11	2.229*
Gender	.20*			.03			-.01		
FEM	.17			.27**			-.06		
MAS	-.06			-.03			.21*		
TEI	.30**			.17			-.20		
ER	.10			.08			-.19*		
EU	.10			.06			-.03		
MDUR	-.10			-.24**			.10		

Note. FEM = femininity scale; MAS = masculinity scale; TEI = trait emotional intelligence; ER = emotion recognition ability; EU = emotion understanding ability; MDUR = marriage duration; Gender coding: 1 = women, 2 = men.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .

**TABLE 6.**

Hierarchical Regression for Husband's Psychological Characteristics and Marriage Duration as Predictors for Wife's Perception of Husband's Communication in Marriage

Predictor	Wife's perception of husband's support			involvement			depreciation		
	$\beta$	R2	F	$\beta$	R2	F	$\beta$	R2	F
		.26	3.439**		.29	4.026**		.25	3.394**
FEM-M	.46***			.35**			-.21		
MAS-M	-.23			-.11			.31*		
TEI-M	-.08			.06			-.37**		
ER-M	-.07			-.12			-.03		
EU-M	.17			.09			-.17		
MDUR	-.23			-.38**			.21		

Note. FEM-M = husband's scores on femininity scale; MAS-M = husband's scores on masculinity scale; TEI-M = husband's trait emotional intelligence; ER-M = husband's emotion recognition ability; EU-M = husband's emotion understanding ability; MDUR = marriage duration.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .

of higher own depreciation were the female gender, higher masculinity, and lower trait emotional intelligence. Male gender and higher own trait emotional intelligence were predictors of support perceived in the spouse. Higher own femininity and shorter marriage duration predicted higher involvement perceived in the spouse. Higher depreciation perceived in the spouse was determined by higher own masculinity and lower own emotion recognition ability.

Regression analyses were also conducted to examine whether the spouses' psychological characteristics predict the perceptions of spouse communication in marriage. The analyses were conducted separately for wives and husbands. The husbands' femininity, masculinity, trait emotional intelligence, emotional abilities, and marriage duration were entered as predictors of the husbands' communication in marriage perceived by the wives (see Table 6). Higher husband support perceived by the wives was predicted by higher husband femininity. Higher husband involvement perceived by the wives was determined by higher husband femininity and shorter marriage duration. Higher husband depreciation perceived by the wives was predicted by higher husband masculinity and lower husband trait emotional intelligence. In separate regression analyses, the wives' femininity, masculinity, trait emotional intelligence, emotional abilities, and marriage duration were entered as predictors of the wives' communication in marriage perceived by the husbands. Results showed that wives' communication in marriage perceived by the husband was not predicted by the wives' psychological characteristics and marriage duration (support:  $F = 1.088, p > .05$ ; involvement:  $F = 1.068, p > .05$ ; depreciation:  $F = 1.699, p > .05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The aim of the current study was to examine the correlates and determinants of the perception of communication in marriage. The obtained results are partially in accordance with the hypotheses.

Both trait and ability emotional intelligence was associated with marital communication. However, they may play different roles in the perception of communication in marriage. The appraisal of own emotional competencies (trait emotional intelligence) seems to play a more important role in the perception of marital communication compared to objectively measured emotional abilities. Many earlier studies confirmed that trait emotional intelligence is more strongly associated with adjustment than ability emotional intelligence (Piekarśka, 2020). Ability emotional intelligence can be viewed as potential capacities that can be used only when they are translated into practical skills (i.e., emotional competences; c.f. Mikolajczak et al., 2008; Zeidner & Olnick-Shemesh, 2010) and when an individual trusts their emotional abilities (Gohm et al., 2005). The obtained results showing the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and marriage communication are consistent with the study by Zmaczyński-Witek, Kamborska, and Rogowska (2019).

Emotion recognition ability was slightly associated with the perception of spouse communication. Higher level of this emotional ability reduced the tendency to perceive the spouse as depreciating. Accurate emotion recognition in others may enable the perception of other people's

real intentions and understanding of other's behaviors what may promote creating of positive relationships between spouses (Fitness, 2001).

Similar to the study by Burger and Jacobson (1979) the current findings indicated that higher femininity is linked to better marital communication skills. In particular, higher femininity promotes the perception of higher own and spouse's support and involvement. In turn, higher masculinity was associated with a higher perception of own involvement. Some earlier studies also indicated a positive relationship between masculinity and marital quality (Van den Troost, 2005).

The regression analyses indicated that perception of marital communication was, above all, associated with trait emotional intelligence, femininity, and biological gender. However, particular aspects of marital communication have different determinants. In the current study, both biological gender and psychological gender were important predictors of marital communication. However, the study by Yelsma and Brown (1985) indicated that psychological gender plays a more important role in communication behaviors than biological gender. The lack of consistency in these results may be due to a different aspect of marital communication that was studied. Yelsma and Brown (1985) studied marital conflict management. The current study also showed that individuals in marriages with a longer duration perceived lower own and spouse involvement. This finding is in accordance with earlier studies showing negative associations between relationship duration and relationship maintenance (Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013).

The observed gender differences in the relationship between spouse psychological characteristics and the perception of spouse communication are very interesting. Husbands' psychological characteristics may affect the wives' perception of the husbands' communication, and the husbands' perception of the wives' communication was not associated with the wives' psychological characteristics. Similar gender differences were also observed in earlier studies. The husbands' self-esteem was related to the wives' perception of the husbands' support whereas the wives' self-esteem was not associated with the husbands' perception of the wives' communication in marriage (Kaźmierczak & Płopa, 2012). A study conducted among couples showed that male ability emotional intelligence was poorly correlated with female relationship satisfaction whereas female ability emotional intelligence and male relationship satisfaction were not associated (Brackett et al., 2005).

The hypothesis on the relationship between the perception of marital communication and gender schema was partly confirmed. As expected, androgynous individuals perceived higher own support and involvement. Feminine individuals perceived higher own support and spouse's involvement, and masculine individuals perceived their spouse as more depreciating. These results are consistent with earlier studies showing that androgynous spouses can handle marital conflict more constructively (Yelsma & Brown, 1985) and have higher social competences and adaptability (Bem & Lewis, 1975), and that feminine and androgynous individuals are more empathic (Karniol et al., 1998). Higher empathy, social competences, and conflict management skills should foster better communication in marriage.

In summary, the current study showed that the perception of communication in marriage is, above all, associated with trait emotional

intelligence and gender schema. The results also showed gender differences in the relationship between spouse psychological characteristics and their communication perceived by their spouse. Only the husbands' psychological characteristics were associated with their communication perceived by their wives. Future studies conducted on larger samples may examine the causes of such gender differences. The results of the current study may have practical applications. They are especially valuable for schema therapy and marriage therapy.

#### DATA AVAILABILITY

Data will be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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