



Marital communication and relationship satisfaction – the differential role of gender schemas

Komunikacja w małżeństwie a zadowolenie ze związku
– różnicująca rola schematów płci¹

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Abstract: The aim of the study was to examine whether gender schemas differentiate marital communication and relationship satisfaction. Most analyses are conducted with reference to biological sex. Psychological gender expands the construct of gender differences. The study involved 400 people (200 women and 200 men) who were married, economically active and had at least one child. The respondents completed the Marital Communication Questionnaire (KKM), the Masculinity and Femininity Scale (SMiK), and the Relationship Satisfaction Scale. The results obtained indicate a differential role of gender schemas in terms of preferred conversational styles. Psychological gender does not affect relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the gender schemas evident in the four psychological gender types differentiate the relationship of spouses' communication with their ratings of relationship satisfaction. To conclude, taking the construct of psychological gender into account in analyses is important from the point of view of research as well as practice. Firstly, it deepens knowledge on relationship satisfaction and communication in marriage; secondly, the knowledge gained may find practical application, e.g. in marriage therapy.

Keywords: communication in marriage, relationship satisfaction, gender schemas, psychological gender

Abstrakt: Celem prowadzonych badań było sprawdzenie czy schematy płci różnicują komunikację w małżeństwie oraz zadowolenie ze związku. Najczęściej analizy prowadzone są w uwzględnieniu płci biologicznej. Płeć psychologiczna rozszerza konstrukt różnic płciowych. W badaniach uczestniczyło 400 osób (200 kobiet i 200 mężczyzn), będących z związku małżeńskim, aktywnych zawodowo, mających co najmniej jedno dziecko. Badani wypełniali Kwestionariusz Komunikacji w Małżeństwie (KKM), Skalę Męskości i Kobiecości (SMiK), Skalę Satysfakcji ze Związku. Otrzymane wyniki wskazują na różnicującą rolę schematów płci w zakresie preferowanych stylów konwersacji. Płeć psychologiczna nie wpływa na zadowolenie ze związku. Ponadto schematy płci widoczne w czterech typach płci psychologicznej różnicują relację komunikacji małżonków z oceną ich zadowolenia ze związku. Konkludując, włączenie konstruktu płci psychologicznej do analiz jest ważne z punktu widzenia badań, jak i praktyki. Po pierwsze, pogłębia wiedzę na relacji zadowolenia ze związku i komunikacji w małżeństwie, po drugie zdobyta wiedza może znaleźć praktyczne zastosowanie np. w terapii małżeństw.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja w małżeństwie, zadowolenie ze związku, schematy płci, płeć psychologiczna

Introduction

Issues of marriage and social communication are willingly addressed in scholarly works (e.g., Dakowicz, 2021; Jankowska, 2016; Krok & Lewoska, 2016; Miluska, 2018; Wałęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019; Wysota, 2015). Analyses are often conducted from the perspective of relationship tenure, age of the spouses, their biological sex, and the fact of having children. In the research presented herein, the author decided to introduce a new variable, namely gender

schemas - given their potential role in modifying the relationship of marital communication with relationship satisfaction.

Justifying the purpose of the study, it is important to note that a successful marriage is still one of the greatest values in a person's life and the search for factors that modify and determine relationship success remains a scientific priority (Abramiuk & Konopka, 2020). Moreover, psychological gender expands the

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construct of gender differences. While the concepts of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ remain comprehensible to everyone due to the fact that they refer to specific biological differences, the concept of genus - the male and female gender schema - is a more complicated term. Research exploring gender differences primarily focuses on biological sex (e.g., Dakowicz, 2021; Wałęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019). Accordingly, the purpose of the analyses conducted was to examine whether the gender schemas evident in the four psychological gender types differentiate the relationship between spouses’ communication and their ratings of relationship satisfaction. Therefore, a conceptualization of the key variables will be presented below.

1. Marital communication and relationship satisfaction

Historical retrospection reveals that the basis of modern marriage originated in the culture of ancient Rome, and its further development was influenced by the medieval doctrine of the Church, the Reformation era, and the social impact of the Industrial Revolution (Rostowski, 2009). When writing about marriage rather than family, it is important to emphasize that marriage is a subsystem that operates within the family system. The participants in this subsystem are the spouses between whom the processes of interaction and communication take place. Marriage, as well as satisfaction with it, is constantly changing through the mutual exchange of information. Modern marital relationships are not only different from traditional ones (the husband is the head of the family, and the woman takes care of the household), but they are also undergoing a gradual transformation. The change involves the position of men and women in marriage, and in society in general. Some mention about the matriarchy of the industrial era because men’s responsibilities are mainly reduced to the material sphere, while women are forced to take on many roles, including those once performed by a husband and father. This makes the woman the central figure in the family, which can affect gender role schemas (Lipińska-Grobelny, 2014).

When dealing with marital problems, the matter of marriage durability and quality is of significant importance. This issue is described using many different terms. Sęk referred to marital success, Rostowski indicated marital selection, Braun-Galkowska wrote about marital success, while Janicka and Niebrzydowski about marital satisfaction, contentment, and happiness. Despite the divergence in terminology, all of the researchers mentioned agree that a well-matched and satisfied couple experiences happiness, both from being together and from having a partner.

Satisfaction with marriage prompts the topic of its conditioning and modifying variables. An attempt to organize them was made, among others, by M. Braun-Galkowska, who distinguished internal factors of success in marriage, such as, for example, the personality of the partners, communication processes between the spouses, and external factors represented, e.g., by the material or family situation of the spouses (Lipińska-Grobelny, 2014). Relationship communication is the subject of interest in this study. Mutual trust as well as perceived intimacy and affection promote ‘unveiling’ in the marital subsystem (Dakowicz, 2021; Jankowska, 2016; Ryś, 1999; Wałęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019; Wysota, 2015). Happy couples are more likely to experience nonverbal positive messages and a high degree of commitment to the relationship. Couples who are dissatisfied with their marriage tend to perceive their partner’s messages as more negative than the sender intended. In addition, there is a tendency to control and devalue the spouse (Dakowicz, 2021; Kaźmierczak & Płopa, 2005).

Therefore, the well-known and frequently applied concept of marital communication by Kaźmierczak and Płopa (2005) was used to describe relationship communication. The authors introduced the concept of conversational style and defined it as a unique way of conveying, encoding, and interpreting messages. They emphasized that there are no completely right or wrong conversational styles, and that the primary task of spouses is to choose a mode of communication that promotes mutual understanding and intimacy. The following were distinguished in marriage: 1) *supportive communication* which boils down to showing respect and interest in the

partner, care demonstrated in everyday situations, and active participation in the process of problem solving; 2) *engaged communication* based on mutual understanding and closeness, emphasized by a high rating of the partner's attractiveness; 3) *deprecating communication*, aggressive towards the partner, based on the desire to dominate and control their actions. Kąmierzak and Płopa (2005) confirmed the relationship between perceived support and commitment and relationship satisfaction as well as between depreciation of the partner and lack of satisfaction with the marriage in both men and women. In addition, men were more satisfied with their relationship than their life partners, whereas women experienced less intimacy, behavioral similarity, self-actualization, and greater disappointment (Płopa & Rostowski, 2005). With this in mind, it seems interesting to ask the following question: "What might this look like for the gender schemas that underlie psychological gender?" Therefore, Sandra Lipsitz Bem's gender schema theory will be presented synthetically in the following section of the article.

2. Bem's gender schema theory

Until 1973, the prevailing view was that masculinity and femininity were part of a single dimension, being its opposite poles. Masculinity was at one end of this continuum, and femininity was at the other end. The more feminine a person was, the less masculine they were, and conversely, the more masculine they were, the less feminine they were. In 1974, Bem described a new approach to this issue, claiming that some people exhibit both traits considered masculine and those perceived as typically feminine. Bem referred to the combination in one person of traits and behaviors specific to one sex and the other as psychological androgyny (Bem, 1974; Lipińska-Grobelny, 2016).

By treating masculinity and femininity as two independent orthogonal dimensions, four configurations of biological and psychological traits can be created, which correspond to the psychological gender types listed below:

1. sexually defined individuals who have a gender schema, with psychological characteristics that correspond to their biological sex (feminine women and masculine men);
2. sexually cross-defined individuals (gender-aschematic individuals) with psychological characteristics corresponding to the opposite sex (feminine men and masculine women);
3. androgynous individuals (gender-aschematic individuals) with both masculine and feminine characteristics, regardless of their biological sex; and
4. sexually indeterminate, gender-aschematic individuals who have little to no feminine or masculine characteristics (regardless of their biological sex).

So what is the gender schema that manifests itself in psychological gender types? It is a cognitive structure that organizes and directs the processing of self-related information. The resulting structure acts as a filter, i.e., on the one hand, it directs the individual to seek specific information, and on the other hand, it facilitates the assimilation of data consistent with the dimensions that exist in the schema. An individual who has a developed gender schema should: 1) process information about oneself in the area of a given category with ease; 2) extract from memory with greater freedom those behaviors that are related to the particular area; 3) predict one's own future behavior in the given area; and 4) resist schema-incompatible information about oneself. According to Bem, only sexually defined individuals possess a schema of masculinity or femininity. The former relates to task functioning, dexterity, and assertiveness, while the latter relates to social and emotional functioning. The other types - androgynous, cross-defined, and sexually indeterminate - are treated by Bem as gender-aschematic (Lipińska-Grobelny, 2016).

3. Issues of own research

The purpose of this study was to examine whether gender schemas differentiate marital communication and relationship satisfaction. Analyses so far have been

conducted mainly with reference to biological sex. Jackson, Miller, Oka, and Henry (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of 226 independent studies with a total of 101,110 respondents and confirmed that there is little difference between men and women in their assessment of marriage quality. Women were slightly less satisfied with their marriage than men. However, the authors of that study noted that such differences did not occur in non-clinical samples. In contrast, Krok and Lewoska (2016) carried out a national study and found statistically significant differences, but only on the Disappointment scale from Plopa and Rostowski's Well-Matched Marriage Questionnaire. Women experienced slightly more relationship disillusionment than men, which the researchers explained by the fact that women participated in carrying out household and caregiving responsibilities to a greater extent.

Psychological gender not only expands the construct of gender differences but is also an important determinant of human behavior in interpersonal relationships (Starr & Zurbriggen, 2017). Mandal (2004, 2020) undertook to verify the relationship between psychological gender and biological sex and marital happiness. In women, the androgynous type was the happiest. In men, a high sense of happiness was associated with high scores on the femininity scale. On the other hand, Krok and Lewoska (2016), who studied 105 couples ($N = 210$ individuals), indicated psychological gender differences in marital satisfaction with respect to intimacy and disappointment. The mean level for intimacy was highest among androgynous individuals. In terms of disappointment, female subjects scored highest, differing significantly from androgynous and male subjects.

Next to sexual intercourse, marital communication is considered to be the most important bonding factor between spouses (Carlson, Miller & Rudd, 2020; Dakowicz & Dakowicz, 2021; Hou, Jiang & Wang, 2019; Ryś, 1999). In the absence of effective communication, love alone cannot guarantee the continuation of a relationship for long. In contrast, the likelihood of being in a marriage is much higher in case of proper communication, even when love fades (Dakowicz & Dakowicz, 2021).

In this article, the interrelations between marital communication and relationship satisfaction were analyzed from the perspective of psychological gender, which was considered (in previous research) in relation to the individual variables mentioned rather than the relationship between them (e.g., Krok & Lewoska, 2016). Therefore, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Does psychological gender differentiate marital communication ratings in terms of: 1.1. self-rated supportive communication, 1.2. self-rated engaged communication, 1.3. self-rated deprecating communication?
2. Does psychological gender differentiate partner's assessment of marital communication in terms of: 2.1. supportive communication, 2.2. engaged communication, 2.3. deprecating communication?
3. Does psychological gender differentiate marital satisfaction?
4. Which marital communication styles are critical to the level of satisfaction with relationship in the following type: 4.1. sexually determined, 4.2. androgynous, 4.3. sexually indeterminate, 4.4. sexually cross-defined?

4. Method

4.1. Research group

The research was conducted on a group of 400 people (200 women and 200 men) aged 21-59 ($M = 40.8$, $SD = 8.6$). All the subjects were married for a minimum of one year, were economically active, and had at least one child. This selection of subjects was due to the need to control the demographic variables listed above, as they are not indifferent to relationship satisfaction scores. Women's age ranged between 22 and 56 years ($M = 39.6$, $SD = 7.5$), while men's ages oscillated between 21 and 59 years ($M = 41.9$, $SD = 9.5$). The respondents primarily had a college degree (69%) or completed secondary school education (25%). Only 6% of the subjects had basic vocational education. The entire procedure, conducted online, was prepared in accordance with the principles of

the Declaration of Helsinki, which means that the subjects were informed about voluntary participation in the study. They were given information about the purpose and procedure of the study and were assured of anonymity as well as of the fact that the results would be used for scientific purposes only. The subjects were provided with a link that initially allowed them to read information about the entire study; after consenting, they proceeded to complete particulars and three questionnaires, beginning with the Marital Communication Questionnaire, then moving on to the Masculinity and Femininity Scale, and ending with a scale to assess relationship satisfaction.

4.2. Research tools

In seeking answers to the research questions formulated earlier, three research tools with satisfactory reliability indices were used.

The Masculinity and Femininity Scale (SMiK) worked out by Lipińska-Grobelny & Gorczycka was used to measure masculinity and femininity, including psychological gender. The scale is composed of 20 adjectives, of which 10 describe feminine characteristics and 10 describe masculine traits. The respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale the extent to which each characteristic characterized them, where 1 meant 'I am definitely not like that' and 5 meant 'I am definitely like that'. Reliability analysis was performed by assessing the Cronbach's *alpha* internal consistency coefficient. Based on the results, the tool had satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's *alpha* for Femininity = 0.85 and for Masculinity = 0.76).

Marital communication quality was measured using Plopa and Kaźmierczak's Marital Communication Questionnaire (KKM). The KKM has two versions: the first is a self-assessment of conversational style and the second involves an assessment of partner's communication style. Each version consists of 30 items. Subjects respond to each item using a five-point scale, where 1 means they never behave as described by the given statement and 5 means they always do. Two versions of the KKM were used in this study. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's *alpha* (for the first version, the

coefficient for support was 0.88, for engagement - 0.77, and for depreciation - 0.86; for the second version, partner's behavior assessment, the coefficient for support was 0.91, for engagement - 0.80, and for depreciation - 0.89). According to the tool's authors, the higher the support and engagement in communication, the higher the overall quality of the relationship. In contrast, an increase in depreciation is associated with a drop in the mentioned relationship quality.

As in Chybicka and Karasiewicz's (2009) study, marital satisfaction ratings were measured using an index created by summing responses to the following three questions: "How satisfied are you with the relationship you are currently in?"; "How satisfied are you with your partner?"; "How satisfied are you with the relationship between you?". The respondents provided answers on a scale from 1 - very dissatisfied to 7 - very satisfied. Cronbach's *alpha* for this measurement was 0.89.

5. Results

All calculations were performed in IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. The number of subjects and central limit theorems allowed for the application of parametric tests. The presentation will begin with descriptive statistics (see: Table 1). The mean score on the supportive communication self-assessment was 40.59 with standard deviation of 6.71 (*Min* = 10, *Max* = 50). The mean score on the engaged communication self-assessment oscillated around 31.01 with standard deviation of 6.23 (*Min* = 9, *Max* = 45). Finally, the mean score on the self-reported deprecating communication reached a value of 23.18 with standard deviation of 6.37 (*Min* = 11, *Max* = 55). Scores for assessing partner's conversational style were lower, but were in line with the general trend, namely, the respondents positively rated their level of support and engagement in marital communication. They evaluated their partner's support and commitment in a similarly favorable manner. Scores below average referred to deprecating communication. For masculinity, femininity, and relationship satisfaction, the respondents scored above average (see: Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the studied variables

Variables	Min	Max	M	SD
Relationship satisfaction	3	21	15.79	4.31
Supportive communication (self)	10	50	40.59	6.71
Engaged communication (self)	9	45	31.01	6.23
Deprecating communication (self)	11	55	23.18	6.37
Supportive communication (partner)	10	50	38.38	8.08
Engaged communication (partner)	9	45	29.26	6.57
Deprecating communication (partner)	11	55	22.87	7.59
Masculinity	10	50	36.15	6.79
Femininity	10	50	34.57	5.97

5.1. Marital communication and psychological gender types

The first research problem in questions 1 and 2 related to the differential impact of psychological gender on marital communication (self-assessment and evaluation of partner’s conversational style). A one-way analysis of variance with Bonferroni post hoc test confirmed that gender schemas differentiate supportive communication (self) to a moderate degree ($\eta^2 = 0.07$) and engaged communication (self) to a degree close to strong ($\eta^2 = 0.1$). Androgynous individuals were characterized by the highest rating of these modes of communication, while sexually inde-

terminate individuals were characterized by the lowest scores. Those with a gender schema placed themselves in the middle of this set, although the mean score obtained ($M = 40.82, SD = 6.6$) still indicated a high self-assessment of supportive communication. There was a similar distribution of results for engaged communication. In contrast, psychological gender types were indifferent to deprecating communication ($F(3,396) = 0.86, Sig = 0.45$), (see: Table 2).

The results given in Table 3 relate, in turn, to the differential effect of gender schemas on partner communication ratings at the level of statistical trend. This is indicated by the weak effect sizes. Partner’s supportive communication and engaged

Table 2. Marital communication (self) and psychological gender types

Psychological gender types		M	SD	F(3,396)	Sig	Post hoc Bonferroni
Supportive communication (self)	Determined (N = 142)	40.82	6.6	9.35	<.001 $\eta^2 = 0.07$	1-2 1-3 2-3
	Androgynous (N = 88)	43.18	6.29			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	38.35	6.71			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	40.62	6.19			
Engaged communication (self)	Determined (N = 142)	31.09	6.63	14.70	<.001 $\eta^2 = 0.1$	1-2 1-3 2-3 2-4 3-4
	Androgynous (N = 88)	34.08	4.85			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	28.53	5.72			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	31.25	6.07			
Deprecating communication (self)	Determined (N = 142)	23.61	6.31	0.86	n.s.	---
	Androgynous (N = 88)	22.56	6.22			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	22.8	6.22			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	23.92	7.11			

Table 3. Marital communication (partner) and psychological gender types

Psychological gender types		M	SD	F(3,396)	Sig	Post hoc Bonferroni
Supportive communication (partner)	Determined (N = 142)	38.79	8.59	2.14	.095 <i>eta</i> ² = 0.02	---
	Androgynous (N = 88)	39.80	7.39			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	37.08	7.4			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	37.79	8.96			
Engaged communication (partner)	Determined (N = 142)	29.15	6.79	2.36	.071 <i>eta</i> ² = 0.02	2-3
	Androgynous (N = 88)	30.7	6.66			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	28.26	6.02			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	29.35	6.74			
Deprecating communication (partner)	Determined (N = 142)	23.63	7.62	1.43	n.s.	---
	Androgynous (N = 88)	22.05	7.35			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	22.16	7.16			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	23.83	8.70			

Table 4. Marriage satisfaction and psychological gender types

Psychological gender types		M	SD	F (3,396)	Sig	Post hoc Bonferroni
Satisfaction with marriage	Determined (N = 142)	15.78	4.14	0.74	n.s.	---
	Androgynous (N = 88)	16.13	4.69			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	15.36	4.38			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	16.21	3.95			

communication styles obtained a small effect size (*eta*² = 0.02). Therefore, it is possible to speak not of statistically significant differences between psychological gender types, but of an emerging trend. Androgynous individuals rated partner’s supportive and engaged communication highest, while sexually indeterminate people rated it lowest (see: Table 3).

5.2. Marriage satisfaction and psychological gender types

The second research problem concerned psychological gender and levels of satisfaction with marriage. The results of a one-way analysis of variance did not confirm statistically significant differences (*F*(3,396) = 0.74, *Sig* = 0.53). The different psychological gender types (gender-schematic and gender-aschematic individuals) present similar levels of relationship satisfaction (see: Table 4).

5.3. Marital communication and relationship satisfaction - the differential role of psychological gender

The final research question was: “Which marital communication styles are critical to the level of satisfaction with relationship in the following type: 4.1. sexually determined, 4.2. androgynous, 4.3. sexually indeterminate, 4.4. sexually cross-defined?” For this purpose, a stepwise regression analysis was performed (see: Tables 5-8).

For gender-specific individuals (feminine women and masculine men), both models were fit to the data (model 1 - *F*(1,140) = 127.87, *Sig* < 0.001, model 2 - *F*(2,139) = 70.01, *Sig* < 0.001). In the first model, only one variable, i.e., *supportive communication (partner)*, was introduced; one more, i.e., *deprecating communication (self)*, was added in the second model. The model with two variables explained 50% of the

variation in the dependent variable of *relationship satisfaction*. The standardized coefficient values were $\beta = 0.64$, $Sig < 0.001$ for partner's supportive communication and $\beta = -0.16$, $Sig = 0.01$ for deprecating communication (self), respectively. On that basis, the stronger the spouse's supportive communication and the weaker the respondent's deprecating communication, the stronger is the relationship satisfaction of sexually defined individuals (see: Table 5).

Moving on to the summary of the second model, it was fit to the data for the androgynous individuals ($F(2,85) = 31.72$, $Sig < 0.001$) and explained 42% of the variability in marital satisfaction. The mentioned

Table 5. Stepwise regression, dependent variable - relationship satisfaction of sexually defined individuals (gender-schematic), (N = 142)

Independent variables	β	t	Adjusted R^2	$F(df1,df2)$
Model 1				
Supportive communication (partner)	.69	11.31***	.47	$F(1,140) = 127.87***$
Model 2				
Supportive communication (partner)	.64	10.22***		
Deprecating communication (self)	-.16	-2.61**	.50	$F(2,139) = 70.01***$

Explanations: ** $Sig < 0.01$, *** $Sig < 0.001$

Table 6. Stepwise regression, dependent variable - relationship satisfaction of androgynous individuals (gender-aschematic), (N = 88)

Independent variables	β	t	Adjusted R^2	$F(df1,df2)$
Model 1				
Supportive communication (partner)	.62	7.35***	.38	$F(1,86) = 54.12***$
Model 2				
Supportive communication (partner)	.45	4.16***	.42	$F(2,85) = 31.72***$
Deprecating communication (partner)	-.27	-2.47*		

Explanations: * $Sig < 0.05$, *** $Sig < 0.001$

variability was most predictive of the level of supportive communication from the partner ($\beta = 0.45$, $Sig < 0.001$) and of aggressive deprecating communication from the partner ($\beta = -0.27$, $Sig = 0.05$). For the androgynous respondents, it was important whether their spouse showed support and interest and actively participated in the problem-solving process. This raised the overall marriage quality rating. In contrast, a deprecating partner displaying an aggressive style in marital communication significantly reduced their relationship satisfaction (see: Table 6).

For the last two groups - gender-aschematic individuals - the regression models were also fit to the data, explaining 52% of the marriage satisfaction of those with low scores on Masculinity and Femininity and 56% of the variability in relationship quality of masculine women and feminine men (see: Tables 7-8). The standardized coefficient values in the sexually indeterminate group were $\beta = 0.43$, $Sig < 0.001$ for supportive communication (partner) and $\beta = 0.34$, $Sig < 0.001$ for supportive communication (self), respectively. On that basis, the stronger the spouse's supportive communication and the higher self-assessment of one's own supportive communication style, the stronger the relationship satisfaction of sexually indeterminate individuals (see: Table 7).

Table 7. Stepwise regression, dependent variable - relationship satisfaction of sexually indeterminate individuals (gender-aschematic), (N = 118)

Independent variables	β	t	Adjusted R^2	$F(df1,df2)$
Model 1				
Supportive communication (partner)	.69	10.17***	.47	$F(1,116) = 103.51***$
Model 2				
Supportive communication (partner)	.43	4.47***	.52	$F(2,115) = 63.27***$
Supportive communication (self)	.34	3.56***		

Explanations: * $Sig < 0.05$, *** $Sig < 0.001$

The standardized coefficient values in the sexually cross-defined group were in turn $\beta = 0.42$, $Sig < 0.01$ for supportive communication (partner) and $\beta = 0.39$, $Sig < 0.01$ for supportive communi-

cation (self). As was the case for sexually indeterminate individuals, the stronger the spouse's supportive communication and the higher the self-assessment of one's own supportive communication style, the stronger the relationship satisfaction of masculine women and feminine men (see: Table 8).

Table 8. Stepwise regression, dependent variable - relationship satisfaction of sexually cross-defined individuals (gender-aschematic), (N = 52)

Independent variables	β	t	Adjusted R^2	$F(df1,df2)$
Model 1				
Supportive communication (partner)	.72	7.34***	.51	$F(1,50) = 53.81***$
Model 2				
Supportive communication (partner)	.42	2.93**	.56	$F(2,49) = 33.88***$
Supportive communication (self)	.39	2.69**		

Explanations: **Sig < 0.01, ***Sig < 0.001

Conclusion and discussion of results

The purpose of the analyses conducted was to examine whether the gender schemas evident in the four psychological gender types differentiate the relationship between spouses' communication and their ratings of relationship satisfaction. This is a scientifically and practically important issue. It is worth noting that on the one hand, a successful marriage is still the most frequently indicated value in the lives of Polish women and men (Abramiuk & Konopka, 2020); on the other hand, marital satisfaction is very strongly related to marital communication (Jankowska, 2016; Walęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019).

The first research problem related to differences between psychological gender types in marital communication, both self-assessment of one's own conversational style and assessment of partner's style. The results obtained showed that psychological gender significantly differentiated supportive (self) and engaged (self) communication. Ratings

of partner's supportive and engaged communication were differentiated by gender schemas at the trend level. The androgynous (gender-aschematic) type scored highest and the sexually indeterminate type scored lowest. Referring to the results obtained, one can mention the position of Bem, who believed that psychological androgyny is the optimal type of psychological gender for good functioning. It is characterized by a wider repertoire of behaviors both communal and instrumental, which gives space in marital communication, for example, to show support and commitment. Krok and Lewoska (2016) further confirmed that androgynous individuals were characterized by the strongest sense of intimacy in the relationship. On the other hand, the sexually indeterminate type - due to a limited number of masculine and feminine characteristics - may manifest difficulties in adapting to the demands of social life. The consequence of this aschematic nature may be less interest in the partner's successes and problems, daily life, or conflict resolution, thus revealing weaker support and commitment in marriage.

The second research problem concerned the satisfaction with the formal relationship experienced by gender-schematic and gender-aschematic individuals. The results for biological sex are divergent; however, in case of psychological gender there are no statistically significant differences in the assessment of relationship quality. The androgynous type, the sexually defined type, the sexually indeterminate type, and the sexually cross-defined type presented similar ratings of relationship satisfaction. This is likely due to the reshaping of the gender role system and the increasing compatibility of partners in terms of relationship expectations, regardless of their biological sex.

The third research problem addressed the issue of the modifying effect of gender schemas on the relationship of marital communication to relationship satisfaction. All regression models were significant and explained between 42% of the variability in satisfaction with marriage of androgynous individuals and 56% for the sexually cross-defined type. Of the six conversation styles, one played a key role in assessing relationship quality. It was the partner's supportive style, manifested in showing respect, taking an in-

terest in the problems and needs of the spouse, and showing concern in everyday situations. Its high intensity significantly improved relationship satisfaction of both gender-schematic and gender-aschematic subjects. In addition, avoiding an aggressive style in communication was the second important determinant of relationship quality of feminine women and masculine men as well as androgynous individuals. Sexually defined individuals had to take into account their own need to dominate but also to control their partner's actions (self-deprecating style). Androgynous individuals exhibiting high levels of reactivity and assertiveness (Lipińska-Grobelny, 2006) expected their partners to avoid deprecating communication (Partner deprecating style). In contrast, feminine men and masculine women as well as sexually indeterminate individuals indicated - in addition to their partner's supportive style - the importance of their own supportive style in shaping

marital satisfaction to be manifested by situationally appropriate levels of expressive traits in men and instrumental traits in women.

In conclusion, taking the psychological gender construct into account in analyses is important for research as well as practice. Firstly, it deepens the knowledge of relationship satisfaction and communication in marriage; secondly, the knowledge gained can find practical application, e.g., in marriage therapy. Regarding the limitations of the research conducted, the correlational nature of the research and the smaller group of respondents in the androgynous and sexually cross-defined types can be noted. On the other hand, the differences and correlations observed are interesting enough to make it worthwhile to continue the analyses with the inclusion of the socio-demographic variables that were intentionally controlled herein, i.e., marital tenure, having/not having children, and being economically active or not.

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