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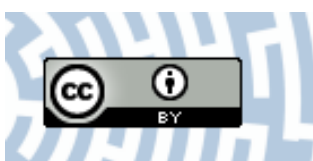
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MARITAL DIALOGUE AS A CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE TO DISSATISFACTION IN MARRIAGE AND ITS PREDICTORS

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Abstract: A lot of research in marriage psychology has been focused on marital conflicts, constructive versus destructive responses to dissatisfaction in marriage, and especially on how couples behave when discussing conflictual issues. Based on the literature review, we assume that partner support and bonding behaviours are positively related to dialogue as an active and constructive problem solving strategy during marital conflicts. We also put forward a hypothesis that there is a difference in predictors of dialogue between women and men in marital conflicts. In the present study, two main questions were posed: (1) do bonding behaviours (conciliatory behaviours, behaviours undertaken for the sake of the relationship and the partner, and physical closeness) and partner support constitute statistically significant predictors of engaging in dialogue as a constructive response to marital conflict? And (2) are there any differences between women and men as far as these predictors are concerned? A total of 180 young, married people participated in the study (102 wives and 79 husbands), all of whom had been married for 5 years or less. The mean age of the participants was 26 years (M = 26,26; SD = 3,04), while mean marriage duration was approximately 2 years. The obtained results indicate that significant predictors of engaging in marital dialogue amongst young couples are the bonding behaviours undertaken for the sake of the relationship and the partner, as well as the physical closeness and certain types of partner support. Moreover, essential differences between women and men have been revealed.

Keywords: Marital dialogue, conflicts, partner support, bonding behaviours.

1. Introduction

Choosing a partner with whom to start a family is one of the most important and stress-inducing decisions a young person has to face (Bakiera, 2013; Oleś, 2012). The initial stage of marriage involves many challenges, such as the need to accept changes in the lives of each spouse, confronting views and conflicting expectations, tolerating disappointment with

everyday marital interactions. Young spouses are therefore a group of people particularly prone to experiencing conflicts. Emerging conflicts may present an opportunity for a couple to develop closeness and mutual understanding, but they may also carry the risk of growing dissatisfaction. The problems that often constitute the source of conflicts leading to marital separation include: breaking emotional ties with the partner and lack of love, character/ temperamental incompatibility (differences in aspirations, values, personalities), destructive forms of conflict resolution (violent arguments, abusive words, "silent treatments"), financial conflicts (problems arising from lack of money, inconsistent opinions on spending , rationing money by one of the spouses, wastefulness), as well as spouse's unfaithfulness or alcohol abuse (Przybyła-Basista, 2006).

On the one hand, an unsatisfactory marriage may result in an increase of the likelihood of physical illness or mental health disorder (Fincham, and Beach, 1999; Robles et al., 2014), and on the other, it carries the risk of a relationship breakdown (Gottman, and Levenson, 2000). Researchers distinguish between early and late divorces (Gottman, and Levenson, 2000). According to Gottman (2006), up to a half of all divorces occur in the first seven years of marriage. For this reason, spouses should make efforts to heighten the chance of a successful marriage (Gottman, 2006).

1.1. Problem-solving strategies in intimate relationships

Conflicts in marriage occur naturally and are characteristic of close relationships between two people who confront their views from time to time and thus reveal differences of opinion or mutual expectations. What is important, according to the results of longitudinal research conducted by Gottman (1994) that covered over 200 married couples and spanned over 20 years, the conflict does not necessarily have to be a problem for the couple itself, the real problem is whether the spouses can solve them. As Gottman (1994) states, adverse reactions to conflict that trigger a spiral of mutual negative interactions leading to a marital disaster included: criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling, that is, a total withdrawal from interaction. All these elements of interaction were predictors of divorce in the earlier stages of marriage, and in turn, the lack of positive interactions was the critical factor for late divorce (Gottman, 1994). Similar conclusions also arise from the studies of Gigy and Kelly (1992) that emphasize the significance of losing the sense of intimacy and being loved, gradually moving away from each other and serious differences in lifestyle and preferred values. Bastine (2004) distinguishes two basic ways of responding in marital conflicts, i.e. fight and withdrawal. In the interaction between partners, a certain specific style of mutual reactions is formed, creating a specific pattern of conflict resolution, characteristic of a given couple: (a) complementary pattern – when one of the partners is defensive and the other one offensive; (b) escalating pattern – when both spouses demonstrate an offensive style of conflict resolution, and (c) defensive pattern – when the spouses are defensive and fight fiercely about which one of them is to be called the greater victim. In the long-term, these patterns most often turn out to

be unconstructive, reducing the partners' marital satisfaction as opposed to the constructive ability to discuss problems openly (Bastine, 2004).

There is a connection between conflict resolution methods and the perceived satisfaction with relationship, while the destructive way of expressing dissatisfaction with marriage is a strong risk factor for the durability and stability of an intimate relationship (Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow, 1986). The observations made by Polish researchers also indicate that the consequence of protracted and unconstructively resolved conflicts is a significant reduction in the individual's well-being and marital satisfaction (Bakiera, 2013; Plopa, 2006).

An interesting concept of the responses to declining satisfaction with the relationship was presented by Caryl Rusbult and her associates (Rusbult, and Zembrodt, 1983; Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn, 1982; Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow, 1986; see also Kriegelewicz, 2006; Wojciszke, 2005). The researcher distinguished between constructive and destructive, as well as active and passive responses to the decrease in satisfaction with relationship. Rusbult proposed the following four main categories of responses to the decline in relationship satisfaction and the emerging conflicts, namely voice, loyalty, neglect, and exit. *Voice* is defined as "discussing problems, compromising, seeking help from a therapist or clergyman, suggesting solutions to problems, asking the partner about what is bothering him or her, trying to change oneself or change the partner" (Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn, 1982, p. 1231). Therefore, this strategy is a vital and the most constructive response to the conflict faced, promoting free communication and conducting marital dialogue, as well as adopting an active problem-solving orientation. What is more, this type of behaviour, adopted in the face of growing dissatisfaction and marital conflicts, increases optimism with regard to the relationship future (Rusbult, and Zembrodt, 1983). *Loyalty* is a passive response to decreasing satisfaction and conflict, however, it is also considered as a constructive strategy (e.g. waiting and hoping for things to improve, praying for improvement). Destructive reactions refer to behaviours that undermine the relationship or are hostile in their nature, and these are: *neglect* (passive reaction allowing for steady, constant decrease in the relationship quality, e.g. ignoring the partner or spending less time together, refusing to discuss problems, criticizing the partner) and *exit* (an active response – formally separating, moving out, filing for divorce) (Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn, 1982, p. 1231). Research by Bradbury and Fincham (1987) indicate that unhappy couples show much more overt negativism. The slow disappearance of the dialogue between spouses leads to conviction that the spouse is really a stranger to oneself. Lack of dialogue, as the active and constructive reaction to conflicts, combined with a decline in satisfaction with the relationship carry the risk of lack of involvement on the part of the partners in the relationship durability and stability. Research carried out by Rusbult et al. (1982) shows that if the spouses had been more satisfied with their relationships before the problems arose, the reaction to dissatisfaction in the face of trouble and marital conflicts would have been constructive engagement in dialogue (voice) or loyalty. Unconstructive reactions (exit or neglect) were much less likely.

In addition, research shows that there are differences between men and women in dealing with marital conflicts (Faulkner, Davey, and Davey, 2005; Gottman, 1999; Gottman, and Levenson, 1992). Women are more likely to initiate discussions on conflictual relationship issues (Gottman, 1999). Women are characterized as more emotionally expressive, while men tend to be task-oriented problem solvers, who nonetheless, withdraw when accused by their wives (the so-called "wife-demand, husband-withdraw" pattern – Gottman, and Levenson, 1992). This means that in response to wife's behaviour, such as complaining or making demands, husbands respond with withdrawal or other passive behaviour. What is more, problems constituting the basis for frequent marital conflicts are primarily noticed by wives, while husbands are less likely to be convinced of these conflicts severity (Przybyła-Basista, 2006).

1.2. Partner support and bonding behaviours as the factors promoting marital dialogue

The subject matter of the analyses contained herein is conducting a dialogue in response to a decline in satisfaction with relationship and the emergence of conflicts in the group of young spouses. Constructive reactions displayed by the partners, oriented on discussing problems, as well as free and open communication and searching for solutions, help not only to repair, but also to deepen an intimate relationship. The ability of spouses to communicate their opinions, needs and goals promotes a better mutual understanding between them, also in conflictual situations (Rusbult, and Zembrodt, 1983; Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow, 1986; see also Davis, and Oathout, 1987; Janicka, and Niebrzydowski, 1994; Wojciszke, 2005). Couples' conflict interactional patterns have been linked to marital satisfaction (Gottman, 2006), and in the longitudinal perspective, the following behaviours are regarded as especially detrimental to the relationship: avoiding conflict, withdrawal from interaction, stubbornness and defensiveness (which includes whining) (Gottman, and Krokoff, 1989).

Researchers often focus on finding dysfunctional conflict patterns in intimate relationships and analysing their consequences. In this article, our interest is focused on searching for factors that influence spouses' engagement in constructive strategies for marital dialogue. Amongst the factors that may potentially be conducive to initiation of a constructive response to conflict, the following two factors are of our particular interest, namely the support received from the partner and certain specific patterns of behaviour aimed at maintaining an intimate relationship with the partner. It can be assumed that both of the aforementioned factors are related not only to the partners reactions to the conflicts, but also affect the satisfaction from a close relationship.

Support received from the partner, plays an important role in the development of marital closeness, as well as it is often a source of strength in critical situations (Pistrang, Picciotto, and Barker, 2001). Maintaining a close relationship is important for the purpose of remaining in good individual mental health in everyday life (Bovier, Chamot, and Perneger, 2004). According to the study carried out by Davis (1999), the greater is the partner's tendency to show support by taking the spouse perspective, the greater is the marital satisfaction. Experiencing

emotional closeness with the spouse and cognitive and emotional involvement in the situation of the beloved one, help show both positive and negative feelings (Ryś, 2004), allow one to gain insight into partner's experiences and predict the spouse's reactions (Rembowski, 1989).

Supportive acts on the side of the partner in the context of everyday marital life contribute to the increase of the sense of trust, and thus reduce the likelihood of a minor offence or misconduct of the partner turning into a major conflict (Cutrona, 1996). Well-functioning couples, benefit from effective communication and problem solving/conflict resolution skills (Jacobson, and Margolin, 1979). These couples are also characterised by the ability to give each other support (Cutrona, 1996). In a situation where disagreements arise between partners, various types of supportive statements can prevent the conflict escalation and negative emotions intensification. Supportive communication can also increase the sense of closeness and contribute to the growth of conviction about more frequent rewarding interactions (Cutrona, 1996). Research shows that support is more valued when provided spontaneously, compared to situations in which it is provided only after a specific request (Cutrona, Cohen, and Igram, 1990). Researchers distinguish between perceived available support and actual received support (Schwarzer, and Knoll, 2007; see also Buszman, and Przybyła-Basista, 2017). The subject matter of empirical analysis for the purpose of the present study is the support received from the partner, understood in accordance with the conceptualization by Cutrona and Russell (1990) who defined it as a multidimensional phenomenon consisting of various types of support (e.g. emotional, instrumental, informational support).

The second important factor taken into account as a potential determinant of a constructive reaction to marital conflicts, are specific behaviour patterns, aimed at maintaining a close relationship with the partner. In the study, the conceptualization of bonding behaviours developed by Kuczyńska (1998) is used. The author of the aforementioned conceptualization assumes that bonding behaviours are responsible for shaping the basis of all close relationships, and facilitating the processes of forming and maintaining relationships. Kuczyńska (1998) distinguishes five types of bonding behaviours: conciliatory behaviours, physical closeness, sexual behaviours, behaviours undertaken for the sake of relationship and partner, and impressive behaviours. Kuczyńska's research was devoted to analysing the relations between particular categories of bonding behaviours and the quality of intimate relationships as experienced by men and women. The results of her study confirmed the thesis about a significant correlation between bonding behaviours and the relationship quality in both women and men, as well as indicated some interesting differences between the genders (Kuczyńska, 1998). Comparative analysis has shown that sexual and impressive behaviours are more typical of men, while physical closeness, conciliatory behaviours and behaviours for the sake of relationship and partner are more often displayed by women.

2. The present research

Based on the literature reports presented above, we assume that partner support and bonding behaviours are positively related to dialogue, as an active and constructive problem solving and conflict resolution strategy. We also put forward a hypothesis that there is a difference between men and women with regard to predictors of engaging in dialogue in marital conflicts. The following research questions were posed: (1) Do the bonding behaviours (i.e. conciliatory behaviours, behaviours for the sake of relationship and partner, physical closeness) and partner support form statistically significant predictors of the undertaking of dialogue as a constructive response to marital conflict? (2) Are there any differences in these predictors between women and men?

2.1. Procedure and participants

The study was carried out in Poland and included young, married individuals. The sample consisted of 180 respondents: 102 women (57%) and 78 men (43%) from Silesian and Mazovian voivodeships. For recruitment, respondents were contacted directly or via the Internet. Data was collected by means of confidential, anonymous survey and questionnaires. The respondents completed either a printed or electronic version of measures. Participation in the study was voluntary. The inclusion criterion for the research group was marriage duration of no more than 5 years. Respondents were, on average, 26 years old ($M = 26,26$; $SD = 3,04$; range = 19-39). The majority of them (77,2%) constituted young individuals, aged between 22 and 28 years. The average relationship duration was 2 years ($M = 2,24$; $SD = 1,51$). Most of the spouses in the sample (114 people, i.e. 63%) had college or university education; 25 individuals (22%) had post-high school education; 8 (4%) individuals had high school education; 19 individuals (10%) had vocational education; and 2 individuals (1%) had primary education.

2.2. Measures

Participants completed a self-report questionnaire set containing: The Problem-Solving Strategies Inventory (SRK), The Support in Intimate Relationship Rating Scale – Revised (SIRRS-R) and The Bonding Behaviours Inventory (IZW).

The Problem-Solving Strategies Inventory (SRK) developed and validated by Kriegelewicz (2003; 2006) is used for measuring dialogue as a constructive response to marital conflict. The questionnaire draws inspiration from a measure developed by Rusbult, Johnson and Morrow (1986) and consists of 32 items. The instrument enables measurement of four problem-solving strategies: dialogue (voice in conceptualization by Rusbult), loyalty, escalation of conflict and withdrawal. In the present study, only one scale is used, i.e. dialogue (exemplary items: "If my opinion differs from my partner's, I try to calmly discuss it with him/her"; "Even

during an argument I try to acquaint myself with and understand my partner's point of view"). Respondents answered to the statements on a 6-grade scale, ranging from 1 ("never") to 6 ("always"). The questionnaire is characterized by its satisfactory psychometric properties and high reliability (Kriegelewicz, 2003, 2006). The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale "dialogue" was 0,89 for self-reports version of the SRK (Kriegelewicz, 2003).

The Support in Intimate Relationship Rating Scale – Revised (SIRRS-R), developed by Barry, Bunde, Brock and Lawrence (2009), was used to measure support received from the partner. We used the set of 25 items of the Polish version of SIRRS-R, developed and validated by Ilska and Przybyła-Basista (2016). The questionnaire consisted of four subscales: (1) emotional and esteem support (e.g. "he/she said good things about me"), (2) informational support (e.g. "he/she inferred how I was feeling about a situation"), (3) physical comfort (e.g. "he/she kissed me", "he/she hugged me or cuddled with me"), and (4) instrumental or tangible support (e.g. "he/she did something to help me directly"). Respondents answered to the statements on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 ("never") to 4 ("almost always"). The psychometric properties of the scale are satisfactory. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the whole scale was 0.943, with the alphas ranging from 0.916 to 0.853 for the individual subscales.

The Bonding Behaviours Inventory (IZW) was developed by Kuczyńska on the basis of the conceptualization by Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1987) and his proposed typology of bonding behaviours. IZW consists of 40 statements on 5 scales that describe different types of behaviours aimed at forming and maintaining the bond in close, intimate relationships: behaviours expressing physical closeness ("hugging", "stroking"), behaviours for the sake of relationship and partner ("expressing readiness to jointly face difficulties", "showing positive interest in partner's matters", "fostering good atmosphere in the relationship"), impressive behaviours ("narrating one's achievements, talking about one's skills and abilities"), sexual behaviours ("confessing desire", "initiating sexual intercourse") and conciliatory behaviours ("complementing each other", "looking at each other with and sharing smiles"). The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the individual subscales' alphas ranged from 0.98 to 0.78.

2.3. Results

In order to obtain answers to the research questions concerning the predictors of choosing dialogue as a constructive strategy of marital conflict resolution, a multiple regression analysis was conducted for the "dialogue" dependent variable. Statistical analyses were carried out using the *Statistica 13.1* program. The following independent variables have been included in the model: behaviours for the sake of relationship and partner, behaviours expressing physical closeness, conciliatory behaviours and various types of support received from the partner, such as: emotional and esteem support, informational support, instrumental or tangible support, and physical comfort.

Table 1.

Predictors of dialogue as a constructive conflict resolution strategy in the whole group of spouses (N = 180)

Variable	β	t	p
Informational support	**0.214**	**2.273**	**0.024**
Emotional and esteem support	0.085	-0.760	0.448
Instrumental support	0.061	-0.649	0.518
Physical comfort	0.038	0.444	0.657
Behaviours for the sake of relationship and partner	**0.452**	**3.911**	**0.000**
Physical closeness	**0.240**	**2.059**	**0.041**
Conciliatory behaviours	0.101	0.745	0.458
Statistics of the model: $R^2 = 0.363$, $F = 15.591$, $p < 0.001$			

First of all, a regression analysis was carried out on the whole group of spouses. Table 1 shows that the predictors explained 36.3% of the variance in the "dialogue" dependent variable in the whole group of young spouses. The strongest predictors explaining the process of engaging in dialogue as a constructive way of solving marital conflicts were: behaviours for the sake of relationship and partner ($β = 0.45$) and preserving physical closeness ($β = 0.24$). Another one of the statistically significant predictors was informational support provided by the partner ($β = 0.21$); other variables introduced into the regression equation proved statistically insignificant.

Another research task was to look for answers to the question concerning the predictors of engaging in dialogue in the group of women. The independent variables of the model accounted for approximately 23% of the total variance of the dependent variable. The strongest predictor of wives' engagement in dialogue was the informational support received from the husband ($β = 0.34$). Moreover, it was the only statistically significant predictor; these data are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2.

Predictors of dialogue as a constructive strategy of conflict resolution in the group of wives (n = 102)

Variable	β	t	p
Informational support	**0.339**	**2.507**	**0.014**
Emotional and esteem support	0.209	-1.079	0.283
Instrumental support	0.012	-0.079	0.937
Physical comfort	0.013	-0.100	0.920
Behaviours for the sake of relationship and partner	0.280	1.537	0.128
Physical closeness	0.008	0.046	0.963
Conciliatory behaviours	0.202	0.959	0.339
Statistics of the model: $R^2 = 0.230$, $F = 5.321$, $p < 0.001$			

In the group of men, two variables were significant. The independent variables of the model explained approximately 53% of the total variance of the dependent variable. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

Predictors of a constructive conflict resolution strategy in the group of husbands (n = 78)

Variable	β	t	p
Informational support	0.065	0.487	0.628
Emotional and esteem support	0.074	-0.544	0.588
Instrumental support	0.035	0.288	0.774
Physical comfort	0.095	0.848	0.399
Behaviours for the sake of relationship and partner	**0.600**	**4.135**	**0.000**
Physical closeness	**0.434**	**2.766**	**0.007**
Conciliatory behaviours	0.320	-1.783	0.079
Statistics of the model: $R^2 = 0.530$ $F = 13.431$, $p < 0.001$			

In the group of men, the strongest predictor turned out to be behaviour for the sake of relationship and partner (β = 0.60). Behaviours that express physical closeness (β = 0.43) are also of great importance for conducting dialogue as a constructive strategy for solving marital conflicts. On the other hand, support received from the spouse turned out to be a statistically insignificant predictor.

3. Discussion

The main research question concerned the identification of factors that have significant impact on a constructive reaction to marital problems and conflicts. We assumed that both, the belief about the supporting partner, as well as specific behaviours aimed at maintaining good relations with the partner can play a significant role in forming such a reaction. Our research has led to some interesting conclusions, contributing to broadening of knowledge about the factors that influence engaging in dialogue as a constructive strategy in the face of marital problems and conflicts. The results of our research suggest that the key role as predictor of that engagement is played by three specific types of bonding behaviours aimed at maintaining the relationship, namely the following behaviours: for the sake of relationship and partner, fostering closeness with the partner and aimed at expressing physical closeness. The third important predictor was the conviction about the informational support received from the partner.

The results obtained, largely support the suggestions made by Kuczyńska (1998), i.e. the author of the concept of bonding behaviours. For both women and men, the basis for continuity and development of an intimate relationship are behaviours manifested while establishing physical closeness, as well as various types of behaviours engaged in creating the relationship and being attentive towards the partner (Kuczyńska, 1998). These behaviours are the essence of the relationship's durability. Physical contact provides partners with a sense of security and ensures pleasure, while occupying a central position amongst many other partners behaviours aimed at shaping and deepening their relationship. It can therefore be assumed that

behaviours such as hugging, stroking, kissing and embracing not only provide a sense of security, but also contribute to reducing hostility (Kuczyńska, 1998, pp. 77-79). This research shows that these behaviours are significantly related to undertaking dialogue in marital conflicts and to a decline in satisfaction with the relationship in the group of young spouses whose marriage duration does not exceed 5 years. These behaviours demonstrate undoubtedly the willingness to cooperate with the spouse, i.e. to rebuild good marital relationships. As shown in the study by Greef and Bruyne (2000), collaborative conflict management has a high positive correlation with marital satisfaction, and the spouses were the most satisfied with their marriage when they engaged in collaborative conflict resolution.

Personality tendencies to show support and empathy to the spouse that help deepen intimacy between partners are also very important in marriage (Davis, and Oathout, 1987; Long, and Andrews, 1990; Rostowski, and Rostowska, 2010). According to this research results, the conviction about the informational support received from the partner was related to undertaking dialogue in problem situations. Therefore, it is not only certain type of behaviour that support maintaining good partner relationships, but also conviction about one's supportive and understanding partner that can act as predictor of engaging in dialogue in problem situations, consequently fostering satisfaction with the relationship.

Interesting differences were shown between men and women, although the results were surprising, to an extent. It turned out that, in the group of men, the predictors of dialogue as a constructive conflict resolution strategy were bonding behaviours (i.e. behaviours for the sake of relationship and partner and developing closeness with the partner, as well as behaviours aimed at expressing physical closeness), while among women the predictor was the conviction about the informational support received from the partner. The results obtained were different than expected. And even though the above types of bonding behaviours are characteristic of all partners in close relationships, they are shown statistically more often by women than men (according to the research results by Kuczyńska (1998). Therefore, trying to interpret the obtained results, the following conclusions can be made: perhaps it is easier for men experiencing conflicts in their relationships and, at the same time, having difficulties with discussing problems and differences of opinion overtly, to engage in nonverbal contact, establish physical closeness with the partner (stroking, embracing, hugging), or become involved in activities for the sake of relationship and partner (e.g. eating together, performing activities resulting from the division of chores, showing concern for the partner's health) rather than engage in a verbal confrontation. When calculating the differences between women and men, Linda Brannon (2002) emphasizes that while an intimate conversation or having confidence are good ways of establishing intimate communication for women, it is sex that plays this role for men. Therefore, perhaps "doing something" for the common good or a non-verbal demonstration of the need for closeness with the partner is a signal for men about their readiness to undertake dialogue. The results of Gottman's research (1994; 2006) are worth recalling here: he observed that men react to criticism from their wives with withdrawal.

Showing readiness to discuss problems by means of a non-verbal message, through a gesture or action could be a signal or encouragement for the partner to take further cooperative actions. Therefore, this research results suggest that, for men, non-verbal communication in a marital conflict is easier than more complex verbal communication. However, one should think that the interaction between the spouses could only be successful if the wife noticed her husband's non-verbal signals and interpreted them positively. The chances of a positive interpretation of husband's behaviour increase when the marriage is happy (Rusbult, 1986; Gottman, and Krokoff, 1989). This observation is also confirmed by other studies that suggest that positive emotionality is conducive to fostering bonding, while negative emotionality reduces the frequency of undertaking bonding behaviours (Jastrzębski, Drążdżewska, Nazarowicz, and Przybysz, 2016).

The results of regression analysis in women were also a considerable surprise. It turned out that the only predictor of undertaking dialogue by the wife as a constructive conflict resolution strategy was the informational support received from the partner. We expected women to need emotional support first and foremost. It is clear from the previous research that warm, supportive messages from husbands are important in building marital trust (Davis, and Oathout, 1987). Looking for explanations of the results obtained in the present study, the description of informational support according to Barry et al. (2009) was scrutinised, and the analysis suggested some interesting interpretations. According to the description of the statements included in the measurement tool referring to the scale measuring the informational support received from the partner (SIRRS-R), supportive behaviours may consist in: inferring how the wife felt in a given situation (item: "Inferred how I was feeling about a situation"), saying what can be done with a given situation (item:" Restated what I had told him about a situation "), or help in looking at a given situation from another perspective (item: "Helped me think about a situation in a new way"). This type of husband's behaviour may be a sign of willingness to engage in dialogue which, in turn, enables discussion.

To sum up, the results of the research presented herein seem interesting and may inspire further study. Any future research should be extended to include comparative analyses between satisfied and distressed couples. A comparison of couples who are happy in their relationships with those who are not, would allow them to seek an answer to the question whether predictors of dialogue as a constructive conflict resolution strategy are similar or different depending on marital satisfaction assessment; It is confirmed by the research carried out by Gottman (1998) according to which criticising is prevalent amongst unhappy couples, and therefore positive solutions to problematic situations are less likely to be found.

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