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**Adolescents' emotional abilities and stress coping strategies:  
The moderating role of gender**

**Abstract:** Emotional intelligence (EI) is conceptualized as a personality trait or an ability. Most of conducted studies on EI-coping association referred to trait emotional intelligence. Therefore, the role of ability emotional intelligence is less clear and need to be further studied. The present study examined the relationship between two EI abilities (emotion recognizing and emotion understanding) and stress coping strategies in adolescent men and women.

The data were collected from 1033 Polish high school students (520 men and 512 women) aged 18-20 years (Mage = 18.46 years). Coping strategies were assessed using the COPE inventory and emotional abilities were measured using the Emotional Intelligence Scale – Faces (SIE-T) and the Emotion Understanding Test (TRE).

The results supported the existence of an association between EI abilities and coping strategies. The analyses of the interaction effects revealed the moderating role of gender on some of the relationships between EI abilities and coping strategies.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, stress coping strategies, emotion recognizing, emotion understanding

**INTRODUCTION**

Emotional intelligence (EI) was first defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990 p. 189) “as the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”. Currently, it is conceptualized as either a personality trait or an ability, which influences the way that it is measured. Like other personality dispositions, trait EI (TEI) is measured via self-report questionnaires (Pérez, Petrides, & Furnham, 2005), which yield information about typical performance (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). Ability EI (AEI), like other standard intelligences, is measured using performance tests (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), which provide information about maximum performance (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). In Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) conceptualization, AEI consists of four branches of mental abilities: (1) to identify emotions in the self and the other, (2) to use emotions to facilitate thought and decision making, (3) to understand emotions, and (4) to manage emotions in the self and the other reflectively.

A high level of AEI is viewed as a predictor of significant outcomes in different life areas such as higher quality of life and lower risk of maladjustment (e.g., Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008).

Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler and Mayer (1999 p. 161) assumed that high-AEI individuals cope with stressful situations more successfully because they “accurately perceive and appraise their emotional states, know how and when to express their feelings, and can effectively regulate their mood states”. It has also been suggested that high-AEI individuals might choose more effective coping strategies (Matthews & Zeidner, 2000; Matthews, Zeidner & Roberts, 2002) and be more likely to employ strategies such as disclosing emotions, obtaining social support and engaging in rumination less frequently (Salovey et al., 1999; Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2012). Low-AEI individuals are expected to feel overwhelmed and threatened by their negative emotions that they experience in stressful situations. For this reason, they might use rumination as an avoidant coping strategy (e.g., García-Sancho, Salguero, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2016).

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There are relatively few studies on the AEI-coping relationship, and their results are not completely clear. However, it generally can be said that the findings suggest that high AEI is associated with the less frequent use of emotion-focused coping and avoidant strategies (e.g., MacCann, Fogarty, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2011; Matthews et al., 2006). There is also evidence that high-AEI individuals more frequently use active coping strategies (Davis & Humphrey, 2012, 2014) and less frequently engage in rumination (e.g., García-Sancho et al., 2016; Lanciano, Curci, Kafetsios, Elia, & Zammuner, 2012; Lanciano, Curci, & Zaton, 2010). It is important to stress that the observed relationships vary according to emotional ability. The recognition of emotion seems to be negatively correlated with emotion-focused coping (MacCann et al., 2011) and rumination (Lanciano et al., 2010). The use and understanding of emotions is negatively related to emotion-focused and avoidant coping (MacCann et al., 2011), behavioral disengagement, and denial (Gohm, Corser, & Dalsky, 2005) and is positively associated with active coping (Davis & Humphrey, 2012). Understanding emotions is also negatively correlated with rumination (Lanciano et al., 2010) and support seeking (Davis & Humphrey, 2012). Managing emotions is positively correlated with active coping (Davis & Humphrey, 2012; MacCann et al., 2011), emotional and instrumental social support seeking and turning to religion (Gohm et al., 2005) and negatively correlated with emotion-focused and avoidant coping (MacCann et al., 2011), behavioral disengagement, denial, alcohol-drug disengagement (Gohm et al., 2005) and rumination (Lanciano et al., 2010). There is also evidence that high-AEI individuals are able to select and change their coping strategies and switch flexibly between them in accordance with situational demands (Davis & Humphrey, 2012). At a high level, using, understanding and managing emotions leads to optimal balance in stressful situations through the flexible employment of coping strategies according to the situation.

Previous studies yielded evidence that gender differences exist in the association between AEI and various aspects of adjustment. Only in men, a high level of AEI is associated with less deviant behavior, less alcohol and drug use, better relationships with new friends (Brackett et al., 2004), greater social competence (Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, & Salovey, 2006), lower psychopathy (Lishner, Swim, Hong, & Vitacco, 2011), less depression (Salguero, Extremera, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2012) and greater resilience to stressors (Schneider, Lyons, & Khazon, 2013). According to these results, it seems reasonable to explore gender differences in additional studies on AEI (Brackett et al., 2006).

### The aims of the current study

The relationship between EI and coping was explored in earlier studies. However, most of them referred to TEI, and most of the studies which referred to AEI were conducted among students. Therefore, the role of AEI in coping is less clear and needs to be further tested

(compared to Zeidner et al., 2012) especially in adolescence. In particular, it is worth to pay attention to two groups of strategies: active - concerning constructive coping with the problem, and passive - avoidance. There is also a lack of studies referring to gender differences in the AEI-coping association. Moreover, previous studies on the AEI-coping relationship were conducted in the US or West Europe (UK, Italy, Spain). It would be interesting to test this association in other countries.

Our investigation was guided by Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model and refers to two EI abilities: facial emotion recognizing (ER) and emotion understanding (EU). Why have we only considered these two abilities? Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler and Mayer (1999) proposed an emotional coping hierarchy, which includes three levels of emotional intelligence: (1) basic emotional skills including emotion perception, (2) emotional knowledge including emotion understanding and analysis, and (3) emotional regulation. The authors stress that the abilities of each of these levels must be sufficiently developed to provide effective coping. The results of the earlier studies generally showed that there is an association between the emotional regulation ability and coping. Simultaneously, the earlier investigations indicated that the relationships between lower-level emotional abilities and coping are less clear, suggesting that these relationships should be studied further. That is why we decided to only refer to ER and EU in our research.

The aim of our study was to examine the relationship between EI abilities (ER and EU) and various coping strategies in Polish adolescent men and women. Our study also investigated whether the AEI-coping association was moderated by gender. Our hypotheses were as follows:

1. EI abilities are positively associated with active coping strategies: active coping, planning, the suppression of competing activities, restraint coping, social support seeking for instrumental reasons and positive reinterpretation and growth and negatively related to passive coping strategies: social support seeking for emotional reasons, focus on and venting of emotions, behavioral and mental disengagement, alcohol-drug disengagement, sense of humor and denial.
2. The relationships between EI abilities and coping strategies are moderated by gender: they are stronger in men.

## METHOD

### Participants

In the study, 1033 adolescents from high school aged 18 to 20 years participated ( $M_{age} = 18.46$ ;  $SD = 0.64$ ). The sample consisted of 512 women (49.6%) and 520 men (50.3%). One person did not provide information on sex. All the participants were from Poland.

### Measures

EI abilities were measured using maximum performance tests based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) concept of AEI.

*Facial emotion recognizing* was assessed using the *Emotional Intelligence Scale – Faces* (SIE-T: Matczak, Piekarska, & Studniarek, 2005). The SIE-T consists of 18

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics, *t* values and Spearman's *rho* correlations between emotional abilities and coping strategies.**

	Total <sup>1</sup>		Women <sup>2</sup>		Men <sup>3</sup>		<i>t</i>	ER			EU		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
ER	71.32	11.12	73.21	10.06	69.43	11.81	5.469 <sup>#</sup>						
EU	17.03	3.81	17.84	3.52	16.23	3.91	6.877 <sup>#</sup>	.36 <sup>***</sup>	.31 <sup>***</sup>	.36 <sup>***</sup>			
Active coping	10.83	2.09	10.64	1.97	11.02	2.19	-2.893	.11 <sup>***</sup>	.11 <sup>*</sup>	.14 <sup>**</sup>	.07 <sup>*</sup>	.06	.12 <sup>**</sup>
Planning	10.45	2.65	10.21	2.62	10.70	2.66	-2.927	.12 <sup>***</sup>	.13 <sup>**</sup>	.14 <sup>**</sup>	.07 <sup>*</sup>	.06	.13 <sup>**</sup>
SSI	10.24	2.99	10.84	2.98	9.64	2.87	6.483 <sup>#</sup>	.13 <sup>***</sup>	.09	.12 <sup>*</sup>	.12 <sup>***</sup>	.05	.11 <sup>*</sup>
SSE	9.97	3.31	11.11	3.29	8.84	2.92	11.602 <sup>#</sup>	.10 <sup>**</sup>	.04	.05	.08 <sup>*</sup>	.02	-.01
Sup	9.51	2.41	9.16	2.34	9.84	2.43	-4.533 <sup>#</sup>	.00	.00	.04	-.12 <sup>***</sup>	-.11 <sup>*</sup>	-.06
Rel	7.53	3.74	7.74	3.91	7.33	3.56	1.733	-.08 <sup>**</sup>	-.08	-.10 <sup>*</sup>	-.08 <sup>*</sup>	-.09 <sup>*</sup>	-.08
Pos	10.80	2.49	10.53	2.53	11.08	2.41	-3.584 <sup>#</sup>	.11 <sup>***</sup>	.12 <sup>**</sup>	.14 <sup>**</sup>	.15 <sup>***</sup>	.14 <sup>**</sup>	.21 <sup>***</sup>
Restraint coping	9.89	2.12	9.78	2.09	10.01	2.15	-1.719	.06	.05	.08	.08 <sup>**</sup>	.11 <sup>*</sup>	.09 <sup>*</sup>
Acceptance	9.81	2.74	9.82	2.61	9.81	2.87	.070	.02	.04	-.01	.05	.10 <sup>*</sup>	.01
Foc	10.23	2.89	11.30	2.83	9.19	2.55	12.467 <sup>#</sup>	.06	.02	-.02	.05	-.05	.00
Denial	6.94	2.26	7.12	2.25	6.77	2.25	2.487	-.16 <sup>***</sup>	-.16 <sup>***</sup>	-.19 <sup>***</sup>	-.15 <sup>***</sup>	-.11 <sup>**</sup>	-.24 <sup>***</sup>
Mdis	8.80	2.42	9.36	2.51	8.26	2.19	7.459 <sup>#</sup>	-.06	-.03	-.17 <sup>***</sup>	.01	.00	-.10 <sup>*</sup>
Bdis	6.88	2.37	7.15	2.41	6.62	2.29	3.616 <sup>#</sup>	-.12 <sup>***</sup>	-.11 <sup>*</sup>	-.17 <sup>***</sup>	-.08 <sup>*</sup>	-.11 <sup>*</sup>	-.11 <sup>*</sup>
Alc	6.39	3.22	6.07	3.04	6.69	3.35	-3.082 <sup>#</sup>	-.13 <sup>***</sup>	-.04	-.18 <sup>***</sup>	-.15 <sup>***</sup>	-.09 <sup>*</sup>	-.16 <sup>***</sup>
Sense of humor	7.59	2.98	7.03	2.77	8.14	3.08	-6.048 <sup>#</sup>	-.06	.03	-.10 <sup>*</sup>	-.01	.12 <sup>**</sup>	-.05

Note. ER = emotional recognizing; EU = emotional understanding; SSI = seeking social support - instrumental; SSE = seeking social support - emotional; Sup = suppression of competing activities; Rel = turning to religion; Pos = positive reinterpretation and growth; Foc = focus on & venting of emotions; Mdis = mental disengagement; Bdis = behavioral disengagement; Alc = alcohol-drug disengagement.

<sup>1</sup> *n* = 1008-1022; <sup>2</sup> *n* = 499-510; <sup>3</sup> *n* = 502-512.

<sup>#</sup> significance level with a Bonferroni correction *p* < .0029.

\* *p* < .05.

\*\* *p* < .01.

\*\*\* *p* < .001.

color photographs of people's faces. Six emotions are listed beside each photograph. The participants must decide if each of the listed emotions is expressed on the face using a 3-point scale (*expressed, not expressed, difficult to say*; for example items, see Laskowska, Gawryś, Łęski, & Koziorowski, 2015). For each correct answer, 1 point is given. The maximum score on the SIE-T is 108.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .77 among women and .83 among men in a sample of high school students. The SIE-T was validated in studies showing, for example, primarily moderate associations with the Polish version of the MEIS, emotion understanding ability and fluid intelligence. The SIE-T is also correlated with the TIE (a Polish AEI test based on Mayer and Salovey's concept; Śmieja, Orzechowski, & Stolarski, 2014; Wojciechowski, Stolarski, & Matthews, 2014). Its low or non-significant correlations with temperament scales suggest

that the SIE-T measures the ability that is independent from temperamental traits.

**Emotion understanding**, which refers to abilities listed in the third branch of Mayer and Salovey's concept of AEI, was measured using the *Emotion Understanding Test* (TRE: Matczak, & Piekarska, 2011). The TRE consists of 5 parts containing 6 items each. In part 1, participants sort the given emotions in order from weakest to strongest. In parts 2-5, they select the single best answer. In part 2, they indicate the opposite emotion of the given one. In part 3, they indicate the emotion that is the component of the target 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. For each correct answer, participants receive 1 point. The maximum score on the TRE is 30.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the TRE is .83 in men and ranges from .80 to .81 in women aged 15 to 25 years. Explanatory and confirmatory factor analyses supported the existence of one scale on the TRE. Validation studies showed, for example, primarily moderate correlations with the Polish version of MEIS, emotion recognizing ability, fluid intelligence, and social intelligence and low or moderate associations with the adapted Polish version of the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale and moderate or insignificant correlations with temperamental traits.

**Coping strategies** were assessed using the dispositional version of the COPE (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub 1989), which was adapted for the Polish context by Juczyński and Ogińska-Bulik (2009). The scale consists of 60 items. The responses are scored on 15 scales (see Table 1). Each scale consists of 4 items. On a 4-point scale (1 = *I hardly ever do this*, 4 = *I almost always do this*), participants describe how they usually cope with stress.

### Procedure

The study was conducted with groups in school classrooms during the normal school day. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained in oral before the study began. All the participants were informed that the study was about adolescents' emotional functioning and coping in stressful situations. They were also advised of their right to withdraw from the study without detriment. They were given verbal and written instructions on how to complete the tests, and were asked to answer all questions individually. The participants received their personal results regarding their EI abilities, if they were interested in them.

## RESULTS

### Preliminary analyses

We used *t*-tests and a Bonferroni correction (.05/17 = .0029) to examine gender differences in emotional abilities and coping strategies (Table 1). The results indicated that women had significantly higher scores than men on ER ( $d = 0.35$ ), EU ( $d = 0.43$ ), instrumental social support seeking ( $d = 0.41$ ), emotional social support seeking ( $d = 0.74$ ), focus on and venting of emotions ( $d = 0.79$ ), mental disengagement ( $d = 0.47$ ) and behavioral disengagement ( $d = 0.23$ ). Men had significantly higher scores than women on suppression of competitive activities ( $d = 0.29$ ), positive reinterpretation and growth ( $d = 0.23$ ), alcohol-drug disengagement ( $d = 0.19$ ) and sense of humor ( $d = 0.38$ ). Medium effect sizes for emotional social support seeking and the venting of emotions were found, whereas small effect sizes were found for the other differences.

### Relationships between EI abilities and coping

Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships both between EI abilities and between EI abilities and coping strategies. Table 1 shows the results of the correlations that were

conducted for the total sample and for men and women separately. The associations between EI abilities were moderate in size. All the significant correlations between the coping strategies and EI abilities were small or very small in size. Correlations were positive in case of active coping, planning, seeking social support – instrumental, seeking social support – emotional, positive reinterpretation and growth, restraint coping, and acceptance, and negative in case of suppression of competing activities, turning to religion, denial, mental disengagement, behavioral disengagement, and alcohol-drug disengagement. The significance level of the differences between the correlation coefficients in men and women were assessed using the Fisher *r*-to-*z* transformation. Significant differences were observed in the correlations between ER and mental disengagement ( $z = 2.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ), alcohol-drug disengagement ( $z = 2.29$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and sense of humor ( $z = 2.03$ ,  $p < .05$ ) as well as in the associations between EU and denial ( $z = 2.02$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and sense of humor ( $z = 2.65$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings indicated that ER was significantly more strongly correlated with mental disengagement, alcohol-drug disengagement and sense of humor, whereas EU was significantly more strongly correlated with denial in men than in women. Only the correlation between EU and sense of humor was significantly stronger in women than in men.

### The moderating effect of gender on the relationships between EI abilities and coping

To test the moderating effect of gender on the relationships between EI abilities and coping strategies, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses. Gender and the scores on both EI abilities tests were mean-centered (standardized) prior to the creation of the interaction terms: ER x gender and EU x gender. In the first step, gender was entered as a predictor variable. In the second step, ER was added. In the third step, the interaction term ER x gender was added. This procedure was repeated for EU.

The results showed that gender significantly moderated the effect of ER on mental disengagement, alcohol-drug disengagement and sense of humor (Table 2). Additionally, the interaction between gender and EU significantly predicted denial and sense of humor (Table 3). The other relationships were not moderated by gender (see Tables 2 and 3). All the significant interaction effects were small, with Cohen's  $f^2$  ranging from .04 to .07. Subsequent analyses showed that there was a significant negative relationship between ER and mental disengagement ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ), alcohol-drug disengagement ( $\beta = -.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and sense of humor ( $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p < .01$ ) in men (Fig. 1-3). In women, these relationships were non-significant ( $\beta = -.03$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $\beta = -.04$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $\beta = .01$ ,  $p > .05$ , respectively). The relationship between EU and denial was negative and significant in both men ( $\beta = -.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and women ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Fig. 4). The relationship between EU and sense of humor was significant and positive in women ( $\beta = .10$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and non-significant in men ( $\beta = -.05$ ,  $p > .05$ ; Fig. 5).

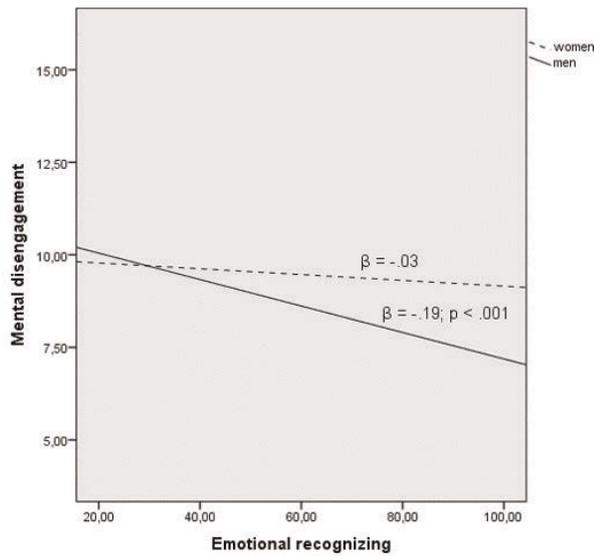


Fig. 1 Effects of emotional recognizing and gender on mental disengagement.

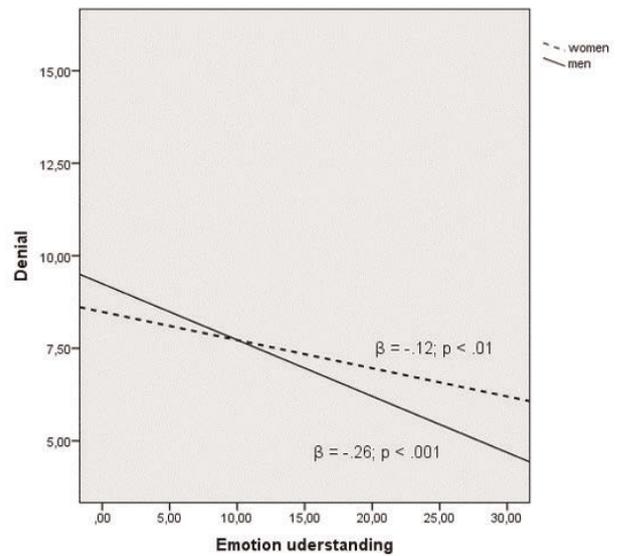


Fig. 4 Effects of emotion understanding and gender on denial.

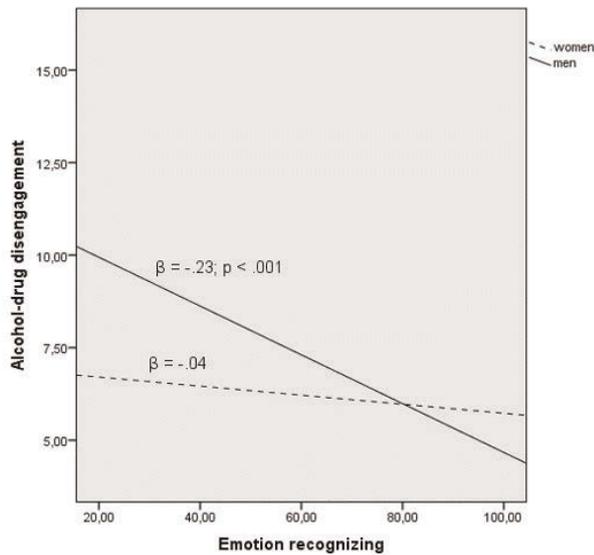


Fig. 2 Effects of emotion recognizing and gender on alcohol-drug disengagement.

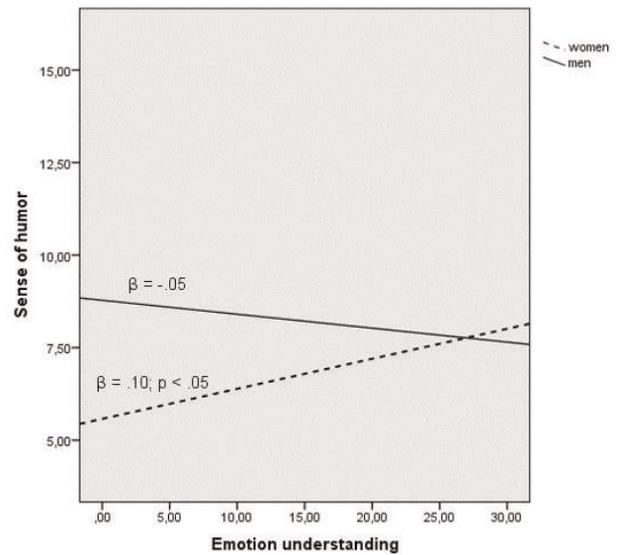


Fig. 5 Effects of emotion understanding and gender on sense of humor.

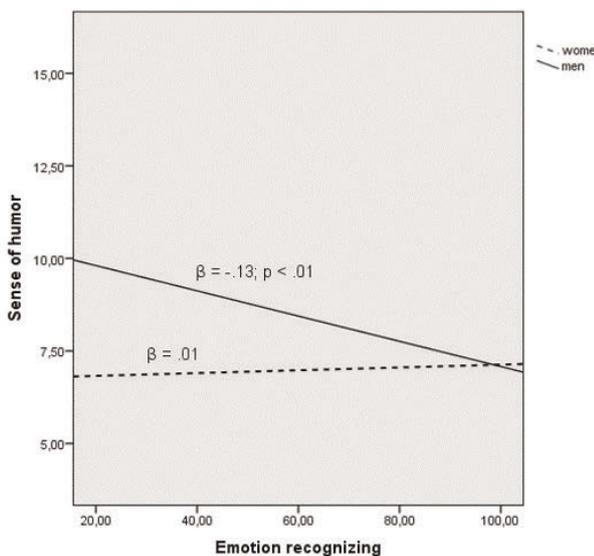


Fig. 3 Effects of emotion recognizing and gender on sense of humor.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between EI abilities (ER and EU) and stress coping strategies. The existence of gender differences in the EI abilities–coping association was also tested. The findings of the present study supported the existence of a relationship between EI abilities and coping strategies in the total sample. The observed associations primarily supported our hypotheses and the results of previous studies (Davies & Humphrey 2012, 2014; Gohm et al., 2005; MacCann et al., 2011; Matthews et al., 2006). In general, EI abilities were positively associated with problem-focused strategies (active coping, planning, instrumental social support seeking, restraint coping) and were negatively associated with avoidant strategies (denial, behavioral and mental disengagement, alcohol-drug disengagement). As expected, positive reinterpretation and growth were positively related to EI abilities.

Table 2. The moderating effect of gender on the relationships between emotion recognizing (ER) and coping strategies.

Variable	Mental disengagement			Alcohol-drug disengagement			Sense of humor			Active coping			Planning		
	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	b	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F
Step 1		.050	52.54		.009	9.40		.034	34.53		.008	8.16		.008	8.05
Gender	-.23***			.10**			.18***			.09**			.09**		
Step 2		.062	32.67		.031	15.80		.038	19.58		.027	13.39		.022	11.32
Gender	-.24***			.07*			.17***			.11***			.11***		
ER	-.11***			-.15***			-.07*			.14***			.12***		
Step 3		.066	23.21		.039	13.40		.043	14.75		.027	9.05		.023	7.59
Gender	-.24***			.08*			.18***			.11***			.11***		
ER	-.10**			-.14***			-.06			.13***			.12***		
ER x gender	-.06*			-.09**			-.07*			.02			.01		
Variable	Seeking social support - instrumental			Seeking social support - emotional			Suppression of competing activities			Turning to religion			Positive reinterpretation and growth		
	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	b	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F
Step 1		.040	40.84		.118	131.31		.019	18.81		.003	2.76		.014	13.73
Gender	-.20***			-.34***			.14***			-.05			.12***		
Step 2		.046	23.69		.119	66.41		.019	9.60		.010	4.98		.032	16.07
Gender	-.19***			-.34***			.14***			-.06*			.14***		
ER	.08*			.04			.02			-.09**			.14***		
Step 3		.046	15.79		.119	44.23		.019	6.40		.010	3.41		.032	10.78
Gender	-.19***			-.34***			.14***			-.07*			.14***		
ER	.08*			.04			.02			-.08**			.14***		
ER x gender	-.01			< -.01			.01			-.02			-.02		

Variable	Restraint coping			Acceptance			Focus on & venting of emotions			Denial			Behavioral disengagement		
	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	b	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F
Step 1		.003	3.43		.000	.05		.135	154.43		.008	7.72		.013	12.91
Gender	.06			-.01			-.37***						-.11***		
Step 2		.008	4.06		.000	.03		.135	77.18		.045	22.98		.034	17.12
Gender	.07*			-.01			-.37***						-.12***		
ER	.07*			<.01			.01						-.19***		
Step 3		.008	2.71		.000	.05		.136	51.47		.046	15.70		.035	11.78
Gender	.07*			-.01			-.37***						-.12***		
ER	.07*			.01			.01						-.19***		
ER x gender	.01			-.01			-.01						-.03		

Note. Gender coding: 1 = women, 2 = men.

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 3. The moderating effect of gender on the relationships between emotion understanding (EU) and coping strategies.

Variable	Denial			Sense of humor			Active coping			Planning			Seeking social support - instrumental		
	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F
Step 1		.006	6.00	.19***	.037	37.95	.09**	.007	7.28	.08**	.007	7.15	-.20***	.041	42.32
Gender	-.08*						.09**			.08**			-.20***		
Step 2		.043	22.63	.20***	.037	19.16	.11***	.021	10.52	.10**	.015	7.83	-.19***	.046	24.23
Gender	-.12***						.11***			.10**			-.19***		
EU	-.20***			.02			.12***			.09**			.08*		
Step 3		.047	16.46	.20***	.042	14.70	.11***	.022	7.45	.10**	.016	5.56	-.19***	.047	16.42
Gender	-.12***						.11***			.10**			-.19***		
EU	-.19***			.03			.12***			.09**			.07*		
EU x gender	-.06*			-.07*			.04			.03			.03		
Variable	Seeking social support - emotional			Suppression of competing activities			Turning to religion			Positive reinterpretation and growth			Restraint coping		
	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F	$\beta$	$R^2$	F
Step 1		.117	132.81	.14***	.018	18.63	-.06	.003	3.23	.11***	.013	12.92	.05	.003	2.91
Gender	-.34***						-.06			.11***			.05		
Step 2		.117	66.39	.12***	.023	11.79	-.07*	.008	3.83	.15***	.047	24.60	.07*	.011	5.39
Gender	-.34***						-.07*			.15***			.07*		
EU	.01			-.07*			-.07*			.19***			.09**		
Step 3		.118	44.33	.12***	.025	8.49	-.07*	.008	2.64	.15***	.048	16.67	.07*	.011	3.61
Gender	-.34***						-.07*			.15***			.07*		
EU	.01			-.08*			-.07*			.19***			.09**		
EU x gender	-.02			.04			.02			.03			.01		

Variable	Acceptance			Focus on & venting of emotions			Mental disengagement			Behavioral disengagement			Alcohol-drug disengagement		
	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F
Step 1		.000	.00		.132	151.60		.052	54.84		.013	12.95		.010	9.81
Gender	<.01			-.36***			-.23***						-.11***		.10**
Step 2		.002	.77		.132	75.88		.053	28.08		.024	12.15		.030	15.18
Gender	.01			-.37***			-.24***						-.14***		.07*
EU	.04			-.02			-.04						-.11***		-.14***
Step 3		.002	.77		.133	50.95		.055	19.32		.024	8.10		.031	10.67
Gender	.01			-.37***			-.23***						-.14***		.07*
EU	.04			-.02			-.03						-.11***		-.14***
EU x gender	-.03			.03			-.04						-.01		-.04

Note. Gender coding: 1 = women, 2 = men.

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Although positive reinterpretation and growth are among the emotion-focused strategies, they are not restricted to stress reduction. They may lead to continued or initial use of problem-focused coping strategies (Carver et al., 1989).

No support was obtained for the expected associations between EI abilities and focus on and venting of emotions. Moreover, contrary to the hypotheses, EI abilities were positively associated with emotional social support seeking, whereas EU was negatively related to the suppression of competitive activities. Additionally, unexpectedly, EU was positively related to sense of humor in women. It is worth mentioning that in other studies, positive correlations were also found among some EI abilities, avoidant coping (Davis & Humphrey, 2012) and emotional social support seeking (Gohm et al., 2005). It can be assumed that seeking emotional social support in particular may lead to a better understanding of stressful situations and, in turn, may lead to more effective coping. An earlier study indicated that high-AEI individuals perceive greater social support and that social support mediated the association between higher AEI and lower distress (Zeidner & Matthews, 2016).

These unexpected associations between EI abilities and some avoidant and emotion-focused strategies may indicate that individuals with a high level of EI abilities may choose coping strategies more flexibly. This finding is in accordance with Davis and Humphrey's (2012) finding that high-AEI adolescents can switch flexibly between coping strategies based on situational demands. Emotion-focused or avoidant strategies do not always have to be maladaptive. These strategies might be adaptive in the short term (Suls & Fletcher, 1985). Furthermore, some of them such as coping with humor might be helpful by inducing positive emotions (compared to Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004). Positive emotions play an important role in coping, as they facilitate more adaptive and proactive coping. Particularly when individuals feel overwhelmed by a stressor, avoidant and emotion-focused coping might help them to rebuild the resources that were depleted by the stressful situation (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). For instance, they might provide a psychological "time-out" from stress when individuals engage in other activities, which might facilitate finding creative solutions to problems, motivate individuals, and lead to proactive coping. It is possible that high-AEI individuals recognize when they need to use avoidant or emotion-focused coping and when engaging in problem-focused coping is more effective. Therefore, they use various coping strategies. It can be assumed that avoidant and emotion-focused strategies are beneficial for high-AEI individuals, especially when they use them with problem-focused strategies, and enable them to cope more effectively with stressful situations.

The results of the analyses of the interaction effects revealed the moderating role of gender on some of the relationships between EI abilities and coping strategies. There were significant differences in the strength of some of these associations in men and women. In men but not in women, high ER was significantly associated with a lower

use of avoidant and emotion-focused strategies (mental disengagement, alcohol-drug disengagement, sense of humor). Additionally, high EU was significantly more strongly associated with lower use of denial in men than in women. As avoidant and emotion-focused strategies are usually viewed as less effective (Matud, 2004), it can be said that these results are in accordance with the finding of earlier studies that suggested that high AEI is more strongly associated with better adjustment and well-being in men (Brackett et al., 2004, 2006; Lishner et al., 2011; Salguero et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2013). A gender difference was also observed in the relationship between EU and sense of humor. Only in women, higher EU was significantly associated with more frequent use of sense of humor.

The gender differences in the associations between EI abilities and coping strategies suggest that high-AEI women attempt to reduce psychological distress in stressful situations to a greater extent than men, whereas high-AEI men avoid using strategies aimed at reducing the negative emotions that they experience under stress. These gender differences are difficult to explain. It is possible that EI abilities play a different role in adjustment in men and women that could be caused by the different role that emotions play in women and men (compared to Shields, 2002). These results might also be the result of existing gender differences in coping strategies that were reported in other studies (e.g., Matud, 2004). Women use avoidant and emotional-coping strategies aimed at reducing distress more often than men, and men more frequently apply problem-focused coping. It is also possible that high-EU women understand to a greater extent than men the role of positive emotions in coping, which is why the positive association between EU and sense of humor is observed only in women. Women usually experience more stress (Matud, 2004), so they might more frequently feel overwhelmed by stressful situations, which is why they might be more strongly motivated than men to use strategies aimed at reducing distress such as sense of humor.

In the present study, weak correlations between EI abilities and coping strategies were obtained. This is in accordance with the results of earlier studies on the relationship between AEI and perceived stress, coping, and well-being (Davies & Humphrey, 2012, 2014; Gohm et al., 2005; MacCann et al., 2011; Matthews et al., 2006; Ruiz-Aranda, Extremera, & Pineda-Galán, 2014). This suggests that the weak relationship between EI abilities and coping appears in different cultures, regardless of the measures of EI abilities and coping strategies used. Low or no correlations were observed in this study, which might indicate that some high-EI individuals might have difficulties in applying EI abilities in practice to cope with stressful situations (compared to Zeidner & Olnick-Shemesh, 2010). It is also possible that the participants, given their young age, did not yet translate their EI abilities into practical skills. EI abilities indicate a capacity that might not be shown in action, until they will not be translated into practical emotional skills (compared to

Mikolajczak, Nelis, Hansenne, & Quoidbach, 2008; Zeidner & Olnick-Shemesh, 2010).

The relationship between EI abilities and coping and the moderating effect of gender might change with age. Therefore, the study should be replicated with samples of younger and older participants. Future researchers might examine whether relationships and gender differences that were observed in this study are constant across the lifespan or change with age from childhood through adolescence to late adulthood. The relationship between emotional abilities and coping may be moderated by other variables (compared to Gohm et al., 2005). In future research concerning AEI and coping relationships, the moderating role of other variables, such as temperamental traits, may be considered.

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