



Attitudes of spouses towards abortion and the quality of their mutual relations

Postawy małżonków wobec aborcji a jakość ich wzajemnych relacji¹

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Iwona Rawicka^a

^a Iwona Rawicka, PhD, <https://orcid.org/0002-3997-2283>, University of Szczecin, Institute of Theological Sciences

Abstract: In recent years, social and political discussions on the legal aspects of abortion in Poland and the relaxation of restrictions in this regard have been intensifying. However, there are few debates about the social, psychological and medical effects on women and men who decide to terminate a pregnancy, both individually and in relation to their relationship. The paper examines the relationship between women's and men's attitudes towards abortion and the quality of their marital relations. On their basis, it is not possible to state unequivocally what the consequences of an abortion for the life of the spouses could be. However, it can be stated to what extent the cognitive and emotional-motivational aspect of their attitudes towards abortion is related to the quality of their relationship, love, marital communication and the sense of marital selection. The diagnostic survey method was applied to conduct the research. In order to collect data that allow one to assess the quality of the respondents' marriage, four standardized research tools were used: Józef Szopiński's Scale of Marriage Bonds, the Questionnaire for Measurement of Love in the concept of Robert Sternberg, adapted by Bogdan Wojciszke, the Questionnaire for Marriage Communication by Maria Kaźmierczak and Mieczysław Płopa, as well as the Matrimonial Selection Questionnaire by Jan Rostowski and Mieczysław Płopa. One of the statements from the scale of attitudes towards parenthood by Marta Komorowska-Pudło was used to assess the respondents' attitudes towards abortion. Based on the data obtained from the research, it can be concluded that the attitudes of spouses towards abortion have a statistically significant, though not high, relationship with the quality of their mutual relations. The higher the level of acceptance they expressed towards the possibility of termination of pregnancy in the event of unplanned conception of a child, the lower was the level of their satisfaction in terms of their mutual bond, love, communication and sense of mutual choice. At the same time, along with the increase in the level of satisfaction of spouses with their mutual relationship, the level of their negative attitude to choosing abortion as an option to regulate the number of children in the family increased. Based on the comparison of the research results with the data presented in the literature on the quality of marriages of people experiencing abortion, it can be concluded that the attitudes of spouses towards abortion in terms of the cognitive and emotional-motivational components are similarly related to the quality of their relationships, as in the case of the attitudes of spouses towards abortion in terms of the behavioral component. Openness to abortion (pro-choice attitude) is associated with less satisfying relationships between men and women in a relationship, and non-acceptance (pro-life attitude) with a higher level of the quality of their relationships. The research also attempted to identify selected individual factors conditioning attitudes towards abortion. Religiousness differentiates the attitudes of respondents of both genders towards abortion, while the education, duration of the marriage and parental status only the attitudes of the respondents.

Keywords: marriage, abortion, love, marital relations, attitudes

Abstrakt: W ostatnich latach nasilają się dyskusje społeczne i polityczne na temat prawnych aspektów aborcji w Polsce i złagodzenia obostrzeń w tym zakresie. Niewiele jest jednak debat na temat społecznych, psychologicznych i medycznych skutków dla kobiet i mężczyzn podejmujących decyzję o przerwaniu ciąży tak w aspekcie indywidualnym, jak i w odniesieniu do ich wzajemnej relacji. W artykule podjęto badania nad związkiem postaw kobiet i mężczyzn wobec aborcji z jakością ich relacji małżeńskich. Nie można na ich podstawie jednoznacznie stwierdzić, jakie mogłyby być skutki aborcji dla wspólnego życia małżonków. Można jednak stwierdzić, w jakim stopniu poznawczy i emocjonalno-motywacyjny aspekt ich postaw wobec aborcji wiąże się z jakością ich więzi, miłości, komunikacji małżeńskiej oraz poczucia doboru małżeńskiego. Do przeprowadzenia badań wykorzystano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego. W celu zebrania danych pozwalających ocenić jakość małżeństwa respondentów posłużono się czterema standaryzowanymi narzędziami badawczymi: Skalą Więzy Małżeńskiej Józefa Szopińskiego, Kwestionariuszem Pomiaru Miłości w koncepcji Roberta Sternberga, w adaptacji Bogdana Wojciszke, Kwestionariuszem Komunikacji Małżeńskiej Marii Kaźmierczak i Mieczysława Płopy oraz Kwestionariuszem Doboru Małżeńskiego Jana Rostowskiego i Mieczysława Płopy. Do oceny postaw respondentów wobec aborcji wykorzystano jedno z twierdzeń ze skali postaw wobec rodzicielstwa Marty Komorowskiej-Pudło. Na podstawie danych uzyskanych z badań można stwierdzić, że postawy małżonków wobec aborcji mają istotny statystycznie, choć niewysoki, związek z jakością ich wzajemnych relacji. Im wyższy poziom akceptacji wyrażali oni wobec możliwości przerwania ciąży w sytuacji nieplanowanego poczęcia dziecka, tym niższy był poziom ich satysfakcji w zakresie ich wzajemnej więzi, miłości, komunikacji i poczucia wzajemnego doboru. Jednocześnie, wraz ze wzrostem poziomu satysfakcji małżonków z ich wzajemnej relacji zwiększał się poziom ich negatywnego nastawienia do wyboru aborcji jako możliwości regulowania liczby dzieci w rodzinie. Na podstawie porównania uzyskanych wyników badań z danymi przedstawianymi w literaturze na temat jakości małżeństw osób doświadczających aborcji można wysnuć wniosek, że postawy małżonków wobec aborcji w zakresie komponentu poznawczego i emocjonalno-motywa-

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cyjnego w podobny sposób wiążą się z jakością ich relacji, jak w przypadku postaw małżonków wobec aborcji w aspekcie komponentu behawioralnego. Otwartość na aborcję (postawa pro-choice) wiąże się z mniej satysfakcjonującymi relacjami kobiet i mężczyzn w związku, a nieakceptacja jej (postawa pro-life) z wyższym poziomem jakości ich relacji.

Słowa kluczowe: małżeństwo, aborcja, miłość, relacje małżeńskie, postawy

Introduction

In the light of systematically repeated discussions on the legal aspects of the permissibility of abortion, the analysis of psychosocial effects that an artificial termination of pregnancy could have on people directly related to it, i.e. both spouses, is usually omitted. In this paper the relationship between spouses' attitudes towards abortion and the quality of their mutual relations is discussed. Although, on the basis of the research presented here, it is not possible to conclude unequivocally what the relational experiences of spouses after an abortion could look like, it is worth paying attention to the quality of the relationship, love, communication and sense of marital selection, depending on what attitudes towards abortion they declared during the research in relation to their own position in the face of unplanned pregnancy. It turns out that the very declaration of attitudes in this respect (openness or lack of openness to abortion in the case of unplanned pregnancy) significantly differentiates the quality of the marital relations between the respondents.

1. Attitudes towards abortion in the aspect of marital relations in the light of literature

Almost thirty years after the introduction of the Act on Family Planning, Protection of the Human Fetus and Conditions for Termination of Pregnancy on January 7, 1993, the discourse on abortion and its various conditions is still important. Systematically, as social debates on the principles of permitting abortion in Poland are returning. Each year, tens of millions of abortions are recorded worldwide (Bearak et al., 2020). Despite the legal prohibition of abortion on demand in Poland, it can be assumed that some women decide to do so, *inter alia*, in the form of the so-called abortion emigration to neighboring

countries or through pharmacological solutions. This is indicated by media reports revealing these facts among celebrities, as well as undocumented statements of people providing medical and therapeutic help.

Two main currents have been clashing in discussions on abortion for years: opponents and supporters. The supporters of abortion are looking for arguments for its legalization, also for cross-border purposes, e.g. indicating the risk of death or serious injury of illegal abortions, but without discussing the long-term and wide-ranging consequences for the quality of mental life or relations with the spouses of women who perform abortions (Lowe, 2018). In these two trends, there is talk of pro-life attitudes that indicates that human life should be protected from conception to natural death, and pro-choice attitudes, recognizing the right of women to choose abortion, due to the belief that it is her business, private, and the fetus is a part of it, not an independent human being (Singer, 2007; Picker, 2007, after: Król, 2014). Meanwhile, an analysis of the Poles' attitudes towards abortion has shown that over the past 25 years, attitudes have changed from pro-choice to pro-life. The fact that abortion should be permitted by law, when a woman simply does not want to have a child, was convinced by CBOS (Public Opinion Research Center) in 1999 that 27% of respondents said *yes* whereas 58% said *no*; in 2005: *yes*: 28%, *no*: 60%; in 2010: *yes*: 18%, *no*: 73%; in 2012: *yes*: 14%, *no*: 75%; in 2016: *yes*: 14%, *no*: 78%; in 2020, *yes*: 18%, *no*: 73% (Feliński, Roguska, 2020).

It is difficult to accurately assess the attitudes of women and men towards abortion. However, one can risk a hypothesis that there is some similarity between attitudes towards abortion in the cognitive, emotional-motivational and behavioral aspects. This means that the cognitive and emotional-motiva-

tional declarativeness of accepting or not accepting an abortion could be reflected with a high probability in the performance or, respectively, failure to perform it, if the women or both spouses were in a situation of unexpected and/or unwanted pregnancy. Research conducted among English and Welsh women shows that those who were negative about abortion more often struggled with making abortion decisions. Women with positive attitudes towards abortion were less likely to have moral dilemmas related to abortion (Hoggart, 2017).

In countries where abortion is legally permissible, many researchers are convinced that attitudes towards abortion and decisions related to abortion by women are largely influenced by the availability of institutions where pregnancy can be legally terminated. The research carried out in 1992-2011 shows that the level of anti-abortion activities and attitudes were negatively related to the number of institutions performing abortion. Also, the abortion rate in a given US state was positively related to the number of institutions performing abortions (Medoff, 2021). Where abortion is legal, women's decisions about it are largely influenced by difficult financial situation, or even poverty. Poor women have more abortions than rich women (Oberman, 2018). In a study carried out in Norway, it turned out that the strongest determinant of women's decisions about abortion was the prospect of single parenthood. At the same time, those women who displayed liberal attitudes towards abortion more often decided to terminate the pregnancy (Skjeldestad, 1994). In 2009, Swedish researchers analyzed the profiles of male partners of women who decided to have an abortion. Among the 590 men under the survey, every third had a previous experience of an abortion performed by a partner. These men were older, had a lower level of education and less emotional support than the men for whom this was the first experience of a partner deciding to have an abortion (Makenzius et al., 2012). Newton (2015; cf. Fagan, Talkington, 2014, after: Ryś, 2014) points out that the acceptance of abortion may be associated with the prevalence and acceptance of contraception, contributing to a radical change in the social perception of sexual intercourse, human life, human, science, and morality in general.

There are few studies in the literature that discuss the quality of spouses' relationships depending on their attitudes towards abortion. The quality of marriages of people experiencing abortions was also rarely discussed. However, the limited data available on the determinants and consequences of this experience for women and men indicate that the acceptance or non-acceptance of abortion is related to the quality of the relationship between them. The research of women in Shanghai shows that women whose husbands were careless about contraception were more likely to accept attitudes towards abortion. At the same time, such an attitude of the husband to family planning more often exposed women to decisions about abortion. The attitudes towards reproduction in the husbands of the women were to a large extent dependent on the education of these men (Ling, Hayashi & Wang, 1998). Many Chinese young women under the survey consider their parents' views on marriage and reproduction crucial. They often put their parents' preferences over those of their intimate partners. They justify this by the fact that intergenerational ties are more durable and reliable than the ties between intimate partners (Lai, Choi, 2021). The vast majority of women decide to have an abortion together with their husbands (Ariffin et al., 2017). However, women are often forced to have abortions by their partners, parents, and even employers or doctors (Reardon, 2018).

When researching attitudes towards abortion, researchers focus, *inter alia*, on whether women who decide to have an abortion and their partners experience the stigma associated with the decision to abort. It turns out that women with a low level of reproductive autonomy feel more stigmatized and must take into account the position of their partners when making decisions (Mehta et al., 2019). At the same time, it also turns out that despite the growing popularity of abortion in the world, the decision to terminate a pregnancy often causes moral outrage towards women and their partners (Pacilli et al., 2018). Major and Gramzow (1999) observed that women who felt abortion stigmatized more often felt the need to keep it secret from family and friends. Hiding this fact was also associated with suppressing thoughts and emotions about abortion, which, how-

ever, led to the fact that thoughts and anxiety about abortion were even more intrusive for them. It was all connected with an increase in mental stress over time. Revealing the fact of abortion reduced distress among women experiencing intrusive thoughts about abortion. The conclusions drawn by the researchers from the above analyzes may lead to suppositions that the distress experienced by these women could have a negative impact on relationships with their spouses. Many women struggling with abortion decisions are victims of violence in their own intimate relationships with their partners. Researchers have observed that violence by intimate partners (physical, emotional and sexual) negatively affects the reproductive health of women (Silverman, Raj, 2014, after: Ely & Murshid, 2021). This violence is associated with unplanned pregnancies by 3-13% of women (Campbell, 2002, after: ibidem). Women experiencing partner violence are at increased risk of unintended pregnancy, contraceptive problems and a history of miscarriage (Colarossi and Dean, 2014; Pallitto et al., 2013, after: ibidem).

In relationships with a partner—the perpetrator of violence, it is difficult to negotiate family planning since they tend to sabotage family planning efforts and the desire to fertilize their partner without caring for her desire to get pregnant (Moore, Frohwirth, & Miller, 2010, after: ibidem). As a result, these are precisely these women who are among those who use abortions more often (Ely & Murshid, 2021). It happens that these partners intentionally engage in unprotected sexual violence in order to impregnate their partner and then consider the pregnancy unwanted and lead to her termination. Such experiences may take place many times (Moore et al., 2010, after: ibidem). On the other hand, experiencing violence in the life history of patients (also in their childhood) was associated with a greater risk of experiencing abortion in the future (Coyle et al., 2015; McCloskey, 2016, after: ibidem). Sexual abuse may more often be associated with abortion, both in the context of deciding about the abortion itself and the strength of the effects of mental health (Reardon, 2018). At the same time, women with an abortion experience are more exposed to sexual violence and violent partnerships (Russo and Denious, 2001, after: Ely, Murshid, 2021).

Many researchers discuss the health and psychological effects of abortion on women. Their analysis allows drawing the conclusion that most of these effects, directly or indirectly, may reduce the quality of marital relations. Currently, with regard to the effects of abortion, researchers have no doubts about their occurrence. The discussions revolve around how often these effects appear, how intense they are, and to what extent they constitute a physical or mental health problem (Wilmoth, 1992, after: Reardon, 2018). Julius Fogel (after Reardon, 2018), a psychiatrist and gynecologist, pioneer of abortion law who performed tens of thousands of abortions, stated that abortion always requires a psychological price. According to him, every woman is traumatized by termination of pregnancy. It touches the level of her humanity, part of her own life. He believes that when a woman terminates her pregnancy, she is destroying herself. It cannot be harmless, and the trauma may collapse into unconsciousness and never reveal itself in a woman's lifetime.

Researchers who describe the consequences of abortion often analyze them from two perspectives—whether they are supporters or opponents of it. Despite many differences, both groups agree that women experiencing abortion more often than those who do not experience it have mental health problems (Reardon, 2018), although there are also some who deny the occurrence of such disorders (Steinberg et al., 2018). A study conducted among women aged 13-49, residents of California, the USA, showed that the treatment rate at a mental health clinic was 17% higher in the group who had an abortion (N = 14,297) compared to the group of women, who gave birth to children (N = 40 122). Within 90 days after pregnancy, the abortion group had 63% more mental health problems than the labor group (Coleman et al., 2002).

Many women experience long-term emotional, spiritual, psychological, and interpersonal difficulties after an abortion, including complicated grief, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and relationship disorders (Whitney, 2017). The mourning process may last from several days to several years, and PTSD often shows up even after several years (Reardon, 2018). In one of the studies conduct-

ed among American women, PTSD was found in 32.5%, and ASD (acute stress disorder) in 52.5% of women after an abortion, compared to those who had never experienced it (Vukelic, 2010). The effects of abortion have been documented to include later premature births and breast cancer, more common in women who terminated their first pregnancy (Carroll, 2012). In an interview, abortion was associated with a significantly increased risk of postpartum depression after the first live birth (Meltzer-Brody, Maegbaek, Medland, 2017, after: Reardon, 2018), alienation, withdrawal from human warmth, inhibition of the maternal instinct (Fogel, after: *ibidem*). Among the effects, researchers also often mention guilt, sadness, grief, a sense of loss, anxiety, the use of psychoactive substances, sleep disorders (Reardon, 2018), decreased self-esteem, self-destructive behavior, existential fears and a decrease in the quality of life (Coleman et al., 2017). Fogel (after: Reardon, 2018) indicates that something happens at deeper levels of a woman's consciousness when she terminates a pregnancy. Adverse personal and interpersonal effects for the spouses turned out to be greater and manifested themselves, *inter alia*, in PTSD and in relationship problems when there was a disagreement between the partners in the abortion decision (Coyle, Coleman, & Rue, 2010).

The effects of an abortion do not always have to be immediate, but they can be triggered by subsequent births or natural losses, and even by subsequent non-pregnancy events (Ryan, Mengeling, & Booth, 2014, as cited in Reardon, 2018). Research shows that the percentage of women experiencing negative reactions increases with time, along with a significant decrease in decision satisfaction and the feeling of relief (Major, Cozzarelli, & Cooper, 2000; Miller, Pasta, & Dean, 1998, after: *ibidem*). The psychological and physical symptoms described in the literature as PAS and PAD post-abortion syndrome prevent many women from fulfilling their marital role and building a successful relationship with their husbands. They hinder these tasks, among others such problems as self-image disorders, loss of life purpose, conflicts in relations with her husband, fear of sexual intercourse, hypersensitivity, outbursts of anger, anxiety and depression, difficulties in feel-

ing love, abuse of psychoactive substances, suicidal thoughts (see Ryś, 2014). When the partner knows about abortion and participated in making the decision about abortion, he may also experience many of the above consequences of termination of pregnancy (see Kornas-Biela, 2000). Then it is difficult to talk about the possibility of building a successful marital relationship free from such difficult states. German researchers indicate that soon after the abortion, satisfaction with the relationship decreases slightly, and in the following years there is no significant difference in satisfaction with the relationship compared to the pre-abortion period (Hajek, 2021). On the other hand, a number of data from studies described by Maria Ryś (2014) indicate that 25-70% of women after an abortion assess the change of relationship with their child's father to the disadvantage or even to its disorder and breakdown or even breakup. Similarly, the child's father may, over time, experience a loss of positive feelings towards his spouse (including trust, respect, sense of security), especially when she has aborted without his knowledge and consent (see Kornas-Biela, 2000). Among the consequences of abortion for marital relations among the women surveyed by Kaczmar (2014), about half of them can be mentioned, e.g. feeling of loneliness, emotional indifference, dying out of love life, the desire for frequent isolation, fear of sexual intercourse and the next pregnancy, and in about one third of them aversion to sexual life, sexual indifference and sexual dysfunction.

Difficulties in heterosexual relations between women experiencing abortions, compared to women who gave birth to a child, are proved by the research of Sullins (2003, after: Franz, Coleman, 2009), which shows that women with an abortion experience are twice as likely to be unmarried, and when they are married the risk of divorce in their relationships is 37% higher (including multiple divorces). These women had twice as many sexual partners, started sex earlier and married later.

Taking into account the negative consequences of abortion for the marital relationship, it is worthwhile in further research to look at the quality of these relationships when declaring attitudes towards abortion before the spouses think about such decisions.

2. Methodological fundamentals of research

The research was conducted in 2018-2020 among 480 people (240 men and 240 women) in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship. The research goal was to determine the respondents' attitudes towards abortion and their relationship with the quality of ties and relationships that they had with their spouses, as well as to identify selected determinants of these attitudes manifested by the respondents. The measurement of attitudes towards abortion was carried out using the scale of attitudes towards parenthood, developed by Marta Komorowska-Pudło (2013). One of the statements on this scale: "In order to avoid an unplanned pregnancy, you should even use an abortion" was used to achieve the research goal set here. The respondents described their own attitude towards abortion by indicating one of the five responses to the above-mentioned statements—from completely agree to completely disagree. The measurement of the quality of mutual relations between the spouses was carried out using Józef Szopiński's (1980) Scale of Marriage Bonds (SMB) (that enables the assessment of compassion, understanding and cooperation of spouses), intimacy and commitment in love), the Marriage Communication Questionnaire (MCQ) by Maria Kaźmierczak and Mieczysław Plopa (2008) (that allows the analysis of the level of support, commitment and depreciation in marital relations) and the Marriage Selection Questionnaire (MSQ) by Jan Rostowski and Mieczysław Plopa (2006) (that measures the sense of intimacy, similarity, self-realization and disappointment of the spouses). The measurement of selected individual determinants of respondents' attitudes towards abortion was carried out using the questionnaire and the data sheets contained therein, as well as the Centrality of Religiosity Scale by Stefan Huber (after: Zarzycka, 2007). Using variables such as the respondents' education, place of residence, duration of the marriage, their parental status and the level of centrality of religiosity in their lives, the relationship with the respondents' pro-life and pro-choice attitudes was determined in the analyzed

aspect of the research. The selection of the sample was non-random, purposeful and included married couples of young adults (aged 25-40).

The statistical analysis that enables the determination of the relationship between the variables was carried out with the use of the Spearman correlation coefficient ρ and Mann-Whitney U.

3. An analysis of the research results

The data obtained in the research show that the more definitely non-accepting the respondents' attitude towards abortion, the higher was the quality of their marriage in terms of all measured aspects (table 1).

Spouses who did not accept abortion were characterized by a higher level of bonding, i.e. compassion, understanding and cooperation. Respondents accepting abortion as a way of regulating fertility in the event of an unplanned pregnancy, less often than respondents who did not accept abortion, sensed mutual moods, shared closeness, empathy and trust, and missed each other less frequently when they were separated. They cared less about joint anniversaries, about sharing experiences that gave pleasure and joy. There was less tenderness and caring between them, as well as caring for a good relationship in the sphere of sexuality.

The lower level of understanding of the respondents accepting abortion, as compared to those who did not accept it, was related to the fact that the former were less likely to engage in joint discussions on mutual activities and investments, and less frequently to talk to each other about various life matters. They showed less joy in their accomplishments and less interest in the causes of their spouse's various emotional states, such as the causes of grief. More often they had secrets that they did not reveal to themselves. Less often they said to each other that they felt good with each other, less often they declared that they understood each other better and better, and they did not feel that in the future they would understand each other better. They appreciated each other's professional matters less and were less interested in the needs of contacts with the spouses' generational families.

Table 1. Relationship between the attitudes of spouses towards abortion and the quality of their marital relations

Marriage quality		Attitudes towards abortion			
		Men		Women	
		The Spearman's Rho	Significance level	The Spearman's Rho	Significance level
Marital bond	Compassion	0.18	0.004	0.27	0.000
	Understanding	0.12	0.050	0.19	0.002
	Cooperation	0.15	0.020	0.21	0.001
	Full bond	0.15	0.019	0.23	0.000
Love	Passion	0.12	0.053	0.15	0.018
	Intimacy	0.12	0.049	0.18	0.004
	Commitment	0.17	0.005	0.24	0.000
	Full love	0.15	0.016	0.20	0.002
Communication directed to the spouse	Support	0.12	0.067	0.18	0.004
	Involvement	0.09	0.169	0.09	0.174
	Depreciation	-0.15	0.015	-0.20	0.002
	Full communication	0.15	0.015	0.20	0.001
Sense of marital selection	Intimacy	0.14	0.029	0.17	0.006
	Similarity	0.17	0.005	0.23	0.000
	Self-realization	0.24	0.000	0.28	0.000
	Disappointment	-0.23	0.000	-0.22	0.000
	Total selection	0.24	0.000	0.27	0.000

In the case of respondents of both genders, the lower quality of cooperation in the marriages of people accepting abortion, compared to those who did not, was associated with less frequent mutual care and less time spent together. There were fewer compromises between them in resolving conflicts, and less often they recognized the sense of marital fidelity. Respondents accepting abortion were less willing to look for solutions during the marital crisis and were less willing to sacrifice to do everything to save the stability of the marriage if the conflicts turned out to be very strong. These respondents also less frequently declared that if they were to remarry, they would choose their spouse for the second time. Moreover, men accepting abortion less frequently indicated having mutual friends, while women from this group less often planned and carried out joint tasks together with their spouses, less frequently declared the use of methods of birth control agreed with their husbands, more often stated that they did not recognize similar values in life with their spouses and appreciated their husbands less often.

The level of love among respondents accepting abortion turned out to be lower than among those who did not accept abortion. The passion of respondents of both genders accepting abortion was less often expressed through sexual arousal at the sight of their spouses. Moreover, the men from this group less frequently desired sexual experiences with their wives and less often indicated that they were attracted to them. The women felt less desire as a result of memories of shared moments with their husbands, or as a result of closeness to them. Those accepting abortions revealed a lower level of intimacy with their spouses. It was manifested in the fact that accepting abortion less often than not accepting it indicated a sense of understanding with their spouse and peace in his presence, support and help in need, as well as warmth and cordiality in the relationship. Those who accepted abortion to a lesser extent than those who did not, gave up on fulfilling their own desires if it were to endanger the relationship. Less frequently, they declared that

they took into account the common good in their actions towards each other and put it before their own good, and that they constantly made efforts for the relationship, also in difficult situations.

Communication with spouses was much better among those who did not accept abortion as compared to those who did. In the case of the men, the relationship between support for wives and attitudes towards abortion turned out to be statistically significant at the level of the tendency. The men accepting abortion less often than those who did not accept it supported their spouses mentally, emotionally and spiritually, backed them up in their actions and views, and helped them when they needed it. In the case of women, the relationship between support and their attitudes towards abortion turned out to be statistically significant. Those accepting abortion to a lesser extent than those who did not accept it were less interested in the successes of their spouses, showed them their care and help, gave them mental, emotional and spiritual support, were interested in their needs, praised their husbands for their work, provided advice when they needed it and helped them in solving various problems or making decisions. The relationship between the generally understood involvement of the respondents in building relationships with their spouses and their attitudes towards abortion turned out to be statistically insignificant, however, in a detailed analysis, several statistically significant correlations were found. It turned out that spouses of both genders accepting abortion less often than those who did not accept it hugged their spouses and kissed them. In addition, the men from this group less often sought compromises with their wives during various conflicts and discussions, and women less often confessed their feelings towards their husbands. More statistically significant relationships were found in a detailed analysis of the level of depreciation of the spouses with their attitudes towards abortion. Respondents of both genders accepting abortion more often than those who do not accept it, imposed their opinion on their spouses, said something inconsiderate or unpleasant to them, behaved arrogantly and rude towards them, humiliated them or behaved vulgarly towards

them. Moreover, women accepting abortion more often than those who did not accept it demanded submission from their spouse or insulted him.

The measurement of the relationship between the sense of marital selection and the respondents' attitudes towards abortion turned out to be statistically significant for all detailed variables. The analysis of the dimension of intimacy allowed drawing conclusions that those who accept abortion less often than those who do not accept it indicated that their contact with their spouses deepened over time, and that the level of their mutual compliance in plans, aspirations, and expectations was higher than in those who did not accept it. Moreover, women accepting abortion less frequently than those who did not accept it declared that with the duration of their marriage, their sensitivity to mutual needs with their husbands increased and the sense of psychological kinship with them, and that the sense of happiness in their marriages increased. Based on the measurement of the relationship between the spouses' sense of similarity and their attitudes towards abortion, it was found that those accepting abortion to a lesser extent than those who did not accept it derived satisfaction from joint activities and the implementation of joint plans with their spouses. Those accepting abortion less frequently than those who did not accept it displayed the same or similar views with their spouses on the upbringing of their children and indicated a convergence of world views, which also expressed their agreement in the choice of the hierarchy of goals and values of life. Women accepting abortion less often than those who don't accept it also indicated that they agreed with their husbands in terms of joint decision-making, as well as in terms of spending free time with them. In the area of the sense of self-fulfillment in marital and parental roles, those who accepted abortion less frequently than those who did not accept it indicated the awareness of the requirements of married life and were less positive about parenthood. More often they declared that they found a full human life in marriage, that they noticed changes in themselves for the better over the years of the relationship, and that marriage was the best way of life, love and work. They also said

Table 2. Individual determinants of spouses' attitudes towards abortion

Individual determinants of respondents' attitudes towards abortion		Attitudes of spouses towards abortion					
		Men			Women		
		Pro-life	Undefined	Pro-choice	Pro-life	Undefined	Pro-choice
		%					
Education	Higher	70.2	18.7	11.1	78.4	13.2	8.4
	Secondary	69.7	19	11.3	80.6	13.5	5.9
	Vocational	75.8	15.1	9.1	87.5	12.5	0
Correlation indicator		$\rho = -0.06$; $p = 0.371$			$\rho = 0.11$; $p = 0.076$		
Place of residence	City over 200,000 residents	71.7	17.7	10.6	73.3	14.6	12.1
	City from 50,000 to 200,000 residents	69.2	11.6	19.2	86.2	10.4	3.4
	City up to 50,000 residents	63.5	25.9	10.6	76	18.7	5.3
	Country	67.9	17.8	14.3	84.4	9.3	6.3
Correlation indicator		$\rho = -0.03$; $p = 0.638$			$\rho = 0.07$; $p = 0.256$		
Duration of relationship	Up to 2 years	63.2	29.4	7.4	88.1	10.4	1.5
	2-3 years	70	15.7	14.3	77.9	16.2	5.9
	4-5 years	63.3	24.5	12.2	66	22	12
	6-9 years	79.3	10.4	10.3	74.2	9.7	16.1
	Above 10 years	69.4	13.9	16.7	74.3	14.3	11.4
Correlation indicator		$\rho = 0.02$; $p = 0.752$			$\rho = -0.19$; $p = 0.002$		
Parental status	Have children	69.8	19.9	10.3	71.6	16.3	12.1
	No children	66.9	19.9	13.2	81.6	13.3	5.1
Correlation indicator		U Mann-Whitney = 7228.50; $p = 0.231$			U Mann-Whitney = 6950.50; $p = 0.078$		

Table 3. Religiousness of spouses and their attitudes towards abortion

Attitudes towards abortion	The level of centrality of the religiosity of the respondents (average results)	
	Men	Women
Pro-life	44.10	48.65
Undefined	34.00	41.07
Pro-choice	31.48	44.70
Correlation indicator	$\rho = 0.32$; $p = 0.000$	$\rho = 0.19$; $p = 0.006$

less frequently that children born into the world made their marriage more attractive and deepened and strengthened their love, and that the birth of a child strengthened their sense of security and mutual support. Those accepting abortion more often declared disappointment with their relationship

with their spouse, more often indicated that they regretted the lost independence and freedom from the pre-marriage period and that they felt better at work than at home. They more often declared that their spouse had failed their expectations, that they felt lonely in a relationship and that they would rather be in company than alone with their spouse. They were more frequent among those accepting abortion than among those who did not accept the statements that in difficult situations and problems they would prefer to leave their spouse and be free, especially if the problems were related to marriage. They also thought about breaking up with their spouse more often. Moreover, the men accepting abortion more often expressed a desire to return to their parents' home and stay in it, and also more often indicated that after conflicts they are accompanied by a long-lasting discrepancy. The women

accepting abortion more often also pointed out that marriage became an obstacle for them in achieving their goals, e.g. professional aspirations.

In the further part of the research, it was determined to what extent pro-life and pro-choice attitudes were differentiated by variables such as the education of the respondents, their place of residence, the duration of the marriage, their parental status and the level of centrality of religiosity in their lives (tables 2 and 3).

Pro-life attitudes were more often revealed by respondents with a lower level of education. In the case of women, the relationship between education and their attitudes towards abortion was statistically significant at the trend level, while in the population of their husbands no such relationship was found (table 2). The place of residence turned out to be a variable that did not differentiate their attitudes towards abortion in the case of the men under the survey. In the group of women, based on the percentage scale, a higher percentage of pro-choice attitudes among female residents of large cities can be found. However, these data are not statistically significant. The attitudes of the women towards abortion varied depending on how long they lived in their marriages. The shorter the duration of the relationship, the more often they rejected the possibility of having an abortion in the event of an unplanned pregnancy. (statistically significant data). In the case of the men, no such differences were found, although on a percentage scale, as in the case of women, the lowest number of pro-choice people in this situation was among those whose marriages lasted up to two years. Women who did not have children yet displayed pro-life attitudes more often than women who already had children. These were to a greater extent (although in the research it concerned every eighth of them), they were open to accepting abortion in the case of unplanned pregnancy (data statistically significant at the trend level). In the case of men, no such differences were found.

Religiousness turned out to be a variable that differentiated to a statistically significant degree the attitudes of spouses towards abortion. The higher the level of centrality of religiosity in the lives of

respondents of both genders, manifested in the interest in religious issues, beliefs, experience of prayer and participation in services, the more often there were people with pro-life attitudes (table 3). Along with the decline in the level of religiosity of the respondents, the group of respondents focused on the possibility of choosing an abortion in the event of an unplanned pregnancy increased.

Conclusions from the research

All the data obtained from the research indicate that the attitudes of spouses towards abortion are statistically significantly related to the quality of their mutual relations. The more accepting they refer to the possibility of terminating a pregnancy in the event of an unplanned conception of a child, the less satisfying their mutual bond, the quality of love, communication and the sense of mutual selection turned out to be. At the same time, the high level of the quality of the marriage relationship positively correlated with the negative attitude to the choice of abortion as an option to regulate the number of children in the family. Pro-life attitudes were more common in spouses engaged in religious life, and in the case of women also in those who had a lower level of education, were in a relationship with a shorter duration, and did not have children yet.

Taking into account the previously indicated data from the research on the difficult relationships of spouses experiencing abortion and comparing them with the presented results from our own research, it can be assumed that there is a high probability that in the situation of legalization of the universal right to abortion, spouses who declare openness to termination of pregnancy at the cognitive and the emotional and motivational component of their own attitudes, would be willing to implement them in the behavioral aspect. This means that a pro-choice attitude carries the risk of actually having an abortion, and not accepting it will be associated with a high probability of having a child also in a situation where its conception was not planned by the spouses. Therefore, it seems justified to organize support for spouses

in building high-quality relationships in order to increase the percentage of people with pro-life attitudes. At the same time, taking into account the determinants of the quality of marriage that appear in women and men in the developmental

period, from the beginning of their lives, it would be worth strengthening activities aimed at shaping psychosocial maturity to build marital relationships in adulthood in the broadly understood family, school and media systems.

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