



The functioning of the family system and its relation to the psychological well-being of spouses in the context of their religious commitment¹

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Abstract: The article describes the functioning of family systems and its relation to the psychological well-being of spouses in the context of their religious commitment. The spouses play a very important role, as their mutual relationship affects the functioning of the entire family system. Positive mental functioning, or the psychological well-being of husband and wife, can have an impact on these relationships. The aim of the study was to verify the connections between the functioning of the family and the psychological well-being of the spouses and to identify the predictors of the analyzed variables. The study included 130 married couples – an equal number of men and women making up 65 marriage systems bringing up school-age children. The following measures were used in the study: Family Assessment Scales (SOR) by Andrzej Margasiński (2013), based on the Polish adaptation of FACES IV – Flexibility and Cohesion Evaluation Scales by David H. Olson; Caroll Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales, as adapted into Polish by Dominika Karaś and Jan Ciecuch (2017); and the Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10-PL) by E. Worthington and colleagues, as adapted into Polish by Jarosław Polak and Damian Grabowski (2017). The analyses of the relationship between the variables shows that the more balanced and well-functioning the system is, the higher is the well-being perceived by the husband and wife. The crucial predictors of a "healthy" family include some dimensions of well-being: high self-acceptance, personal growth, and positive relations with others. Some differences in the analyzed variables between husbands and wives were also found.

Keywords: family functioning, psychological well-being of spouses, religious commitment, marital relations

Introduction

Family is the basic environment of every person's development (e.g., Strużyńska, 2020; Wolska-Długosz, 2016) and at the same time a source of behavior principles and patterns for children (Brzezińska et al., 2016; Zalewska, 2017). In the systemic perspective, the functioning of all individuals making up a family is interdependent, and changes concerning any of the elements affect the others (e.g., Bajkowski, 2017; de Barbaro, 1999; Wampler & Patterson, 2020). Particularly significant in this system are parents, whose mutual relationship influences the functioning of the entire family system (Drożdżowicz, 1999; Franczyk, 2021; Weryszko, 2020).

Empirical research indicates that functioning in a healthy family is positively related to psychological well-being. Married people are happier than widowed or divorced individuals and happier than those who have never married; despite the conflicts it involves, marriage raises self-esteem and strengthens the sense of personal identity (Argyle, 2004; Trzebińska, 2008). The link between marriage and well-being seems to be strong because of the support received and thanks to the new roles that become a source of self-esteem (Niśkiewicz, 2016). One of the factors that increase life satisfaction is closeness (Babiarz & Brudniak-Drag, 2013).

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Another interesting issue is the relations between the religious commitment of the spouses and the functioning of their families as well as psychological well-being, which is why this variable was also included in the present study.

1. A model of family functioning: the systemic perspective

One of the theories explaining the functioning and quality of the family is the systemic approach. The source of this approach is the thesis formulated by Herbert Spencer (1880, after: Klein & White, 1996) about the presence of universal processes in society as a general system, just like they are present in biological organisms that can be studied by scientists of various disciplines. The application of the system metaphor to society made it also applicable to the family (Drożdżowicz, 1999). The foundations of the systemic theory of the family postulate an influence of the system on the environment while at the same time acknowledging its separateness from that environment, marked by boundaries. The external boundaries define the range of information that gets into the system (from complete to strongly limited information), which makes it possible to distinguish the system from the environment. At the same time, in accordance with the feedback loop principle, some data from outside undergo transformations inside the system (internal boundaries) and return to the environment. A flexible family system will therefore be capable of adapting to the new demands of the environment and to the changes taking place in it (Plopa, 2011) while retaining its own necessary separateness and integrity (Świętochowski, 2014).

Subsystems are distinguished within the family system (Franczyk, 2021; Weryszko, 2020). One of these is the marital subsystem, being a fundamental element of the family (Braun-Gałkowska, 1992), and the spouses themselves are described by Virginia Satir (2000) as “the architects of the family.” This is so for many important reasons. The functioning of the marital subsystem influences the entire family because the quality of the relationship between the parents influences the quality of all the remaining

relationships in the family (Nurhayati et al., 2019; Weryszko, 2020). The relationship between the married couple determines the ways of communication in the family (Galvin et al., 2015). The spouses’ interaction style is a model of interpersonal behaviors for their children and will be transmitted to other social relations, also those outside the family (Sergin & Flora, 2019). What happens within the marital subsystem determines the family climate as well. The spouses give shape to the entire family life, and it is their relations that will determine the division of duties and the organization of the whole family life (Duda, 2017). Thus, marriage quality, marital satisfaction, the individual characteristics and traits of the partners in marriage, and the system of interactions between them make it possible to describe the whole family system, for instance, in terms of its level of cohesion or flexibility (e.g., Braun-Gałkowska, 2018; Olson, 2013), specifying whether the partners cooperate on the basis of mutual expectations, obligations, and the proportions of positive and negative behaviors, tinged with an emotional bond. The moment a child is born, the marital subsystem becomes a parental subsystem, which also has new tasks to perform and changes the organization of the whole family. Studies show dynamic changes of mutual influences in the family system depending on the stage of family life and other changes taking place in the family members (cf. Dąbrowska-Wnuk, 2018; Ostoja-Zawadzka, 1999; Rojewska, 2019).

One of the models illustrating family functioning is the Circumplex Model by David H. Olson (2013). In his model the author describes the family on three basic dimensions: cohesion, flexibility, and communication. The concept of cohesion is defined as the emotional bond between family members. Cohesion will be determined not only by the mutual emotional closeness between the members of families, the time spent together, shared interests, a common circle of friends, and making decisions together but also by setting the psychological boundaries between the family members (Margasiński, 2015). The second dimension of family functioning is flexibility, defined by the quality and degree of changes taking place in the systems. Flexibility comprises changes in leadership, roles, and the rules of mutual interactions, and these

changes result from negotiations between family members. The definition highlights the quantity of the changes rather than the possibility of making them (Margasiński, 2015). Family communication, which is the third dimension, is understood as the ability to engage in positive communication in partner and family systems. Communication is an auxiliary dimension and at the same time one that is indispensable for the family to change and adjust the levels of cohesion and flexibility to situational and developmental demands (Margasiński, 2013). An additional important dimension, which was not highlighted directly by David Olson (2004), is satisfaction with family life. The author defines it as the degree to which family members feel happy and fulfilled with one another.

Each of these dimensions is a continuum, from a very low, through moderate, to a very high level of the characteristic. This makes it possible to describe the family in many ways that constitute the Circumplex Model. The cohesion dimension ranges from disengagement (very low level), through balanced cohesion, to enmeshment (very high level), and the flexibility dimension spans a spectrum from rigidity (very low level) through balanced flexibility, to chaos (very high level; Margasiński, 2013). Communication is additionally involved in defining the functioning of the family; when it is effective and positive, it contributes to balancing the family system.

According to Olson (2013), what promotes healthy family functioning is balanced (moderate) levels of cohesion and flexibility, whereas very low or very high levels indicate problems in the family (Tomas & Olson, 1993, 1994, after: Olson, 2013). A higher level of satisfaction with family life is also found in balanced families and correlates positively with family communication. This means that families with a high level of satisfaction with family life are characterized by much better communication than those with a low level of satisfaction (Margasiński, 2015).

2. Psychological well-being

The experience of contentment or satisfaction is associated with the individual's well-being – a general positive mental state in different domains of life (e.g.,

Czapiński, 2017; Compton & Hoffman, 2019; Rashid & Seligman, 2018; Seligman, 2005). This understanding well-being is in line with the eudaimonic perspective adopted by Carol D. Ryff (1989), who described positive human functioning by means of six factors.

The first factor is autonomy, defined as living in accordance with one's own inner beliefs. An autonomous person recognizes themselves as an independent individual capable of acting upon internalized values and standards, particularly when external circumstances demand conformism. According to Ryff (1989), autonomous functioning also means resistance to cultural influences and a sense of freedom from social norms. Studies show (Carr, 2011; Ryff, 2014) that single adults have a higher level of autonomy than married people.

The second factor is environmental mastery, which means effectively and actively coping with significant events in one's environment. It also means skillful organization of the external world – namely, a kind of adaptation skill, but one that consists in creating and controlling the physical and social worlds in accordance with one's abilities, needs, and desires. Studies found that a positive predictor of environmental mastery was length of marriage, regardless of respondent's gender, while a negative predictor, particularly for women, was the fact of having three or more children (cf. Carr, 2011; Lopez et al., 2019).

The third factor is personal growth – the person's belief about the fulfillment of their potential. It amounts to the awareness that one has certain skills, talents, and body characteristics that enable personal development in a situation of challenges posed by the environment. The application of one's potential leads to an increase in competence and the belief that knowledge and skills can be used in practice, which in turn has a motivating effect on developmental aspirations and on the achievement of what one is capable of.

The fourth factor is positive relations with others, which means the ability to maintain strong and lasting relationships with significant others. Ryff (1989) draws attention to the experience of satisfying interpersonal relations based on closeness, trust, love, and friendship, and to showing concern and engaging in activities for the benefit of others, which are an

important aspect of healthy human functioning. This dimension is undoubtedly positively linked with normal marital and family relations (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The research conducted by the cited authors also revealed an interesting pattern regarding respondents' gender. Adult women scored higher on positive relations with others than adult men, and this was the only gender difference connected with the dimensions of psychological well-being.

The fifth factor is purpose in life, which refers to the individual's belief that there is a valuable goal being pursued in their life and giving direction to it, even in adverse circumstances. The author's research (Ryff, 1989) indicates changes in the perception of this dimension of psychological well-being with age. It is emphasized that in older adults the goals become more complex and diverse, and their achievement is, to a greater extent, postponed in time. This results in perceiving one's life as meaningful and having a direction.

Finally, the sixth factor is self-acceptance, defined as a positive attitude towards oneself and the acceptance of one's limitations. This factor is also a characteristic of mental health and indicates better effectiveness in action. Ryff and Singer (2012) point out that self-acceptance is the key aspect of well-being, especially in situations when the individual is dissatisfied with their own functioning. It allows the person to adopt an understanding attitude towards themselves, refuse to be bothered too much about one's imperfections, and readily maintain a positive self-image.

3. Religious commitment and its relations to family functioning and spouses' well-being

In the literature, information can often be found about the relations between religiousness and overall quality of life as well as mental and physical health. Researchers have also investigated the links between religiosity and the quality and stability of marriage (Braun-Galkowska, 1984; Rostowska & Żylińska, 2009). Relations between religious commitment and family functioning have been explored, among others, by Dakowicz (2012), whose research revealed differences in marital relations and in the

level of expectations from marriage depending on religious commitment. Spouses with higher commitment in this sphere had higher expectations from marriage, better interpersonal relations, and higher marital satisfaction. They create a climate of family life conducive to the personal growth of all family members. This author's research also investigated the family systems of religiously committed young women (Dakowicz, 2014), revealing higher marital satisfaction in respondents' parents and a higher quality of interpersonal contacts in these families. A question therefore arises about the direction of the relationship between religious commitment and family functioning; perhaps these relations are circular, which would mean that not only religious commitment helps build proper family relations conducive to development, but also such relations and the positive family climate may encourage young people to engage in religious activity. Similarly, the research by Bukalski (2016) indicated a higher quality of the marital relationship in spouses with higher religious commitment. According to this author, the convergence of the spouses' religious beliefs has a significant effect on marriage quality, because both husband and wife accept the indissolubility of marriage. The results of that research also showed that in the group of men religiosity less often co-occurred with the understanding of love, communication, and relationship quality, while among women religious beliefs co-occurred with commitment and quality of life. Likewise, the study by Jarosz (2003) revealed that individuals with mature religiosity show no hostile behaviors towards their partners, build positive interactions, exhibit a protective attitude towards others, provide support, and are aware of social interrelations.

Previous studies were also devoted to the relationship between religiosity and well-being. Based on the results of his research, Krok (2009) found that religiosity showed weak associations with hedonic and eudaimonic quality of life, which are determined both by the external structure of religiosity and by the dimensions of quality of life. This author's research also concerned religiosity and quality of marital life, and it also revealed a not very strong positive relationship (Krok, 2012).

4. The methodological assumptions of the present study

The research presented in this article was devoted to the relationship between the functioning of the family system and the psychological well-being of husbands and wives.

The aim of the research was to find answers to the following questions:

- Are there differences between husbands and wives in the evaluation of family relations?
- Are there differences between spouses in the level of psychological well-being?
- Is there a relationship between the characteristics of the family system and the psychological well-being of husbands and wives?
- What is the relationship between the indicators of family system functioning and the psychological well-being of husbands and wives?
- What sociodemographic factors are related to the functioning of the family and the psychological well-being of its members?
- What predictors explain family relations and the psychological well-being of spouses?

The following measures were used in the analyses:

- Family Assessment Scales (SOR) developed by Andrzej Margasiński (2013), based on the Polish adaptation of David H. Olson's FACES IV – Flexibility and Cohesion Evaluation Scales;
- Psychological Well-Being Scales by Caroll Ryff, as adapted into Polish by Dominika Karaś and Jan Ciecuch (2017).

In our study we also used an extensive survey that we designed to collect sociodemographic data. Additionally, we collected information about respondents' religiosity. For this purpose, we administered the Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10-PL) by Worthington and colleagues, as adapted into Polish by Jarosław Polak and Damian Grabowski (2017).

Family Assessment Scales are used to measure various aspects of family life. In the present study, we measured spouses' perception of the family. The scales

enable the assessment of basic dimensions of family life: cohesion (emotional bond between family members) and flexibility (changes in leadership, roles, and rules in the family system). We also assessed additional aspects, namely communication, thanks to which the family can change the levels of cohesion and flexibility and the level of satisfaction with family life. Spouses were asked to assess the relations in the family in which they functioned at the time, which yielded results concerning the levels of variables measured by individual scales of the SOR: (A) balanced cohesion, (B) balanced flexibility, (C) disengagement, (D) enmeshment, (E) rigidity, (F) chaos, (G) communication, and (H) satisfaction. Family Assessment Scales enable a general assessment of the "health" of family functioning (Margasiński, 2013) through computing cohesion and flexibility indexes and the overall index. The "healthier" the family system, the more balanced it is; in that case, the values of the overall index are higher than 1, and when they are lower than 1, they indicate problems in the family system.

The Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS) measures individuals' well-being defined in accordance with the eudaimonic perspective. We used the full 84-item version of the questionnaire due to its acceptable psychometric properties. Based on factor analysis, six dimensions of well-being were distinguished: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Karaś & Ciecuch, 2017). These dimensions were described above in more detail. Scores are calculated for individual scales and the overall score is computed for the questionnaire as a whole. The choice of this measure was dictated by previous empirical findings, which suggest links between well-being and satisfying family relations (Ryff, 2014).

The Polish version of the questionnaire measuring religious commitment, RCI-10-PL, is a short 10-item measure assessing subjective religious beliefs that have an effect on activities in daily life and on relations with the group, understood as a religious or social community (Polak & Grabowski, 2017). As the authors observe, the scale concerns mostly the effects of religiosity on functioning in secular

situations and is neutral with regard to religious doctrines or traditions. It is, therefore, a measure fit for use in the area of family group functioning.

The study included 130 participants, with equal groups of 65 women and 65 men. When selecting the sample, we made sure that they were formally married spouses bringing up at least one child between preschool age and adolescence. The participants made up family systems in which the marital and parental subsystems could be clearly distinguished. The basic descriptive statistics for the study sample are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Except for the number of siblings variable, the values of skewness and kurtosis confirmed the alignment of variable distributions with the normal distribution. Participants' mean age was 40.35

years in the group of men (range: 25 to 58 years, $SD = 8.7$) and 38.20 years in the group of women (23 to 58 years, $SD = 8.79$). The spouses had been married for an average of 14.03-years (range: from 1 to 37 years, $SD = 9.23$) and were bringing up two children (range: 1 to 5 children). The wives were better educated than the husbands: 29 women (44.62%) had secondary education and 26 women (40.00%) had higher education, while 22 men (33.85%) had vocational education and 20 men (30.77%) had secondary education. The spouses showed religious commitment: the mean score was 29.63 ($SD = 9.88$) for men and 32.38 ($SD = 9.58$) for women, as against the American mean score of 23.6 ($SD = 18.8$) for the measure as a whole (Polak & Grabowski, 2017).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the sociodemographic characteristics of the spouses in the study

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>Mo</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Number of children		65	2.20	2.00	2.00	1.02	0.50	-0.42	1.00	5.00
Length of marriage (in years)		65	14.03	12.00	10.00	9.23	0.50	-0.75	1.00	37.00
Age	Men	65	40.35	41.00	42.00	8.70	0.11	-0.80	25.00	58.00
	Women	65	38.20	39.00	40.00	8.79	0.17	-0.61	23.00	58.00
Number of siblings	Men	65	2.75	2.00	2.00	2.16	1.87	5.30	0.00	11.00
	Women	65	2.38	2.00	2.00	1.41	1.00	1.30	0.00	7.00

Note. *N* = number of participants; *M* = mean; *Mdn* = median; *Mo* = mode; *SD* = standard deviation; *Min./Max.* = minimum/maximum

Table 2. Education level of the spouses

Education	Men		Women	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Higher	19	29.23%	26	40.00%
Secondary	20	30.77%	29	44.62%
Vocational	22	33.85%	8	12.31%
Elementary	4	6.15%	2	3.08%
Total	65	100.00%	65	100.00%

Table 3. Religious commitment of the spouses

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>Mo</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Religious Commitment Level	Men	65	29.63	31.00	33.00	9.88	-0.07	-0.51	10.00	50.00
	Women	65	32.38	34.00	34.00	9.58	-0.52	0.24	10.00	50.00

Note. *N* = number of participants; *M* = mean; *Mdn* = median; *Mo* = mode; *SD* = standard deviation; *Min./Max.* = minimum/maximum

5. Results

The application of Family Assessment Scales to marital systems made it possible to compare the scores of husbands and those of wives. As shown in Table 4, no statistically significant differences in the evaluation of family functioning were found between spouses. The tested marital systems scored average on nearly all scales, except for three of them: Disengagement, Rigidity, and Family Satisfaction, where the scores were above average (sten 7). This pattern of results indicates a satisfactory level of healthy family system functioning, but an increased level of Disengagement suggests that, on an everyday basis, each spouse is preoccupied with his or her own affairs and leads a rather individual life. Combined with high Rigidity, indicating certain difficulties in introducing situational or developmental changes, in problem situations such spouses may show a tendency to toughen their opinions, attitudes, and decisions at the cost of family cohesion. However, the predominance of separate

activities over joint ones and a certain rigidity in mutual relations makes it possible for the spouses to be satisfied with their family life, and even to a great degree (7 sten), which attests to a sense of happiness and fulfillment that stems from satisfying family life. This is additionally supported by proper communication. The values of composite indexes – cohesion, flexibility, and total – were above 1, which attests to a balanced and therefore “healthy” family system, with no significant differences between the spouses.

To determine the relationships between husbands’ and wives’ evaluations of family functioning and selected variables, we used Pearson’s *r* correlation test (Table 5). As the results show, the test revealed significant relationships.

It turned out that length of marriage and the number of siblings were positively correlated with Disengagement in men. The strength of this correlation is low, but it can be stated that the longer the marriage and the higher the number of siblings, the more disengaged from the family the husbands feel,

Table 4. Differences between husbands and wives and in the assessment of family functioning

Family Assessment Scales (SOR)	Husband (N = 65)		Wife (N = 65)		t(64)	p	Cohen's d
	M Sten	SD	M Sten	SD			
A. Balanced cohesion	29.02 6	4.38	29.43 5	3.97	-0.81	.42	-0.20
B. Balanced flexibility	25.37 6	5.69	25.91 5	4.78	-0.72	.47	-0.18
C. Disengagement	13.78 7	4.34	13.26 7	4.40	1.01	.32	0.25
D. Enmeshment	15.34 6	5.02	15.58 6	5.29	-0.42	.68	-0.10
E. Rigidity	20.12 7	4.82	20.34 7	4.36	-0.38	.70	-0.10
F. Chaos	15.86 6	5.18	15.86 6	4.86	0.00	1.00	0.00
G. Communication	40.72 6	6.84	41.08 6	6.46	-0.42	.67	-0.11
H. Satisfaction	40.37 7	7.43	40.94 7	6.25	-0.65	.52	-0.16
SOR cohesion	1.12	0.61	1.19	0.63	-1.11	.27	-0.28
SOR flexibility	1.02	0.44	1.03	0.36	-0.17	.87	-0.04
SOR overall	1.04	0.47	1.08	0.45	-0.94	.35	-0.23

Note. N = number of participants; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; t(df) = Student's t-test for two dependent samples; p = significance; Cohen's d = effect size
 *** p < .001. ** p < .01. * p < .05.

Table 5. Pearson's r correlation matrix for the family assessment scales and selected variables in the groups of men and women

Family Assessment Scales (SOR)	Length of marriage		Age		Number of siblings		Religious commitment	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
A. Balanced cohesion	-.06	-.13	.07	-.13	.03	-.10	.24	.12
B. Balanced flexibility	.04	-.01	.17	-.14	.08	-.09	.05	.20
C. Disengagement	.28*	.10	.21	.12	.26*	.14	.15	.25*
D. Enmeshment	.04	-.12	.09	.10	.07	.10	.23	.21
E. Rigidity	.05	-.08	-.02	-.10	.01	-.08	.19	-.03
F. Chaos	.07	.03	.00	.18	.15	.21	.09	.24
G. Communication	-.09	-.15	-.03	-.30*	-.09	-.25*	.36***	.09
H. Satisfaction	.04	-.08	-.01	-.36***	-.01	-.30**	.32**	.01
SOR cohesion	-.04	-.14	.21	.06	.17	-.01	.01	-.06
SOR flexibility	-.04	.01	.23	-.01	.13	-.04	.05	-.09
SOR overall	-.09	-.16	.16	.05	.11	-.03	.14	-.05

Note. *** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

Table 6. Differences between husbands and wives in self-reported psychological well-being

Psychological Well-Being Scale	Husband (N = 65)		Wife (N = 65)		t(64)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Autonomy	4.43	0.76	4.38	0.72	0.37	.71	0.09
Environmental Mastery	4.43	0.72	4.47	0.63	-0.34	.73	-0.09
Personal Growth	4.37	0.78	4.40	0.62	-0.27	.79	-0.07
Positive Relations with Others	4.57	0.76	4.71	0.62	-1.30	.20	-0.32
Purpose in Life	4.53	0.78	4.49	0.70	0.47	.64	0.12
Self-Acceptance	4.52	0.72	4.51	0.70	0.07	.94	0.02

Note. N = number of participants; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; t(df) = Student's t-test for two dependent samples; p = significance; Cohen's d = effect size

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

the lower their emotional commitment becomes, the less time they spend together with the family, and the less often they consult their wives about their decisions. In the wives, a variable that turned out to be significantly positively correlated with Disengagement was religious commitment. The women who feel increasingly disengaged from their husbands increasingly often engage in religious life.

Significant correlations with selected variables were also found in the case of the Communication and Satisfaction scales, both in men and in women.

A negative correlation with these scales is visible for age and number of siblings. With an increase in age and the number of siblings, the wives' rating of marital communication decreases and, most importantly, their satisfaction with family life decreases too (in this case the correlation was found to be the most significant, $r = -.36$ at $p < .001$). In the case of husbands, the higher the level of religious commitment, the better the communication ($r = .36$ at $p < .001$) and family life satisfaction.

Table 7. Pearson's *r* correlation matrix for the psychological well-being scale and selected variables in the groups of men and women

The Psychological Well-Being Scale	Length of marriage		Age		Number of siblings		Religious commitment	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
Autonomy	.07	.07	.07	-.07	.13	-.01	.04	-.04
Environmental Mastery	-.01	.02	-.08	-.13	-.09	-.05	.20	.18
Personal Growth	.01	.03	-.06	-.03	-.09	-.04	.28*	.12
Positive Relations with Others	-.11	-.11	-.08	-.24	-.15	-.15	.31**	.22
Purpose in Life	-.18	-.14	-.08	-.06	-.11	-.05	.26*	.16
Self-Acceptance	-.12	-.01	-.06	-.05	-.05	.01	.27*	.21

Note. *** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

Analyzing respondents' sense of psychological well-being (Table 6), we found no statistically significant differences between husbands and wives. Participants' scores were average on all the analyzed dimensions of well-being.

Pearson's *r* correlation test showed a relationship between religious commitment and four dimensions of psychological well-being, but only in men (Table 7). The more religiously committed the husbands were, the more capable they were of improving their skills and realizing their potential (personal growth), the more positive relations with others they maintained, the more accurately they defined their life goal (purpose in life), and the higher self-acceptance they had. What is characteristic, religious commitment was not related to the sense of independence and self-directedness, which are part of the autonomy of individuals' actions; nor was it related to environmental mastery, which is linked with a sense of agency.

Pearson's *r* correlations between family functioning variables and dimensions of psychological well-being in the groups of men and women are presented in Table 8.

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations between family functioning variables and the dimensions of psychological well-being, except for one covariance – in men, disengagement correlated negatively with self-acceptance, which means that, for husbands, the lower the disengagement (or, in other words, the higher the family cohesion), the higher the self-acceptance, which determined a man's mental health, maturity, and optimal functioning.

All remaining correlations are positive, indicating that the more balanced and well-functioning the family system is, the higher the well-being experienced by husbands and wives tends to be, though this is not consistently the case for all dimensions of the scale due to the lack of statistically significant results. It can be most strongly asserted, however, that high family life satisfaction, both in men and in women, is accompanied by a high level of perceived well-being – in all its dimensions, without exception. Likewise, the ability to engage in positive and effective family communication is associated with all dimensions of the spouses' well-being, except autonomy.

The last stage of analyses was an attempt to identify the determinants of family functioning and spouses' psychological well-being. For this purpose, we applied stepwise multiple regression analysis, with perceived family functioning and well-being as explained variables and with sociodemographic variables and respondents' religiosity as explanatory variables. The calculations included only those variables that were significantly correlated with the explained variables (see Tables 5, 7, and 8).

Some dimensions of psychological well-being – self-acceptance, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and personal growth – and religious commitment and length of marriage together statistically significantly explain between 6% and 28% of the variance in perceived family functioning (Table 9). The analysis revealed no significance of autonomy and environmental mastery in explaining family system functioning.

Table 8. Pearson's *r* correlations between family functioning variables and dimensions of well-being in the groups of men and women

Family Assessment Scales (SOR)	The Psychological Well-Being Scale											
	Autonomy		Environmental mastery		Personal growth		Positive relations with others		Purpose in life		Self-acceptance	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
A. Balanced cohesion	.09	.25*	.21	.25*	.31**	.36***	.31***	.53***	.23	.39***	.27*	.53***
B. Balanced flexibility	-.06	.17	.18	.40***	.09	.33**	.25*	.40***	.22	.32**	-.04	.37***
C. Disengagement	.09	-.14	-.20	-.09	-.20	-.12	-.22	-.07	-.20	-.24	-.27*	-.18
D. Enmeshment	-.12	-.16	-.12	-.08	-.14	-.16	-.15	-.11	-.23	-.04	-.09	-.09
E. Rigidity	.10	-.16	.19	-.12	.07	-.14	.06	.05	-.03	-.12	.06	-.02
F. Chaos	.06	-.07	-.15	-.17	-.06	-.14	-.15	-.07	-.10	-.15	-.17	-.23
G. Communication	-.03	.12	.27*	.28*	.38***	.30**	.41***	.38***	.44***	.31**	.39***	.39***
H. Satisfaction	.23*	.25*	.41***	.41***	.45***	.36***	.42***	.49***	.41***	.41***	.42***	.46***
SOR cohesion	.14	.16	.22	.18	.27*	.26*	.36***	.27*	.30**	.31**	.29*	.27*
SOR flexibility	.09	.30**	.17	.28*	.15	.29*	.31**	.31**	.17	.26*	.18	.37***
SOR overall	.16	.19	.23	.23	.27*	.36***	.43***	.31**	.35***	.32**	.32**	.37***

Note. *** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

At this point, it is worth focusing on how the above determinants differ between husbands and wives. Higher self-acceptance is a strong predictor of higher balanced cohesion ($beta = 0.53$) and a moderate predictor of better communication, higher flexibility, and higher SOR overall score (with $beta$ ranging from 0.37 to 0.38) in the group of women. In the group of men, better positive relations with others are a significant moderate predictor of several family system characteristics: higher SOR overall score (the highest value of $beta = 0.43$), cohesion and flexibility indexes, and their balanced quality (with $beta$ ranging from 0.40 to 0.25). Interestingly, higher self-acceptance is a weak predictor of lower disengagement in men ($beta = -0.27$).

Of the sociodemographic variables, length of marriage turns out to be the only predictor, and a weak one, of communication and satisfaction only in women, with the relationship between these variables being inverse, which means that longer marriage is related to weak communication and lower marital satisfaction. For men, a significant moderate determinant of higher family life satisfaction is high personal growth ($beta = 0.45$), while the determinants of

marital communication were a more clearly defined purpose in life ($beta = 0.37$) and higher religious commitment ($beta = 0.26$, weak relationship).

Only three characteristics of the family system – balanced cohesion, communication, and satisfaction – statistically significantly explain 5% to 27% of the variance in psychological well-being (Table 10). Family life satisfaction is a predictor of all dimensions of well-being – its higher level is a moderate determinant of higher levels of all dimensions of well-being ($beta$ ranging from 0.41 to 0.45), except for autonomy. The differentiation of this variable by participants' gender is clearly visible. Greater satisfaction with family life significantly determines higher levels of the following dimensions of well-being in husbands: personal growth ($beta = 0.45$), positive relations with others ($beta = 0.42$), self-acceptance ($beta = 0.42$), and environmental mastery ($beta = 0.41$); in wives, it is a weak predictor ($beta = 0.25$) of autonomy and a moderate predictor of environmental mastery ($beta = 0.41$) and purpose in life ($beta = 0.41$). In the group of women, higher balanced cohesion is a moderate predictor of higher personal growth ($beta = 0.36$) and a strong predictor of positive re-

Table 9. Predictors of family functioning in the groups of men and women

Explained variable	Gender	Explanatory variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²
A. Balanced cohesion	Husband	(Constant)	20.79	3.22		6.46	6.71***	.08
		Positive Relations with Others	1.80	0.69	0.31	2.59***		
	Wife	(Constant)	15.83	2.78		5.70	24.57***	.27
		Self-Acceptance	3.02	0.61	0.53	4.96***		
B. Balanced flexibility	Husband	(Constant)	16.85	4.26		3.96	4.11*	.05
		Positive Relations with Others	1.86	0.92	0.25	2.03*		
	Wife	(Constant)	11.38	4.25		2.67	11.87***	.15
		Positive Relations with Others	3.08	0.89	0.40	3.44***		
C. Disengagement	Husband	(Constant)	21.18	3.34		6.34	5.03*	.06
		Self-Acceptance	-1.64	0.73	-0.27	-2.24*		
	Wife	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
G. Communication	Husband	(Constant)	20.75	4.54		4.57	10.64***	.23
		Purpose in Life	3.23	0.99	0.37	3.26**		
		Religious commitment	0.18	0.08	0.26	2.29*		
	Wife	(Constant)	28.11	4.90		5.74	9.28***	.21
		Self-Acceptance	3.49	1.03	0.38	3.37***		
		Length of marriage	-0.20	0.08	-0.28	-2.51*		
H. Satisfaction	Husband	(Constant)	21.36	4.78		4.47	16.33***	.19
		Personal Growth	4.35	1.08	0.45	4.04***		
	Wife	(Constant)	23.10	5.60		4.13	13.34***	.28
		Positive Relations with Others	4.31	1.11	0.43	3.89***		
		Length of marriage	-0.18	0.07	-0.26	-2.38*		
SOR cohesion	Husband	(Constant)	-0.21	0.44		-0.48	9.41***	.11
		Positive Relations with Others	0.29	0.10	0.36	3.07***		
	Wife	(Constant)	-0.05	0.49		-0.10	6.61*	.08
		Purpose in Life	0.28	0.11	0.31	2.57**		
SOR flexibility	Husband	(Constant)	0.20	0.33		0.60	6.65**	.08
		Positive Relations with Others	0.18	0.07	0.31	2.58**		
	Wife	(Constant)	0.16	0.28		0.57	10.10***	.12
		Self-Acceptance	0.19	0.06	0.37	3.18***		
SOR overall	Husband	(Constant)	-0.20	0.33		-0.61	14.51***	.17
		Positive Relations with Others	0.27	0.07	0.43	3.81***		
	Wife	(Constant)	0.01	0.35		0.02	9.90**	.12
		Self-Acceptance	0.24	0.08	0.37	3.15***		

Note. *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; *SE* = *B* standard error; *beta* = standardized regression coefficient; *t* = *t*-test statistic; *F* = ANOVA statistic; *R*² = adjusted coefficient of determination

*** *p* < .001. ** *p* < .01. * *p* < .05.

Table 10. Predictors of psychological well-being in the groups of men and women

Explained variable	Gender	Explanatory variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²
	Husband	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Autonomy	Wife	(Constant)	3.20	0.58		5.55	4.26*	.05
		H. Satisfaction	0.03	0.01	0.25	2.06*		
Environmental Mastery	Husband	(Constant)	2.83	0.46		6.18	12.62***	.15
		H. Satisfaction	0.04	0.01	0.41	3.55***		
	Wife	(Constant)	2.79	0.48		5.77	12.46***	.15
		H. Satisfaction	0.04	0.01	0.41	3.53***		
Personal Growth	Husband	(Constant)	2.46	0.48		5.12	16.33***	.19
		H. Satisfaction	0.05	0.01	0.45	4.04***		
	Wife	(Constant)	2.74	0.54		5.04	9.47***	.12
		A. Balanced cohesion	0.06	0.02	0.36	3.08***		
Positive Relations with Others	Husband	(Constant)	2.84	0.48		5.97	13.64***	.17
		H. Satisfaction	0.04	0.01	0.42	3.69***		
	Wife	(Constant)	2.29	0.49		4.63	24.54***	.27
		A. Balanced cohesion	0.08	0.02	0.53	4.95***		
Purpose in Life	Husband	(Constant)	2.48	0.54		4.63	15.01***	.18
		G. Communication	0.05	0.01	0.44	3.87***		
	Wife	(Constant)	2.59	0.53		4.86	12.88***	.16
		H. Satisfaction	0.05	0.01	0.41	3.59***		
Self-Acceptance	Husband	(Constant)	2.87	0.45		6.32	13.52***	.16
		H. Satisfaction	0.04	0.01	0.42	3.68***		
	Wife	(Constant)	1.77	0.56		3.18	24.57***	.27
		A. Balanced cohesion	0.09	0.02	0.53	4.96***		

Note. *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; *SE* = *B* standard error; *beta* = standardized regression coefficient; *t* = *t*-test statistic; *F* = ANOVA statistic; *R*² = adjusted coefficient of determination
 *** *p* < .001. ** *p* < .01. * *p* < .05.

lations with others (*beta* = 0.53) and higher self-acceptance (*beta* = 0.53). Communication turned out to be significant only in men, and its higher level significantly determined stronger belief in having a purpose in life (*beta* = 0.44).

Concluding the analyses explaining the relations between family functioning and dimensions of psychological well-being, it is not possible to unambiguously specify which variable is the most important predictor, because the evaluation of family functioning significantly explains a percentage of the variance similar to that which well-being explains in the reverse relationship. These relations are probably circular, which means that, to some extent, the psychological well-being experienced by the husband and wife

influences the functioning of the family system, but the way this system functions is determined by the perceived level of well-being. It is possible, however, to identify the determinants that significantly contribute to a “healthy” family system, and these are: high self-acceptance, the possibility of personal growth, and having positive relations with others. For spouses’ psychological well-being, the most important determinants turned out to be balanced family cohesion, family life satisfaction, and positive family communication. Sociodemographic variables turned out to be weak or non-significant predictors of the analyzed variables, the exception being length of marriage. Additionally, a significant though weak predictor of family communication was men’s religious commitment.

Conclusion

The healthy functioning of the entire family system largely depends on marriage quality (Braun-Galkowska, 2007). Relations between the spouses have an effect on their satisfaction with family life, which is frequently accompanied by a sense of well-being (Krok, 2015, Niškiewicz, 2016), and well-being itself, as observed by Ryff (1989), should be approached broadly and comprehensively as a permanent element of human mental health and normal development. Efficient family functioning results in a healthy developmental environment for all family members (de Barbaro, 1999).

The results of the present study characterize family systems in which a man and a woman are formally married and are bringing up preschool-age or school-age children together, making up a complete family for many years (Table 1). Thus defined, families constitute a balanced system in which the spouses feel a moderate bond with each other and flexibly react to changes (of roles, rules, or relations), problem situations, and developmental stress. The families examined in this study are characterized by average levels of balanced cohesion and flexibility, which means not only their emotional bond but also their individual autonomy and their capacity for coping with stress and with changes are adequate. At the same time, the spouses in the sample tend to be high in disengagement and rigidity, which indicates high autonomy perceived by the spouses, with husbands and wives having their own psychological territory that other family members do not interfere with, combined with resistance – small but noticeable – when changes are made regarding leadership or regarding the rules to follow in mutual relations. This model of relations seems to be beneficial for the spouses, as shown by their experience of high family satisfaction, additionally supported by the ability to communicate efficiently in the marital subsystem.

Comparing the functioning of husbands and wives in the family system, one can conclude that, with the increasing number of years they have lived in marriage, men move emotionally away from their wives and devote a growing amount of time to their own affairs, while in women the experience of weak-

ening emotional bond with the husband induces greater religious commitment. Moreover, older women who have numerous siblings report worse communication with their spouse than younger wives. With age, the sense of happiness and fulfillment in marriage also decreases in women. No statistically significant relationships of this kind were found in men. More religiously committed husbands experienced higher relationship satisfaction and reported more effective communication with their spouse.

The present study indicates that the more balanced the family system is, the higher psychological well-being the spouses experience. The investigated correlates of well-being are positively related to family life satisfaction and marital communication. Similar results were reported by Krok (2015) for life satisfaction. In his research, the explanatory variables turned out to be intimacy and self-realization, which together explained 12% of the variance. This means that spouses' life satisfaction grows with an increase in their satisfaction with being in an intimate relationship with their partner and with increasing possibilities of self-fulfillment and the realization of their values and life tasks. Krok's results indicate, moreover, that marital satisfaction not only has an effect on the general experience of happiness understood as pleasure, but also enriches the global perspective of happiness conceptualized in terms of values and goal. Positive relations between the spouses will thus translate into the development of their sphere of values, their sense of meaning and purpose, and the perception of their life as offering self-realization and fulfillment. These results are also consistent with previous studies (Argyle, 2008; Kamp et al., 2005).

The present study was an attempt to identify the determinants of the analyzed variables: family functioning and spouses' psychological well-being. A series of stepwise multiple regression analyses allowed for identifying the main predictors of healthy family systems, including three dimensions of psychological well-being: high self-acceptance, personal growth, and positive relations with others. Spouses' psychological well-being is determined by balanced cohesion in the family, family satisfaction, and effective family communication. Of the socio-

demographic variables, only length of marriage turned out to be a significant predictor of family functioning; the quality of family functioning decreased with the growing number of years in marriage only in the case of women. Additionally analyzed, religious commitment proved to be a weak predictor explaining marital communication only in men.

A detailed analysis of predictors reveals interesting differences between husbands and wives. For men, the most significant determinant of family satisfaction is the possibility of personal growth (this predictor explains 19% of the variance in family satisfaction), whereas in the case of women the significant predictor is self-acceptance, explaining 27% of balanced family cohesion. The results of our study show that a man satisfied with his family life has the chance to achieve personal growth – to improve his skills and realize his potential – also outside the family, whereas for a woman the most important thing is the emotional bond between the members of the family in which she accepts herself, being fully aware of her potential, accepting her vices and virtues, and maintaining her mental health in order to function in an optimal and mature way. A significant predictor of normal family functioning that turned out to be common to both spouses is positive relations with others; for husbands these relations are important in the

global context and concern the family in general, while for their wives they determine satisfaction with family life. In other words, the women satisfied with family life are those who have positive relations with others – those who experience warm and deep relations based on love, trust, empathy, friendship, and intimacy, which probably also concerns family relations with the spouse.

What is also worth noting is the relations of husbands' and wives' religious commitment to family functioning and psychological well-being. More specifically, religious commitment is positively correlated with communication and marital satisfaction in men and with disengagement in women. It is reasonable to suppose that husbands who are high in religious commitment communicate with their wives better, whereas for wives, religiosity may be a mechanism compensating for the lack of cohesion in their relationship with their husbands. There were also not very strong positive correlations between religious commitment and well-being (personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, self-acceptance), which is consistent with the results reported by Krok (2012). The nature of these relations is probably circular. Religious commitment turned out to be a statistically significant predictor only for the Communication scale in the case of husbands.

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