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DOI: 10.15290/rtk.2024.23.11

Contemporary Concept of Marriage and Family in the Opinion of Students

The article will address the problem of the contemporary concept of marriage and family in the opinion of students. The first part will address the issue of defining the concept of marriage in contemporary theological, canonical, psychological, pedagogical and sociological literature. In this context, a thorough and critical analysis and synthesis of the scientific literature on marriage will be made. It seems that marriage is an interdisciplinary term. In this approach, there will be a certain agreement as to the basic elements that make up the overall definition. In the second part of this publication, the same methodological steps as above will be undertaken, however, this time with regard to the concept of family. In this case, a certain, specific concept of an interdisciplinary family will emerge. The third part of the article will concern the analysis of the empirical research that had been conducted. Diagnostic survey is the method used in this research, and a questionnaire is the tool. At the beginning there will be a data sheet followed by six open questions. The entire article will be closed with a brief ending and conclusions.

Key words: cohabitation, marriage, engagement, polyamory, family, divorce.

Introduction

The issue of marriage and family is the subject of numerous interdisciplinary studies. However, recently, new scientific disciplines dealing with marriage and family have been created. These are gamology and familiology. The main problem addressed in this article is the contemporary concept of marriage and family in the opinion of students. The structure of this article is based on two theoretical and one empirical parts. Hence, two methods were used. One of them is a critical analysis

and synthesis of the literature on marriage and family. The second method refers to the empirical part of the article. It is a diagnostic survey using a questionnaire as a research tool. The theoretical goal of the article is to present a coherent concept of marriage and family and to verify it with the concept of marriage and family formulated by the surveyed students. The pragmatic goal is to present the publication to parents, educators, teachers and specialists in the field of family sciences in educational work with a holistic approach.

The issues of marriage and family were the subject of particular concern of the last popes, St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI. There is a certain continuity in this. Benedict XVI dedicated his first encyclical *Deus caritas est* to the love that is God himself. He showed that the whole newness of the Christian understanding of God brings to light the newness of the Christian image of man. "The calling of the human person to love is the deepest essence of the reflection of God, to which God chose man, using the way of love to reveal to us people the deepest mystery of his life in the Holy Trinity. Here, Benedict XVI pointed out the close relationship existing between the image of God, who in entirety is love, and human love. Namely, monogamous marriage corresponds to the monotheistic image of God"¹. True marital love is naturally realized in family life.

The traditional understanding of marriage and family was not unknown to the respondents. The respondents are students of the Faculty of Humanities and Computer Science of the Masovian University in Płock. They constituted a research sample of 80 people. The surveyed students were asked to answer six basic questions. At first, it was about providing our own definition of marriage and family. The next questions concerned open (polyamorous) relationships, informal relationships, engagement and the causes of divorce of married couples. An important element of scientific reflection regarded the confrontation of students' answers with current traditional views on marriage and family

The concept of marriage

The modern concept of marriage in accordance with God's will can be found in canon 1055 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law: "Marriage is a covenant entered into freely by a man and a woman who have formed an indissoluble community of life, directed by its nature to the good of

¹ K. Koch, *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy w myśli Benedykta XVI*, in: *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, ed. A. Tomkiewicz, W. Wieczorek, Lublin 2010, p. 207.

the spouses and the procreation and upbringing of children". Within the meaning of canon law, marriage is by nature indissoluble, it should be said that it is lifelong². E. Ozorowski emphasizes that the history of salvation is the realization of the Creator's saving plan over time. The Bible presents the history of humanity as creation, fall and the way of return. The fundamental feature of this teaching is the connection between God's relationship with people and the marital relationship between a man and a woman. These two realities interpenetrate and explain each other³. S. Wyszynski taught that:

Marriage is a special type of covenant. It has the hallmark of a universal and socially necessary institution, but implemented by people consciously and voluntarily. In it, a human person abandons his loneliness and opens himself to another person; connects with it on a common path of life, which is also a way of giving new life. Marriage is the natural beginning of the family – the cradle of life⁴.

We find similar definitions of marriage in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

The marital covenant, by which a man and a woman create a community of the whole of life, directed by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and upbringing of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized⁵.

The concept of "marriage" can also be defined in a philosophical context. It then means one of the basic forms of implementing the natural law of love. It is also a place of a "gift" from man to man – a complete, exclusive, irrevocable, total gift. "A gift unlimited in time, encompassing the whole man, his spirituality and corporeality, including sexuality"⁶. All the above concepts of marriage refer to marriage as a union of two people: a man and a woman.

² R. Szttychmiller, *Małżeństwo*, in: *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. E. Ozorowski, Warszawa–Łomianki 1999, p. 223.

³ E. Ozorowski, *Małżeństwo*, in: *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. E. Ozorowski, Warszawa–Łomianki 1999, p. 225.

⁴ S. Olejnik, *Teologia moralna życia społecznego*, Włocławek 2000, p. 271; cf. J. Kiedos, *Małżeństwo – rodzina – wychowanie w wypowiedziach Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, in: *Rodzina. Historia i społeczność*, ed. W. Korzeniowska, U. Szuścik, Kraków 2006, p. 11.

⁵ *Katechizm Kościoła katolickiego*, Poznań 1994, no. 1601.

⁶ P. Magier, *Małżeństwo i rodzina. Kluczowe elementy personalno-chrześcijańskiej koncepcji rodziny*, in: *Rodzina. Historia i współczesność*, ed. W. Korzeniowska, U. Szuścik, Kraków 2006, p. 85.

In understanding marriage as a natural system it should be emphasized that marriage is not just a mathematical or physical sum of two elements: a man and a woman, but is a whole that, in turn, creates a new quality. In this aspect, changes in one spouse determine changes in the other spouse and take on the nature of dynamic, mutual relationships⁷.

Unlike the religious view of marriage, it is worth mentioning the secular definition of marriage. "Marriage is a permanent union between a man and a woman. Marriage is concluded by two unmarried persons of the opposite sex submitting a joint declaration on entering into marriage"⁸. Marriage in this sense is a legal relationship of a personal nature that binds a husband and a wife. The necessary conditions for entering into a marriage are: different sexes of the bride and groom and their declarations of will at the same time.

The institution of marriage is characterized by: monogamy and equality of rights and obligations in personal and property relations. It may be included in a secular or religious form. Declarations about entering into marriage should, as a rule, be made publicly in the presence of two adult witnesses. Marriage can be concluded by persons who are over 18 years of age. For important reasons, the guardianship court may allow a woman who is over 16 years of age to enter into marriage⁹.

The effect of entering into a marriage is that it imposes rights and obligations on both spouses. Spouses are obliged to: cohabitation, mutual assistance, fidelity, cooperation for the good of the family they have founded through their union, contributing to meeting the needs of the family – each according to their strength and earning and property potential, joint and several liability for the obligations incurred by one of them in matters resulting from meeting the ordinary needs of the family¹⁰. From the moment of marriage between the spouses a community of properties is established by law¹¹. The institution of formal

⁷ B. Harwas-Napierała, *Specyfika komunikacji interpersonalnej w rodzinie ujmowanej jako system*, in: *Psychologia rodziny*, ed. I. Janicka, H. Liberska, Warszawa 2014, p. 59; B. Yorburg, *Family relationship*, New York 1993.

⁸ <https://www.infor.pl/slownik/prawo/74311,Malzenstwo.html> (date of access: 13.01.2024).

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ M.Z. Stepulak, *Futurystyczna wizja małżeństwa i rodziny w świetle aktualnej refleksji naukowej*, in: *System rodzinny w ujęciu temporalnym. Przeszłość – Teraźniejszość – Przyszłość*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, J. Łukasiewicz, Lublin 2016, pp. 268-272.

¹¹ <https://www.infor.pl/slownik/prawo/74311,Malzenstwo.html> (date of access: 13.01.2024).

marriage of an extra-sacramental nature is based in a special way on the interpersonal relationship as the relationship between a man and a woman¹². This situation differs from a sacramental marriage, in which interpersonal relations between spouses are established and at the same time focused on the relationship with God.

The concept of family

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the family as follows: “A man and a woman united in marriage create a family with their children. This relationship is prior to recognition by the public authority; it imposes itself. It should be considered as the normal point of reference in determining the various degrees of kinship”¹³. The Polish term for family comes from the word “parent”. A marriage between a man and a woman becomes a family at the moment of conception and then the birth of their first child. Spouses in such a situation are parents, the father and the mother. A family of a Christian nature strives to be, above all, a fully living part of the People of God of the New Covenant, to participate in the priestly, prophetic (teaching) and royal mission of Christ and His Church¹⁴.

The condition for the implementation of this triple mission in the family is the development of mature religiosity and spirituality¹⁵. Nowadays, in the context of family issues, there is a confrontation of two theories: liberalism and conservatism. Liberal theory recommends that instead of religious faith developed in the family, the so-called civic education consisting in the ability to improve social relations.

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The basis for such a change from religious faith to ‘civil faith’ was provided by liberal anthropology, which showed man more as a social being (...) than as an autonomous individual pursuing his own immanent and transcendental goals¹⁶.

A Catholic couple with a conservative orientation takes up the effort of self-education of the spouses and raising children in a religious

¹² See E. Mandal (ed.), *Masculinity and femininity in everyday life*, Katowice 2012.

¹³ *Katechizm Kościoła katolickiego*, Poznań 1994, no. 2202.

¹⁴ W. Tabaczyński. *Rodzina*, in: *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. E. Ozorowski, Warszawa–Łomianki 1999, p. 388.

¹⁵ M.Z. Stepulak, *Człowiek „wewnętrzny” w systemie rodzinnym*, in: *Współczesne problemy system rodzinnego. Diagnoza – Terapia – Profilaktyka*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, Lublin 2014, pp. 62-63.

¹⁶ T. Zawajska, *Paedagogia perennis. Pomiędzy liberalizmem i konserwatyzmem*, in: *Wychowanie jako wartość*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, M. Dubis, Lublin 2017, p. 128.

spirit. The following stages could be distinguished in this process: 1) Awakening. At its core, we can find adequate interpersonal relationships between the child and the parent. This type of relationship leads to the proper development of the personality of parents and their children. At this stage, mutual love plays a huge role, allowing the child to learn to understand his or her inner self and fully open up to God and other people. 2) The second stage is development. It is the process of giving the child a more complete idea of God. A child develops extraordinary sensitivity in reading God's presence in the surrounding reality. The child unconsciously uses modeling and imitation mechanisms and it builds its own religious orientation on the attitudes of his parents. Parents pass on to their children such values as: prayer, religious practices, decisions, the sense given to various meanings, and cultivating religious traditions and home customs. 3) The last stage is completion. This stage of religious education leads to full knowledge of God and the ability to express one's faith, to mature personal and free choices of values and to develop a sense of responsibility, to life in the "community of saints"¹⁷.

According to L. Cynarzevska-Włażlik, family is a community of people connected by marriage and kinship (sometimes adoption), which is realized in the transmission of life, upbringing and introducing new generations to the cultural and religious heritage. The family is protected by the legal order and social and religious norms. It implements individual and community tasks and goals and meets the needs of love, belonging, growth and development. As a social group important for society, it is supported in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity by the state and the Church in fulfilling the rights and obligations arising from its nature and formal and institutional status¹⁸.

A special type of family are multi-generational families. It is therefore important to notice the presence of elderly people. They are the guardians of collective memory and are worthy of the respect due to them, because the hallmark of a truly human civilization is expressed in the respect and love for elderly people. Intergenerational relations in the family system teach primarily those who are mature and honest in social life. In many families, grandchildren learn and discover the

¹⁷ M.Z. Stepulak, *Religijny wymiar wychowania w systemie rodzinnym*, in: *Rodzina wobec współczesnych wyzwań*, ed. W. Kowalski, Lublin 2014, p. 283.

¹⁸ L. Cynarzevska-Włażlik, *Rodzina*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, ed. E. Gigilewicz, vol. XVII, Lublin 2012, p. 178.

basics of faith thanks to their grandparents, and as a result, they learn adequate religious, spiritual and moral attitudes¹⁹.

Among modern definitions there is the phrase that a family is nothing else than a group of people that are related to each other, most often through kinship, but also affinity or common residence. According to sociologists, it is also one of the most fundamental social units on which the entire society is based. Undoubtedly, the topic of family is one of the most interesting, as can be seen from how often this concept is studied by psychologists, familiologists, sociologists, educators and social workers. According to some, the family is the basic social group, according to others, the family is a system that should be considered as a whole. Nowadays, a new definition of family is given as a spiritual unification of a group of people gathered around one home and showing mutual care and concern based on belief in real or presumed biological connection. According to the Church, a family is a marriage between a man and a woman and their children who are spiritually united²⁰.

Ultimately, it seems that the definition of family is more complex, although nowadays many people try to limit it significantly, recognizing that only the mother, father and child constitute a family. As numerous definitions show, biological ties are not the only and basic determinant here. Of course, they are a certain basis, but they do not constitute an absolute rule. A family is a group of people that are related to each other (biologically, but not only), by the most important determinants, among which there are love, self-respect and willingness to help without expecting payment and care for each other²¹.

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Analysis and interpretation of empirical research

For the purposes of this article, empirical research was carried out using the diagnostic survey method using the following questionnaire as a tool. The purpose of the survey questions was to obtain knowledge regarding the current concept of marriage and family among students. In this research, neither the main hypothesis nor specific hypotheses are formulated, because the questions formulated in the survey determine the direction of exploration of scientific investigations. The survey had the title: Marriage and family and took the following form:

¹⁹ M. Brzeziński, *Religijno-moralne życie rodziny w obliczu przemian społecznych*, in: *Rodzina europejska*, ed. J. Koperek, Lublin 2011, p. 92.

²⁰ <https://rodzinarodzinie.pl/co-to-jest-rodzina> (date of access: 16.01.2024).

²¹ Ibidem.

INSTRUCTIONS: The following survey is anonymous. Please provide honest and complete answers to the questions below. The order of answering is optional (please provide the number of the question you are answering). You can get extra sheets of paper for your answers

Personal data:
Sex.....
Age.....
Place of residence: city; village.....

- 1. Please provide your own definition of marriage
- 2. Please provide your own definition of family
- 3. What is your opinion on open (polyamorous) relationships?
- 4. What is your belief about informal relationships?
- 5. How do you understand the concept of engagement and what does it mean for your future marriage?
- 6. What is the reason why many married couples divorce?

Thank you very much for participating in the research. The information obtained will be used to prepare new methods and strategies necessary in working with people preparing for marriage.

The table below shows the number of surveyed students according to their fields of study:

Table No. 1. Students of the studied fields of study

No.	Field of study	Women	%	Men	%	Total (N)	%
1.	Social work	7	13.07	1	4.55	8	10.00
2.	English philology	9	15.52	1	4.55	10	10.50
3.	New media	11	18.96	12	54.54	23	28.75
4.	Psychology	31	53.45	8	36.36	39	48.75
	TOTAL	58	27.50	22	72.50	80	100.00

Source: the author’s own research.

80 people participated in the research, including 58 women and 22 men. The study covered students of such fields as social work, English philology, new media and psychology. They were first, second and third year students. The above majors of studies are carried out

at the Faculty of Humanities and Computer Science of the Masovian University in Plock.

The surveyed students provided their own definitions of marriage in specific categories.

Table No. 2. Please provide your own definition of marriage

No.	Category of answers	Women	%	Men	%	Total (N)	%
1.	The love relationship of a man and a woman	26	44.83	11	50.00	37	46.25
2.	Formal union of a man and a woman (church wedding, Civil Registry Office)	29	50.00	11	50.00	40	50.00
3.	Alternative relationships (homosexual, cohabiting and other relationships)	3	5.17	-	-	3	3.75
	Total	58	100.00	22	100.00	80	100.00

Source: the author's own research.

Giving their own definition of marriage, 50% of students claim that it is a formal union between a man and a woman (it may be a church wedding or a civil contract at the Civil Registry Office). This definition was given by 50% of women and 50% of men. In this case, young people's attachment to the traditional, conservative form of marriage is visible. The point is, however, that for them a church wedding is identical to a civil contract. Therefore, there is a lack of awareness of the distinction between the sacred and the profane. A similar view could be found in Polish literature²². The second proposal for the definition of marriage referred to the claim that marriage is a union of love between a man and a woman. This definition was given by 46.25% of students, including 44.83% of women and 50% of men. This definition correlates highly with the Polish-Belarusian research conducted in 2018²³. The third category of answers was expressed by the definition that marriage is an alternative relationship (mainly homosexual, cohabiting and other

²² Z. Tyszka, *Rodzina we współczesnym świecie*, Poznań 2003.

²³ L. Łysiuk, M.Z. Stepulak (ed.), *Miłość nigdy nie ustaje. Miłość w systemie wartości rodzinnych*, Lublin–Brześć 2018; cf. B. Więckiewicz, *Katolicki model rodziny a wierność jego zasadom*, in: *Miłość, wierność i uczciwość na rozstajach współczesności*, ed. W. Muszyński, E. Sikora, Toruń 2008, pp. 36-46.

relationships). Similar research has been carried out in the world and in Poland, which confirms the selection of the above relationships²⁴ to an even greater extent. This definition was provided by 5.17% of women, which constitutes a total of 3.75% of all respondents.

Table No. 3. Please provide your own definition of family

No.	Category of answers	Women	%	Men	%	Total (N)	%
1.	Relationship of loving and related people	49	84.48	16	72.73	65	81.25
2.	Family is a community and social value	8	13.79	5	22.73	13	16.25
3.	Informal community (homosexual relationship)	1	1.73	1	4.54	2	2.50
	Total	58	100.00	22	100.00	80	100.00

Source: the author's own research.

81.25% of respondents believe that a family is a union of loving and related people. 84.48% of women and 72.73% of men think so. Similar research results were obtained in Ukraine in the Volyn region²⁵. 16.25% of students claim that family is a community as a social value. This applies to 13.79% of women and 22.73% of men. The third category of answers refers to the definition of family as an informal community (homosexual relationship). 2.50% of respondents think so, including 1.73% of women and 4.54% of men. Young people claim that they are not personally interested in such relationships, but they do not condemn such relationships.

²⁴ A.E. Artis, *Maternal Cohabitation and Child Well-Being among Kindergarten Children*, "Journal of Marriage and Family" 69 (2007), pp. 222-236; A. Goodman, E. Greaves, *Cohabitation Marriage and Relationship Stability*, "Economics & Social Research Council" 2010, pp. 1-13; C.M. Kamp Dush, P.R. Amato, *Marital and Cohabitation Dissolution and Parental Depressive Symptoms in Fragile Families*, "Journal of Marriage and the Family" 75 (2013), pp. 91-109; A. Prusik, *Rodzina i jej alternatywne formy w poglądach młodych Polaków*, Olsztyn 2014; A.M. Zeiss, J. Kasl-Godley, *Sexuality in Older Adults' Relationships*, "Generations" 25(2) (2001), pp. 18-24.

²⁵ I. Filippowa, Y. Yemelianova, *System wartości na pograniczu Ukrainy*, in: *Znaczenie wartości w badaniach psychologicznych i życiu społecznym*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, J. Łukasiewicz, Lublin 2016, pp. 79-92; B. Ogrodowska, *Polskie tradycje i obyczaje rodzinne*, Warszawa 2011.

Table no. 4. What is your opinion about open (polyamorous) relationships?

No.	Category of answers	Women	%	Men	%	Total (N)	%
1.	The right way to break the traditional model of a relationship	17	29.31	8	36.36	25	31.25
2.	Open relationships destroy values and true married life	38	65.51	13	59.09	51	63.75
3.	I have no opinion	3	5.18	1	4.55	4	5.00
	Total	58	100.00	22	100.00	80	100.00

Source: the author's own research.

31.25% of respondents, including 29.11% of women and 36.36% of men, believe that polyamorous relationships are the right way to break the traditional relationship model²⁶. These types of responses are an expression of a protest against traditional marriages, which in many cases fall apart. This is therefore, an attitude of breaking generational transmission²⁷. Some people claim that the tendency to enter into open relationships is a derivative of people's unstable emotionality and amorousness²⁸. It may also be a desire to escape from routine and experiment²⁹. However, 63.75% of respondents, including 65.51% of women and 59.09% of men, claim that open relationships destroy values and true married life.

²⁶ D. Anapol, *Poliamoria. Miłość i intymność z wieloma partnerami i partnerkami*, Warszawa 2013.

²⁷ J.A. Lavner, B.R. Karney, T.N. Bradbury, *Do Cold Feet Warn of Trouble Ahead? Premarital Uncertainty and Four-Year Marital Outcomes*, "Journal of Family Psychology" 26(6) (2012), pp. 1012-1017.

²⁸ M. Sawicki, *Kochliwość. Czy to coś pomiędzy monogamią a poliamorią?*, "Charaktery" 9-10(32) (2023), pp. 36-40.

²⁹ A. Loewe-Kurilla, *Co nas motywuje do wchodzenia w otwarte związki?*, "Charaktery" 2(313) (2023), pp. 44-47.

Table no. 5. What is your belief about informal relationships?

No.	Category of answers	Women	%	Men	%	Total (N)	%
1.	1. Informal relationships do not oblige you to anything. They provide opportunities for personal development and autonomy.	46	79.32	19	86.36	65	81.25
2.	2. Informal relationships are at odds with maintaining fidelity and cultivating love.	12	20.68	3	13.64	15	18.75
	Total	58	100.00	22	100.00	80	100.00

Source: the author's own research.

81.25% of surveyed students (79.32% of women and 86.36% of men) accept informal relationships. In their answers, they justify that informal relationships do not oblige them to anything. Such a statement can be found in the literature on the subject³⁰. Nowadays, young people live in cohabitation as an informal, temporary relationship. This thesis is confirmed by my previous research on cohabitation³¹. Such relationships provide – according to students – a chance for personal development and human autonomy. 18.75% of respondents (20.68% of women and 13.64% of men) emphasize the importance of formal marriages (civil contract), but are even more in favor of sacramental marriages³². Therefore, there is a clear crisis related to entering into formal relationships, especially sacramental ones.

³⁰ J. Kiedos, *Małżeństwo-rodzina-wychowanie w wypowiedziach Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, in: *Rodzina. Historia i społeczność*, ed. W. Korzenio-wska, U. Szuścik, Kraków 2006, pp. 11-21. M.Z. Stepulak, *Postawy młodzieży maturalnej z diecezji siedleckiej wobec kohabitacji*, in: *Specyfika wychowania w systemie rodzinnym*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, Lublin 2013, pp. 25-51.

³¹ M.Z. Stepulak, *Postawy młodzieży maturalnej z diecezji siedleckiej wobec kohabitacji*, in: *Specyfika wychowania w systemie rodzinnym*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, Lublin 2013, pp. 25-51.

³² E. Zawadzka, *Funkcje rodziny dawniej i współcześnie. Podobieństwa i różnice – studium teoretyczne*, in: *Instytucja rodziny wczoraj i dziś. Perspektywa interdyscyplinarna*, ed. K.M. Stępkowska, J.K. Stępkowska, Lublin 2012, pp. 7-13.

Table no. 6. How do you understand the concept of engagement and what does it mean for your future marriage?

No.	Category of answers	Women	%	Men	%	Total (N)	%
1.	It is a special period of preparation for marriage	53	91.38	18	81.81	71	88.75
2.	Engagement is an insignificant stage	3	5.17	3	13.64	6	7.50
3.	I have no opinion	2	3.45	1	4.55	3	3.75
	Total	58	100.00	22	100.00	80	100.00

Source: the author's own research.

The vast majority of students (88.75%), including 91.38% of women and 81.81% of men, emphasize that engagement is important. In their opinion, this is a special period of preparation for marriage³³. However, it does not matter whether the bride and groom live together or separately before the wedding. Engagement and living together is the next stage leading to marriage. It is a kind of adjustment. This aspect highlights the lack of understanding of the proper definition of engagement, in which the teachings of the Catholic Church are an important element. The engaged couple cannot live together and must maintain premarital chastity³⁴. Nowadays, there is a phenomenon of absolute acceptance of informal (engagement) relationships by parents in which their children live³⁵. Only 7.5% of respondents believe that engagement is an insignificant stage in life. However, 3.75% of students have no opinion on engagement.

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Table no. 7. What is the reason for divorce in many marriages?

No.	Category of answers	Women	%	Men	%	Total (N)	%
1.	Incompatibility of characters and personality immaturity	14	24.14	5	22.73	19	23.75

³³ See S. Bukalski, *Style przywiązaniowe nupturientów oraz inne czynniki psychologiczne jako predyktory jakości narzeczeństwa*, Szczecin 2013.

³⁴ M.Z. Stepulak, *Religijny wymiar wychowania w systemie rodzinnym*, in: *Rodzina wobec współczesnych wyzwań*, ed. W. Kowalski, Lublin 2014, pp. 271-293.

³⁵ See S. Plopa, *Rodzice a młodzież*, Warszawa 2012.

No.	Category of answers	Women	%	Men	%	Total (N)	%
2.	Lack of adequate interpersonal communication	12	20.69	4	18.18	16	20.00
3.	Marital infidelity	11	18.97	4	18.18	15	18.75
4	Marital conflicts	8	13.79	4	18.18	12	15.00
5.	Burnout in marriage	8	13.79	4	18.18	12	15.00
6.	Financial problems	5	8.62	1	4.55	6	7.50
	Total	58	100.00	22	100.00	80	100.00

Source: the author's own research.

The surveyed students gave various reasons why people divorce. 23.75% of respondents believe that character incompatibility and personality immaturity are the main causes of divorce. However, it seems that in this case young people succumb to stereotypes. In this case, there are no fundamental differences between women and men³⁶. The second reason for divorces is the lack of adequate interpersonal communication (20% of respondents). For 18.75%, the reason for divorce is marital infidelity. 15% of students believe that the next causes of divorce are marital conflicts and marital burnout. Financial problems are the reason for divorce for 7.5% of the surveyed people³⁷.

Conclusion

Marriage is generally understood as a covenant entered into voluntarily by a man and a woman. The purpose of this covenant is the good of the spouses and the birth and upbringing of children. In the philosophical sense, marriage is a gift from man to man, exclusive, irrevocable and total. Marriage creates a whole that is a new quality. The concept of family is closely related to the definition of marriage. A marriage between a man and a woman becomes a family at the moment of conception and then the birth of their first child. There are two basic approaches to marriage: liberal and conservative. According to some researchers, the family is the basic social group. According to other scholars, the family is a system that should be looked at

³⁶ M. Błażek, M. Kaźmierczak, A. Lewandowska-Walter, B. Pastwa-Wojciechowska, *Funkcjonowanie kobiet i mężczyzn w sytuacji rozwodowej – analiza psychologiczna*, "Polskie Forum Psychologiczne" 17(1) (2012), pp. 62-78.

³⁷ E. Zubrzycka, *Narzeczeństwo, małżeństwo, rodzina, rozwód?*, Gdańsk 1993.

holistically. Family can also be defined as the spiritual unification of a group around one home. An important element of both marriage and family is mature love.

By analyzing and interpreting the results obtained in the research, the following conclusions could be drawn:

- Almost half of the surveyed students – 46.25% – defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and 50% believe that marriage is a formal union between a man and a woman (church wedding or civil contract). These results do not contradict the traditionally understood definition of marriage.
- Most respondents define family as a community of loving relatives. Family understood in this way grows out of marriage as a union between a man and a woman.
- 31.25% of respondents believe that polyamorous relationships are the right way to break the traditional relationship model. These statements are an expression of young people's opposition to tradition and the prevailing postmodern fashion. However, 63.75% of students are convinced that polyamory is an open relationship they destroy values and true married life. It may also be an expression of an individual approach to mature and responsible attitudes.
- 81.25% of respondents accept informal relationships. In their opinion, informal relationships do not oblige anyone to anything. However, almost 20% of respondents believe that informal relationships interfere with maintaining fidelity and cultivating true love.
- Generally, respondents understand engagement as a special period of preparation for marriage. However, students are far from the traditional understanding of engagement, which understands that the engaged couple cannot live together (cohabitation) and should maintain premarital chastity.
- The respondents list the reasons for divorce in the following order: incompatibility of characters, immaturity of personality, lack of adequate communication, marital infidelity, marital conflicts and, to a small extent, financial problems. However, it seems that students are guided by stereotypes prevailing in society.

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