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RELIGIOSITY AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: RESEARCH RESULTS IN POLAND

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Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic that globally affected humanity in 2020 paralyzed the current functioning of the world. This has led to consequences not only in the economic or business sphere but also in the psychological and relational dimensions. The situation also affected families, whose members were forced to coexist due to the nationwide quarantine restrictions imposed by governments that limited individuals' ability to leave home. Certainly, there are many factors that could help families live through the difficult time of the pandemic. Since religiosity and faith are precisely such factors, the subject of this study is to find out whether faith and its practice helped spouses and families to cope positively during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and how they shaped marital and intra-family relationships. To this end, an online survey was conducted among 200 respondents in Poland. The results confirmed the existence of a relationship between faith in God and families' ability to weather the pandemic. There were no arguments or acts of aggression or violence in married couples. Religiosity also contributed to strengthening family relationships and lowering anxiety in children during the pandemic. In addition, the beneficial effect of the religious factor in the form

of worship was noted to strengthen the psychological resilience of the respondents, thus increasing their overall well-being.

Keywords: family, marriage, relationships, pandemic, COVID-19, religiosity, faith, well-being.

Streszczenie. Religijność i relacje rodzinne w czasie pandemii Covid-19. Wyniki badań w Polsce. Pandemia COVID-19, która dotknęła globalnie ludzkość w 2020 roku, sparaliżowała dotychczasowe funkcjonowanie świata. Doprowadziło to do konsekwencji nie tylko w sferze ekonomicznej czy biznesowej, ale także w wymiarze psychologicznym i relacyjnym. Sytuacja ta nie ominęła rodzin, których członkowie w pewnym okresie zostali zmuszeni do koegzystencji ze względu na rządowe restrykcje kwarantanny narodowej dotyczące ograniczenia możliwości opuszczania domu. Z pewnością istnieje wiele czynników mogących ułatwić rodzinom przeżywanie trudnego czasu pandemii. Religijność i wiara są jednymi z nich. Dlatego przedmiotem niniejszego badania jest ustalenie, czy wiara i jej praktykowanie pomogły małżonkom i rodzinom w pozytywnym radzeniu sobie w czasie pandemii COVID-19 oraz jak kształtowały relacje małżeńskie i wewnątrzrodzinne. W tym celu przeprowadzono ankietę internetową wśród 200 respondentów w Polsce. Wyniki potwierdziły istnienie związku między wiarą w Boga a przetrwaniem rodzin w czasie pandemii. W małżeństwach nie było kłótni, agresji ani przemocy. Religijność przyczyniła się również do wzmocnienia relacji rodzinnych w czasie pandemii, a także do obniżenia lęku u dzieci. Ponadto zauważono, że dobroczynny wpływ czynnika religijnego w postaci praktykowania kultu wzmocnił odporność psychiczną respondentów, co zwiększyło ich ogólny dobrostan.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, małżeństwo, związki, pandemia, COVID-19, religijność, wiara, dobrostan.

INTRODUCTION

Man as a social person seeks close relationships with others in his life. Interpersonal relationships are an expression of the relationship that takes place between individuals. They arise as a result of an exchange of interactions between people with the participation of cognitive, emotional and behavioral factors, and at the same time refer to positive or negative relationships.¹

¹ Paweł Landwójtowicz, "Wybrane cechy współczesnej relacji małżeńskiej w kulturze zachodnioeuropejskiej," in *Relacje rodzinne i społeczne w kulturze środkowo-europejskiej i chińskiej*, red. Dariusz Krok, Dariusz Klejnowski-Różycki (Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2011), 151–173.

In essence, since the family constitutes the primary and fundamental environment of human life, family relationships play a particular role in the life of every individual. Family relationships are characterized by a specific arrangement of internal bonds between spouses, parents, children and siblings. Moreover, a family is not a simple sum of units independent of one another, but a group of persons remaining in interaction with each other. What matters is how individual family members are connected to each other and how they interact. Thus, the balance and stability of mutual relations between spouses and parents, their sense of responsibility and the emotional bond between all family members, is the basis for proper family relationships.

The period of the pandemic, announced by the head of the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020, was the unique situation that families found themselves in caused by the COVID-19 virus, which spread all over the world, invading the lives of individual communities and people. All in all, due to the restrictions imposed, the situation of the pandemic changed family functioning considerably. Families began to live in a kind of circle of their own, adhering to the necessary isolation from friends, acquaintances and further family members. In addition, the necessity of online learning and the failure to adapt to the sudden implementation of such a solution, as well as the lack of direct contacts with peers, had a substantial impact on the well-being and development of children and adolescents. As an outcome, children and youth had to stay at home, and remain in contact with their classes and teachers online. Whereas, changes in the functioning of everyday life imposed significant reorganization upon families.² As mentioned above, the time of the pandemic caused people to be “trapped”

Maria Ryś, “Kształtowanie się poczucia własnej wartości i relacji z innymi w różnych systemach rodzinnych,” in *Kościół, Rodzina, Życie*, red. Mieczysław Ozorowski, Adam Skreczko (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2011), 113–144.

² Katarzyna Marianna Płoszaj, and Dorota Kochman, “Wpływ pandemii Koronawirusa (COVID-19) na jakość życia rodziny i dziecka” (Impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the quality of life of the family and the child), *Innowacje w Pielęgniarstwie i Naukach o Zdrowiu* 6, nr 3 (2021): 59–78, <https://doi.org/10.21784/IwP.2021.016>. Sławomir Tykarski, “Czas pandemii – spojrzenie na funkcjonowanie polskich rodzin. Raport z badań” (The Time of the Pandemic – A look at the Functioning of Polish Families: Survey Report), *Teologia i Człowiek* 60, nr 4 (2022): 159–174, <https://doi.org/10.12775/TiCz.2022.030>.

in their own houses and apartments: often small, shared with others. In Poland, in 2020, there were 1.2 rooms per inhabitant – which is one of the worst results in the entire EU, where the average is 1.6 rooms. Conditions similar to those in Poland were also found in Romania, Croatia, Slovakia and Latvia. At the opposite pole, countries such as Malta, Belgium and Ireland had over two rooms per person. According to Eurostat, in 2020, nearly 18% of the EU population lived in overcrowded housing. The rate in Poland turned out to be one of the highest in Europe at 36.9%.³ Overall research findings show that the pandemic and the prolonged 24-hour cohabitation of families bring about two consequences. On the one hand, it allowed family bonds to be tightened, while on the other hand, the intensity and closeness of contacts with partners or children caused tensions, which then gave rise to crises within the family.⁴

Forced by the pandemic, the necessity for family members to stay in their home environment with constant fear for their own health, and cope with the occurred situation, were put to the test. Continuously being in the same company, conducting mutual communication and coping with the trauma caused by the pandemic, was a challenge. This situation inevitably changed intra-family relationships, which were largely determined by the external threat and, above all, depended on the personality of the family members and their behavior.

Among the factors influencing the functioning of individuals, their religiosity, as an outward manifestation of their faith, ought to be mentioned.⁵ The determination of one's personal attitude toward faith is related to their general reference to religion. In an objective sense, religion is a set of truths, assertions, and norms of conduct regulating the individual's re-

³ European Commission, Eurostat, Statistical Office of the European Union, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>.

⁴ Agnieszka Cybulska and Krzysztof Pankowski, "Życie codzienne w czasie społecznej izolacji," in *Pandemia koronawirusa w opiniach Polaków*, pod red. Agnieszki Cybulskiej i Krzysztofa Pankowskiego, *Opinie i Diagnozy*, nr 46 (Warszawa: Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, 2020), 24–43. Dorota Szaban and Beata Trzop, "Blaski i cienie życia rodzinnego w lockdownie. Przemiany wybranych funkcji rodzin" (The ups and downs of family life during a lockdown. Changes in selected family functions), *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych* 50=14, no. 3 (2022): 25–41, <https://doi.org/10.18290/rns22503.11>.

⁵ John Anthony Berry, "Aquinas's Understanding of Religion," *Religions* 14, no. 7 (2023): 855, 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070855>.

relationship to the supernatural reality.⁶ Religiosity, in turn, is the individual experience of these truths and norms. It is the subjective side of the religious phenomenon. When talking about religiosity, it is however necessary to bear in mind its primary relationship with a particular form of religion in a subjective sense. In the case of Christian religiosity, it needs to be remembered that a personal religion is what accentuates the personal relationship of the individual with God, whereas the attitude of the person as well as religious practices and customs, are a manifestation of religiosity.⁷

Studies on faith and religiosity show that they have a positive impact on human life and daily existence. Religiosity affects the mental condition of the individual and contributes to their well-being. Furthermore, faith is a factor that strengthens mental resilience, especially in situations of high stress and difficult life experiences, becoming a kind of human ‘capital’.⁸ The connection between psychology, faith and theology can thus be seen.⁹ The aforementioned well-being does also apply to married life. It appears that religiosity of spouses is one of the factors that provide satisfaction in

⁶ Henri Müller-Pozzi, *Psychologie des Glaubens: Verhältnisbestimmung von Theologie und Psychologie* (München: Kaiser; Mainz: Matthias Grünewald-Verlag, 1975).

⁷ Ewa Kielek-Rataj, “Religijność personalna a satysfakcja z małżeństwa” (Personal religiosity and marital satisfaction). *Family Forum* 3 (2013): 97–113, <https://czasopisma.uni.opole.pl/index.php/ff/article/view/889>. Czesław Walesa, “Rozwój religijności małego dziecka,” *Życie i Myśl* 27, nr 4 (1978): 24–50; Czesław Walesa, “Psychologiczna analiza rozwoju religijności człowieka ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem pierwszych okresów jego ontogenezy” (A Psychological analysis of the Development of Man’s Religiousness, with Particular Stress on the First Periods of His Ontogenesis), in *Psychologia Religii* (Selected Problems of the Psychology of Religion), pod red. Zdzisława Chlewińskiego (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1982); Czesław Walesa, *Rozwój religijności człowieka*, t. 1. *Dziecko* (The development of human religiousness. Child) (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2005).

⁸ Lluís Oviedo and others, “Coping and Resilience Strategies among Ukraine War Refugees,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 20 (2022): 13094, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192013094>.

⁹ Lluís Oviedo, “Fundamental Theology at the Crossroads: Challenges and Alternatives. After a Long Maturation,” *Scientia et Fides* 10, no. 1 (2022): 49–71, <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2022.003>. Wioletta Szymczak and Justyna Szulich-Kałuża, „Religious or Spiritual? Empirical Manifestations of Contemporary Changes in Poles’ Self-Declarations and Media Representations,” *Verbum Vitae* 40, no 4 (2022): 813–842. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.13903>. Piotr Roszak, Robert Reczkowski, and Piotr Wróblewski, “Religion and Cognitive Safety: Pastoral and Psychological Implications,” *Pastoral Psychology* 73, no. 3 (2024): 367–377, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-024-01124-z>.

marriage as well as influence intra-marital and family relationships¹⁰. In the lives of believers and practitioners, it constitutes an important element in integrating the family community. However, it should be noted that during the pandemic, due to imposed restrictions, the participation of believers in religious services and practices was markedly limited, particularly in the first months of the pandemic. Because of this, individual religious practices, personal and family prayer, Scripture reading, online attendance at church services and, after the restrictions were lifted, participation in the liturgy celebrated in churches, played an important role at that time.

Accordingly, it is worth mentioning here that psychological and religious literature emphasizes that religiosity is not limited only to prayer and deepening faith, but in a significant way associated with a general attitude toward the other person. It can therefore be recapitulated that commitment in a relationship with another person is an immanent feature of religious commitment. Moreover, a mature contact with God helps in building positive relationships with people by appreciating and valuing others. Studies on the connection between interpersonal and religious relationships indicate that people with mature religiosity show a lack of hostility and aggressive behavior toward their relationship partners, and have many and close contacts with others as well. In addition, they present a caring attitude toward others, are able to provide support and have an awareness of social connections. Religious spouses are focused on each other, do good to each other and cooperate for the good of others, which gives them a sense of satisfaction and, above all, is consistent with the Christian model of marriage.¹¹

¹⁰ Jose Orathinkal and Alfons Vansteenwegen, "Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction," *Contemporary Family Therapy* 28, no. 4 (2006): 497–504, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-006-9020-0>. Annette Mahoney and others, "Marriage and the Spiritual Realm: The Role of Proximal and Distal Religious Constructs in Marital Functioning," *Journal of Family Psychology* 13, no. 3 (1999): 321–338, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.13.3.321>.

¹¹ Marek Jarosz, *Interpersonalne uwarunkowania religijności* (Interpersonal Conditions of Religiousness) (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2003).

1. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the current study is to examine whether a correlation did exist between religiosity and family relationships during the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic, taking into account the period of the imposed national quarantine in Poland, in 2020.

The authors of the study applied the quantitative diagnostic survey method with the use of an online questionnaire, designed by the Institute for Family Studies at the University of San Sebastian in Chile, which served as a research tool. Due to the cooperation undertaken with the aforesaid Institute, the obtained questionnaire was translated and adapted to Polish conditions, and extended to include issues related to the practice of religious worship.

The survey carried out was anonymous. By means of the online questionnaire the respondents received an electronic link where they, after entering, could proceed to fill out the questionnaire. The respondents were selected by a network sampling method, which was based on reaching out to individuals, and then through them to the next ones. This is a non-random sample and therefore the research is not representative. The survey period lasted two months, from 1 February to 31 March 2022. After that time, the link to the questionnaire was no longer active. By using the mentioned tool, the survey reached 200 individuals. It should be noted that not everyone answered the entire set of questions, hence the summation of the results will not always take the value of 100%. The missing value is the percentage of people who did not answer a given question.

2. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The sample used for this study comprised 161 women (80.5%) and 37 men (18.5%). It should be emphasized that during the pandemic, at the time the questionnaire was completed, 150 respondents (75%) were married. Thirty-one respondents (15.5%) were neither married nor in a free relationship. Seven respondents (3.5%) were married at the time of the pandemic, but did not live together. However, four persons (2%) were in a free relationship but did not live together, while three (1.5%) were in a free relationship and currently live together. As regards the identity of

the persons whom the respondents lived with – most often it was their spouse (75.5%) and children (66%). Subsequently, parents (14%), other family members (8.5%), elderly people, for example, grandparents (3.5%), and other people from outside the family (3%). However, if we look at the housing conditions of the respondents, they most often lived in a dwelling with 3 rooms (35.5%), 5 rooms (23%), 4 rooms (15.5%), more than 5 rooms (14%), 2 rooms (11%), 1 room (0.5%).

Among the respondents, the largest number of people were married (or in a free relationship) for 16 to 25 years (32%). This was followed by those who had been married for more than 25 years (25%). Yet, another group included respondents that had been in a marriage for six to fifteen years (20%), six persons (3%) had been married for two to five years, whereas two persons (1%) less than one year. This question did not apply to 32 respondents (16%).

When it comes to religiosity, the Christian belief in one God, out of 37.7 million people in Poland, 32 million belong to the Roman Catholic Church.¹² For the purposes of this article, religiosity has been reduced to the practice of worship consisting in attending every Sunday Mass.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Gender	
Women	161 (80.5%)
Male	37 (18.5%)
Nationality	
Women	Polish nationality (100%)
Male	Polish nationality (100%)
Religious denomination	
Women	Catholicism (100%)
Male	Catholicism (100%)

¹² Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Wyznania religijne w Polsce w latach 2019–2021* (Religious denominations in Poland 2019–2021) (Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2022), <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/inne-opracowania/wyznania-religijne/wyznania-religijne-w-polsce-2019-2021,5,3.html>.

Table 1 (continuation)

Matrimonial profile	
Marital relationship: the persons lived together	150 (75%)
Free relationship (informal relationship): the persons lived together	3 (1.5%)
Marital relationship: the persons did not live together	7 (3.5%)
Free relationship (informal relationship): the persons did not live together	4 (2%)
No relationship	31 (15.5%)
Duration of the relationship	
Less than 1 year	2 (1%)
2–5 years	6 (3%)
6–15 years	40 (20%)
16–25 years	64 (32%)
More than 25 years	50 (25%)
Identity of roommates	
Spouse/life partner	154 (75.5%)
Children	132 (66%)
Parents	28 (14%)
Other family members	17 (8.5%)
Elderly people	7 (3.5%)
Other people from outside the family	6 (3%)
Housing conditions	
1 room	1 (0.5%)
2 rooms	22 (11%)
3 rooms	71 (35.5%)
4 rooms	31 (15.5%)
5 rooms	46 (23%)
more than 5 rooms	28 (14%)

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

3. RESULTS

The empirical part of the current study focuses on the relationship between the religiosity of respondents and detailed family functioning in the time of the pandemic. The following issues are raised: frequency of quarrels, manifestations of aggression and violence, displays of affection, anxiety in children, positive influence on other family members, strengthened/worsened family relationships, depressive feelings, and the need for mental health care. The manifestations of religiosity, on the other hand, concern three variables, which are: the support the respondents had in their faith in God, as well as ways and frequency of participation in Sunday Masses (in church or online).

Each time family relationships are discussed, the obtained results based on respondents' answers, will be presented first. After that, the connections with religiosity. Moreover, in order to avoid repeating data related to religiosity, the results rated on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, strongly agree), will be presented below:

- “Faith in God was my support” – 133 people (66.5%) replied they “strongly agree,” 29 (14.5%) “agree,” while five persons (2.5%) chose “disagree” and just as many (2.5%) confirmed they “strongly disagree.” Ten respondents (5%) were unable to respond to this statement, which was not applicable to following four (2%) individuals. The combined results of “strongly agree” and “agree” indicate that faith in God was (or rather was) a support during the pandemic for the absolute majority of respondents (81%).
- “Did you participate in Sunday Mass during the pandemic?” – 113 people (56.5%) declared their actual attendance in church, 68 respondents (34%) attended online broadcast of Holy Mass, 12 respondents (6%) affirmed their lack of participation, and one person (0.5%) admitted that this question did not apply to them.

4. FREQUENCY OF FAMILY QUARRELS AND SUPPORT IN FAITH IN GOD

- “More frequent quarrels occurred” – 61 respondents (30.5%) did not identify with this statement when choosing the option “strongly disagree” and 42 people (21%) checked “disagree,” while 29 respondents (14.5%) agreed and nine people (4.5%) strongly identified themselves with the statement. Thirty-three people (16.5%) found it difficult to answer, and 15 (7.5%) confirmed it did not apply to them. For more than half of the respondents, the conditions and restrictions due to the pandemic and quarantine were not the cause of more frequent family quarrels. Generally speaking, it can be assumed that more frequent disputes occurred in every fifth family (19%).

Table 2. Frequency of Family Quarrels and Support in Faith in God

		“Faith in God was my support”				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
“More frequent quarrels occurred”	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	5	49
	Disagree	3	2	0	5	30
	Undecided	1	0	1	8	22
	Agree	0	0	4	6	16
	Strongly agree	0	1	0	5	3

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The data from the table, presented graphically by a scatter plot, are as follows:

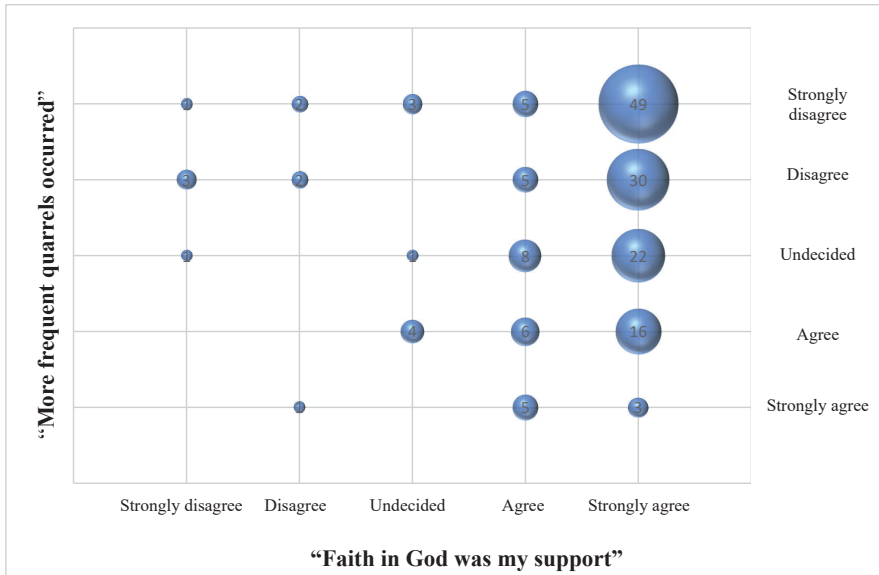


Figure 1. Graphical representation:
Frequency of Family Quarrels and Support in Faith in God

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

By analyzing the answers received from the respondents regarding the frequency of quarrels and their experience of support in their faith in God, the following relationships can be observed: 49 people, while admitting that there were absolutely no quarrels in their marital relationships, also fully agreed that faith in God was their support in coping with the pandemic. On the other hand, 30 respondents declared that there were hardly any quarrels in their relationships, and faith contributed positively to their survival of the pandemic. It can be concluded that a correlation between faith in God and the frequency of marital quarrels, does occur. There were no (or almost no) marital quarrels in the relationships (79 in total) where faith in God was helpful in coping with the pandemic. This is confirmed by the fact that only three individuals for whom faith in God was a support, strongly agreed with the statement that quarrels occurred more frequently in their relationships, and 16 stated that they somewhat occurred.

5. MANIFESTATIONS OF AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE, AND SUPPORT IN FAITH IN GOD

- “Situations of aggression and violence occurred more frequently” – was strongly denied by as many as 102 respondents (51%), and 26 (13%) disagreed with it, while 16 (8%) were indecisive, however, six persons (3%) stated they “agree” and four (2%) “strongly agree.” In 35 cases (17.5%) that situation did not apply to them. In consequence, seeing the results, it can be said that the situation of the pandemic and quarantine did not provoke aggression or violence, which occurred in negligible cases. In 91 cases (gray color in the table), where people strongly denied the occurrence of situations of aggression and violence, they also acknowledged that their faith in God supported them during the pandemic. This proves that these factors correlated with each other.

Table 3. Manifestations of Aggression and Violence, and Support in Faith in God

		“Faith in God was my support”				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
“Situations of aggression and violence occurred more frequently”	Strongly disagree	3	1	4	11	80
	Disagree	1	2	1	7	14
	Undecided	0	0	1	4	9
	Agree	0	1	0	2	3
	Strongly agree	0	0	0	2	2

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The values from the table are presented graphically as follows:

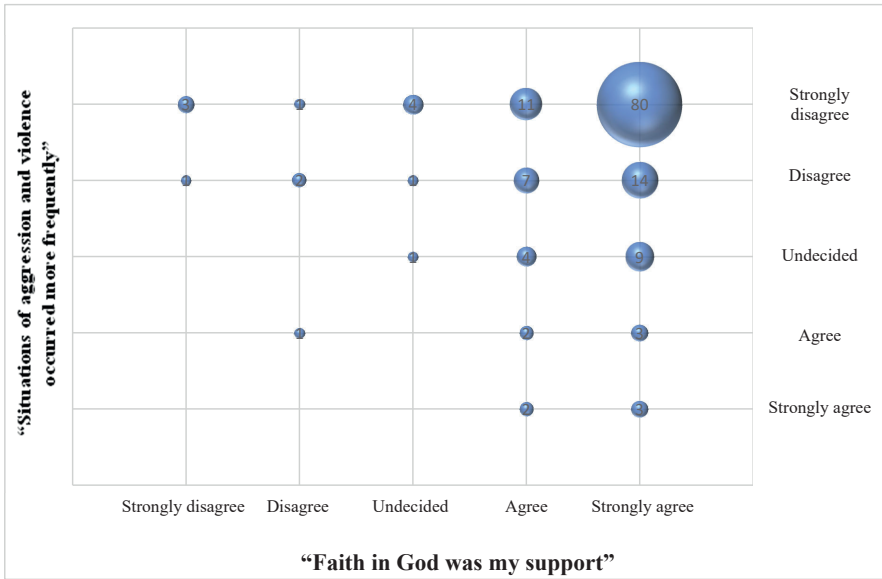


Figure 2. Graphical representation: Manifestations of Aggression and Violence, and Support in Faith in God

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

6. DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION IN THE FAMILY AND SUPPORT IN FAITH IN GOD

- “There were more displays of affection” – 67 respondents (33.5%) were more likely to agree, while 47 (23.5) strongly agreed, and 49 (24.5%) were indecisive. Nevertheless, 12 (6%) disagreed, yet only one person (0.5%) strongly disagreed. For 10 respondents (5%) this assumption did not apply to them in their everyday life. The conclusion that emerges allows to claim that most of the respondents showed affection more often within their families during the pandemic.

Table 4. Displays of Affection in the Family and Support in Faith in God

		“Faith in God was my support”				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
“There were more displays of affection”	Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1
	Disagree	0	0	0	4	8
	Undecided	0	5	3	14	26
	Agree	2	0	2	6	54
	Strongly agree	2	0	4	3	35

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The data from the table in the form of a graph is presented as follows:

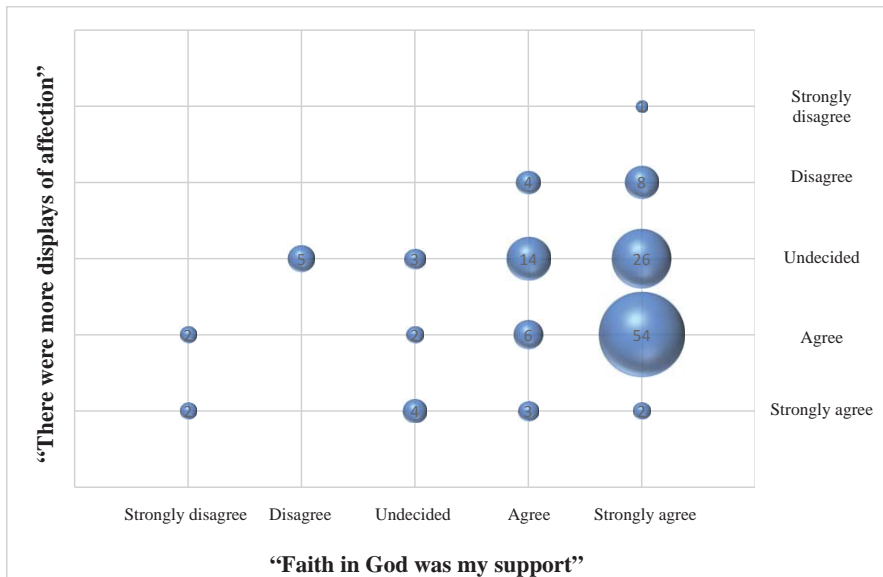


Figure 3. Graphical representation:
Displays of Affection in the Family and Support in Faith in God

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

From the given data, it can be observed that as many as 89 people who confessed that there were more displays of affection in their families during the pandemic, also expressed a firm belief that their faith in God supported them (gray color in the table). As can be seen, there is a close correlation between these factors. However, only four respondents whose families showed more affection, claimed that faith in God did not serve as a support in their lives.

7. FEAR IN CHILDREN AND PRACTICE OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

- “I was worried about their changed behavior, they showed excessive fear” – was related to the opinion of parents/guardians who were supposed to assess whether their children/wards showed increased fear in the time of the pandemic. The largest group of respondents strongly disagreed (35 check marks, 17.5%), 26 respondents (13%) chose the “disagree” option, another 26 respondents (13%) checked the “agree” alternative, whereas 20 (10%) “strongly agreed.” The following 26 (13%) found it difficult to make a choice, while this statement did not apply to 55 (27.5%) respondents. As can be observed, the scale tilts (by 7 percentage points) toward persons whose children showed no change in behavior and had no excessive fear. Nonetheless, this is not a significant difference since a similar group of parents/guardians did notice a change in the behavior of their offspring/wards.

Moving on, the respondents were also asked whether their children attended Sunday Eucharist during the pandemic. Sixty-eight people (34%) selected the option “yes, in church,” 50 (25%) “yes, online,” while 12 respondents (6%) denied it, and 61 (30.5%) chose the alternative “not applicable.” As for the children that attended Sunday services, the frequency is as follows: 68 respondents (34%) checked the option “always,” 31 (15.5%) “almost always,” and 23 respondents (11.5%) “sometimes,” whereas six individuals (3%) “almost never,” five (2.5%) “never,” and 61 (30.5%) declared that this issue did not apply to them.

As for the subsequent question on excessive fear in children, the answers “strongly disagree” and “disagree” were added together, in order to give a clear presentation of the results, which gave 61 checks. In the group of children who did not show any signs of excessive fear, 51 of them attended Sunday Mass, of which 33 in church, and 18 online. Regarding the frequency of participating in every Sunday Eucharist in church, 23 children were always present, whereas eight almost always. Then again, seven children always attended online, and six individuals almost always. The compared results and responses, confirmed that the children did show excessive fear. The responses “strongly agree” and “agree” made a total of 46. Within this group, 27 children attended Sunday Mass (including 17 in church and 10 online). Nine children always attended each Sunday Mass in church, five almost always. Concerning online participation, 10 children participated this way, of which five attended always and another five almost always.

Table 5. Fear in Children and Practice of Religious Worship

	Children did not show excessive fear 61 check marks		Children did show excessive fear 46 check marks	
	In church 33	Online 18	In church 17	Online 10
Ways of participating in Sunday Mass and their frequency				
	In total 51		In total 27	
Always	23	7	9	5
Almost always	8	6	5	5
Sometimes	2	5	3	0
Almost never	0	0	0	0
Never	0	0	0	0

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The data from the table shown graphically by means of a pie chart are as follows:

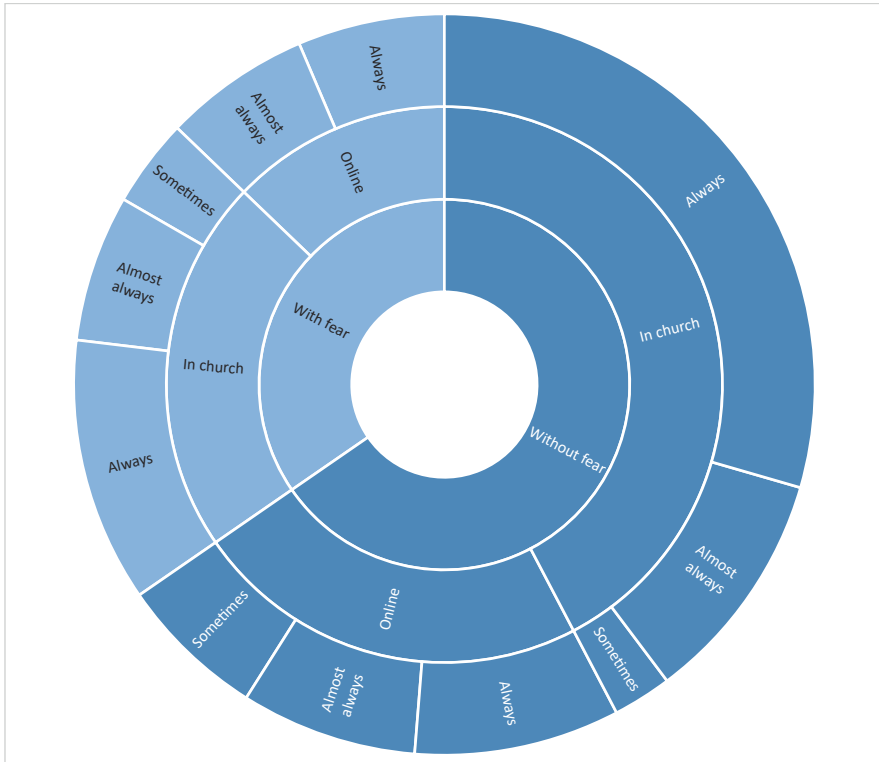


Figure 4. Graphical representation:
Fear in Children and Practice of Religious Worship

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

When looking at the results in the table, the value of both groups of children should be taken into account: the ones who did not show any excessive fear (61 checks) and those that did show fear (46 checks) takes 100%. In this way, the proportion needed to compare both groups will be maintained. In the first group, the number of children attending Sunday Mass is 83%, and 58% in the second. This implies that the children attend-

ing Sunday Eucharist (at church or online) were less likely to show excessive fear during the pandemic. Furthermore, the frequency of participation in Sunday service is also worth noting. The number of children who did not show excessive fear and always went to church for Sunday service reaches 45%, whereas by those who showed excessive fear 33% attended Sunday Mass at church. The difference (12%) is not large, however, it may be the basis for putting forward the hypothesis that children who attended each Sunday Mass at church showed less fear due to the pandemic. When it comes to online participation every Sunday no such difference can be found for it is only five per cent. Therefore, it can be assumed that practicing faith by attending Sunday Eucharist (particularly at church) may have an impact on reducing fear in children caused by the pandemic.

8. POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS AND SUPPORT IN FAITH IN GOD

- “I had a positive influence on the people I lived with” – 39 respondents (19.5%) strongly agreed with this confirmation, 68 (34%) agreed, while eight (4%) disagreed, and five (2.5%) strongly disagreed. Fifty-six people (28%) were indecisive, and 19 (9.5%) chose the option “not applicable.” It can here be concluded that a large part of the respondents positively assesses their impact on the people with whom they lived during the pandemic.

Table 6. Positive Influence on Other Family Members and Support in Faith in God

		“Faith in God was my support”				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
“I had a positive influence on the people I lived with”	Strongly disagree	0	0	0	1	3
	Disagree	0	0	2	2	4
	Undecided	1	2	1	16	33
	Agree	1	2	2	7	51
	Strongly agree	2	0	4	1	31

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The data from the table, represented graphically by a scatter plot, are as follows:

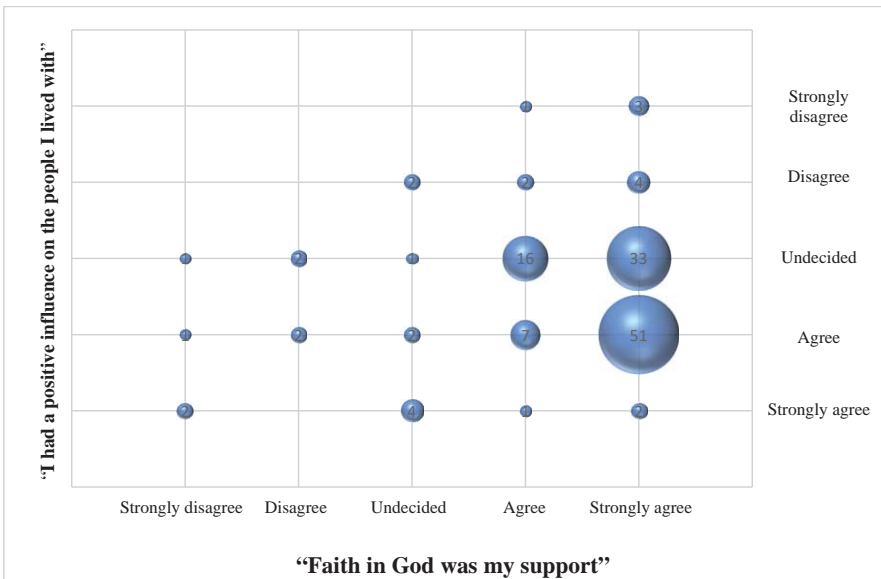


Figure 5. Graphical representation: Positive Influence on Other Family Members and Support in Faith in God

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

From the figures presented, there can be seen a correlation between the answers of respondents who had a positive impact on the people they lived with during the pandemic and the support they had in their faith in God. As it turns out, the 31 people who strongly agreed with the statement about having a positive effect on household members also strongly agreed that faith in God was their support. However, those who assessed their benevolent influence somewhat positively, and were still strongly convinced of the role that faith in God has, are 51 people. In total, 82 respondents confirmed their positive impact on household members, and support from God. Furthermore, it is also worth noticing the group of people who felt they had complete support in their faith in God, but who however did not evaluate their impact on the family environment positively by affirming that they “strongly disagree” and others “disagree.” Overall, there are seven such combination variants. Then again, there are only five respondents who strongly agreed or agreed to their positive influence on family members, but who strongly or somewhat disagreed with having support in God. Moreover, a certain regularity can also be spotted, as the number of check marks that confirm the positive impact on household members increases, just as the number of people who felt that faith in God was a support for them (gray color in the table). Based on these results, it can be established that those who found support in their faith in God also assessed a positive influence on the people in their household during the time of the pandemic.

9. STRENGTHENED/WORSENEF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS, SUPPORT IN FAITH IN GOD AND PRACTICE OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

When asked whether living together at home during the pandemic has changed the relationships between family members to any extent, 92 respondents (46%) did not observe any changes. Nevertheless, as many as 81 people (40.5%) declared that family relationships had become stronger. In 13 cases (6.5%), the relationships worsened, while eight respondents (4%) were unable to answer this question. The obtained results confirm the answers given to a different, although similar statement, which reads as follows: “My relationship, in terms of emotionality, is just

as intimate or more intimate than before” – 75 people (37.5%) strongly identified with this content, 54 (27%) agreed, five (2.5%) disagreed, and two (1%) strongly disagreed. Twenty-four respondents (12%) remained indecisive, and to 32 (16%) this issue did not apply to them. As an outcome, the time of the pandemic did not have any negative affect on the emotional quality of the marital/partner relationship.

Table 7. Strengthened/Worsened Family Relationships, Support in Faith in God

		“Faith in God was my support”				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
“Has living together at home during the pandemic changed the relationships between your family members in any way?”	Yes, the relationship got stronger	4	0	4	8	61
	Yes, the relationship got worse	0	2	1	5	4
	Nothing changed	0	3	5	15	62
	I do not know	1	0	0	1	4

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

Data from the table in the form of a scatter plot are presented as follows:

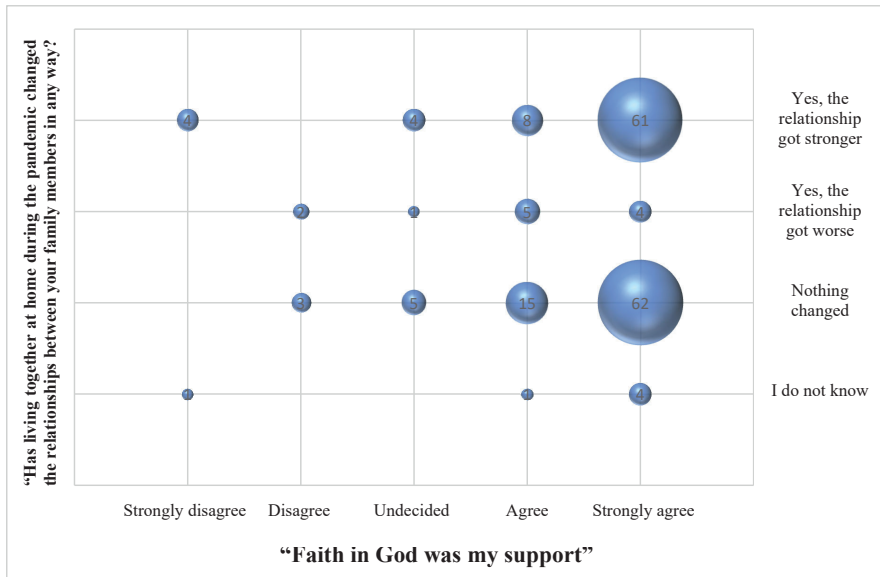


Figure 6. Graphical representation: Strengthened/Worsened Family Relationships, Support in Faith in God

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

When analyzing the figures, it can be observed that 61 respondents strongly agreed with the statement that faith in God was a supporting factor for them and whose family relationships have been strengthened (and eight individuals for whom faith was rather a support). Then again, for a similar group (62 people), the relationship has not changed (and that means it has certainly not gotten any worse). On the other hand, there were only four respondents for whom faith in God was their complete support, even though their family relationships deteriorated, while for five individuals faith was rather a supporting factor. Furthermore, four respondents acknowledged that their family relationships did get stronger during the pandemic, but faith in God was of no support to them. Thus, it can be inferred that a correlation between faith in God and the strengthening of family relationships does exist.

In addition, it is worth comparing two numerically similar groups of people for whom faith in God was a support. In one of the groups, family relationships were strengthened, while no changes appeared in the other. The comparison will concern the religious practice of attending Sunday Eucharist. The way of participation (in church or online) and its frequency (always, almost always, sometimes, almost never, never). It turns out that both groups, numbering 60 respondents, confirmed their participation in Sunday Mass. In terms of form, that is, church or online, the results are equivalent. However, in the case of frequency of Sunday service participation, the differences are noticeable. More people whose family relationships were strengthened and who always attended Sunday Mass in church, are recorded, in contrast to those whose family relationships did not change although they always went to church for Sunday Eucharist. The first group holds 12 persons (20%) more than the second. It can therefore be assumed that family relationships are strengthened among people for whom faith in God is a support and who always attend each Sunday Mass in church. In comparison, the respondents who found support in their faith in God, but whose family relationships have not been strengthened, were less likely to attend every Sunday Mass in church. However, when it comes to online participation, the difference is not considerable.

**Table 8. Strengthened/Worsened Family Relationships,
Practice of Religious Worship**

	Faith in God was a support/Family relationships got stronger (1)		Faith in God was a support/Nothing changed in family relationships (2)	
	In church 39	Online 21	In church 35	Online 25
Ways of participating in Sunday Mass and their frequency				
	In total 60		In total 60	
Always	39	18	27	20
Almost always	7	1	8	4

Table 8 (continuation)

	Faith in God was a support/Family relationships got stronger (1)		Faith in God was a support/Nothing changed in family relationships (2)	
Sometimes	0	2	0	1
Almost never	0	0	0	0
Never	0	0	0	0

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The graphical representation of the above data is as follows:

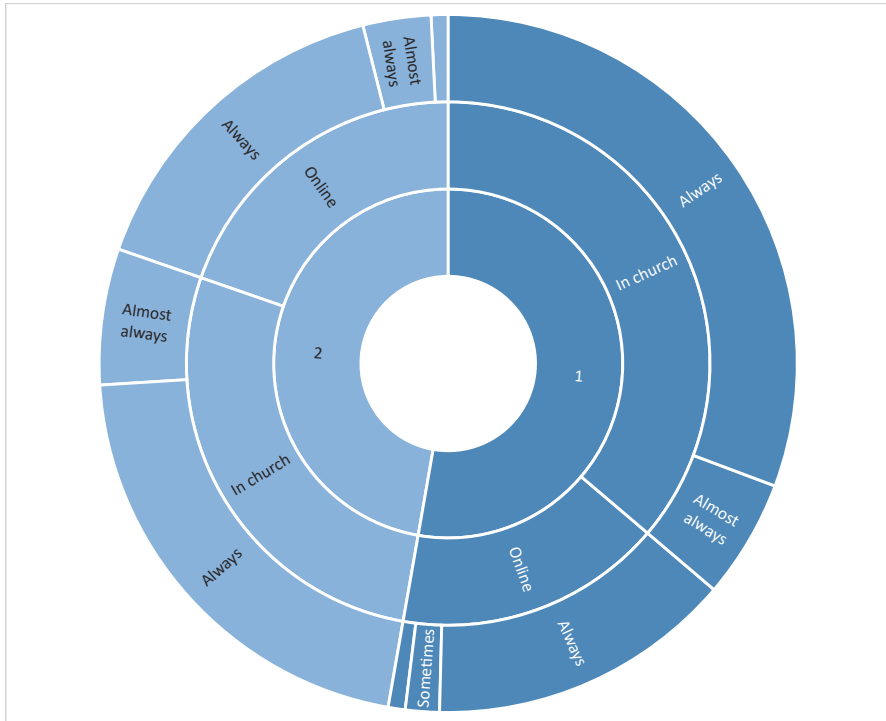


Figure 7. Graphical representation: Strengthened/Worsened Family Relationships, Practice of Religious Worship

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

10. FEELING DEPRESSED AND SUPPORT IN FAITH IN GOD

- “I felt more depressed (apathetic)” – 25 respondents (12.5%) strongly identified with this, 58 (29%) agreed, whereas 31 (15.5%) disagreed, and 39 (19.5%) strongly disagreed. Twenty-six people (13%) remained indecisive, yet 11 (5.5%) chose the alternative “not applicable.” A similar number of people who experienced depression (apathy) during the pandemic as well as those who did not experience such symptoms, can be noted.

Table 9. Feeling Depressed and Support in Faith in God

		“Faith in God was my support”				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
“I felt more depressed (apathetic)”	Strongly disagree	2	0	2	4	31
	Disagree	0	0	1	3	25
	Undecided	1	0	0	5	19
	Agree	1	3	5	10	36
	Strongly agree	0	1	0	6	15

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The values from the table are presented graphically as follows:

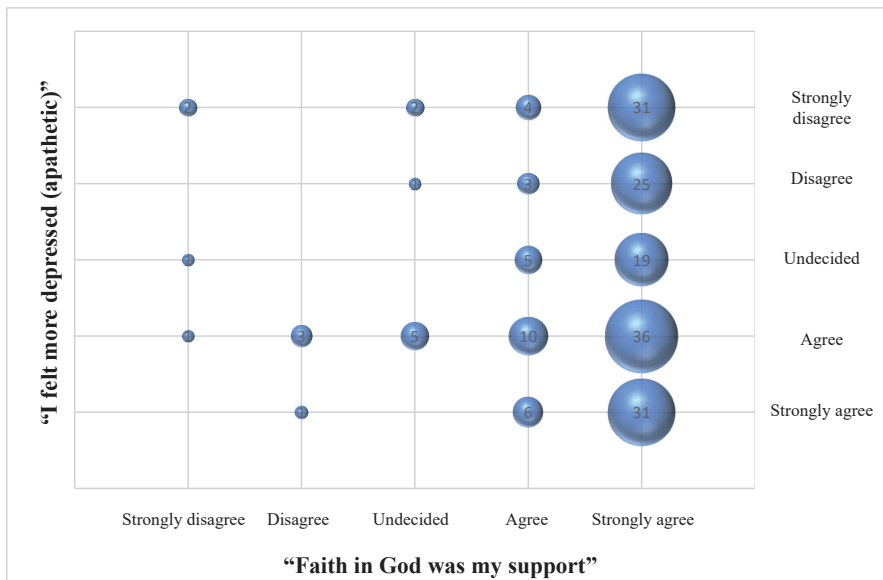


Figure 8. Graphical representation: Feeling Depressed and Support in Faith in God

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

From the above figures, it can be observed that the people who strongly agreed that faith in God was their support during the pandemic, and at the same time strongly disagreed with the statement that they felt depressed, are more than half as many (31/15) compared to the people who, on the same assumption regarding faith, fully confessed they felt apathy. As a result, faith in God provided protection against depressive feelings due to the pandemic for a greater part of the population. When considering what had an impact on this, it can only be stated that the participation in Sunday services in church or online was not the case, for no correlation was found. Moreover, this tendency is maintained as well when comparing the replies of people who fully agreed with the statement that faith in God was a support for them, even though they provided different responses in the matter of feeling depressed by choosing the options "agree" and "disagree." Then again, attendance in Sunday Mass had no influence in this case either. Interestingly, even those who felt depressed

were more likely to participate in Sunday Eucharist in church more frequently. All in all, it is fair to say that faith in God is a help in dealing with apathy, however, it is not necessarily related to the participation in Sunday services (in church or online).

11. THE NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND PRACTICE OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

- “I will need mental health care or counseling” (after the end of the pandemic) – the largest group of respondents, where the content concerned their lives, strongly disagreed with it (54 checks, 27%), 34 people (17 %) chose the option “disagree,” whereas 14 respondents (7%) selected the alternative “agree,” and eight (4%) chose “strongly agree.” As many as 47 respondents (23.5%) found it difficult to decide, as for 29 (14.5%) respondents this statement did not apply to them. By adding up the results of “strongly disagree” and “disagree” as well as “strongly agree” and “agree,” it can be seen that the scale (by 33 percentage points) definitely tilts toward those who will not (or are unlikely to) need mental health counseling after the pandemic. The obtained results were juxtaposed with the responses related to participation in Sunday Mass.

Table 10. The need for mental health care or counselling, participate in Sunday Mass

		“Did you participate in Sunday Mass during the pandemic?”										
		Yes, in church					Yes, online					No
		Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	
“I will need mental health care or counseling”	Strongly disagree	32					16					6
		24	6	2	0	0	12	2	2	0	0	
		Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	
Disagree	Disagree	21					11					2
		14	6	1	0	0	3	3	5	0	0	
		Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	
Undecided	Undecided	24					21					2
		16	6	2	0	0	15	5	1	0	0	
		Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	

Table 10 (continuation)

		“Did you participate in Sunday Mass during the pandemic?”											
		Yes, in church					Yes, online					No	
“I will need mental health care or counseling”	Agree	8					5					0	
		6	2	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0		
		Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never		
		Strongly agree	4					4					0
			2	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	
			Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	Always	Almost always zawsze	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The data from the table in the form of a graph are presented as follows:

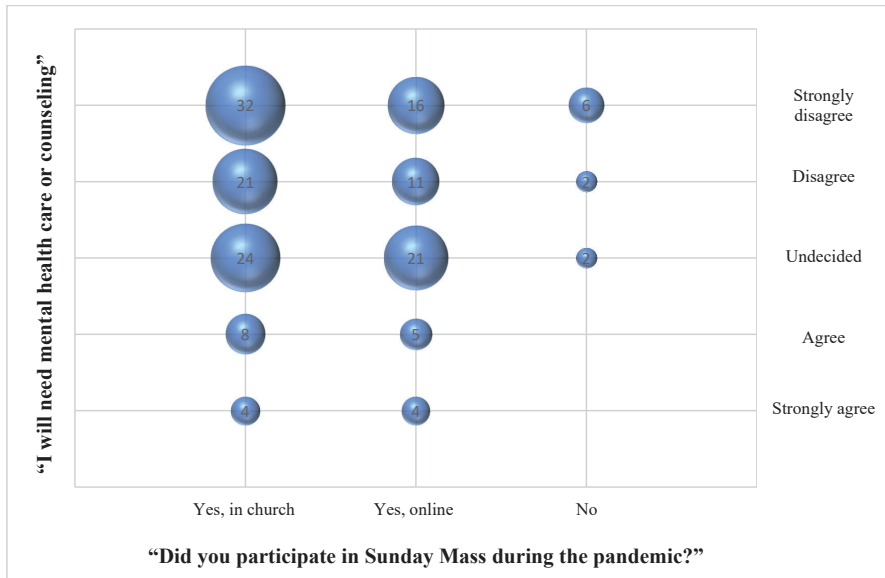


Figure 9. Graphical representation:

The need for mental health care or counselling, participate in Sunday Mass

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

In order to visualise the results better and simplify the calculations, the responses from people who declared that they would definitely not or probably not need mental health care or counseling after the pandemic, were summarised. The outcome is 88 people. It appears that, within this part of the population, 80 respondents attended Sunday Mass during the pandemic (of which 53 people in church and 27 online). Among those, 38 respondents “always” went to church (i.e., every Sunday), while 12 respondents “almost always.” By contrast, 15 persons “always” attended Sunday Mass online and five individuals “almost always.” Moreover, it is also worth drawing attention to the small population of 22 people who said they would need (or rather will need) mental health care or counseling, 21 of them attended Sunday Mass (in church or online) during the pandemic. Therefore, it can be concluded that a religious factor in the form

of worship may strengthen mental resilience. As a result, respondents were unlikely to benefit from mental health counseling after the pandemic ended.

Attention was also drawn to whether there is a correlation between the need for mental health care or counseling after the pandemic as well as seeking support and counsel from a clergyman, pastor or religious leader during the pandemic. On the statement “I sought support and counsel from a clergyman/pastor/religious leader,” respondents answered as follows: 54 (27%) checked the answer “strongly disagree,” 20 (10%) “disagree,” while 29 (14.5%) “agree” and 17 (8.5%) “strongly agree.” Twenty-two respondents (11%) were unable to respond to this statement, whereas this issue did not apply to 44 persons (22%). When summing up and comparing the results of “strongly disagree” and “disagree” as well as “strongly agree” and “agree,” it can be seen that the majority of respondents (37%) did not seek support from a clergyman or religious leader. However, when it comes to comparison of the responses regarding the need for mental health care or counseling, and seeking support and counsel from a clergyman, pastor or religious leader, the results are as follows:

Table 11. The need for mental health care or counselling, seeking support and counsel from a clergyman/pastor/religious leader

		“I sought support and counsel from a clergyman/pastor/religious leader”				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
“I will need mental health care or counseling”	Strongly disagree	20	7	6	7	3
	Disagree	8	7	3	8	3
	Undecided	14	5	10	6	5
	Agree	6	1	1	3	3
	Strongly agree	4	0	0	3	0

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The data from the table in the form of a graph are presented as follows:

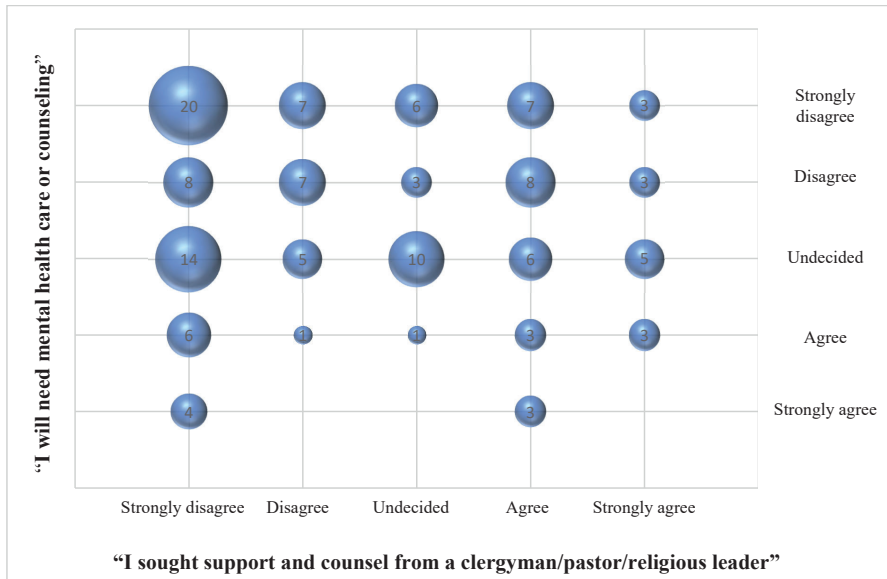


Figure 10. Graphical representation:
The need for mental health care or counselling, seeking support and counsel from a clergyman/pastor/religious leader

Source: The authors, on the basis of the survey conducted.

The obtained numerical data confirm the abovementioned conclusions that the respondents did neither seek support nor counsel from a clergyman, pastor or religious leader during the pandemic, and were not in need of mental health care or counseling after the pandemic ended. Therefore, no correlation can be established that contact with a clergyman or religious leader contributed to a better mental condition of the respondents. Accordingly, it is worth comparing the results of those who acknowledged they sought or rather sought support from clergy but were not in need of mental health care or counseling, to those who did not seek counsel from clergy but were in need or rather in need of mental health counseling. The first group consists of 21 persons, and the second 11 (gray in the table). Based on these data, it can be stated that there are

almost twice as many people who benefited from the support of clergy and therefore were not in need of mental health care. Thus, contact with a clergyman, pastor or religious leader somehow strengthened those people mentally. Nevertheless, there are too few responses of this kind in order to make such a thesis for the entire studied population.

12. STUDY LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that due to the method used to obtain respondents, the surveys conducted are not representative. In addition, it is important to remember that the collected data do only include some part of the respondents, due to the fact that not all people from the studied population of 200 people, provided an answer to all questions. Another remark concerns the timing of the survey, which took place two years after the introduction of the epidemic emergency on the territory of Poland. Therefore, the answers given by the respondents were a form of retrospection. Furthermore, the study was intended to demonstrate the impact religiosity had on family relationships during the pandemic and national quarantine. In essence, the received results grant a response to the question of whether or not a correlation does exist between each of the issues separately discussed. However, they remain silent on the question of how the given correlation occurs. Apart from that, consideration must be given to the fact that marital and family well-being may be influenced by, apart from religiosity, a number of other factors, such as the condition of marital bonds, ability to resolve conflicts and personal maturity. Accordingly, it is a network of various predictors interrelated. In addition, it would be valuable to compare the answers of respondents with different religious beliefs, to find out whether every faith and religiosity have the same impact. Therefore, in order to deepen the phenomena in question, in-depth interviews ought to be conducted with the respondents. Although this would go beyond the scope of this study, it would become a starting point for further research.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

When looking at research on the impact of religiosity and spirituality on coping with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a positive impact. For example, it was found that religiosity can play an important role in reducing suffering and minimising the consequences of social isolation. This therefore has implications for public health. Medical staff are therefore encouraged to take their spiritual and religious beliefs into account in their work with patients and their families, thus providing the most comprehensive care possible¹³. Other studies have shown that frequent conversations with loved ones on religious and spiritual topics reduced psychological distress and had a beneficial effect on perceptions of self-rated health. Thus, discussions on religious topics become a resilience factor, influence well-being and mitigate the perceived effects of the pandemic¹⁴. In a particular way, this task was undertaken in Poland by nuns and monks who, as volunteers, ministered to COVID-19 patients in hospitals. Their involvement was not limited to medical assistance, but also included spiritual and prayer support¹⁵. Also, the results of other studies show a positive relationship between religious commitment and an increase in immune system function, which in turn reduces the risk of infection. Thus, religiosity and spiritual involvement have a measurable impact on a person's immunology. This means that in the case of a coronavirus infection, the course of the disease is likely to be less severe and recovery will occur sooner due to the increased immunity associated

¹³ Giancarlo Lucchetti and others, "Spirituality, religiosity and the mental health consequences of social isolation during COVID-19 pandemic," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 67, no. 6 (2021): 672–679, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764020970996>.

¹⁴ Laura Upenieks, "Religious/spiritual struggles and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: Does "talking religion" help or hurt?" *Review of Religious Research* 64, no. 2 (2022): 249–278, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-022-00487-0>. Stefano Abbate, "Pandemic and Desacralization: the New Political Order Founded on the Bare Life," *Scientia et Fides* 11, no. 1 (2023): 105–120, <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2023.012>.

¹⁵ Franciszek Mróz and Piotr Roszak, "The Ministry of Religious Congregations to People Affected by the SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus in Poland: Geographies of Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Religion and Health* 61, no. 3 (2022): 2279–2301, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-022-01570-0>.

with religiosity and spirituality.¹⁶ This thesis is echoed by another study conducted in Italy, which found that Christian religiosity, expressed in the practice of prayer and attendance at services, was a strategy for coping with illness caused by the virus. However, the researchers note that the benevolent effect of religiosity takes place in people who have undergone religious socialisation in childhood. In addition, an increase in the manifestation of religiosity and religious revival in the face of dramatic pandemic events has been noted. However, this phenomenon is presumed to be short-term and to diminish when the existential uncertainty associated with the pandemic disappears¹⁷.

The research presented in this manuscript also fits into the context of the positive impact of religiosity and spirituality in experiencing a pandemic. It can be concluded that religiosity did have a positive impact on family relationships. The present research revealed the existence of a correlation where the relationship between persons for whom faith in God was helpful in surviving the pandemic, experienced no (or hardly any) marital quarrels. Thus, situations of aggression or violence did not appear. Whereas in the families that found support through their faith in God, more displays of affection were apparent. In addition, they also assessed their positive impact on the people they lived with in the time of the pandemic. A correlation between the support in faith in God and the strengthening of family relationships, was also noted. Accordingly, it can be assumed that family relationships become stronger with people for whom faith in God is a support and who always attend every Sunday Mass in church. The respondents who found support in their faith in God, but whose family relationships were not strengthened, were less likely to attend each Sunday Mass in church. As regards the practice of religious worship by children, it is possible to presume that practicing faith by attending Sunday Eucharist (particularly in church) may have an impact on reducing anxiety caused by the pandemic. Furthermore, a benevolent

¹⁶ Harold G. Koenig, "Maintaining Health and Well-Being by Putting Faith into Action During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Religion and Health* 59, no. 5 (2020): 2205–2214, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01035-2>.

¹⁷ Francesco Molteni and others, "Searching for comfort in religion: insecurity and religious behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy," *European Societies* 23, no. S1 (2021): S704–S720, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2020.1836383>.

influence of the religious factor in the form of worship to enhance the mental resilience of the respondents, was recorded – which will result in a less frequent need for mental health counseling after the pandemic is over. It turns out that faith in God is helpful in dealing with apathy, although the results did not confirm that it is related to participation in Sunday services, in church or online. Neither was it found that contact with a clergyman or religious leader resulted in a better mental condition of the respondents.

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DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Ethical Approval The study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, and according to local legislation and national guidelines on research involving human subjects. All quotes as part of this research were provided to the researchers with the explicit consent of the participants. The research we conducted was approved in the field of ethics by the Faculty Research Ethics Board of the Faculty of Theology of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun (certificate number 1/2023).

Consent to Participate Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Consent to Publish The authors affirm that human research participants provided informed consent for publication.

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