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A NEW FORM OF FRIENDSHIP
AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN POLAND:
IDENTIFICATION OF THE FRIENDS
WITH BENEFITS PHENOMENON

Close friendship is one of the most fundamental issues in psychology. It is a universal relationship in terms of which it is possible to describe every human being, since every individual engages in it. The quality of close friendship relationships is one of the essential conditions of mental health. A close friendship generates space in which to fulfill the most fundamental human needs. The aim of this empirical study was to identify a new form of close interpersonal relationship, called “friend with benefits” and defined as friends having sexual relations. The results of the empirical study allow us to explore this phenomenon, discuss differences in the quality and intensity of the friends with benefits relationship between men and women, and draw some important conclusions.

Keywords: friendship; friends with benefits; young adults.

Friendship is a fundamental issue for psychology because it is a universal phenomenon. Every person should have friends and function in a particular way thanks to these relationships. The quality and intensity of close friendship relationships influence individuals’ emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social development (Szarota, 2014). Friendship seems to offer an opportunity to create in an exceptional way the conditions for mental health, thus becoming its precondition (Rydlewska, 2017). In Seligman’s (2005) publications friendship is also presented as a frontal dimension of human psychological well-being. People

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who are in close friendship relationships with others are happy. Particularly in the last two decades, however, friendship has been undergoing dynamic transformations.

DEFORMATION OF FRIENDSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

Apart from being signaled in review studies (Prusiński, 2015; Szarota, 2014), the mutation of friendship has not been addressed in Polish psychology even in the form of a preliminary study. This phenomenon is discussed especially in articles published across the Atlantic, which is hardly surprising, as the American society seems to be more liberal in terms of cultural norms and patterns, and this in turn informs the way people live their friendships. These changes reach European societies with a delay, although it is true that they have been present in the Old Continent for some time. Friendship is no longer a phenomenon immutable in time but quite the contrary: it is a bond profoundly dependent on the current cultural context. What is it, then, that has undergone deformation in close friendship relationships?

Nowadays, what has been a friendship relationship is often reformulated in a way that involves sexualization. Most scholars emphasize that although friendship relationships have never been deprived of the intimacy component in the process of being defined, and although words such as “liking” or even “loving” could also be used to specify the intensity of friendship relations, the friendship sexualization criterion is a new element. Until recently, friendship was a purely platonic relationship. At present, the erotic dimension is no longer totally surprising. Studies show that the established boundaries of intimacy are crossed and new expectations regarding friendship are set (Lehmiller, VanderDrift, & Kelly, 2014). According to some researchers, even though intimacy is, of course, also present in friendship relationships and even though, importantly, intimacy grows with the development of friendship, it is never supplemented with sexual contact (Bisson & Levine, 2009). Argyle (1999) mentioned that experiencing love affairs and sharing sexual life is reserved for relationships that are usually marriages. The bond of friendship is therefore not the same as a relationship based on sexuality.

It should also be noted, however, that – particularly in evolutionary psychology – it is pointed out that casual sex supplementing various interpersonal relationships is not a new phenomenon. Buss and Schmitt (1993) point out the adaptive benefits of short-term sexual relationships. Developmental psychologists

(Copen, Daniels, & Mosher, 2013) argue that the appearance of this component in friendship relationships is connected with social changes initiated long ago; the frequently listed ones include: higher acceptance of premarital sex, the popularization of contraceptives, the emergence of cohabitation as a large-scale phenomenon, or the phenomenon of “suspended adulthood.”

The existing empirical studies reveal that the friends with benefits phenomenon is popular among young people, aged up to 35. Some researchers investigating this phenomenon stress that this is a modern kind of sexual relationship. This kind of situation is usually the case between heterosexual friends. Apart from “friends with benefits,” also other terms are used in the literature to refer to this type of relationship, such as “booty calls,” “one night stands,” or “fuck buddies.” Another expression in use is “hooking up,” employed by young people to refer to brief and episodic sexual activities.

Wentland and Reissing (2014) note that this phenomenon has not been precisely defined. It should be emphasized, however, that each of the terms mentioned above may describe a different level of commitment to the relationship, thus referring to a slightly different phenomenon. It should be noted that the common denominator for the phenomena described by different terms is sexual behaviors occurring in a non-formalized relationship.

The term I have chosen to use is “friends with benefits.” I will understand this type of relationship as a non-romantic friendship relationship supplemented by sexual behaviors that are non-episodic and accepted by both partners.

In the literature, authors present many factors that may direct young people towards friendship with benefits. A certain pattern is mentioned, not so much obligatory as trendy among young people, that is becoming a significant factor encouraging them to embark on this kind of relationship (Fielder & Carey, 2010). A serious predictor of sexual behaviors in friendship relationships is alcohol, which increases the likelihood of crossing the boundaries of physical intimacy. According to Longmore’s (Longmore, Manning, Giordano, & Rudolph, 2004) research team, an important factor behind engagement in friendship with benefits is psychological stress. Studies also reveal gender differences. Men have a tendency to seek numerous partners. Friendship with benefits seems to them to be one of the forms of fulfilling these expectations.

Researchers (Owen & Fincham, 2011) report that more than 50% of the population of young people before finishing secondary school have had an experience of friendship supplemented by sexual behaviors. Research shows (Sprecher & Regan, 2002) that, like ordinary friendship, this relationship includes components such as mutual understanding and support or doing various activities

together. Fielder and Carey (2010) as well as Grello's (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006) research team point out, however, that the physical intimacy which occasionally occurs in these relationships – from kissing to sexual intercourse – is not accompanied by the expectation of relational commitment. The need for physical and emotional contact present in young people is channeled in this relationship and satisfied there without deeper commitment, which seems to be a highly comfortable and favorable solution.

Wentland and Reissing (2014) emphasize that this type of relationship involves a certain danger. If sex becomes an element of transaction in friendship, young people no longer want to enter into relationships that require more commitment, even though the friends with benefits relationship may turn out to be unsatisfying in other, non-sexual dimensions. What is more, this relationship can complicate friendship itself due to the deeper emotional bond emerging. It should be noted that physical intimacy with a friend can also introduce relational ambiguity at the emotional level.

In this relationship there may also appear an expectation in one of the individuals involved that the friendship with benefits may evolve into a full partnership. The study conducted by Regan and Dreyer (1999) shows that more often it is women rather than men who engage in casual sex in friendship relationships with the intention of transforming friendship into a full relationship. Bisson and Levine (2009) discovered that fewer than 10% of friendships with benefits develop into full relationships.

As noted by Szarota (2014), the inclusion of the sexual dimension in friendship not only becomes natural but is actually often expected. The contract may concern the frequency of sexual activities, though fidelity is not usually a necessary condition. This kind of mutation in friendship can be seen as evidence of the increasing trivialization and primitivization of the sexual domain of human life; it can also be seen as evidence of objection to entering into stable marital relationships, which require much more effort. There is a risk that contracting a friends with benefits relationship changes a relationship into a commodity. The relationship ceases to serve purposes other than immediate emotional and sexual satisfaction. Individuals frequently embark on such relationships not in order to create a permanent bond with the other person but in order to satisfy a specific need.

As noted before (Prusiński, 2015), if young people treat the friends with benefits relationship as a kind of free consumption, there is a risk of false commitment. It may turn out that this kind of friendship makes sense as long as individual expectations and impulses are satisfied. If both partners treat their relation-

ship above all in a practical and utilitarian way, there is no strong bond to speak of. A completely different, already mentioned, group of implications is the developmental failures and disappointments that may affect individuals involved in this kind of hybrid relationship.

As mentioned above, in Polish psychology there has been no research devoted to this type of relationship. The findings presented above are based on empirical studies conducted by American psychologists. The fundamental question about the presence and scale of the phenomenon in Polish society induced me to undertake an empirical study, guided by the following research questions: Can we speak of friends with benefits relationship among young people in Polish society? Is the quality of this relationship differentiated by gender? Does friendship with benefits differ from close friendship?

In the context of these research questions, I formulated the following hypotheses:

(H₁) The friends with benefits phenomenon is present among young people in Polish society.

(H₂) Women have a higher quality of friends with benefits relationship than men.

(H₃) The friends with benefits relationship differs qualitatively from the close friendship relationship. The quality of close friendship is higher than the quality of friendship with benefits both in women and in men.

METHOD

Participants

I conducted the empirical research in the Mazowieckie, Małopolskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, and Śląskie Voivodeships, Poland. The research was conducted in two parts.

The first part was conducted from November 2015 to February 2016, and its aim was to establish whether or not the friends with benefits phenomenon was present among young people in Poland at all. The participants in the first part of the study were 180 people aged 19 to 30. There were 126 women and 54 men in the sample, which constituted 70% and 30% of the entire tested group, respectively. The participants' mean age was $M = 22.89$ years ($SD = 2.48$).

In the first part of the study, the percentage of participants aged between 27 and 30 in the sample was small (9.4%). Participants aged 19-26 constituted 90.6% of the sample.

As regards the participants' education, the largest group was individuals with secondary education (83.3%); respondents with basic vocational education constituted 7.8% of the sample, and so did those with incomplete higher education; the remaining 1.1% had higher education. Inhabitants of villages constituted 28.3% of the sample, 37.7% of the participants lived in towns with a population of up to 100,000 residents, and the rest of the sample were individuals living in cities with at least 100,000 residents.

The second part of the study was conducted from April to July 2017, and its aim – after the confirmation of the existence of the investigated phenomenon in the first part – was to test only those individuals who had an experience of friends with benefits relationships.

The participants in the second part of the study were 104 people aged 19 to 41. There were 59 women and 45 men in the sample, which constituted 57% and 43% of the entire tested group, respectively. The participants' mean age was $M = 23.64$ years ($SD = 4.09$).

There was a small representation of participants aged between 31 and 41, whose proportion in the sample was 7.8%. Participants aged 19-30 constituted 92.2% of the sample.

As regards education level, the largest group was individuals with secondary education (59.6%); respondents with basic vocational education constituted 7.7% of the sample, respondents with incomplete higher education constituted 20.2%, and 12.5% of the sample were individuals with higher education. Inhabitants of villages constituted 16.3% of the sample, 30.7% of the participants lived in towns with a population of up to 100,000 residents, and the rest of the sample were individuals living in cities with at least 100,000 residents.

Measure

To measure the changeable quality of relationships (both close friendship and friends with benefits relationship), I used the instrument called Friendship Intensity Measurement Scale (FIMS).

Developed by Arunkumar and Dharmangadan (2001), this questionnaire consists of 40 items. The respondent rates the degree to which he or she agrees that given item refers to his or her existing friendship relationship being described, indicating the answers on a 5-point Likert scale (in the Likert scale I used, the

rating options were as follows: strongly disagree; moderately disagree; hard to say; moderately agree; strongly agree). The items of the questionnaire operationalize four components of friendship.

FIMS makes it possible to compute scores on four subscales and the overall score. The subscales are: Viability (V), Support (S), Intimacy (I), Harmony (H).

A high score on the Viability scale (example items: *I accept him/her most of all people; Whenever I feel lonely I miss his/her presence*) means that the person wants to function in the friendship relationship being described. Viability means consent to the close presence of the other person in one's life, with the other person being as they are, without inducing them to modify their behaviors, values, or attitudes.

A high score on the Support scale (example items: *I feel he/she is the only person to whom I can disclose everything and with whom I can discuss anything; I can't tolerate his/her mistakes*) means that the respondent receives support and help from the partner in the relationship in situations of problems, crises, and personal worries. Support in the relationship is understood as mutual help: received and given. This also includes mutual backing and advocacy as well as expressing one's own opinion.

The score on the third FIMS subscale makes it possible to determine the level of intimacy in the relationship (example items: *When he/she corrects me he/she shows liking. I feel totally relaxed after confiding in him/her*), understood as sharing personal and inner experiences. On the intimacy level, mutual understanding is also assumed to mean not only as the understanding of certain events or experiences from the other person's life but also – more fundamentally – as the understanding of the most personal reasons for his or her behavior.

The fourth subscale measures harmony in the relationship (example items: *His/her presence is always a pleasure for me. He/she always behaves spontaneously*). In the case of this dimension, we speak of pleasure derived from the other person's presence, spontaneity in the relationship and in the expression of personal attitudes, and a certain stability of the relationship.

The overall FIMS score is the sum total of all item scores. The minimum score is 40, and the maximum score is 200. Each scale consists of 10 items. The minimum score on each scale is 10, and the maximum score is 50.

The English version of FIMS was used with the authors' consent. In the process of translating FIMS we used the help of independent translators, who were not psychologists. The whole process of measure adaptation is being carried out by the author of the present paper. FIMS is still in the process of being adapted; more precisely, after the completion of the pilot study on a Polish popu-

lation, the currently discussed version that I used in the present empirical study is a preliminary one.

Nevertheless, the process of psychometric validation of the experimental version of this instrument suggests satisfactory levels of validity and reliability. It therefore seemed reasonable to use it to measure the quality of interpersonal relationships in the present study.

As regards the psychometric properties of the measure, the collected empirical data made it possible to analyze the reliability of the questionnaire. I assessed the reliability (Cronbach's α coefficients) of each scale and the overall FIMS score (for two versions of the questionnaire: friendship with a man and friendship with a woman). The reliability coefficients are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach's α) for FIMS Subscales and Overall Score

FIMS	Cronbach's α
MF	
Overall score	.893
MF Viability	.721
MF Support	.724
MF Intimacy	.604
MF Harmony	.667
FF	
Overall score	.933
FF Viability	.835
FF Support	.817
FF Intimacy	.729
FF Harmony	.762

Note. MF overall score – overall score in the version of the questionnaire measuring the relationship with the best male friend, MF Viability – Viability subscale, MF Support – Support subscale, MF Intimacy – Intimacy subscale, MF Harmony – Harmony subscale. FF overall score – overall score in the version of the questionnaire measuring the relationship with the best female friend, FF Viability – Viability subscale, FF Support – Support subscale, FF Intimacy – Intimacy subscale, FF Harmony – Harmony subscale.

The reliability of the overall FIMS score for two conditions – friendship with a man and friendship with a woman – is very high. The reliability of individual subscales is lower, its values ranging from acceptable to moderate: .679 for FIMS/MF subscales and .786. for FIMS/FF subscales.

To assess the validity of FIMS, I performed a confirmatory factor analysis on the scores obtained in the Polish sample. The theoretical model underlying the measure (Arunkumar & Dharmangadan, 2001), with the latent variable of friendship and its four components, had existed before the process of generating the factor model began. Based on the theory, it was hypothesized that the friendship relationship consists of four dimensions: viability, support, intimacy, and harmony. The confirmatory factor analysis was meant to check if the theoretically established subdimensions indeed underlie the subscales and to what extent the factor structure obtained for the Polish sample is comparable to the structure of the original measure, which would confirm the factorial validity of the Polish adaptation of FIMS. The fit indices for the two versions of the questionnaire were as follows, respectively: FIMS/MF: RMSEA = .080, CMIN/DF = 2.20, GFI = .753; FIMS/FF: RMSEA = .077, CMIN/DF = 2.07, GFI = .776). As can be seen, the indices show a moderate and acceptable fit of the model to the data.

In the research presented in the present paper, the FIMS was supplemented with an extensive Particulars section. This section elicited standard sociodemographic data, such as sex, age, education, and place of residence; it also contained questions about variables relevant to the subject matter of the study (whether or not the respondent had had an experience of sexual behaviors in a non-romantic friendship relationship in the past and whether or not that relationship was supplemented by non-sporadic sexual behaviors).

Procedure

In the first part of the study all participants completed three versions of the FIMS. The first two versions of the questionnaire, FIMS/MF and FIMS/FF, concerned the quality of close friendship. The respondent was asked to think about the person who was his or her best friend and to indicate the level of their agreement with the questionnaire's items, assuming that they referred to that particular person and to the relationship with that person. Next the participant completed the Particulars section. The respondents who indicated in the survey that they had been or were in a non-romantic relationship of friendship supplemented by sexual behaviors (i.e., a friends with benefits relationship) were then asked to complete FIMS/FWB. In this final questionnaire the respondent was asked to think of a person who was their friend (not a romantic partner) and with whom they were in a sexual relationship, as well as to indicate the level of their agreement with the questionnaire's items, assuming that the items referred to that

person and to the relationship with him or her. Out of the total number of participants, 41 completed FIMS/FWB.

In the second part of the study, the respondents were asked first to complete the Particulars section. Next, those who indicated that they had been or were in a friends with benefits relationship were asked to complete the three versions of the questionnaire: FIMS/MF and FIMS/FF, which concerned close friendship, and FIMS/FWB, concerning friendship involving a sexual relationship. The instructions in the questionnaires (FIMS/MF, FIMS/FF, and FIMS/FWB, respectively) were the same as in the first part of the study.

All the three versions of the questionnaire were administered in the paper-and-pencil form. The three versions of FIMS used in the present studies did not differ significantly from one another. Their items were the same except for personal pronouns, which changed along with the type of the friendship described. The main difference between the versions was the instruction. The instruction in FIMS/FWB clearly stated that the participant's answers were to refer to his or her non-romantic friendship with another person in which there were sexual behaviors.

RESULTS

Friends with benefits relationship – the scale of the phenomenon

The first of the hypotheses considered concerned the fundamental question: the very existence of the friends with benefits phenomenon in Poland. The assessment of whether the participants in the study were in a friends with benefits relationship was done in two ways. The data from the Particulars section provided information that a given person was or was not in this kind of relationship. Additionally, I compared FIMS/MF and FIMS/FF scores with the FIMS/FWB score. By doing this, I wanted to make sure that, apart from the participant's subjective beliefs reported in the Particulars section, there were actual differences between the quality of his or her friends with benefits relationship, close friendship with a man, and close friendship with a woman. Previous studies suggested that the quality of the friends with benefits relationship should be lower.

In the case of men, the quality of close friendship – both if the partner in this relationship was a man ($M = 146.02$) and when the partner was a woman ($M = 149.48$) – was higher than the quality of friendship with benefits

($M = 115.33$). In the case of women, I found small differences only. The quality of friendship with benefits ($M = 153.41$) was similar to the quality of close friendship both when a woman's partner in this relationship was a man ($M = 155.35$) and when her partner was a woman ($M = 160.28$).

Systematic empirical research concerning the friends with benefits relationship yielded several interesting results.

First of all, it revealed that 22.8% of the participants reported having been in at least one friendship relationship in the past in which they had sex with the partner. A friends with benefits relationship in the life history was reported by more than 44% of men and only by 13.5% of women.

In the total sample, 12.5% of the participants reported that they were in a friendship relationship at the time of the study in which they had sex with the partner. As regards gender subgroups, 12% of women and 13% of men reported that at the time of the study they were in a relationship of friendship in which they had sex with their partner.

The respondents were also asked whether or not they allowed the possibility of sex in their close friendship relationships. Nearly 34% of the total sample allowed the possibility of engaging in a friendship in which a sexual relationship would be an additional component. This possibility was indicated by 61% of male respondents by 22% of female respondents. This picture is complemented by the fact that 13% of male respondents and 10% of female respondents had dated many people over a very short time (dating included sexual behaviors).

To sum up, the basis for the verification of the first hypothesis, concerning the occurrence of the friends with benefits relationship among young people in Polish society, was the percentages and differences in mean values found in the study. These values show that this phenomenon is present among young people also in Polish society.

Friends with benefits relationship and the subject's gender

To test the second hypothesis, I analyzed the results obtained in the second part of the study. I decided to check if there were gender differences in the sample in terms of the general quality of friendship with benefits and in the four specific components of this relationship. It is assumed that women had a higher quality of friends with benefits relationship than men. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Differences in the Quality of Friends With Benefits Relationship Between Women and Men

FIMS	Sex	Mean	Significance of differences	
			Value of the statistic	<i>p</i>
FWB Overall score	F	144.15	768.00 ^a	.001
	M	125.89		
FWB Viability	F	37.95	892.50 ^a	.02
	M	33.84		
FWB Support	F	33.08	3.761 ^b	.001
	M	27.42		
FWB Intimacy	F	34.83	3.444 ^b	.001
	M	29.78		
FWB Harmony	F	38.29	854.50 ^a	.01
	M	34.84		

Note. FWB overall score – overall score in the version of the questionnaire measuring the friends with benefits relationship, FWB Viability – Viability in Friends With Benefits Relationship subscale, FWB Support – Support in Friends With Benefits Relationship subscale, FWB Intimacy – Intimacy in Friends With Benefits Relationship subscale, FWB Harmony – Harmony in Friends With Benefits Relationship subscale, F – female, M – male; a – the value of Mann–Whitney *U* statistic, b – the value of Student’s *t*-statistic.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that there were statistically significant effects of the gender variable. In all cases, it was in women that the quality of friends with benefits relationship was the highest.

Differences were significant particularly at the overall score level. Women’s mean score for this relationship was $M = 144.15$, while men’s corresponding mean score was much lower, $M = 125.89$. If we move to the level of specific indicators of friends with benefits relationship quality, differences are also significant. Women scored higher on the subscales by an average of 5 points.

To sum up, the basis for the verification of the second hypothesis was the values obtained in Student’s *t*-test and the Mann-Whitney *U* test. The tests revealed statistically significant differences. Moreover, these differences were considerably large.

Friends with benefits relationships versus close friendship relationships

To test the third hypothesis, I analyzed the results obtained in the second part of the study. I assumed that the quality of close friendship was higher than the quality of friendship with benefits both in women and in men. For comparison

with the friends with benefits relationship, each respondent's two closest friendship were considered: with a man and with a woman. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Differences in Quality Between Friends With Benefits Relationship, Close Friendship Relationship With a Man, and Close Friendship Relationship With a Woman in the Sample

Sex	FIMS	Means	Significance of differences	
			Value of the statistic	<i>p</i>
M	MF Overall score	146.16	-4.033 ^a	.001
	FWB Overall score	125.89		
M	FF Overall score	147.13	-3.721 ^a	.001
	FWB Overall score	125.89		
F	MF Overall score	155.27	-2.867 ^b	.01
	FWB Overall score	144.15		
F	FF Overall score	158.00	-2.891 ^a	.01
	FWB Overall score	144.15		

Note. MF overall score – overall score in the version of the questionnaire measuring the relationship with the best male friend, FF overall score in the version of the questionnaire measuring the relationship with the best female friend, FWB overall score – overall score in the version of the questionnaire measuring the friends with benefits relationship, F – female, M – male.

a – the value of the Wilcoxon statistic, b – the value of Student's *t*-statistic.

Based on the analysis performed using Student's *t*-test and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, it can be concluded that significant differences occurred both in the group of men and in the group of women.

In the case of men, the quality of close friendship – both when the partner in this relationship was a man ($M = 146.16$) and when the partner was a woman ($M = 147.13$) – was higher than the quality of friendship with benefits ($M = 125.89$). In the case of women, the differences were two times smaller. The quality of the friends with benefits relationship ($M = 144.15$) was much closer to the quality of close friendship both when a woman's partner in this relationship was a man ($M = 155.27$) and when her partner was a woman ($M = 158.00$).

Based on these results, it should be concluded that the third hypothesis was confirmed. What confirms the hypothesis is especially the difference found in the male group.

DISCUSSION

The research presented above provides a small insight into the nature of the friends with benefits relationship. Although it is difficult in psychology to reach full agreement about the characteristics of a particular phenomenon, the above research results do make it possible to identify a few of its attributes.

The phenomenon of friends with benefits relationship does exist among young adults in Polish society. It is hard to answer the question of whether this phenomenon is new, since there are no earlier studies that could serve as a point of reference for the current one. It should be noted, however, that among young adults, also in Polish society, friendship performs a new function. In many cases, friendship has ceased to be only a purely platonic interpersonal relationship, which used to give certain possibilities of functioning and growth also – and perhaps particularly – due to the lack of a sexualizing element. The results of the first part of the present study show that differences in quality between friendship with benefits and close friendship relationships are fundamental, in favor of the latter. Close friendships are more supportive and intimate, and the partners in these relationships accept them to a greater degree.

Having experiences of a friends with benefits relationship is mainly characteristic of men. Women less often supplement friendship with sexual behaviors. What is important, more than half of the tested sample of men allowed physical sexual contact in friendship, whereas among women consent to this kind of behavior was considerably lower. Both male and female respondents stressed that they also had experience of casual sexual behaviors in several interpersonal contacts that they engaged in simultaneously.

As regards the differentiation of friends with benefits relationships according to the respondents' gender, women rated them substantially higher than men in terms of quality. Men's relationships of friendship with benefits were characterized by lower quality than women's. The differences are visible both in overall scores and in specific relationship components.

Men's friendships with benefits were characterized by lower viability: by a lower degree of acceptance of the other person as they she is, without inducing her to change, and by lower respect for the partner. In the case of women, friends

with benefits relationships were characterized by higher support understood as mutual help in situations of problems and crises as well as personal worries. This also includes mutual advocacy and backing. The level of intimacy in friends with benefits relationship was lower in men than in women, intimacy being understood as sharing personal and inner experiences. The situation was similar in the case of harmony; in accordance with the definition of this relationship component, it can be said that men derived less pleasure from the other person's presence and company in this relationship and that they were less spontaneous in expressing personal needs. Their relationships were marked by lower stability.

Moreover, particularly in the population of men, there were differences in quality between close friendship relationships and friends with benefits relationships. The quality of a friendship relationship was higher than the quality of a friends with benefits relationship regardless of whether a man's partner in the former was another man or a woman. In the population of women, these differences were significantly smaller. Women build and experience friends with benefits relationships similarly in terms of quality to close friendship relationships, compared to the corresponding relationships built by men. Perhaps their friendships with benefits are relationships similar to other friendship relationships, in which sex is not present. Comparing the differences to those found in the group of men, it is legitimate to venture such a speculation. For men, friendship with benefits is a relationship qualitatively different from their other friendship relationships. It satisfies the need for relationship to a lower degree. Men's engagement in this kind of relationships is lower. The question should be posed whether in the case of men this kind of relationship can evolve into a full partnership if it is not at least nearly as intense as a close friendship. It is also a fact that men have a tendency to seek many sexual partners at the same time (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

The anticipation of friendship involves another important human need – the need for sexual satisfaction. Although a person without friends is regarded as a suspicious individual: extremely egoistic, disordered, or at least inhibited, there arises the question of what a friendship relationship satisfying sexual needs may suggest. Is the extension of friendship relationship to include the erotic dimension a sign psychological maturity? Research shows that, especially in men, friendship does not achieve higher quality with the appearance of the sexualization component. On the contrary: in the case of men, friends with benefits relationships appear to be shallow and weakly developed. It can be suspected that men treat these relationships in a utilitarian way. They are not characterized by deep intimacy, manifesting itself in mutual trust and support, while the sexual

activity component is a significant element of relationships as such. Based on other studies conducted by the author of the present paper, devoted to differences pertaining to friendship, comradeship, and acquaintance, it should be stressed that in the case of men, friends with benefits relationships have only slightly higher quality compared to relationships with friends from work or distant acquaintances. Perhaps sex interferes with the friendship relationship, introducing an ambiguity that is difficult to cope with and leading to an extreme situation of sex without friendship.

The above conclusions supplement and confirm the findings reported by Wyndol and Shaffer (2011) based on their own empirical research. According to these researchers, it is not necessary to be friends with a particular person in order to have a friends with benefits relationship with them. Some subjects having a friends with benefits relationship were mere acquaintances to each other. This means typical friends with benefits do not have to be close friends. The study mentioned above showed that young adults engaged in fewer activities with their partners in friends with benefits relationships than with their close friends. The activity of young men in friends with benefits relationships may focus only on sexual behaviors and need not be so extensive as it is in friendship.

It should also be noted that an important component of friendship relationships is intimacy understood as having shared, secret, strictly personal experiences. What is also assumed when speaking about a high level of intimacy in an interpersonal relationship is mutual understanding – not merely as understanding certain facts from the other person's life but, more fundamentally, as understanding the most personal reasons for their behavior. This understanding is meant, or reserved, for that particular close person, attesting to the quality and intimacy of the relationship. The presented empirical research reveals that in the case of men the level of intimacy in friends with benefits relationships is lower compared to the level of intimacy in such relationships in the case of women. There is, however, a certain level of sexual engagement. Perhaps, as suggested above, sex in this kind of relationship amounts to occasional physical contact without relational commitment. Perhaps the transformation of friendship into the process of consumption aimed at satisfying a very specific need is linked with the process that has been progressing in Poland especially in the last two decades – namely, with individuals' changing approach to their personal identity (Giza-Poleszczuk & Marody, 2004; Król, 2005), in which the awareness of the need to achieve one's goals and full personal freedom are increasingly often the superior values.

Also in the introduction to this article it was mentioned that this type of deformed friendship could be a kind of free consumption and thereby model

false engagement in relationships in general, depriving individuals of the ability to build lasting relationships. This is because a relationship in which sex is an important or even central component can exist as long as individual sexual needs are satisfied.

Finally, what should be mentioned is the danger connected with the abnormal development of individuals' social competence. Adopting Matczak's (2007, p. 7) definition of social competence as "complex skills conditioning the effectiveness of coping in particular types of social situations, acquired by the individual in the course of social training," considering the quality of the social training the individual participates in, we can say that abnormal development may concern particularly the skills that condition the effectiveness of behaviors in intimate situations. If competencies are acquired in the course of social training, in the case of friendship with benefits this training is totally different from the expectations the individual is supposed to meet in a close friendship. Especially in the case of men, intimate situations of friendship with benefits do not always engage individuals emotionally: they are not always full of intimacy and attachment. Social skills conditioning the effectiveness of behaviors in intimate situations in individuals functioning in friends with benefits relationships may be abnormal or at least more weakly developed if previous interpersonal training has given no opportunity for close personal contacts, self-disclosure, confiding in others, and being confided in. If social competence is to be assessed based on the criterion of the individual's agency – namely, his or her effectiveness in achieving goals, there is a fear about the developmental value of the goals achieved by the individual engaged in this kind of relationship.

For the sake of balance, it should be noted in the assessment of friends with benefits relationship that, according to research (Lehmiller, 2013), a considerable number of friends with benefits hope that their friendship will evolve into a love affair or a stable relationship. Being in a friendship with benefits can therefore be a way for some people to experience intimacy and sexual adjustment before they engage in a serious and formal relationship. Of course, transition from casual sex to stable relationship may be a complicated process, not always feasible due to the individual's previous behaviors and current habits. When Lehmiller and colleagues (2014) asked their subjects about their reasons for engaging in a friendship with benefits, they answered that they needed sex. For many people these relationships serve the sole purpose of satisfying the need for physical intimacy and nothing else, but they may also be the only possible way of satisfying this need.

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