Challenges facing Pro-life and Pro-choice organisations within Warsaw, Poland

Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Introduction: Global concerns exist about the accessibility of reproductive health services including safe abortion. One of the determinants of abortion availability is its legal status, which permits or prevents abortions. Poland has some of Europe’s strictest abortion laws. Pro-choice and pro-life organisations play a significant part in shaping the debate over abortion and these organisations’ objectives in Poland stand opposed to each other, working either to liberalize or restrict the current abortion laws.

Aim: The aim of this study is to describe the challenges of the pro-choice and the pro-life organizations in Warsaw, Poland to achieve their objectives and their perceptions of each other’s challenges.

Methods: This qualitative study was comprised of seven semi-structured interviews with four pro-choice organisations and two pro-life organisations. One to two persons from each organisation participated. The interviews were conducted between December 2014 and January 2015 in Warsaw, Poland. The interviews were analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis.

Results: The study findings showed the challenges of Pro-choice organisations include lack of community interest, pressure from conservative politicians and government organisations, corruption in healthcare, lack of financial resources, and limited access to the media. The challenges discussed by pro-life organisations included difficulties in mobilizing people, lack of governmental support, challenges with health care providers, lack of financial resources, and lack of support from the media. The organisations failed to perceive or acknowledge the challenges of the opposed organisation.

Conclusion: It was found that both of pro-life and pro-choice organisations perceived their challenges to be complex and multidimensional. The opposite organisation, respectively, was perceived to be without challenges. Future studies could provide deeper insight into the possible opportunities for those organisations.
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Complex Adaptive Systems</td>
<td>CAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conscientious Objection</td>
<td>CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizens’ Platform Party (Platforma Obywatelska)</td>
<td>PO</td>
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<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Vitro Fertilization</td>
<td>IVF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwos)</td>
<td>PIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender</td>
<td>LGBT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
<td>NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pro-choice</td>
<td>pC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pro-Life</td>
<td>pL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative Content Analysis</td>
<td>QCA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic Church</td>
<td>RCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights</td>
<td>SRHR</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Nation</td>
<td>UN</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
<td>WHO</td>
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Acknowledgments

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Thanks to the respective organizations who participated in this study, the pro-life and pro-choice organizations in Warsaw, Poland.

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Last but not the least, I would like to thank my family and dedicate all success in every moment in my whole life to them.
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Introduction

The aim of this master’s thesis is to describe the challenges that the pro-life (pL) and pro-choice (pC) organisations perceive in pursuing their objectives and to describe their perceptions of the challenges of the respectively opposed organisations in Warsaw, Poland. Poland has undergone dramatic changes in both abortion legislation and the number of registered abortions over the last several decades. The two organizations (pL and pC) have opposite positions in their view on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in general and abortion specifically. They are active in Poland and many other countries.

Abortion

Abortion is a significant global health challenge and one of the most debated issues in SRHR (1). Both pL and pC organisations play a significant part in shaping the debate over abortion (2), for this reason the main focus in this study on the positions of pL and pC organisations on abortion issue.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), abortion is defined as “termination of pregnancy before the stage of viability. An induced abortion is characterized by deliberate interference with the pregnancy, either by the woman herself or by someone else, with the aim of terminating it” (3).

Determinants of abortion availability include legislation that permits or prohibits abortions, the availability of qualified healthcare professionals, abortion services coverage, and conflicts between religious and political priorities (4). Different EU member states have different legal positions regarding abortion (5), for more details see Map 1. Legislation within the EU varies between highly restrictive legalization, in places such as Ireland and Poland, to less restrictive legalization in countries such as Luxemburg. Luxemburg permits abortion depending on the physical or mental health status of the mother (5). The majority of EU states allow abortion on socioeconomic grounds with differences in the gestational age limit (5). Sweden has the longest gestational age limit for abortion which permits abortions until the end of the eighteenth week of the pregnancy (5). In general, the highest abortion rates are in the Central and Eastern Europe, especially in Estonia and Romania (5). Northern European countries have higher rates of abortion among adolescents. In Sweden the proportion was around 24 per 1000 women in 2008 (5).
Poland’s move from liberal to restrictive abortion law

Poland currently has one of the most restrictive legislation regarding abortion in the EU. Abortion is allowed only in the following cases: if the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother, if the fetus has a high probability of severe and/or irreversible damage or an incurable disease, if the pregnancy is a result of a criminal act. Additionally all abortions must be performed in public hospitals (6-8). Serious concerns exist regarding the accessibility of reproductive health services for women in Poland, including access to contraception and safe abortion (6).

Map 1: Availability of Abortion in Europe. Source: Law Library of Congress
The modern history of access to abortion services can be divided into two periods. The first period is the period before 1989 where there was an increase in women’s reproductive and sexual autonomy from pC activists perspective (6). For example, in Poland family planning and sex education were openly endorsed and in 1956 abortion was conducted legally on maternal request for the gestational age up to 14 weeks. Most importantly, it was offered free of charge in all public hospitals (6). It is estimated that 95 percent of all abortions were performed for maternal request between 1956 and 1989 (6). The RCC was voicing their opposition to abortion and launched the first serious to outlaw abortion in 1984 (7).

The second period began in 1989, when the influence of the Soviet Union successively decreased and the RCC took steps to outlaw abortion (7). In 1993 the ‘Law on Family Planning, Legal Protection of the Fetus and the Conditions of the Permissibility of Abortion’ or commonly known as the ‘Anti-Abortion Act’ was passed (7). The explanation to the RCC’s political influence and success in banning abortion was its close ties to its previous role during Poland’s occupation by foreign countries throughout the 19th century, in which it acted as a refuge against invaders and a defender of freedom (8). It’s important to mention here that abortion legislation over these years has been shaped according to the political views of the ruling government. For example, when the left-wing government returned, the Polish parliament tried to liberalize abortion laws in 1996 to allow abortion on socioeconomic grounds, but this attempt was deemed unconstitutional. In 1997 new elected right-wing government and since that time the anti-abortion act 1993 is the current abortion law in Poland (8).

In Poland, the two popular right-wing parties are Citizens’ Platform (Platforma Obywatelska PO) and the Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość PIS). The others parties have few representatives in the Parliament. PO and PIS are two right-wing parties who are conservative on moral issues and are strong defenders of the RCC (8).

The Left-wing parties are mainly the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), the Social Democracy of Poland (Socjaldemokracja Polska—SDPL), and the Zielony (Green Party) those have more liberal views toward SRHR (8).
Family planning services in Poland

The position of the RCC in the Polish society is an important factor regarding the abortion debate. The RCC is one of the major actors in Poland, in 2008 around 90 per cent of Poles declared themselves to be Catholics. The RCC has a role to formulate norms of acceptable behaviour in the Polish community including the sexuality (8).

In the early 1990s, school-based sex education was replaced with the religiously-influenced ‘Preparation for Life in a Family’ optional courses, teaching abstinence before marriage, sexual intercourse should only take place within the marriage and the text books ignored the scientific knowledge about contraception (8). The data from WHO showed that around 20 percent of Polish women use modern contraceptive (the pill, the contraceptive patch, and the Intrauterine devices) methods while the rate in United Kingdom is around 80 percent. The reasons behind the low use of modern contraceptives in Poland include that many doctors use the Conscientious objection (CO) to refuse prescribing the pill In addition to the economic reasons. CO means that the healthcare professional can refuse to give a service that he\she considers as incompatible with one’s own religious, moral, or philosophical beliefs (6). None of The contraceptives or the visits to gynecologists’ is refunded in the national health care system. The only option to access the contraceptives is the private visits to gynaecologists which increases the costs. The access to emergency contraceptives is very difficult, considering the waiting period for an appointment at private doctor and the high costs of the pills (8). Despite the previous difficulties to access the contraception and to legal abortion the fertility rate in Poland is one of the lowest in Europe, it is around 1.3 in 2008 compared to 2.1 in 1989 (9).

As mentioned previously abortion on maternal request was legalized in Poland in 1956 so there was around 40 years of access to abortion in public hospitals on socioeconomic grounds (7,8,10,11). The number of abortions have reduced significantly since the anti-abortion act, currently there are around 200 legal abortions carried out in Poland per annum taking into consideration that number of Population around 38 Million (12). The official Statistics in Poland cover cases of abortions performed in public hospitals only (12). There are no accurate estimations for the number of illegal abortions (12). Before 1993, the number of abortion conducted in Public hospitals since 1963 to 1985 never fell below 120,000 per year (12).
**Pro-life and Pro-choice organisations objectives**

In general terms, pC and pL organisations are the main counterparts regarding issues such as abortion, sexual education in schools, and family planning (13). pC and pL organisations play an important part in shaping the debate over the availability and accessibility of SRHR services which have been occurring globally for several decades (2).

The main objective of pL organisations is to protect the human life, they argue that the foetus has the right to life from conception to natural death, and it is considered as human life from the moment of conception (2, 13). In addition, the women have no right to decide upon the life of expected child during pregnancy, and they are opposition to legal abortion (2, 13). The pL organisations use specific terms rather than “foetus” and terms such as include “unborn children”, “viable unborn”, and “unborn human life” to emphasize that abortion is a crime and equivalent to killing innocent children has done nothing to deserve death from the perspective of pL organisations and it must be allowed to live (13).

In contrast, the pC organisations objective is to advocates the women’s right to have legal and safe access to abortion as a public health goal that can improve the physical, mental, or social health of the mother. pC organisations argues that there is denial of women's human rights; “women are not dying because of untreatable diseases; they are dying because societies have yet to make the decision that their lives are worth saving” (14).

In other words, pC organisations is movement for freedom of women’s choice, they never suggest that women must have abortions (13,15). In addition, pC organisations argue that implementation of laws to make abortion illegal will not stop women from having underground abortions. pC organisations argues that life beginning at birth (13).
Pro-life and Pro-choice organisations in Poland

pL movement organized petitions and country-wide pL marches and demonstrations, including protesting outside the Sejm (the Polish parliament) itself to ban abortion (7). Since 1984, the pL activities against abortion have been increasing. The pL federation was the first organisation that became politically influential in 1993 and it was mainly supported and facilitated by the RCC (17). The organisations involved in the pL federation in Poland are: Polskie Stowarzyszenie Obrónców śycia Człowieka (Polish Human Life Defenders Association), Fundacja Pro Prawo do śycia/Stop Aborcji (Pro-Life Right/Stop Abortion Foundation), Apostolat "Młodzi dla Śycia" (“Young People for Life” Apostolate), Stowarzyszenie "Po pierwsze rodzina" (“Family First” Association), Inicjatywa Marsz dla śycia (March for Life Initiative), Krucjata Modlitwy w Obronie Dzieci Poczętych (Prayer Crusade in Defense of Unborn Children), Stowarzyszenie Nauczycieli Naturalnego Planowania Rodziny (Natural Family Planning Teachers Association), Fundacja SOS Obrony Poczętego śycia (SOS Defense of Unborn Life Foundation), Instytut Studiów nad Rodziną (Institute of Family Studies) and Human Life International – Polska (16).

There is some kind of cooperation between the pL organisations with international organisations such as: Human Life International - Europe, International Right to Life Federation, American LifemLeague USA, National Right to Life American Victims of Abortion and Pro-Life Action League USA. Those organisations not only providing financial support for the pL organisations but also provide training supplies and educational materials such as movies, and books (16). The pC also has some kind of cooperation with international organisations like: International Planned Parenthood Federation, some pC religious organisations) such as Catholics for Choice), NARAL Pro-Choice America, and National Abortion Federation America.

The approval of the Anti-Abortion Act was unexpected to pC organisations and to adapt with the new situation, several pC organisations formed the’ Federation for Women and Family Planning’ to lead and coordinate the pC movement (6,11). The federation website showed that federation formed at that time from five organisations which are (the Pro Femina Association, the Polish Feminist Association, the League of Polish Women, Neutrum, and The Society for Family Development).
The pC organisations objective is to secure liberal abortion law and promote modern contraception methods. Since the approval of the Anti-Abortion act they have organized campaigns and collected signatures for bill proposals to liberalize the abortion in addition to country-wide pC marches (13-17).

The pL organisations do not consider the Anti-abortion act 1993 as victory but as one good step for complete ban on abortion. The current objective for pL organisations is to remove the exceptions from the Anti-abortion act, but have not been able to do so thus far (14-17).

The pC organisations consider the anti-abortion act in 1993 as too restrictive, in spite of the fact that it did not lead to an elimination of abortions. pC organisations argue that illegal abortions are still common even though there is no exact numbers of illegal abortions (17).

Studies show that performing abortion illegally became commercialised as a consequence of pL organisations success in banning the legal abortions. The illegal abortion became the only possible way for those who do not want to keep the pregnancy (17,18). The cost of illegal abortion can vary between 370-620 Euro (18).

Studies indicated that the RCC is against the abortion and it led the pL movement in Poland (8,11,19,20). In addition, The RCC has influence on the community as it is able to influence social norms and social practices reinforced through different channels as its official presence within schools (8).

Some studies focused on politicians and found that they also added to the complexity of the abortion debate in Poland (6–8,10,19). The studies found that there was no consensus among politicians regarding SRHR and abortion, but rather a variety of different views were expressed (6–8,10,19). Moreover, the anti-abortion act was approved in the parliament in 1993 with small margin (19). Right-wing politicians pressured the government to ban abortion and the left-wing politicians were against the abortion ban (10). This indicates that the ability of pL organisations to obtain political support was important to ban the abortion (8).

Both pL and pC organisations are disappointed with the political situation as neither had majority support from politicians either to ban abortion completely or to liberalize it (19). The CO is considered as a compromise between both of the organisations for individual use and not for systematic use (10).
The complexity of the CO issue arises with unregulated use in the healthcare sector when health professionals refuse to participate in the provision of treatment to certain patients (21). The CO creates a conflict between women’s rights in having universal access to SRHR services and their unequal position depending on the place of residence, socio-economic status and its consequences on their health (21).

The pL organisations seen as more effective compared to pC organisations in promoting the pL position and their views, for example pL organisations have been able to collect more signatures for bill proposals (17). Some studies indicated that the pL organisations have easy access to media and this might be a reason for its effectiveness in promoting its objectives (8,20). pC organisations messages are manipulated and misrepresented by the media, for example popular media has called marches and campaigns “pro-abortion”. This was seen to reduce the effectiveness of pC messaging in the media (8,20).

**Rational of the Thesis**

As mentioned above, abortion is an important global health issue. Both pC and pL organisations may play an important role in shaping the debate over SRHR, specifically abortion; either by contributing to the liberalization of abortion rights and laws or through reinforcing stricter laws that limit abortion rights for women. These organisations’ challenges are influenced by the ongoing debate on abortion on all levels. The complexity of the different positions taken by the different actors such as the RCC, the politicians and media shapes the challenges that are faced by these organizations. The challenges of these organisations and the order by way or the various ways in which these organisations navigate through the current health system as well as overcome the hinder they face when dealing with abortion, will also influence in turn the discourse around abortion.

Therefore, this study will provide knowledge and deeper insight into the challenges of those organisations and will thereby aid in understanding the environment in which they operate. This is in order to understand the general context concerning the issue of abortion so as to achieve a better navigation of the system which will enable to improve future strategies aiming at improving maternal health.
There are gaps in research regarding the current situation of pL and pC in Poland. To the researcher’s knowledge, there is no study focused on the challenges of pL and pC organisations or at least one of them in Poland or at any other country.

**Theoretical framework: Complex Adaptive Systems theory**

Complexity theory in organisations, also known as complex adaptive systems (CAS) theory argues that certain organisational systems have many connections which cannot be fully understood by single part of the system (22). CAS theory seeks to understand organisational systems at multiple levels and explain influences that exist within and between several aspects of those organisational systems (22). In addition, it aims to identify the barriers and opportunities that influence the organisations (22).

Organisations these days face more complex situations compared to previous generations as there are a huge increase in the number of organisations and more competition to survive in their environment, organisations are considered as complex adaptive systems (23).

“A Complex Adaptive System is a dynamic network of many agents (which may represent individuals, firms, nations) acting in parallel, constantly acting and reacting to what the other agents are doing. The overall behavior of the system is the result of a huge number of decisions made every moment by many individual agents” (24).

As the CAS theory suggests, pL and pC organisations have the capacity to adapt or alter with its changing situations to reduce the complexity of challenges and increase their organisations survivability (18-22). The characteristics of CAS defined as follows (25,26):

Complex systems consist of a large number of components, these components interact dynamically. There are different ways of interacting and for complex systems the level of interacting is fairly high. The interactions are non-linear, which is an indicator for complex systems. These interactions occur both internally to the complex system (organisation) and externally, the changes that face Complex Systems can be unpredictable. In complex systems positive or negative feedback is essential. This means that the pL and pC organisations are also capable learning from positive or negative experiences.
Both pL and pC organisations work within an environment that changes according to political and cultural or social trends. The CAS is a useful here to consider the barriers and challenges that these organisations might face, but also identifying the opportunities (22–24,26).

**Aim**

This study involves two opposing organisations in Warsaw, Poland with different standpoints in relation to induced abortion, the pL and pC organisations. The aims of the study are to describe the challenges the respective organisations perceive in pursuing their objectives and to describe their perceptions of the challenges of each other’s organisations. The research questions for this study are:

What are the challenges the pL and pC organisations perceive in pursuing their objectives?

How do the two organisations perceive the challenges of each other?

**Methodology**

**Design**

The study has a qualitative design (27) and qualitative content analysis (QCA) was used (28). These methods were chosen to enrich data and deepen the understanding of the topics. Data was analysed using QCA, as it enabled the researcher to identify understanding of the meaning of the content (28). Semi structured individual interviews with open ended questions were used because they allow for the informants perspective to be in focus and new ideas that can be brought up. Semi structured interviews can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (27).

**Participant recruitment and setting**

The researcher could identify the largest number of pL and pC organisations in Poland to be based in Warsaw. Due to time limitations there was no possibility to go around Poland so the decision was made to conduct the study only in Warsaw. Purposive sampling was chosen for this study. The selection criteria were that the organisations should be pL or pC organisations, based in Warsaw and willing voluntarily participate in the study. Six pC organisations and four pL organisations were identified in Warsaw.
The researcher contacted by email all the pC and pL organisations that were identified. However, only four pC organisations and two pL organisations accepted to participate in the study. Each of the organisations had the option to select one person who belongs to their organisations and who willing to represent the organisation in this study, there was no more specific criteria about the representative from the researcher side. However one pL organisation selected two representatives. The interviews took place in private, calm rooms where the participants could feel comfortable in the environment.

**Characteristics of participants**

There were in total seven interviews (representatives); three representatives from the two pL organisations and there were four representatives from the four pC organisations. Among the pC organisations, three representatives were female and one was male. Among the pL organisations, two were male and one was female. The representatives had different positions within the organisations including programme coordinators, organisation founders, executive directors and vice presidents and spokesperson.

**Data collection**

The interview guide, the information sheet and the informed consent were assessed by two native Polish speakers and were translated into Polish. A native Polish translator was recruited for the two interviews that were conducted in the Polish language. The study was introduced to the translator in advance, the interview guidelines and information sheet were given to the translator so that it was understood that any information shared from the interviewees was confidential. In total, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted between December 2014 and January 2015. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect the data (Appendices 1). It consisted of open-ended questions. This had been prepared specifically for this study by the researcher during Field research course 2014. The participants were given information sheets containing information about the study (Appendices 2) and were asked to sign the written informed consent in the Polish language (Appendices 3). The interviews were all recorded and permission to use a voice recorder was always requested.
The participants were informed that only the research team would have access to the data and the recording would be erased after the thesis defense in June 2015. The researcher took some notes during the interviews which were later considered in the follow up questions. The interviews lasted between 30 to 70 minutes long, in total 279 minutes. The participants were asked mainly about their organisations’ challenges and their perceptions of opposite organisations’ challenges. No questions about the number or employees in their organisations or any personal questions were asked to the participants such as their ages, if they work with their organisations on voluntary bases or if they have other jobs as well.

The questions were not limited to the interview guidelines. Follow-up questions and clarifications were asked. Five interviews were held in English and two interviews were held in Polish in presence of a translator. All the participants are native Polish speakers however; they had the choice to conduct the interview either in English or in Polish.

Each participant organisation received as a gift a good quality chocolate package for their participation after the interview. They were not informed about this in advance.

Table1: Summery of the conducted semi structured interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of organisation</th>
<th>Number of organisations</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
<th>Language of the interview</th>
<th>Gender of interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro-life organisations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 interviews in Polish, 1 in English</td>
<td>2 Male, 1 Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-choice organisations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 interviews in English</td>
<td>3 Female, 1 Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis

The data was collected, transcribed word by word and analyzed by the researcher. For the interviews that were conducted in Polish, the researcher transcribed the translation that was provided by the translator during the interview. As soon as transcriptions of all interviews were done, analysis began. The analysis process was done in March 2015. QCA was used as an analysis method according to Graneheim and Lundman (2004). According to the steps of QCA, the researcher quickly read the transcription a couple of times to get the initial understanding of the whole dataset. Then, after detailed reading, meaning units were identified according to the aim of study. Meaning units are words or sentences that related to the aim (28).
The material was then condensed, where the meaning units were rewritten into shorter text to get an overall picture of the content which this called as coding (28). The codes were taken out from each condensed meaning unit, and code were then grouped into sub-categories and categories (28). The whole process of the analysis was done using Microsoft Word.

Table 2: Extract of the analysis process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Unit</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“There is only one or two owners of media who wants to work with us and even them often against our issues they representing very wrongly our issues...”</td>
<td>Access to media Media perspectives</td>
<td>Media Coverage can be help and hinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Media does not support our case, on certain projects like March of life it is quite big event in Poland ...so even if they do not support your case, they show it.”</td>
<td>Media perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Are they facing any challenges sorry no nothing, they got open way for anything whatever they want...”</td>
<td>No challenges Easy Access</td>
<td>The opposite organisations without challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“organisations who are against protecting life, they have a lot of support and money and the media in their side”</td>
<td>Privileges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflexivity

The researcher is a nurse by profession with three years’ experience in nursing. He is Male from Jordan. The roots of the research in Poland can be related to the pre-understanding of the historical development of SRHR there. It was interesting how European women were going specifically to Poland in 60s and afterward to have abortion, while these days the women who are financially able go outside Poland to have abortion. This movement from a country with the right of liberal abortion to women in 50s and now Poland considered as one of the strict countries in Europe regarding abortion, this is the main reason for choosing those organisations in Poland. Additionally, he believes that both pC and pL organisations have the right of equal opportunity to present their challenges regardless any of the researcher personal opinions or beliefs. One of difficulties faced was how the researcher own opinions and beliefs on SRHR could have affected the data collection and analysis process. This was particularly challenging in the early stages of the study, however by ensuring that the core focus of the study was to examine both pL and pC organisations challenges, the researcher was able to take a step back and concentrate on the organisations perspectives.

The researcher is against abortion services to be available on socioeconomic grounds and the researcher supports the availability and easy accessibility of modern contraceptives. The other difficulty was that the researcher explored two extreme opposite organisations challenges (pL organisations and pC organisations). In reality, the researcher met Polish people who do not consider themselves as supporters for pL or pC organisations so dividing population as either pL or pC supporters might be not fair.

The researcher’s two friends are native Poles, Catholic, one of them considers herself as pC supporter and the other friend considers herself as supporter for the current anti-abortion act without complete ban of abortion. They played an important role in helping him in finding accommodation during his stay in Poland, helping him in translating the information sheet and the informed consent in addition to finding a translator for the two interviews conducted in Polish. They were very interested in his research topic and acted as key informants, but they had no role in the topic choice. They also helped in contacting the pL organisations which were difficult to contact as the researcher did not receive any reply on the emails he sent to those organisations.
**Ethical considerations**

The Declaration of Helsinki was used to guide the design and completion of this study (29). Written informed consent in the Polish language was obtained from each individual participant after the information about the study was given. Participation was voluntary and privacy was ensured. To protect individual confidentiality real names of participants and organisations have been changed on all transcriptions and reports.

There were no benefits for participation except that the researcher offered to send a copy of the thesis to the participants that requested it along with the participant organisations. There were no known risks for participating in this study as both organisations work within the confines of the law, but the sensitivity of the issue and arguments they might use can be controversial. Any decision to withdraw from the study would be respected at any time without consequences. The interviewee could refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw from the interview without mentioning the reasons. The participants were informed that only the research team would have access to the data and the recording would be erased after the study was reported. This information was emphasised several times verbally, on information sheet, and in the informed consent. The interviews were all recorded and the permission to turn on the recorder was always taken. The records and transcriptions were stored securely in password-protected files by the researcher.

**Findings**

Seven categories were derived from the interviews. The first five categories describe various challenges the respective organisations perceive in pursuing their objectives (Table 3), the last two categories describe organisations’ perceptions of the challenges of each other’s organisations (Table 4).

The following identifications are used in the quotes: pC1, 2, 3 or 4, and pL1-A, pL 1-B, and pL2. These indicate the participant from which pC or pL organisation.

In Case of pL organisation 1, A means the first participant and B means the second participant from that pL organisation.
Table 3: Categories and subcategories of the organisations challenges in pursuing their objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Pro-life organisations subcategory</th>
<th>Pro-choice organisations subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Importance of community attitudes to organisations | • Difficulties in mobilizing people  
• Worry about their abilities to continue mobilizing people  
• The language used from the opposite organisations | • Lack of interest from the community side  
• The community should decide on reproductive issues  
• The emotional language used from the opposite organisations |
| Nobody feels fully supported by politicians   | • No support from government  
• Politicians promote for gender ideology | • Problems with right wing politicians and government                                                   |
| Moral viewpoint of HealthCare Professionals is protected by CO | • Healthcare providers who are against using the CO. | • The health professionals’ attitudes to induced abortion  
• Corruption in healthcare                                                                                 |
| Access to financial resources is limited      | • Lack of financial resources                                                                      | • Lack of financial resources  
• Difficulties in applying for grants to support their activities                                           |
| Media Coverage can help and hinder            | • Communication with media and its agenda                                                          | • Limited access to media  
• Media present their views wrongly.  
• Debate on media not useful                                                                           |

Table 4: Categories and subcategories of organisations’ perceptions of the challenges of each other organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Pro-life organisations subcategories</th>
<th>Pro-choice organisations subcategories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The opposite organisations without challenges    | • Denying that pC organisations have challenges  
• Strengths of pC organisations                  | • Denying that pL organisations have challenges  
• Strengths of pL organisations                  |
| The strategy used to achieve their objectives is wrong | • Convincing the community with their issues  
• pC want to change the law only                 | • pL Strategy of showing horrible pictures                                                           |
1. Importance of community attitudes to organisations

The pL and pC participants expressed difficulties in engaging with the community, for pL the main challenge was the mobilization of supporters and continued mobilisation whereas for the pC it was the general lack of interest from the public and indecisive public attitudes towards abortion and SRHR in general.

The pC participants explained the current activities like campaigns for liberalizing the abortion law and the services they are doing in areas of SRHR. pC participants expressed two main reasons for the lack of interest. Firstly, participants perceived community to be becoming more conservative. The second reason is that the community in general needs the services of reproductive health but does not talk about it openly. For example, Abortion is illegal according to the law so the community feels afraid to talk about it.

“...we face a lack of interest on the community side. It means that everybody needs the services of reproductive health but nobody wants to talk about it ...” pC2

The pC participants described how the situation of lack of community interest is exhausting to them. They considered that the community has the role to decide about their preferences in the SRHR issues for example, if they prefer to have a liberal right for abortion or not. The role of community is important to them because without the community supports it will be hard to run their activities. Also, those organisations considered that there is no solution unless the community reached a decision to liberalize the SRHR and they are waiting for the social changes.

“...I think our society has to grow up to the final decision. If they like to have liberal rights for reproductive health or they are much more religious oriented, or like to see the role of religion toward sexuality. The society did not choose yet. We are waiting for the final decision and the social change.” pC1

The pC participants blamed the community for their acceptance to the current situation. They explained the reason for community acceptance by the very emotional language used from the opposite organisations’ side where they considered this emotional language also as a challenge for pC organisations.
The pC participants described that the pL organisations strategy to use emotional language to obtain sympathy from the community not only on the abortion issue, this also was applicable to issues like IVF. There was example in this study about the “conservative waves”, this term was used to indicate the pL organisations and their supporters. The example was in the “conservative waves” campaigns show graphics of frozen foetus with a dramatic emotional story around the graphics by giving names to the frozen foetuses and creating the sense that these foetuses are helpless persons. This emotional language used from the “conservative waves” considered as a way to cheat the community in order to obtain their support, because they do not tell and many people do not know that frozen foetuses are not visible to eye while in the campaigns the graphics make them look very big in size.

“We lost hope, we just watching this conservative waves taking the way even the contraceptive or the IVF, they saying it is murder, they showing the graphics of frozen fetus in the IVF, they are giving them names, this is James, this is Kate and they are frozen, and they are so helpless, of course many do not know that these not visible in eye.”  pC4

The pL participants felt that they their organisations and their activities had community support. The participants discussed how many signatures they and their rivals were likely to collect or number of participants in their campaigns. The pL participants reported that the challenges they are facing related to difficulties in mobilizing people and encouraging them to show sympathy with their issues. The pL participants considered that the difficulties they face in mobilizing people were more to do with practicalities, like organizing, it’s time consuming and limited number of supervisors for the volunteers.

“There are a few of challenges at first, we are still trying to mobilize people and encourage them to show sympathy...”  pL A-1

“It is difficult because it is really hard to get organized and it takes time we have limited number of people who can supervise the volunteers in this...”  pL2

The previous challenges led to concerns about the future of pL organisations and their ability to continue mobilizing people and encouraging them to participate in their activities in spite of their belief that the community was supporting their issues.

“So my opinion is that the society is still conservative and people are supporting our case but are we strong enough to mobilize people and to encourage them more to participate in our activities?”  pL2
The pL participants’ reported that one of challenges they face in the community is the language used from the opposite organisation’s side which creates more pressure on them. From the pL participants point of view, the pC organisations attempt to mislead the community into undervaluing the life of the fetus like woman has the right to “kill” her unborn child when she know that she is pregnant.

“because people who are against protecting life make some kind of brain washing for people in Poland and give them wrong views of life values…” pL1-B

2. Nobody feels fully supported by the politicians’

The pC participants considered the right wing governments in Poland as a challenge to them, because they are usually against SRHR such as abortion, contraception and sexual education.

“The challenge working on prochoice issues in Poland is first of all political, because for many years we had conservative governments who were very suspicious about reproductive rights they are usually against abortion, against contraception, against sexuality education in Poland...because the fact that we have right wing government for many years.” pC3

The pC participants indicated that it is very difficult to have dialogue with the right-wing politicians. They considered this as a barrier that prevents them from presenting their views to the politicians. They explained that they tried to invite some right wing politicians to their important conferences about SRHR previously but they did not receive any positive responses, so those politicians refuse to have any kind of communication with pC organisations.

“We only can have conversation with people who are centre or left wing. Those who are very conservative right wing, they do not want to talk about it at all or meet us…” pC2

The pC participants’ point of view the situation become more challenging when the right-wing politicians request things from the community that do not seem logical like suggesting that young people should not have sex. They think that those politicians want to regulate everything and forcing people to follow specific life style that might not be suitable for others. The pC participants’ opinion that those politicians should give the community better education, trust and possibilities where the community can choose what it is suitable in their case as it is not black or white.

“Conservative politicians say that young people cannot have sex. But young people have sex” pC1
The pC participants stated that the influence of the church’s opposition is not obvious in their work; rather they have extreme opposition from the politicians who are against their activities. They are not sure if there is any a formal tie or hidden deals between the RCC and the politicians. However, the right wing politicians in general are against abortion, contraception and sexual education.

“It is not very clear to show where the church directly addresses our issues; it is much more complicated. It is done by the politicians who are against our activities…” pC2

The pL participants considered that they have no support from the government. They consider that the challenges with politicians go to surface when the politicians propose for a bill against the current family law so they go and protest front the parliament and collect signatures to support their views.

“We do not have any support from the government; we are on our own...we sometimes go protesting in front of the Parliament when there is a bill against the Family law” pL1-A

pL participants’ indicated that they are in bad relationship with some politicians as those politicians promote the “gender ideology” including promoting for sexual relationships without marriage and promoting for LGBT which is considered as a big problem.

“There is no support from government … in some governmental offices in Poland there are some lessons and courses which aim to spread gender ideology, it is really big problem …” pL2

3. Moral viewpoint of HealthCare Professionals is protected by Conscientious Objection

The pC participants consider that there are a number of factors that can be challenging to them when dealing with the varieties of healthcare professionals’ viewpoints. Firstly, the influences of healthcare professionals’ personal beliefs were seen to have an impact on their actions. pC participants felt that rather than basing actions on ideology, health care professionals should base their actions on knowledge and science.

“The reaction should be much more professional not ideological, so unfortunately the society of medical professionals are very diverse, some of them are very progressive and some of them very conservative as everywhere.” pC3

The pC participants mentioned that healthcare professionals use the Code of Ethics and the CO to refuse to provide health and reproductive services. Additionally, there is a recent declaration
of Catholic Doctors that states that doctors should not prescribe contraceptives which in their point of view makes the situation more challenging to pC organisations.

“This year we had the Catholic doctors’ declaration. They came up with a declaration for the Catholic doctors’ conduct and this declaration states that the human body is a sacred thing, and they will not prescribe contraceptives and so on and so on. Many doctors signed it openly and we had this debate, abortion is illegal and you want to take the contraceptive from us, like what the f**k” pC4

The second point is that pC participants indicated that they have limited number of doctor supporters and to adapt with this issue they are trying to be in contact with those doctors frequently and invite them to their events. In addition, they have good contact with the young generation of health professional students.

“It is a complicated issue and a challenge. We have pretty good contact now days with groups of medical students, the young generation of people. But when it comes to doctors, it is extremely difficult. We have a couple of doctors who are open so we invite them to conferences; we use them as much as we can …” pC2

The third challenging issue for the pC organisations is the corruption in healthcare. The pC participants reported that many doctors benefit from the current “Anti-Abortion Act” so it is not in their interest to protest for changing the law. The pC participants indicated that those doctors adopt the catholic views in hospitals regarding the abortion and in their private clinics they do it illegally.

“It is very good position to be gynecological in Poland because you can make a lot of money which not taxed on illegal abortion, for example it would be around 3000 zlotys [720 Euro] for abortion so a lot of doctors do it in their private offices, when it comes to hospitals then many of them just impose official catholic views and even refuse to give you contraceptive so you will not get abortion and you will not get contraceptive either so you just need to put your legs together and it is your problem.” pC1

The pL participants on the other hand expressed they have challenges with the health care providers. They mentioned a number of stories of health care professionals who were forced to leave their work in hospitals because they refused to perform an abortion for women with ill fetus. Those participants argue that these doctors did not do anything wrong to deserve this. From their point of view the doctors used their right to refuse performing abortion (CO).

“Doctor (...) has been thrown out from the hospital because he did not kill an ill child which was in vitro and this was the third in vitro of life of this woman…” pL2
The pL participants focused on the challenges they face with healthcare professionals in issues related to SRHR in general. Their main concern after the abortion issue was that they are against using the IVF method. The challenge for them, in relation to the current IVF debate was to convince healthcare professionals that IVF is an unnatural method and that they should not promote it.

“They are proposing technology to kill innocent children and to have children using an unnatural method. They want to spread it, it is not good method and it does not succeed always. Only twenty percent...” pL1-A

4. Access to financial resources is limited

The pC participants reported that they have no access to national financial resources and there are limited financial resources that they can apply for to fund their activities, which is very difficult process. In spite of the fact they are paying less rent as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) compared to what a company can pay for the same office, and this is seen as a facilitator for their work. Some of these organisations have contracts with the municipality where they provide medical services that are covered by the national health services or some educational projects for students in schools or voluntary work.

“Now we are at the edge of the bureaucracy component, we are running some projects for the municipality also we have several branches in Poland and every branch has slightly different financial sources. Few of them are running medical services which are funded by national health care services so they got a contract for service.... Here we are mostly based on voluntary work and projects for the municipality...” pC3

The pC organisations seek funding for their activities from international resources like applying for grants from international foundations and donors which is not easy at all and it became more complicated when Poland became part of EU. Those foundations and donors started to consider Poland as a well-developed and rich country with less need for funding. The pC participants’ anticipated that it will be harder getting financial support in the next few years as there are signs that the EU parliament will be more conservative.

“It seems that in the next few years the EU parliament could become more conservative so it is really hard to say what’s going to happen but the problem is that the EU does not have funding for reproductive rights although it would be funded for developmental assistance for example in developing countries, not here. so this is the issue everybody assume that the EU is over with this and fixed which is not true so it is really hard to get funding for our work basically” pC4
The pC participants described the lack of national funding possibilities and how it is complicated as a Polish NGO to get funding through national sources. They wanted to try to adapt a strategy to encourage the government to fund external projects related to SRHR through the UN system; and felt it would be easier later on to encourage the government to fund similar projects internally.

“Left wing politicians in favour of our issues forced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to spend a small amount of money directly on reproductive rights, it was only possible because the money did not go for Polish NGOs and distributed by United Nation system so for them it was much easier to swallow this kind of bill so they say ok let’s give the UN money and we do not care how they spend… if we force the government to finance some external project it would be much easier to implement something similar internally unfortunately it is not working in that way.” pC1

The pL participants considered the lack of financial resources as the biggest weaknesses for their activities, which need a lot of money. These organisations are mostly dependent on continuous fundraising for their activities and the community is the main financial supporter of their projects.

“We do not take any grants, we do fundraising from people in the community, we once got some money from one of the local municipalities but it is wrong to say that we had money because that money was spent on a project…” pL 1-A

“…The biggest weakness of our activities is that we do not have as much money as those who want to kill children but we know that what we are doing has a very big value.” pL 1- B

The pL participants were concerned that the fundraising do not cover 100% of their financial needs of their organisations so they sell Magazines and Calendars. The lack of funding was perceived as a barrier for their projects. On the one hand, they do not have sufficient funds for the big projects and on the other the government does not financially help them. As such they promote for their projects in international catholic media to collect donations from different countries in the world.

“…We sell magazines and calendars to the catholic community, we do fundraising …we are planning to build this centre to help families and single mothers, it will be in Warsaw and will cost around four million Euro… we have connections with TV SAT America and we will gather money for this project from over the world…” pL2
5. Media Coverage can be help and hinder

pC participants indicated that they occasionally receive invites for TV show appearance from a limited number of TV media; they do not have a lot of connections with media where they can get the possibility to present their views. The problem is not only limited access, but also that the media misrepresents pC messages

“There is only one or two owners of media who wants to work with us and even they are often against our issues. They represent our issues very wrongly so you know even the media is against us so it is not very easy.” pC1

The pC participants reported that the media has its own agenda and sometime the media can be far from objectivity. In one side, they do not present arguments that might facilitate solving the issues. On the other side they are interested in the personal conflict between the guests to increase the percentages of audience. The pC participants expressed that this situation is very exhausting to them; they do not see that the appearance on TV shows as useful. In addition, the pC participants gave examples to indicate that there is no balance on Media debate; the pL organisations bring pregnant women to the studios to talk about the beautiful feelings of being a pregnant lady. In contrast the challenge for the pC organisations is that they cannot bring women who had abortion to the studio because the women will not allow her face to be shown so it is the expert talking from the pC organisation without any real life people as examples to support the expert views.

“...it’s because also of the media, I have to tell you that media are so superficial and media do not ask questions, they do not bring arguments but they are happy when something happens, you know clash.” pC2

The pL participants did not have a lot of concerns regarding the media coverage. They mentioned that the media are not interested in writing or talking about the pL issues frequently. The pL participants reported that the media does not support the pL issues but when they have a big event they show it as it looks like. There were comparison between how the media was unfair in the last couple of years in presenting their campaigns like saying they had a limited number of participants and old people. The pL participants explained that the media is very important to spread the pL issues so they have the initiative to contact with the media. For example, when they
have big campaign they send invites to the media to cover it and send press releases about the event.

“Media does not support our case, on certain projects like March of Life. it is quite big event in Poland we are going to do it this year, I think when you are doing your work well that gives you an effect so even if they do not support your case, they show it.” pL 1-A

“When there is big campaign we contact the media to cover it, we appoint press officer and send press releases” pL2

6. The opposite organisations without challenges

The pC participants at first did not consider that pL organisations have any kind of challenges. They considered that pL organisations are more privileged and could get anything they wanted.

“I would say that they are very privileged in terms of challenges ...” pC2

The pC participants started to mention in details the strengths of pL organisations including that they have more money and they are in more powerful position. They indicated that the pL organisations it is easy to them to start an activity, they have easy access to premises, easy access to any public money or any other international catholic organisations. Additionally, they are able to use the facilities of the churches for collecting money or signatures. They told the researcher to imagine how this makes pL activities easier.

“Are they facing any challenges? Sorry no nothing, they got an open way for anything. Whatever they want, they get money they get places they get influences so what are the obstacles? ” pC1

The pC participants focused on the funding issues for pL organisations. They indicated that they do not know the financial situation of pL organisations, because pL organisations are very secretive and the source of funding is not known. They noted that as these organisations are secretive, it is difficult in general to know what problems they might have.

“I do not talk about funding because I do not know much about the problem with these organisations that they do not reveal their sources of funding, they are very secretive about this so we do not know. It is hard to me to say what their situation is really” pC3
The pC participants reported that there are no pL organisations that struggle for survival. They indicated that the media does not show the pL organisations financial situation, they show their activities and the influence they have but not their weaknesses.

“I do not know about any anti-choice organisation which is suffering for survival maybe I do not see in the media…” pC4

Similar to the perceptions that pC participants had, the pL participants at first did not consider that pC organisations have challenges; they reported that pC organisations have support from the media, more money for their activities and support from international organisations. In addition, most European countries are on their side and these countries that support them can have some kind of “soft influence”, as these countries cannot obligate Poland to change its laws.

“organisations who are against protecting life, they have a lot of support and money and the media in their side” pL1-B

7. The strategy used to achieve their objectives is wrong

The pC participants considered that the strategy of pL organisations in showing graphic films to support their views in issues like abortion or IVF is strong and seen to result in negative public opinions because pL organisations show these pictures on streets where kids should not see these things. They considered these pictures as “horrible” and should not be shown to the public. From pC participants’ point of view this is a challenge to pL organisations because people started to hate this strategy of showing horrible pictures.

“Well the messaging they use sometimes very strong and too graphic for example showing the bloody part of body whatever it is…. people are angered by this I mean they use the public space to show some horror pictures people say that I do not want to see it…” pC3

The pC participants reported that they have in their organisations ethical standards compared to pL organisations. They noted that they would do not show disturbing pictures to people even if they have the ability to do this.

“We do not go around with the photos with brainless fetuses or fetuses for many horrible ways anyone has a google and can check how it looks like; we do not use it as a poster, we do not stand on the street with that, we do not show it to children walking on the street.” pC1

“It is radicalism to show disturbing pictures we do not have lack of sensitivity to show the pictures.” pC4
The pL participants considered that pC organisations are currently trying to brainwash people in Poland by promoting homosexuality, “sexual liberalization” and incorrect views of life and family values. The pL participants’ reported that the problem pC organisations face is how to convince the people that abortion is just a simple medical procedure and that a fetus is not a human being.

“The main challenge is to convince the society that this is not a child, it is not human being and abortion is just a simple procedure.” pL1-A

The pL participants reported that the challenge for pC organisations is that their main focus is to change the law not the attitudes of people toward the current family law. In spite of this, from their point of view the pC organisations have good structure; they have money, experts, and lawyers.

“The main difficulty I think it is their strategy, they just want to change the law, not the people’s opinions, and they want this weird thing [liberal Abortion] to happen.” pL2
Discussion

This qualitative study highlighted the challenges of pL and pC organisations perceive in pursuing their objectives and their perceptions of the challenges of each other’s organisations. The nature of the two organisations is complex and the challenges they face are intricate and interwoven. The challenges for the pC organisations includes lack of interest from the community side, right wing politicians and governments, CO and the corruption in health care, lack of financial resources and limited access to the media. The challenges for pL organisations includes difficulties in mobilizing people, difficulties with politicians who are against the current family law, lack of financial resources, and difficulties with the media as they do not support the pL issues. Both organisations denied that the opposite organisation have any challenges.

The context in which pL and pC work most likely explains the similar categories identified for this study. However, the pL and pC organisations identified their challenges depending on their different views to the abortion issue. The participants gave examples about their challenges in different areas of SRHR but the main focus was the abortion issue. The results of this study show the complexity of challenges that pL and pC organisations have.

Discussion of Results

This study confirms the previous studies findings that politicians have different views on the abortion (6–8,10,19). The pC participants were very specific in defining which politicians they have problems with and which politicians they have good communication with. Previous studies found that there was no consensus among politicians regarding SRHR and abortion, but rather a variety of different views was expressed (6–9). In the present study, the pC participants distinguished the politicians as either right-wing or left-wing. This might mean they wanted to show that they are not working alone and they have the support of politicians who can deliver their message and this gives them some kind of power in facing their challenges. This also shows that not all politicians are against their issues, and gives hope that they might be able to face the challenges with the right wing politicians. In previous study found that none of pL or pC have the majority of politicians’ support for their issues (19).
The way, in which the pC participants discuss their interaction with right-wing politicians could actually indicate, that they don’t actually want to engage with them, rather blame them. The pC participants considered it a challenge that some politicians request things from community that do not seem logical. It seems these participants want to warn young people of the consequences if they decided to follow the politicians and at the same time to show young people that the pC organisations care for their sexual rights. In addition, they wanted to show that they have difficulties with those politicians to protect SRHR rights and enable the young people to have the right of choice in issues like abortion.

The pL participants did not mention if they have good contact with politicians. The pL participants did not specify if those politicians belong to left or right wing parties. It seems that pL participants careful answers shows they might have a fixed opinion; any politician who speaks against the current family law will be considered on their black list regardless of whether if this politician belongs to right or left wing parties. In addition, when they say that they have no support from government it seems that they have high expectations from the government, perhaps wanting an official call to people to support pL organisations. This causes a sense of disappointment for pL organisations in regards to the attitudes of the government; they might consider that the government is against them.

The pC participants were concerned about corruption in healthcare as a challenge to their work as many healthcare professionals benefit from the current “anti-abortion” law so the healthcare professionals are not interested in changing it. Corruption in healthcare has been explored in other studies in Poland (17,18). Those studies show that doing abortion illegally became a commercial venture as a consequence of pL organisations’ success in banning abortion. Illegal abortion became the only possible way for those who do not want to continue a pregnancy (17,18). The complexity of corruption in healthcare to pC organisations is broader than the fact that some doctors are corrupt or benefit from the current law. Those organisations face a serious and complex challenge; they are facing a system where it can be acceptable for a number of doctors to ask for money to give a service considered by the law as illegal. In addition the corruption within healthcare can cause social inequality for those who can pay, they will get an abortion or any other required service and can offer to travel to another country without
financial problems (17,18). According to the current law, doctors who perform illegal abortion can be sentenced up to three years (17,18). Corruption might be reduced by stricter laws to prevent corruption and by improving the economic status for doctors or other suitable actions. It could be argued that these organisations are not responsible for fighting corruption in healthcare but they are in a situation where corruption in healthcare is a challenge that complicates their calls in liberalising abortion. Fighting corruption is the responsibility of government and the community must report corruption cases and refuse to pay bribes.

The use of CO is seen as challenge for pC participants which can complicate the pC organisations’ advocacy position which states that women have the right to choose, for example if she wants to keep her pregnancy or not (13,15). In a previous study in Poland, CO was considered as a compromise between the pL and pC organisations in Poland for individual use rather than systematic use (10). According to the law, if a healthcare professional wishes to use CO in a non-emergency case this obligates the healthcare professional to make a referral to another doctor who can provide the service (10).

Some might argue that these should not be difficulties to pC organisations, as those organisations advocate for right of women to choose so they should respect that healthcare professionals also have the right to choose.

The challenge for pL organisations is not with the health professionals who use CO. The challenge for them is with the healthcare providers who take action against the healthcare professionals who used CO. Some might argue that this issue should not cause a challenge to pL organisations in facing healthcare providers who have fired those doctors, because there is a high probability that those doctors did not follow the law and they may be found guilty.

As mentioned previously the law obligates healthcare professionals who want to use CO to refer women if it is not urgent, in the case of emergency CO cannot be used (10). It seems that they are facing these healthcare providers, not because they want to defend those doctors who are forced to leave the hospitals, but they are defending the concept of CO. The real challenge might be they are afraid that CO will lose value if healthcare providers are allowed too easily to take actions against the doctors. This might be good example of pre-empting future changes and trying to mitigate them in the present.
The pC organisations are open to different possible funding opportunities that will enable their organisations to work in the field. The question here is about the influence and power relationship of municipalities on those organisations. This also applies to those international donors, they can decide to which issues they want to give money.

None of the pC participants mentioned if they collect donations from the community. There are currently two explanations for this: The first explanation that those organisations are not asking the community for donations to support their activities, and the second explanation that those organisations considered the little amount of donations they receive not worth mentioning as source of funding. In other words, do they not do it or did they not mention it - these are two different things. Those two explanations might require further investigation to explore the reasons for not asking the community for donations or the challenges that caused receiving a little amount of donations.

The question here is if the pL organisations have difficulties in funding, why they are not trying to find different sources of funding like applying for grants from international donors. Some might argue that this is more difficult because the majority of international donors or organisations are not interested in Pl organisations so they do not fund it.

It seems that both pL and pC organisations have different ways of obtaining the funding. In the case of Pl organisations they are mainly depending on donations. In addition pC participants thought the pL organisations were not transparent about their funding resources. This leads to the importance of transparency. It could be good for both organisations to publish annual reports about their financial situation writing what they received from the different sources of funding and on what issues they spend that money. In this way all organisations’ financial situation will be obvious for all and might increase the community trust in those organisations.

This study confirms previous studies findings that some of the pC views are misrepresented in the media (8,20), and in this study it was considered as one of the challenges. It seems that the pC organisations started to think about avoiding appearances on limited accessible media. If avoiding media were to occur, it might be considered as an unwise decision because the opposite organisations will have the full time to talk about their organisation and
maybe misrepresent the pC objectives more. Previous studies indicated that the pC marches in media called as “pro-abortion” (8,20). There will be no one trying to correct the wrong views which will go more to surface in the media, and this will make their challenges more complicated.

It would be beneficial for the organisations to be more open to the media. Those organisations should take the initiative to contact all the media available in Poland trying to establish new relations with the media. The pC participants talked about the media as it is only TV; they did not mention if their difficulties are the same with the newspapers and radio channels. It seems that the TV media is the most challenging to them. TV can be more influential and it can be considered as more important than the radio. This does not mean they should ignore the other kinds of media, these days’ social media might be the same or more influential than TV especially if they want to target the young generation.

The pL participants were conservative about the challenges they face in media. Previous studies indicated that the pL organisations in Poland have easy access to media and this can be a reason for the pL organisations’ success (8,20). It seems that the pL organisations have big expectations from the media; they might want more intensive coverage not only for their big events but they might want newspapers to write long articles on front pages and not only short sentences. The most critical point as to why they considered that the media does not support them is they might want the media to call people to support the pL organisations.

This study finding does not show that the pL organisations success was facilitated by the easy access to national media as mentioned in the previous studies (8,20). The strategy of pL organisations’ has positive and negative effects. It is positive that they have the initiative to contact the media and this explains why they might appear to have easy access to media. The negative might be that they have big expectations from the media, which might be not logical in Poland where they have liberal reproductive rights. They might have easy access to media but the easy access is with the international Catholic media where will be direct call to people to support the pL organisations.
pC participants expressed that they face lack of interest. The pC participants used the word “conservative community” to indicate the lack of community interest and not the Catholic community. The explanation for using this word specifically might be because the majority of inhabitants in Poland are Catholic (30), so if they cite a lack of interest from the Catholic community, this means that their supporters in Poland are only from non-Catholic religious groups. This also suggests that there are Catholic people who are supporting the pC issues. Previous studies indicated that the RCC was working to ban abortion, spearheaded the pL movement in Poland and its influence on the community could succeed in banning abortion (8,11,19,20). None of the pC participants mentioned the RCC specifically as a challenge and none of them explained that the RCC is responsible for the lack of community interest they face.

Even if those organisations believe that the RCC is a challenge to them, there is difficulty to show this to the public because they would lose most of their community supporters. As mentioned previously most Polish people are Catholic so there is high probability that the community will defend the church against any such claims. This might lead to much more complicated challenges within the community.

The pL challenges in mobilizing people seemed to be very complex. It is not just simply using words. Mobilizing people is a critical element and a variety of issues that should be taken into consideration. People must be convinced about the organisation’s values to reach the point where people take to the streets when they are called to rally. The pL participants did not mention that the RCC has a role or helping them in mobilizing people. Previous studies indicated that the RCC was working to ban abortion, spearheaded the pL movement in Poland and its influence on the community could succeed in banning abortion (8,11,19,20). Some might argue that those participants did not want to look like that they have faith organisation supporting their activities and providing them help in mobilizing people, because this might reduce the importance of the challenges they have in mobilizing people.
Complex Adaptive Systems theory

CAS theory (31) found to be fit with the results of study, and is appropriate to describe these pL and pC organisations as complex adaptive systems. According to the challenges mentioned by the organisations, it showed that the organisations have many interactions including politicians, community, and media. These dynamic interactions happen in more than one area are described as non-linear and adds more complexity to the organisations situation (26). These organisations interact dynamically to adapt in their environment (25), each organisation wants to be able to work functionally to achieve their objectives and to survive and to get the attention from the opposite organisation. CAS theory helped in a deeper understanding of the results. In the Polish situation and specifically in Warsaw where this study was conducted, both pL and pC organisations have made attempts to minimize the complexity and to adapt with their challenges.

When the researcher asked about the perceptions of the opposite organisations’ challenges, the notion of competition was obvious. Those organisations wanted to make clear that they are only ones that have challenges while the opposite organisations do not. Both of the organisations did not want to mention that the opposite organisation might have challenges; they did not mention that the opposite organisations might have financial problems or might have problems with politicians. Both organisations’ behaviour in denying that the opposite organisations might have challenges can be described as an adapting strategy. The explanation for this behaviour is related to the complexity of the situation and the competition between the organisations. For example, if they mentioned that the opposite organisations have challenges, to them this equates to helping the opposite organisations by creating some kind of sympathy with these organisations and this is what they do not want.

In contrast, their perceptions of the opposite organisations’ challenges which are mentioned in “the strategy used to achieve their objectives” category might not be an accurate portrait of reality. The pC participants chose a successful adapting strategy for pL organisations’ tactic of showing “horrible” pictures to obtain community support. The pC participants wanted to find a critique to that strategy which might reduce it is effectiveness in the community. The same thing occurred when the pL participants mentioned that the challenge for pC organisations is that they want only to change the law not opinion of the people. The pL
organisations wanted to find critique that shows community that pC organisations do not care about individuals and the pL organisations only care for community opinions. This leads that organisations need to accept the idea that opposite organisations has challenges.

The pL organisations try to adapt to their financial problems and survive financially mainly through fundraising from the community. These organisations need better strategies to adapt to their financial issues rather than depending on donations. The donations can give good results in funding their activities for a limited time. People usually donate one, two or three times for a specific project or organisation but at the end the people may find more important projects or issues they want to donate to, so the amount of donations they receive will be reduced.

In this complex situation for both organisations in Warsaw, with high level of interactions, it appears that those organisations have a lot of pressure and stress in their daily activities where they are seeking to adapt and survive. However, as stated before, the significance of this study is to enable both pL and pC organisations to overcome their challenges or at least to cope adapt creatively. If nothing happens, in the short to middle term, it will be very difficult for both organisations to overcome the previously mentioned challenges for many reasons including the fact that some of those challenges somehow relate to personal beliefs and none of pL or pC organisations has the sufficient power.

pL and pC organisations have challenges which can be varied depends on the kind of organisation. These challenges for both organisations in this complex environment can have a negative effect on the efficiency of the organisations, moreover, might number of organisations cannot survive. Both pL and pC organisations get some kind of opportunities from the challenges they face. These challenges can have hidden positive effects or opportunities that these organisations can benefit from, for example the challenges might create some kind of sympathy with these organisations and maybe more supporters for their issues from the media, politicians, community, and donors. This means more survival time for the organisation and better situations for the organisations to work in.
In case that the pL or pC organisations tried to overcome some of the challenges they face they should be careful not to make the challenges more complicated to them. For example, trying to overcome challenges with politicians can create in some politicians the sense that they should not existed and make those politicians more defensive of their views and maybe cause the organisations more difficulties. This leads to the importance of adapting creatively. The best thing the organisations can aim for is to adapt with their challenges and not to overcome. Adapting creatively to their challenges can increase the opportunities that will be available to the organisations such as creating more supporters for their issues and which means more survival time and better situation. This is does not mean that they should give up trying to change the complex situation, because the CAS theory is characterized by unpredictable changes which can happen (25).

**Methodological Discussion**

**Trustworthiness**

There are several concepts to describe the trustworthiness in the qualitative research which are credibility, dependability and transferability which correspond to validity, reliability and generalizability in quantitative research (28).

Trustworthiness was enhanced through the following strategies:

The researcher used anonymous quotations from the interviewees’. Participants’ from six different pL and pC organisations with different positions supported the credibility of data. Reviewing the meaning units, condensed meaning units, codes and categories twice then the researcher decided on the final categories will be used. The study was supervised by experts in qualitative research methods and the interview guideline and information sheet were discussed by peer students and reviewed during the Field Research course in 2014. All evidence; audio records and signed informed consents were saved securely. The Polish interviews were conducted in the presence of a translator, and two well-educated Polish friends helped in the translation of the information sheet and the informed consent (one of them is a nurse and one engineering student).
Strengths and Limitations of the study

This study adds view of what the pL and pC organisations consider as their challenges and how they perceive each other challenges, this could not be found at any of other publications in Poland or at any other country to the researcher knowledge. The study setting for this study was only Warsaw; due to time limitations it was not possible to conduct this study in any other Polish cities. The challenges for pL and pC organisations in different cities may be slightly different.

The researcher conducted the study with both pL and pC organisations, which can be seen as a strength point that enabled them to have an overview of the whole situation. The issue might be that some organisations did not want to participate in the study because the opposite organisations were included in the study. There is limited number of participants of pL organisations (two organisations) compared to four pC organisations. However upon analysis, it seems that saturation was reached for pC organisations. For pL organisations, only two organisations participated this might be reduced variety of information provided by the pL organisations. In addition, for pL organisations due to issues with translation some interviews were shorted and may not have covered the full spectrum of issues or allowed for in-depth consideration of some areas.

All the organisations and then the participants were aware from the first contact that the study seeks to explore the challenges of both side organisations, so might be some participants did not share certain issues openly either in the questions related to their challenges or the perceptions of opposite organisations challenges. All of the study participants had the choice to conduct the interview in English or in Polish with the presence of a translator which might be strength that allowed the participant choose their preferred language. Two participants belonging to pL organisations requested to have translator during the interview. The presence of the translator may have influenced their answers or made them less comfortable.

The majority of interviews in this study (five interviews) were conducted in English. English is not the native language of the researcher or the study participants. This could have had an effect as English was not the participants mother tongue, some may have found it difficult to express their perceptions with fluency.
There is lack of publications that specifically discussed the pC and pL organisations challenges in Poland, the reason might be that the researcher only could review the publications written in English. This might be the reason why the researcher could not find a lot of information about those organisational structures, staffing, financing…etc.

**Implications**

In summary, this study’s finding provides insights for the pL and pC organisations challenges. The current approach to the “Anti-abortion Act” can be described as the centre of the organisations’ objectives. In other words, the pL organisations want a complete ban on abortion without exceptions, which exists in the current law. The pC organisations want to liberalise abortion and they are against that law. Hence, the results here suggest that pL and pC organisations should explore the possible adapting strategies for their current challenges in Warsaw which might be characterized with creativity for better opportunities for adapting and significant performance impact.

This means that the organisations’ strategies will have limited success in achieving their objectives if they did not consider the complex, adaptive nature of their organisations. Those organisations should expect surprises that might happen at any time, since their interactions at different levels including politicians, media, and community which might produce new situation at any time.

The emergent categories of the pL and pC organisations’ challenges and their perceptions of each other’s challenges might merit further investigation. The seven categories in this study indicate that they are important in guidance the exploring the possible adapting strategies to those organisations. While this study was not designed to address the opportunities for those organisations, future studies could easily address each category separately to provide deeper insight into the possible opportunities.

As discussed previously that there is no study concerned about the challenges of pL and pC organisations in Poland. Therefore, the identification of challenges performed in this study can be a contribution to the existent studies and fill the existing gap regarding the challenges.
Conclusion

In conclusion, it was found that both pL and pC organisations perceive they have complex challenges in pursuing their objectives which are interlinked at multiple levels including politicians, moral of healthcare professionals, media, community attitudes and financial resources. They perceived that the opposite organisations were without challenges. The pL and pC challenges and their perceptions of each other’s challenges were discussed theoretically based on CAS theory and it was found that theory fit to complex challenges they have. There is a need for pL and pC organisations to adapt creatively with their complex challenges which might provide them with better opportunities.
References


16. Polish pro-life movement and one of its leaders [Internet]. [cited 2015 May 10]. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/795365/Polish_pro-life_movement_and_one_of_its_leaders


Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Thank you for hosting me today, I really appreciate you taking your time to help with this research.

My name is Rabie Adel and I am doing my master’s degree in International Health in Sweden. I graduated as a nurse 5 years ago and since then have worked for a hospital and I had many voluntary experiences and now preparing for my thesis for the international health programme. I am interested in your Pro-life Prochoice organization. I am especially interested in the challenges you have come across as part of your work. We expect the interview to take around one hour. I will ask you some questions and feel free to talk about anything you feel is relevant.

The discussion will be recorded. The recordings of the discussion will only be used for my thesis, will remain confidential and your name will remain anonymous. You may also refuse to answer any of the questions at any time or choose to end the interview at any time.

Please feel free to express your opinions. There are no set answers that I am looking for. Please let me know if there anything not clear and then I will start with my first question.

Can you please introduce yourself, your working experience?

What the activities your organization currently does in relation to Pro-life\pro-choice movement?

What are the challenges the organization face to deliver its message?

What are the challenges you expect the opposite organizations face?

Would you like to add anything at end of this interview?

Thank you very much
Appendix 2

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

Title of research project
Challenges facing Pro-life and Pro-choice organizations within Warsaw, Poland

Purpose of the study
To explore the challenges of pro-choice and the Pro-life organisations in Warsaw face, regarding the delivery of their message to the community. The aim also includes comparing these challenges in order to find differences and similarities.

How will the study be conducted?
Semi structured interviews will be conducted, either in English or Polish, depending on the language preferred by the interviewee. In case the interview will be conducted in Polish, a translator will be used and present during the interviews. The interviews will be held at the same participant organization at private and calm room and will take around 45 minutes.

Possible risks and advantages of participating in this study
There are no known risks associated with this research project

Confidentiality
Complete confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy will be assured. To protect individual confidentiality and anonymity during data collection, no participants’ names will be used and each transcript collected will be coded. Interviews will be tape-recorded and then stored securely in password-protected files by the main researcher; transcripts and other data collected stored securely in the same manner. All raw data collected during the study will only be accessible to the research team.

Benefits
There were no benefits for participation except that the researcher will send a copy of the thesis the participants that request it as well to the participant organizations. The interviews are not financially compensated.
Voluntariness

Any decision to withdraw from the study will be respected at any time without consequences. The interviewee can refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw from the interview without mentioning the reasons.

Please feel free to ask me if you have any question
Appendix 3:
Information that sent to organisations in Polish

Badacz zamierza przeprowadzić wywiady zarówno w języku angielskim jak i polskim w zależności od preferencji uczestnika badania. Czas trwania rozmowy to około 45 minut. Każda organizacja wybiera jednego lub więcej przedstawicieli. Przewidzianych jest kilka wywiadów z reprezentantami organizacji Pro-life i Pro-choice w Warszawie. Istnieje możliwość zaaranżowania kolejnej rozmowy jeśli nie zostały podane wszystkie ważne informacje lub przedstawiciel organizacji zrezygnował z uczestnictwa w badaniu. Kryteria wyboru organizacji zawierały lokalizację siedziby w Warszawie oraz legalne działanie pod polskim prawem, a także zgoda na udział w badaniu.

## Appendix 4: informed consent written in Polish language

**FORMULARZ ŚWIADOMEJ ZGODY NA UDZIAŁ BADANIACH**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>temat projektu badań</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wyzwania przed jakimi stają organizacje Pro-life i Pro-choice w Warszawie, Polska</td>
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<th>Imię i nazwisko</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rabie Adel</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>nazwisko osoby prowadzącej badania</th>
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<td>Rabie Adel</td>
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<tr>
<th>Przedmiot cel badania</th>
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<tr>
<td>Każda organizacja, zarówno wspierająca prawo do życia jak i prawo do aborcji, próbuje przekazać wiadomość społeczeństwu, przedstawicielom ochrony zdrowia, decydentom i władzom szczebla lokalnego. To nie zawsze jest łatwe. Celem mojej pracy magisterskiej jest odkrycie wyzwań przed jakimi stają organizacje Pro-life i Pro-choice oraz porównanie tych wyzwań między organizacjami w celu znalezienia podobieństw i różnic.</td>
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<th>Spodziewane korzyści badania</th>
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<tr>
<th>Ryzyko związane badaniem</th>
<th>risks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brak ryzyka związanego z udziałem w badaniu.</td>
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