

## **REVIEW**

**from Prof. Mayiana Milcheva Mitevska, D.Sc**  
**Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"**

dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "**PhD**"

by: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences

professional field 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral programme Social Psychology

**Author:** TEODORA SILVESTROVA MEDNEVA

**Topic:** Burnout syndrome in freelancers: factors, diagnosis and prevention  
of occupational distress

**Scientific supervisor:** Assoc. Prof. Yuri Yanakiev, PhD, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

### **1. General description of the submitted materials**

By Order No. RD-21-2309 of 04.12.2023 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU) I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the procedure for the defence of my dissertation on "Burnout syndrome in freelancers: factors, diagnosis and prevention of occupational distress" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. PSYCHOLOGY, PhD PROGRAMME SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY The author of the dissertation thesis is TEODORA SILVESTROVA MEDNEVA - PhD student in the independent form of study at the Department of Psychology with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. YURIY YANAKIEV, PhD from PLOVDIV UNIVERSITY "PAISIY HILENDARSKY".

The set of paper materials submitted by TEODORA SILVESTROVA MEDNEVA **is in accordance with** Article 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU and includes the following documents:

- a request to the Rector of PU for disclosure of the dissertation defence procedure;
- CV in European format;
- Minutes of the Departmental Council relating to the reporting of readiness for the opening of the procedure and to the preliminary discussion of the thesis;
- Dissertation;

- Author's abstract;
- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of scientific publications;
- list of noticed citations;
- a declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
- a statement of compliance with the specific requirements of the faculty concerned (only for PhD students enrolled by 04.09.2021);The PhD student has attached 4 /four/ publications.

The dissertation was discussed and directed for defense at the departmental council of the Psychology Department of the Pedagogical Faculty of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" on 30.10.2023.

## **2. Brief biographical data about the PhD student**

Teodora Medneva has many years of experience in project management, and expertise in human resource management and accounting. Within her studies as a PhD student, she also teaches courses at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". Acquired knowledge and skills and diplomas in diverse fields such as Master of Engineering, Master of Finance and Bank Management, Master of Human Resource Management, and Master of Management Psychology. He is a trainer in transactional analysis. Theodora Medneva applies the skills she has learned in her expert activities. The PhD student's interest in researching and supporting mental health naturally grew into the successful development of her dissertation on "Burnout syndrome in freelancers: factors, diagnosis and prevention of occupational distress".

## **3. Relevance of the subject matter and appropriateness of the set goals and objectives**

The dissertation is independent scientific research in Bulgarian science on a topic including knowledge in the field of social psychology, organization and management of organizational processes in the freelancing work environment, the manifestation of burnout and the possibility of prevention. The topic is one of constant relevance, given the rapidly changing work environment, and, through its scientific study, several regularities are revealed through the socio-psychological framework of analysis - the nature of freelancing, as well as the relationship between concepts such as self-employment and self-employment. The specific tasks, practices and models for the correction and prevention of risky behaviours are presented through the prism of observation, conversation, interview, case study, statistical analysis and derive a conceptual model. This author's approach

represents a **scientific novelty** and a **contribution** to the clarification and illumination of the problem within the theoretical framework of gig economics. The topicality, practical relevance and applicability of the dissertation are also conditioned by the following circumstances: firstly, the burnout syndrome in freelancers has not yet been developed independently and extensively in the field of social psychology. The second set of circumstances is related to today's tense environment of process control, which confronts a number of our society and social organizations with risks and trials.

#### **4. Knowledge of the problem**

The PhD student knows the state of the research problem and evaluates the literature creatively. A rich scientific literature of Bulgarian and foreign authors has been studied and correlated to the subject of the research; the citation of opinions and arguments has been done conscientiously and correctly. The structure meets the requirements for the construction of a dissertation. The thesis is spread over 225 pages. It contains 50 tables and 55 figures. The literature used includes 292 sources in Bulgarian and English. It consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, limitations of the study, contributions, bibliography and two appendices.

Does the chosen research methodology allow to achieve the set goal and to obtain an adequate answer to the problems solved in the dissertation.

#### **5. Characteristics and evaluation of the thesis**

The first chapter ("Theoretical Justification") is devoted to a sequential presentation of the key constructs in Bulgaria. It contains 6 paragraphs in which the nature of the gig economy as a factor for the intensive increase of freelancing, as well as the relationship between concepts such as self-employment and self-employment are analysed in depth from the perspective of the PhD student's interdisciplinary expertise. At the same time, the concepts of distress and Burnout are theoretically explored. This chapter provides an in-depth analysis and illustrates methods and approaches for examining the constructs from a social and organizational psychology perspective. The development undoubtedly makes a scientific contribution in its section on the important advantages of

'centralisation-decentralisation' in the organisation of managerial activity and, specifically, on 'social-psychological risks' and 'job security'.

The second chapter presents the design of the empirical study by defining the logical instrumentation and subjects, as well as the stages of the research.

The presentation and analysis are contributory.

The third chapter contains a detailed quantitative (based on statistical methods) and qualitative (substantive) analysis of the results of the empirical study. Prevention and treatment approaches are analysed. An integrated diagnostic tool for the assessment of occupational burnout is derived, followed by contributions, limitations of the study and a conclusion. The validity of the development is stepped in the range of age characteristics and the specificity of the problems in the different stages of age growth; depending on the environment, and the different forms of antisocial manifestations against their health.

The development represents a scientific contribution. The author is well aware of what has been written by Bulgarian and foreign researchers on the topic and adds to it in good faith a scientific analysis from a new and previously unexplored aspect of management and organizational doctrine.

It is noteworthy that the dissertator has refrained from venturing into the space of managerial decisions so far, and has kept the research exclusively in the scientific realm, which is undoubtedly to be commended. The exposition and argument itself contain knowledge and cogency, making the study an overall contribution of high scientific and practical significance.

## **7. Contributions and Significance of the Development for Science and Practice**

The contributions can be broadly characterized as:

- Revealing and proving new essentials and characteristics of relevant and significant aspects of management practice and social psychology;
- formulating new ideas, concepts and approaches;
- obtaining new knowledge on the scientific problems treated.

The scientific contributions are in the professional field 3.2. Psychology. They are obtained as a result of summarizing the research conducted by Teodora Medneva and can be found in the presented scientific publications. Summarized, they are presented as follows:

1. New knowledge has been obtained about stress management and burnout in freelancers as a complex system and more specifically in a Bulgarian socio-cultural environment.

2. The need for the development of Approaches and models in the counselling and therapeutic work of Burnouts is proved.

3. Proposed model for prevention and therapy of burnout syndrome.

#### **8. Assessment of the publications on the dissertation**

The publications of the dissertation are 4 /four/ in Bulgarian in the University Publishing House "Paisii Hilendarski" and they reflect the results of the dissertation. They have not been submitted for participation in other procedures). I do not know if they have been used and cited in the works of other authors. Collective publications reflect the contribution of the doctoral student through his/her specific style and language.

#### **9. Personal participation of the PhD student(s)**

The dissertation research carried out, and in its entirety, presents original formulated contributions and results obtained, are the personal merit of the doctoral student.

#### **10. Abstract**

The abstract was prepared according to the requirements of the relevant regulations and reflects the main results achieved in the thesis.

#### **11. Critical comments and recommendations**

There are no critical remarks, and I recommend that, after necessary additions, the work be published as a monograph.

#### **12. Personal impressions**

I share excellent impressions of my professional interaction with Teodora Medneva.

#### **13. Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results**

The scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation research can be included in training courses.

### **CONCLUSION**

The dissertation ***contains scientific, scientific and applied results that represent an original contribution to science*** and **meet all the** requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LADARB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LADARB and the relevant Regulations of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The dissertation work shows that the PhD student Teodora Silvestrova Medneva **possesses** in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty of Psychology, Social Psychology, **demonstrating** qualities and skills for independent scientific research.

Due to the foregoing, I confidently give my **positive assessment of** the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation, abstract, results and contributions, and **I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science** to Teodora Silvestrova Medneva in the field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. 2.2 Psychology, doctoral programme SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY.

11.01.2024

Reviewer: .....

(signature)

**Prof. Mayiana Milcheva Mitevska, D.Sc**

(ac., d., n., name, surname)