

# **REVIEW**

**by Assoc. Prof. Youri Pavlov Ianakiev, PhD**

**at University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski**

of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences

professional direction 3.2. "Psychology"

PhD program Social Psychology

**Author: Elitsa Banko Ntountoulaki**

**Topic: *LEADERSHIP STYLES AND FORMING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN HEALTHCARE DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS***

**PHD ADVISER: PROF. DSc MAYIANA MITEVSKA**

**– 1. General description of the presented materials**

By order No. RD 21-493 of 27.02.2024. of the Rector of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic of *LEADERSHIP STYLES AND FORMING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN HEALTHCARE DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS* for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.2. Psychology, PhD program Social psychology The author of the dissertation is Elitsa Banko Ntountoulaki - a PhD student of independent training at the Department of Psychology with PROF. DSc MAYIANA MITEVSKA from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". The set of paper materials presented by Elitsa Banko Ntountoulaki is in accordance with Article 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the PU, includes the following documents:

- a request to the Rector of the PU to disclose the procedure for the defense of a dissertation work;
- curriculum vitae in European format;
- dissertation work;
- abstract;
- a list of scientific publications on the subject of the dissertation;
- copies of scientific publications;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents

The PhD student has attached 12 publications.

## **2. 2. Brief biographical data for the doctoral student**

Elitsa Banko Ntountoulaki holds a bachelor's degree in "Psychology" from the University of Plovdiv, a master's degree in "Leadership Psychology" from the same university. PhD student from 2022. Shows diverse and international experience in the field of palliative care and medical representation.

## **3. Actuality of the topic and appropriateness of the set goals and tasks**

The relevance of the problem developed in the dissertation work in a scientific and scientific-applied sense is confirmed by the numerous referenced and indexed publications on the subject of leadership, which is irrevocably on the agenda, as well as by the specificity of leadership processes during the Covid-19 pandemic. The degree and levels of actuality of the problem and the specific tasks identified for development in the dissertation fit into the context of a comprehensive scientific tradition on the functioning of organizations in crisis conditions. Quality management in healthcare for the patient is particularly relevant during the global pandemic of Covid-19. One of the ambitions defined in the title of the dissertation work is to outline the state of the healthcare sector in Bulgaria at this particular moment and to outline prospects for improving the quality of management and care.

## **4. Knowing the problem**

It is evident from the proposals for a doctoral thesis that the doctoral student knows the topic, developed in detail in the literature review.

## **5. Research methodology**

The chosen research methods, four in number, in principle allow satisfactory achievement of the set goal and the search for an adequate answer to the tasks solved in the dissertation work. In addition to the PhD for the opening of the procedure, the PhD student has applied a satisfactory amount of articles on the subject of the development.

## **6. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work**

A thorough reading of the doctorate shows that Ms. Ntountoulaki demonstrates skills in deriving and structuring the meaning axes of the research as traces of compliance with the requirements for data reliability, on which the contributions of the dissertation work are built. The development consists of 195 pages. It is structured in three chapters: two theoretical, empirical with results with introduction, conclusion and literature used. The literature includes 236 sources. The first chapter presents definitions and methods for researching leadership styles and their role in optimizing organizations. Attention has been paid to the health sector during the COVID-19 crisis. The second chapter presents approaches to the study of organizational culture and the effectiveness of organizations depending on management style. The third chapter is devoted to the empirical research and its results. The style of the exposition and the structure of the development correspond to the academic canon. The theoretical overview outlines leadership traits, the behavioral approach to leadership styles, the situational approach to leadership, and transformational leadership. Attention is paid to psychosocial factors that can neutralize or distort the effects of leadership influence. The models of organizational culture with a focus on healthcare are presented. Leadership during the COVID-19 crisis is the basis for mapping the relationship between leadership and organizational culture.

## **7. Contributions and significance of the development for science and practice**

The PhD student presented five contributions. I partially accept the first scientific-theoretical contribution and the second practical-applied contribution. In my opinion, the remaining three contributions are not clearly argued and empirically proven in the presented dissertation work.

## **8. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation work**

The doctoral student has attached 12 publications that are out of print and related to the topic of the dissertation. Two of them are independent, and ten co-authored.

## **9. Personal participation of the doctoral student**

The check demonstrated no plagiarism.

## **10. Abstract**

The abstract reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation.

## **11. Critical remarks and recommendations**

First of all, I establish a significant semantic discrepancy between the intentions displayed in the title of the doctorate and the object, subject, goals, tasks and hypotheses proposed in the corpus of the text of the dissertation and the abstract. In them, not once is it mentioned that the semantic charge

is oriented towards conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, however, we arrive at the essential contradiction in the scientific-theoretical contributions to account for the derivation of a "theoretical framework of the influence of leadership styles on organizational culture in a Covid-19 situation in the field of health care." The very design of the study vaguely states that: "the research was carried out in the period 2021 - 2022". In which months exactly did the survey take place? Why was the data collection carried out over such a long period? On page 94 I read that:

*The first stage of the empirical research was carried out in the period of 2021 by filling in self-assessment questionnaires on the google platform in Sofia, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora. The second stage of the study was conducted in 2022 with the same instrumentation in the same hospital environment.*

I assume that the work covers the period during (2021) and after the isolation (2022) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, do you think that this could affect the results of your study? Do you control for this variable by observing whether there are differences in scores obtained with participants who responded during and after the COVID-19 pandemic? How is it possible, by this logic, since the COVID-19 crisis does not figure in the foundations of the conceptual project, that the main contributions section of the dissertation advertises the creation of a theoretical model of leadership styles and organizational culture in a pandemic crisis?

I also note that there is a lack of effort to interpret the data in the form of a comparative analysis between the results obtained and those of other studies with the same instruments. Only such a contextualization of the data would allow filling the discussion gap in the development through the addition of controls.

In my opinion, there is no clear rationale for the doctoral student's decision to include administration and other professions on an equal footing with medical professionals in the study. Can it be argued, in your opinion, that the specifics of work and the workload in terms of stress and responsibility during the COVID -19 crisis and beyond are essentially comparable for those working in these disparate both in terms of qualification and as activity positions?

In my opinion, a significant omission is the lack of diagrams to the data tables (30 in number) to facilitate access to the information. It also gives a bad impression that the literature used is not presented homogeneously in the body of the text. In parentheses are the surnames of all authors and the initials of their personal names, for example: (Mitevaska M., Tsvetkova P., Ntountoulaki E., 2022). Elsewhere we find the correct spelling with surnames of only two or more authors and year: (Blake & Mouton, 1982); (Berson et al., 2008). My recommendation is that the citations be uniform.

## **12. Personal impressions**

Mrs. Ntountoulaki is actively present in the academic space of the Higher School, where she develops her competences. She is a regular participant in the annual student forums and doctoral school initiatives.

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

I don't have any.

## **CONCLUSION**

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science and meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the law and the relevant Regulations of PU "Paisii Hilendarski".

The dissertation work shows that the doctoral student, Elitsa Banko Ntountoulaki, possesses specialized knowledge and demonstrates qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Elitsa Banko Ntountoulaki in the Higher Education Department: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional direction: 3.2. Psychology, PhD program: "Social Psychology".

18/04/2024

Reviewer: .....

(signature)

Assoc. prof. Youri Pavlov Ianakiev, PhD