

OPINION

by Prof. Mayiana Milcheva Mitevska, D.Sc
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dissertation work for the award of the educational and scientific degree " **doctor** "

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

Professional field 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral Programme in Educational and Age Psychology

Author: Lazar Stefanov Atmadzhov

Topic: 'Risk behavior in adolescence'

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Irena Levkova, PhD Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

1. General introduction of the procedure and the PhD student

By the order № RD-21-569 of 16.03.2022 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 dissertation defense on the topic "Risk behavior in adolescence" 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, doctoral programme "Risk Behavior in Adolescence". The author of the dissertation is Lazar Stefanov Atmadzhov - a full-time PhD student at the Department of Psychology with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Irena Ivanova Levkova, PhD from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The submitted by Lazar Atmadzhov set of materials on paper is in accordance with Article 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU, includes the following documents:

- an application to the Rector of PU for the disclosure of the procedure for dissertation defense;
- CV in European format

- departmental council protocol related to reporting readiness for the opening of the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation work;
- abstract;
- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of scientific publications;
- a declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;

The PhD student has attached 4 publications.

2. Relevance of the topic

The dissertation problem is relevant for educational and age psychology as well as for the study in the field of social and organizational psychology, since the shared experience in the family contributes to the development of the individual's personality, and personality traits and the family environment are related to social realization and professional achievement. The specific actuality of the topic stems from the fact that the restructuring of the relationship between parents and adolescents in parental separation has been observed in recent years. "But even in full families /of two parents/, there are often relations of cooperation of one parent with the child or adolescent" - a phenomenon strongly present in Bulgaria, not only because of the integrity or lack thereof in families, but also because of cultural and local peculiarities. Risk behavior is examined through the prism of *parentification* as a possible difficulty of the adolescent to independently control his/her life and actions, which again adds to the relevance of the topic, given the scarce research in this area.

3. Knowledge of the problem

Looking into the content of the dissertation, it is clear that the PhD student has an excellent knowledge of the state of the problem under development, especially in terms of practical approaches to influencing risky behavior. In developing the dissertation research, primary and secondary literature sources in this country and abroad in the fields of psychology, sociology, pedagogy and other social sciences were studied. Information was sought from various educational archives, and statistical information was drawn from published sources. Good practices in the country and in other countries have been studied, as well as data from other sources - reports, articles, interviews, etc.

4. Research methodology

The study design includes a survey as a reliable instrument for examining parental reliance on adolescent FRA (Family Relationships Assessment). As well as the Parenting Questionnaire PQ Assessment, Perceived Parenting Usefulness Questionnaire PI Assessment; Hooper 2009. assessment with the RCADS (Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale), Parenting and School Achievement Questionnaire PQY-Parenting Questionnaire for Youth. Data was processed using SPSS.

The chosen research methodology allowed testing the hypotheses and achieving the aim of the dissertation.

5. Description and evaluation of the thesis and contributions

Lazar Atmadzhov has presented the analysis of his dissertation in 241 pages with an introduction, three chapters, a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for application in practice. The list of cited literature is developed in 343 titles, of which 24 in Cyrillic alphabet. The achieved results are illustrated by 6 figures.

The aim is to investigate the factors that give rise to the essential contradictions and deficits as a prerequisite for risky behavior and falling into risk, and to look for possible solutions to this psychological-pedagogical scientific and societal problem, including the means of information provision, meaningful communication and effective feedback between all stakeholders in the process.

It is intended that the aim of the dissertation research will be achieved through the following research tasks, which can be described as, for example:

1. To clarify the nature of the phenomenon of "risky behavior", as well as the factors and causes of falling into risky situations and the mechanism of developing risky behavior in adolescents of school age.
2. To study the condition and problems of adolescents at risk by analyzing information sources for overcoming and preventing deficits and deviations in adolescents at risk.
3. To reveal the key factors for the existing crisis of confidence and socio-pedagogical work with adolescents at risk, outlining the possibilities for prevention and management of risky behavior at personal, social, institutional level by creating a coherent system of stakeholders and functions to support adolescents at risk at micro and macro levels.
4. Diagnosing the main psycho-physiological, behavioral and social deficits in the development of contemporary adolescents in Bulgaria by means of different research methods and analysis of best practices in order to derive criteria for the assessment of emotional and social maturity, educational motivation and effective corrective and preventive methodology of work with students and adolescents at risk.
5. To justify a model of responsibility - for content creation, information analysis, collaboration, cooperation and mutual assistance between the institutions and persons involved in the process of socialization of adolescents at risk in school - based on an individual approach, building trust and motivation for socialization and learning - for the needs of information management of the process of socialization of adolescents at risk.

The contributions in the dissertation are in the professional field of 'Psychology' and can be broadly characterized as follows, for instance:

1. The main psycho-physiological, behavioral and social deficits in the development of contemporary adolescents in Bulgaria are studied and criteria for the assessment of emotional and social maturity, educational motivation and effective corrective and preventive methodology of work with students and adolescents at risk are derived, thus expanding the social-psychological knowledge of the specifics and peculiarities of support and assistance to adolescents at risk through targeted individualized and systematic psychological and pedagogical activity.
2. The key factors for the existing crisis of confidence are diagnosed on the basis of the specifics of the socio-psychological and socio-educational work with adolescents at risk and the possibilities for prevention and management of risky behavior at personal, social, institutional

- level through the creation of a coherent system of interrelated stakeholders and functions in support of adolescents at risk at micro and macro levels are outlined.
3. The status and problems of the process of adolescents at risk are studied, and an analysis of information sources for overcoming and preventing deficits and deviations in adolescents at risk is made.
 4. Theoretical and practical-applied material on the different types of parentification of adolescents at risk, factors and mechanisms of falling into risky situations from a psychological point of view is developed.
 5. An author's model of responsibility - for content creation, information analysis and mutual assistance between stakeholders - based on an individual approach, building trust and motivation for socialization and learning is articulated.
 6. The conceptual analyses carried out in the dissertation research can be applied in the system of socio-psychological and socio-pedagogical activities on socialization of different groups of adolescents at risk. The proposed scientific information can be used in the management of professional prevention and intervention of deviance by educators, psychologists, social workers and specialists of other helping professions.

6. Assessment of publications and personal contribution of the PhD student

The publications listed for peer review are eight in number and are authored by the authors. The articles were published in refereed scientific journals in the field of psychology.

7. Abstract

The submitted abstract complies with the requirements and reflects the main theses, conclusions and scientific achievements of the dissertation.

8. Recommendations for future application of the dissertation contributions and results

I encourage Lazar Atmajov to maintain and expand the expertise in his practice. Good practices and applicable models of governmental and non-governmental organizations for working with adolescents at risk and with risky behaviors from Bulgarian reality can be studied - a necessary approach of specialists for effective help and support of different at-risk groups of adolescents through professional-competence and ethical position in the process of socialization.

CONCLUSION

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

The doctoral dissertation shows that the PhD student Lazar Atmadzhov **possesses** in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty "Psychology", **demonstrating** qualities and skills for independent scientific research.

For the reasons stated above, I confidently give my **positive assessment** of the research presented by the above reviewed dissertation, abstract, results and contributions, and **propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science** to Lazar Atmadzhov in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, doctoral programme "Educational and Age Psychology.

5.05.2023 г.

Prepared the opinion:.....

(signature)

Prof. Mayiana Milcheva Mitevska, D.Sc