

SCIENTIFIC JURY MEMBER'S OPINION

By: assoc. prof. Manol Nikolov Manolov, PhD, lecturer at Psychology Department, St. Cyril and St. Methodius, University of Veliko Tarnovo, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

Member's opinion is about: PhD thesis for acquiring of educational and scientific degree "doctor", scientific field 3. Social, economic, and legal sciences, professional field: 3.2. Psychology, Developmental and educational psychology.

PhD Thesis author: Lazar Stefanov Atmadzhov

PhD Thesis theme: "Risk-taking behavior in adolescence"

Scientific Supervisor: assoc. prof. Irena Ivanova Levkova, PhD

Thesis materials: brief CV, PhD abstract, PhD thesis, publications

I. Personal information about PhD student

Lazar Stefanov Atmadzhov graduated with a bachelor's degree in pedagogy at Plovdiv University (PU) "Paisii Hilendarski", after which he upgraded his initial training in the field of Preventive Pedagogy, which is also his Master's degree. Acquired also at PU "Paisiy Hilendarski. In 2019, he was enrolled as a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology at Paisii Hilendarski. During the academic year 2021/2022, the doctoral student also receives a teacher qualification at the "St. Cyril and Methodius", University of Veliko Tarnovo.

The professional experience of Lazar Stefanov Atmadzhov is over 10 years, and most of the time his main involvement is in the Complex for Social Services for Children and Families, where he works with juvenile and minor offenders, as well as families in divorce and separation. At the same time, he is part of a jury of the Commission against anti-social acts of minors and juveniles, Southern region, Plovdiv Municipality. He has recently been a teacher at PGTST "Gotse Delchev", Plovdiv, where he is a philosophy teacher.

It is clear from the presented resume that the acquired experience is fully relevant to the chosen topic of the dissertation work. A wealth of experience has been gained in working with risk and risky behavior in adolescence.

The PhD student sets a good example regarding lifelong learning. The scientific activity of the doctoral student is represented by 8 publications issued in the period 2019-2021.

II. Structure of PhD thesis

The dissertation work proposed for opinion, authored by Lazar Stefanov Atmadzhov, has a total volume of 234 pages, together with appendices and literature. The work refers to a serious volume of sources - 324. Here it is worth noting that the presented dissertation work is without marked pages, which makes it difficult to use the content. Not all mentioned sources were used in the preparation of the dissertation.

The work is divided into three chapters, which provide an overview of the topic, the development of the design, and the corresponding interpretation and analysis of the results of the work.

III. Scientific relevance of the developed and researched problem

The relevance of the scientific problem can be considered as "eternal", which undoubtedly makes it part of the present and emphasizes its relevance. A deep knowledge of risky behavior, as well as the mechanisms of its formation and manifestation, help to develop, approve and apply preventive programs, as well as those for intervention that aim to prevent it. At the same time, however, it is not clear from the title itself what the purpose of the study is, nor what its subject is. From the introduction of the dissertation, it is also not clear what exactly the researched problem is, in what way it will be researched and what questions the doctoral student poses to himself. In essence, the title query poses a current problem, which in the actual research is developed into something that is different. A careful reading of the work finds evidence presented in the content and a connection made between all requests. Refinement in the future should be aimed at a narrower presentation of the scientific issues.

IV. Main accents of the dissertation, scientific interpretation of the author.

Already in the first chapter, the doctoral student presents a broad overview of a number of risk factors related to the formation of risky behavior in adolescents. The stages of youth are also addressed. Thus, the first chapter provides a broad overview of risk factors but does not delve into any to be expanded upon in the detail that would be relevant to the rest of the dissertation. It should also be noted that the used concepts related to attachment do not go deeper into the examination of the styles that are relevant to the study. The concepts used are also presented haphazardly, with no emphasis on any of them. The same applies to the presentation of other factors and features of youth. In fact, only about 12 pages are devoted to the main emphasis, which is parentification, which does not allow its deployment into meaningful operational definitions that would determine the desired results.

Despite the presented critical remarks, behind the presented overview it is evident the desire of the doctoral student to present the problem in the widest possible way, which fully corresponds to the topic indicated as too general.

It is evident that the doctoral student has a deep knowledge of the problem of risky behavior among adolescents, being able to connect causes and consequences adequately and logically. This would likely contribute to the development of diagnostic skills and recognition of the factors behind certain behaviour.

V. Research design and results of the psychological research

The PhD student dedicates two independent chapters to present the research model and the results of the research conducted. The second chapter should be a continuation of what was presented in the first chapter, instead, here for the first time the request to consider the problem of "parentification" and its relation to risky behavior emerges. However, as stated above, the operational definitions of the dependent and independent variable are not precisely operationalized. This, together with the lack of a research plan and a clear research focus leads to confusion. In addition, some of the basic concepts relevant to research analysis are also confused. The subject, independent and dependent variables are not clearly delineated, as well as the selection of the sample and clear criteria of which behavior is risky, which is not, and how it is recognized to allocate the groups. The lack of a clear distribution of groups - with proven risky behavior and without risky behavior makes it difficult to confirm and interpret the first hypothesis. The conclusions regarding the second and fourth hypotheses are conflicting. A number of analyzes are presented, which undoubtedly show skills in collecting and working with statistical data, but the lack of an adequate research plan, as well as the relevant attributes of the study make it difficult to draw conclusions.

VI. Scientific and applied contributions of the PhD thesis

After familiarizing myself with the theoretical, methodological and research part of the dissertation development, I find the obtained results a touchstone regarding the possibilities for future research in relation to the topic. The fact that parentification is not a widely researched problem in Bulgaria should not be overlooked. This is also the reason why I personally perceive the examination of this problem as the most significant contribution. The discussion of the topic, as well as the broad problem - risky behavior - are important aspects related to the preparation of appropriate programs for prevention and intervention. The above-mentioned weaknesses of the

dissertation become the cause of weaknesses in the contributions presented. In any case, it should be emphasized that parentification as a factor is an important aspect in the study of risk behavior.

VII. Opinion and recommendations

Behind the presented dissertation are:

- The PhD student's experience working with risky behaviour.
- The doctoral student's deep knowledge of the problem of risky behavior and the family factor in its formation.
- The desire of the doctoral student to present the problem in all its axes, which is conceivable only on the condition that he dedicates his life to science.

Beyond the presented positives that the dissertation brings, it should be emphasized the inefficiencies in the formation of a research design, as well as a narrow presentation of a theoretical overview on a topic. There are difficulties in presenting problem formulation, operationalizing concepts and working with tools.

The presented 8 publications were published in the period 2019-2021, and they are peer-reviewed and present fragments of the dissertation. This fulfills the requirements regarding obtaining the scientific and educational degree "doctor". The work has gone through an internal defense procedure, and the doctoral student has successfully defended his dissertation work..

VIII. Conclusion

My in-depth acquaintance with the proposed dissertation development, as well as my impressions of the theoretical competences of the author, give me reason to evaluate it positively.

In the requirements for preparing an opinion, I have presented my notes on the work, which I also present as a hope for the development of the doctoral student, who has shown that he is constantly updating his knowledge and skills.

08.05.2023

Member of scientific jury:

/assoc. prof. Manol Manolov, PhD/