

REVIEW

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The review is a part of the election procedure for associate professor in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (Child & Adolescent Psychology), promulgated in the State Gazette no. 24 of 17.03.2023 for the needs of the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ". It was elaborated on the basis of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules on the Terms and Conditions for Acquisition of Academic Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ".

One candidate applied for the above-mentioned position – Chief Assistant Professor of Psychology PhD Svetlina Georgieva Koleva.

Svetlina Koleva graduated from the National High School for Ancient Languages and Cultures "Konstantin-Kiril the Philosopher", has a bachelor's degree in psychology from the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" in 2004 and a master's degree in Child-Adolescent and School Psychology, also in Sofia University in 2006. She received a PhD in Child and Adolescent Developmental Psychology in 2018, after a successful completion and defense of her doctoral thesis: „Three-component model of psychopathic personality characteristics in adolescence" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Since 10.2014 she has been a part-time Assistant, since 6.2016, an Assistant professor, and since 5.2018, a Chief assistant professor in Developmental Psychology in childhood and adolescence at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". For the period 2005–2014, she was trained as a psychodrama assistant and as a psychodrama therapist.

1. Research and results

In regard of the application requirements, Svetlina Koleva presented three monographs:

1. Sadistic tendencies in adolescence. Part 1. Assessment scales. S.: East-West Publ., 2020 (as a habilitation thesis).
2. Sadistic tendencies in adolescence. Part 2. Personality determinants. S.: East-West Publ, 2021
3. A triarchic model of psychopathic personality traits in adolescence. S.: East-West Publ , 2019, developed on the basis of the dissertation research for the award of the scientific and educational degree Doctor of Psychology.

In addition to the three monographic works, from the list of publications - 22 in total, three more studies (in co-authorship), one individual paper and a book individual chapter (in English) were submitted for review.

In the habilitation work - Sadistic tendencies in adolescence. Part 1. Assessment scales, 7 author's chapters are included, the first of which presents a theoretical analysis of sadism: parameters for definition and assessment approaches, and the others: construction of research instruments - self-descriptive scales for assessment of personality traits associated with sadistic tendencies. From this point of view, the first chapter is fundamentally important, examining in detail the concept itself in historical terms, with an emphasis on the psychoanalytic paradigm (S. Freud, M. Klein, etc.), as well as modern views on the interpretation of sadistic

manifestations , in particular from the position of the so-called "threatened egotism". The definition of sadistic tendencies is essential, as "a combination of various behavioral, cognitive and interpersonal characteristics associated with causing physical or emotional pain to others for the purpose of controlling or humiliating them". Such a view gives reason to look for the projections of sadistic tendencies in everyday behaviors or attitudes: from the tendency to humiliate or bully others to the pleasure derived from watching movies, violent sports, or video games. Such everyday manifestations of cruelty characterize subclinical or everyday sadism, to which bullying by peers at school can also be referred. The thesis of everyday sadism is fundamentally important in the planning of each of the empirical studies, because it substantiates the idea of sadism not only as a field ("territory") of psychiatry or clinical psychology, but also of the developmental psychology. Similar forms of sadism, significantly present in the everyday life of a person, show the need to develop assessment tools, as a prerequisite for early identification of sadistic tendencies and work on the prevention and intervention of such manifestations.

Within the framework of the theoretical analysis, the manifestations of sexual sadism, the differentiation of sadism from other antisocial personality traits, in particular from the traits of the so-called 'Dark Triad', are being reviewed. The question about sadistic personality disorder and, in particular, whether there are grounds for re-establishing it in the DSM-IV diagnostic category are also discussed. The concluding paragraphs of this chapter are devoted to the role of sadism in antisocial behavior, as well as the age perspective: early manifestations and developmental pathways.

The content of this chapter is examined in more detail in the review because of its fundamental importance for planning the series of empirical studies: together with the systematization of the main parameters for analysis, the emphasis on everyday sadism allows the development of a toolkit designed for use in a non-clinical sample. At the same time, the question arises for the reader about the scales for direct assessment of sadism. Obviously, sadistic manifestations such as pleasure from inflicted suffering, humiliation, dominance, submission and control are evaluated negatively and this gives rise to a psychometric problem related to potential dissimulation. The alternative is to focus efforts on developing instruments to assess personality traits associated with sadistic tendencies that are less vulnerable to socially desirable responding. Such an approach would allow an indirect assessment of sadistic traits while broadening the perspective of the analysis. It is this problem that is the subject of empirical research in the remaining chapters of the habilitation work, in which the adaptation/construction of six self-descriptive personality scales is successively presented. In short: empirical research thus defined two main questions: (a) for which personality traits there are both theoretical and empirical arguments regarding their relationship with sadistic tendencies and (b) development of appropriate assessment tools. The solution of these two problems is presented in the following chapters of the habilitation thesis.

Six chapters detail the adaptation/construction of six self-reported scales in adolescence: Personality Inventory for DSM-5: Short Form (PID-5-BF, Krueger et al., 2013) (on 910 individuals, with complete data), the Honesty-Humility Scale from the six-factor model of personality (HEXACO, Lee & Ashton, 2004) (on 655 individuals), the Spitefulness Scale (Marcus et al., 2014), (2200 individuals), the Fearlessness Scale - an original instrument that does not have a foreign language source, constructed on 1658 individuals, the Constellation of Affective and Interpersonal Behaviours Screening Instrument (CAIBSI, (Houghton et al., 2013) (on 266 individuals) and the Machiavellian Personality Scale (MPS, Dahling et al., 2009) (266 individuals). For each of the scales, in accordance with modern psychometric requirements, the structure in Bulgarian adolescents was assessed in two stages: first, by exploratory factor analysis, then the derived structure was validated by confirmatory factor analysis. The results provide reasons to varying degrees for changes in the Bulgarian version of the instruments:

from reproduction of the original structure, incl. items distribution, to minimal changes, to dropping of some of the items and change in the number of factors. In fact, the most significant change is present in the Spitefulness Scale (which subsequently turned out to be one of the strongest predictors of sadistic tendencies): when constructing the Bulgarian version, in view of the specificity of the adolescent age, only 6 of the 19 original items were selected, some of them partially reformulated, with 4 new items added; there is also evidence of the presence of a second, smaller factor that is situationally more specific. Of special interest is the construction of the Fearlessness Scale, as an original Bulgarian instrument. In short: the development of the Bulgarian versions of the scales was done in accordance with modern psychometric requirements, the procedure is presented in sufficient detail so that the reader can orient himself in the way of obtaining the data and their interpretation. One recommendation here concerns the number of subjects in the analysis of the CAIBSI and MPS (N=266 subjects). As the number was not large enough, the confirmatory analysis was performed on the exploratory study sample, potentially leading to an overestimation of the goodness of fit indexes. Therefore, in perspective, the structure of the two instruments should be evaluated on a second, independent sample.

In conclusion: the habilitation thesis contains the theoretical model and the parameters for the analysis of sadistic tendencies, as well as the developed toolkit: scales for the assessment of personality traits, intended for indirect measurement of sadistic tendencies. This, in turn, allows one to move on to the next stage of research: assessing the prognostic capabilities of personality traits as determinants of sadism.

The second monographic work *Sadistic tendencies in adolescence. Part 2. Personality determinants*. S.: East-West Publ., 2021 analyzes the relationship of personality traits to sadism. To solve this problem, both the personality traits described in the first book were used, as well as additional traits, evaluated with scales adapted by the author (The Dark Triad - short version, for the assessment of narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy), developed in co-authorship (e.g. Toronto Empathy Questionnaire) or tools already available in our country (for empathy, narcissism, moral disengagement, anger, hostility and mistrust). The inclusion of additional personality traits in the tested models broadens the perspective of the analysis by allowing a comparative analysis of the effects of the personality traits, mentioned in the first part of the study, with the other variables. Five scales, adapted/constructed in Bulgaria, were used to assess sadistic tendencies: for sadistic personality disorder (SPD), for sadistic tendencies (VAST), for a comprehensive assessment of sadistic tendencies (CAST), for sadistic personality (ASP). and Six-Factor Adolescent Sadism Scale (JSS-6). In total, the monographic work presents 12 studies, with testing of structural models, in which the five measures of sadism (including their components) regressed on personality traits defined as independent variables. Of particular interest is the definition of an alternative dark triad, in which low levels of honesty-humility, spitefulness, and fearless are included as components. In a series of studies, the author shows that this variant has better predictive capabilities for sadistic tendencies than the traditional dark triad of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. The data were analyzed and interpreted correctly, and in the case of more complex structural models, with several dependent variables or in the assessment of mediator effects, the methods of structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to assess goodness of fit indexes. Without going into detail, the results confirm the predictive capabilities of the personality traits embedded in the models, and hence the possibility of indirect assessment of sadistic tendencies, using "personality determinants". Also highly impressive is the screenings development, despite the limited number of items, explain a significant percentage of the variance of sadistic tendencies: e.g. the screener formed by Spitefulness + Antagonism (total of 15 items) explained 68.1% of the variance of sadistic tendencies (assessed using the Six-Factor Adolescent Sadism Scale).

The third monographic work *Triarchic model of psychopathic personality traits in adolescence*. S.: East-West Publ., 2019 is developed on the basis of the candidate's PhD thesis. Since the work has already been peer-reviewed and successfully defended, it will only be presented briefly here. Based on theoretical analysis and empirical data, the problem of psychopathic traits in adolescence is investigated. Assessment of such traits in adolescents is a current research task, reflecting efforts to identify the etiology of psychopathic personality across age, with a view to early assessment and intervention. In accordance with the dominant quantitative (dimensional) approach to the measurement of psychopathic traits, an important aspect of the problem is the development of an adequate instrument designed for use in a non-clinical sample. The study is based on the triarchic model of K. Patrick and co-authors (Patrick et al., 2009), distinguishing three partially overlapping phenotypic blocks – Disinhibition, Boldness and Meanness. The emphasis is on the explanatory possibilities of the model for understanding both the adaptive (but damaging to others) functioning of the psychopathic personality, as well as antisocial (criminal) manifestations. The factor structure of the Triarchic Measure of Psychopathy (TriPM, Patrick, 2010), a self-reported questionnaire operationalizing the Triarchic Model, was conducted on 1061 adolescents in two stages, on independent samples, by using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The relationships between the three phenotypic blocks Disinhibition, Boldness and Meanness correspond to theoretical expectations and confirm the construct validity of the instrument. Within the framework of the study, the questionnaire for the Dark Triad-short version was adapted to assess Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The assessment of convergent and divergent validity of the TriPM has been confirmed within the framework of correlational relations and structural models, with a large number of externalizing variables: psychopathic traits, callousness and unemotionality, narcissism, moral disengagement, sadistic tendencies, and externalizing developmental problems. The results undoubtedly confirm the feasibility of using the Triarchic Measure of Psychopathy in an adolescent non-clinical sample for research and applied purposes. As the scientific supervisor of the dissertation research, I know the content of the work in detail. From this point of view, it is obvious that the candidate has put extra effort into the preparation of the monograph based on the dissertation work. The specified additional work before the publication of the dissertation work should undoubtedly be positively evaluated and testifies to the responsible attitude and self-demandingness of the author.

In addition to the mentioned three monographic works, the list of publications presented by the candidate includes three studies and two papers. Since two of the studies and one of the papers are part of the habilitation work, they will not be subject to a separate evaluation. The third study: "Factor structure of Questionnaire for problematic personality traits in childhood", *SU Yearbook, book Psychology*, 108, 30-49, presents a study of personality traits in preschool age that increase the risk of developing a psychopathic personality. The material was prepared by a team of seven authors, one of whom is the reviewer of the current contest. For this reason, it is not correct in this case to rate this publication. On the other hand, the research was carried out within the framework of a scientific project, and for this reason I will share my impressions of St. Koleva as part of the team, below. The second article, with individual sole author St. Koleva, evaluates the role of hostility and empathy as predictors of aggressive, prosocial, and avoidant behavior in adolescents. The study was published in English, in a book of the authoritative international publication *Routledge, New York* (2018). The material reinforces the impression of the candidate as a precise researcher of problem behavior during adolescence.

Participation in projects.

The candidate has participated in four scientific projects, one of them under the national program "Young scientists and postdoctoral fellows", the other three under the FNI, SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

1. Research project under the national program "Young scientists and post-doctoral students" - "Schadenfreude as a psychological construct. Analysis of parameters and personality determinants" (2019–2021).

2. "Personality Inventory for DSM-5: Short Form (PID-5-BF). Factor structure, reliability and validity in a Bulgarian adolescent sample", FNI (2019).

3. "Approbation of a questionnaire for the assessment of problematic personality traits in primary school age", (2018).

4. "Approbation of a questionnaire for the assessment of problematic personality traits in childhood", FNI (2017).

2. Teaching and academic activities

The candidate has an academic experience of 9 years: two as a part-time Assistant professor, two as a full-time Assistant professor and five - as Chief assistant professor in Child and Adolescent Psychology, at the Department of "General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology", Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University. Sv. Koleva leads seminars on the following courses on the topic of the competition: "Psychology of Child-Adolescent Development" - Bachelor's program "Psychology", "Psychology of Child-Adolescent Development" - Master's program "Child-Adolescent and School psychology", "Child psychology and pedagogy" - bachelor's degree "Nurse", as well as lectures and seminars on "Intimate relationships" - master's program "General psychology in English". The evaluation of the teaching and scientific activity for Sv. Koleva in all conducted attestations is positive, incl. and the students' assessment, according to the results of the anonymous survey. Sv. Koleva is also a practicing psychologist and psychotherapist, working with children, adolescents and their families.

3. Personal impressions of the applicant

My personal impressions about Svetlina Koleva refer to the time she studied psychology at the University of Sofia - bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology, as well as her work on the dissertation research (of which, as I indicated, I was the supervisor), and also from her academic work as an Assistant professor and Chief assistant professor in the following years. According to my personal impressions, Svetlina Koleva is motivated and responsible, with a marked interest in empirical research in the field of child and adolescent psychology. In her work, she is a person with interesting and creative ideas, which she does not hesitate to protect and follow through to their implementation. Along with that, however, she is self-critical, knows how to accept other people's arguments, is cooperative, with opportunities for teamwork. She is curious, loves professional challenges and is not afraid to take responsibility. Student reviews and the popularity of the courses she leads characterize her as a well-liked teacher, authoritative and demanding, but also responsive to younger colleagues. She also has a successful practice as a child and family psychologist and psychotherapist.

Conclusion

The candidate undoubtedly fulfills the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate professor". At the same time, it should be pointed out that Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" is in first place in the professional field of Psychology, according to the national rating system. The leading position of the university means that the

holding of an academic position in the SU should not be limited to the minimum national requirements, but should adequately reflect the position of the university and the level of the teaching conducted in it in the modern highly competitive environment. From this point of view, I think that Svetlina Koleva undoubtedly meets these higher criteria for holding the academic position of "Associate professor" position at Sofia University.

In conclusion:

- The two monographs are presented for review. The first one, as a habilitation thesis, consists a study, dedicated to the problem of the indirect assessment of sadistic tendencies - by defining significant personality determinants. This problem was successfully solved through a series of empirical studies, which led to the creation of short and economical screening methods for the identification of sadistic tendencies, the manifestations of which, by definition, are considered socially unacceptable and, accordingly, difficult to empirically assess. Such a result undoubtedly has both research and purely applied aspects, with considerable potential for future research as well. The author has demonstrated a high level of professional competence regarding the formulation of initial hypotheses, the planning and implementation of the series of empirical studies, as well as excellent capabilities for critical evaluation of the obtained data. The results were analyzed using modern methods of structural equation modeling. The excellent structuring of the work, as well as the professional language should also be mentioned among the essential merits. The third monographic study, based on the successfully defended dissertation, offers further development and expansion of the source text, which also testifies to the author's criticality and exactingness in presenting the results of empirical research in the public space.

- The academic experience of the candidate at Sofia University (for 9 years), the popularity of the courses led by her, the feedback from the students and the prestige among fellow teachers unequivocally testify to a high level of teaching activity. The results of scientific research and the fulfillment of academic duties undoubtedly characterize Svetlina Koleva as a specialist with a high level of professional competence and in-depth specialized training for academic and practical work. Based on the presented publications and the presented arguments, I strongly recommend the esteemed jury to award Svetlina Koleva academic position "Associate Professor" in professional direction 3.2. Psychology (Developmental Psychology in Childhood and Adolescence) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

August 4, 2023

Signature:

Prof. DSc Plamen Petrov Kalchev