

## OPINION

for the defense of a dissertation on: "Psychosocial correlates of overweight and obesity" of Petya Veskova Pandurova,

full-time doctoral student at the Department of General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski",

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", in a scientific specialty 3.2. "Psychology"

with supervisor Prof. Sonia Karabelova, PhD DP "Health Psychology"

### **1. Data on the doctoral student.**

Petya Pandurova in 2014. completed a bachelor's degree in psychology at NBU, followed by a master's degree in "Health Psychology" - 2018, and in the period 20196-2023. is a full-time doctoral student at the Department of General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" in the DP "Psychology of Health" in Bulgarian. Initially, he worked as an office assistant, later as an office manager and sales manager, combining the latter position and as the head of human resources management in Balkan Engineering Group from 2004 to 2013. She was an intern and freelance psychologist in the therapeutic community for the treatment and rehabilitation of addicts "Octava" until 2015, and is currently a therapist under supervision.

The curriculum vitae lists many specializations - at the Chiron Institute for Psychodramatic Practices, eating disorders consultant, social activities associate - social work with children at risk, training to work with TEMAS - a methodology for researching cognitive, personality and affective functions in children and adolescents from 5 to 18 years, psychodrama therapist, constellator at the Institute of "Integral Constellations and Techniques" - Italy, psychodrama therapist for children and adolescents Germany Sezenen Institute. It can be seen that professional and educational experience have guided her to the choice of a research problem, which in many cases implies the success of a dissertation work.

Lists five dissertation publications - most co-authored. During the period of his studies at the DP, she participated in five national and international scientific forums, including two in projects.

## **2. Data for the dissertation.**

The choice of the topic of the dissertation research is not only interesting, but also falls right into the field of applied activity in the doctoral program "Psychology of Health". Its relevance stems from the need for each person to adjust their diet to their physical characteristics, to take care of their physical and hence their mental health. The social importance of the topic is dictated by the fact that today obesity and overweight of the satisfied society are an inseparable part of the health problems of the person. Therefore, I accept that the search for psychosocial correlates leading to this phenomenon is relevant and dissertable.

According to the procedure, there are no violations and inconsistencies with the regulatory framework of the Republic of Bulgaria and of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". Scientific indicators are fully covered /40t./. A document of originality and authenticity is available under Art. 27, para. 2 of the PP ZRASRB.

## **3. Analysis of the dissertation research and the abstract.**

In terms of structure, the dissertation project has a classic appearance - an introduction, three logically connected chapters, a conclusion and references, spread over 223 pages, of which 186 are main text, tables and graphs. It fully meets the requirements for such a genre of scientific research. The research done is presented in 34 graphs and 32 tables. The list of used literature includes 18 Bulgarian sources and 305 by foreign authors, relevant to the interpreted issues. The application includes the research toolkit.

In the Introduction, the doctoral student gives a brief overview of the relationship between obesity and various types of diseases, including states that obesity is the fifth cause of death, according to the WHO. The multifaceted and multifactorial reasons for the appearance of this phenomenon have also been determined. Hence the purpose of the dissertation research - highlighting the various reasons and conditions for its appearance.

The first chapter: "Overweight and obesity" is a theoretical overview of the definitive characteristics of the main concepts related to the dissertation. The

epidemiology of obesity and overweight, their consequences and the importance and role of diet and physical activity for prevention are clarified. The leading theoretical explanatory models for the phenomenon are thoroughly presented, including the ecological approach, which is the starting point for the interpretation of the subject of the dissertation research. The summaries after each chapter make a good impression, as they are not a logical bridge to the next one.

The second chapter: "Organization of the empirical research" presents the program of the well-planned and executed empirical research, clearly and precisely formulating the goal, tasks, hypotheses, subject, object, procedures and stages of implementation. The methodological toolkit is adequately selected and precisely described. Questionnaires developed by the doctoral student related to nutrition and some personal characteristics can be defined as contributions of the doctoral student.

The third chapter: "Analysis and interpretation of research results" is a presentation of the obtained data and dependencies. Various dependencies between psychosocial correlates and overweight and obesity as factors, behavior and BMI have been derived from the applied methods. A well-structured theoretical model determines to a significant extent the truth of the obtained data. Visualization of the results supports the perception of the main text, which is distinguished by logical consistency, scientific validity and coherence. The introduced demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as the analysis of their eating habits, physical activity and obesogenic correlates outline a clear picture of the problems with overweight and obesity in Bulgaria. Admirations deserve the discussions after all the interpreted data, which make the reader a participant in the study conducted.

In the Summary and conclusion, the main findings and conclusions related to the dissertation research, the limitations and difficulties accompanying its implementation, its scientific contribution, as well as directions for future similar research are systematized. The intended therapeutic and counseling interventions at the individual and community level can serve as a model for providing support to people with obesity and overweight.

The abstract fully corresponds to the dissertation and presents its main points in abbreviated form.

On the topic of the dissertation, 5 publications were made in scientific publications.

#### **4. Scientific contributions.**

I accept the contributions formulated by the doctoral student and comment on them as follows:

1. A value analysis was made of the available theoretical explanatory models for obesity and overweight known from the last decade.
2. At the moment, this is the first study in Bulgaria, including correlates from the different levels of influence according to the Ecological Model
3. The conducted empirical research is precisely composed and executed and the obtained data are representative, analytically presented and have a high degree of applicability to various professionals working with people with weight problems.
4. The three new questionnaires developed, which operationalize everyday dietary patterns (healthy and unhealthy eating), make it possible to collect and analyze quantitative data on the studied theoretical constructs and to empirically assess the interrelationship between social and environmental (obesogenic) factors, eating behavior, physical activity and weight.
5. The conducted study deepens empirical knowledge regarding the predictive role of individual, social and contextual factors for each of the studied eating behaviors and physical activity. The shown interrelationship between factors, behaviors and BMI is an illustrative example of the holistic approach to the analyzed phenomena.
6. The short and meaningful analyzes after each chapter contribute to the additional understanding of the presentation of the doctoral student. The same can be said about the discussions that are "open" in the analyzes of each of the mentioned factors.
7. The guidelines for theoretical and practical research are also a contribution of the work, which I also accept as a request for subsequent ones.
8. The dissertation work is applicable in counseling, psychotherapy and other forms of support for people with overweight and obesity.

## **5. Notes and recommendations.**

I have no comments or questions about the work, except for the recommendation that it be published as a body of a book, because I definitely think that it will be useful both for specialists and for all people who are concerned with the problems of overweight and obesity.

## **6. Summary.**

The overall impression of the work is that it is a well-thought-out, in-depth study, supported by a sufficient number of sources for a theoretical basis, with an original structured and executed empirical study, presented in a rigorously scientific and at the same time understandable language, with a sufficiently representative sample and generalizations and conclusions - measured and practically oriented.

## **7. Conclusion.**

On the basis of the above analysis, I propose to the respected members of the Scientific Jury to give a positive assessment to Petya Pandurova's dissertation work on the topic: "Psychosocial correlates of overweight and obesity" and to award the Doctoral Degree in Professional Direction 3.2. Psychology in the doctoral program "Psychology of health" at the Department of "General, experimental, developmental and health psychology" of the Faculty of Philosophy of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", and I will vote "YES".

20.07.2023

City. V. Tarnovo

Prepared by:

/prof. Kr. Petrova/