

REVIEW

by

Prof. Rumyana Krumova-Pesheva, DSc

of a Dissertation work for adjudication of educational and scientific degree “**doctor**”

in scientific specialty 3.2 Psychology (Health Psychology)

Title: “**Psychosocial correlates of overweight and obesity**”

PhD candidate: Petya Veskova Pandurova

thesis supervisor: Prof. Sonya Karabelyova, DSc

The Dissertation work of Petya Pandurova is devoted to a significant and current topic in the contemporary reality: the topic about the psychological and social aspects of the problem with overweight and obesity. These diseases, since many years in the medical practice, have received a status of serious somatic disorders with demonstrated psychic equivalents. The illnesses are related to endocrine, emotional, organic and functional nature, with elevated levels of distress, ineffective coping skills, pressed affects, internal conflicts, etc. They correlate with anxiety and depression, difficulties in defining and expressing emotions, unhealthy transgenerative behavior models, etc.

This dissertation work has a volume of 223 pages and contains introduction, three chapters, summary and a conclusion. The bibliographic report includes 323 sources from which 18 are in Bulgarian, and the rest 305: in English. All referenced titles are fully relevant to the problems, discussed in the dissertation. The results from the empiric research have been shown by 32 tables, as well as 34 graphics. In the application is added an examinational methodic.

The abstract has a volume of 63 pages and visualizes informatively the most important topics of the work of Petya Pandurova. There are 6 displayed publications of the author, from which 1 is individual and 5 coauthored, directly associated with the scientific and research

problem of the development. Also, there are exhibited participations in 3 scientific forums, as well as 2 projects which are a strong evidence for the long-term and profound interest of the author in the guideline.

In the introduction of the dissertation work the author Petya Pandurova exhibits summarized information, according to the topic of overweight and obesity as one of the most severe and harmful diseases of the contemporary world. Attends to show their big number of aspects, related to hormonal, affective and somatic misbalance, likewise a range of risks for disadaptation.

The first chapter of the dissertation work has the title: “Overweight and obesity”. Here Petya Pandurova offers definition of the concepts and epidemiological information, which create in detail the idea of the problem in historical perspective: in European countries or, more in concrete – in Bulgarian social and cultural context. The age parameters, social-economic factors and health consequences from the overweight and obesity are convincingly discussed. Informatively and thoroughly are described the tendencies and threads, associated with the “unlocking” of somatic consequences, provoked by unhealthy behavior patterns. The author displays the facts reflexively and conducts an excellent meta-analysis of the relations between different nutritional demeanors, physical activity, hunger, satisfaction, healthy and unhealthy ways of alimentation, quantity and quality of the food consumed, etc. Clearly and evidently is described the influence of the parents’ stereotypes, social support, self – control, etc. In the text are examined different research methods, according to the nutritional behavior as: developmental, social-cognitive, model of the health attitudes, etc. In the theoretical part appropriately are included psychosomatic views, theories for the outside effect, for cognitive-limited alimentation, spiral model of the overweight and obesity, theories for the influence of the chronical and cumulative stress, for the homeostatic interaction and others. The author sets a special accent on the Ecological model which connects individual and social behaviors and reactions with determinations from the environment. Discusses the limits in the contemporary world, as well as of the resources in health demeanor. The role of the personal characteristics is reported, likewise of the interpersonal relationships, of the physical and organizational context about forming effective and non – effective patterns of nutrition.

Second chapter: “Organization of the empiric research” includes the aim and the tasks of the examination. There are offered 5 hypotheses. The procedure of research is described correctly and professionally. The examination has been done in 2 parts. Firstly, has been set a pilot study and secondly, the main dissertational research. The author chooses and uses in detail

all methods. During the first phase participate 562 respondents, while in the second – 712. Convincingly are indicated social-demographic characteristics of the participants as: sex, age, physical activity, chronic illnesses, etc.

The third chapter is associated with analysis and interpretations of the results received. It is clarified that during the pilot study have been set serious statistic procedures, with the aim to adapt and standardize the methods of the research. The results have been analyzed and used as a base for optimizing the methodology of the original empiric part of the dissertational work. Very accurately is displayed the structural organization of the used methodic. Based on a big number of factors and dispersion analysis are established significant statistic differences, depending on demographic attributes. The methodology has been chosen and categorized in accordance with multidimensional structure of the problem researched. The psychometric characteristics of the questionnaires and scales are illustrated from Petya Pandurova as methodic with high validity, as well as internal consistency. In addition, correctly are described the statistic procedures which examine the relations between the studied phenomena. In detail the author exhibits the differentiating effect of the factors: sex; age; education; place of residence; family, economical and health status on the alimentation behavior, likewise physical activity.

Reflexively have been discussed the results from the check of the hypothesis. It has been displayed that emotional and limited alimentation are more likely for women. In contrast, men are more occupied with physical activity – this is a fact which demonstrates the differentiating effect of the sex on the alimentation behavior and physical activity. It has been shown, according to the age differences in the nutritional style, a tendency about the young who have a big probability of consuming food unhealthier. At the same time, it has been clarified that this group of people is more active physically. Moreover, it has been proven the differentiating role of education: the respondents with higher degree of education have a big likeability to eat healthier. In addition, the place of residence has a significant influence on the alimentation demeanor or, more concretely, on the healthy manner of consuming food. Family moral and rituals, related with the food consuming and food, show their value as a factor supporting the positive attitude towards the own health. The author logically creates an opinion on the seriousness of the poverty as a hindrance in front of the creating of a healthy alimental routine.

From the interpretation of the results has been understood, also, that the respondents with obesity have lower levels of physical activity, healthy and limited consummation, respectively and highest levels of unhealthy, emotional and external stimulated alimentation, in

comparison with individuals in norm. The PhD student Petya Pandurova analyzes this result in relation with the reduced self-control, with affective disorders and difficult emotional regulation. The author reports correctly the role of a big range of genetic predispositions, as well as social and cultural aspects. Profoundly have been discovered different psychological correlates, associated with beliefs and morals; satisfaction and frustration; elevated level of depression and anxiety. The social correlates refer to the role of the supporting systems, interpersonal dysfunctions, disorders in the forming of the body image, etc.

There have been made an extensive range of correlation and regression analysis with the aim to research the relation between all of the examined phenomena, likewise their influence on the nutritional behavior, the physical activity and the weight of the respondents. It has been revealed that the healthy manner of consummation may be investigated as a model of adaptive demeanor which has the objective to ensure enough quantity of food, depending on the age. As intriguing for the clinical practice has been considered the conclusion: for the positive correlation between the emotional alimentation with different negative affects, depressive symptoms, anxiety, distress, frustration from the own body, as well as with the personal characteristic “neuroticism”.

The author displays correctly some limits of the research: the volume of the methodology, the not enough homogeneity of the group by sex, likewise subjective factors. There have been demonstrated possibilities for future researches with the same topic, associated with prevention and intervention. The scientific contributions have been reported on a methodological, empirical and practical levels. In addition, there have been exhibited 6 contributions of the dissertation work, which emphasize that it is the first Bulgarian research. It includes correlates from distinct levels of influence, according to the ecological model.

The constructed methodic by Petya Pandurova creates a big amount of possibilities for developing of the investigational focus, not only by the individual characteristics, but also by the social and contextual impacts. The results from the research enrich the scientific and empiric understanding of the significance of the social-demographic factors, health behavior, physical activity, etc.

In conclusion: in my opinion, the actuality and significance of the dissertation work in the field of health psychology, clinical psychology and psychotherapy are unquestionable. The idea of this multicomponent empiric research have been demonstrated from the author totally precisely and professionally. The investigation of different psychosocial correlates is an

essential step and base in the establishing and developing of programs for diagnostics, prevention, as well as intervention for people with overweight and obesity. The dissertation work contains crucial scientific and practical value. Shows the convincing skills of the author for a theoretical analysis and synthesis of dissimilar psychic phenomena in their individual and psychosocial dimensions. The overall literature view, likewise the empiric model, display the skills of the author for planning, organizing and conducting of profound investigational projects. All of the above gives me the reason to offer, completely convinced, in front of the scientific jury, Petya Pandurova to receive the PhD degree in professional field 3.2 Psychology (Health Psychology).

Date: 9.08.2023

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Signature:.....

(Prof. R. Krumova-Pesheva)