

# **Opinion**

from

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**for the dissertation of Lyubomira Ivailova Tsvetkova**

on the subject:

## **Personal and professional determinants of alexithymia**

for the award of PhD in the professional field 3.2. Psychology

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Irina Zinovieva, DSc

### **1. Main characteristics and framework of the dissertation research**

The dissertation of Lyubomira Ivailova Tsvetkova is developed in accordance with the normative requirements and academic standards for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". The dissertation consists of 211 pages and structurally contains an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography. The thesis contains 3 figures and 69 tables. The bibliography includes 8 Bulgarian language sources and 208 of foreign authors. The appendix with the methods is not included.

The aim of the dissertation research is to examine the relationship of alexithymia with personality traits (Big Five personality dimensions, Dark Triad traits and attachment styles in adulthood) and the interaction with perceived stress, occupational burnout, well-being and life satisfaction. The topic is actual given the increased needs in society for profiling and managing emotional resources, and for preventing and treating emotional distress at the individual, professional, and community levels.

The methodology is consistent with the formulated research aim, tasks and hypotheses of the dissertation. The correct description of the methods demonstrates the doctoral student's excellent preparation from a methodological point of view.

## **2. Content and analyses**

The dissertation introduces the reader to the topic through the soul-body framework and brief references to the relevance of the research. Chapter one reviews the definitions of the construct alexithymia. A thorough historical overview of the main methodological frameworks and current critical issues are presented. Separate paragraphs describe the cognitive deficits associated with alexithymia, the links to psychosomatics and psychopathology, the differentiation of different types of alexithymia (primary, secondary, and organic), the neuropsychological bases and pathogenesis of alexithymia and tools for assessing the construct (questionnaires, projective methodologies, interviews, and observation-based instruments). Chapter two reviews research on the prevalence of alexithymia in the general population, the relationship with socio-demographic characteristics, the 'Big Five' personality traits, 'Dark Triad' traits and attachment styles, occupational burnout, perceived stress, occupational well-being and life satisfaction. The two theoretical chapters of the paper conclude with brief summaries of the main points which lead into the empirical third chapter. It begins by detailing the aims, hypotheses and objectives of the study. The theoretical-empirical model of the study is presented graphically (Fig. 2). Eight questionnaires were used : Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), Mini IPIP, Dark Triad - Short Version (Short Dark Triad, SD3), Adult Attachment Style Scale (AAS), Copenhagen Burnout Scale (CBI), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Affective Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (JS). The procedure of conducting the study is described. Chapter four presents the sample (458 subjects) and the psychometric characteristics of the instruments. Chapter five is devoted to the results of the empirical study in relation to the assessed personal, professional socio-demographic factors related to alexithymia. Specialized statistical procedures are used and the results are presented in tabular form. Chapter six summarizes the results through the verification of the hypotheses without overinterpretations and overgeneralizations. The text ends with a brief conclusion.

## **3. Contributions**

I accept the scientific contributions formulated by the PhD student. A comprehensive study has been conducted in a healthy population. New scales have been adapted for use in a

Bulgarian population. An integrative psychometric model has been achieved to assess the interrelationships between individual, occupational and existential dimensions of alexithymia in a Bulgarian sociocultural setting. The publications presented by the doctoral student are related to the topic of the dissertation and present different approaches to the research. The summary of the dissertation (40 pages) presents the content of all aspects of the research in a systematic way, giving an overall view of the dissertation.

#### **4. Recommendations and questions**

An advantage for the work would be the availability of more graphs and the presentation (in a separate paragraph) of the many results relevant to the scope of the study in the direction of counseling and therapy practice. I have technical comments relating to the tabular presentation of results that could be improved visually, unified and presented to an established standard. I have the following question: You are getting interesting significant results related to the health status of subjects. How do you assess the health status of the respondents?

#### **5. Conclusion**

Tsvetkova's CV and the submitted dissertation research on "Personal and professional determinants of alexithymia" give me grounds to conclude that she has the necessary skills and professional experience to successfully plan, implement and publish scientific research. Taking into account the overall qualities of the dissertation and its contributions to the professionally developed subject matter, I express a positive opinion and propose to the Honourable Scientific Jury to award Lyubomira Ivailova Tsvetkova the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field "3.2. Psychology".

10 August 2023

Sofia

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