

**O P I N I O N**

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at the Department of Psychology and leadership,  
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for the dissertation of **Lyubomira Ivaylova Tsvetkova**

- a full-time doctoral student at the Department of General, experimental,  
developmental and health psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia university "St.  
Kliment Ohridski",

on topic: **Personal and professional determinants of alexithymia,**

Submitted for the award of an educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"  
in professional field 3.2. Psychology, Cultural and differential psychology (in  
Bulgarian)

**Scientific adviser:** Professor Irina Zinovieva, DSc  
Sofia university "St. Kliment Ohridski"

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## **1. Relevance and importance of the problem**

The problem presented in this dissertation is relevant and at the same time personally and socially significant, as the personal and professional determinants of alexithymia reflect the essential aspects of impaired functioning, especially in cases of failure to identify the presence of alexithymia. In this regard, this dissertation, which presents a comprehensive and thorough review of current understandings of the nature and prevalence of alexithymia, a review of research and intervention methods, and the results of the author's research of alexithymia and related constructs, can contribute significantly to the identification of alexithymia as a risk factor for a wide range of health, psychological, and psychosomatic problems, and as a consequence, to the processes of intake, screening, goal planning, and therapy.

## **2. Scientific and methodological justification of the study**

The text of the dissertation convincingly justifies the chosen approach for proving the doctoral thesis - both scientifically and methodologically, being organized in the following main parts: introduction, basic part of text, conclusion and list of sources.

The introduction presents the doctoral student's understanding of the nature and relevance of the problem under study.

The basic part of text includes six chapters that sequentially develop the main aspects of the problem: the nature of the construct of alexithymia; the prevalence of alexithymia and associations with personal, professional, and sociodemographic variables; a summary of the theoretical review; the design of psychological research; a description of the sample and the psychometric characteristics of the psychological methods; the results of the research; summary and discussion.

The conclusion outlines the applicability of the obtained results in psychological work, both for the identification of alexithymia and in attempts to improve the psychotherapeutic processes by developing a complex approach based on the obtained results.

The list of sources includes 216 titles in Bulgarian and English, and the ratio between them confirms the need for more scientific publications in Bulgarian on alexithymia.

In this regard, I would suggest that the doctoral student consider formatting the dissertation into a monograph in Bulgarian, as well as publishing the results of the empirical research in English. A monograph on the problems of alexithymia in the Bulgarian sociocultural context would be useful in the practice of Bulgarian psychologists. A publication in English with the results of the research would add value to the world databases.

The text of the dissertation complies with the linguistic norms, the style corresponds to the purpose of the text, the doctoral student proves through the dissertation the knowledge and skills necessary for the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in working with scientific text.

## **3. Research methodology**

The design of the empirical study is justified through the theoretical review, with formulated goals and objectives, four groups of hypotheses with brief theoretical justifications, a

theoretical model of the study, highlighting the need to study the associations of alexithymia with personal, professional and sociodemographic variables in the Bulgarian sociocultural context, as well as alexithymia with the output variables *life satisfaction* and *professional well-being*.

The instrumentation of the study is consistent with the objectives and is adequate to verify the formulated sets of hypotheses. Research instruments with proven reliability and validity, adapted in Bulgarian, were applied: Toronto Alexithymia Scale - TAS-20; Personality Traits of the Big Five Model - Mini IPIP; The Dark Triad - short version; Perceived Stress Scale - PSS; Life Satisfaction Scale - SWLS.

The Adult Attachment Style Scale - AAS, (Collins & Read, 1990), the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory - CBI, (Kristensen et al., 2005) and the Affective Occupational Well-being Questionnaire (Warr et al., 1990) are adapted for the purpose of the study.

The methodology of the study includes a description of the statistical methods used by the doctoral student to perform the necessary procedures to test the results of the research and verify the hypotheses. The procedure contains the necessary description for conducting the research. The results of the statistical verification are presented in chapters four and five - *sampling and psychometric characteristics of the instruments* and *results of the research*. The sample includes 458 individuals. The selected statistical methods are adequate for the respective controls; the interpretation follows the logic of the obtained results.

An important part related to the results of the research is revealed in chapter six of the dissertation - *summary of the results and discussion*. The hypotheses are interpreted according to the results obtained, conclusions are formed to verify them, and the results are correlated or compared with the results of other studies known to the doctoral student and referred to in the text. The style of such framing of conclusions and discussion questions is fruitful, as it synthesizes problem areas and trends in the field under study that outline directions for the researcher's future work.

#### **4. Scientific results and contributions**

I fully accept the results and contributions proposed in the summary of dissertation, and I support the directions for future work that the doctoral student derives from the scientific results.

#### **5. Summary of dissertation and publications on the topic**

The summary reflects the content of the dissertation and the results obtained, the style and layout of the text meet the requirements for summary of dissertation writing.

Four publications have been submitted on the topic of the dissertation, of which two are independent and two co-authored. In the period of the dissertation development the doctoral student has participated with papers in four scientific conferences.

#### **6. Originality and credibility of the dissertation**

I have no reason to doubt the originality and credibility of the dissertation and the results obtained. The sources cited or referred to by the doctoral student, as well as the published results of

other researches, are correctly stated. Taking into account the thorough and comprehensive theoretical review, the chosen approach for conducting the empirical study and the presentation of the obtained results, I accept that the dissertation is an original work of the doctoral student.

## **7. Conclusion**

The dissertation presents results achieved through in-depth work on a scientific problem on a current, significant and perspective topic. The text reveals a thorough knowledge and systematic preparation of the doctoral student on the chosen topic. The results of the work on this topic could contribute to the identification of alexithymia and therapeutic processes, thus bringing clarity and completeness not only in theoretical but also in practical aspects.

The arguments stated in the opinion are the grounds to vote positively **Lyubomira Ivaylova Tsvetkova** to acquire the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in professional field 3.2. *Psychology, Cultural and differential psychology (in Bulgarian)*.

26.07.2023

Signature: .....

(assoc. prof. Romyana Kareva)