

Opinion

from

Assoc. Prof. Daniel Lyudmilov Petrov

Department of General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology"

SU "St. Kl. Ohridski"

for dissertation of

Boyko Vassilev Panchev

on the subject:

THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IN COPING WITH EXISTENTIAL CRISES

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 Boyko Vasilev Panchev is developed in accordance with the normative requirements and academic standards for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". The presented dissertation consists of 210 pages and structurally contains an introduction, five chapters, conclusion, and references. There is no appendix with the questionnaires. The thesis contains one figure and 52 tables. The list of references includes 164 sources (in Bulgarian, English and French).

The main aim of this dissertation research is to examine the relationship between personality characteristics, indicators of social support and coping strategies, and opportunities for posttraumatic growth in individuals who have experienced existential crises.

The topic is actual given the impact of social isolation, the atomized living of modernmen and the severe consequences for mental well-being. The theoretical framework chosen reflects a return to a trauma-informed approach to psychology by seeking answers in experience. The methodology used is consistent with the research aim, objectives and hypotheses formulated for this thesis study. The correct description of the methods demonstrates B. Panchev's excellent preparation from a methodological point of view.

2. Content and analyses

The introduction briefly sets out the theoretical framework of the study, the main constructs and its aims, hypotheses and objectives. Chapter One contains the theoretical approaches to the study of existential crises, resilience and social support. The nature and content of these concepts and the current scientific status of research on the topic are reviewed. Chapter two is devoted to posttraumatic growth, the role of posttraumatic stress (causes, symptoms, and treatment), and criteria for posttraumatic growth. Chapter three is an exploration of changes in attitudes about the world and self, emotional regulation, and the role of social support in existential crises. Participants are 71 adults who have experienced an existential crisis - life-threatening illness, financial collapse, job loss followed by a prolonged period of unemployment leading to a drastic change in quality of life, loss of a parent in childhood or adolescence, traumatic divorce, etc. A conceptual cluster analysis is used. Chapter 4 presents the empirical study of the role of personal characteristics and social support in coping in existential crises. A review of contemporary empirical studies on the research questions (including Bulgarian authors) is conducted. The theoretical model of the study is summarized: aims, hypotheses and tasks of the study are described in detail. The theoretical-empirical model of the study is presented graphically (Fig. 1). The following questionnaires were used:

- Personality characteristics - the "Big Five" (Mini IPIP; Donnellan et al., 2006)
- Social Support Scale (Peirce et al., 1996; adapted for Bulgaria by Nikolova and Zinovieva (Nikolova, 2022))

- Self-esteem scale (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001)
- Coping strategies (Carver et al., 1989)
- Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996)
- Resilience scale (adapted from Wagnild & Young, 1993).

The main chapters of the paper conclude with brief summaries and discussion. The research procedure, sample characteristics and psychometric characteristics of the constructed test battery are described. Specialized statistical procedures were used: descriptive statistics, crosstabulation, correlation and regression analysis. The results are presented in tabular form accompanied by psychological interpretation. A summary and discussion of the results through the verification of the hypotheses is published in chapter six. The main findings in terms of application, the results in relation to previous research, and opportunities for further research are noted. The thesis ends with a brief conclusion.

3. Contributions

I accept the contributions of the dissertation formulated by B. Panchev. A quantitative and qualitative study has been conducted with a specialized sample. An integrative psychometric model has been elaborated to assess the relationship of personality characteristics and social support with certain coping strategies and the presence of posttraumatic growth. Empirical data from a Bulgarian sociocultural setting were collected to provide information on the specific characteristics of particular groups and their coping patterns. The results have applied relevance in counseling and therapeutic contexts and successfully complement the data in the scientific field.

Boyko Panchev presented five publications (one co-authored). The articles are related to the topic of the thesis and present different approaches to the research. Also B. Panchev has participated in two national and three international conferences, as well as in one research project. In accordance with the minimum national requirements, 55 points are available. The summary (41 pages) gives a comprehensive view of the dissertation work, presenting in a systematic way the content of of the research.

4. Recommendations and questions

I recommend that in the future the study be transformed into a book based on a dissertation or into a handbook for professionals and other target groups.

5. Conclusion

The presented dissertation research on "The Role of Personality Characteristics and Social Support in Coping with Existential Crises" gives me a reason to conclude that Boyko Panchev possesses excellent skills and professional experience to successfully plan, implement and publish scientific research. Taking into account the overall qualities of the dissertation and its contributions, I express a positive opinion and propose to the Honourable Scientific Jury to award Boyko Vassilev Panchev the degree of Doctor of Psychology in the professional field "3.2.Psychology".

14.05.2024

Reviewer:

Sofia

/Assoc. Prof. Daniel Petrov, PhD/