ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Professional area: 3.2. Psychology

Evaluation of the doctoral dissertation entitled "ATTACHMENT STYLE AND PARENTING PRACTICES OF MOTHERS-VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE" submitted under the procedure for awarding the scientific and educational degree "doctor" in the professional area: 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral candidate: Maria Hristova Sokolova

My overall positive evaluation of the submitted dissertation rests on the following criteria:

(1) Overview of the dissertation – volume and structure

Maria Sokolova has submitted for review a comprehensive text that unfolds coherently, reads easily and successfully integrates multi-directional searches, diverse data and information.

The thesis is 184 pages long, with 204 references, 41 in Cyrillic and 163 in Latin. There are 59 tables and 7 figures in the text. The work has 1 appendix, which presents the instrument of the empirical study.

The work is organized in three chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. The classical structure in three parts - theoretical, methodological and empirical - is appropriate and highlights the main points of the PhD thesis. All three chapters are well structured, clear and coherent.

The summary of the dissertation fully and accurately reflects the structure and content of the full text of the dissertation and presents the most important ideas and conclusions of the undertaken research.

(2) Review of the literature and theoretical background of the study

The three main constructs: attachment, parenting practices, domestic violence - are the subject of analysis and summary in the theoretical part of the thesis. Based on the literature review,

conclusions are drawn that form the theoretical framework of the empirical study, and the relevance of the selected study dimensions is justified. The scope of the study is outlined in the context of broader research areas and a rationale for its scientific relevance is provided. The text attests to the PhD student's very good knowledge of the related literature and the broad scope of her conceptual explorations.

The social relevance of the research is also discussed, as it attempts to contribute to breaking the vicious cycle of reproducing domestic violence.

(3) Methodological approach

Considerable methodological research work has been undertaken in relation to:

(a) reviewing and systematizing research efforts, such as the studies of parenting practices;

(b) designing appropriate research instruments for studying a specific sample on a sensitive topic.

The dissertation research of Maria Sokolova stands out by a high degree of coherence between the theoretical model and its operationalization in study's aims, objectives and hypotheses. The psychological rationale of the research design and the theoretical justification of the chosen methods is explicit. Specific issues in research with mothers - victims of domestic violence are highlighted and promising directions for future research are discussed.

(4) Significance and strength of the results, interpretations and conclusions

A comprehensive psychological study of attachment and parenting practices in mothers - victims of domestic violence was conducted and new, original results of scientific and applied value were obtained. They relate to:

(a) characterizing domestic violence through the lens of the experiences and behaviors of the 207 mothers studied;

b) description of the psychological characteristics of mothers related to domestic violence;

c) revealing the interrelationships between the dimensions: attachment styles, parenting practices and psychological functioning, social support, economic status and a behavioural indicator (seeking psychological help);

d) demonstration of mediating effects for social support and counseling over the influence of attachment styles on parenting practices;

e) composing profiles of the mothers participating in the study, according to the observed relationships between attachment styles, on the one hand, and psychological functioning, parenting practices and domestic violence, on the other.

(5) Critical notes to the dissertation

Maria Sokolova's dissertation is of very high quality. In this sense, my comments constitute of guidelines for furthering the potential of the work and its contributions. I recommend the PhD student to persevere in the dissemination of the research results, which will amplify the contributions of the research, and to continue elaborating the directions for practical application of the results, for example, as preventive measures for the effective and timely counseling of mothers-victims of domestic violence and the reduction of risks for their children.

(6) Scientific contributions of the dissertation

I accept the scientific and applied contributions made by the doctoral candidate and justified in the dissertation. The theoretical achievement of the work is the theoretical argumentation and empirical verification of the relationships between attachment style and parenting practices in the context of studying domestic violence in Bulgaria. The demonstrated mediating role of social support, types of domestic violence and frequency of psychological counselling on the influence of attachment style on parenting practices of mothers-victims of domestic violence adds to and enriches the global literature on the topic.

Methodologically, the richness of the work is the numerous research instruments adapted for Bulgarian conditions with very good psychometric characteristics, which expands the possibilities for basic and applied research. Another valuable point is the confirmed factor structure of the studied dimensions, which allows for comparability of Bulgarian data in cross-cultural comparisons.

The new knowledge, the in-depth understanding and the reliable and valid methods are also useful in the practical work of various specialists (psychologists, psychotherapists and social workers) with mothers-victims of domestic violence.

Also, I would like to underline the PhD student's success in collecting new, complex data on a sensitive topic such as domestic violence.

(7) Assessment of the quality of the PhD student's scientific work in relation to meeting minimum national requirements

The attached *Reference on the fulfilment of the minimum requirements for the PhD* confirms the fulfilment of the national requirements regarding scientific publications. Doctoral candidate Maria Sokolova submitted five publications on the topic of the dissertation, which reflect the main points in the dissertation work. She co-authored three of them with her supervisor, two are in English. The number and nature of the publications of Maria Sokolova meet the minimum national requirements under the RSASR and PPZRASRB.

I know Maria Sokolova as a student in the Academic Writing course I teach, and as a presenter and author in the Doctoral School organized by our Institute. I have had the opportunity to observe and appreciate her dedication to the topic at hand, her independence and consistency in work, her willingness to learn and grow; her efforts to achieve the sought after results, and her drive for high quality performance. These personal qualities have undoubtedly affected her scientific production, and they are an excellent prerequisite as well for further research work.

CONCLUSION

The thesis submitted by Maria Sokolova perfectly meets all the requirements for a doctoral dissertation for obtaining the scientific and educational degree "doctor." The presented dissertation demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the topic, mastered methodological experience and expertise, good research practice and substantial research contribution.

Based on the merits of the research work, I give a **positive evaluation** to the doctoral thesis of Maria Hristova Sokolova and propose that she **be awarded the scientific and educational degree "doctor" in professional direction 3.2. Psychology.**

Sofia, 21 April 2024 Signature: *Professor Katya Stoycheva, PhD*