Opinion

From

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniel Lyudmilov Petrov
Department of General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology
SU "St. Kl. Ohridski"
for dissertation of

Maria Hristova Sokolova

on the subject:

ATTACHMENT STYLE AND PARENTING PRACTICES OF

MOTHERS - VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. D. Bakalova, PhD
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1. Main characteristics and framework of the dissertation research

The dissertation of Maria Hristova Sokolova 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 184 pages and structurally contains an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliographic reference and an appendix. The doctoral thesis contains 7 figures and 59 tables. The list of references includes 204 sources (41 in Cyrillic, 163 in Latin).

The main aim of the dissertation research is to examine the impact of attachment styles on the parenting practices of mothers victims of domestic violence, taking into account the role of the types of violence experienced, social support and the psychological functioning, in order to delineate and reduce the risks of violence towards their children.

The topic is actual given the footprint of the pandemic and social isolation, the atomized and conflictual living in modern times, increasing domestic violence and reproducing patterns of behaviour with severe consequences for human development and social well-being. The theoretical framework reflects a return to a trauma-informed approach to psychology by seeking answers in experience and childhood. The methodology is consistent with the formulated research aim, objectives and hypotheses of the thesis research. The correct description of the methods demonstrates Maria Sokolova's excellent preparation from a methodological point of view.

2. Content and analyses

In the introduction the author sets the theoretical framework of the research, its main objectives, hypotheses and tasks. The structure of the doctoral thesis is briefly presented. Chapter one contains the theoretical basis of the study and covers the three main research areas related to parenting, parenting style and parenting practices, attachment theories and domestic violence. The nature and content of these concepts and the current scientific status of research on the topic are examined. Particular attention is given to the impact of parental control, commitment and consistency of disciplinary practices, use of physical punishment and positive parenting practices on child development and personality formation. A review of contemporary empirical studies (including Bulgarian authors) is made. The theoretical chapter ends with brief summary of the main points which leads to the empirical second chapter. Chapter two begins with a summary of the theoretical model of the study, detailing the aims, hypotheses and objectives of the study. The theoretical-empirical model of the study is presented graphically (Figure 6). The following questionnaires were used:

1. The Experiences in Close Relationships – Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS, Fraley *et al*., 2011);
2. Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ, Frick, 1991);
3. Severity of Violence Against Women Scale (SVAWS; Marshall, 1992);
4. The Screen for Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms (SPTSS; Carlson, 2012; BSI; Derogatis and Melisaratos, 1983);
5. Social Provisions Scale (SPS, Russell and Cutrona, 1987).

Additional socio-demographic data are included as well as questions about different types of violence and the frequency of counseling with a psychologist/therapist.

The research procedure, sample characteristics and psychometric characteristics of the constructed test battery are described. Specialized statistical procedures are used: descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, independent samples T-tests, one-factor analysis of variance, correlation, regression and mediator analysis. The results are presented in Chapter Three in tabular and graphical form, accompanied by psychological interpretation. A summary and discussion of the results through hypothesis verification is provided. The main findings are noted in their applied aspects. The paper ends with a conclusion which lists the limitations of the study.

3. Contributions

I accept the contributions of the dissertation formulated by the PhD student. A comprehensive study has been conducted with a specialized sample. New scales have been adapted for use in a Bulgarian population. An integrative psychometric model has been elaborated to assess the functioning of mothers-victims of domestic violence. Empirical material was collected from Bulgarian sociocultural settings to provide information on the specificities of particular groups and relational patterns during the pandemic. The results have applied relevance in counseling and therapeutic contexts and successfully complement the data in the scientific field.

The five publications presented by Maria Sokolova (two of them as unique author) are related to the topic of the dissertation and present different approaches to the research. The summary of the dissertation (28 pages) presents the content of the research in a systematic way, giving an overall view of the dissertation.

4. Recommendations and questions

Either a decimal point or a decimal comma should be used in the same text like decimal separator. A book by A. Bandura in Bulgarian has not been published. The translation of the *preoccupied attachment style* adopted and popular in the Bulgarian scientific literature is *свръхангажиран*. I recommend that the study be transformed into a book based on a dissertation or into a handbook for professionals and other target groups.

5. Conclusion

The submitted dissertation research on "Attachment Style and Parenting Practices of Mothers - Victims of Domestic Violence" gives me grounds to conclude that Maria Sokolova

has excellent skills and professional experience for successful planning, implementation and publication of scientific research. Taking into account the overall qualities of the dissertation and its contributions to the professional field, I express a positive opinion and propose to the Honourable Scientific Jury to award Maria Sokolova the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field "3.2. Psychology".

19 April 2024 Author: Daniel Petrov

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Sofia /Assoc. Prof. D. Petrov, PhD/