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OPINION

Prepared by Assoc. Prof. Zornitsa Totkova, PhD, Institute for Population and Human Studies at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia 1113, Acad. G. Bonchev str., bl. 6, fl. 5,
Regarding a decision on the competition for filling the academic position of an Associate Professor in Higher education division 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field 3.2. Psychology (Counseling Psychology – Personality and Addictions), unit "Social and Counseling Psychology", Institute for Population and Human Studies at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, as announced in the State Gazette issue 58 of 09.07.2024.
Candidate: Assist. Prof. Rositsa Zhelyazkova Racheva, PhD, unit "Social and Counseling Psychology", Institute for Population and Human Studies at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

1. Summary data on the candidate's scientific work and activity

This opinion was prepared in accordance with the order No. РД-6- 445/05.09.2024 of the Director of the Institute for Population and Human Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences based on documents submitted through a competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in Professional field 3.2. Psychology (Counseling Psychology – Personality and Addictions), announced in State Gazette No. 58 of 09.07.2024. The documents submitted for the competition meet the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRB), the Rules for the Application of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Rules of BAS and with the Rules set at the IPHS-BAS.

The candidate Rositsa Zhelyazkova Racheva has obtained her PhD in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (Educational and Developmental Psychology) in 2014, and since 2016 she has been an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at the Institute of Psychology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The publications and citations submitted by the candidate (А, В, Г5, Г6, Г7, Г9, и Д11) fully comply the minimum national requirements for holding the position of "Associate Professor" in Higher education division 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field 3.2. Psychology and meet the minimum requirements laid down in the Rules for the Application of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in the same Higher education division and Professional field. The subject matter and content of the submitted scientific works correspond to the profile of the competition and are focused in the field of counselling psychology and personality psychology.

2. Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and scientific-applied contributions

Assist. Prof. Rositsa Racheva, PhD submitted 24 scientific publications for the competition, including: 1 independent scientific monograph in Bulgarian (habilitation thesis); 1 book based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree

"Doctor" in Bulgarian language; 8 scientific articles, of which 6 in English, published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-famous databases; 4 studious, of which 2 in English and 10 scientific articles published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals and in edited collective volumes.

The author places the personality of addicts to psychoactive substances at the center of the proposed habilitation thesis "Personality Characteristics of Addicts" (ISBN 978-619-245-383-1 (Print), ISBN 978-619-245-384-8 (Online)) and thoroughly explores and analyses the personality characteristics associated with problematic substance use. The first chapter discusses key aspects of the topic of problematic alcohol and drug use and systematizes key concepts related to the use, abuse, and dependence on psychoactive substances. Biological, psychological, and social theories related to substance use are reviewed, and factors associated with the formation of addictions are presented and summarized into three major groups: physiological, environmental, and individual. The second chapter is devoted to the relationship between personality and substance use disorders. The author identifies current models and approaches to the study of personality and builds personality profiles of addicts based on the available scientific data. At the end of this section, a conceptual model of personality dispositions is proposed that encompasses behavioral, emotional, and social problems in addicts, based on the distinction between externalized and internalized personality characteristics. Chapter Three presents an in-depth analysis of empirical research on the most common externalized and internalized characteristics of individuals with substance use disorders. The results of research conducted on these particular characteristics and the relationship between them are analyzed, and in addition, differences between individuals in the general population and individuals with problematic use to both alcohol and drugs are outlined.

The monographic work (I.1.), the book based on the dissertation thesis (II.1.) and the series of publications (III.1., III.2., III.3., III.5., III.8., IV.4., V.1., V.2., V.5., V.6., etc.) outline the main scientific and applied contributions of Assist. Prof. Rositsa Racheva, PhD in the substantive field of Counseling Psychology – Personality and Addictions. Among the main contributions can be mentioned: 1) The study of the specifics of the personality profile of addicts to psychoactive substances in both adolescence and adulthood and adapted and constructed methodologies for the assessment of personality characteristics of addicts in order to optimize the treatment processes and assess the results achieved in the rehabilitation process; 2) The study of the interrelationships between internalized and externalized personality characteristics and socio-demographic factors and specifics of psychoactive substance use; 3) Different aspects of the treatment of psychoactive substance dependence in Bulgaria are studied, which include the demand and accessibility of treatment and the safety and efficacy of supportive treatment, and in addition, guidelines for good practices in psychosocial rehabilitation of addicts and also psychosocial interventions for working with adolescents with problematic substance use are outlined.

The other substantive area of the candidate's scientific work is in the area of personality psychology with a focus on the personality of addicts. The works presented in this field (V.6, V.8, V.9, etc.) extend and enrich scientifically, methodologically and applied research on the personality of adolescent and adult problem substance users. Also essential is the contribution related to the adaptation and construction of methods to assess personality characteristics. The

author constructed scales assessing externalized personality characteristics, which include impulsivity, risk-taking, sensation seeking, aggressiveness, and antisocial behavior, as well as scales for the assessment of internalized personality characteristics, such as emotional stability, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Adapted for Bulgaria is the MMPI-A, the adolescent version of which is one of the best studied and commonly used tests. The results obtained in this field provide an opportunity to use the methods to study different clinical populations in order to refine diagnosis and treatment. Knowledge of the role of personality in adolescents and adults with problematic substance use is the key to good planning of prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation interventions and can be applied to both selective prevention and needs assessment in the treatment and rehabilitation process.

Last but not least, the candidate's scientific work in the field of transport psychology should be noted. The presented publications in this field (III.2., III.3., III.6., IV.1., V.3., etc.) contribute significantly to the development of the modern image of transport psychology in Bulgaria and lay a very good foundation for future research in the field and for the development of preventive programs and interventions to reduce risky driving behavior.

3. Opinion on the presence or absence of plagiarism

As a member of the scientific jury and after reviewing the submitted scientific publications and the habilitation thesis of Assist. Prof. Rositsa Racheva, PhD, I can state the absence of plagiarism.

4. Critical notes and recommendations

I have no critical remarks and recommendations regarding the research design, statistical processing of data, analysis and summaries of the results presented in the candidate's thesis.

5. Personal impressions

I know Rositsa Racheva since the period of her education (2008 - 2014) at the Department of Psychology, IPHS-BAS for obtaining the PhD in the scientific specialty “Educational and Developmental Psychology”. Subsequently, her appointment as an assistant professor in the Psychology of Personality and Methodology of Psychological Measurement unit at the end of 2016 happened almost at the same time when I was appointed to the same position in the same unit. So the two of us started our path in science together. The opportunity to work together in multiple projects, research, article writing, organizational and administrative activities brought us closer as researchers and enabled me to appreciate the qualities and professionalism of Rositsa Racheva. She is distinguished by her consistency, focus, productivity and efficiency and I highly appreciate her communication and coordination skills, her analytical skills and her precision.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of the evaluation of the original scientific contributions of Assist. Prof. Rositsa Racheva, PhD, the presented scientific publications and the reference for their citation, which fully meet the minimum national requirements set forth in the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Rules for the Application of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Rules of BAS and with the Rules set at the IPHS-BAS, I confidently propose to the distinguished members of the scientific jury to support the election of the Asst. Prof. Rositsa Zhelyazkova Racheva, PhD for the academic position of Associate Professor in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field 3.2. Psychology (Counselling Psychology – Personality and Addictions) in unit "Social and Counselling Psychology" at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

02.10.2024 г. Assoc. Prof. Zornitsa Totkova PhD: …….