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REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Valery Denev Todorov, PhD,

Professional field 3.2. Psychology

on the submissions for participation in the competition for academic position of Associate Professor in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic, and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology (Counseling psychology – personality and addictions), announced in State Gazette, No 58 of July 9th 2024

This review is a part of the procedure set to render a decision on the competition for filling the academic position of an Associate Professor in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (Counseling psychology – personality and addictions), as announced in the State Gazette issue No 58 of July 9th 2024 for the needs of the Institute for Population and Human Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IPHS – BAS). The review has been prepared on the basis of the Rules of Procedure of the Scientific Jury for occupying academic positions at IPHS – BAS and following Order No RD-6-445/05.09.2024 issued by the Director of IPHS – BAS.

The only candidate in the competition is Rositsa Zhelyazkova Racheva, holding a PhD in Psychology, Assistant Professor at IPHS – BAS, section Social and Counseling Psychology, Department of Psychology at the same institute. The candidate meets the requirements of Art. 27 of The Rules for the terms and conditions for occupying academic positions at IHPS – BAS and was admitted for evaluation by the Scientific jury of the competition.

According to the procedure, all legally required materials and documents have been provided. The following materials have been submitted for evaluation: one scientific monograph, one monograph on the basis of defended dissertation, four scientific studios, 14 scientific articles, 8 of which published in refereed scientific journals and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information (WoS, Scopus).

I. Research activity and results

1. *Evaluation of the scientific monograph*

The monograph entitled “Personality characteristics of addicts to psychoactive substances” presented for evaluation is dedicated to a problem of upmost social importance – the addictions to psychoactive substances.

Over the last years, a steady trend of increasing the number of people with addiction to psychoactive substances has been observed. Addictions and related problems are considered as one of the leading causes of death prior retirement age in the developed countries. In addition to the direct negative effect on public health, addictions cause indirect harm to societies such as reduced productivity, crime, reduced ability to take care for the next generation. At present, in our country, this problem seems to be largely underestimated. Terefore I believe that any attempt to increase the public understanding of the topic and to support the efforts of the professionals dealing with the problem is particularly useful and significant.

The main focus of the monograph are the distinctive personality characteristics of individuals with substance addictions compared to individuals without addictions. Through an analytical review of a significant number of literature sources and a solid logical rationale, the author formulates her own model of personality characteristics with potential connection to addictions. The model includes a total of nine personality characteristics structured into two main groups – externalized and internalized. Scales for assessment of each of the characteristics were developed and their validity and reliability have been verified.

Through a series of empirical studies, data were collected on a sample of people with substance use disorders and a control sample of healthy individuals, selected on the principle of matched pairs. Three additional variables were controlled in the research process – type of substance, onset of use, and presence or absence of family history of substance use disorders. The obtained results show that, according to the main personal characteristics, individuals with addictions show statistically significantly different results in comparison to the control group. This can be interpreted both as a proof of the proposed theoretical model and at the same time as a confirmation of the validity of the measurement scales. The intercorrelations of the scales and their relation with the other variables in the study are also demonstrate their validity.

The monographic work presents an elegant, carefully constructed and well-grounded theoretical model and its operationalization through a precisely constructed battery of psychometric methodologies. Its main results would be of significant and immediate benefit to the professionals working in the field of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of

individuals with addictions. At the same time, the work has also a significant potential for further development and improvement.

The statement is coherent, logically consistent. The text is easily perceived and this allows the reader to effortlessly comprehend the presented complex ideas, concepts, and empirical results. These characteristics of the monograph make the work an accessible and attractive material suitable for a wide range of readers interested in the subject, and not just the specialized academic audience. This enables the monograph to be used as a teaching tool in a variety of educational contexts.

I would emphasize the following main scientific and applied contributions of the monograph:

- The work offers an up-to-date systematic analytical review of the scientific literature on personality characteristics of individuals addicted to psychoactive substances.

- A theoretical model of the personality characteristics of individuals with addictions is developed, as well as a set of scales measuring the personality characteristics included in the model.

- A well-conducted empirical verification of the model and psychometric instruments is presented.

- The created scientific products are practically oriented and are suitable for direct application in the field of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of addictions.

2. *Evaluation of the contributions of the other submitted publications*

Another 19 scientific publications are presented for evaluation by the candidate. One of them is a book based on a defended dissertation, and four are scientific studios; 8 of the works are published in refereed scientific journals and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information.

The main research topics in these publications are substance abuse and addictions; the personality traits associated with substance abuse and addictions; psychological support of individuals with substance related issues, including teenagers. Another field of research interest of the candidate with substantiated scientific contributions is transport psychology and specifically the study of driving behavior. The work of the candidate on diagnostic tools with important applied significance, such as the Bulgarian adaptation of the adolescent version of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-A), and the Bulgarian version of the Multidimensional Questionnaire for Driving Styles also can be highlighted as valuable contribution of the additional publications submitted for evaluation.

Through the mentioned publications, the candidate demonstrates a convincing and sustainable presence in the academic field of the competition; thoroughness, systematicity and diversity of her scientific works.

3. *Citation by other authors*

The candidate presents 9 of the citations of her work in peer-reviewed and indexed editions in global databases according to the provided reference. As per this indicator, her scientific work also fulfils and even exceeds the requirements of the position of Associate Professor.

4. *Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the obtained results in practice*

According to the presented biographical report, from 2004 until now, the candidate has participated in 11 scientific and scientific-applied projects. Most of the projects have a strong practical implication in significant applied areas such as psychosocial interventions for addictions, prevention of risky driving behavior.

5. *Scientific contribution, originality of the presented works and authenticity of the presented scientific data*

The scientific contribution of the presented works is convincing and diverse. No grounds were found to doubt the authenticity of the presented scientific data and results.

II. Teaching and lecturer activities

From February 2020 until now Dr. Rositsa Racheva is an external lecturer at the Sofia university “St. Kliment Ohridski”, teaching a course on “Alcohol and drug use in adolescence” in the master's program “Child adolescent and school psychology”.

III. Administrative and public activities

Currently Dr. Rositsa Racheva is actively involved in a number of administrative activities: she is the chairman of the Ethics Commission of IPHS – BAS, chairman of the Scientific Seminar of IPHS – BAS. She fulfils a number of important public and expert duties: currently she is a member of the State-Public Advisory Commission on road safety issues; a member of the Council for Cooperation with the Scientific and Academic

Community under the Chairman of the State Agency “Road Safety”, an expert at the Standing Committee on Transport and Traffic Safety at the City Council; she is a member of the local committee for combating anti-social behaviour among children and adolescents at the Lozenets district.

Dr. Racheva is a member of the Bulgarian Psychological Society and the Bulgarian Association for Cognitive-Behavioral Psychotherapy.

IV. Fulfilment of the requirements for holding the academic position

In my opinion, the candidate fully fulfils and, in some respects, exceeds the requirements for holding the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (Counseling psychology – personality and addictions).

V. Personal impressions of the candidate (if any)

I have favorable personal impressions of Dr Racheva both professionally and personally. I believe she enjoys a good professional and academic reputation, as well as respect in the professional community.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, my overall assessment of the criteria and indicators for the academic activity of Assistant Professor Rositsa Zhelyazkova Racheva, PhD is positive, as she fulfils the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRB, Art. 2b, Art. 24, Art. 26), 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 for holding the academic position “Associate Professor” in the professional field 3.2 Psychology (Counselling psychology – personality and addictions) and I propose her admission to election by the Scientific Council of the Institute for Population and Human Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Date: 20.10.2024 Signed: …….

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