

OPINION

By: *Prof. Ergyul Tair Redzheb, PhD, D.Sc.*
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Regarding: Public defence of a PhD thesis for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”, Area of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences; Professional field: 3.2 Psychology Department General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Doctoral candidate: *Maria Petrova Vassileva*

Dissertation title: *„Role of compassion to self and others for carrier success and life satisfaction ”*

Scientific jury member’s opinion is prepared following Order No ПД-38-150, 25.03.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

1. Information for the PhD student

Maria Petrova Vassileva is a doctoral student in the Department of “General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology” at the Faculty of Philosophy of the SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” in the scientific specialty 3.2. Psychology (Cultural and Differential Psychology). She obtained a master's degree in “International Economic Relations” from University of National and World Economy, Sofia (2000) and in “Business Administration” from HEC Montreal, Montreal (2007). She carried out training and consulting activities in the field of organizational change management, career development, efficiency and others in various international organizations (2008-2020).

2. General characteristics of the presented dissertation

The dissertation has a total volume of 208 pages (179 pages of main text), including: introduction; three chapters (theoretical, methodological, empirical results and discussion) conclusion and references. The presented content is adequately illustrated with 38 tables and 1 figure. The references contains 362 sources, mostly

in English, reflecting principal authors and research on compassion, personality, well-being, career and etc.

The presented manuscript is devoted to the topic of compassion, a subject of discussion from ancient times to the present day in most of the religious traditions and scientific fields. A topic compelling not only the minds of medieval theologians, but also modern researchers and publicists, as a basis for the development of significant areas such as education, justice or society in general. A research niche that is less researched was chosen, and the purpose of the dissertation was clearly formulated in the direction of an integrated approach to infer the role of compassion to self and others for career success and life satisfaction. The theoretical overview of the main dimensions studied presents definitions of the constructs, including the lack of accepted common definitions, the complex interrelationships between compassion (to self and others) and life satisfaction and career success. A multidimensional construct approach to compassion is adopted, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and motivational components. The origins of compassion to self and others are traced to the influence of parental environment and temperament, inferring connections with personality traits and self-esteem. A number of studies have been presented on the role that compassion play in individual well-being and career success.

Based on the in-depth and systematic theoretical review, a research model and five general hypotheses regarding the relationships between compassion and life satisfaction, objective and subjective career success, personality/self, and demographic characteristics are derived. The applied toolkit fully corresponds to the set goal and raised hypotheses. For the questionnaires that have not been adapted for Bulgarian conditions, a correct approval procedure has been applied. The research sample includes 320 persons, in which predominate female (81.5%), persons aged 40 to 50 (28.1%) and person with higher education (over 70%). The performed factor analyzes and the verification of the internal consistency of the items testify to very good psychometric characteristics of the instruments used. A good impression is made by the scientific style of the presentation and the awareness of the doctoral student, both in terms of phenomenon studies and in terms of the statistical methods used for data analysis. The obtained results are correctly presented and thoroughly analyzed. The overall impression of the dissertation can be summarized as a systematic theoretical study with a correctly derived model of empirical research, adequate statistical procedures for data processing and a reasoned interpretation of the obtained results. It should also be noted the critical view of the author represented by the objective attitude towards the limitations of the study.

3. Evaluation of the obtained scientific and scientific-applied results

The main scientific and scientific-applied results of the conducted research are located in the separate chapters of the dissertation, which is structured according to a classic pattern with clearly distinguished theoretical, methodological and analytical parts. The theoretical overview comprehensively presents the main constructs of the study: the essence and origin of compassion, the dimensions of compassion to self and others, the influence of various personal and cultural factors, the correlations of compassion with well-being (subjective and objective) and career success.

The empirical part of the dissertation is based on quantitative data that has been correctly statistically processed, and the obtained results partially confirm the hypotheses of the study. For example, the assumptions about a positive relationship between compassion and life satisfaction were confirmed in the part about to self ($r=.433$) and rather weakly in relation to others ($r=.029$). Regarding the predictive power of compassion, it was found that the commonets of compassion to self and others (helpfulness) explained 44% of the variance in life satisfaction. There is no statistically significant correlation between compassion to others and objective and subjective career success. There was a weak positive correlation of self-compassion with objective ($r=.022$) and subjective ($r=.035$) career success. In summary, compassion (to self, to others, helpfulness, etc.) was a predictor of subjective career success and explained 12% of the variance. The hypothesis of correlations between compassion and personality traits is also partially confirmed (four out of five traits correlated). Finally, with regard to demographic characteristics, it is found that compassion to others is higher in women and there are no gender differences in terms of compassion to self. This result should be interpreted with caution due to the gender dispropotion (81.5% female sample). Higher incomes and higher levels of education also have a differential effect on compassion to others, with lower levels of compassion being present compared to individuals with lower incomes and positions.

4. Evaluation of scientific and scientific-applied contributions

The dissertation has significant scientific and scientific-applied contributions, among which we have point out the in-depth review of a number of psychological constructs, on the basis of which an author's model was created that describes the relationships between the components of compassion and success (objective and subjective) in career and life satisfaction. As a result of the conducted research and analysis, confirmations of correlations already established in the literature between compassion and personality traits on the one hand, and with life satisfaction on the other hand, were found. The present study validates them in the Bulgarian context. The findings extend research on the predictive power of compassion in relation to

objective and subjective career success. The scales for compassion adapted for Bulgarian conditions (Self-compassion short form, Compassion to others and Fear of compassion to others), as well as the development of two new scales (Helpfulness and Objective Career success) complement the methods of the Bulgarian researchers with new tools. In a scientific-applied level, the results related to differences in compassion depending on income and position can be considered, which may have their application regarding the explanation of individual behavior in a work or social context.

5. Evaluation of dissertation publications

The author presented a list of six publications on the topic of the dissertation in scientific journals and/or proceedings from scientific forums that provide publicity of the topic in front of psychological community. The publications fully satisfy the minimum national requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” (57.5 points).

6. Evaluation of the summary of disertaion

The summary of dissertation has a volume of 43 pages in English and 48 pages in Bulgarian and correctly reflects both the structure and the content of the PhD thesis.

7. Critical notes, recommendations and questions

The dissertation was developed at a high scientific level, as my notes are more of a technical nature. For example, Table 1, which presents the distribution of the sample by gender (p.124) is presented in the summary with a discrepancy for women (p.18). Also, in some paragraphes there are spelling and grammatical errors that do not disturb the general positive impression of the presented work.

8. Conclusion

The dissertation of Maria Petrova Vassileva is a comprehensive and author's study, with an in-depth theoretical overview on compassion, job satisfaction and career success, with correctly illustrated theoretical model and empirical research. The set goals and tasks have been successfully fulfilled, and scientific results have been achieved. I believe that the presented dissertation meets the mandatory requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act

(DASRB), the Rules for the Application of the DASRB, and the internal normative documents of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” for awarding the educational and scientific degree “doctor”. All this gives me the reason to give my positive assessment for the dissertation on the topic “Role of compassion to self and others for carrier success and life satisfaction” and to propose to the respected members of the scientific jury to award Maria Petrova Vassileva the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in area of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field: 3.2 Psychology.

May, 12th, 2024

Signature:

(Prof. Ergyul Tair, PhD, D.Sc.)