

SOFIA UNIVERSITY “ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI”

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

STATEMENT

From Prof. Sonya Karabeliova, PhD

on the topic of a doctoral thesis:

“Role of compassion to self and others for career success and life satisfaction”

for the attainment of the educational and scientific degree of 'Doctor' in the field of 3.2 'Psychology' (Cultural and Differential Psychology)

Author of the doctoral thesis: Maria Petrova Vassileva

1. Relevance and Significance of the Developed Scientific Problem

The dissertation is devoted to a relatively new topic in the field of differential psychology. The relevance of the topic refers to the relationship of compassion with life satisfaction and career success, which contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological aspects of success in the professional realization of the personality. The significance of the researched issues is enhanced by the fact that the dissertation also presents data on the relationship of compassion to others and to oneself as a construct with success and career and have an effect on the sense of well-being and quality of life.

2. Understanding of the Problem

The work provides an overview of numerous theoretical approaches for the analyzed constructs, which is an indicator of the in-depth knowledge of the existing concepts on the developed topic. This is supported by the bibliography of the dissertation, which includes 362 literary sources,

predominantly in English. The presented analysis of the theoretical material on the topic showcases the candidate's ability to research, analyze, synthesize, and draw conclusions regarding key concepts in the work.

3. Research Methodology

The chosen research methodology aligns with the objectives and tasks of the dissertation. The following scales and questionnaires were used:

- Compassion to others (Pommier, Neff, Toth-Kiraly, 2019),
- Compassionate Love Scale developed (Sprecher and Fehr, 2005)
- Self-Compassion Short form scale (Raes et al., 2011),
- Fear of Compassion scale (Gilbert et al., 2011),
- Helpfulness Scale,
- Objective career success scale,
- Subjective career success scale (Greenhaus et al., 1990),
- Personality traits Scale according to the “Big Five” Model (MINI IPIP - Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006
- Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985)
- Self-liking and self-competence Scale (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995, 2001).

Socio-demographic data of the participants were also collected. The chosen instruments were carefully selected and relevant to the study's objectives.

4. Characterization and Evaluation of the Dissertation Work and Contributions

The title of the dissertation work fully corresponds to the researched problems. The wording used in the title provides a generalized description of the thematic framework of the study. The doctoral candidate has collected data that are part of the planned research area.

The work is structured into an introduction, theoretical and empirical sections, conclusion, and bibliography.

The conceptualization of each category begins with a historical perspective and continues with an analytical tracing of different viewpoints, supported by the analysis of numerous specific studies.

The dissertation is developed within 208 standard pages and contains an introduction, three main chapters, structured from the perspective of the theoretical and empirical study of the issue, conclusion, and bibliography. The used literary sources are relevant to the researched issue, with most of them from the last 10-15 years, which further contributes to a high evaluation. The dissertation includes 38 tables and 1 figure.

In the theoretical part of the work, the theoretical approaches to sympathy are presented in detail. Definitions of the constructs, the empathy process, and the origins and flow of empathy are described. The doctoral student pays attention to the fear of sympathy depending on the direction: fear of sympathy from others, fear of sympathy for others, and fear of sympathy for oneself. The relationships of empathy with attachment style and emotion regulation are also examined. A separate paragraph presents the interrelationship of the constructs of empathy with personality and self, personality traits, and self-esteem. A special place in the first chapter of the dissertation is devoted to research on the role of compassion for others and for oneself in relation to individual well-being and career success. In this regard, numerous studies have been described that establish a connection of sympathy with the physical and mental health of the individual. Additionally, this development paragraph describes definitions of career success (objective and subjective) and relationships with the constructs of compassion.

All of this supports the ideas of the doctoral candidate, on which the theoretical and empirical model of the study is built. In this sense, it can be said that this allows for the derivation of a theoretical framework of key concepts, the relationship between which is exhaustively discussed.

The content of the literature review corresponds to the research theme and presents views on the essence of the analyzed concepts and reported results in the literature regarding the relationships between them. The chosen structure of the presentation demonstrates a detailed and in-depth understanding of the subject matter.

The empirical part of the dissertation is conditionally divided into two chapters.

The second chapter of the dissertation presents the setup of the empirical study and the justification of the theoretical model of the study. It includes the aims, tasks, hypotheses, and methods of the dissertation work. The aims and tasks are clearly formulated. Five main hypotheses regarding the relationships between the analyzed constructs are put forward.

The doctoral candidate approaches the resolution of the set tasks with scientific seriousness and chooses an adequate approach. The set goals and tasks, as well as the nature of the presumed dependencies between the studied constructs, determine the statistical methods applied in the data analysis. These methods include techniques from descriptive and deductive statistics, used to establish the variation of the studied phenomena among different respondents and their interrelationships.

In this part of the dissertation, the questionnaires and scales used for the empirical study are correctly described, along with the methodology and procedure of the research.

In a separate paragraph presents the sample on which the empirical study was conducted, describing the respondents, the psychometric characteristics of the used questionnaires and scales, based on the results of the applied factor analyses and those for testing internal consistency.

My remarks concerning this section are technical. I believe that in the main text of the dissertation, it is not necessary to present separate tables with results for the reliability of subscales from individual questionnaires. The data can be indicated in the tables with the results of factor analyses. The tables containing results from analyses of internal consistency can be placed in the appendices. Despite these notes, I consider that the doctoral candidate has correctly managed one of her main task.

In the third chapter of the dissertation, the results of the applied deductive statistical methods are presented, demonstrating the differences in the studied constructs depending on the investigated demographic factors, as well as the relationships between phenomena. The results include data from:

- T-tests and one-way ANOVA for independent samples to test significant differences in the studied phenomena based on demographic characteristics;

- Correlation analyses to examine the relationships between the studied phenomena;
- Regression analysis to test the effects of personality traits and professional characteristics on alexithymia and its facets. Additionally, the effect of overall alexithymia on certain personality traits, life satisfaction, and professional well-being has been examined.

The results of the applied statistical analyses are accurately described. The presented tabular and graphical material is of good quality and high utility. My only technical note for this section is that presenting the results in tabular form does not imply their detailed description in the text.

At the end of this chapter, a presentation and summary of the obtained results are provided, along with a detailed discussion of the verification of the raised hypotheses. The application of the obtained results to practice is also discussed.

The positive evaluation of the obtained results can be recognized through the following analyses and summaries of the conducted study:

- a. Appropriate questionnaires and scales have been selected, whose psychometric characteristics meet the research standards. Some of the methodologies are applied for the first time in the Bulgarian socio-cultural context.
- b. The empirical approach provides data for establishing causal relationships and dependencies, allowing hypotheses to be tested with high reliability.
- c. I believe that the summaries and comparative analyses with data from other studies are adequate and have specific practical applicability in consultancy practice.

In the conclusion of the dissertation, the main results are briefly presented, discussing their application in consultancy practice.

The main contribution of the dissertation work is the in-depth critical and comparative analysis of the obtained data with similar studies. The conclusions are relevant to the objectives and objectively reflect the research results. They demonstrate Maria Vassileva's competence to analyze and interpret results from empirical studies and to draw conclusions for practical

applications. All of this serves as an indicator of her deep research interest in the examined issues.

The contributions are clearly formulated and well-supported with arguments, objectively reflecting the achievements of the dissertation work. The presented contributions could be further expanded in terms of the practical applicability of the entire development.

5. Critical Remarks

My critical remarks are mainly technical in nature and do not diminish the significance of the dissertation research.

6. Abstract

I believe that the abstract reflects the main parameters of the topic, presenting both theoretical analyses and experimental results. The text fully meets the requirements.

Maria Vassileva presents six publications, four of which are independent and two co-authored. Additionally, four reports are described – 3 independent and 1 co-authored.

7. Recommendations

My recommendations to the doctoral candidate pertain to continuing and deepening the research from the perspective of professional burnout, especially among doctors and medical professionals, as this would further contribute to her work. Additionally, based on the results of the research, a handbook could be developed using the utilized tools to serve as a quick screening and diagnostic tool for specialists.

CONCLUSION

Maria Vassileva's dissertation work represents a comprehensive and in-depth study of a current scientific topic, with the obtained results having potential applications in consultancy practice. The dissertation and its related publications meet the requirements and bibliometric criteria of the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulation

for its implementation for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor."

Considering the relevance of the dissertation's topic, the in-depth theoretical analysis of the research data, and the successfully conducted study, I confidently give my positive evaluation and recommend that the members of the Academic Jury vote positively for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" to **Maria Petrova Vassileva in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (Cultural and Differential Psychology)**.

22/05/2024

Sofia

Reviewer:

(Prof. Sonya Karabeliova, PhD)