

OPINION

regarding the dissertation work of Vaska Zdravkova on the topic:
"The possibilities of cognitive - behavioral psychotherapy to manage depressive states in developmental dyslexia"

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Vaska Zdravkova's dissertation is written on 170 pages, divided into 3 chapters, conclusion, recommendations, bibliography and appendices. The bibliography consists of 214 titles in Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, Croatian and English. On the topic of the dissertation, Vaska Zdravkova has 5 publications in scientific publications. The text is illustrated with 5 figures and 10 tables. This structure meets the requirements for this kind of scientific development.

In recent years, scientific interest in dyslexia has grown, both in terms of identification and etiology, and in terms of developing and adapting therapeutic strategies. Therapeutic programs are usually aimed at overcoming underlying neuropsychological deficits. Traditional treatment programs focus on school skills and often neglect emotional and behavioral symptoms.

Dyslexic syndrome affects different areas on functioning: impressive and expressive speech, readings skills, reading understanding, writing skills, comprehension of the written, mathematical skills and math thinking. The clinical picture is complemented by emotional disorders and behavioral deviations, which further complicate the mastery of basic school skills. Vaska Zdravkova's dissertation is on a current topic. The approach to treating developmental dyslexia is innovative and unconventional.

As the doctoral student rightly notes, over 60 definitions of developmental dyslexia can be found in the specialized literature. Very often, however, the content value of the different definitions is identical. In connection with this is the first positive side of the dissertation work. Vaska Zdravkova has successfully navigated and presented adequately and critically presents numerous definitions and etiological theories. A critical analysis of the available literature was made, highlighting both the positive aspects and the "white spots". The approach adopted

by the doctoral student is to use the two diagnostic reference books - DSM and ICD. She draws on the bio-psycho-social model, specifying that dyslexic symptoms can be of different value in this model. This implies assessment at the biological, cognitive and behavioral levels. In this way, Vaska Zdravkova smoothly moves to the main goal of the dissertation work - to assess the level of depression and the possibilities of CBP in children with dyslexia.

Difficulties in the acquisition of basic school skills, already demonstrated in the first grades, have an impact on emotional regulation and behavioral patterns. It is these difficulties that have a negative impact on mental states, quality of life, self-esteem and lead to the experience of difference, inadequacy, anxiety and sadness. Children with dyslexia are sensitive to rejection, show high levels of anxiety, depression, which often deepen the manifestations of dyslexia.

Depression is consistently seen in the teenage years of developmental dyslexia carriers. For children with dyslexia, going to school is accompanied by emotional stress, which gradually becomes chronic and leads to depression. There are a low self-esteem, with social isolation, as well as comorbidity with anxiety or syndrome on deficit on attention and hyperactivity. These other conditions can increase the risk of depression.

Dyslexia contributes to the development of a sense of frustration that manifests itself in various social situations. The frustration leads to anger toward schools, teachers, parents, and peers that forms dysfunctional thoughts of self, others, the world, and the future. This disrupts interactions with others, leads to isolation, self-isolation, aggression, etc.

Cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy aims to change negative dysfunctional thoughts and beliefs, but also to arm the patient with skills that they will be able to use in problematic situations in everyday life.

In the chapter "Organization of the study" the purpose, research tasks and hypotheses of the empirical study are clearly and accurately formulated. The hypotheses concern the effectiveness of the interventions - traditional therapy and CBP.

74 participants aged 7-13 were included in the study: 38 subjected to cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy and 36 to generally accepted, usual therapy.

The groups were mirrored in terms of age, educational status, level of depression, voluntary participation, and diagnosed dyslexia.

The results of the empirical study provide evidence of a significant reduction in depressive symptoms and negative automatic thoughts, as well as improved social functioning and adjustment compared to usual therapy. Behavioral activation and cognitive restructuring have been tested and recommended. The features of the checkpoint in childhood are competently and clearly described. There is also a place in the sessions for psychoeducation, tailored to the age and educational status of the examined children. The described approaches and interventions have an important practical application in the studied persons. The approach is innovative, but it proves its validity, although depressive symptoms are intervened and not dyslexia directly. Based on the results of the empirical research, recommendations were formulated, which also have their practical value.

5 articles on the topic of the dissertation are presented. The dissertation is written in good language and style.

I have no significant comments on the content of the dissertation, except for the imprecise use of some terms (e.g. therapy/treatment) and insufficient clarification of the essence of the so-called usual therapy.

Conclusion

Bearing in mind the topicality of the topic, the innovative approach to dyslexia therapy, the practical value of the dissertation work, with full conviction I propose to the Honorable Scientific Jury to award Vaska Zdravkova the educational and scientific degree DOCTOR in 3.2. Psychology, Clinical Psychology.

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Signature

(Prof. Ludmil Georgiev, Ph.D., Ph.D.)