

REVIEW

BY PROF. Dr. TATIANA SIMEONOVA IVANOVA, PhD

DIRECTOR OF SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL DIRECTORATE

In "ACIBADEM CITY CLINIC UMBAL TOKUDA" EAD

Subject: Dissertation for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.4. Public health, doctoral program "Public Health Management".

Author: Nadezhda Bozhidarova Mihailova - Georgieva

Form of doctoral study: Independent form of study

Scientific unit: Department of "Social Medicine and Health Care Organization", Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, Faculty of Public Health

Topic: "Child mortality in Bulgaria-health-political and cultural-historical aspects"

Research supervisor: Prof. Dr. Klara Dokova, PhD

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

The review was prepared on the basis of Order No. R-109-23/29.01.2024 to the Rector of the Medical University - Varna for my election as a member of the Scientific Jury and on the basis of Protocol No. 1 /08.02.2024. for my appointment to prepare a review of the procedure for acquiring the PhD with candidate Nadezhda Bozhidarova Mihaylova Georgieva and in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Application of the ZRASRB (PRZRAS) and the Development Regulations of the academic staff of the Medical University - Varna.

The presented set of materials and documents by Nadezhda Bozhidarova Mihaylova - Georgieva is in accordance with the requirements of the specified normative documents.

The dissertation work has been discussed and directed for public defense by the Faculty Council of the Department of Social Medicine and Health Care Organization. (Minutes 1/10/01/2024).

Nadezhda Mihailova was born on September 24, 1981 in the city of Varna. She completed his secondary education in 2000. - Frédéric Joliot Curie Language High School, city of Varna with a foreign language profile - French.

She has completed: 1 bachelor's degree at the Free University of Varna, majoring in "International Relations", as well as 2 master's degrees: Medical University of Varna - majoring in "Public Health" – 2018 and Free University - Varna, specialty "International Negotiations". She speaks several foreign languages - English, French, Russian, Spanish.

Since 2023, she has been a part-time teacher at Varna Medical University, teaching the following disciplines: Introduction to Public Health, Information Systems and Technologies, Introduction to Health Informatics.

From 2018 until now she works as an organizer at Varna Medical University, Department of Health Care. She is involved in a number of projects: "Prevention of drug addiction among students" - Roma ethnic group. The project was financed by the Municipality of Varna - 2004; Cost of Inaction Pilot Bulgaria Discussion, financed by UNICEF - 2021; DAFNE - 2010-2011, financed by the European commission No. 21024 "Child mortality in Bulgaria - a source of new approaches for optimizing children's health care" - Project under the Science Fund of MU-Varna 2021-2024.

She has systematically participated in a number of courses, both as an organizer, scientific editor, and as a participant in international and national scientific forums.

Nadezhda Mihailova is a member of a number of organizations: Bulgarian Association for Public Health, European Association for Public Health (EUPHA), NGO Public Health - 99", Bulgarian Society for the History of Medicine.

2. Relevance of the topic

The dissertation is dedicated to an extremely topical problem - the high level of child mortality in our country, a concentrated indicator for assessing the social and health well-being of the population. Despite the drastic reduction in the level of child mortality over the last 120 years (from 35 to 60 times) in the European region, problems remain. They are particularly alarming on a national scale, due to the fact that, despite the sharp reduction in infant mortality from 155% in 1922 to 5.1% in 2020, Bulgaria has been in the last places on this indicator in the EU for the last 25 years.

The need to deepen studies on the problem, to obtain comprehensive information about the factors that determine the high level of child mortality and the ways to achieve success in reducing it, motivated the doctoral student to choose this undeniably relevant topic.

3. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions

Nadezhda Mihailova's dissertation is written in a volume of 154 pages, illustrated with 18 figures, 10 tables and 6 appendices. It is properly structured and includes the following sections: Abbreviations and symbols used - 2 pages; Introduction - 2 pages; Four chapters: Chapter One - Literature review - 41 pages; Second chapter: Aim and tasks, hypotheses and methods - 8 pages; Chapter Three: Results and Discussion with Summary - 50 pages; Chapter four: Conclusions, contributions - 4 pages.

The bibliographic reference contains 218 sources, of which 79 are in Cyrillic and 139 are in Latin.

In the introduction, the problem is well formulated and the purpose of the dissertation is justified.

The literature review is extremely well structured and logically follows the course of the research. The historical view of the development of the assessment of child mortality based on the introduction of the mandatory registration of vital events, the fight against child mortality, the contribution of the development of medical science, with special attention paid to the determinants influencing the level of child mortality is very well presented. In the form of conclusions, the factual prerequisites for the study are very correctly presented.

The purpose of the dissertation work is formulated clearly and precisely in accordance with the topic of the dissertation - "to study the dynamics of child mortality in Bulgaria in a health-political context for the period 1950-2020 and to assess the role of cultural and organizational factors in achieving favorable trends'.

In order to fulfill the purpose, 5 tasks have been formed, which contribute to the fulfillment of the purpose of the dissertation work and determine the conduct of a theoretical-historical study, analysis of child mortality in Bulgaria in a European context with the period 1950-2020, a structured survey, a qualitative study of the meaning of ethno-cultural factors, which I believe covers the entire spectrum of the problem.

The researched material is diverse and sufficient in volume to meet the set goals and tasks - a long period of 70 years with a sub-period (1960-2020) was followed in terms of the dynamics of total child mortality, as well as the dynamics of neonatal, early neonatal and post-neonatal child mortality in the context of two groups of factors - legislative initiatives and their practical application for the protection of motherhood and childhood and interregional differences in indicators for the period 2000-2019.

Mothers' readiness for childbirth and child care in the period up to 1 year was studied on the basis of a survey among 249 women using a questionnaire containing 30 questions.

In an in-depth interview (qualitative study) of the influence of ethno-cultural factors on mothers of Roma origin, 11 women were included, which is a sufficient number for conducting this type of research.

The statistical research methods used are diverse and adequate and are a guarantee of credibility and applicability of the established results and the conclusions drawn.

Results and discussion

The dissertation work is distinguished by exceptional accuracy and specificity regarding the analyzed results in fulfillment of the set goals and tasks of the research.

The in-depth study of the trends in child mortality in Bulgaria (1950-2020), in a European context and the differences between the indicators for the six regions of Bulgaria for a twenty-year period (2000-2019) establishes very important facts that should be taken into account at the present moment, such as: how the opening in Bulgaria of hospital structures to deal with newborn children with increased risk had a favorable effect on the RNS indicators in the 1960s and 1970s and how the presence of factors for increasing the number of newborns at risk (early births, low socio-economic status, deterioration of the educational structure of young mothers and others), lead to negative results

Also extremely important is the established fact that in Bulgaria there is a permanent regional inequality in child mortality - general and specific - age, which continues to deepen.

Mothers' contacts with the most important structures of the health system for them show the importance of women's consultation, the maternity hospital, compliance with the Children's Health program for home visits by a doctor and for advice on raising the child, children's consultation, i.e. these are important organizational points that should always be taken into account when identifying measures to reduce the level of child mortality.

In the qualitative study conducted by the author, the interviewed mothers of Roma origin note the presence of discriminatory moments in contacts with some health structures, which can play a role as barriers to the access and use of health care by pregnant women and children, which practically means that there are educational, ethnic and cultural differences in maternal awareness and behaviour.

Conclusions and contributions: The conclusion corresponds to the obtained results. Nadezhda Mihailova logically draws 11 conclusions regarding the trends in the level of child mortality and the factors that determine the corresponding level and can be influenced by specific strategies and measures. The conclusions are concise and fully correspond to the obtained results. The contributions of the dissertation are 8 - 5 with a theoretical and 3 - with an emphasized scientific-applied and methodical character. I fully accept them as presented by the author.

I highly appreciate the development of Nadezhda Mihailova in several directions: it is dedicated to an extremely topical problem, a large-scale in-depth study is presented, a long time interval is examined, allowing to objectively determine the periods of rise and fall of the indicator, for the first time in Bulgaria included a study of regional differences in child mortality indicators, the qualitative study has an independent high scientific value, as it examines ethno-cultural differences, the analysis is correct and the recommendations made are of high practical value.

4. The abstract meets the legal requirements. It is written on 86 pages, and fully reflects the results presented in the dissertation work. In an overview and clear way, in a summarized form, it gives an idea of the overall design of the work, the methods, the results and the main conclusions.

5. Assessment of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

Nadezhda Mihailova contributed 2 publications as an independent and first author in a national journal (Social Medicine) and 1 participation as a first author in a scientific forum with international participation (the article was published with scientific review). This scientific activity is sufficient to show that the doctoral student is consistent in her scientific activity and meets the national minimum requirements for the educational and scientific degree "PhD".

I believe that the topic examined by the doctoral student is among the important issues of modern public health care and presents a thorough and consistent assessment of child mortality, which remains

a major problem in health care around the world, and especially in Bulgaria. It continues to be a main topic of discussion, but in most cases the facts established and the directions indicated for its reduction remain without consequences.

In this regard, I would like to point out that the conclusions and recommendations, which are based on the material and conclusions of the study, are distinguished not only by theoretical, but also by high practical value and can serve as a basis for building a modern national program to reduce child mortality

CONCLUSION

The dissertation is dedicated to an extremely topical problem, contains scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied results that represent an original contribution to science, expanding our knowledge in the field of public health, and specifically, in relation to child mortality. It is written in a strictly scientific style, in a nice Bulgarian language. It is well structured, the most appropriate methods are used to achieve the goal, the analysis made is extremely thorough, with very good visualization. It meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at the MU-Varna. Nadezhda Mihailova has completed all the tasks and activities set out in the individual study plan. With the presented materials, the doctoral student shows qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

This is the reason to give my positive assessment and to confidently recommend to the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to positively evaluate the dissertation work on the topic "Child mortality in Bulgaria - health - political and cultural - historical aspects" and to award Nadezhda Bozhidarova Mihailova - Georgieva the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the field of Higher Education 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.4. Public Health, Doctoral Program "Public Health Management".

05/18/2024

REVIEWER:

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
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2016/679

(Prof. Dr. Tatiana Ivanova, PhD)