

## **OPINION**

**by prof. Silviya Borisova Tsvetkova, DCLinPsy**

Medical University-Pleven

for doctoral thesis

**„Psychological Aspects of Gambling Behavior”**

**by Petya Dimitrova Petkova**

PhD student in full-time education in PhD programme “Medical Psychology”

(enlisted by order № P-109-293/9.07.2021) professional direction 3.2.

Psychology, university education sphere: 3. Social, economical and legal sciences

**Scientific supervisor: prof. Ivan Aleksandov, DPsySc**

With Order № P 109-271/5.08.2024 issued by the Rector of Medical University/MU/ “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov”-Varna, in view of report under entrance № 102-2070/24.07.2024 by prof. Dr. Petar Milchev Petrov, PhD in MS – head of Department “Psychiatry and Medical Psychology” and with decision after Protocol №25/29.07.2024 of Faculty Council and report under entrance № 103-3752/30.07.2024 by prof. Dr. Yoto Trifonov Yotov, PhD in MS – Dean of Faculty “Medicine” at MU-Varna, I have been appointed as external member of the Scientific Jury. On its first session I have been appointed to present standpoint for the doctoral thesis on theme “Psychological Aspects of Gambling Behaviour” for awarding educational and scientific degree “doctor” in university education sphere: 3.Social, economical and legal sciences, professional direction 3.2. Psychology, PhD programme “Medical Psychology” to Petya Dimitrova Petkova.

### **Short biographic data and career development of the PhD candidate**

Petya Petkova graduated Journalism, Bachelor’s degree at Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabur” in 1998. In 2019 she graduated Master degree “Psychology and Developmental Psychopathology” at Varna Free University. In 2021, she was enlisted as PhD candidate (full-time doctoral studies) at Department “Psychiatry and Medical Psychology” in Medical University-Varna.

The professional and labour record of the PhD candidate passes from advertiser’s editor through operational accountant, technical assistant, forwarding agent to psychologist in Center for Social Rehabilitation and Integration of

Disabled Children/CSRIDC/ and Center for Social Rehabilitation and Integration of Disabled Women/CSRIDW/-Varna. Then, during March and April, 2023, she held exercise classes - total of 22 academic hours in "Medical psychology", for students in specialty "Medicine" and "Dental Medicine" at MU-Varna. For the period 2009-2019 she participated in three projects as expert-trainer and mentor.

She complied with all scientific-metric requirements of Regulation for Academic Staff Development (RASD)-Varna in connection with the doctoral studies and by Rector's order she has been stroke off with the right of defense. For this procedure have been stated no infringements.

### **General Characteristics of Doctoral Thesis**

The volume of the presented doctoral studies amounts up to 143 pages and contains 44 tables, 29 figures and 3 annexes. The reference includes 271 literary sources, 34 are in Cyrillic and the rest are in Latin alphabet. The structure of this doctoral thesis comprises three main chapters and three titles. It contains: Introduction; First Chapter-Reference Review; Second Chapter- Methodology of empiric survey (presents also its results); Third Chapter-Discussion of Results. The conclusions, restrictions and future trends and contributions are formulated as titles. There are three annexes and a reference list.

### **Actuality and content of the doctoral thesis**

Behavioral dysfunction in gambling-orientated personalities is strongly manifested and leads to inconsequential and inappropriate behavior, serious communication disorders; the ability of taking rationally thought-of decisions is seriously impacted and this results to disability to achieve personal success in almost all life spheres. The gambling addiction is determined as the most difficult for reaction to psychotherapy and treatment; the suicidal actions are the most frequent among the groups of addicted persons. For this reason, the prevention of gambling behavior appears of exceptional importance and pressing necessity.

The volume of literature review is 68 pages and consists of five separate sections: evolutionary origin of gambling behavior, factor impact on gambling, deviation in gambling and clinical criteria, theoretical and methodological aspects, emotional regulators and affectivity of behavior. From the thoroughly studied literature the PhD student draws ten conclusions that give her the ground for the structure of Second Chapter: Methodology of empiric study,



including the results, as well. The goal of study is to design a screening method for gambling behavior assessment. Six tasks and five hypotheses are being formulated. The applied methods are: Scale surveying the necessity to seek profound experiences and sensibilities (M.Tsukerman), Diagnostics of the risk readiness rate of Shubert (PSK), as well as a Method for Screening of Gambling Behavior (MSGB). For results' processing has been applied statistical package SPSS.

Object of this study are a total of 242 persons, all divided in separate groups - 193 students from MU-Varna and Varna Free University (without gambling behavior) and 49 persons (with gambling behavior), hospitalized in "Psychiatric Clinics" at UMHAT "Sveta Marina"-Varna, Second psychiatric clinic, "Narcology". The PhD student has applied hybrid form for data collection.

In the Second Chapter are presented both the results of this study and the statistically established relations between structure items of the applied methods, as well as these between the different methods. It is reasonable to make this in the Third Chapter.

The numbering of the figures and tables, which richly illustrate and determine the commented results, could be refined.

The self-structured and adapted method (Method for screening of gambling behavior/MSGB) clearly demonstrates its importance and reliability through internal consistency survey and its relations with other applied methods. Items in this method are classified in compliance with the person characteristics: motivation, sensation seeking, inclination to risk taking, impulsivity, attitudes and subjective norms, behavioral control and adherence models. ROC analysis allows the results to be presented by the indicator "susceptibility" and it is being used to assess the classification effectiveness in MSGB. Third Chapter "Discussion of Results" appears comparatively short. It is focused on the applied statistical analyses and illustrates the possessed meaningful parameters thus determining also the high advisability for this method application for such goals. The conclusions follow in a logical manner the executed analyses by making generalizations and syntheses. From the point of view of the content, the conclusions provide an answer to the formulated hypotheses. In "Restrictions and future trends" the PhD student points out that the scale-structured method is rather connected with the gambling inclination/aptitude/ and commitment outside the clinical criteria for determination of the gambling behavior presence. She finds out the difference between the screening method at "problem with gambling" and at "gambling disorder".

The contributions emphasize on: Development of conceptual model for gambling behavior survey and establishment of a 'Gambling Behavior Screening Methodology' (MSGB).

**The author's summary** reflects the most significant features of the doctoral thesis and gives a clear idea of the conducted surveys.

In connection with the doctoral thesis theme are published five full-text works, whose sole author is the PhD student.

### **Conclusion**

This doctoral thesis **“Psychological Aspects of Gambling Behavior”** treats an actual and significant theme for contemporary society. It is developed in compliance with the requirements of scientific research and its character covers both theory/cognition and practice/application aspects. It complies with the requirements of Law for Development of Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria and Regulation for application of the above-mentioned law in Medical University-Varna.

In connection with the above-mentioned, I give my positive assessment and recommendations to the respected Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree **“doctor”** in scientific specialty “Medical Psychology” in the university education sphere: 3. Social, economical and legal sciences, professional sphere 3.2 Psychology to **Petya Dimitrova Petkova**.

7<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Prepared by:

(prof. Silviya Tsvetkova, DCLinPsy)

Заличено на основание чл. 5, §1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС) 2016/679
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