

R E V I E W

on a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, (Medical Psychology), for the needs of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, Veliko Tarnovo Branch, Department of "Health Care" and the Fourth Psychiatric Clinic at the University Hospital "St. Marina" EAD - Varna, announced in the State Gazette No. 85 of 08.10.2024

Reviewer:

Valeri Stoilov Stoyanov

Professor in the professional field 3.2. Psychology,

Doctor of Sciences

Varna * 2025

1. General presentation of the materials received for the competition

The competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, specialty "Medical Psychology", is for the needs of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, Veliko Tarnovo Branch, Department of "Health Care" and the Fourth Psychiatric Clinic at the University Hospital "St. Marina" EAD – Varna and was announced in the State Gazette No. 85 of 08.10.2024.

The review was assigned by decision of the Scientific Jury, determined by Order of the Rector of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna No. R - 109 - 444 of 05.12.2024.

The only candidate in the competition is Chief Assistant Professor Veronika Ivanova, PhD, from the Medical University - Varna. The submitted documents meet the basic requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University - Varna.

Chief Assistant Professor Veronika Ivanova, PhD, proposes 26 scientific papers for review in connection with the competition, as follows:

- 1. Monograph:** Ivanova, V. (2020). Family Psychodynamics and Adolescence. An Attempt to Understand the Teenager: City center.
- 2. Publications in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information** – 5 pcs. of which 2 pcs. independent and the rest in co-authorship.
- 3. Articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes** – 20 pcs. (8 in co-authorship, 12 independently), of which 11 in English.

A reference is presented for the noted citations, as well as the required documents for participation in the competition.

The scientific works proposed for review are outside the works specified in the abstract of the dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" and are accepted for review.

With the scientific works submitted for participation in the competition, the acquired PhD and the noted citations, Chief Assistant Professor Veronika Ivanova, meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position "Associate Professor", field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, according to the Annex to Art. 1a, para. 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (New - SG, issue 56 of 2018, in force from 06.07.2018) - Minimum national requirements for the scientific, teaching and/or artistic or sports activities of candidates for acquiring a scientific degree and for holding the academic positions "Chief

Assistant", "Associate Professor" and "Professor" in field 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology.

2. Candidate data

Chief Assistant Professor Veronika Ivanova is a graduate of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", where in 2005 she obtained the Bachelor's degree in psychology, and in 2007 - Master's degree in psychology, specialty "Clinical and Consultative Psychology". In 2011 she successfully completed specialization and acquired the specialty "Clinical Psychologist" at the Medical University - Varna. In 2016 she also obtained the PhD in Psychology (Medical Psychology) at the Medical University - Varna. The topic of the dissertation is: "Influence of family relationships and parent-child relationships on anxiety expression in preschool children".

Since 2010, Veronika Ivanova has been a clinical psychologist at the University Hospital "St. Marina" - Varna, successively "Assistant Professor" and "Chief Assistant Professor" in medical psychology at the Department of "Health Care" - Veliko Tarnovo branch of the Medical University - Varna. She is a member of the Society of Psychologists in Bulgaria.

The educational profile, the acquired qualification as a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, the accumulated professional experience as a clinical psychologist and lecturer at the Medical University - Varna by Veronika Ivanova, PhD, are in line with the requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (Medical Psychology), according to Art. 53, para. (1), items 1 and 2 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as Art. 125. (1) of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at the Medical University - Varna and are a prerequisite for subsequent scientific and professional growth.

3. General characteristics and assessment of the candidate's scientific output

The scientific interests of Veronika Ivanova, PhD, are entirely in the field of medical, clinical psychology and developmental psychology and are in harmony with the achievements of modern psychology in these thematic fields.

The habilitation work with which Veronika Ivanova, Ph.D., is applying for the competition is: Ivanova, V. (2020). Family Psychodynamics and Adolescence. An Attempt to Understand the Teenager: City Center. ISBN 978-619-7503-11-1. (Reviewers: Prof. Ivan Alexandrov, Ph.D. and Assoc. Prof. Diana Dimitrova, Ph.D.)

The monograph is undoubtedly dedicated to a topical issue for developmental psychology and clinical psychology, which is currently poorly represented in the scientific works of experts in our country. Adolescence is part of the life cycle in humans, during which the most dynamic processes of emotional and social maturation of the child, ultimately of personal development, take place. The behavior and experiences of the adolescent are determined on the one hand hormonally, but on the other hand it is the "struggle" to achieve ego-identity by the individual, to find the boundaries

between him, his parents and peers, to make sense of the essential and significant things in life, i.e. values. This "struggle" of the adolescent is not for himself, it is not isolated from the micro- and macro-environment. It also involves the family system, which is subjected to serious tests. The dynamic development of society, its globalization, leads to the "blurring" of values and the uniqueness of subcultures. Social media and virtual space in general offer many and contradictory values and approaches to solving life problems, which further complicate the "social maturation" of the adolescent. All this suggests, given the importance of adolescence for the future well-being of people, an even more intensive and systematic study of this period of human development.

Veronika Ivanova's monograph responds precisely to this public need. She offers us her reading of the peculiarities of dynamic mental processes in adolescents, their experiences and the causes of their suffering at certain moments and periods. All this is based on the author of the monograph's extensive experience as a clinical psychologist in the psychiatric clinics of the "St. Marina" Hospital - Varna.

Starting the monograph with the chapter "Theoretical aspects in the study of family dynamics in adolescence", the author presents us with the complexity of the individual's transition from childhood to adolescence and the possible perspectives of personal development. The issue is successfully analyzed within its systemic dimensions, outlining the dynamic relationships in the adolescent's family system. On this basis, the influence of the maternal and paternal authority on the development of both the healthy personality and their "complicity" in the development of pathological conditions in adolescents is clearly shown.

Adolescence is a stage of age development in which the individual strives to begin to exist autonomously, through himself, by reducing the influence of his parents. However, this process is often associated with crises, which are most often observed behaviorally either as provocation, as deviant or criminal behavior, or as oppression, depression. There is also a significant share of a group of adolescents who deviate most strongly from the normal process of psychosocial maturation in adolescence. Their psychosocial development is in the direction of mental illness, anorexia, suicide or drug use.

By presenting various cases from her consultative and clinical practice, Veronika Ivanova successfully operationalizes theoretical models and concepts and introduces the reader to the depths of mental phenomena.

In the second chapter, methods of psychodiagnosis are analyzed, with the emphasis on projective methods, given their possibilities for the purposes of psychological counseling, psychotherapy and clinical practice. The advantages of projective methods in childhood diagnostics have been successfully outlined, related to the possibility of qualitative assessment of the overall functioning of the individual, and not only with the assessment of individual symptoms. Diagnostics with projective methods also has the potential to create a therapeutic space between a specialist and a child and trust between them. On the other hand, quantitative methods create an atmosphere of an exam situation, no matter how trained and experienced the clinical psychologist is. This makes children anxious and greatly complicates the creation of a therapeutic supportive environment.

In this regard, the possibilities of a number of projective methods are presented, such as: SATO - projective graphic methodology for children, Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), Tell Me a Story TEMAS Tell-Me-A-Story (Temas Non Minority Clinical Version), Metaphorical Associative Maps (MAK).

In connection with the theoretical model outlined in the first chapter and the role of the family environment in the formation of adolescents, the possibilities of the systemic model of R. Beavers (W. Robert Beavers) for family functioning, created on the basis of a series of empirical studies. The value of the model and the created instrument for psychological research of the profile of family functioning is that it has been validated on the basis of a study of both families of children and adolescents with developmental disorders (e.g. psychosis, addictions, psychosomatic diseases), and in a control group of normally functioning families. The result is a valid instrument consisting of two scales - Questionnaire for the Study of Family Competence/Health and Questionnaire for the Study of Family Style, which determine the degree of family development and its functionality in five degrees - in the continuum from optimal to severely dysfunctional family.

The same chapter presents the validation of the methodology for family relationships SFI - (Self-Report Family Inventory: Version II), created by R. Beavers for the study of family functioning for Bulgarian cultural conditions. The studied individuals are 171 - 137 women and 33 men. The sample consisted of individuals aged between 21 and 53 years (average age 33 years). 48 people were examined in the test/retest procedure.

The processing of the empirical information was carried out adequately for the purposes of adapting and validating for Bulgarian cultural conditions a methodology created in another cultural environment. The factor structure of the questionnaire was checked, and the internal consistency of the factors was also checked with Cronbach's Alpha. However, the psychometric analysis shows that in the sample examined, some of the items have a low correlation with the total score on the scale and do not contribute to increasing the homogeneity of the scale. At the next stage of the analysis, unreliable items were eliminated sequentially until the combination of items with the highest possible Cronbach's Alpha value was reached. The results obtained outline the presence of one clearly expressed factor "family functioning", which explains 51.798% of the variation. The internal consistency ratings of the shortened to 23-item questionnaire on family functioning are shown by Cronbach's Alpha - .794. The external validity of the scale was measured in relation to the FACES II questionnaire. The author of the monograph also clearly outlines the limitations of using the scale. One of the limitations of the method is related to the lack of norms for families with different structures - single parents, homosexual couples. The norms obtained for one nationality and culture can hardly be compared with those of another, due to the dependence of family functioning on factors of the social environment. One of the limitations of the method used is also related to the self-assessment nature of the questionnaire, measuring the perception of family functioning of one of the family members. There is a possibility that each individual family member perceives the functioning of the family system in a different way.

The third chapter examines the problem of psychotherapeutic and clinical psychodiagnostics of personality in adolescents. The problem is analyzed through the prism of the diagnostic model for functional psychotherapeutic diagnostics of Otto Kernberg. The approach of O. Kernberg (2000)

combines both diagnostic and therapeutic interventions (clarification, interpretation, confrontation) during the structured interview. O. Kernberg distinguishes three levels of personality organization - neurotic, borderline and psychotic. The model is illustrated with a description of typical clinical cases.

The fourth chapter is devoted to psychotherapy and counseling in hospital settings. The issues of institutional psychotherapy of teenagers - its limitations and possibilities are problematized. Psychotherapy, as the author of the monograph emphasizes, allows the creation of such a free space in which the focus is precisely on the patient's experiences, in contrast to the approach in which the focus is on efforts to change external behavior, especially those behaviors that interfere with the functioning of the adolescent at school. D. Leader is quoted in support that in modern psychiatric and psychotherapeutic care there is a "pseudoscientific emphasis on measurable and visible results, which replaces the continuous work that gives dignity to the individual.". The change in approach turns the adolescent into a subject, instead of the approach being an object to be treated and possibly adapted to some reality of ours, but not his. The goal is to give him the opportunity to discover his own reality and the ways in which to live with it.

The monograph is written in a professionally developed language, at the same time accessible and easy to read by a wider circle of interested persons. The author successfully "draws" the reader into the depths of human experiences, successfully presenting the root causes of this, something that is very useful for specialists in developmental psychology, counseling psychology, psychotherapy and clinical practice.

The combination of scientific concepts on the problem with the "view" of a specialist from practice makes the monograph very informative and interesting not only for scientific circles, but also for practicing psychologists, for students of medicine, medical care and psychology and for all who are interested in these problems.

The monograph by Veronika Ivanova, Phd, is a comprehensive and complete scientific work, dedicated to a specific, current problem, thoroughly and systematically analyzed on the basis of the author's own empirical research and analysis of a series of individual cases from clinical practice, consulting and psychotherapeutic activities, with a clear and logically justified position. There are significant theoretical and practical-applied contributions.

In the remaining publications of Veronika Ivanova, problems in several thematic areas are developed.

The first thematic area is related to the study of the phenomenology, diagnostics and symptomatology of anxiety, stress and psychotrauma, both in children and adults (publ. No. 4, 5, 20, 24, 25). Various aspects of the manifestations of anxiety in childhood have been analyzed. The psychometric characteristics of an author's scale for the study of anxiety have been developed and evaluated.

Empirical data from studies of sailors - victims of prolonged captivity by pirates and victims of an industrial train accident have been presented and analyzed. Conclusions have been drawn about the

differential diagnostic and clinical psychological work, counseling and therapy of people who have found themselves in such situations.

The second thematic area is dedicated to children on the autism spectrum (publ. No. 3, 9, 14, 18, 23, 17, 21), presenting both methods for screening and diagnosing autism spectrum disorders, as well as aspects of the mental development of children with autism, interaction with parents and approaches to psychotherapeutic work with children with autism. Attitudes, experiences and various behavioral and social models of parents of children with developmental problems are analyzed, and summarized information from the diagnostic interviews and consultation sessions with parents is presented.

The third thematic area is related to various aspects of the psychologist's activity in a clinical environment. The emphasis is on psychological diagnostics, counseling and psychotherapy of adolescents in a clinical environment (publ. No. 1, 6, 11, 15). Special emphasis is on the influence of family dynamics on girls with anorexia, as well as early predictors of prepsychotic states in adolescents. Based on empirical data from our own research, the possibilities of working with the projective TAT methodology in psychotic adolescents are presented, as well as the possibilities of the short form of the MMP¹ questionnaire for studying adolescents in a clinical setting.

The features of group psychotherapy in low-functioning groups of psychotic patients are analyzed. The possibilities of working with Bulgarian folk tales with girls who have experienced violence are presented. The interrelationships between the psychotherapist's ability for authentic presence and the quality of psychotherapeutic work are studied. An author's scale for assessing the effectiveness of group psychotherapy in psychotic patients is presented. The specifics of crisis counseling and psychotherapy in adolescents with suicide attempts are studied. A model for group psychotherapy in inpatient settings is developed (Publ. No. 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19).

The scientific output of the Chief Assistant Professor Veronika Ivanova, Ph.D., with whom she is participating in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor", meets the requirements for presenting scientific papers and has contributed to the transfer of modern scientific and applied scientific achievements in the field of medical and clinical psychology in the training of future doctors and medical care specialists, within the framework of their postgraduate qualification, as well as their application in clinical practice.

4. Summary of the candidate's scientific and applied scientific contributions

In summary, the scientific and applied scientific contributions of Veronika Ivanova, Ph.D., are reduced to the following:

1. A thorough, systematic analysis of adolescence as part of the life cycle in humans has been made, outlining the dynamic relationships in the adolescent's family system and their connection with the experiences of adolescents. On this basis, the influence of the family institution on the development of both a healthy personality and the "complicity" of parents in the development of pathological conditions in adolescents has been clearly shown. The possible perspectives of psychosocial and personal development in adolescence are clarified.

2. A phenomenological clinical-psychological description of symptoms in mental disorders and disorders in childhood and adolescence has been made, attitudes, experiences and various behavioral and social models in parents of children with developmental problems have been analyzed, early predictors of prepsychotic states in adolescents have been identified, the influence of family dynamics on girls with anorexia have been identified, various aspects of the manifestations of anxiety in childhood have been analyzed, the specifics of crisis counseling and psychotherapy in adolescents with suicide attempts have been studied, a model for group psychotherapy in inpatient settings has been created and tested.

3. A number of methodologies have been adapted and standardized for Bulgarian cultural conditions, as well as original methodologies for psychological measurement have been created: a scale for the study of family relationships, based on the model of R. Beavers; adapted methodologies for the study of anxiety in preschool age; an author's scale for the study of anxiety behavior in preschool age; an author's scale for the study of psychotherapy effectiveness in psychotic patients; a method for assessing the authenticity and level of communication of the psychotherapist, based on the theory of Bűdzenthal; a short author's battery for testing intelligence in children with mental and behavioral disorders - clinical sample.

4. The use of a number of methods for psychodiagnostics in children and adolescents in a clinical environment has been optimized and current norms have been created, as well as a number of approaches to counseling and psychotherapeutic intervention in a clinical environment, based on the processing and analysis of serious arrays of empirical information and summarization of one's own experience.

At the moment, I have no information and have not found plagiarism by Senior Assistant Professor Veronika Ivanova, Ph.D.

5. Characteristics and assessment of the candidate's educational and pedagogical activity

It is difficult for me to give an assessment of the teaching activity of Chief Assistant Professor Veronika Ivanova, Ph.D., due to the fact that we work in different higher education institutions. I know her from her participation in various scientific forums and the scientific reports she presented, as well as her participation in the discussions during the sessions. My impressions are of an erudite and thorough researcher and clinical psychologist.

The scientific output of the competition shows that Chief Assist. Prof. Veronika Ivanova, Ph.D., very actively conducts empirical research in a clinical environment, and this is a prerequisite for the transfer of scientific knowledge in the process of teaching medical and clinical psychology to students and in the various forms of postgraduate qualification of medical specialists. In this sense, I believe that Veronika Ivanova can be a very useful habilitated lecturer, leading independent courses in the thematic field of medical and clinical psychology.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above data and analysis, I draw the following conclusions about the candidacy of Chief Assistant Professor Veronika Ivanova, PhD, for the academic position of "Associate Professor":

1. The candidate meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor", field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, according to the Appendix to Art. 1a, para. 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.
2. Has accumulated professional experience as a lecturer and clinical psychologist in accordance with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University - Varna.
3. Offers for review scientific production with significant scientific and practical-applied contributions.

All this gives me grounds for a positive assessment of the candidacy of Senior Asst. Veronika Ivanova, Ph.D. to occupy the academic position of "Associate Professor".

In this regard, I recommend to the Scientific Jury to propose, in accordance with the procedure established at the Medical University - Varna, Chief Assistant Professor Veronika Ivanova, PhD, to be elected to occupy the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (Medical Psychology).

01/26/2025

City of Varna

Reviewer:

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

Prof. Valeri Stoyanov, DSc

