

OPINION

By Diana Stancheva Dimitrova, Associate Professor, PhD in Psychology

Lecturer at the Department of Health Care, V

eliko Tarnovo Subsidiary of Varna Medical University

Regarding: Competition for the Academic Position of Associate Professor in Medical Psychology This opinion addresses the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in Medical Psychology, professional field 3.2 Psychology, within the area of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences. The candidate for this position is Senior Lecturer Veronika Andreeva Ivanova.

This opinion was prepared following Order R-109-444 dated December 5, 2024, issued by the Rector of Varna Medical University, and Protocol Nr 1 from the Scientific Jury meeting held on December 20, 2024.

One candidate applied for the announced competition: Senior Lecturer Veronika Andreeva Ivanova, PhD in Psychology. The candidate has submitted all the required documents, following the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the applicable regulations, and the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at Varna Medical University.

I. Brief Biographical Data

Senior Lecturer Veronika Ivanova, was born in 1982 in Plovdiv. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Sofia University Kliment Ohridski in 2005 and completed her Master's degree in Clinical and Counselling Psychology at the same university in 2007. From 2012 to 2016, she was a full-time PhD student at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at Varna Medical University. She qualified as a Clinical Psychologist, with additional qualifications as a Psychotherapist and specialisation in Clinical Psychology. Additionally, V. Ivanova is an award-winning poet, which enhances her creative portfolio.

II. General description of the materials submitted to the competition

The materials submitted for the competition include 28 full-text scientific publications and 20 documents required by the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and complying with the Regulations for Academic Staff Development of Varna Medical University. All the documents are in electronic versions and allow authenticity verification.

III. Evaluation of teaching activities

Within five consecutive academic years, senior lecturer Veronika Ivanova has a total workload of 1044 hours (8 lectures and 1036 exercises), realised in Bulgarian and English language teaching of students of speciality Medicine, Dental Medicine, Midwifery and Nursing. She has a total teaching experience as of October 14, 2024, of 13 years and 22 days.

IV. Research activities

The candidate has participated in 17 projects. As part of her scientific research activities, senior lecturer Veronika Ivanova has presented publications related to psychotherapy and counselling in hospital settings. These publications address the challenges and possibilities of institutional psychotherapy for teenagers. Given her position, she has specifically focused on the role of psychotherapy within a Child Psychiatric Clinic. Her research emphasises external symptoms as outlined in the Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disorders. Through her work as a psychotherapist, she aims to create a safe space that prioritises internal experiences, rather than solely targeting external behaviours that may disrupt functioning and academic performance. Additionally, an important contribution of her work is the validation of measurement methodologies and methods in the fields of child and adolescent medical psychology, clinical psychology, and psychotherapy.

V. Evaluation of Contributions

The candidate's total publication record includes 27 works, comprising one monograph and one dissertation abstract for a PhD educational and scientific degree. Among these, there are 14 publications in English and 13 in Bulgarian, all published in full text in scientific journals with ISSN and in collections with ISBN.

The monograph titled *Family Psychodynamics and Adolescence: An Attempt to Understand the Teenager*, published in 2020, explores the specific family dynamics and the changes that teenagers experience, addressing both normal and pathological aspects. It identifies the behaviours and family influences that can lead to suffering. This work not only discusses theoretical frameworks related to adolescence and family relationships but also includes clinical case studies from the author's practice.

Significant contributions of this work include the introduction of projective methodologies for studying adolescent personality, an analysis of the interrelationships between family dynamics and adolescent suffering, and the theoretical foundations for counselling and psychotherapy in institutional settings.

There are 25 publications, totalling over 120 pages, published and indexed in global databases. Veronika Ivanova's research interests span several areas, primarily focusing on child and adolescent psychology in both health and illness contexts. A significant portion of her work is dedicated to developing research methodologies related to child anxiety, family dynamics, parent-child relationships, and inpatient psychotherapy. The publications can be categorised into **several thematic areas**.

- The first thematic area focuses on the study of anxiety, stress, and psychological trauma, examining their problems, phenomenology, diagnosis, and symptomatology in both children and adults.

- The second thematic area encompasses research related to working with children on the autism spectrum. Numerous studies, along with clinical observations and interviews with parents, have been conducted (see Publications Nr 3, 9, 14, 18, 23). Research has included an analysis of drawings created by autistic children, emphasizing body image, socio-communicative aspects of development, parental interaction, and the potential for psychotherapeutic engagement with these children.
- The third area involves psychotherapy and personality research. This includes examining the relationship between the personalities of future medical professionals and their ability to establish therapeutic relationships. An original scale for assessing the effectiveness of group psychotherapy for psychotic patients has been developed, along with an exploration of the specifics of crisis counselling and psychotherapy for adolescents who have attempted suicide. Additionally, a model for group psychotherapy in inpatient settings has been created.
- The fourth area pertains to child clinical psychology and diagnosis. It presents a review of current clinical tests used for screening and diagnosing autism spectrum disorders (ASD), along with a summary of information gathered from diagnostic interviews and consultation sessions with parents.

The author's contributions can be summarised in the following areas:

1. Conceptualization of theoretical models in the fields of medical and clinical psychology, along with their practical verification.
2. Validation of methodologies and measurement techniques in child and adolescent medical psychology, clinical psychology, and psychotherapy.
3. Exploration of the phenomenological clinical-psychological presentation of symptoms associated with mental disorders in childhood and adolescence.

VI. Overall Evaluation of the Applicant's Compliance with the Science Metrics

The amount of the presented scientific production of senior lecturer Veronika Ivanova, PhD in Psychology complies with the requirements of Varna Medical University for the academic position of Associate Professor (Table 1).

<i>Groups of Indicators</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Varna MU criteria</i>	<i>Senior lecturer V. Ivanova</i>
A	Indicator 1	50	50
B	-	-	-
C	Indicator 3	100	100
D	Indicators 4-10	200	240.25
Citations	Indicators Д11-Д13	50	60
<i>Total</i>		<i>400</i>	<i>450.25</i>

CONCLUSION

Senior lecturer Veronika Andreeva Ivanova, PhD in Psychology has extensive professional experience in psychology both as a practitioner and as a lecturer. Her papers are based on many years of practical research and she has made a significant contribution to the field. The scientific production and accompanying documents align with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, and the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at Varna Medical University.

Therefore, I recommend that the Scientific Jury award Dr Veronika Andreeva Ivanova the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific speciality of Medical Psychology, within the field of higher education 3: Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences.

January 2025

Diana Dimitrova, Assoc Prof, PhD in Psychology

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