

STATEMENT

By

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Scientific field of my most recent habilitation: **Psychology**

On

The scientific works submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of **Associate Professor** in the field of higher education **3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences**, in the professional field **3.2. Psychology (Medical Psychology)**, for the needs of **Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna**, announced in **State Gazette, Issue 85, dated October 8, 2024**, with candidate **Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Veronika Andreeva Ivanova**.

Research (Creative) Activity and Results

1. Evaluation of the Monographic Work, Creative Contributions, and Other Publications Equivalent in Scope and Completeness to a Monograph, Including the Assessment of the Scientific and Applied Contributions of the Author

The monograph "**Family Psychodynamics and Adolescence: An Attempt to Understand the Teenager**" presents an in-depth study of family relationships and their influence on adolescent development. The author, **Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Veronika Ivanova**, successfully integrates **theoretical analysis, empirical data, and clinical observations**, making the work valuable both for the scientific community and practicing specialists.

1. Scientific Significance and Originality

The monograph examines adolescence not only through a **psychiatric paradigm** but also through **psychotherapeutic and psychodynamic concepts**, enriching the understanding of this critical developmental stage. The inclusion of **psychoanalytic and systemic models** contributes to a deeper comprehension of adolescent conflicts and family dynamics.

2. Methodology and Approach

The author employs **both qualitative and quantitative research methods**, including the **validated Bulgarian version of the Beavers Family Assessment Scale**. The monograph presents **clinical case studies** illustrating different behavioral models in family settings and their impact on adolescents' mental health. The use of **projective diagnostic methods** further strengthens the practical value of the study.

3. Practical Applicability

The monographic work has **direct applicability in clinical practice**, providing **valuable guidelines for identifying and intervening in adolescent crises, anxiety, and depressive disorders**. The strategies discussed for **family-based counseling and therapy** are particularly useful.

4. Style and Structure

The work is **clearly structured**, with a **logical sequence** that facilitates easy comprehension of the arguments. The theoretical framework is supported by **empirical data and real-life case studies**, making it suitable for **both professionals and psychology students**.

The monograph "**Family Psychodynamics and Adolescence**" is a **valuable scientific contribution** to the field of **family and adolescent psychology**. It offers an **innovative and practically oriented perspective**, combining **theoretical concepts with clinical practice**. The work has **high scientific and applied value**, making it beneficial for both academic and clinical settings.

1. Theoretical Framework and Psychological Analysis of Adolescence

- The **psychoanalytic understanding** of adolescence, based on authors such as Freud, Aichhorn, and Meng, emphasizes the **reactivation of repressed instincts** during this stage.
- **Delaroche** views adolescence as a **conflict between the desire for independence and the "mourning of childhood."**
- Deviant behavior is categorized into **"escape forward"** (antisocial tendencies) and **"escape backward"** (depressive tendencies).
- The **psychopathology of adolescence** is analyzed beyond the traditional psychiatric framework, focusing on **unconscious processes**.

2. The Influence of Family Dynamics on Adolescence

- Family models are analyzed using **Beavers' System Model**, which classifies families into five groups (**from optimal to severely dysfunctional**).
- The **Beavers Scale for Family Dynamics Assessment** is applied, measuring factors such as **health, conflicts, cohesion, leadership, and emotional expressiveness**.
- The concept of **"parental crisis"** is introduced as a **mirrored process of adolescent crisis**.

3. Methodology and Diagnostic Tools

- Both **qualitative and quantitative** methods are presented for **studying family dynamics**.
- **Projective methods** such as **Metaphoric Associative Cards (MAC)** and **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)** are employed to explore **unconscious mental processes**.
- The **validation of SFI (Self-Report Family Inventory: Version II)** for Bulgarian conditions is conducted to **assess family functioning**.

4. Psychotherapeutic Work with Adolescents

- Different **personality organizations** according to **Otto Kernberg** (**neurotic, borderline, psychotic**) are analyzed.
- Specific **psychotherapy strategies** in hospital settings are discussed, where the **institutional environment often limits free expression**.

Scientific Contributions

The monograph presents **original scientific contributions** in the fields of **family psychology, psychotherapy, and psychodynamic research on adolescence**. It integrates **theoretical, methodological, and clinical aspects**, making a significant impact in the following areas:

Theoretical Contributions

Expanding the Psychodynamic Understanding of Adolescence

- Introduces **Delaroche's model** of the adolescent crisis as a **conflict between independence and the mourning of childhood**.
- Analyzes the **mirrored process of the "parental crisis,"** contributing to a **new understanding of family dynamics**.

Integration of Psychoanalytic and Systemic Approaches

- **Beavers' Systemic Model of Family Functioning** is combined with **psychoanalytic concepts of unconscious processes** in family dynamics.
- **Classical psychoanalytic theories** (Freud, Meng, Pfister) are examined in the context of **modern adolescent psychotherapy**.

Differentiation Between Normal Adolescent Crisis and Pathological Conditions

- Distinguishes between **states requiring short-term psychotherapeutic intervention** and those indicating **severe mental disorders**.

Introduction of the Concept of "Crisis Within a Crisis"

- A new understanding of **"crisis within a crisis"** is introduced, explaining additional complications in **anxiety and depressive states** during adolescence.

Methodological Contributions

Adaptation and Validation of Diagnostic Tools for the Bulgarian Context

- The **Beavers Scale (Self-Report Family Inventory – SFI)** has been **validated** for assessing **family relationships in Bulgaria**.
- A **factor analysis** was conducted, demonstrating **high internal consistency** of the questionnaire (**Cronbach's Alpha = 0.794**).
- A **shortened version** of the questionnaire (**23 items**) has been developed, facilitating its application in **clinical practice**.

Introduction of New Projective Methods in Psychotherapeutic Diagnosis

- **Metaphoric Associative Cards (MAC)** are used as an **innovative diagnostic and therapeutic tool** for working with adolescents.
- **Projective methods** are analyzed as **more effective than standard quantitative tests** in assessing family dynamics.

Clinical and Applied Contributions

Expanding the Understanding of Family Dynamics in Various Psychopathological Conditions

- A **typology of family dynamics in different personality disorders** (narcissistic, schizoid, obsessive-compulsive, etc.) has been developed.
- **Real clinical cases** are presented, illustrating the **role of the family environment** in the development of **mental disorders**.

Application of Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Institutional Settings

- The **limitations of institutional psychotherapy for adolescents** are analyzed, highlighting the **need for an individualized approach**.
- The **role of psychotherapy in child psychiatric clinics** is explored, addressing the problem of focusing on symptoms rather than internal experiences.

Proposed Strategies for Effective Interaction Between Psychotherapist, Parents, and Adolescents

- **Common parental mistakes** (over-control, invasion of personal space, distrust) that **worsen communication** with teenagers are described.
- **Concrete guidelines** are provided for **improving family relationships** through empathy, flexibility, and clear boundaries.

The monograph "**Family Psychodynamics and Adolescence**" makes a **significant scientific contribution** to understanding the **influence of family dynamics on adolescence**. It **integrates theoretical models, clinical observations, and validated diagnostic tools**, providing **valuable insights for psychotherapists, clinical psychologists, and family therapy specialists**.

Dr. **Veronika Ivanova's** publications, as presented in the documents, demonstrate a **significant contribution to various areas of psychology**, particularly those related to **child development and the educational environment**.

The main areas of contribution can be summarized into three key directions:

1. **Conceptualization of Theoretical Models in Medical and Clinical Psychology and Their Verification in Practice.** This includes an **analysis of family relationships**, psychological aspects of adolescence, and **the diagnosis and treatment of anxiety and psychological trauma**.

1. Key Contributions in Research and Clinical Work

- **Family relationships, psychological aspects of adolescence, diagnosis, and treatment of anxiety and psychological trauma.**
- **Validation of methodologies and measurement tools** in child-adolescent medical psychology, clinical psychology, and psychotherapy. Various **scales and tests** have been developed and adapted for diagnosing **anxiety, personality traits, and mental disorders.**
- **Phenomenological and clinical-psychological examination of symptoms of mental disorders in childhood and adolescence.** This includes research on **autism, anxiety disorders, anorexia, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),** as well as **therapeutic approaches such as group psychotherapy and crisis counseling.**
- These contributions have been developed within **various research and clinical projects,** supported by **publications in scientific journals and academic collections.**

2. Evaluation of Contributions in Other Published Works

The evaluation of **Dr. Veronika Ivanova's publications and creative works** following her appointment as **Chief Assistant Professor** reveals **significant contributions** in both **scientific research and applied practice.** Her publications encompass **psychodiagnostics, psychotherapy, and clinical psychology,** focusing on:

- **Adolescence** – early diagnosis of **psychotic states,** the link between **trauma and suicidality.**
- **Family dynamics** – its influence on **anorexia and doctor-patient communication.**
- **Autism** – **diagnostic methods using drawings and social communication.**
- **Mental disorders** – research on **PTSD and group therapy in psychosis.**
- **Intelligence and personality** – validation of psychological tests (**Raven's Progressive Matrices, MMPI**) and their impact on **communication.**
- **Positive psychotherapy** – its application in **medical education.**

Dr. Ivanova's work contributes to **diagnostics, early intervention, and psychotherapy** for children, adolescents, and **patients with psychotic disorders.**

3. Citations by Other Authors

According to the **citation report,** **Dr. Veronika Ivanova's scientific publications** have been referenced in **numerous national and international scientific journals,** demonstrating the **significance of her research contributions in medical psychology.** The citations are categorized as follows:

1. **Citations in peer-reviewed scientific journals indexed in major international databases.**
2. **Citations in monographs and collective scientific volumes.**
3. **Citations in non-indexed but peer-reviewed journals.**

These citations highlight the **academic impact and recognition** of her work in **medical psychology and clinical research.**

4. Evaluation of Results from Participation in Research and Creative Projects and Their Practical Applications

The evaluation of **Dr. Veronika Ivanova's research and creative projects** confirms her **significant contributions in medical and clinical psychology** through active **participation in scientific research** and its **practical implementation**.

Creative Projects

The results of these projects are reflected in **scientific publications, developed methodologies, and practical applications**.

1. Scientific Research Projects and Their Significance

The candidate has participated in numerous studies related to:

- **Diagnosis and therapy of anxiety in children and adolescents.**
- **Research on mental disorders in childhood and adolescence** (e.g., work with children on the **autism spectrum, anorexia, and pre-psychotic states**).
- **Analysis of psychological aspects of family dynamics and its impact on adolescent mental health.**
- **Group and individual psychotherapy, including adaptation of projective methods and screening tools.**

These studies have led to the **validation of methodologies**, adaptation of **international tools for Bulgarian conditions**, and the development of **new diagnostic and therapeutic approaches**.

2. Practical Application of the Results

The obtained results have **real-world applications** in:

- **Clinical practice** – Developed **diagnostic methodologies and psychological scales** (e.g., a **custom scale for assessing behavioral anxiety**) are used for **evaluating anxiety in children and adolescents**.
- **Psychotherapy and counseling** – Research on **group psychotherapy dynamics for psychotic patients** and **crisis counseling** has contributed to **new therapeutic approaches** applicable in **clinical settings**.
- **Work with children on the autism spectrum** – Findings from **drawing analysis and socio-communicative aspects** of autistic children have been used to **develop new counseling methods** for parents and therapists.
- **Education and professional training** – Research results are **incorporated into the curriculum** at **Medical University – Varna**, enhancing the **competence of psychology and healthcare students**.

3. Impact Assessment

- Developed **diagnostic and therapeutic models** contribute to a **more precise evaluation of mental health conditions in adolescents and children**.
- Created methodologies are **applicable in both clinical and educational contexts**.
- Participation in **interdisciplinary projects** allows the **integration of psychological research into medical practice**, improving **healthcare quality**.

The research and **creative projects** of the candidate have **significant theoretical and practical impact**, leading to **enhanced diagnostics, effective psychotherapeutic interventions, and the development of methodologies** applicable in **clinical and educational practice**.

4. Scientific Contribution, Originality of the Presented Works, and Reliability of Scientific Data

Dr. **Veronika Ivanova** declares that the **presented scientific works, data, and results** included in the **associate professor selection process** are **original** and not borrowed from other studies or publications in which she was not involved. Additionally, she confirms the **authenticity of the provided information** in documents and publications, ensuring they adhere to **academic standards**.

Reliability of Scientific Data

- All presented data were collected through **empirical research**, conducted in compliance with **scientific methodologies**.
- The results have been **published in peer-reviewed journals**, ensuring their **validity and reliability**.

Teaching and Academic Activities

According to the **academic report, Chief Assistant Professor, PhD, Veronika Ivanova** has made **significant contributions** to teaching and academic work, particularly in **medical and clinical psychology**. Her contributions cover several key aspects:

Teaching Activities

- **Lecturer in the Department of Health Care at the Veliko Tarnovo Branch of Medical University – Varna.**
- Leads **lectures and practical courses** for students in various disciplines related to **psychology, medical psychology, psychotherapy, and health care**.
- Her teaching covers **both fundamental disciplines and specialized courses** in **clinical psychology and psychotherapy**.

Development of Educational Materials

- **Author and co-author of textbooks, lecture courses, and methodological guides** for training psychology students.
- Develops **interactive teaching methods**, including **clinical case studies, psychological tests, and practical simulations** to prepare students.

Participation in Educational Projects

- Engaged in projects aimed at **developing education in medical and social sciences**.
- Implemented **new teaching methodologies**, including **adapting international training standards** in clinical psychology.

Scientific Supervision and Mentorship

- **Supervises term papers and theses** for students in psychology and health sciences.
- **Supports the development of young researchers**, assisting their **academic growth through publications and research projects**.

Dr. Veronika Ivanova actively combines academic teaching, scientific research, and clinical practice. Her contributions are crucial to the **training of psychology and healthcare students**, promoting **innovative teaching methods** and integrating research findings into education.

Administrative and Public Engagement

- **Administrative:** Member of the **Department of Health Care (MU – Varna, Veliko Tarnovo Branch)**, organizes and **coordinates academic disciplines**, participates in **scientific projects and academic committees**.
- **Public:** **Clinical psychologist at UMHAT "Sv. Marina" – Varna**, former school psychologist, student mentor, and active participant in **scientific forums and publications**.

Fulfillment of Requirements for the Academic Position

Dr. Veronika Ivanova has met all requirements for appointment to the **academic position of Associate Professor in Psychology**. The submitted materials fulfill the **minimum academic criteria** and include:

- **Monographic work.**
- **List of publications, citations, and applied scientific results.**
- **Documents verifying compliance with the minimum academic requirements.**
- **Declaration of originality and authenticity of scientific data.**

Personal Impressions of the Candidate (if applicable)

- **Author of a monograph, textbooks, and over 30 scientific papers.**
- **Participant in 17 scientific forums and research projects.**
- **Developer of diagnostic methodologies and adaptation of standardized tests for psychotherapeutic applications.**

Opinions, Recommendations, and Remarks on the Candidate's Work and Achievements

Chief Assistant Professor, PhD, Veronika Ivanova is a specialist with significant contributions in scientific research, clinical practice, and education. For her future professional development, it is recommended that she:

- **Expand her research in child and adolescent psychology.**

- **Adapt international diagnostic and therapeutic methodologies to the Bulgarian context.**
- **Maintain active participation in scientific and professional organizations to promote psychology and create new collaboration opportunities.**
- **Organize seminars and conferences to further contribute to the advancement of the field.**

Dr. Veronika Ivanova has the **necessary qualifications and potential** to continue her **professional growth** and **expand her influence in psychology** both **academically and practically**

Conclusion

I give my positive assessment of the candidate's academic work and recommend that Dr. Veronika Ivanova be admitted to the selection process by the Academic Council.

Date: January 31, 2025

Signature:

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