

ВЕЛИКОТЪРНОВСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ  
"СВ. СВ. КИРИЛ И МЕТОДИЙ"



ST CYRIL AND ST METHODIUS  
UNIVERSITY OF VELIKO TARNOVO

## **REVIEW**

**by prof. Velislava Atanasova Chavdarova, PhD**

**University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. Cyril and St. Methodius"**

**of a Dissertation**

**of Borislava Petrova Dimitrova**

**on the topic:**

**"DYNAMICS OF GENERALIZED EXPECTATIONS IN PATIENTS  
WITH DEPRESSION"**

**with scientific supervisors:**

**Prof. Ivan Stoyanov Alexandrov, D.Ps.S.**

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svetlin Varbanov Varbanov, D.M**

**Scientific field 3. Social, economic and legal sciences**

**Professional field 3.2. Psychology / Medical psychology/**

### **1. Relevance of the scientific problem considered in the dissertation**

I believe that the topic is not only dissertable, but also particularly relevant. It is reasonable to consider depression as a leading cause of disability worldwide with an impact on life expectancy and a negative impact on professional, social and personal life. This impact is simultaneously on interpersonal relationships, professional performance, physical health and overall quality of life. The doctoral student believes that there is a closed cycle that leads to the degradation of personal and environmental space, which supports depression, which in turn worsens the environment and damages the personality.

The author sets an unconventional research discourse, formulating a research goal according to which it is necessary to "establish the dynamics,

specificity and influence of generalized expectations: long-term motivation, optimism, negative expectations and localization of control in the process of treatment and recovery in patients with depression. This raises the question of identifying the interrelationships and cause-and-effect indicators that will outline a research model with potential practical application in clinical and therapeutic work.

## **2. Data about the doctoral student**

Borislava Dimitrova has been a doctoral student at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" since 2020. She has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Applied Psychology, as well as Criminology and Social Prevention. Borislava Dimitrova's professional path is tied to her professional experience, predominantly related to helping activities, consulting and training, where she develops her creativity and professionalism.

The author is a correct and precise researcher who manages to verify her diverse experience in a useful scientific product, providing a tool for practical work.

The deposited documentation is proper and meets all the criteria in the sense of the procedure for conducting the current defense. The information from Borislava Dimitrova's autobiography testifies to a step-by-step and worthy path to professional realization in the field of medical psychology.

## **3. Data on the dissertation and the abstract**

The submitted dissertation is 132 pages long and includes 42 tables and 2 figures. The content is conceptualized in an introduction, three main chapters, structured in subchapters, conclusion, contributions and bibliography. The body of the book also includes Appendices containing the methods used in the conducted empirical research.

The bibliographic reference indicates the use of 146 titles, of which 22 in Cyrillic and 124 in Latin.

I assess the theoretical basis of the work as excellently conceived and implemented, informative, particularly up-to-date, appropriate and academic in nature, consistent with the objectives and specialized language of the study.

The text in the introduction eruditely guides and adequately orients the reader in its specific design. Even here, and albeit in outline, the model of the phenomenon under study is clearly presented in the perspective of the dynamics of the definitive concepts related to the category of "depression". The mechanism of its manifestations and the alleged relationship with personality traits that help to minimize the negative impact of environmental factors and situations that increase stress levels are particularly accurately captured and revealed. Such personality traits are generalized expectations – optimism, negative expectations, localization of control and motivation, which occupy a central place in the structure and process of personality organization and modulate mental processes.

Current, unexplored and significant in its essence, the issue provokes an expansion of the scope of psychological tools in order to achieve consistent and effective prevention and intervention at the personal level, both with individuals prone to depressive manifestations and with individuals who fall into risk groups.

The lack of research, both theoretical and empirical, on issues related to clarifying the causal relationships between depression and regulatory personality variables – generalized expectations and their influence on the specificity, dynamics and transformation of the disease in the treatment process, poses a number of challenges to the present study.

The subject, object, limitations of the study, the main hypotheses, the tasks and the methodology of the overall theoretical and empirical study are in the same style – meaningfully conceptualized and precisely formulated.

The theoretical part of the presentation is laid out in several problematic circles.

The first presents a detailed and informative interpretation of the descriptive aspects and specifics of generalized expectations in the structure of personality.

The concept of generalized expectations, emphasized in the theoretical part of the dissertation, has undergone a number of changes in its evolution, but the general conclusion is that they are considered as regulatory structures in the personality system, which direct behavior in new unclear, uncontrollable and complex situations.

The main semantic emphasis in the theoretical part of the work is the analysis of depression, which is associated with emotional, cognitive, functional and motivational deficits. Reasonably, depression is considered one of the most common mental illnesses (disorders) worldwide, with social significance, which has a negative impact on all aspects of human life. The operationalization and explanation of the concept is implemented in an etiological, neurobiological, social and personal context. The impact of depression on the daily life of people and their loved ones in the direction of reducing the quality of life of a person, his functioning and in some cases disability, suicide, abuse of alcohol and psychoactive substances is also considered.

The author's analytical reasoning is excellently linked to the presentation of adequate diagnostic methods.

The research focus of the dissertation work is also related to the establishment of the dynamics, specificity and influence of generalized expectations: long-term motivation, optimism, negative expectations and localization of control in the process of treatment and recovery in patients with depression. In this context, the main research tasks are the establishment of the interrelationships between long-term motivation, generalized expectation, optimism, negative expectations, localization of control and the severity of depression; analysis of the specifics of generalized expectations in patients with depression; revealing the influence of the generalized expectation "optimism" on the severity of depression, as well as the influence of negative expectations on the severity of depression. The influence of long-term motivation and localization of control on the severity of depression is also sought.

The scientific idea is realized by studying the influence of depression at the beginning, during and after treatment on the dynamics and specificity of generalized expectations.

The work also makes an expert differentiation and integration of generalized expectations and their influence on depression.

I believe that the theoretical framework of the dissertation is an excellent basis for the model of empirical research, increasing its heuristic potential. I appreciate this informative and systematic conceptualization as a contribution to the theory of medical psychology, and the application and methodology of qualitative and quantitative research approaches as a contribution to applied psychological science.

They are the main subject around which the methodology of the conducted research gravitates. The goals of the empirical research are related to establishing the dynamics, specificity and influence of generalized expectations: long-term motivation, optimism, negative expectations and localization of control in the process of treatment and recovery in patients with depression. In turn, the identification of the interrelationships and the causal indicators between them outline a research model with potential practical application in clinical and therapeutic work.

The methodological setting – differentiated and clearly presented – is described precisely and comprehensively in the second part of the work. The verification of the 5 hypotheses was carried out with a well-argued and tailored to the specifics of the study toolkit. Both the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results is original and synthetically implemented. The research tasks, including the testing of a model for the diagnosis of generalized expectations, were successfully implemented. It is in the conduct and commenting of the study that the doctoral student optimally develops her expert potential.

The study itself was conducted "in the field" and was implemented in 3 stages. The reasons for including different parts of the research toolkit in the individual stages of the study were stated in a reasoned and justified manner. The choice of specific research methods, 5 in total /worksheet, test for establishing the severity of depressive symptoms of the Montgomery Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS); test for assessing the long-term motivation of individual behavior; method for assessing optimism and negative expectations and Rotor test for measuring the localization of control/, was excellently implemented and fully corresponds to the goals and objectives.

The scientific study was conducted over a period of five months (from April 2024 to August 2024) and a total of 70 individuals with clinical data for depression were examined. Participants aged between 18 and 65 years were included. The statistical processing of the results was carried out with the statistical package of programs "SPSS – 22 - form for expert science".

The formulated conclusions are directly related to the subject of the study and logically arise from the analysis of the processed data.

I see a particularly valuable contribution in the explanatory text regarding the limitations of the implemented procedure and the shared recommendations

for its optimization. As in the entire dissertation work, here too – clearly and categorically – the candidate demonstrates excellent knowledge of the issue, adequate command of terminology and professionalism.

Regarding the requirements for citation and correct reference to authors, I find that the work fully covers the criteria and meets the standards.

#### **4. Scientific contributions**

Accepting the contributions formulated by the doctoral student and beyond the already commented achievements in the dissertation work, I find reason to emphasize the following:

- By using an integral research approach, the information on generalized expectations and their relationship with depression has been studied and systematized. The findings and analytical observations made are the basis for building a model for studying the dynamics of generalized expectations of patients with depression;
- A battery of test methods for assessing and dynamically monitoring generalized expectations in patients with depression is introduced, explained and verified;
- The paper substantiates a conceptual model for studying the interrelationships between generalized expectations and the dynamics of the course of depressive episodes;
- The applied research provides a new perspective for explaining the combined influence of the four variables – locus of control, optimism, negative expectations and motivation to explain variations in the severity of depression;
- Of key importance is the information related to the need to restore and support long-term motivation, optimistic expectations, locus of control and minimizing negative expectations of those treated as an approach to compensating for the negative impact of depression in the treatment process;
- The identified interrelationships and causal indicators outline a research model with potential practical application in clinical and therapeutic work;.
- Tracking the dynamics of generalized expectations in the process of treating depression is a central concept in individualized approaches to managing depressive symptoms with undoubted practical contribution.

- The application of the developed intervention and prevention strategies can improve mental health and well-being and reduce the levels of stress and negative emotions associated with the experience of depression. Psychological work aimed at supporting and optimizing generalized expectations may be a prospect for further research in the field of the issue.

## **5. Assessment of publications on the dissertation work**

The presented list of 5 publications on the topic of the dissertation corresponds to the requirements for obtaining the ONS "doctor". Their publication in prestigious journals is a guarantee of professionalism. Their depth and quality are unquestionable.

## **6. Personal participation of the doctoral student**

The participation of the doctoral student in the planning, conducting, analysis, summary and interpretation of the results obtained from the theoretical and applied research is undisputed. Professionalism and precision have been demonstrated in the individual stages. The formulated conclusions correspond to the achieved results.

## **7. Abstract**

The presented Abstract of the dissertation work has an appropriate volume of 60 pages, is structured according to the compositional organization of the research and adequately presents its main theses, results, conclusions. Significant emphasis is placed on the significance and scientific novelty of the research, whose methodological limitations are adequately indicated. The structure also includes the author's self-assessment of the contributions of her work.

## **8. Critical remarks and recommendations**

In order to popularize the dissertation, I would recommend its publication as a monographic work.

## **9. Personal impressions**

The presented work demonstrates the excellent theoretical and practical preparation of the doctoral student on the researched problems, as well as her

ability to process, interpret, analyze and summarize results from a conducted psychological study. The work is balanced and well-structured.

The conclusions and findings are both adequate and bold. I believe that the author possesses the necessary skills and competencies to continue her scientific development.

## CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific, scientifically applied and applied results that represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The development shows that the doctoral student Borislava Dimitrova possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty 3.2. Psychology, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted theoretical and applied research, presented in the above-reviewed dissertation, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Borislava Dimitrova in the field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, doctoral program "Medical Psychology".

11.12. 2024 г

Reviewer:

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

Veliko Tarnovo

Prof. Velislava Chavdarova PhD

