

REVIEW

by

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According Order No. R-109-497/02.12.2025 of the Rector of the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna, issued on the basis of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in Bulgaria and the Regulations for its Implementation.

Subject: Procedure for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the doctoral program “Child and Adolescent Psychiatry” in the field of higher education 7. Health and Sports, professional field 7.1. Medicine of Dr. Gabriela Valentinova Gacheva.

Topic of the dissertation: “Tracking of constant and variable characteristics in the active phase and remission in patients with anorexia nervosa in adolescence”.

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Petar Milchev Petrov, MD

Brief biographical data

Dr. Gabriela Valentinova Gacheva graduated from the Fifth Language High School - Varna, in 2013. She obtained her higher education in Medicine at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna in 2019. Since 2020, she has been an assistant professor and a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at the Medical University - Varna. In December 2024, she became a specialist in child psychiatry. She participates in national and international scientific forums and research seminars and is clinically engaged in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry.

Significance and relevance of the topic

Anorexia nervosa is one of the most severe mental disorders in adolescence, which is characterized by high somatic and mental morbidity, significant risk of chronicity and relapses, as well as a serious risk for the full functioning of the person affected. In this context, tracking the clinical dynamics between the active phase of the successful and the remission phase is essential both for understanding the pathogenesis and for optimizing therapeutic strategies.

The focus on distinguishing between stable (permanent) and changeable (variable) psychological characteristics is particularly relevant and of high practical value, as it provides an opportunity for more precise planning of long-term treatment and relapse prevention.

Structure and content of the dissertation work

The work is developed in a volume of 142 pages and includes 31 tables, 3 figures and 2 graphs. The bibliography includes 454 literary sources, predominantly international and in Latin, which is fully justified in view of the specificity and dynamics of the research problem.

The structure of the work is in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff and includes an introduction, a general literature review, clearly formulated tasks, a description of the entire contingent and methods, presented and discussed results, conclusions, conclusions and bibliography. The presentation is logically consistent, clear and scientifically argued.

The literature review demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the problem, considering the historical aspects, world diagnostic classifications, epidemiology, etiopathogenesis and clinical picture of anorexia nervosa. The information presented creates a stable theoretical framework for conducting the empirical study.

Methods and results

The study was conducted in a real clinical environment and includes a two-stage assessment of patients with anorexia nervosa in adolescence - in the active phase and in the remission phase. This design allows not only a momentary assessment of the results, but also a comparative analysis of the dynamics of clinical and psychological characteristics over time, which is a significant methodological advantage of the development.

The instrument used – Eating Disorder Inventory-3 (EDI-3), is internationally validated and widely used in clinical and research practice. Its application in this work allows for a comprehensive assessment of both the main symptoms of the eating disorder and deeper personal and emotional constructs, which often remain insufficiently influenced after achieving somatic stabilization.

The statistical processing of the data was carried out with adequate and established methods, complementing the added goals and objectives of the study. The presentation of the result is clear, structured and logically consistent, with each group of indicators being analyzed in the context of the clinical phase. A proper comparison with data from current international studies was made, allowing the results to be interpreted in a broader scientific context.

The analytical approach in discussing the results is particularly valuable, in which the author does not limit himself to a constant description, but looks for prominent patterns for established differences between the active phase and remission. The limitations of the study – single-center nature, limited sample size, and lack of long-term follow-up – are also correctly taken into account, which testifies to scientific maturity and critical thinking.

Contributions and practical significance

The dissertation contains clearly identifiable scientific and applied scientific contributions. First of all, it provides original empirical data on the profile of adolescents with anorexia nervosa in a Bulgarian clinical setting, which fills an existing gap in the national scientific literature on the topic.

A significant contribution is the distinction of psychological indicators into those that respond significantly during the course of treatment and those that remain relatively stable even in the remission phase. This distinction has important clinical significance, as it draws attention to the need for continued psychotherapeutic work even after normalization of body parameters.

The results of the study argue for the need for a personalized therapeutic approach, in which treatment is not limited to somatic recovery, but includes targeted work on emotional regulation, control mechanisms and personal vulnerabilities that maintain the risk of relapse.

The dissertation also creates a methodological basis for future multicenter studies, as well as for the development of clinical algorithms for long-term follow-up of patients with anorexia nervosa in adolescence. The results have direct applicability in clinical practice and can be used in both the diagnostic and therapeutic process.

Conclusion

The presented dissertation is an independent, methodologically precised and scientifically significant study on a current problem in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry. Dr. Gabriela Valentinova Gacheva demonstrates in-depth theoretical knowledge, skills in planning and conducting scientific research, as well as the ability to critically analyze and interpret the results.

The scientific work meets the requirements of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation. Therefore, I give a positive opinion for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Dr. Gabriela Valentinova Gacheva.

10.02.2026

Varna

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