

## **REVIEW**

**By Assoc. Prof. Nevjana Feschieva, MD, PhD**

**MEMBER OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY, APPOINTED BY ORDER № R 109-344 / 09.10.2019**

**REGARDING A PHD-DISSERTATION,  
FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION 7. HEALTHCARE AND SPORTS,  
PROFESSIONAL DIRECTION 7.4 PUBLIC HEALTH,  
SCIENTIFIC SPECIALTY: PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT**

**THEME: “THE INFLUENCE OF THE BULGARIAN FOLK DANCES ON THE HEALTH  
OF THE STUDENTS FROM MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF VARNA ”**

**BY JULIETA GEORGIEVA VIDENOVA**

### **1. SHORT BIOGRAPHY AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHD CANDIDATE:**

Julieta Georgieva Videnova was born on the 22.05.1970 in Varna. In 1994 Julieta Videnova graduated from the National Sports Academy with a Master's Degree in the fields of: “coach in athletics” and “physical education teacher” . Her professional career started as a teacher in physical education at the secondary school “Petar Beron” - Kostinbrod and as a methodologist in a applied-sciences laboratory and a teacher in "Theory and methodology of sports training" at the sports school “Georgi Benkovski” - Varna (period 1994/2003). Since 2003 and at present she worked as a senior teacher of physical education and sports, since 2007 she has been the Head of the Sports Sector at the Medical University of Varna. Since 2012 she is teaching Bulgarian folk dances at the Medical University - Varna. In 2018 Julieta Videnova received a Master of Public Health degree from the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov". In 2018 she was enrolled as a free PhD-student in the scientific specialty Public Health Management at the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization, Faculty of Public Health at Medical University of Varna with an Order of the Rector of the university, № P109-469 / 20.07.2018. After fulfilling all the requirements and submitting a thesis, she was given the right of defense, submitted the necessary documents and was admitted to the present public defense.

Mrs. Julieta Videnova has a rich sports biography: during the period (1986/1990) she was part of the Bulgarian National Athletics Team and a multiple national champion in the sprint disciplines for

girls, holds the national record of 200 m. running in a hall, she won the sixth place in the European Championship for girls in 1987 at Birmingham, UK, participated in the 1988 World Cup for Girls in Sudbury, Canada.

Ms. Videnova has scientific interests, which has been proven with considerable publishing activity in Bulgarian and foreign scientific journals - a total of 18 articles.

## **2 GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE DISSERTATION:**

### **2.1. Relevance of the dissertation**

At the heart of the dissertation idea is the issue of the positive health augmenting and effective primary prevention of chronic diseases through physical activity. Young people - medical students and other medical majors who as future professionals are expected to be active agents of health promotion among the population - are selected as the investigated community. This is important, but it would not be innovative if the tools of achieving physical activity were not the Bulgarian Folk Dances (BgFD) - an exceptional national cultural phenomenon. In this case, attention is paid to the BgFD potential to stimulate the individual development of personal physical qualities and to improve the individual emotional attitudes and motivation. The research on the place of the BgFD in improving the health and quality of life of the students also focuses on the role of the BgFD in improving the academic education as an "universe".

The look at the dissertation keywords – *health promotion, physical activity, Bulgarian folk dances, quality of life, academic education* and their decoding at a research context, convinces about the originality, relevance and importance of the work, as well as its affiliation with the public health field.

### **2.2. Quantitative characteristics**

The dissertation contains of 139 pages, structured in five main chapters, illustrated with 10 tables and 6 figures. The annexes are nine. The bibliographic reference includes 117 literary sources, of which 43 are in Cyrillic and 74 are in Latin. The dissertation contains of 139 pages, structured in five main chapters, illustrated with 10 tables and 6 figures. The bibliographic reference includes 117 literary sources, of which 43 are in Cyrillic and 74 are in Latin. The annexes are nine and the last 9<sup>th</sup> including 4 creative biographies.

### **2.3. Assessment of the literature review.**

The volume of the Literature review is 37 pages, ie. about 1/3 of the dissertation is appropriate for the topic because of its novelty. It is made up of six paragraphs, four of which are devoted to the history and importance of BgFD, their classification and definition, and the folklore areas in Bulgaria. In them, BgFD are considered as a ritual, an art, an element of national culture. The attitudes, interest and motivation for folk dancing activities logically follow the presentation of BgFD in the context of health promotion and ends with their characterization as culture, physical activity and a curriculum discipline. In terms of content, the review has a strong *informative* part (the first 4 paragraphs), since for the first time the BgFD are presented to the medical community as an element of scientific research. The secondary analysis that the PhD candidate makes on BgFD studies in order to substantiate her own study gives the second characteristic of the review - its *analytical* value. Its merit is the association of BgFD with health promotion among the students' community, with particular attention to the health benefits of the students who study and practice BgFD. It raises the issue of BgFD as an alternative to sports in the higher education curriculum.

The in-depth literature review focuses on certain ideas of the PhD-candidate and is a good basis for further formulating of the dissertation goals.

### **2.4. Methodology assessment**

The aim of the study is to investigate the influence of BgFD on the health of the students from Medical University of Varna and the place of BgFD in academic curriculum. In order to accomplish this aim six tasks have been formulated, including determining students' attitudes and motivation to play sports and BgFD; investigation of the anthropometric profile of the participants from Medical University of Varna and comparison of the indicators among the groups studying sports and BgFD; to evaluate and compare students' self-esteem related to their health and quality of life; study the stress levels of the study participants; conduct a Delphi study on the role of BgFD as a physical activity and their place in the physical education and sports curriculum; as a final applied outcome study, was prepared a training tool for the study of BgFD available on the university's online Blackboard platform.

The methodology of the study has been developed and described very well. The applied two-phase mix-methods approach of quantitative and qualitative methods is very appropriate for the purpose of the study. The sample of 184 students - two groups of 92 people - studying sports and dances at BgFD was tested by quantitative methods and a comparative analysis was made before and

after the questionnaire "intervention". The methods used were: sociological/questionnaire method, the assessment of the level of physical capacity through anthropometric measurements (height, weight, BMI, dynamic flexibility, speed of the upper, lower limb, maximum force of the upper limb).

The qualitative methods are presented by Delphi study conducted with 3 panels - expert, institutional and teaching panel in order to reach consensus on the place of the BgFD in the compulsory curriculum at higher schools as a type of physical activity, improving the health and quality of life of the students.

Appropriate statistical methods are applied - alternative, correlation, non-parametric, parametric, variational analyzes, which guarantee the reliability of the obtained results.

The developed research design with the application of diverse, purpose-relevant and target groups oriented, show good methodological preparation and, of course, competent scientific supervision.

## **2.5. Results, discussion and conclusions.**

The presentation and discussion of the results is done in a logical sequence of phases - quantitative and qualitative. The conclusions are drawn from the results.

The students who study BgFD have no prior history of active athletes (only 15.7%) and 56.4% of BgFD are the only sports activity during the survey week. BgFD is perceived by the participants as a hobby, a dance, a way of relaxation. There is a beneficial effect on the students' physical activity and on the emotional stamina and lifestyle. A decrease in bad habits was found: unhealthy eating -76%, smoking-71%, alcohol use-74%. Self-assessment of health or quality of life is made at three levels: the physical, mental/emotional and social dimensions. The subjective assessment of the health of the BgFD-students at the beginning and at the end of the semester showed an increase at the levels of mental health ( $p < 0.006$ ). Improvements in subjective assessment at the physical and social levels are found, but are not statistically significant.

The subjective health assessment of the sport-students at the beginning and end of the semester showed an increase in the levels of physical health ( $p < 0.021$ ) and mental health ( $p < 0.006$ ). There were no statistically significant differences between the health status of the two groups of BgFD-students and the sports-students.

A one-off assessment of the emotional state and stress levels of the students participating in the mid-semester study showed that over 50% of them had high levels of stress, with differences between the two groups being minimal, but to the benefit of BgFD-students.

The prepared anthropometric profile shows a high proportion (59.74%) of participants with BMI > 25.0, ie. with obesity and the need for physical activity. Comparative anthropometric analysis shows identical results between the two groups, which is indirect evidence for the BgFD effectiveness as a physical activity.

The results of the qualitative Delphi study confirmed the notion that "BgFD are a specific physical activity, sport, social phenomenon, a means of revealing the authenticity of the nation, a way of entertainment and emotional charging". Consensus has been reached in three directions:

- BgFD improve health and quality of life;
- BgFD are an equivalent alternative to sports activities in the curriculum of the students from higher education institutions;
- BgFD-teaching at Medical university of Varna is a successful academic model.

An important part of the consensus is the recognition of BgFD as a holistic health determinant, which is in line with the modern health promotion approaches.

I fully accept the author's recommendations to the various institutions and I hope that they will find their solution regarding BgFD-trainings.

I agree with the contributions formulated by Ms Videnova. They are original - of theoretical and applied nature. Particularly appreciated is the developed educational tool for the study of BgFD, also available on the University's online Blackboard platform.

**The dissemination** of the results from Julieta Videnova's dissertation work fully complies with the Rules of Medical University of Varna for the development of the academic staff. There are 3 publications related to the topic of dissertation work and 2 participation in scientific forums.

The short version of the dissertation reflects fully the essence of the dissertation. It is well figured and appropriately shaped.

## **CONCLUSION**

The presented dissertation on "The influence of the Bulgarian folk dances on the health of the students from the Medical University - Varna" with the author Julieta Georgieva Videnova, fully meets all the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the implementation of the Law and the Rules of the Medical University of Varna.

An original and contemporary topic, a diverse range of methodological approaches and methods, good implementation of the conceptual design, sufficient research in volume and quality. The focus of the work towards improvement of students' health through improvements and refinement of academic programs is an added value.

This gives me reason to consider that the dissertation is fully compliant to the legal requirements.

Herewith, I strongly recommend to the members of the scientific jury to vote positively for the award of the educational and scientific degree "**PhD/doctor**" to Julieta Georgieva Videnova in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and sports, professional direction 7.4 Public health, Scientific specialty: Public health management.

**Varna, 20.11.2019**

**Reviewer:**

(Assoc. Prof. Nevjana Feschieva, MD, PhD)