

Review

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nevyana Georgieva Feschieva, PhD, DM

of the dissertation

of Donka Panayotova Nikolova

on the topic:

„Rehabilitation Care to Overcome Loneliness in Elderly People“

Scientific Advisors:

Assoc. Prof. Stanislava Pavlova, Ph.D.

Prof. Dr. Paraskeva Mancheva, MD

Field of higher education: 7. Health and Sports

Professional field: 7.4. Public Health

Major: "Health Care Management"

By order № P 109- 482/ 18/11.2021 of the Rector of Medical University -Varna, Prof. Valentin Ignatov, based on a Report by prof. Silviya Borisova, DSc. with Ref. № 102-2877/04.11.21 and decision of the Faculty of Public Health of Medical University - Varna by Record №173/09.11.2021, I was appointed an external member of the scientific jury, and by Record №1 of the scientific Jury to also present a review of the dissertation on "Rehabilitation Care to Overcome Loneliness in Elderly People" for the award of educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the scientific specialty " Health Care Management ", professional field 7.4. Public health and the field of higher education 7. Health and sports.

Brief biographical data and career development of the PhD student: In 1989. Donka Nikolova graduated from the Institute for Personnel Training "Dr. P. Beshev" with a degree in Rehabilitation. She further upgraded her educational degrees: in 2006 she received a bachelor's degree in Psychology from VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar", and in 2007 she obtained a Master's degree in Applied Psychology. In 2017 she obtained a bachelor's degree in Health Care Management, and in 2018 Educational and qualification degree Master in Health Care Management at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov". Her academic career began in 2015, when after a competition she was appointed an assistant professor to the Board of Rehabilitators of the Medical College - Varna, where she led exercises in Kinesiotherapy of: Internal Medicine, Surgery, Rheumatology, Gerontology and Therapeutic Massage, Zonotherapy, Healing gymnastics. She develops in the scientific-teaching field, has 15 participations in scientific forums and 28 full-text publications in Bulgarian and international scientific journals. She was enrolled in 2021 with a specialization in non-clinical specialty "Public Health" for a period of one year.

Her professional path is related to her two specialties: Rehabilitator (in various medical centers and sanatorium "SANA") and as a Psychologist in the Center for Social Rehabilitation and Integration for Children with Special Educational Needs "Joy" at the Foundation "Joy for our children" - Varna). Since November 1, 2013 she has been the Director of the same center.

The preparation of Assistant Professor Donka Nikolova directs her to a dissertation in which she can apply her knowledge in both areas - rehabilitation and psychology.

Information about the doctoral procedure. Enrolled by Order of the Rector of Medical University-Varna R-109-94 / 08.02.2019, the dissertation was approved and proposed

for public defense by the Department Council at the Department of Health Care at the Faculty of Public Health at MU - Varna with a Record №238 from 08.11.2021.

General characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation presented by the assistant professor contains 158 pages and is illustrated with 8 tables, 94 figures and 7 appendices; The bibliographic list includes 168 literary sources, of which 53 are in Cyrillic, 115 - in Latin and 17 - Internet sources.

The material is structured in the following well-balanced main sections: Introduction - 2 pages. Literary review - 39 pages; Purpose, tasks and methodology - 11 pages; Results and discussion - 74 pages; Summary - 11 pages; Conclusions, Suggestions, Contributions - 4 p.

The topicality of the dissertation should be considered in the context of the extremely rapid aging of the population in the world and in Bulgaria. Among the accompanying socio-psychological problems, social isolation and loneliness are very important and are a serious obstacle to the adaptation of the aging person to the new bio-social phase of life. The consequences of them apply both to the individual and to society. COVID - 19 epidemic in the last 2 years has increased social isolation and further emphasizes the search for approaches to address these socio-psychological phenomena. Social exclusion and lack of access to social services together with low incomes is a manifestation of social vulnerability, and reflects weaknesses in the macroeconomic, social and financial policies of the state and society. Assessment of the dissertation.

In the introduction to the dissertation the PhD student clearly justifies the importance of the research problem.

The literature review is structured in 5 parts and covers: socio-demographic and health profile of elderly people; social services for elderly people; loneliness, social isolation and social communication with elderly people; practical approaches to dealing with loneliness; provision of rehabilitation care to users of the social service "Home for Old People".

The PhD student shows good mastery of the subject and considers the problems from both psychological and rehabilitation point of view, to which her knowledge / education in these two areas undoubtedly contributes. World research achievements in the field of measuring loneliness, especially for the elderly, are presented. The very good description of methodologies such as Therapy with memories and other forms of Art therapies, as well as ergo therapy give a request for the intentions of the doctoral student to be based on them in the methodology of her research. The literature review shows the excellent awareness of the doctoral student, as evidenced by the inclusion of literary sources from the last two years.

Assessment of goal, tasks and methodology

The goal of the dissertation is formulated: to study and establish the impact of specific rehabilitation care to overcome / reduce the feeling of loneliness in the elderly and old people by applying an experiment.

To achieve this goal, five tasks are planned: To clarify the socio-demographic and health profile of users of the social service "Home for Old People"; to develop a complex methodology "From Past to Present" and to conduct an experiment with users of the social service " Home for Old People"; to assess the degree of loneliness experienced before the experiment in both groups - experimental and control group; to assess the degree of loneliness experienced after the experiment in both groups - experimental and control group.

Three hypotheses are presented. The subject and object of the study are well described. 86 users of the social service "Home for Old People" are covered, divided into 43, at random

on the basis of an experimental and control group. The 8 stages of the research are described, presented in Table 1.

At the heart of the methodology is the complex methods developed by the doctoral student "From Past to Present", which contains 5 topics: "Childhood", "Family - marriage and children", "Friendship", "Profession", "Favorite activities and interests" and final stage conducted in separate sessions lasting from 60 to 90 minutes. The methodology includes rehabilitation elements in the form of tonic exercises suitable for the elderly and old people.

The used research methods - documentary, questionnaire, experiment are adequate to the set goals. Applied Scales: The University of California Los Angeles Loneliness Scale (UCLA Loneliness Scale, Version 3) and Diener's Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) are widely used and established in gerontological practice. They could be presented as independent research methods. The declared static methods are actually applied in the dissertation.

The study was approved by the Commission on Ethics of Research (CER) at the Medical University - Varna and conducted between March 2019 and February 2020 (Record №81 of the Commission on Ethics of Research, MU-Varna from a meeting on 28.02.2019).

The methodology of the dissertation meets modern requirements, proves the preparation of the doctoral student for research work and is a guarantee for the reliability of the results.

Assessment of results, discussion, conclusions and contributions.

The results are presented in three paragraphs, according to the set tasks and the applied methods: socio-demographic and health profile of the users of social services in Home for Old People "Gergana" (from the survey); results from the application of both scales for loneliness and life satisfaction. The results are accurately presented and very well illustrated. I find that the socio-demographic and social profile of consumers, although significantly informative, takes up too much space. And its significance is more limited, as it only gives an idea of the users from whom the experimental and control groups were recruited. No evidence has been presented that Home for Old People "Gergana" is representative of the Homes for Old People in Bulgaria.

The most significant part of the results are those of the scales and especially of the levels of loneliness before and after the experiment with the applied author's complex methodology. , which confirms the second research hypothesis.

The doctoral student correctly asks the research question whether the methodology should be applied only in Home for Old People or could have a wider application. I think that her, albeit timidly mentioned, attempt at a pilot study at the Vinitsa Retirement Club is the right step, and probably only the epidemiological situation is the reason why she did not deepen it. The good results from the application of the methodology in Home for Old People and from the pilot study suggest its significantly wider use.

The conclusions logically follow from the results of the study and prove the effectiveness of the applied methodology for reducing the feeling of loneliness in the elderly in the Home for Old People.

I agree with the contributions by appreciating those of methodological and practical application.

Abstract and publications on the dissertation

The abstract to the dissertation correctly reflects the structure and content of the work and presents the most important results and conclusions of the research work.

In connection with the topic of the dissertation there are four full-text publications and one participation in a scientific conference with international participation, in which the PhD student is the first author.

Remarks and recommendations.

I had the opportunity to make remarks on the dissertation during its discussion, most of which were taken into account. I would recommend Assistant Professor Donka Nikolova to continue her work among consumers outside the Home for Old People, focusing on the existing retirement clubs in Varna, as a place where elderly people communicate, express their interests and can mutually support each other to accept the challenges of the new stage of life. .

Conclusion

The dissertation of Donka Panayotova Nikolova on "Rehabilitation Care for Overcoming Loneliness in Elderly People" on relevance, scope and quality of work, as well as the importance of contributions meets the requirements of the Law on Academic Staff Development in Bulgaria and the Rules of MU - Varna for its implementation.

In connection with all the above, I confidently give my positive assessment and recommend to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "PhD" to Donka Panayotova in the scientific specialty "Health Care Management".

28.01.2022

Reviewer:


/Assoc. prof.. Nevyana Feschieva, DM./