

STANDPOINT

by **Assoc. Prof. Tsveta Atanasova Hristova, PhD,**

“Angel Kanchev” University of Ruse, FPHHC, Department of Health Care,
member of the Scientific Council, in compliance with Order № P-109-125/15.02.2023 of the
Rector of “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University of Varna

on the doctoral dissertation entitled:

“Postponing Parenthood – Midwifery Role in Overcoming the Factors”

of doctoral student: **Teodora Yordanova Todorova,**

in fulfillment of the requirements for the educational and scientific degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Healthcare Management,
Professional field 7.4. Public Health

Asst. Prof. **Teodora Yordanova Todorova** was enrolled as a full-time PhD student in the doctoral program «Healthcare Management», Professional field 7.4. Public Health, in compliance with Order №P-109-41/31.01.2020, on the basis of Art. 24, para. 6 и Art. 30, para. 3 of RIDASRBA, Art. 68, para. 1 of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University - Varna. Pursuant to Order №. P-109-125/15.02.2023, of the Rector of “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University – Varna, and was dismissed with the right of defense.

Teodora Yordanova Todorova is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Health Care of “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University – Varna, Shumen Affiliate. The topic of the dissertation, supervised by Assoc. Prof. Teodora Nikolaeva Evtimova, PhD, is “Postponing Parenthood – Midwifery Role in Overcoming the Factors”.

All the necessary documents in compliance with the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations to it and the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at Medical University-Varna, have been provided.

Biographic data and professional development of the doctoral student

Asst. Prof. Teodora Yordanova Todorova was born in 1985 in the town of Velingrad. She graduated in the Midwifery specialty from Medical University – Plovdiv in 2009. In 2019, she acquired her Master’s degree in Healthcare Management at the same university. She completed her specialization in Public Health at “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University – Varna in 2022.

She worked as a midwife between 2009-2017 at “Razvitie” Medical Center – Velingrad and “Zdrave” MHAT– Velingrad. Since 2018 to the present, she has been an Assistant Professor at the Department of Health Care of “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University – Varna, Shumen Affiliate.

Her primary professional and scientific interests are in the field of midwifery care organization and its management – aspects of the midwifery role and opportunities for autonomous midwifery practice, reproductive health prevention, health education and health promotion. It is impressive that the doctoral student has taken part in over 30 trainings and

courses regarding her scientific interests as well as in international and national forums. She has published nine scientific papers.

She is a member of BAHP, BPHA, EUPHA.

General characteristics of the dissertation

The present dissertation presented by Teodora Yordanova Todorova was developed in the full-time course study of the doctoral program “Healthcare Management”, Professional field 7. 4. Public Health at “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University – Varna.

It comprises a total of 182 pages and 6 Appendices. Structurally, it consists of an introduction, five chapters and list of references. In the outlined general structure, logically connected paragraphs are identified, revealing the versatility of the problem addressed. The last chapter encompasses the formulated conclusions, contributions and recommendations. 12 tables and 50 figures are included in the scientific work. The bibliography consists of 209 sources, 108 of them are in Cyrillic alphabet (in Bulgarian and Russian), 79 – in Latin alphabet (in English), and 22 Internet sources.

An appropriate logical structure and content-textual vision of the research study were adopted. The presentation style is clear and scientifically grounded. The volume, the structure and the layout of the dissertation meet the criteria set by this type of scientific work.

The dissertation work was discussed and referred for defense by the extended Departmental Council of the Department of Health Care at “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Medical University – Varna on 17. 01. 2023.

Evaluation of the topicality of the research problem

The dissertation presents a problem that is not only significant for public health, but also further threatens our national economic and political independence in the future.

Postponing parenthood deepens the demographic crisis in the country, results in complications and increased risks for the mother, the fetus and the child. The later pregnancy and childbirth planning begins, the more likely they are to have negative outcome. Families, partners need professional information and emotional support provided by a medical team, in which the midwife has a deserved role.

The topicality of the problem is well justified by the author. The suggested model of “Midwifery Support Centre for Future Parents” (MSCFP) with the participation of the midwife at different levels of reproductive health prevention provides sufficient grounds to consider the topic relevant and the objectives achievable.

Study Layout

Chapter I of the dissertation “Literature review – topicality of the problem” encompasses the following rubrics: Historical review of the family structure from the postliberation period to the beginning of the period of democratic transition; Cultural and religious beliefs about marriage among ethnic groups in Bulgaria; Significance of the problem of postponing parenthood in economically developed countries; Median age at birth in the least economically developed countries with pronounced poverty; Significance of the problem of postponing parenthood in Bulgaria; Midwife’s competences in planning pregnancy. The chapter comprises 57 pages that reveal the basic concepts of the research.

The literature review is based on sufficient number of sources that the doctoral student skillfully analyzes and demonstrates in-depth knowledge of other authors' work on the chosen topic. The structure of the literature review and the stylistic layout reveal the skills of Asst. Prof. Teodora Yordanova Todorova to work with literary sources and to express her own opinion on the dissertation topic.

Chapter II entitled "Methodology and study design" presents the methodology of the research study that is correct and detailed. The aim and 7 objectives are successfully formulated and 3 working hypotheses are derived. The study is conducted in five stages, 405 respondents are recruited, divided into 5 groups according to certain criteria. The place and the survey period are clearly defined. The organization of the survey is precisely presented and the selected toolset is sufficient to prove the set aim. Primary sociological information is processed with appropriate statistical methods.

The study results are presented in **Chapter III** in ten rubric sections. Both in the theoretical and the empirical part of the study Asst. Prof. Teodora Yordanova Todorova demonstrates rich literary, practical and research awareness, skillfully combined with analytical thinking and ability to select between the research and approaches in focus. The clinical and socio-economic factors for postponing parenthood and midwifery competence in overcoming them are also presented.

Chapter IV is the author's concept of the solution to the problem – a model of Midwifery Support Centre for Future Parents (MSCFP). It is closely related to the specifics of the doctoral student's interests regarding the set aim, objectives and hypotheses. Asst. Prof. Teodora Yordanova Todorova focused her research interest on a needful and possible to fulfil project as an experienced professional in the field of midwifery care. She devised a Model that has its practical implementation in diminishing the factors leading to postponing parenthood as well as in outlining the righteous role of the midwife to the woman and the family. The model affirms the prestige of the midwifery profession and reveals the need for autonomous midwifery practice within her competence.

The author draws important conclusions, suggestions and recommendations in **Chapter V**.

I highly appreciate the precisely conducted study by the author, which proves the need wide professional discussion of the considered problem and the role of the midwife as part of the medical team to solve that problem.

Results

The present research study is distinguished by its originality and contribution in either theoretical or practically applicable character.

Briefly, the basic contributions can be summarized in the following directions.

With theoretical implication:

1. Literature review was provided concerning the demographic characteristics in Bulgaria, namely the birth rate.
2. The factors leading to postponing parenthood among men and women at childbearing age were investigated.
3. The theoretical aspect justifies the need for further additional enhancement of competences of midwife employed at school health offices and fertility clinics.

4. The midwife's attitudes, readiness and motivation to implement autonomous midwifery practice were studied.

With practically applicable implementation

1. Health education information brochures for 11-14-year-olds and a Guidebook for couples with reproductive problems were developed.
2. An innovative model for the provision of autonomous midwifery care through organized training and consultative activities – MSCFP – was devised.
3. The Model of MSCFP is economically effective in overcoming the medical and social factors for postponing parenthood.
4. The functioning of MSCFP in the country will contribute to adding prestige to the midwifery profession.

Conclusion

By its very nature, the dissertation presents the results of the author's in-depth research. The results are logically structured and the conclusion section presents the summary of the findings.

The doctoral student presents three independent publications on the topic of the dissertation, which are a convincing proof of her successful current work. The abstract of the dissertation is 77 pages and precisely presents the content of the dissertation.

*The dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations to it, and the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" Medical University – Varna, which accounts for my convinced positive standpoint and propose to the respected Scientific Council that the doctoral student **Teodora Yordanova Todorova** acquire the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in "Healthcare Management" scientific specialty.*

24.03.2023.

Standpoint by:

Assoc. Prof. Tsveta Atanasova Hristova, PhD

