

STATEMENT

by

Prof. Silviya Borisova Dimitrova, PhD, DSc
Head of the Department of Health Care
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on dissertation for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

field of higher education: 7. Health Care and Sport

professional field: 7.4 Public Health

specialty: Health Care Management

Topic: Postponing parenthood – the midwife's role in overcoming the factors

Author: Teodora Yordanova Todorova

Form of education: Independent

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Teodora Nikolaeva Evtimova, PhD

1. Procedure Details

In accordance with Order No. R-109-41 issued by the Rector of MU-Varna on January 31st, 2020, Teodora Yordanova Todorova was enrolled as a doctoral student in an independent form of education to obtain an educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the area of higher education: 7. Healthcare and sports, Professional field 7.4 Public health, qualification Healthcare management. A protocol for successfully passing the doctoral exam has been submitted. Based on the decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Public Health, Protocol No. 201 dated February 9th, 2023, regarding readiness for public defense and the appointment of a scientific jury, Teodora Todorova has been enrolled with the right to defend with the Order of the Rector of MU-Varna No. R-109-125 dated February 16th, 2023.

The submitted set of documents complies with the Rules for the development of the academic staff at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" - Varna and includes a dissertation, abstract, autobiography, list of publications related to the topic of the dissertation, copies of publications, declarations, and other relevant documents.

2. Brief biographical data of the PhD student

Teodora Yordanova Todorova graduated from the Medical University of Plovdiv with a degree in Midwifery in 2009. After graduation, she started working as a midwife at MHAT "Zdrave", Velingrad.

In 2015, she obtained a Master's degree in Healthcare Management from the same university. In 2022, she acquired a degree in Public Health from the "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" Medical University, Varna.

Teodora began her career in university education in 2018, when she became an assistant in the Department of Health Care at Shumen, Medical University-Varna, a university affiliate.

She has completed over 30 professional development courses nationally and internationally in health care. Teodora has authored more than 9 academic publications and participated in national and international conferences. In addition to mentoring students, she also assists them in preparing for scientific research and participation in scientific forums.

3. Evaluation of Topic Relevance

The importance of the topic is determined by one of the most significant changes in family planning - the postponement of parenthood. Women's reproductive age has been steadily increasing over the years. The reasons, as well as the problems related to delayed parenthood, are complex and the subject of various fields of science. In light of this, questions arise regarding the place of motherhood (parenthood) in modern society's hierarchies of values, as well as legitimate concerns about the choices made by the young generation in terms of values.

In her dissertation, the doctoral candidate examines the role of midwives in overcoming the reasons for postponed parenthood. The professional activities of midwives in protecting sexual and reproductive health by informing women are a necessity that requires changes in the organization of maternal healthcare. Despite the existence of generally established norms for the ideal age at which to plan the stage of parenthood, the pursuit of professional growth, career development, and financial independence necessitate changes in the priorities of future parents.

Based on the above facts, I believe that Theodora Todorova's dissertation topic is of high scientific significance and relevance. The aim is adequately formulated according to the included material for research in the dissertation, and the tasks are also fully and accurately stated. The chosen topic allows for well-reasoned conclusions, proposals, and contributory aspects to be formulated.

In Theodora Todorova's dissertation, the role of midwives in overcoming postponed parenthood is explored in a relevant, prospective, and practical manner. This proves its scientific place in healthcare management.

4. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The dissertation work developed by Teodora Yordanova Todorova is a volume of 182 pages, structured according to standard requirements, including: an introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, and Organization of Scientific Research, Results, Practical approaches to overcome postponement of parenthood as prevention of reproductive health, Contributions, Proposals, and Recommendations. It is richly illustrated with 50 figures, 12 tables, and 6 appendices. The bibliography includes 209 sources, of which 108 are in Cyrillic, 79 are in Latin, and 22 are internet sources.

The author provides an analytical review of the literature, examining the historical aspects of the family structure in Bulgaria from the period following the "Liberation" to the beginning of the "Transition". In a logical sequence, Teodora Todorova examines the cultural and religious beliefs regarding marriage among ethnic groups in Bulgaria. A comparison is made between the significance of the problem in economically developed countries and in our country. The author's experience and knowledge contribute to the correct and in-depth analysis of predisposing factors for postponing parenthood. The midwife's competencies in planning pregnancies are analyzed.

It is apparent from the logically structured literature review that the author is knowledgeable in the field of the problem under consideration.

The main aim and objectives are specifically formulated and accurately reflect the research work carried out by Teodora Todorova. The author uses a wide range of methods adequate for achieving the goal. The structure and content of the developed tool are subordinate to the specificity of the information gathered from the respective group of respondents. A methodology for improving the effectiveness of interaction with parents has been developed and tested with the aim of studying and analyzing the role of the nurse in the daycare center in forming healthy habits in children.

Documentary and sociological research methods have been used. In order to reveal the essence of observed phenomena and their interdependencies, statistical methods have been applied to analyze and interpret data.

The research toolkit is custom-designed and includes survey questionnaires to gather the opinions of registered individuals and medical experts in centers for reproductive medicine and patients hospitalized in departments of pathological pregnancy and delivery. To investigate the opinions of obstetricians-gynecologists and embryologists regarding the role of midwives in overcoming the reasons for postponement of parenthood, a questionnaire was developed to conduct in-depth interviews.

The dissertation presents logically organized results in the third chapter. The study covers reproductive health, clinical, and socio-economic reasons for delaying parenthood. The awareness of the appropriate age for having the first child is examined among patients of different religious affiliations.

The opinions of medical specialists regarding the risks of delayed parenthood on reproductive health are explored. The study reveals a deficit of health information regarding risky reproductive behavior among the respondent groups, which can be compensated by the autonomous activity of midwives.

The doctoral candidate analyzes the clinical and socioeconomic reasons for postponing parenthood. A prerequisite for successful consultative activity in the Center for Reproductive Medicine is established - trust in the midwife. Despite high trust in the midwife regarding competence, experts categorically state that the midwife's knowledge must be constantly upgraded and expanded.

Skillfully, Teodora Todorova investigates the professional opportunities and competencies of midwives to assist people of reproductive age in overcoming the reasons for postponing parenthood. Among the challenges facing the midwifery profession are the establishment of trust, the establishment of independent midwifery practice, and the enhancement of competencies.

The opinions of medical specialists regarding the promotion and prevention of reproductive health have been studied. According to them, health education in schools is the way through which a midwife can influence parents to overcome the reasons for postponing parenthood.

In-depth research has identified the necessary knowledge and skills for consulting and training in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

Competencies of the midwife in various directions have been derived - health education, consultant on pregnancy and childbirth issues, as well as prevention of reproductive health.

The results of the study determine the basic prerequisites for developing practical approaches to prevent delayed parenthood as a prevention of reproductive health.

The practical approaches are based on the basic points derived in the study by Teodora Todorova - Model of a Midwifery Support Center for Future Parents (MSCFP) and Auxiliary Tools of MSCFP. Doctoral students discuss the obtained results and skillfully present them as deficiencies in practice.

In addition, the doctoral student presented auxiliary tools that offer an opportunity to provide information and skills to adolescents regarding reproductive and sexual health.

The reference to the contributions presented in the dissertation work objectively reflects the real achievements of Teodora Todorova. I accept the contribution of the dissertation work in both the theoretical and practical aspects.

The seven main conclusions presented in the dissertation work are clearly and precisely formulated, and they summarize the results obtained from implementing the tasks and objectives set.

The formulated recommendations and contributions of the dissertation work are made on the basis of the author's own data from the scientific research.

The dissertation is written in an academic style with precise terminology.

The dissertation summary accurately reproduces the content of the dissertation work. It is written in a clear, understandable language and a scientifically oriented style, reflecting the main points in the dissertation and giving a clear idea of the achievements of the doctoral student.

5. Assessment of Publications and Personal Contribution of the PhD student

The doctoral candidate has presented three full-text publications on the topic of the dissertation in Bulgarian journals. In all three of them, she is the first author, which reflects her contribution to the scientific research.


6. Conclusion

Teodora Yordanova Todorova's dissertation is of high scientific and practical value. It increases public awareness of reproductive and sexual health and outlines the role of midwives in overcoming the causes of postponed parenthood.

Upon reviewing the documentation provided to me, I am of the opinion that Teodora Yordanova Todorova fully complies with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulation for its Implementation, and the Regulation for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University of Varna.

With my positive vote, I support the award of the academic and scientific degree of "Doctor" to Teodora Yordanova Todorova.

05.04.2023
Varna

Statement written by: 
Prof. Silviya Borisova, PhD, DSc