

## Review for awarding Doctoral Degree

### REVIEW

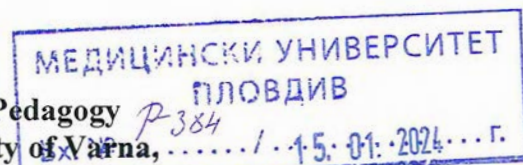
By Prof. Elena Grozeva Zheleva, PhD in Pedagogy  
Prof. Dr. Parskev Stoyanov Medical University of Varna, P 384

Affiliate – Sliven, Department of Health Care

E-mail: elena.zheleva@mu-varna.bg, GSM: +3

Appointed for a member of Scientific Committee in accordance with:

Order No P - 3591/06.12.2023 by the Rector of Medical University of Plovdiv



Of a Dissertation for awarding educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”, Professional field 7.4. Public Health, Doctoral Program “Management of Health Care”

**Author: Marieta Simeonova Vladimirova**

**Type of doctoral studies:** self-study

**Department:** “Department of Midwifery Cares”

**Topic: “Midwife Competencies in Family Planning of Romani Women in Plovdiv Region”**

**Supervisor:** Assoc. Prof. Daniela Ivova Taneva, PhD in Medicine, Medical University of Plovdiv, Faculty of Public Health, Department of Midwifery Cares, Head of the Department

**Consultant:** Dipl. Eng. Angelina Kirkova-Bogdanova, PhD in Medicine, Medical University of Plovdiv, Faculty of Public Health, Department of Medical Informatics, Biostatistics and E-learning

### **1. GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE PROCEDURE AND OF THE DOCTORAL CANDIDATE**

The provided set of materials on paper and on electronic medium meets the requirements of Art. 70(1), Section I. Acquiring educational and scientific degree “DOCTOR” in Medical University of Plovdiv, Regulations of Medical University of Plovdiv from 28 January 2021, and includes documents required for the dissertation defense procedure.

The doctoral candidate has enclosed **three** published papers, related to the Dissertation, developed in co-authorship, as she is the first author of **two** of them, and the second author of the third one.

### **2. BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE DOCTORAL CANDIDATE**

**Marieta Simeonova Vladimirova** has been working as a midwife at University Multidisciplinary Hospital for Active Treatment “Saint George” EAD, city of Plovdiv, Obstetrics and Gynaecology Clinic, from 01 August 2014 to 10 September 2018. Since 10 September 2018 and currently she is working as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Midwifery Cares, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Plovdiv. She actively participates in the training of students studying in programs “Midwifery” and “Medical Laboratory Technician (X-Ray Imaging)”. She conducts study and practical courses in the study subjects “Philosophy and Introduction to Nursing and Midwifery Cares” and “Special

Midwifery Cares” for the students studying in programs “Midwifery” and “Medical Laboratory Technician (X-Ray Imaging)”. She participates in semester and state examinations as a member of State Examinations Boards.

In 2014 she completed higher education with excellent result, specialty “Midwifery”, Bachelor Degree, professional qualification “Midwife”, professional field “Healthcare”, at the Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Plovdiv. In 2018 she acquired higher education, Master Degree, specialty “Healthcare Management”, professional qualification “Manager of Healthcare and Practice Teacher”, professional field “Public Health”, at the Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Plovdiv.

The qualifications and teaching experience, acquired by the doctoral candidate, determine her professional development under Doctoral Program “Management of Healthcare”.

In 2023 she acquired professional qualification under program “Consultant in Breastfeeding and Healthy and Balanced Nutrition”.

The doctoral candidate participates in national training seminars and courses with the purpose of achieving higher level of her professional qualification. She participates in two scientific projects.

### **3. RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC AND APPROPRIATENESS OF THE SET GOALS AND TASKS**

The Dissertation is dedicated to a quite significant and global problem in contemporary midwifery – competencies of the midwife in the family planning of Romani women in Plovdiv Region. This is an important issue of our time and is oriented in the practice to increase the knowledge and competencies in the investigated matter. The specificity of this research requires developing of measures for the midwife’s activity in the matters of reproductive behaviour and family planning, and for the midwife’s work with the Romani ethnic group.

In the contemporary environment the requirements for quality professional training, qualification and acquired personal and professional qualities of the midwives are getting higher. The midwifery cares are complex and require great attention, as it takes time to train highly-qualified professionals.

The present scientific research is useful for developing a model of health promotional policy directed to the Romani families and their specific needs, and for recommendations for increase of the competencies of the midwife in the matters of family planning in Romani community.

**Doctoral candidate Marieta Vladimirova** presents the midwife as a leading health professional, emphasizing on the understanding that in the last years the midwife’s role of an autonomous health professional on the matters of health consultancy is getting more and more important. This enhances the need of achievements in the professional training of midwives and conducting scientific researches, and of implementation of innovations for prevention. The midwife with academic education has knowledge, skill and competencies which allow conduction of family consultations of pregnant women and mothers.

The significance of the Dissertation comes from the investigated and analyzed issues regarding the midwife’s competencies in the family planning of Romani women, the practical training of the midwives, the increase of their competencies in the matters of the family planning and reproductive health in risk groups of the population.

Considering this, the topic developed by Assist. Prof. **Marieta Vladimirova** is of great importance of our time, eligible for Dissertation defense and embodying high scientific value.

#### 4. KNOWLEDGE OF THE MATTER

The doctoral candidate knows very well the investigated matter. She makes creative assessment of the reviewed literature and this approach allows her to make a critical analysis of the theoretical formulations. The literature overview used by Assist. Prof. **Marieta Vladimirova** to investigate the matter on the midwife's competencies in the family planning of Romani women in Plovdiv Region is very detailed. Her theoretical thoughts come as a result of comprehensive analyzing of 210 literature sources, 55 of which are in Cyrillic, and 155 are in Latin. **The doctoral candidate** makes a creative assessment of the literature material. This gives me grounds to accept that the doctoral candidate is very well informed about the reviewed issue.

All literature sources are issued in the last 10 years and meet the requirement for contemporaneity and relevance.

#### 5. RESEARCH METHODS

To achieve the goal of the Dissertation the author uses original research methodology, containing sociological and statistical research methods. The conducted research is mixed. At the first stage of the research the candidate uses **sociological methods** on the basis of **surveys**, performed with two survey cards for clarification of the specificities of family planning and reproductive behaviour of Romani women. At the second stage she uses the **survey** again, performed with one survey card, for assessment of the midwife's competencies in the family planning of Romani women.

To achieve the goal of the research, the author also uses the method of interview. The interviews are carried out with a view to ensuring authenticity and completeness of the collected primary information.

Considering the goal and tasks of the research, and the amount and type of data, the author uses the following **statistical methods: descriptive statistics** – for processing of quantitatively measurable indicators; **alternative analysis** – for summarizing qualitatively measurable dichotomous variables – assessment of relative share in (%). **Parametric analyses: T-test** for two independent samples. **Nonparametric analyses: Chi-square test; Mann-Whitney U test; Kruskal-Wallis test;** and **Correlation analysis.**

MS Excel 2010 is used for visualization of the observed processes and for illustration of existing regularities. The used significance level is  $\alpha = 0,05$ . The data analysis is made using statistical software product IBM SPSS Statistics v.23.

The research is approved by Statement of the Academic Ethics Committee of Medical University of Plovdiv (Ref. No P – 662/ 21.03.2023).

The mathematical and statistical methods for processing and analysis of the collected data are correctly presented. The following **units of observation** are included in the research: the selected **technical units** are Obstetrics and Gynaecology Ward of University Multidisciplinary Hospital for Active Treatment “Plovdiv” AD; Obstetrics and Gynaecology Ward “Vesela” of Multidisciplinary Hospital for Active Treatment “Saint Mina”; Obstetrics and Gynaecology Clinic of University Multidisciplinary Hospital for Active Treatment “Saint George” EAD; University Specialized Hospital for Active Treatment in Obstetrics and

Gynaecology “Selena”; and Community Centre for Children and Families – city of Plovdiv. **The logical units of observation** vary for the different stages of the research: **First stage** – A logical unit is any woman defining herself as a person of Romani origin, who searched for help in any of the technical units of observation in the period 2019-2022; **Second stage** – A logical unit is any midwife who agreed to participate in the research and filled in the provided survey card. **Anonymous direct individual survey** is used for collecting primary statistical information.

The research is conducted in two stages which allows dynamic follow-up.

The indicators of observation are defined in Romani women /social and demographic characteristics, parity of interview data, and resultative indicators/ and in investigated midwives /social and demographic characteristics, and assessment of the midwife’s professional competencies, related to the family planning of Romani women/.

A complete analysis of the indicators characterizing the reproductive behaviour of the observed group of people is made.

The selected research methods allow achievement of the set goal and of proper solution of the Dissertation tasks.

## **6. CHARACTERISTICS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE DISSERTATION**

The dissertation completely meets the requirements for doctoral dissertation and is presented in totally 160 pages. The Dissertation is composed of introduction; literature overview; goal and tasks; materials and methods; results; program for postgraduate training; conclusions; contributions; suggestions and recommendations; references; 5 enclosures.

The research data are visualized using 34 figures, 11 tables, 2 schemes and 5 enclosures.

**In the introduction** the doctoral candidate very confidently emphasizes on the significance of the investigated matter, motivates her choice, and outlines the issues which are clarified in each part.

**The literature overview** /38 pages/ sufficiently enough presents the following terms: origin and migration; number of population; lifestyle and culture; the Romani people over the world and the midwifery care; the Romani people in Bulgaria and the midwifery care; defining of the term “Competence”; midwife’s competencies; midwife’s competencies in the family planning.

**The analysis of the literature overview** summarizes the importance of the issue, which is determined by this ethnic group that is widely spread all over the world and in Bulgaria. Despite the different economic, political, demographic, cultural and religious conditions of the countries that they live in, the Romani people succeed to keep their identity and specific way of life. The Romani people are considered a risk group in many indicators. Unemployment, poverty, poor social and living conditions, overpopulation, lack of sexual and health education, early marriages, adolescent pregnancies, high parity are observed in this ethnic group. There is evidence of risky reproductive behaviour, lack of family planning, high rates of children’ and mothers’ morbidity and mortality in the Romani ethnic group. The paper presents the need of providing information to the Romani community in Bulgaria on the matters of reproductive health and family planning. It emphasizes on the importance of affirmation of the practising midwives as highly-qualified professionals with socially significant role, providing autonomous midwifery cares and promotion of behaviour which is beneficial for health. The research outlines the need of developing programs for additional

practical training of the midwives with a view to achieving higher level of competencies in the matters of family planning and reproductive health in the risk groups of the population.

**The research goal and tasks** are focused on investigation and analysis of the midwife's competencies in the family planning of Romani women in Plovdiv Region. The goal of the Dissertation is clearly and precisely formulated, as solution of 5 tasks is envisaged for its achievement.

**The materials and methods of the Dissertation research** are presented confidently by Assist. Prof. **Marieta Vladimirova** through detailed research methods, and its main instrument corresponds completely to the general concept of the research. Subject to the theoretical research, the doctoral candidate logically develops a program for postgraduate training with a view to increase of the midwife's competencies in the matters of family planning of Romani women. The Dissertation logically presents object, subject of investigation, hypothesis, main goal, envisaged tasks for solution.

**The exposé** covering 51 pages presents the results and the discussion of the research conducted by **Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova**. It is the most essential and important part of the Dissertation, and includes: **social and demographic characteristics of the ethnic group** /age of the investigated group; place of living; education; marital status; age of entering into civil marriage; social and economic status/; **family planning** /reproductive behaviour, contraception, wanted abortions/; **reproductive attitudes; midwife's competencies in the family planning of Romani women** /demographic and professional characteristics; midwife's competencies in the matters of reproductive behaviour and family planning; attitudes for additional training of the midwife/. The data collected during this extensive research confirms the insufficiency of exploring the matters, related to family planning. The lack of education and of health culture of Romani people are the main difficulties which the midwives have to deal with. **The doctoral candidate** proves that the midwives determine the work of the health mediators as a factor of improvement of the health culture of Romani women. Most of the risk groups are Romani. The less discussed topic between the midwives and Romani women is planning of the family size, and family consultancy is omitted in the training of midwives. This determines the need of additional training with a focus on the family planning /consultancy/ for increasing the midwife's competencies for working with minority groups.

**Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova** reveals the role of the midwife in the promotion of family planning among Romani women, and assesses it as very important. She proves that with age and length of service of the working midwives, the tendency is towards underestimation of family planning of Romani women.

The comprehensive and detailed analysis of the results of the scientific research allows the doctoral candidate to develop **"Program for postgraduate training of midwives"** which is aimed at expansion of their competencies in the family planning in marginalized ethnic groups of the population. She proves that the implementation of the program shall increase the midwives' competencies for working with the Romani ethnic group on the matters of reproductive behaviour and family planning. This, in turn, shall give opportunities for optimal identification of the issues and development of midwifery model of care, by giving a chance for optimal application of health interventions and reduction of the risky behaviour of Romani people regarding their health.

The final part of the Dissertation presents conclusion, contributions, suggestions and recommendations which come as a result of the conducted research, collected results and their interpretation.

The doctoral candidate makes suggestions and recommendations in four directions to Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, Council of Ministers and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

## **7. CONTRIBUTIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH FOR SCIENCE AND PRACTICE**

The Dissertation and its contributions come as a result of many years of work and scientific searching of the doctoral candidate, and that is why I think that they should be credited mostly to her.

**The doctoral candidate** states three main groups of **contributions: scientific and theoretical** /the conducted complex medical and social retrospective anamnestic study proves the competencies of the midwife in the family planning of Romani women in Plovdiv Region. The performed comparative analysis reveals the reproductive behaviour and family planning of Romani women in the period 2004-2023/, **contributions of confirmative nature** /confirmation of tendencies in the reproductive behaviour and family planning of Romani ethnic group, and in the influence of Romani mothers on their daughters' reproductive behaviour/, and **contributions of applied nature** /a program for postgraduate training of the midwives on the matters of family planning and reproductive health in the marginalized ethnic groups; particular recommendations to the Bulgarian institutions are formulated with a view to influence not only on this ethnic group, but also on the professionals engaged in the health education and health care among Romani people/.

The stated **contributions of the Dissertation** are significant for science and practice. The doctoral candidate envisages implementation in the practice of the midwife's competencies in the family planning of Romani women, which are found to be absent. Perspectives of further development are present.

## **8. ASSESSMENT OF THE PUBLISHED PAPERS, RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION**

The presented **three papers** are published in scientific journals. The doctoral candidate is the first author of two of them, and the second author of the third one. One of these papers is published in an international journal. **Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova** has participated in one international scientific conference conducted abroad. The numbers and quality of the papers meet completely the requirements of Medical University of Plovdiv for public defense and present the achieved results and the essence of the Dissertation to a greatest degree.

I rate highly the self-participation of the doctoral candidate in the conducted Dissertation, the formulated contributions and the obtained results which should be credited only to her.

## **9. SELF PARTICIPATION OF THE DOCTORAL CANDIDATE**

The self-participation and the merits of the doctoral candidate in the conducted Dissertation, and the formulated contributions and the obtained results are apparent.

## **10. ABSTRACT**

The Abstract corresponds completely to the content and structure of the Dissertation and outlines its most important contributions.

## **11. CRITICAL REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

I have no critical remarks and recommendations to the conducted Dissertation research and the set of materials provided for review.

## 12. PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS

I would like to share my positive personal impressions of **Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova**.

## 13. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE USE OF THE DISSERTATION CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS

I would give my recommendation to **Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova** to use the scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the Dissertation research in her future academic development.

## CONCLUSION

The Dissertation of Assist. Prof. **Marieta Simeonova Vladimirova** is distinguishable by many merits in theoretical and empiric-applied aspect. The author achieves her goals and presents conclusive results in confirmation of the research hypothesis.


I think that the Dissertation meets all requirements of the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (LASDRB), the Regulations on Implementation of LASDRB, and the Regulations of Medical University of Plovdiv.

The Dissertation shows that doctoral candidate **Marieta Simeonova Vladimirova** has comprehensive theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty “Healthcare Management”, as she **demonstrates** qualification and skills for independent conduction of scientific research.

Considering the above stated, I confidently give my *positive assessment* for the conducted research, presented by the reviewed Dissertation, Abstract, achieved results and contributions, and *I give my recommendation to the honourable Scientific Committee to award educational and scientific degree “Doctor”* to **Marieta Simeonova Vladimirova**, in doctoral program “**Healthcare Management**”.

29.12. 2023  
City of Varna

Reviewer: .....  
Prof. Elena Zheleva, PhD in Pedagogy



Заличено на основание  
Чл.5 §1, 6, 7в Регламент (ЕС)2016/679