

STATEMENT

by **Assoc. Prof. Milena Gancheva Sandeva, PhD in Medicine**

Department of Midwifery Cares, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Plovdiv

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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

on a Dissertation for awarding educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”

Professional field: 7.4. Public Health

Doctoral Program: “Healthcare Management”

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.

Brief background of the doctoral candidate

Marieta Simeonova Vladimirova completed higher education with excellent result, specialty “Midwifery”, Bachelor Degree, in 2014 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.

Marieta 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 August 2014 to September 2018. In 2018, after winning an announced competition, the doctoral candidate was appointed for an Assistant Professor at the Department of Midwifery Cares, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Plovdiv.

The doctoral candidate participates in various national training seminars and courses with the purpose of achieving higher level of her professional qualification. In 2023 she acquired professional qualification under program “Consultant in Breastfeeding and Healthy and Balanced Nutrition”.

2. Relevance of the issue

The high contemporary requirements to the preparation of the health professionals are determined mostly by the constantly increasing need of quality healthcare. The Dissertation of Assist. Prof. Vladimirova is dedicated to a significant and major issue of our time, related to midwife’s competencies in family planning of Romani women in Plovdiv Region. The comprehensive research of the problems, related to the population reproduction, requires investigation of the reproductive behaviour and of the matters on the family planning of the population, incl. of all groups in it. Bulgaria is inhabited by many ethnic groups. The largest group is the one of the Bulgarians, followed by the Turkish and the Romani groups. It is one of the countries in EU with greatest number of Romani population. This determines the influence of this ethnic group on all demographic parameters of our country.

Traditional unwritten rules and norms of social behaviour continue to exist in Romani people, and are being understood by them as specifically Romani and typical only for them. These rules are an important marker of identity which separates them from all other communities that they interact with, and that is why it is important these rules to be followed and reproduced in the community. The Romani people are a very risk group with urgent need of comprehensive understanding, developing of strategies for integration and assistance of the Romani families on the matters of family planning, with the active participation of health professionals, particularly midwives. The present scientific research is directed to development of a model of health promotional politics, oriented to the specificities of the Romani families, as special attention is paid to the competencies of the midwives in the matters of reproductive behaviour and family planning in the Romani community.

Improving the midwife’s competencies in the matters of reproductive behaviour and family planning of the Romani people could lead to improvement of their health education, smoother process of integration, building trust, and reduction of the negative tendencies in the general health and social status of this ethnic group.

I think that the topic developed by **Marieta Vladimirova** is of great importance of our time, eligible for Dissertation defense and embodying high scientific value.

3. Knowledge of the matter

The presented literature overview (38 pages) and the extensive bibliography in the Dissertation of Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova give a clear picture of the comprehensive knowledge on the matters of family planning of Romani women in Plovdiv Region, and on the competencies which the midwife, working with this group, should have. The literature overview is based on **210** literature sources, 55 of which are in Cyrillic, and **155** of which are in Latin. All literature sources are issued in the last 10 years and meet the requirement for contemporaneity and appropriateness.

The overview is developed in **8** sections and covers a significant part of the origin and migration, population number, lifestyle and culture, and specificities of the Romani community worldwide and in Bulgaria. The midwife’s competencies through the prism of Romani ethnic group specificity are reviewed and analyzed in details. The issue is comprehensively reviewed and is valuable in terms of knowledge. In the References, Assist. Prof. Vladimirova outlines the main problems, possibilities and perspectives for development and creation of a new systemic approach for improving family planning of Romani women. The stated results are a proof of the absence of unified and systemic approach in the pedagogical preparation of the health professionals working with the Romani ethnic

group. On the other hand, the health professionals have problems in the communication with this group of patients, due to asymmetric relations, language barriers, insufficient health education, illiteracy, lack of motivation for cooperation. A significant conclusion is made: that **there are no comprehensive researches of the midwife's activity on the matters of reproductive behaviour and family planning of Romani women.** Unfortunately, this element of the professional competency is not sufficiently covered by the training of the future health professionals.

I am convinced that the doctoral candidate is very well informed about the reviewed topic.

4. Research methods

The used research methods meet the requirements of the contemporary science and allow achievement of the set goal and tasks.

To achieve the goal of the Dissertation Assist Prof. Vladimirova 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 and interviews**, 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, but this time the emphasis is on assessment of the midwife's competencies.

Subject, units and indicators of observation are clearly defined in the research methodology. Mathematical and statistical methods for processing and analysis of data collected are correctly presented. The reliability of the results is guaranteed by using a great number of contemporary statistical analyses. The research is made at two stages which allows dynamic follow-up.

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

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

5. Characteristics and assessment of the Dissertation and contributions.

The scientific paper of Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova is organized according to the requirements and is presented in **160** pages, being structured in the following parts – introduction, literature overview, goal, tasks, materials and methods, result and discussion, program for post-graduate training, conclusions, contributions, suggestions and recommendations, references and enclosures. The visualization is made using **34** figures, **11** tables, **2** schemes and **5** enclosures. The References include **210** literature sources, **55** of which are in Cyrillic and **155** of which are in Latin.

The introduction and the extensive literature overview (containing 38 pages), which includes 8 sections, reviews comprehensively and in details the matters of origin and migration, number of population, lifestyle and culture, specificities of Romani community, and the matters of midwifery care worldwide and in Bulgaria. The paper offers a review of a significant part of the midwife's functions and roles in relation to the specificities of Romani community, and of midwife's professional and pedagogical qualification. **The analysis of the literature overview** summarizes the importance of the issue and determines the need of developing programs for additional training of the midwives with a view to achieving higher level of competencies in the matters of family planning and improvement of the reproductive behaviour of Romani ethnic group.

The goal and tasks are clearly and precisely formulated and directed to investigation and analyzing the midwife's competencies in the family planning of Romani women in Plovdiv Region.

The materials and methods of the Dissertation are presented confidently through detailed presentation of: formulation of the research; subject of investigation; units and indicators of observation; research tools; methods and methodical tools; mathematical and statistical processing of data.

The exposé (51 pages) presents the results and the discussion of the conducted research. A detailed analysis of the results collected is presented in this part. The Dissertation is well structured, as it is of note that the doctoral candidate outlines significant issues covering the specificities of the reproductive behaviour, contraception, wanted abortions, and attitudes of the investigated group of people. The paper offers a detailed analysis of the competencies of the midwives in the matters of reproductive health and family planning, as well as of the attitudes of the health professional for additional training in such a direction.

The comprehensive and detailed analysis of the results of the scientific research allows Assist. Prof. Vladimirova to develop **“Program for postgraduate training of midwives”** which is aimed at improvement and expansion of their competencies in the family planning in risk ethnic groups of the population, as the Romani ethnic group is. This program shall be useful for the professionals who work with these risk groups in terms of developing appropriate approaches for increase of sensitivity at various levels – family, community, with a view to overcoming the problems of this ethnic group such as early marriage, adolescent pregnancy, contraception, and so on.

Six major conclusions are made originating directly from the obtained own results, and which are in direct relation to the Dissertation structure.

The Dissertation embodies scientific and theoretical contributions and contributions of confirmative and of practical-applied nature.

On the basis of the obtained results of the Dissertation, Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova makes relevant and well-grounded recommendations to various institutions – **Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education and Science; Council of Ministers; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.**

6. Assessment of the published papers and personal contribution of the doctoral candidate

Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova presents 3 published papers in relation to the Dissertation, as she is the first author of 2 of them. One of these papers is published in an international journal. The papers meet completely the requirements of Medical University of Plovdiv for awarding educational and scientific degree “Doctor”, and represent the results and essence of the Dissertation.

The doctoral candidate has participated in one international scientific forum with reports presenting the results of the conducted research.

The doctoral candidate has complete self-participation in the Dissertation, and all conclusions, contributions and obtained results should be credited only to her.

I have no critical remarks on the Dissertation structure and on the provided materials. I would give my recommendation to Assist. Prof. Vladimirova to continue with further investigations on this relevant matter.

7. Abstract

The Abstract is developed in accordance with the requirements and presents the results of the Dissertation.

CONCLUSION

The presented Dissertation embodies scientific and theoretical contributions and contributions of confirmative and of practical-applied nature, which form an original contribution to the science and practice, and meet the 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 Assist. Prof. Marieta 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 above described Dissertation, Abstract, achieved results and contributions, and *I give my recommendation to the honourable Scientific Committee to award educational and scientific degree “Doctor”* to Assist. Prof. Marieta Vladimirova, in doctoral program “Healthcare Management”, field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.4. Public Health.

02.01.2024

Reviewer: 
Заличено на основание
Чл.5 §1, 6. "В" Регламент (ЕС)2016/679

/Assoc. Prof. Milena Sandeva, PhD in Medicine/