

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Monika Ruseva Obreykova,
Deputy Head of the Department of Health Care, FOSZG
BDU "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov"

REGARDING:

dissertation "Formation of health skills and habits in children from the Roma community" for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Health Care Management" in Professional Field 7.4. Public Health, Field of Higher Education 7. Health and Sports.

Reason for submitting the opinion: participation as an external member of the Scientific Jury for the defense of the dissertation work according to Order No. R-115/09.01.2026 of the Rector of the Medical University – Plovdiv.

Author of the dissertation work: Nedyalka Grozeva Boycheva Assistant Professor at the Department of Nursing.

Form of doctoral studies: independent form of study

Topic of dissertation: "Formation of health skills and habits in children from the Roma community"

Scientific supervisors: Prof. Dr. Maria Semerdzhieva, MD; Prof. Biyanka Torniyova, PhD

General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

The presented set of materials on electronic media has been carefully prepared and in accordance with the requirements of the procedure for acquiring the ONS "Doctor" at MU - Plovdiv and the Regulations of MU - Plovdiv (2026)

Nedyalka Grozeva Boycheva graduated with a degree in Nursing from the Medical College at the Higher Medical Institute - Plovdiv in 1997. In the period 1998–2000, he acquired a Bachelor's degree in Health Care, as well as a professional qualification in Health Care Manager and Lecturer in a Medical College at the Plovdiv Medical University.

During the period 2002–2004, he acquired a Master's degree in Public Health and Health Management with the professional qualification Health Manager at the Medical University - Sofia.

In 2006, Nedyalka Boycheva was awarded second prize by the Bulgarian Association of Healthcare Professionals (BAHP) in the national competition "Nurse of Bulgaria". In 2017, she obtained a second master's degree in "Healthcare Management" at the Medical University of Plovdiv.

From 01.10.2008 to 2010, Prof. Nedyalka Boycheva was a part-time lecturer at the Nursing Care Section. On 02.03.2010, after winning a competition, she was appointed as an assistant at the Nursing Care Department at the Faculty of Health and Welfare at the Medical University of Plovdiv. From that year until now, she has been working at the Department of Nursing. In 2019, the doctoral student acquired a specialty in "Medical Pedagogy", and in 2024 she received a second specialty in "Public Health".

She is a member of prestigious professional organizations such as BAPZG and BNDOZ.

Relevance and Significance of the Problem

The dissertation submitted to me by doctoral student Nedyalka Grozeva Boycheva for an opinion on the topic "Formation of Health Skills and Habits in Children from the Roma Community" is highly relevant due to the existence of significant health inequalities and limited access to preventive health services.

The topic is of great public importance, as it contributes to the prevention of preventable diseases and the reduction of epidemic risks. Its relevance is supported by national and European strategies for social inclusion and equal access to healthcare. Thus, the formation of health skills in childhood is established as an effective and sustainable health intervention. In this context, the study of Rev. Nedyalka Boycheva makes a significant contribution to the in-depth study of the issue under consideration, by convincingly affirming the role of the nurse as a leading factor in prevention and health promotion activities. Through the performance of her professional, educational and social functions, the nurse contributes to the sustainable improvement of the health status of children from the Roma community and to the reduction of health inequalities.

Nedyalka Boycheva's dissertation fully meets the requirements for a doctoral dissertation and is presented in accordance with the established academic requirements and is presented in a volume of 246 pages, structured in four main chapters. The study includes an introduction, a literature review, formulated goals and objectives, a description of the materials and methods used, presentation and discussion of the results, conclusions, scientific contributions and recommendations, as well as a conceptual model of a plan for the formation of health skills and habits in children from the Roma community. At the end of the work, a bibliography and five appendices are included. The text is illustrated with 48 figures and 25 tables. The bibliography includes a total of 160 literary sources, of which 110 are in Cyrillic and 50 in Latin.

Literature Review

The doctoral candidate demonstrates a high level of awareness of the research topic, with her practical experience in the relevant field contributing significantly to this. The literature review on the topic covers both Bulgarian and foreign scientific sources, which testifies to a thorough and balanced review of scientific achievements. The paper provides a reasoned analysis of the relevance and significance of the research topic, as well as the reasons for its choice. The citation is correct and in accordance with academic requirements, and the scientific terminology is used precisely and adequately.

In the first chapter, rev. N. Boycheva presents the lifestyle, culture and identity of the Roma in Bulgaria and sets the theoretical and sociocultural basis of the study. The features of the Roma identity, the value system, traditions and beliefs of the Roma family, as well as the role of men and women in the family structure are examined. The analysis of these aspects contributes to a better understanding of attitudes, behaviors, and health practices in the Roma community. By clarifying cultural and social specificities, the necessary context is created for the subsequent consideration

of health status, health habits and the role of the nurse in the process of health promotion and prevention.

In the second chapter of the dissertation, a hypothesis, main goal, intended tasks to be solved, object of research and logical units are logically derived.

The aim of the proposed dissertation is to study and analyze the health skills and habits of Roma children aged 0-7 years in order to improve the health status and raise the health culture of the Roma community. A total of 579 respondents were included in the study, divided into four target groups. The first group includes 270 respondents of Roma origin, with a wide age range of participants – from 16 to 50. The second group includes 200 participants of Bulgarian origin (non-Roma), who fill out identical questionnaires, with their average age being 35 years. The third group consists of 59 specialists from various kindergartens located in the largest Roma neighborhood of the city of Plovdiv - the Stolipinovo neighborhood. The fourth group includes 50 health professionals working primarily with children of Roma origin in diagnostic and consultative centers located in the Stolipinovo neighborhood.

The third chapter is dedicated to a systematic and in-depth analysis of the factors influencing the health and health habits of children from 0 to 7 years old living in a Roma community. Through analysis of data obtained from parents, educators and medical specialists, the socio-demographic characteristics of families are examined, as well as the main determinants of health - nutritional, hygiene habits, sleep, tempering and general health of children. The comparisons made between the opinions of different professional groups allow for an objective assessment of the health skills of Roma children and outline the significant role of medical specialists in the process of prevention and health promotion. The section concludes with substantiated conclusions that serve as a basis for formulating practical recommendations and future interventions.

The dissertation contains the following significant contributions:

- researched and analyzed the main social, cultural and economic factors influencing the formation of health habits in children from the Roma community aged 0 to 7 years.
- a comparative analysis was conducted between Roma and Bulgarian families regarding child care, nutritional and hygiene habits, and parenting practices, which highlighted specific culturally determined patterns of behavior.
- the attitudes of medical specialists and pedagogical staff regarding the challenges of working with Roma children in the context of health education and multicultural communication were also analyzed.
- as a result, key figures with potential for health impact have been identified, among which the nurse and the general practitioner play a leading role, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive and inter-institutional approaches.

Abstract, publications related to the dissertation

The abstract of the dissertation presents the most significant results of the conducted own research, as well as the main conclusions, scientific contributions and practical recommendations. The three scientific publications presented by the doctoral student are thematically related to the dissertation work and have been published in journals indexed in Web of Science.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation work of Nedyalka Grozeva Boycheva presents significant scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied results with an original contribution in the field of medical education and health care, aimed at the formation of health skills and habits in children from the Roma community. The work fully complies with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADRB), the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the current Regulations of the Medical University - Plovdiv. Based on the above-mentioned indisputable qualities and scientific merits of the dissertation "Formation of health skills and habits in children from the Roma community", I express my categorical POSITIVE EVALUATION for the research conducted, presented through the dissertation, the abstract, the achieved results and the scientific contributions. In this regard, I propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Nedyalka Grozeva Boycheva in the doctoral program "Health Care Management", Professional Field 7.4. "Public Health", Field of Higher Education 7. "Health and Sports".

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

20.01.2026

city of Burgas

Prepared by:.....

Assoc. Prof. Monika Obreykova, doz.