

OPINION

from

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New Bulgarian University
professional field 7.4. Public Health

of a dissertation work on

***"INDIRECT INTERVENTIONS FOR THERAPY IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM
SPECTRUM DISORDERS"***

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Scientific supervisor: assoc. prof. Margarita Stankova, MD, PhD

for obtaining the degree of Ph.D. in 7.4 Public Health
DP "Speech Therapy"

Significance of the researched problem in scientific and applied terms

The research problem is of high importance due to the growing need for effective therapeutic interventions for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and special educational needs. Children with ASD face serious challenges in the development of social, language and communication skills, which necessitates the development of modern and scientifically based intervention methods.

In this context, the problem is significant because:

- **Early diagnosis and therapy** are key to improving the long-term prognosis and quality of life of children.
- **The insufficient support for parents in the therapeutic process** in Bulgarian practice and the need for their active involvement as co-therapists.
- **The lack of established methods for home therapy** and evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions implemented by parents.
- **The possibility of using technology**, such as online programs and educational computer games, to facilitate therapy and improve children's communication skills.

The significance of the problem is also enhanced by current trends in speech therapy and therapy practice, which encourage the integration of digital tools and programs for distance learning and supervision. This approach provides an opportunity to expand the scope and access to services, especially for families in remote areas or where there is a lack of sufficient specialists.

Thus, the researched problem has both theoretical and practical significance, offering innovative solutions for more effective therapy of children with ASD and support for their families.

Justification of goals and objectives

The goals and objectives of the study are clearly formulated and correspond to the current needs in the therapy of children with ASD. The doctoral candidate sets realistic and specific goals related to the validation of the FOCUS test for Bulgaria and the development of an indirect intervention program, which is an important step towards creating adapted methodologies for work in the Bulgarian context.

Correspondence between the chosen methodology and the set goal

The chosen methodology is well-founded and appropriate for the purposes of the study. The author applies a comprehensive approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, which provides a more in-depth analysis of the results. The validation of the FOCUS test is carried out with high precision, and the indirect intervention program is presented in detail and supported by empirical data.

Scientific and applied scientific contributions

Among the main scientific and applied scientific contributions are:

Scientific contributions:

- **An indirect intervention program** has been developed to develop language and communication skills in children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).
- Validation of the **FOCUS test for Bulgaria** and comparative analysis of the results.
- **Cluster analysis** and assessment of the effect of parental participation in the therapeutic process, substantiating the importance of the family factor in the development of children with ASD.

Scientific and applied contributions:

- Adaptation of **methodology and programs for parent training** in Bulgaria.
- The application of a multidisciplinary approach to the assessment and therapy of children with ASD.
- **Conducting supervision** and preparing a survey for qualitative research of program participants.
- The application of the developed program has the potential for **implementation in speech therapy practice** at a national level.

Posting activity

Tsveta Kamenski has a total of 8 scientific publications indexed in Scopus. These publications have been cited 40 times in 24 different documents, indicating a growing impact in her research field. Her h-index is 4, reflecting the consistent scientific contribution and significance of her research.

For the purposes of the dissertation work, she presented four publications on the topic of the dissertation, published in authoritative international journals. They examine innovative approaches to the use of educational technologies and online platforms in the therapy and assessment of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and special educational needs. The effectiveness of computer games as a means of improving emotional competence and cognitive

skills, as well as their integration into therapeutic interventions, is presented in co-authorship. Special attention is paid to online programs for parental mediation and assessment of parental skills, emphasizing the role of digital technologies for wider access to quality therapy. The publications have a significant scientific and applied contribution, demonstrating how technologies can facilitate the therapeutic process and improve outcomes for children and their families.

This is a clear indicator of the active scientific activity of the doctoral candidate and her commitment to popularizing research results. In addition, the presence of these publications testifies to a high level of proficiency in professional English.

Opinions, recommendations and notes

The work is extremely comprehensive and in-depth. It is recommended that future studies track and analyze the long-term results of the indirect intervention program and examine its application in different age groups.

Conclusion

The presented dissertation on the topic "***INDIRECT INTERVENTIONS FOR THERAPY IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS***" meets all the requirements, formulated in the Bulgarian legislation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Based on this and on the above-mentioned merits of the presented dissertation, I will vote "FOR" the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 7.4. Public health to **Tsveta Asenova Kamenski F057878** .

25.02.2025

Prepared the opinion:.....
/assoc. prof. Polina Mihova/

