

SCIENTIFIC OPINION

By Prof. Tsvetko Evgeniev Tsvetkov, PhD

Regarding the doctoral dissertation of Nina Stoyanova Dyakova

On the topic: "Key Factors Influencing Individual Performance and Sporting Achievements of Junior Male and Female Shooting Athletes"

For the award of the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" (PhD),

Field of Higher Education: 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences Professional,

Subdivision: 3.4. Social Activities, Doctoral Program: "Social Policy, Psychological Research, and Social Work"

Scientific Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Irina Todorova Todorova, PhD

1. Biographical Data, Educational, and Career Development of the Doctoral Candidate

Nina Stoyanova Dyakova was born in the city of Targovishte. She completed her secondary education at USPS (Unified Secondary Polytechnical School) with a sports profile in Targovishte, specializing in competitive shooting. In 1991, she enrolled at the National Sports Academy (NSA) "V. Levski," where she successfully earned a Bachelor's degree as a "Competitive Shooting Coach" and "Physical Education Teacher." At the same institution, she completed a Master's degree in the "High Performance Sport" program, specializing in Competitive Shooting.

Nina Dyakova possesses a solid professional, scientific public, and athletic biography. For over 31 years, she has been a lecturer at the "G. Benkovski" Sports School in Varna as a Senior Teacher in specialized training for competitive shooting. Alongside her success in instructional work, she prepares shooting teams, participates with them in numerous competitions, and has secured top-tier placements. She organizes and conducts seminars and conferences on the challenges of competitive shooting. Her desire for self-improvement and professional qualification is reflected in:

- Acquiring the Third Professional Qualification Degree;
- Earning a certificate for professional qualification from a Higher Education Institution.

I am fully convinced that her drive for excellence, professionalism, and the implementation of scientific approaches in sports led her toward the development of this doctoral thesis.

2. General Characteristics of the Submitted Dissertation

The dissertation consists of 259 pages, including 11 appendices. A total of 402 literary sources were used, 9 in Cyrillic and 393 in Latin script. The work is illustrated with 175 figures and 134 tables. The structure comprises an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, recommendations, and a summary.

I will briefly address each section:

Introduction. In just one page, the author successfully presents the core idea of the work: the essence of sports and sporting events; new approaches to athlete preparation; psychological preparation and its role; and the place of coaches in athlete development. The methodology of the research - from the objective to the overall structure, is also included here.

Chapter One. I view this chapter as the literary formulation of the problem. It provides an extensive review, citing numerous specialists, on cognitive processes and their influence on athletes, specifically those in competitive shooting. Defining psychological factors affecting sports performance are also included. The summary at the end of this chapter demonstrates the candidate's excellent theoretical grounding and her ability to analyze and derive key findings that serve as the basis for the methodology.

Chapter Two. This chapter is comprehensively written. It covers topics such as increasing attentiveness, improving psychological readiness, and complex approaches and strategies for performance enhancement.

The Improving Sporting Achievement section leaves an excellent impression. Based on her own competitive and coaching career, the candidate presents approaches for success and achieving peak results in major shooting competitions. She identifies the development of training plan-programs - based on modern trends in sports science combined with all factors determining athletic results - as the leading factor.

The methodology is appropriately presented, adhering to all requirements for the empirical section. The inclusion of the section "Reliability of Research Instruments" is particularly impressive.

The section on the Analysis of Results holds the highest practical value. It involves three stages: an analysis of original questionnaires regarding cognitive processes in shooting activities, a second group of questions regarding emotional states. The second stage presents a training program for improving mental processes, and the final stage is the analysis of the results obtained.

The final part of the scientific work can be considered as a conclusion. It summarizes the findings and presents nine recommendations. The candidate's inclusion of recommendations for future research is an excellent idea.

3. Evaluation of Scientific and Applied Contributions

- Development and validation of an original questionnaire to assess factors influencing the sports achievements of junior shooting athletes;
- Extensive categorization and analysis of strategies for achieving high performance levels. Special attention is given to the ten key strategies developed by Dr. Neda Nozari (ISSF member). Within this context, I give an excellent evaluation of the candidate's inclusion of a ten-step preparation plan-program for shooters;
- Development of an integrative model for the interaction between cognitive, interoceptive, and psychological factors that determine sports performance.

4. Critical Remarks on the Submitted Work

- Imbalance in literary sources. While it is the candidate's right to choose their sources, there are many Bulgarian specialists in both psychology and competitive shooting relevant to this topic who could have been cited.
- The theoretical formulation contains a vast amount of information that might have been more effectively utilized in separate research papers.
- The conclusions and recommendations should ideally be presented as an independent section. Regarding the recommendations, they should be directed at specific stakeholders and linked to expected outcomes.

These remarks should be accepted as recommendations for the candidate's future research activities rather than as significant flaws.

5. Evaluation of Publications Related to the Dissertation

The author has 6 publications—one co-authored and five independent. These reports were presented at scientific conferences at various higher education institutions in the country, three of which had international participation.

6. Evaluation of the Abstract (Autoreferat)

The abstract correctly reflects the content of the dissertation. The contributions are properly selected and defined, and are categorized into theoretical and scientific-applied aspects.

7. Conclusion

A careful review of the dissertation allows me to conclude the following: This is a competently written, complete scientific research product that fully meets the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations for its implementation. The dissertation is an original study in which the candidate demonstrates deep knowledge and the ability to analyze and derive specific conclusions for practice. Opportunities exist for the development and continuation of the research in both theoretical and practical terms. The dissertation research presents the doctoral candidate as an erudite, ethical, and responsible researcher.

Based on the above, I express my firm support and recommend that the Honorable Scientific Jury award Nina Stoyanova Dyakova the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in the Field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences; Professional Subdivision 3.4. Social Activities, Doctoral Program: "Social Policy, Psychological Research, and Social Work".

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Sofia

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