

R E V I E W

by

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivaylo Tsanov

member of the Scientific Jury in the procedure for awarding the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor” in Professional Field 3.4. Social Work

of the doctoral dissertation of

Nina Stoyanova Dyakova

entitled:

“Key Factors Influencing the Individual Performance and Sporting Achievements of Adolescent Male and Female Competitors in Shooting”

submitted for the award of the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor” under the doctoral program “Social Work, Psychological Research and Social Policies” in Professional Field 3.4. Social Work.

1. Relevance of the problem addressed in the dissertation in scientific and scientific-applied terms

The dissertation is devoted to a problem that may justifiably be defined as relevant both in scientific and in scientific-applied terms. Although the empirical field of the study is related to sport shooting, the work is situated within Professional Field 3.4. Social Work insofar as it examines psychological and behavioral factors related to the development, adaptation, resilience, and personal functioning of adolescent boys and girls in an organized social environment. In this sense, studying is significant not only for sports practice but also for a broader understanding of the socio-psychological mechanisms that influence the performance, self-regulation, and motivation of young people.

It is noteworthy that the topic has been selected in such a way as to combine psychological issues with a practically applicable context. This is precisely what makes it relevant to the field of social work, as it directs attention to the possibilities for support, development, and psychological assistance for adolescents in an environment requiring a high degree of discipline, resilience, and personal mobilization. In this sense, it may be assumed that the dissertation possesses both scientific significance and real potential for application in intervention-oriented and supportive practices aimed at young people.

2. Does the doctoral candidate demonstrate knowledge of the current state of the problem and a creative evaluation of the literature?

It is evident from the dissertation that the doctoral candidate is sufficiently familiar with the current state of the problem under consideration. A substantial body of literature has been used, covering cognitive processes, attentional networks, psychological factors related to performance, as well as strategies for improving psychological readiness and the overall functioning of young competitors. This makes it possible for the problem to be situated not only within a narrowly applied context, but also within the broader framework of psychological research on development, self-control, anxiety, motivation, and resilience in adolescents.

In this sense, it may be said that the author demonstrates a good command of the relevant literature and a clear intention to systematize the accumulated scientific knowledge. In some places, the exposition is more descriptive, which is characteristic of large-scale literature reviews; however, overall, it may be assumed that the literary material has been selected conscientiously and used in accordance with the aims of the dissertation. There is also evidence of an effort toward creative interpretation, particularly where different factors are linked within a more comprehensive explanatory framework.

3. Can the chosen research methodology provide an answer to the stated aim and objectives of the dissertation?

The methodology selected by the author broadly corresponds to the stated aim and objectives of the dissertation. The study employs a systematic review of the scientific literature, a questionnaire designed to obtain subjective evaluations of the relevant factors, and a set of psychological instruments intended to establish more objective relationships. This combination is justified, as the problem under examination is multidimensional and requires the integration of subjective assessments, psychological characteristics, and functional indicators.

From the perspective of Professional Field 3.4. Social Work, it is particularly important that the study does not restrict itself to performance as a mere sporting outcome but approaches it through the prism of personal and psychological factors that may become the subject of support, development, and intervention. In this sense, the chosen methodology can address not only the specific objectives that have been set, but also identifying broader relationships related to the support of young people in situations of high demands and tension.

4. Brief analytical description of the nature and reliability of the material on which the contributions of the dissertation are based

The material on which the contributions of the dissertation are based is of a dual nature. On the one hand, there is the substantial body of literature, and on the other, the empirical material obtained through a questionnaire survey and the use of psychological instruments. This dual foundation gives the study greater analytical stability and allows its conclusions to rest both on accumulated scientific knowledge and on concrete empirical data.

About the reliability of the material, it may be said that the author has made efforts to ensure methodological correctness and a careful interpretation of the results. Part of the data is based on self-report measures, which is typical of psychological and socio-psychological research, but these are supplemented by other forms of measurement, thereby increasing the reliability of the overall picture. In this sense, it may be assumed that the material is sufficient and reasonably reliable to support the main conclusions and contributions of the dissertation.

5. What do the scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation consist in? What is their significance for science and practice?

The scientific contributions formulated in the dissertation are eight in number. Among them, the author points out that this is the first empirical study conducted in Bulgaria on the factors influencing the sporting achievements of adolescent male and female competitors in sport shooting; relationships have been established between the level of sporting achievement and certain characterological features, between sporting achievement and performance in other domains such as education and interpersonal relationships, as well as between high sporting achievement and the positive experiences of competitors against a background of elevated levels of family anxiety; the absence of a relationship between height and sporting achievement has also been demonstrated; and a discrepancy has been identified between the competitors' subjective perceptions and the objectively established factors of success.

The scientific-applied contributions are four in number: the MAIA-BG 2024 test has been piloted; a combination of diagnostic tests has been proposed for identifying psychological characteristics that are key to sporting performance; factors associated with high sporting achievements have been identified that may become the focus of specialized training; and the proposed diagnostic tools may also be used to predict potential for high sporting performance. In this sense, it may be assumed that the contributions possess both cognitive value and a distinctly applied significance.

6. To what extent may the dissertation and its contributions be regarded as the personal work of the doctoral candidate?

From the content of the dissertation, it may be concluded that the study and its principal results constitute the personal work of Nina Stoyanova Dyakova. This is evident from the way the research logic has been constructed, from the selection and processing of the literary material, as well as from the analysis of the empirical data. There is clear and consistent personal involvement in the research process, and it may be assumed that the contributions of the dissertation are, to a sufficient degree, her own work.

7. Evaluation of the publications related to the dissertation

Publications related to the dissertation have been presented, and they are thematically connected with the problem under study. They attest that part of the ideas and results have been introduced into academic circulation. In this case, what is more important is not so much their number as their thematic relevance and their role in outlining the doctoral candidate's scholarly profile. The

publications may be assessed positively insofar as they correspond to the nature and content of the dissertation.

8. Have the results of the dissertation already been used in scientific and social practice? Has any direct economic effect been achieved?

The results of the dissertation have a clearly practical orientation and may also be used in Nina Stoyanova Dyakova's coaching practice, insofar as they support the assessment of the factors influencing the performance of young competitors and provide a basis for more targeted psychological and competitive preparation.

9. Well-grounded recommendations for the future use of the scientific and scientific-applied contributions

The results of the dissertation may be used both in the training of young shooting competitors and in broader practices aimed at working with adolescent boys and girls under conditions of heightened demands, competitiveness, and the need for self-control. It would be appropriate for the identified factors and the conclusions drawn to be incorporated into programs for psychological preparation, the development of attention, the management of anxiety, and the enhancement of emotional resilience. The dissertation also has the potential to be useful to specialists in psychological counselling and support for young people.

10. Has the abstract been prepared in accordance with the requirements, and does it accurately reflect the main points and scientific contributions of the dissertation?

The abstract has been prepared in accordance with the main requirements and adequately reflects the content of the dissertation. It presents the relevance of the problem, the aim, the objectives, the methods, the hypothesis, the structure, and the main results. It may be assumed that it properly fulfils its function and provides a clear idea of the nature and direction of the research.

11. Critical remarks on the dissertation, including on the candidate's familiarity with the literature

Certain remarks of a rather editorial and clarifying nature may be made regarding the dissertation, but these do not affect its essential merits, the scientific logic of the exposition, or the results achieved. The work demonstrates substantial familiarity with the relevant literature, consistency in the development of the problem, and a clear effort to establish a well-grounded connection between the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the study. In this sense, it may be assumed that there are no substantial critical remarks that would call into question either the scientific value of the dissertation or its suitability for a successful public defence.

12. Other issues on which the reviewer considers it necessary to take a position

It should be noted that the dissertation has the potential to go beyond the scope of the specific sports discipline under consideration. Some of the relationships identified are relevant to the

broader issue of psychological support and the development of young people in structured, highly demanding environments. It is precisely this that makes the dissertation relevant to Social Work in a broader sense.

13. Conclusion, with a clear statement as to whether the degree should be awarded

In view of the considerations set out above and the overall assessment of the dissertation, I consider that it meets the requirements for the award of the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor” in Professional Field 3.4. Social Work. The dissertation is topical, scientifically sound, and contains results of applied value in the field of psychological research and work with young people.

Because of the overall evaluation of the dissertation, the publication activity, and the submitted documentation, I propose that the esteemed Scientific Jury award Nina Stoyanova Dyakova the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor” under the doctoral program “Social Work, Psychological Research and Social Policies” in Professional Field 3.4. Social Work.

Varna,
26 March 2026

Prepared by:.....
/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivaylo Tsanov/