

Review

of a member of the dissertation council for the dissertation of

GRIGORIEVA ALEXANDRINA ANDREEVNA

on the topic:

**“THE CONCEPT OF PSYCHOPROPHYLAXIS OF AUTOAGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR
OF ADOLESCENTS (EXISTENTIAL-ANALYTICAL ASPECT)”,**

submitted for the degree of doctor of **Psychological Sciences**

in the specialty **19.00.04-medical psychology**

I had a chance to read the thesis in an English translation provided to me by the author.

The author *introduces* into her scientific research by a clear statement of the relevance of the theme. It is eye-opening to read about the big dimension and tragedy of adolescents and their psycho-social problems which lead not only to self-harm but even to suicides. She could clearly show the degree of the development of treatment and preventive activities very openly for both, Russia and other countries. She formulated her hypothesis, the research problem, gave references to the many theoretical and methodological foundations of her work and reflected other specificities of the thesis.

She then starts with a chapter on *theoretical foundations and characteristics* of autoaggressive behavior in adolescence, different types, describing extensively different theories and gives a survey on the epidemiology.

A very informative extra-chapter is devoted to the *theory and concepts of prevention* of autoaggressive behavior in adolescents with the basic approaches and programs according to the different psychological theories. She also describes the existing preventive programs for general secondary schools.

Chapter 3 deals with the *concept of prevention based on the existential approach* where she develops the role of existential crisis for the prevention and describes the concepts and the structural and functional model of prevention.

The next chapter goes on *research methods, its scope and general characteristics*. It is followed by a chapter on *sociodemographic and psychological characteristics* of adolescents with risks of autoaggressive behavior, which assesses the impact of sociodemographic, psychological, and gender-age characteristics of adolescents.

In chapter 6 the *existential consciousness* of adolescents with autoaggressive behavior is elaborated. It brings the features of the components of the existential consciousness in comparison between autoaggressive and normal adolescents, their connection to values and resilience, and the

factors with different components according to the groups. Also, their interrelationship with depressive symptoms is studied.

Chapter 7 elaborates the *evaluation of the effectiveness of preventive interventions*.

The author finishes the thesis with a chapter “conclusions” and “practical recommendations”. Very helpful in reading were the summaries after each chapter especially because of the great amount of information.

The thesis has with 573 indicated literature posts (I have found even more literature in the text which was not indicated in the bibliography) a comprehensive scholarly background and covers the actual research of autoaggressive behaviour of adolescents. The author gives a good survey of theories and empirical research in that topic bringing in both the Russian as well as the international literature. Her broad horizon in this regard becomes also visible by an impressive number of 71 own scientific publications (including 25 articles in journals according to the list of the Higher Attestation Commission) and the many presentations of her research in conferences and congresses.

The great merit of this thesis is the theoretical reflection, development and practical application of the existential contents to make them applicable for all 3 types of preventions and also in treatment. She could show the importance of existential issues in the formation of autoaggressive behaviors, especially in adolescence. She reflected critically the lack of existential themes in the prevention of autoaggression for adolescents who in their age are naturally searching to develop an understanding of their life and are at the same time looking for meaning. Despite this knowledge prevention programs so far do not consider existential problems, and do not use personalized approaches that allow the youngsters to form a system of personally significant values and to grow as persons. The author developed a theory about the raise of self-harming and even suicidal behavior in adolescents and developed an existentially based method that increases the resilience of teenagers and reduces the need to resort to autoaggressive behavior. So she gives a substantial contribution to “one of the urgent and unsolved scientific and practical problems of medical psychology” (p. 8) by the substantiation and development of a holistic concept of psychoprophylaxis of various types of autoaggressive behavior of adolescents.

In this context the creation of the existential crisis model for adolescents (Fig. 5, p. 104) constitutes a great contribution to medical psychology and allows to define autoaggressive behavior of adolescents as “the negative outcome of an existential crisis, as well as the apersonal behavior of a teenager” (p. 133). This model delivers the main directions of psychocorrection work (p. 124) allowing to imply specific procedures as a compound and solidly based intervention.

The author describes in chapter 4 very precisely the stages of the empirical work which was done with a total of 2086 people in the years 2017-2019 in the city district of Chekhov according to her own planning. For the many questions she searched she used a great variety of tests:

The questionnaire "a Study of volitional self-regulation" (Animals A. V., Eidman E. V.); the Questionnaire for determining the risk of suicide, "Suicidal person-19" (Yuackavich P. I., 2009); Questionnaire to study the level of impulsivity (Calf V. A.); "Methods of body modification and self-injury" (Pol'skaya N. A. 2017); "Rapid test to identify the interest, awareness and attitude of adolescents to the use of substances ", Questionnaire "risk addiction" (Hasan, B. I., Tyumeneva

Y. A., 2003); Questionnaire of dysfunctional beliefs in borderline personality disorder (PBQ-BPD, Kholmogorova A.V., 2016), "Express test to identify the interest, awareness and attitude of adolescents to the use of substances and alcohol" (Grigorieva A. A., 2020), Achenbach questionnaire; Questionnaire "Drug addiction risk group" (Khasan B. I., Tyumeneva Yu. A.) - scale "Behavior in a risk situation"-questionnaires; Test-questionnaire "Study of volitional self-regulation" (Zverkov A.V., Eidman E. V.); Questionnaire for studying the level of impulsivity (Losenkov V. A.); Test of Resilience (Maddy S., 1984); "Questionnaire of individual values" (Schwartz, 2013); The test of existential motivations (Langle A., et al., 2010) in the Russian adapted version (V. B. Shumsky, E. M. Ukolova, E. N. Osin, Ya. D. Lupandina, 2016); Depression scale for children from 7 to 17 (Kovach M., 1992) "Child Depression Inventory (CDI)", adapted by N. G. Garanyan (1999) and validated by S. V. Volikova, O. G. Kalina, and A. B. Kholmogorova (2011); and questionnaires for the study of sociodemographic characteristics. Above all she also made Phenomenological Interviews.

The calculation of the data was done by a sophisticated whole set of statistical methods. It leads to a highly differentiated statistical description of the mental health of the adolescents of this sample, divided into adolescents with tendencies of autoaggressive behaviour, with different types of autoaggressive behavior, with tendency to suicidal behavior, substance abuse and its types, risky behavior, multiple (polymodal profile) and single (mono-modal profile) risks of autoaggressive behavior, family background, economic situation, religion, substance (ab)use in family, domestic violence and its frequency etc. and all split in gender and age, compared with norm groups. In a next step she compared samples with the level of impulsivity, volitional self-regulation and dysfunctional beliefs. She finally investigated the features of existential consciousness and could describe that the investigated adolescents with autoaggressive behavior had in fact lower levels in all 4 fundamental existential motivations. The existential significance for that is that autoaggressive adolescents have an increase in feelings of distrust of the world, dissatisfaction with life, low importance of one's own personality for others, and lack of prospects. This is accompanied by a devaluation of traditions, own security, and achievements. The author also combined the existential consciousness with other factors like mood, depressive feelings, self-esteem etc. and could show understandable correlations.

Very important for the practical application of the findings is the development of a specific preventive intervention procedure based on the findings and the theoretical concept. The author could show evidence in reduction of self-harming behavior and completed it with some case-descriptions.

There was a huge amount of theoretical, empirical, methodological and statistical work done which gives this thesis a great value. Despite of this there are some critical remarks. One refers to the age restrictions of some tests which were applied to adolescents although the tests are not foreseen for that age – at least there is no critical discussion about it.

Another remark refers to the description of the results. It is hard reading the many detailed results. It would be helpful if the author would more often give up her sticking at the data by summarizing and interpreting them. This would improve the scientific value of the thesis. As well as a critical discussion of the investigation and its results at the end.

There are sometimes interpretations/explanations which are difficult to follow. To give an example: "In autoaggressive behavior, the desire to realize existence leads to an increase in the relationship between FEM with the value system, as well as with the ability to cope with stress

(resilience).” (engl. p. 195) – On what is the attestation of “desire to realize existence” grounded? Is it just an assumption? Or a conclusion – but of what? The statistics of table 44 + 45 describe a correlation between FEM and resilience which is significant for autoaggressive youngsters but much lower in the normal population. This means that their resilience is stronger connected to FEM: when they have good FM they are more resilient and vice-versa. Resilience and FEM in normal population seems not to be so strongly interconnected. – It seems a bit critical to derive from this a “desire to realize existence” (if it was taken from there).

Another example (from p. 199): “The combination of variables indicates that the dialog exchange of the adolescent's personality at each contextual existential level with the world, life, oneself, and the future prevents the development of various types of autoaggressive behavior (Table 46).” The factors show simply the two tests.

Despite of these critical remark we can conclude: The author could bring evidence for her hypothesis, that the development of an existential-analytically based concept of psychoprophylaxis of autoaggressive behavior of adolescents can reduce the risk of autoaggressive behavior of adolescents in the implementation of personalized programs in the practice of secondary schools.

The Dissertation of **GRIGORIEVA ALEXANDRINA ANDREEVNA** on " **THE CONCEPT OF PSYCHOPROPHYLAXIS OF AUTOAGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR OF ADOLESCENTS (EXISTENTIAL-ANALYTICAL ASPECT** " meets the basic requirements established by the Order of 01.09.2016 No. 6821/1 "On the procedure for awarding academic degrees at St. Petersburg State University", the applicant for fully deserved the award of the degree of doctor psychological sciences in the specialty 19.00.04. – medical psychology. Paragraphs 9 and 11 of this Procedure are not violated by the dissertant.



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