

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Katya Ivanova Dionisieva
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on a scientific work submitted for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree
“Doctor” in Professional Field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, scientific specialty Musicology and
Musical Art

**Topic: MOVEMENT THERAPY THROUGH DANCE TECHNIQUES AND ITS
INFLUENCE ON NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM
SPECTRUM DISORDERS**

Doctoral candidate: Violeta Petrova Glogova

Scientific supervisors:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stankova

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asya Ivanova

This opinion has been prepared on the basis of a decision of the Faculty Council of the Master’s Faculty from Session No. 05/12.02.2026, and a report by the Dean of the Master’s Faculty with Ref. No. D-RE-821 of 18.02.2026, as well as on the basis of a decision of the scientific jury under the procedure (Minutes No. 1/04.03.2026).

Significance of the Research Problem

Contemporary therapy for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is characterized by the incorporation of new nonverbal approaches that are still insufficiently explored but demonstrate predictable positive outcomes. Research related to the development and implementation of therapeutic models for the communicative development of children with ASD constitutes both a necessity and a challenge for a broad range of specialists. In this sense, the choice of topic and the nature of Violeta Glogova’s research - namely, the application of movement therapy through dance techniques in the development of nonverbal communication in children with ASD - directly correspond to contemporary research trends.

The extensive, thematically coherent, and well-structured literature review includes three sections related to the specifics of nonverbal communication, the possibilities of nonverbal interaction as an alternative approach for educating children with autism, and an in-depth understanding of the characteristics, needs, and developmental potential of children with ASD through dance techniques. In addition, the doctoral candidate’s preparation and experience as a dance pedagogue working with children from different age groups constitute a prerequisite for the successful implementation of the research project.

Justification of the Goals and Objectives of the Dissertation

The aim is precisely formulated and corresponds to the topic of the dissertation. The study of the applicability of specific elements of dance-movement therapy in the process of developing nonverbal communication in children with autism is central to the research and is defined by

Violeta Glogova through clearly formulated research objectives, emphasizing the author's development of a specific dance-movement therapeutic program.

Methodology and Research Methods

The research algorithm includes validated diagnostic instruments and two author-developed methodologies—a methodology for movement selection and a methodology for selecting musical themes in dance-movement therapy for children with ASD. All instruments are accurately presented and include the necessary details and clarifications. Relevant elements of descriptive statistics and significance tests were used for statistical data processing.

The results from the study of the target group of children with ASD are systematized, descriptively presented, and visualized. They contain the author's findings and assumptions regarding the leading indicators of the research - sustainability, scope, and effectiveness of the intervention. The analyses allow the author to convincingly interpret the evidence related to the confirmation of the proposed hypotheses.

At the conclusion of the discussion on the two methodologies from the experimental work, the doctoral candidate outlines “specific expected benefits,” thereby supplementing the potential application of these instruments in therapeutic practice. The results obtained through the applied instruments are summarized in the conclusions and emphasize their significance for future research and the development of applied integrative therapeutic approaches for children with ASD.

Scientific and Scientific-Applied Contributions

The dissertation is devoted to an interesting and insufficiently explored problem concerning the therapeutic role of dance and music in the formation of nonverbal communicative skills in children with ASD. For the purposes of the study, Violeta Glogova conducts an in-depth review of the scientific literature and systematizes and summarizes theoretical concepts from various authors, thereby substantiating the significance of the idea of developing a diagnostic and therapeutic program for work with children with autism spectrum disorders.

The scientific contributions of the work, formulated by the author in the concluding section of the abstract, are significant from a research perspective. The contributions of a scientific-applied nature are genuine and could even be expanded toward the development of nonverbal communication and its influence on overall communicative performance across different age groups of children with ASD.

Publications Related to the Dissertation

Doctoral candidate Violeta Glogova presents five publications for the period 2024–2025, four of which are single-authored and one co-authored. All publications are related to the topic of the dissertation and fully meet the requirements for doctoral candidates.

Opinions and Recommendations

The innovative nature of the dissertation and the specificity of the terminology used create a prerequisite for the search for and proposal of specific terms. In this case, this concerns the term “*movement skills*.” It is close in meaning to the terms *motor skills* or *dance skills*, but the

question remains whether any of them conveys the exact intended meaning. I leave it to the author to refine the use of an appropriate equivalent in the Bulgarian language.

Conclusion

Doctoral candidate Violeta Glogova, who has successfully completed the doctoral program “Music” at New Bulgarian University, Professional Field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, is the author of a dissertation containing scientific and scientific-applied results contributing to contemporary interdisciplinary therapy for children with autism spectrum disorders and meeting the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation.

Based on the above, I give a positive evaluation of the presented dissertation entitled **“Movement Therapy through Dance Techniques and Its Influence on Nonverbal Communication in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.”**

I propose to the esteemed scientific jury that the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” be awarded to Violeta Petrova Glogova in Professional Field 8.3. Music and Dance Art.

12.05.2026

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