

OPINION

by

Prof. Dr. Zhelka Tabakova,
National Academy of Music “Prof. Pancho Vladigerov” regarding the doctoral dissertation of
VIOLETA PETROVA GLOGOVA Doctoral Candidate at New Bulgarian University in
Professional Field 8.3 Music and Dance Art

entitled

MOVEMENT THERAPY THROUGH DANCE TECHNIQUES AND ITS IMPACT ON NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Scientific Supervisors: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stankova and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asya Ivanova for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD)

General Overview of the Procedure and the Submitted Materials

Violeta Petrova Glogova has been enrolled as an independent doctoral candidate in the Doctoral Program “Music” at New Bulgarian University since 2023, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stankova and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asya Ivanova. The materials submitted for the procedure comply with the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria. The composition of the Scientific Jury was determined by Order No. 3-RK-126 / 19.02.2026.

Biographical Information

Violeta Petrova Glogova was born on 27 April 1984 in the town of Samokov. She has received multidisciplinary education in various fields including science, art, and pedagogy (1)¹, as well as additional qualifications in different dance techniques and sports at the National Sports Academy (2)². She has worked as a dance pedagogue with children of different age groups and at CLM Progressive Primary School, specialized in working with children with autism (2022–2025). She collaborated with New Bulgarian University as a part-time lecturer in Aerobics and Zumba (2017–2022), and since 2022 she has been a full-time lecturer and consultant in the “Sports Courses” program at the same institution.

Structure and Content of the Dissertation

The dissertation was discussed and approved for public defense at a meeting of the Department of Music. The dissertation comprises 162 pages and includes: Introduction; two main parts — Part One, “Theoretical Framework,” (3)³ consisting of four chapters with subsections, and Part

¹ Secondary education – Specialized High School “Konstantin Fotinov” in Samokov; Bachelor’s degree (2007) from the University of Forestry (Forest Engineering); Master’s degrees: 2011 – University of National and World Economy (Business Administration); 2017 – New Bulgarian University (Modern Dance Choreography); 2023 – Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy).

² At the National Sports Academy: 2008 – Coach in Ballroom and Sport Dancing; 2011 – Contemporary Dance Techniques; 2019 – Instructor in Aerobics and Callanetics; 2023 – Zumba Instructor.

³ Part One – “Theoretical Framework” consists of four chapters with subsections: Chapter I – “Nonverbal Communication: Definitions and Theories”; Chapter II – “Development of Nonverbal Communication in

Two (Empirical), “Materials and Methods” (4)⁴, consisting of two chapters with subsections; Conclusions; Final Remarks; Future Perspectives; Contributions; Bibliography (20 titles in Cyrillic and 220 in Latin script, totaling 240 references); Appendices; Tables; and Graphs.

Clearly Formulated Objectives and Tasks of the Dissertation

The relevance of the topic is determined by the increasing global prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) (5). ⁵This situation presents researchers with numerous challenges, including the need to support affected individuals and facilitate their adaptation and integration into society, to the extent possible, by overcoming the physical and intellectual limitations associated with the condition. In the search for effective therapeutic approaches, there has been growing interest in methodologies originating not only from science but also from the arts. Such an interdisciplinary investigation is precisely the focus of Violeta Glogova’s dissertation. As the author states, “*the present study is aimed at analyzing the effect of dance-movement therapy on the development of nonverbal communication in children with ASD*”. **The object** of the study is “*the process of developing nonverbal communication through dance-movement therapeutic work*”. **The aim** of the dissertation is “*to investigate the effect of applying structured dance-movement therapy and to evaluate the applicability of developed methodological approaches.*” The dissertation formulates five primary research tasks. The **methodological framework** includes theoretical, analytical, and empirical approaches.

Significance of the Research Problem in Scientific and Applied Scientific Term

Nonverbal communication forms the foundation of human interaction. On a subconscious and uncontrolled level, people express the entire spectrum of emotions and feelings through body language. By directing these involuntary expressions and reflexive actions through the art of dance - which also incorporates music and spatial awareness - therapy engages the multisensory motor functions of both body and psyche.

Degree of Familiarity with the Research Problem and Adequacy of the Literature Review

Violeta Glogova examines dance not merely as an art form but as a powerful therapeutic instrument. The first part, “Theoretical Framework of the Study”, consisting of four chapters, convincingly demonstrates that “*its therapeutic application (of dance) involves interpreting movement, bodily tone, spatial relationships, and reactions to the environment, making it a particularly suitable tool when working with children with ASD.*” The study presents various methodologies aimed at fostering expression, communication, and emotional bonding. As noted by the author, “*models of dance-movement therapy view the process as an interaction between bodily experience and cognitive interpretation.*” Different motor-psychological techniques based on mirroring, imitation, and rhythmic organization are analyzed. Violeta Glogova investigates dance as the core of a therapeutic model that creates a favorable environment for overcoming difficulties and achieving emotional stability, social interaction, and interpersonal trust. Based on the examination of previous studies and publications, the doctoral candidate

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders”; Chapter III – “Dance as a Means of Nonverbal Communication”; Chapter IV – “Application of Dance Techniques as a Means of Developing Nonverbal Communication in Children with ASD.”

⁴ Part Two – “Materials and Methods” consists of two chapters with subsections: Chapter I – “Empirical Study”; Chapter II – “Results and Discussion.”

⁵ <https://www.dw.com/bg/ima-li-naistina-epidemia-ot-autizm/a-72237413>

concludes that further research is needed, particularly “*toward evaluating its effectiveness (of dance) and developing methodological frameworks for practical application.*”

The second part, consisting of two chapters, has a practical and applied orientation and includes a pilot experimental study *utilizing dance-movement therapy (DMT)*, namely the application of methods derived from dance and music as therapeutic tools for autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The doctoral candidate formulates four hypotheses (6) ⁶aimed at investigating therapeutic methods. Their relevance and practical value are convincingly demonstrated, particularly regarding improvements in various aspects of the disorder, validated through analysis of the obtained indicators; the importance of an individualized approach in selecting therapeutic instruments; and the role of music as a bidirectional stimulus affecting both perception and the selection of musical material. The organization of the experiment follows established standards for preparation, implementation, and evaluation of results, clearly demonstrating positive “*changes in nonverbal behavior and communicative manifestations.*”

The doctoral candidate proposes an original dance-movement therapy program adapted for children with autism spectrum disorders. The structure of the program includes three practical levels. A methodological framework and evaluation scale have been developed. The “Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist” (ATEC) by Rimland & Edelson has been utilized. The findings are supported by a substantial number of tables and graphs.

In the **Conclusion**, comprehensive findings for the entire dissertation are formulated. The study also outlines “*perspectives for future research and practical application of integrative therapeutic approaches in work with children with ASD.*”

Accuracy in Citation of a Representative Number of Authors

Violeta Glogova demonstrates accuracy and academic integrity in her citations and includes a substantial number of authors in the bibliography.

Contributions of the Dissertation

I accept the contributions identified by the doctoral candidate, summarized in two directions: scientific and applied-scientific contributions. I believe that she demonstrates very strong achievements in the research, analyses, and conclusions. Through this dissertation, she convincingly substantiates her thesis and successfully fulfills the stated objectives. The most significant contribution, in my opinion, is the author’s original dance-movement therapy program.

Evaluation of the Abstract in Relation to the Main Theses and Contributions of the Dissertation

The dissertation abstract accurately reflects the content and contributions of the dissertation.

Personal Qualities of the Author

⁶ Two of these hypotheses are related to improving various aspects of the disorder through analysis of the obtained indicators; the third is associated with an individualized approach in the selection of therapeutic instruments, while the fourth focuses on music as a bidirectional stimulus—the effect of music on the subject, which subsequently determines the selection of musical material.

Although I do not personally know Violeta Glogova, her curriculum vitae and dissertation clearly demonstrate her strong interest in dance art and sports not only as independent forms of teaching and practice, but also in their application to new fields related to the treatment of the mind and body.

Publications Related to the Dissertation Topic

Glogova, V., & Bozhinova, I. (2024). *Methodology for the Selection of Movements in Dance-Movement Therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Yearbook of the National Sports Academy, 2, 99–107.

Glogova, V. (2024). *Development and Use of Nonverbal Communication in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and Their Parents*. Norwegian Journal of Development of the International Science, 124, 108–116. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10515068>

Glogova, V. (2024). *Dance as a Form of Nonverbal Communication and a Therapeutic Tool in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)*. XV National School for Doctoral Students and Young Researchers in the Social Sciences – “Fundamental and Applied Research and Innovations,” ISSN (online) 2683-0868.

Glogova, V. (2025). *Assessment of Changes in Nonverbal Behavioral Responses in Children with Suspected Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Following Dance-Movement Therapy*. The Scientific Heritage (Budapest, Hungary), 168, 57–63. ISSN 9215-0365.

Glogova, V. (2025). *Pilot Study of a Methodology for Music Selection in Dance-Movement Therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. XX Young Scientific Forum for Music and Dance, NBU.

Final Evaluation

In conclusion, I express a positive assessment of the dissertation. The doctoral candidate’s academic activity meets the scientometric requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in accordance with the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The dissertation by **Violeta Petrova Glogova**, doctoral candidate at New Bulgarian University, entitled “**Movement Therapy through Dance Techniques and Its Impact on Nonverbal Communication in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders**”, together with its scientific and applied contributions and the related publications, is entirely sufficient. Therefore, I give my positive evaluation and recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury **award Violeta Petrova Glogova the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD)** in Professional Field 8.3 Music and Dance Art, in accordance with the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria.

12 May 2026, Sofia

Prof. Dr. Zhelka Tabakova