R E V I E W

by Prof. DSc Antoineta Hristova

of the dissertation of Plamen Iliyanov Petkov

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPERSONAL TRUST IN FRIENDSHIP AND BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "PhD"

scientific direction 3.2. "Psychology", doctoral program in social psychology

Plamen Petkov's dissertation is entitled - "Social psychological determinants of the development of interpersonal trust in the sphere of friendship and business relations". The title itself indicates the ambitious goal that Plamen and his supervisor prof. Zografova. It is a topic characterised by its relevance in terms of primordial human relationships, its topicality in the context of deep divisions in societies, and its difficulty given its complexity and insufficiently established factors of influence. The dissertation's task is further complicated by the inclusion of two target situations in the study, interpersonal relationships and organizational environments. In the context of this background, we have a finished text of 191 pages, references: 316, tables: 60, figures: 15 and appendices: 12, which meets the requirements for a dissertation containing a theoretical overview, empirical study, analysis of results, discussion and conclusions, with appendices that present all adapted methodologies.

The theoretical overview in the first part of the dissertation is remarkable for its excellent structuring and logical consistency. Plamen Petkov gives a detailed overview of the two main approaches to the study of trust - the behavioural and the psychological. The former includes perspectives from the works of Hardin (Hardin, 1993) and Williamson (Williamson, 1981), while the latter includes those of Mayer (Mayer et al., 1995) and Rousseau and colleagues (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer, 1998).

Petkov discusses extensively the determinants and antecedents of trust in relationships, concluding the chapter with a comparative summary analysis of the intersections and differences between trust in the spheres of friendship and business relationships. Quite reasonably, it follows the stated aims, objectives and hypotheses of the study. The aim of the study is to assess the social psychological factors of interpersonal trust in friendship relationships and between agents in organizations in the context of political uncertainty. Following are 7 objectives and 6 hypotheses. A clear research design is outlined.

The dissertation has many positive attributes, including the 10 scales developed (Cultural Internalization Scale, Higher Order Values Questionnaire, Reaction and Motivation to Rewards and Punishments Questionnaire, Organizational Trust Questionnaire, Community Group Relations Trust Scale, Multidimensional Organizational Trust Scale, Childhood and Adolescent Experiences Scale, Affiliation Scale, Political Insecurity Scale, and Conformism Scale). Their adaptation work is statistically precise and correctly represented. One question remained to which I have not received a sufficiently convincing answer concerns the inclusion of two scales of organizational trust. The argument that is noted, namely, "The inclusion of two scales measuring organizational trust is necessary for the reason that the measurement of trustworthiness in an organizational context is a construct that is present in both of them. Since trustworthiness is specific in business relationships, there is a difference between how it is measured in an organizational context, and in a friendship relationship. If a general trustworthiness scale were used, it would not capture the specificity of context in organizations. For this reason, I use a scale that is constructed specifically to measure trustworthiness in an organizational context. This enables a more accurate determination of whether trustworthiness is a core element of trust in an organizational context, as previous research has indicated. The correlation between the two scales in the pilot study was very high and significant, and for these reasons, the instruments are used in the main study". If the correlation is very high, it roughly means that it can measure the same thing. But, regardless of the remark made, the work is not lost but enriched from a methodological point of view.

Correct inferences are drawn, in which there is no over-interpretation and which can clearly point to the need for future research and replication of parts of the present in order to verify the insufficiently conclusive results of the statistical analyses performed.

It can be summarized that, based on the data obtained, trust in friendship relationships is most influenced, first of all, by group membership. Secondly, the data suggest that experiences in childhood and adolescence play a stable and strong role. For trust in an organizational context, higher order values have the greatest influence, followed by childhood and adolescent experiences, and group membership has the least influence. On the basis of the results, Plamen Petkov constructed a new model of the factors of influence in the formation of trust in business relationships, leaving only the significant outcomes, namely, trustworthiness from interpersonal relationships and the need for inclusion in a group and conformity due to the insistence and charismatic nature of others from the influences of social groups.

An extensive review of the literature pertaining to the topic of trust is conducted. As the dissertator writes, "The study contributes to existing knowledge by empirically validating the hypothesis of the role of early experiences and cultural internalization, and simultaneously highlights the need to distinguish between different social starting points of trust. It affirms that trust is not an unpredictable construct according to 'common sense' expectations, but is sensitive to context, social roles and the lived history of the individual."

A particular strength of the dissertation is the appendices of all the questionnaires used, along with the factor analyses and statistics, making them amazing for future replications.

I support the formulated contributions of the presented dissertation:

The scientific contributions can be formulated as:

1. A new model of interactions between social psychological factors and socio-cultural factors, and their influence on trust has been created and verified; and 2. The influence of the internalization of culture by individuals and their early experiences on the creation of trusting relationships has been identified as a Bulgarian specificity.

2. Two new scales, the Childhood and Adolescence Experiences Scale and the Political Insecurity Scale, have been constructed and can be used in future research.

3. The results of the survey may have practical application in the design of programs by various governmental entities and non-governmental organizations, as well as in the private sector, to increase trust, both within organizations and with their users.

I would note the limitations of the study to only the cultural and national constraints in that the study was conducted in a Bulgarian context, which limits the generalizability of the results to other cultures. Sociocultural differences could alter trust dynamics to varying degrees.

Plamen Petkov has presented an abstract that meets all structuring requirements and has met the scientometric requirements. The latter are many times above the required minimum, namely, out of the required 200 points, he has 514 points, making him one of the PhD students at the Institute for Population and Human Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences with the highest training score.

Dear Colleagues, I am convinced that Plamen Petkov's research "SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERMEDIATE TRUST IN THE SPHERES OF FRIENDSHIP AND BUSINESS RELATIONS" has the qualities of a successful dissertation in social psychology. The procedure of the doctoral dissertation meets

the requirements of the Law on Psychology and its implementing regulations. The Internal Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Institute of Psychology - BAS have also been observed. I will vote "YES" for awarding Plamen Iliyanov Petkov the degree of Doctor of Education and Science.

18.01.2025

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