BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
INSTITUTE FOR POPULATION AND HUMAN STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

OPINION

by Valery Denev Todorov, PhD, associate professor at the Institute of Population and Human Studies, professional field "3.2 Psychology"

in regard to the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" to doctoral student Plamen Iliyanov Petkov in the field of higher education "3. Social, economic, and legal sciences", professional field "3.2. Psychology",
doctoral program "Social Psychology"

dissertation topic „Socio-psychological determinants for the development of interpersonal trust in the sphere of friendly and business relationships"

1. Overall impression and assessment of the dissertation

As the title suggests, the dissertation is devoted to researching the factors for the development of interpersonal trust in the context of friendly and business relationships. Trust is a key prerequisite for building social fabric; without it, cooperation between individuals and communities of people is impossible.

Undoubtedly, the topic is significant and relevant, especially in the current social situation characterized by conflicts, polarization of attitudes, a tendency toward fragmentation of social communities, and a lack of trust in traditional media, political actors, and institutions.

The work is structured in three chapters, without the usual introduction and conclusion. However, these are available in the extended abstract. The first chapter includes a systematic literature review of theoretical and empirical studies on the topic. The review is adequate in scope and volume, including well-chosen current sources. The author develops his own theoretical concept on the basis of which he formulates research hypotheses.

The second chapter presents the hypotheses, design, and methods of the study, as well as the rationale for their selection and the arguments for their relevance. The results and discussion are presented in the third chapter, together with the main conclusions, limitations, and directions for future research.

My overall impression is that through the presented dissertation, the doctoral student demonstrates the required skills to conduct a fully-fledged independent scientific study with all its elements, including empirical verification of the author's hypotheses, presentation of results with detailed analysis, and convincing conclusions. This is a mature scientific work with well-formulated limitations and ideas for further development. There is no evidence of plagiarism or other forms of research ethics violations.

2. Significance and credibility of the results obtained, the interpretations, the conclusions, and the scientific contributions

The presentation of the results is detailed and follows the logic of the study design. The choice of research methods and statistical techniques is well justified. The results are interpreted adequately, and the conclusions are logically justified and clearly formulated.

In the section presenting the results and their interpretation, the work as a whole fulfils its research objectives. The results are interpreted in depth and convincingly in light of the hypotheses raised. The contributions of the dissertation are well formulated in the extended abstract and, in my opinion, correspond to the actual achievements. I accept the dissertation as a serious statement and dedication of the author to future development as an independent researcher.

3. Assessment of the quality of scientific works reflecting the research in the dissertation

Three independent publications were presented during the doctoral program in the period 2023-2024 – two in Proceedings of the National School for Doctoral Students and Young Researchers in Social Sciences and one in a specialized scientific journal. All three publications are on the topic of the dissertation and have been published in peer-reviewed journals that meet the regulatory requirements. The number and quality of the publications meet the requirements. The empirical data collected can be used as a basis for formulating additional hypotheses and can be integrated into subsequent studies as a natural continuation of what has been achieved so far.

4. Conclusion

The above-mentioned merits of the dissertation research, as well as the accompanying publications and the overall performance of the doctoral student during his training, give me reason to express a positive assessment of the dissertation. Therefore, I propose to the members of the esteemed scientific jury to award Plamen Iliyanov Petkov the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” in the field of higher education “3. Social, economic, and legal sciences”, professional field “3.2. Psychology”, doctoral program “Social Psychology”.

Sofia, 17.01.2026 Signature: 