OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Stoil Mavrodiev, Ph.D., D.Sc., on the doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field: 3.2. Psychology, Doctoral Programme "General Psychology"

Author: Lyubomir Rumenov Draganov **Topic:** "Belief in a Just World and Life Stories"

Supervisor: Prof. Ergül Tair, Ph.D., D.Sc., Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

My overall impression of the dissertation is unequivocally positive. The study represents an original, in-depth, and very well-structured contribution to contemporary personality psychology and motivational processes. The author successfully integrates the classic theory of the Belief in a Just World (BJW) by Lerner (1980) with the narrative approach to personality, offering a new perspective on the regulatory and protective functions of this belief in the context of autobiographical stories.

The work comprises 188 pages, including an extensive theoretical review, a clearly formulated research problem, detailed methodology, and empirical analysis. The structure is logical and coherent – from theoretical premises, through research design, to the discussion of results and contributions. The topicality of the subject is indisputable, especially in the context of relational models of personality (Mitchell, 2000; Westen, 1998) and the need to understand mechanisms for coping with experienced injustice in modern societies.

The literature review is balanced and purposeful, demonstrating good orientation in the current scientific literature. The overall impression is of a mature, academically sound, and innovative study that goes beyond standard quantitative approaches to BJW through qualitative narrative analysis.

The research results are significant, convincing, and well-argued. The author demonstrates that BJW functions not only as a self-reported disposition measured by scales, but also as a deeply integrated meaning-making structure that organizes the selection, interpretation, and presentation of autobiographical material. Particularly convincing are the differences between personal belief in a just world (which performs an internal regulatory function – meaningful and emotional integration) and general belief (social-normative role – maintaining a sense of order and predictability). These interpretations are supported by complex mediation models using structural equation modeling (SEM), which adds methodological relevance.

The scientific contributions are clearly delineated at several levels:

- **theoretical** – through an original authorial model that expands the understanding of BJW with a narrative and interpretive approach;
- **methodological** – through a newly developed coding scheme for categorizing autobiographical narratives (with categories such as positive/negative self-presentation, resolution, outcome, and motivation), which shows high intercoder reliability and is applicable for future studies;
- **empirical** – through data from a Bulgarian sociocultural sample, enriching the predominantly Western literature;
- **practical-applied** – as a basis for interventions aimed at restoring meaning, control, and emotional regulation after injustice.

The conclusions are consistent with the hypotheses and data, without excessive generalizations, which strengthens the scientific value of the work.

My evaluation of the quality of the scientific publications reflecting the dissertation research is highly positive. The candidate has three publications in refereed journals directly related to the topic. They are sufficient in number and quality for the procedure and demonstrate the ability to independently present scientific results.

The abstract correctly reproduces, both structurally and in content, the main parts of the dissertation.

No evidence of plagiarism has been identified.

In conclusion, Lyubomir Rumenov Draganov's doctoral dissertation fully meets the requirements for originality, scientific significance, methodological correctness, and contribution to psychology. The doctoral candidate possesses a high level of psychological and methodological preparation.

In view of the above, I confidently give my positive evaluation and will vote **IN FAVOR** of awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Lyubomir Draganov in professional field 3.2. Psychology, Doctoral Programme "General Psychology".

I recommend that the scientific jury also give a positive evaluation.

22.01.2026 Prepared by:

Assoc. Prof. Stoil Mavrodiev, Ph.D., D.Sc., SWU "Neofit Rilski"