

STATEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL OPINION

Delivered by:

Associate Professor Gergana Dimitrova Dimitrova-Stancheva, PhD

University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski

based on the materials submitted for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

field of Higher Education **3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences**

Professional Field **3.7. Administration and Management**

PhD Program **Social Management**

for the candidate **Dimo Zhelev Zhelev**

Dissertation Title: "The Impact of Leadership on Employee Motivation in Hotels during and after a Crisis "

Research Supervisor Associate Professor Mina Nikolaeva Angelova, PhD;
University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the PhD Student

It is the Order №. PD-21-1491 of July 17th, 2024 of the Rector of the University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski (PU), which designates me as a Full Member on duty for the Scientific Jury Panel to deliver professional assertion on a procedure for the defense of a dissertation work on the topic "*The Impact of Leadership on Employee Motivation in Hotels During and After a Crisis*" for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.7 Administration and Management, PhD Program Social Management. The author of the dissertation is Dimo Zhelev Zhelev - part-time doctoral student at the Department of Management and Quantitative Methods in Economics, with research supervision Associate Professor Mina Nikolaeva Angelova, PhD from University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski.

In accordance with Art. 36. (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the PU, the Doctoral Student has attached (1) an application to the Rector of PU to participate in the procedure for the defence of dissertation work; (2) CV in European format; (3) protocol from the departmental council related to reporting the readiness to open the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation work; (4) abstracts in Bulgarian and

English; (5) declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents; (6) report on compliance with the minimum national requirements for the degree "Doctor"; (7) a list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation; (8) dissertation; (9) copies of the scientific publications on the subject of the dissertation. The documents are in accordance with the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB). Dimo Zhelev has presented four scientific publications which are reports of international and national scientific conferences.

2. Brief Biographical Data of the Doctoral Candidate

Dimo Zhelev Zhelev holds a Bachelor's degree in Tourism from the University of Food Technologies (2006) and a Master's degree in Economics, specializing in Marketing from University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski (2018). In 2019, he enrolled as a full-time PhD student (later transferred to part-time) in the Doctoral Program of Social Management at the Department of "Management and Quantitative Methods in Economics" at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski.

The doctoral candidate has gained extensive practical experience as the owner and manager of a Digital marketing agency related to the tourism and hotel sector (since 2005). During his doctoral studies, he has also lectured students in the discipline "Software in Tourism" as a part-time lecturer for Bachelor students of the Management of the Tourism Business program. He has participated as a speaker at academic conferences and has developed strong organizational and team leadership skills. He is proficient in English.

3. Relevance of the Topic

The relevance and significance of the dissertation topic are indisputable, particularly in the context of turbulent environments and crisis management. Technological advancement, digitalization processes, and the COVID-19 pandemic have necessitated a comprehensive rethinking of established business models to adapt to the demands of the *new reality*. The tourism sector, specifically the accommodation industry, was among the most affected during the pandemic. These challenges in the business environment raised questions about the strategic transformation of organizations, using both internal and external potential to successfully position themselves in the new reality.

A key component of this potential lies in human resource management, which requires modern models of interaction between leaders and followers, with a focus on motivation

management – one of the primary tools of leadership in response to the increasingly diverse desires and needs of employees.

Based on these briefly presented arguments, I sincerely support the significance and timeliness of the chosen topic. A well-defined and thoroughly justified research problem has been identified, with the primary aim clearly stated: *to develop a methodology and methodological tools for assessing leadership styles in relation to specific environmental characteristics and their impact on employee motivation, supported by research tasks for achieving this goal.*

4. Understanding the Issue

Dimo Zhelev's dissertation demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The research thesis is clearly formulated and well-argued, consistent with the chosen topic, subject, object, aim, and research tasks, which are presented in their entirety and logical sequence, reflected in the structure and content of the dissertation.

The researched problem is relevant in both scientific and practical terms. The candidate exhibits a deep knowledge of the theoretical foundations in the research area, with strong analytical and synthesis skills. These are demonstrated through the summary conclusions, important findings, and recommendations presented, along with the proposed comprehensive research model.

5. Research Methodology

Based on the developed comprehensive model, the candidate suggests an original conceptual model that allows for the creation of a methodology, selection of research tools, and study design appropriate for achieving the main research goal, solving the posed tasks, and proving the formulated thesis.

The approaches and methods employed validate and objectify the results of the analyses, highlighting the candidate's excellent analytical skills, as well as proficiency in working with data, processing, systematizing, and summarizing it, interpreting the results, and formulating conclusions and recommendations.

6. Characterization and Evaluation of the Dissertation Work and Contributions

The presented scientific work has a total volume of 225 pages, of which: main text: an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, and contributions - 194 pages; a list of scientific publications - 1 page; a declaration of originality and authenticity - 1 page; a bibliography - 8

pages; appendices - 20 pages; table of contents - 1 page. The presence in the text of 49 figures and 18 tables is an indication of a clear presentation of the obtained results. The bibliography consists of 136 scientific resources. The overall structure and volume of the dissertation meet the requirements of Art. 27 (2) of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB).

The structure is well-balanced, with each chapter logically connected and sequentially presented, all serving the main objective: to develop a methodology and methodological positions for assessing leadership styles and their impact on employee motivation under specific conditions. The **first chapter** provides a solid theoretical foundation, with an extensive review of specialized literature on leadership, motivation, crisis, and organizational environments. The citations are accurate, and the writing style is scientific and academic. The candidate skillfully analyzes and synthesizes the literature, identifying connections between specific elements and various theories, leading to the presentation of a set of concepts and models to be implemented in the research methodology. The **second chapter** introduces the conceptual model and research tools developed for the study. The **third chapter** applies the research tools in an empirical study on the impact of leadership styles on employee motivation during crisis and post-crisis periods, thus fulfilling the research objectives. The main thesis is proven, and the research goal is achieved. I confirm the scientific and applied contributions, which are precisely and comprehensively formulated.

Overall, the dissertation presents a completed scientific study with a perspective for applying the conceptual model in other sectors or in response to other crisis events of strategic importance, as intended by the candidate.

There was no plagiarism found in the review materials and based on a report from a scientific work check in the specialized software for checking plagiarism StrikePlagiarism

7. Assessment of the PhD student's publications and personal contributions

The PhD student has presented four publications related to the dissertation, one of which is in English and co-authored with his research supervisor. The publications meet the national minimum requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor."

8. Abstract

The abstract accurately and comprehensively reflects the essence of the dissertation and the results achieved, illustrated with selected figures and tables.

9. Recommendations for Future Use of Dissertation Contributions and Results

I can make the following notes and recommendations to help the PhD student's future research work:

- 1) to publish the dissertation in a book;
- 2) to pursue further research on the topic, presenting the results of this and subsequent studies at international scientific forums;
- 3) to continue publication activity in high impact factor/rank publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific, applied-scientific, and practical results that present an original contribution to the field and meet the requirements of the Law of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the corresponding regulations, and the rules of University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski.

The dissertation demonstrates that Dimo Zhelev, a doctoral student, has extensive theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty Social Management, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent scientific research.

As a result of the foregoing, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, as presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results, and contributions, and I suggest to the honorable scientific jury that **Dimo Zhelev Zhelev** be awarded the educational and scientific degree "**doctor**" in the field of higher education. **3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, professional guidance 3.7 Administration and Management, PhD Programme Social Management.**

15.09.2024

Author of the opinion:.....

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