

## **REVIEW**

**by prof. Velislava Atanasova Chavdarova, PhD**

**University of Veliko Tarnovo “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”**

**Faculty of Philosophy, department of Psychology**

For awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

in the scientific area 3.2. Psychology

PhD program positive psychology

Author: Stanislav Raychev Aleksandrov

Topic: Research on the experience of well-being in early adulthood

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Irena Levkova – Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski”

### **1. General description of the submitted materials**

By order No. P 21-2107 dated 20.11.2024 of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski” (PU), I am appointed as a member of the scientific jury for ensuring a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic “Research on the experience of well-being in early adulthood” for the acquisition 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 program “Positive Psychology. The author of the dissertation is Stanislav Raichev - a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Psychology with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Irena Levkova from the Paisiy Hilendarski University.

The set of materials on paper submitted by Stanislav Raichev is in accordance with Art. 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University, and includes the following documents:

- a request to the Rector of the University for the opening of the procedure for the defense of a dissertation;

- a CV in European format;
- a protocol from the departmental council, related to reporting the readiness to open the procedure and with a preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation;
- an abstract;
- a list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of the scientific publications;
- a declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
- The doctoral student has attached 3 publications.

## **2. Brief biographical data about the doctoral student**

In the professional and creative path of Stanislav Raichev, there is stability and purposefulness, diversity and precision of scientific interests and a desire to combine scientific development in the field of psychology with diverse activities in Bulgaria and abroad. The doctoral student has completed a bachelor's and master's degree at the "Paisiy Hilendarski" University of Psychology, where he demonstrated intellectual capacity deserving a positive assessment.

In his education and career, there is both consistency, perseverance and a desire to upgrade and develop. I believe that both the profile of his education and the activities practiced have presupposed the specific choice of the topic.

The procedure for acquiring the ONS "Doctor" was carried out correctly, in compliance with all legal requirements.

## **3. Relevance of the topic and appropriateness of the goals and objectives set**

The choice of the topic is multidimensionally argued in the direction of the perception that the expectation of the future, the reflection on the past and the experience of the present are part of the predictors of flourishing, through which a person understands and gives meaning to what is happening in his life. I believe

that this conviction generates dissertationability and high utility of the presentation by giving it not only theoretical-educational, but also practical-applied value.

The relevance of the topic is undeniable, since an answer to the main research question is critically sought: How do the predictors of flourishing such as hope, cognitive-affective mindfulness and quality of life change, depending on age and how they influence the components of flourishing such as positive emotions, commitment, relationships, meaning and achievements. This requires a multidisciplinary approach, including the combination of personal aspirations for self-improvement with public efforts to create a supportive environment. The author convincingly proves the thesis that expectations for the future, including optimism and hope, are of critical importance for well-being, achievements and positive emotions, which, in turn, have a decisive role in personal and professional development.

Another aspect that favors healthy psychological functioning and on which the focus of the dissertation is directed is the conscious experience of the present moment /mindfulness/ in a non-judgmental way, accepted as fundamental for maintaining mental health, resilience and stress management. This approach allows for an authentic experience of the moment, without being determined by the future or the past.

The emphasis in the work is also the reflection on recent emotional experiences or events from the near future.

#### **4. Knowledge of the problem**

The theoretical part of the dissertation is developed with an understanding of the problem and the ability to critically evaluate the existing explanatory models and the hierarchy of concepts from which they are built is shown. The text is readable, logically and critically constructed and points to possible empirical verifications and applied aspects of the analyzed theoretical constructs. The literature sources are used correctly.

#### **5. Research methodology**

The research is precisely planned and conducted, and the empirical information is qualitatively processed and analyzed using adequate statistical filters. The model of the doctoral student's own research logically originates from the analyses in the theoretical part of the dissertation.

I assess the design of the empirical research as optimal for the purpose of the research and the verification of the hypotheses set, and the analyses of the own research as in-depth, adequate and related to the hypotheses.

Overall, the planning of the empirical research, its conduct and the analyses of the information obtained are evidence of the good research culture of the doctoral student and a thorough, systematic understanding of the research problem.

The aim of the study is “to identify the levels of the studied constructs: flourishing, hope, cognitive-affective mindfulness and quality of life in the studied individuals, as well as to establish the potential interdependencies between them”.

The subject of the dissertation is related to the analysis of the relationships between the selected variables and their components, as well as comparing the results of these variables between two groups of studied individuals: the first group including participants in early adulthood, between 18 and 30 years old, and the second group, which includes respondents aged 30 to 60 years old.

According to the leading hypothesis, it is assumed that there are statistically significant differences in the levels of the studied constructs - flourishing, hope, cognitive-affective mindfulness and quality of life, depending on socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, marital status, monthly income, etc. The research tasks correspond to the set goal, subject, object and hypotheses.

In accordance with the formulated goal and hypotheses, the research toolkit was selected, which includes the PERMA profile (Butler & Kern, 2016), adapted by Margarita Bakracheva (2020); Domain Specific Hope Scale (Simpson, 1999), adapted by Margarita Bakracheva (2020); Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale – Revised (CAMS-R) (Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, Greeson & Laurenceau,

2007), adapted by Margarita Bakracheva (2020); 8-point quality of life scale, SF-8TM Health Survey, adapted by Milena Grigorova and Dimitar Obreshkov.

The selected research methodology allows achieving the set goal and obtaining an adequate answer to the tasks set in the dissertation.

Sociodemographic data were collected through a questionnaire. The main stage of the study was implemented in the period from September 2023 to May 2024, online via Google Forms. The information obtained was processed and organized in Microsoft Excel 2024 to facilitate statistical analyses in IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

The conclusions are formulated based on variance analysis, internal consistency check, correlation and regression analysis, which allow for a detailed study of the relationships between flourishing, hope, mindfulness and quality of life.

## **6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work**

The dissertation work has a volume of 239 pages and consists of an introduction, three chapters, summary and conclusions, a list of literature used and appendices, which include the questionnaires used and tables from the statistical analyses.

The first chapter provides a theoretical overview and structures the conceptual framework of the work. The main theories and concepts related to flourishing, hope, cognitive-affective well-being and quality of life are analyzed in depth. The main thesis is organized around the statement that the transition to adulthood includes career development, family formation, as well as adaptation to new social, psychological and economic conditions. In turn, stress and uncertainty can harm psychological well-being and life satisfaction, especially if previous conflicts have not been successfully resolved. Measuring well-being at this critical life stage requires a comprehensive approach, including aspects such as hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, adaptation and development of personal and professional skills.

The analysis is distinguished by its analytical and critical nature and demonstrates the excellent skills of the doctoral student in working with scientific text.

The second chapter describes the design of the applied research. The research methodology, the organization of the empirical study, the approaches and techniques for data collection, as well as the criteria for selecting participants, the stages of the study and the limitations are presented.

The doctoral student has successfully implemented the research tasks related to establishing the general level of flourishing in the studied individuals and the levels of its forming components, including positive emotions, commitment, relationships, meaning and achievements; diagnostics of the levels of hope (optimistic attitude), cognitive-affective mindfulness and quality of life in the studied individuals and analysis of the configurations of the components forming them; comparison of the levels of flourishing, hope, cognitive-affective mindfulness and quality of life in a dynamic aspect /in students and adults/; correlation and regression analysis of the underlying constructs (flourishing, hope, cognitive-affective mindfulness and quality of life).

The conducted study is structured and analyzed correctly and in-depth. Its scope corresponds to the requirements for this type of scientific work.

The third chapter describes the results and analyzes the data obtained. The emphasis is placed on the interrelationships between flourishing, hope, cognitive-affective mindfulness and quality of life.

In the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained, the doctoral student develops his research potential, demonstrating competence and professionalism, deserving an undoubtedly positive assessment. The generalizations made are relevant to the results obtained and have practical applicability.

The analysis shows significant correlations between the components of flourishing and the various subscales. The data emphasize the significant influence of "academic success" and "mental health" on flourishing, supported by research showing the role of hope for personal development. Regression analyses

show the influence of socio-economic status on "engagement", especially in different age groups.

The list of used literature includes 337 sources in Bulgarian and English.

In terms of the requirements for citation and correct reference to authors, the study fully covers the criteria and meets the standards.

## **7. Contributions and significance of the study for science and practice**

In a theoretical aspect, the following scientific contributions can be found:

- A complex discourse on well-being is proposed from a historical, theological, philosophical and psychological perspective.
- By using an integral research approach, the information on the theoretical framework of the concept of "well-being" has been studied, systematized and precise, and the influence of hope, mindfulness and quality of life has been described in depth.
- By analyzing hope, mindfulness and quality of life, measured using various psychological instruments, the present study successfully identifies and analyzes the key factors that influence the well-being of young adults.
- The dynamics of well-being in terms of age have been competently differentiated. The findings and analytical observations made are the basis for formulating conclusions and describing an author's model for studying flourishing in adulthood.
- A multidisciplinary approach to health has been successfully implemented, including the integration of physical, emotional and psychological aspects.
- The relationship between well-being and other psychological constructs has been competently verified. The predictors that comprehensively influence the experience of well-being have been studied.

In an applied aspect, the following scientific contributions can be found:

- The comprehensive quantitative, qualitative and statistical analysis is synthetically presented and visualized with well-explained tables, histograms, graphs and diagrams.

- The formulated conclusions, presented in the form of a summary of the results of the study, are sufficiently informative and relevant to the data obtained and can be successfully used in future studies.
- The differences of the studied individuals in terms of well-being in terms of gender, role and age have been established.
- The influence of the way in which cognitive-affective mindfulness and hope affect different life stages has been expertly studied, emphasizing the need for age-related strategies for maintaining high levels of these qualities.
- The research model is described comprehensively. The subject, object, goal and tasks are precisely formulated. An adequately structured author's methodology for studying the measured quantities has been applied.
- The verification of the hypotheses has been carried out using appropriate tools and statistical data processing. The qualitative comparative analysis of the results has been correctly carried out.
- The formulated conclusions are relevant to the specific study, and the summary has realistic applicability.
- Adequate strategies for interventions in psychological counseling are presented, aimed at increasing well-being and including methods for strengthening resilience and improving emotional health.

## **8. Assessment of publications on the dissertation work**

The presented list of 3 publications on the topic of the dissertation meets the requirements for obtaining the ONS "doctor". Their publication in prestigious journals is a guarantee of professionalism. Their depth and quality are unquestionable.

## **9. Personal participation of the doctoral student**

The participation of the doctoral student in the planning, conducting, analysis, generalization and interpretation of the results obtained from the theoretical and applied research is unquestionable. Professionalism and precision have been demonstrated in the individual stages. The formulated contributions correspond to the achieved results.

## **10. Abstract**



The presented Abstract of the dissertation work has an appropriate volume of 32 pages, is structured according to the compositional organization of the research and adequately presents its main theses, results, conclusions. Significant emphasis is placed on the significance and scientific novelty of the study, whose methodological limitations are adequately indicated. The structure also includes the author's self-assessment of the contributions of his work.

### **11. Critical remarks and recommendations**

In order to popularize the dissertation work, I would recommend its publication as a monographic work.

### **12. Personal impressions**

The presented work demonstrates the excellent theoretical and practical preparation of the doctoral student on the researched problems, as well as his ability to process, interpret, analyze and summarize results of a conducted psychological study. The work is balanced and well-structured.

The conclusions and findings made regarding the choice of well-being and the accompanying determinants are both adequate and bold. I believe that the author possesses the necessary skills and competencies to continue his scientific development.

### **13. Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results**

Future research may include additional factors that may influence the processes of flourishing. This would allow for a deeper study of hidden or secondary influences that may lead to variations in the experience of well-being. Based on the results obtained, it is reasonable to develop intervention programs to increase the social activity of older people and stimulate their social inclusion and participation by strengthening social ties.

## **CONCLUSION**

The dissertation contains scientific, scientifically applied and applied results that represent an original contribution to science and meets all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the

Republic of Bulgaria (ADSRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ADSRB and the Regulations of the University of Paisiy Hilendarski.

The development shows that doctoral student Stanislav Raichev possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty 3.2. Psychology, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted theoretical and applied research, presented in the above-reviewed dissertation, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Stanislav Raichev in the field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, doctoral program "Positive Psychology".

15.01. 2025 Mr .

Reviewer: .....

Prof. Velislava Chavdarova, PhD