

# **OPINION**

by Velislava Atanasova Chavdarova,

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regarding the doctoral dissertation submitted for the award of the educational  
and scientific degree "Doctor"

in: Higher Education Field 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences

Professional Field: 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral Program: Pedagogical and Developmental Psychology

**Author: Antonia Georgieva Traykova**

Title: Aggression and Anxiety in Teenagers with Problematic Internet Use

**Scientific Advisor: Prof. Dr. Kirilka Tagareva**

Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

## **1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Doctoral Candidate**

The professional and academic path of Antonia Traykova demonstrates consistency and purposefulness, as well as a diversity and precision of scientific interests, alongside a commitment to integrating academic development in the field of psychology with a wide range of activities in education and counseling. The doctoral candidate holds Master's degrees in Law and in Positive Psychology. She has worked as a legal advisor, a school psychologist, and is currently employed as a psychologist in a kindergarten. Her curriculum vitae is impressive in its coherence and progressive development, showing a clear drive for growth and a strong emphasis on work with people. She possesses intellectual capacity that merits a positive evaluation.

I believe that both her educational background and her professional experience have logically led to the specific choice of her dissertation topic.

The procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" has been conducted properly and in full compliance with all legal requirements.

## **2. Relevance of the Topic**

The dissertation of Antonia Traykova addresses an interesting, highly relevant, and still insufficiently explored topic in the Bulgarian context. There remains limited research focused on the emerging phenomenon of "problematic internet behavior," which affects various aspects of children's personality development. Today, society is becoming increasingly sensitive to this issue, which necessitates diverse approaches for managing it and supporting the healthy development of young individuals. Anxiety and aggression are traditionally associated with adolescence, but when influenced by the online environment, they acquire new dimensions and become a threat to the personal development of teenagers.

In this regard, Antonia Traykova clearly defines her research objectives, which are related to analyzing the interaction between aggression, anxiety, and different aspects of internet behavior in adolescents—behavior that may be associated with behavioral addiction—as well as examining their influence on the formation of teenagers' individual psychological profiles.

## **3. Familiarity with the Problem**

The dissertation is developed with a clear understanding of the subject matter, and it demonstrates the candidate's ability to critically evaluate existing explanatory models and the conceptual hierarchies on which they are built. The text is readable, logically structured, and critically oriented, guiding the reader toward possible empirical verifications and practical applications of the theoretical constructs under analysis. The literature sources have been used appropriately and accurately.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

The overall planning of the empirical study, its execution, and the analysis of the collected data testify to the doctoral candidate's solid research competence and to her thorough, systematic understanding of the studied issues.

I assess the design of the empirical research as optimal for the aims of the study and for testing the proposed hypotheses. The analyses are in-depth, appropriate, and directly related to the hypotheses.

The sample size is particularly impressive—399 individuals aged between 14 and 19 years. The conducted study has a complex character and represents a well-balanced combination of expert analyses. It can be stated unequivocally that the doctoral candidate possesses well-developed skills for both quantitative and qualitative interpretation of data, as well as for accurately summarizing the collected information.

#### **5. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation and Its Contributions**

Structurally, the dissertation comprises 185 standard pages, including references, appendices, and the methodological instruments used. The theoretical and empirical study is illustrated with 17 tables and 6 figures.

The bibliography includes 39 sources in Cyrillic, 67 in Latin script, and 11 online sources. The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, findings, a conclusion, appendices, and a bibliography. A significant portion of the references are from the last ten years.

The dissertation has an optimal structure and well-developed sections. The first chapter is theoretical in nature. The author presents an expert review and distinction of the key constructs—aggression, anxiety, and problematic

behavior—examining their causes, preconditions, and their influence on personality development.

The second chapter describes the design of the empirical study. The research model is presented logically and comprehensively, including a clearly stated aim, specific research tasks, hypotheses, a detailed description of the studied sample, the psychological measurement instruments used, and the procedure for conducting the research. The results of the empirical study are subjected to statistical processing, both qualitative and quantitative analysis, and are systematically presented in tables and figures.

Here is the English translation of the remaining part of section 5, along with section 6 ("Scientific Contributions"), in formal academic style:

Overall, the empirical study is precisely planned and executed, with the empirical data processed and analyzed with high quality, employing appropriate statistical methods. These include reliability testing of the scales (Cronbach's alpha), descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, analysis of variance, regression analysis, and cluster analysis. The research model developed by the doctoral candidate logically derives from the theoretical analyses presented in the first part of the dissertation.

## **6. Scientific Contributions**

The dissertation yields significant scientific and applied contributions, enriching the psychological understanding of the relationships between problematic internet behavior, aggression, and anxiety in adolescents.

The following achievements of the doctoral candidate are also regarded as original contributions:

In-depth critical and interdisciplinary analyses have been conducted on the concepts and theoretical models within the research domain—namely aggression,

anxiety, and problematic behavior in the digital environment. These constructs are examined in relation to a specific age group and are conceptualized in the context of the research objectives.

Different behavioral models of teenagers are typologized in relation to constructs such as social engagement, self-regulation, and self-reflection in a digital environment.

A unique theoretical-empirical model has been synthesized to study the specific features of the cognitive and emotional components of problematic internet behavior.

A custom methodology has been developed by the author to measure the studied variables, specifically tailored to the research goals.

The results of the empirical study provide detailed data on gender and age differences in levels of aggression and anxiety, revealing important patterns and dynamics specific to the Bulgarian adolescent sample.

Overall, the results of the study constitute a solid body of knowledge that can be actively utilized by psychologists and educators for the diagnosis and prediction of problematic internet behavior. The research remains open to further development and expansion, and it can easily be adapted as a foundation for future studies of a similar nature.

The developed and validated author's questionnaire has proven to be a reliable instrument. It enabled the author to profile the behavioral manifestations of teenagers in the digital environment and to highlight significant personality traits that may serve as a basis for psychological support in problematic situations.

The dissertation also provides a competent analysis of a number of other issues related to adolescence, which serve as an excellent foundation for

structuring programs aimed at facilitating the development of self-regulatory mechanisms, managing anxiety, and reducing aggression during adolescence.

## **6. Evaluation of Publications and the Doctoral Candidate's Personal Contribution**

The submitted list of three publications related to the dissertation topic meets the formal requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor." Their publication in reputable academic journals is a testament to the candidate's professionalism. The depth and quality of the publications are indisputable.

- The personal contribution of the doctoral candidate can be evaluated in several directions:
- An integrative approach to studying problematic behavior in the digital environment;
- The identification of the interrelationship between anxiety, aggression, and internet behavior during adolescence;
- The development of an original questionnaire for investigating the issues in question;
- A successful attempt at personality typologization of adolescent internet users;
- Proposals for the development of strategies, programs, and projects aimed at providing psychological support in cases of deviant behavior in upper-school-age adolescents.

## **7. Abstract**

The abstract accurately reflects the structure and content of the dissertation. Its length is optimal and precisely composed.

## **8. Recommendations for Future Use of the Dissertation's Contributions and Results**

The dissertation research is highly beneficial and contributes to enriching the data pool concerning problematic internet behavior, as well as anxiety and deviant behavior associated with such internet use and the profiling of adolescents. The creation and validation of the questionnaire for assessing online behavior allow for its broader application in future research, as well as its use for other investigative purposes.

The results of the study demonstrate a high degree of reliability and can be utilized in the development of projects, programs, and strategies for psychological intervention with adolescents exhibiting problematic internet behavior.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the above analysis, I firmly state that the dissertation by Antonia Traykova, titled: “Aggression and Anxiety in Teenagers with Problematic Internet Use”, possesses sufficient scientific merit. This provides me with a sound basis to vote positively and to recommend to the members of the academic committee that Antonia Georgieva Traykova be awarded the educational and scientific degree Doctor, in Higher Education Field 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.2. Psychology (Pedagogical and Developmental Psychology).

July 28, 2025

Veliko Tarnovo

Prepared by: .....

Prof. Dr. Velislava Chavdarova