

REVIEW

**by Prof. Kirilka Simeonova Tagareva, PhD,
Plovdiv University ‘Paisii Hilendarski’**

of the Dissertation thesis for awarding the educational and scientific degree of ‘Doctor’

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

Professional field 3.2. Psychology Doctoral program *in Positive Psychology*

Author: Kristiana Georgieva Eneva

Topic: “Positive Cognitive Processes and Relationship Satisfaction in Young Adults”

Academic Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Youri Pavlov Ianakiev – Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”

1. General Description of the Submitted Materials

By Order No. RD-22-1496/23.06.2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” (PU), I was appointed as a member of the scientific jury to oversee the defence procedure for the dissertation titled “Positive Cognitive Processes and Relationship Satisfaction in Young Adults” for awarding the educational and scientific degree ‘Doctor’ in Higher Education Area 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.2. Psychology, Doctoral Program in Positive Psychology. The author of the dissertation is Kristiana Georgieva Eneva – a part-time PhD student in the Department of Psychology, with academic supervisor Prof. Youri Pavlov Ianakiev, PhD.

The materials submitted on hard copy by Kristiana Eneva comply with Article 36 (1) of the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff at PU and include the following documents:

- a request to the Rector of PU for initiating the thesis defence procedure;
- a curriculum vitae in European format;
- protocols from the department council regarding readiness to initiate the procedure and preliminary discussion of the thesis;
- a thesis;
- an abstract;
- a list of scientific publications on the thesis’ topic;
- copies of the scientific publications;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents.

The doctoral candidate has attached eight publications.

2. Brief Biographical Information about the Doctoral Candidate

Kristiana Georgieva Eneva was born in 1994. In 2017 she graduated with a bachelor's degree in Psychology in PU with qualification for psychologist, psychology teacher. During 2019 she acquired a Master's degree in Positive psychology with the qualification "Psychologist". Kristiana Eneva has other qualifications in connection to her scientific interests in the field of psychology and education: Montessori pedagogue, basic positive psychotherapy consultant; positive psychotherapist.

Her doctoral training started on March 1st 2021 when she was enrolled as a part-time doctoral student in Positive Psychology at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Pedagogy, PU. During her education period, she responsibly completed all activities outlined in her individual plan for the PhD degree and successfully passed all required exams. In 2025, Kristiana Eneva was formally cleared to defend her dissertation. Her dissertation was presented and approved by the scientific unit of the Psychology department in the Faculty of Pedagogy at Plovdiv University on June 3rd, 2025.

Kristiana Eneva has professional experience in the field of education and tourism. She has worked as a school psychologist in "St.St. Cyril And Methodius" school in Plovdiv as well as an accountant and operator in JYG LTD in Plovdiv. The presented autobiographical data consistently shows the doctoral student's orientation towards the field of positive psychology as well as the period of youth and support further her dissertation research topic - positive cognitive processes and romantic relationship satisfaction in young adults.

3. Topic Relevance and Appropriateness of the Goals and Objectives Set

Kristiana Eneva's dissertation focuses on young adults' psychological wellbeing and health. The topic is relevant both scientifically and practically. Scientifically, her work is aimed at broadening the scientific knowledge of early, middle and late adulthood in the field of positive psychology. Practically, the relevance lies in exploring ways and opportunities for developing a higher relationship satisfaction in couples. This leads to higher interest in empirical research of the connection between couple relationship satisfaction and positive cognitive processes in young adults. Kristiana Eneva sets tasks, connected with examining optimism, hope, mindfulness and relationship satisfaction and their correlations in the period of adulthood.

4. Familiarity with the Problem

Kristiana Eneva has a deep knowledge of the state of the problem and has the ability to creatively assess the literature on the subject.

5. Research Methods

The current choice of research methods enables K. Eneva to achieve her stated goals, which she aims to solve in her dissertation. The following instruments were applied:

1. **The Life Orientation Scale – Revised (LOT-R, Scheier et.al., 1994).** The scale shows levels of generalized optimism/pessimism and is consisted of 10 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 0 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree). The higher the score the higher the levels of generalized optimism. Lower levels indicate pessimism. The scale is single structured, no subscales and has three reverse items and four distractors. Optimism levels are scores by the remaining six items.
2. **Adult Hope Scale (AHS, Snyder et.al 1991).** The scale is consisted of two subscales – Agency and Pathways. The main scale is 12 items, and the subscales are 4 items each. The other four items are distractors for validity purposes. Each item is rated on an 8-point Likert scale (from 1 – Definitely false to 8 – Definitely true).
3. **Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS, Brown&Ryan, 2003).** The scale is unidimensional and includes 15 items, each rated on a 6-point Likert scale (from 1 – Almost always; to 6 – Almost never). Higher scores on the scale show higher ability for dispositional mindfulness.
4. **The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS, Hendrick, Dicke & Hendrick 1998).** The scale consists of 7 items, each one rated on a 5-point Likert scale with different indexes for every item. RAS is a self-reported, cognitive based instrument and has 2 reverse items.
5. **Family Satisfaction by Adjectives Scale (FSAS, Barraca et al., 2020).** The scale measures family satisfaction in functional and dysfunctional couples. It has 27 items with dyadic emotional statements varying from positive to negative emotion. Each pair of emotions is assessed from “Totally,” “Quite” and “To some extent”, for the negative affect and “To some extent”, “Quite” and “Totally” for the positive affect.

Other questions for the participants include gender, age, education, sexual orientation, relationship status, relationship length and parental status.

Statistical methods for analysis include: Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation; Factor Analysis of the items; Psychometric properties for each scale,

including Kronbach's alpha, T-test for paired comparisons (ANOVA), correlation analysis. The data is analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics, v. 19.

6. Characteristics and Assessment of the Thesis

The dissertation consist of a total of 344 pages which include: introduction, three chapters, list of contributions and limitations, conclusion, appendices and references. The research is based on 166 used sources – 23 in Cyrillic , 132 in Latin alphabet and 8 webpages. The work includes 39 figures and 53 tables.

The first chapter is theoretical and analytical and introduces literature review on the dissertation topic. It consists of four parts, dedicated to the theoretical examination of optimism, hope, mindfulness and social relationships. The first part presents historical perspectives on optimism as well as contemporary optimism theories such as those of Martin Seligman (M. Seligman), Charles Carver and Michael Scheier (Carver&Scheier), etc. It also analyzes the connection between optimism and hope as well as social relationships. The second part examines hope. The focus is on the positive psychology of hope – C. Snyder's theory as well as developing hope in adults. The third part discusses the idea of mindfulness as it presents modern mindfulness theories, programs for developing and advancing mindfulness skills and etc. The fourth part presents the nature of social relationships as well as different theories for social relationships, love, attachment and romantic relationship satisfaction. The displayed theoretical approaches are focused on empirical assertions (Argile and Henderson, 1989; Ellen Bernscheid and Elane Walster, 1978; Diana Dwyer, 2000 etc.)

The second chapter presents the empirical study design. The object and subject of the study are outlined. The aim is set, there are 10 tasks and 7 hypotheses. The study organization and methods are described. The empirical study has 825 participants in early, middle and late adulthood. 735 (89%) of them are women and 86 (10%) are men. The respondents are divided into two experimental groups: the first group consists of individuals in young adulthood – up to 40 years and includes 541 people (65%) and the second group includes individuals in middle and late adulthood – above 40 years and includes 284 people (35%).

The third part of the dissertation thesis is dedicated to analyzing the study results. First, a sociodemographic analysis of the respondents is presented. After that – analysis of the results for the main constructs in accordance to the corresponding instruments: optimism scale; hope scale; mindfulness scale (MAAS); cognitive partner relationship satisfaction scale; family relationship satisfaction by adjectives scale (emotional satisfaction). Correlation analysis is used for examining the connections between the researched constructs.

In her research Kristiana Eneva proposes the following 7 hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. it is assumed that higher relationship satisfaction would positively correlate with higher levels of optimism, hope and mindfulness in adulthood.

Hypothesis 2. It is expected that respondents, involved in romantic relationships would score higher on positive cognitive processes than the single ones.

Hypothesis 3. It is assumed that out of demographics (gender, age, marital status, relationship length, children) most common relationship length would show a meaningful connection to partner relationship satisfaction. We expect that maintaining a long-term relationship with one's partner would be connected to better ability to draw pleasure from the relationship and hence a higher feeling of satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4. It is assumed that respondents in early adulthood would show lower scores on optimism, hope and mindfulness as well as relationship satisfaction than the respondents in middle and late adulthood.

Hypothesis 5. It is expected that the cognitive and affective relationship satisfaction scales would show high correlation coefficients with one another, as cognitive scores would be somewhat slightly higher than the affective-based scores.

Hypothesis 6. It is expected that no gender differences would be found in levels of optimism, hope, mindfulness and romantic relationship satisfaction. It is also expected that having children as factor would be correlated only to the levels of partners' romantic relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 7. It is assumed that all scales would show high reliability (Kronbach's alpha) and interitem correlation indexes. More precisely, K. Eneva suggests the scales could be applied to Bulgarian population.

The results and their analysis point, that the first hypothesis is confirmed. Higher levels of romantic relationship satisfaction (both cognitive and emotional) show positive correlation indexes with higher levels on the scales, measuring optimism; hope and mindfulness. The highest correlation coefficient is the one between the relationship between mindfulness and emotional satisfaction as positive cognitive processes are concerned. The author suggests that such a result gives basis to the idea that mindfulness attention ability affects relationship processes more significant than other examined constructs, which then contributes for the stronger satisfaction of both partners.

The second hypothesis is not confirmed. It is established that there is no statistical connection between levels of positive cognitive processes and the participants' relationship status.

In accordance to the third hypothesis, it turns out that in is partially confirmed. There isn't a meaningful relationship between cognitive relationship satisfaction and different relationship length, while some groups differ according to emotional satisfaction. There is also no meaningful connection found between participants with different relationship length and optimism as well as hope. However, such a relationship is found meaningful for mindfulness.

The fourth hypothesis is confirmed. Participants above 40 years score higher on the scale for dispositional optimism. The author analyzes the results according to early and middle-late adulthood period specifics.

As for hypothesis 5, it is fully confirmed. The cognitive and affective relationship satisfaction scales show high correlation coefficients with one another.

The sixth hypothesis is partially confirmed. The results of the PhD student's analysis show no significant differences in optimism nor hope (and its two subscales) between men and women. Although such difference is found in mindfulness levels of men and women - male participants score higher on dispositional mindfulness than females. For hope there is a meaningful connection between the results, shown by parents and non-parents. These findings are meaningful for agency as well as the whole hope scale. No such difference is found for the pathways' subscale.

The seventh hypothesis is confirmed. All scales show good reliability (Cronbach's alpha) and internal consistency (hypothesis variance).

7. Contributions and Significance of the Work to Science and Practice

The scientific and application contributions of Kristiana Eneva's dissertation thesis consist in the conducting of an original study on positive cognitive processes and relationship satisfaction in young adulthood. The study offers a more consistent and rich understanding of cognitive wellbeing, satisfaction and relationships in young people. The scientific contributions in accordance to the matter of the dissertation thesis conclude in:

1. Based on the theoretical analysis, contemporary concepts of optimism, hope, mindfulness, relationships and emotional satisfaction are integrated and all available connections between them are well-grounded.

2. A systematic review of multiple scientific researches in accordance to the examined constructs is presented.
3. An adaptation for Bulgarian population is implemented for the scales, measuring positive cognitive processes and partner relationship satisfaction.
4. The conducted empirical study is original in the Bulgarian scientific field according to the connection between optimism, hope, mindfulness, relationships and emotional satisfaction in young people. The results of the study enrich the existing models of psychological wellbeing in adulthood, confirming that higher levels of romantic relationship satisfaction is connected positively with more optimism, hope and mindfulness in everyday life in adulthood.
5. The empirical data gives ground to the suggestion that specific actions should be taken into account - encouraging optimism, hope, mindfulness in developing educational, social politics, psychocorrectional practices and health strategies in our country.

8. Assessment of dissertation publications

The publications, presented for reviewing are a total of 8. Six of them are individual publications with Kristiana Eneva as an author and two – co-authored with the academic supervisor. All of them are in Bulgarian. The articles are dedicated to topics in connection with the dissertation – optimism and pessimism, hope, mindfulness, couple relationship satisfaction etc.

9. Personal Involvement of the Doctoral Student

I think that the conducted dissertation study is Kristiana Eneva's personal work and the contributions and results achieved are her individual accomplishment.

10. Abstract

The abstract is built according to the requirements and reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation.

11. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

I don't have critical remarks, which could lead to a significant impact on the current review. I propose that K. Eneva continues her work into the field of positive psychology.

12. Personal impressions

I know Kristiana Eneva as a student in the bachelor's program in psychology and master's program in positive psychology. I have a positive opinion of her. She is responsible and loyal in her work.

13. Recommendations for Future Use of Dissertation Contributions and Results

I recommend the publishing of scientific articles and a monography on the topic.

Within the scope in my competence I didn't find texts, which can be defined as plagiarism, nor did I receive any reports of such during the period of my work on the review.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation thesis has scientific, applied-scientific and application results, which represent an original contribution in the science and are in accordance to the requirements of the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), The Rules for Application of ZRASRB and the according rules in PU "Paisiyi Hilendarski".

The dissertation work shows that Kristian Georgieva Eneva has theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty of positive psychology as she also shows qualities and abilities for independent conduct of a scientific study.

For the abovementioned reasons, I confidently give my *positive assessment* for the conducted study, as presented in the reviewed dissertation, abstract, achieved results, and contributions. *I propose to the honourable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree of 'doctor' to Kristiana Georgieva Eneva in the field of higher education: Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional direction Psychology, doctoral programme Positive Psychology.*

24.07.2025 г.

Reviewer:.....

(Prof. Kirilka Tagareva, PhD)