

REVIEW

by Velislava Atanasova Chavdarova – Professor, PhD at Veliko Tarnovo University "St. Cyril and St. Methodius", Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Psychology

of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

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

Professional Field 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral Program: "Positive Psychology"

Author: Kristiana Georgieva Eneva

Title: **Positive Cognitive Processes and Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships in Early Adulthood**

Academic Supervisor: **Prof. Phd Yuri Yanakiev** – Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

1. General Description of the Submitted Materials

By Order No. P 22-1496 dated 23.06.2025 of the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (PU), I was appointed as a member of the academic jury for the defense procedure of the dissertation titled "Positive Cognitive Processes and Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships in Early Adulthood", submitted 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 Program "Positive Psychology". The author of the dissertation is Kristiana Eneva – a full-time doctoral student in the Department of Psychology, supervised by Prof. Dr. Yuri Yanakiev of PU "Paisii Hilendarski".

The set of materials submitted by Kristiana Eneva in hard copy complies with Article 36 (1) of the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff at PU and includes the following documents:

- Curriculum Vitae in European format;
- Dissertation thesis;
- Abstract of the dissertation;

- List of scientific publications related to the dissertation topic;
- Copies of the scientific publications;
- Declaration of originality and authenticity of the submitted documents.

The doctoral candidate has attached 8 publications – authored independently or in co-authorship with the academic supervisor.

2. Brief Biographical Information about the Doctoral Candidate

Kristiana Eneva is a doctoral student at the Department of Psychology within the Faculty of Education at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. Her professional experience is diverse and specialized, combining a range of activities that form a multifaceted professional profile, primarily realized in positions related to helping and expert psychological practice.

The author is a conscientious and precise researcher who successfully verifies her psychological experience by integrating it into a valuable scientific product that also serves as a tool for practical application.

Her educational and research path demonstrates consistency, reflected in her attainment of a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in positive psychology from PU, as well as her advanced training in various programs, including Montessori pedagogy, psychotherapy, and others.

The submitted documentation is complete and complies with all criteria within the context of the current dissertation defense procedure. The doctoral candidate has diligently fulfilled all the requirements of her individual study plan. No instances of plagiarism have been identified.

The information in Kristiana Eneva's CV testifies to a step-by-step and honorable journey toward professional realization in both scientific and practical domains.

3. Relevance of the Topic and Appropriateness of the Objectives and Research Tasks

The choice of topic is multidimensionally justified, based on the understanding that anticipation of the future, reflection on the past, and experience of the present are among the predictors of satisfaction in romantic relationships—through which individuals comprehend and give meaning to the

events in their lives. I believe this conviction ensures the dissertation's academic value and practical utility, giving it both theoretical-educational and applied relevance.

The relevance of the topic is indisputable, as it critically seeks to address the central research question: What are the contemporary challenges related to identifying modern strategies for coping with problems and life demands across different age stages? How do the predictors of satisfying romantic relationships—such as hope, cognitive-affective mindfulness, and quality of life—change with age, and how do they influence the components of flourishing, such as positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments?

This necessitates a multidisciplinary approach, through which the author convincingly proves the thesis that expectations for the future—comprising optimism and hope—are critically important for well-being, achievements, and positive emotions, which in turn play a decisive role in the realm of interpersonal relationships.

Another aspect that promotes healthy psychological functioning and is a central focus of the dissertation is the mindful, non-judgmental experience of the present moment. This is considered fundamental for maintaining mental health, resilience, and stress management. Such an approach allows for authentic experience of the moment, undetermined by either the future or the past.

The dissertation also emphasizes reflection on recent emotional experiences or events from the near future.

4. Knowledge of the Problem

The theoretical part of the dissertation demonstrates a solid understanding of the issues involved, along with the ability to critically evaluate existing explanatory models and the conceptual hierarchies they are built upon. The text is readable, logically and critically structured, and directed toward potential empirical validation and practical application of the analyzed theoretical constructs. The literature sources are used correctly and appropriately.

5. Research Methodology

The research is carefully planned and conducted, and the empirical data is processed and analyzed with high quality, using appropriate statistical tools. The

research model developed by the doctoral candidate logically derives from the theoretical analyses presented in the dissertation.

I assess the empirical design as optimal for achieving the stated research goals and testing the hypotheses. The analyses are thorough, appropriate, and directly related to the hypotheses.

Overall, the planning, execution, and analysis of the empirical research demonstrate the doctoral candidate's strong research skills and deep, systematic understanding of the studied issue.

The aim of the research is "to empirically analyze the correlation between the level of satisfaction in romantic relationships and positive cognitive processes among individuals in early adulthood."

The subject of the dissertation relates to the empirical examination of the positive cognitive processes of optimism, hope, and mindfulness, as well as the level of satisfaction in romantic relationships. The object of study includes individuals in early adulthood—both partnered and unpartnered. A control group consists of individuals in middle (and later) adulthood.

According to the main hypothesis, a higher degree of satisfaction in romantic relationships positively correlates with greater capacity to utilize optimism, hope, and mindfulness in daily life among the adults studied. The research tasks align with the defined aim, subject, object, and hypotheses.

In accordance with these objectives and hypotheses, the research tools have been appropriately selected. The methodology is suitable, and given the size of the sample, the data obtained is reliable. It is processed through descriptive statistics, mean values and standard deviations, factor analysis of items, analysis of the psychometric properties of each questionnaire used (including Cronbach's alpha), t-tests for comparing means of two samples (ANOVA), and correlation analysis.

The conclusions are drawn based on variance analysis, internal consistency checks, correlation and regression analyses, which enable a detailed investigation of the relationships between flourishing, hope, mindfulness, and quality of life.

6. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The dissertation is 344 pages long and consists of an introduction, three chapters, a summary and conclusions, a list of references, and appendices containing the questionnaires used and statistical analysis tables.

The first chapter presents a theoretical overview and structures the conceptual framework of the study. It includes an in-depth analysis of key theories and concepts related to optimism, flourishing, hope, cognitive-affective mindfulness, and quality of life. The central thesis is organized around the assertion that the transition to adulthood requires particular attention to love and romantic relationships. Furthermore, the influence of defensive pessimism, psychological well-being, physical health, the need for achievement, etc., on quality of life and social relationships, hope, and mindfulness is acknowledged. Conflictual dyads are also reasonably and thoroughly analyzed as a contrast to romantic relationship satisfaction.

This analysis is marked by analytical depth and critical perspective, demonstrating Kristiana Eneva's excellent skills in working with academic texts.

The second chapter outlines the design of the applied research. The research methodology is presented, including the organization of the empirical study, data collection methods and techniques, participant selection criteria, stages of the study, and its limitations.

The doctoral candidate has successfully carried out the research tasks related to:

Establishing the overall level of satisfaction in participants' romantic relationships;

Assessing their general capacity to engage in positive cognitive processes;

Exploring potential links between participants' age characteristics and the studied indicators;

Comparing data across categories such as "partnered/unpartnered" and "early/middle adulthood";

Examining the dispositional traits of participants experiencing high satisfaction in romantic relationships;

And formulating recommendations to improve relationship quality at each stage of the romantic bond.

The conducted research is structured and analyzed accurately and in depth. Its scope corresponds to the standards required for a scientific work of this kind.

In Chapter Three, the results are presented and the data is analyzed. The general conclusion drawn from the study is that it is not a single skill, but rather a combination of specific abilities that makes romantic relationships more satisfying and can influence their longevity and stability. Identifying these specific characteristics is of key importance.

In analyzing and interpreting the data, the doctoral candidate demonstrates her research potential, showing competence and professionalism that deserve positive evaluation. The conclusions are relevant to the findings and have practical applicability.

The list of references includes 166 sources in both Bulgarian and English.

Regarding citation and correct attribution to authors, the work fully meets the requirements and complies with academic standards.

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

Theoretical Contributions:

- A complex discourse on relationship satisfaction is offered from both philosophical and psychological perspectives.
- Through an integrated research approach, information regarding the theoretical framework of the concepts of optimism, hope, and mindfulness has been systematically explored, organized, and clarified. Their influence on satisfaction in romantic relationships is thoroughly described.
- By analyzing hope, mindfulness, and optimism—measured using various psychological tools—the study successfully identifies and examines key factors that affect relationships during adulthood.
- The dynamics of relationship satisfaction are competently differentiated across age groups. The resulting findings and analytical observations form the basis for formulating conclusions and describing an original model for analyzing the studied constructs.
- The relationship between satisfaction in romantic relationships and other psychological constructs is competently verified. The study investigates the predictors that complexly influence the experience of satisfaction.

Applied Contributions:

- A comprehensive quantitative, qualitative, and statistical analysis is synthesized and visually presented through well-annotated tables, histograms, graphs, and charts.
- The conclusions, presented as a summary of the research results, are sufficiently informative, relevant to the data, and suitable for use in future studies.
- Differences in satisfaction with romantic relationships among participants are identified with respect to gender-role and age variables.
- The impact of cognitive-affective mindfulness and hope on various aspects of relationships is expertly examined, emphasizing the need for developing strategies to maintain the quality of interpersonal communication.
- The research model is described in a comprehensive way. The subject, object, aim, and tasks are clearly formulated. A well-structured, author-developed methodology is applied to measure the variables.
- The hypotheses are tested using appropriate tools and statistical methods. The qualitative comparative analysis of the results is conducted accurately.
- The formulated conclusions correspond to the specific study, and the summary has realistic applicability.
- The dissertation makes a step toward the broad theme of building and maintaining satisfying and high-quality relationships, whether romantic or not. It provokes reflection on the theoretical and practical application of new findings within the model of modern positive psychology in a national context.

8. Evaluation of the Publications Related to the Dissertation

The submitted list of 8 publications—independently authored and co-authored with the academic supervisor, and related to the dissertation topic—exceeds the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor." Their publication in reputable journals is a guarantee of professionalism. Their depth and quality are indisputable.

9. Personal Contribution of the Doctoral Candidate

Kristiana Eneva's involvement in the planning, execution, analysis, summarization, and interpretation of the results obtained from the theoretical and applied research is unquestionable. At each stage, she demonstrated professionalism and precision.

10. Abstract

The submitted abstract of the dissertation is appropriately sized at 32 pages, is structured according to the compositional organization of the research, and accurately presents its main theses, findings, and conclusions. It emphasizes the significance and scientific novelty of the study, and its methodological limitations are clearly stated.

11. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

To increase the visibility of the dissertation, I recommend its publication as a monograph.

12. Personal Impressions

The presented work demonstrates Kristiana Eneva's excellent theoretical and practical training in the examined topics, as well as her ability to process, interpret, analyze, and summarize the results of psychological research. The dissertation is well-balanced and well-structured.

The conclusions and findings regarding satisfaction in romantic relationships are both well-grounded and bold. I believe the author possesses the necessary skills and competencies to continue her academic development.

13. Recommendations for Future Use of the Dissertation's Contributions and Results

Future research plans of the doctoral candidate may include studies on positive cognitive processes within the context of Bulgarian culture.

Further research focused on satisfaction in romantic relationships and the conceptualization of risk factors will enrich psychological theory and practice.

The results of this dissertation study may serve as the basis for the development of national and European programs aimed at supporting couples experiencing difficulties in their relationships.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific, applied-scientific, and practical results that represent an original contribution to the field and meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria

(LDASRB), the Regulations for its Implementation, and the Regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The work demonstrates that the doctoral candidate Kristiana Eneva possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional competencies in the scientific field 3.2. Psychology and exhibits the qualities and skills required to independently conduct scientific research.

For the above reasons, I confidently give my positive evaluation of the theoretical and applied research presented in the dissertation, abstract, achieved results, and contributions, and I recommend to the esteemed academic jury that the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" be awarded to Kristiana Eneva in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, doctoral program "Positive Psychology".

24.07. 2025

Reviewer:

Prof. Phd Velislava Chavdarova

