

OPINION

by **Assoc. Prof. Doncho Stoyanov Donev, PhD – Trakia University**

regarding the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of **"Associate Professor" at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"**

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

Professional Field: 3.2. Psychology (Positive Psychology).

In the competition for "Associate Professor," announced in the State Gazette, No. 96 of November 11, 2025, and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski," the participating candidate is **Chief Assistant Professor Diliانا Svetoslavova Angelova, PhD**, from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Candidate

1.1. Presentation of the Procedure

By Order No. RD-22-32 of January 9, 2026, of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the competition for the academic position of **"Associate Professor"** at PU in the Field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.2. Psychology (Positive Psychology).

One candidate submitted documents for the announced competition: Chief Assistant Professor Diliانا Svetoslavova Angelova, PhD.

The set of materials presented by Chief Assistant Professor Diliانا Angelova, PhD, is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU and includes:

1. Request for admission to participate in the competition (template form);
2. Curriculum vitae in Europass format;
3. Diploma for higher education with the acquired educational and qualification degree "Master" and supplement;
4. Diploma for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor";
5. List of scientific publications;
6. Scientific publications (copies of the publications);
7. Minutes of dissertation committees;
8. List of citations;
9. Certificate of compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements;

10. Abstract of materials pursuant to Article 76 of the Regulations on the Implementation of Academic Staff Development;
11. Self-assessment of contributions;
12. Declaration of originality and authenticity of the submitted documents;
13. Document certifying employment record;
14. Documents on teaching activities;
15. Documents on research activities;
16. Documents pertaining to creative artistic activities;
17. Documents proving fulfillment of the faculty's additional requirements;
18. Other documents.

The candidate has submitted a total of **18 scientific works**, including 1 monograph, 1 book based on a dissertation, and 16 research articles. All 18 works are accepted for review as they were published outside of the doctoral period and the previous competition for "Chief Assistant Professor".

1.2. Presentation of the Candidate

The academic trajectory of Chief Assistant Dr. Diliانا Angelova demonstrates a systematic progression in expertise within the domain of child development. In 2007, she completed a bachelor's program in "Primary School Pedagogy and Foreign Language." She defended her master's degree in "Counseling Psychology," specializing in issues of child and adolescent age, in 2010, thereby acquiring the professional qualification of "Child Psychologist." Chief Assistant Dr. Angelova earned the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in Psychology (doctoral program in "Pedagogical and Age Psychology") at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" in 2013. Dr. Angelova's professional path is characterized by a consistent pursuit of specialization and advancement of expertise, transitioning from foundational pedagogical training to narrowly focused psychological practice and high-level scientific research. Since 2018, she has been on staff at Plovdiv University, assuming the academic position of "Chief Assistant" in 2022.

2. General Characteristics of the Candidate's Activity

The teaching activities of Chief Assistant Dr. Diliانا Angelova at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski," are distinguished by high intensity, methodological precision, and extensive engagement in the education of students across bachelor's and master's programs.

In recent academic years, Dr. Angelova has maintained a workload that systematically exceeds the established annual norm of 360 hours. She has made significant contributions to the methodological support of the educational process through the development of curricula for the Bachelor's degree program in "Social Activities," covering disciplines such as "Positive Psychology and Social Work," "Developmental Psychology in Childhood and Adolescence," "Social Psychology," and "Psychological Foundations of Crisis Intervention." In the Master's degree program,

she teaches the discipline "Social Cognition and Behavior" across several tracks, including "Applied Psychology," "School Psychology," "Positive Psychology," and "Management Psychology."

Her scientific production includes:

- Habilitation treatise – 1;
- Book based on a successfully defended dissertation – 1;
- Articles and reports published in scientific journals, peer-reviewed and indexed in internationally renowned scientific databases – 2;
- Articles and reports published in non-peer-reviewed journals with scientific review or in edited collective volumes – 14, of which 3 co-authored and 11 independent.

The habilitation treatise, along with several articles and reports, is devoted to the study of friendship as a socio-psychological phenomenon in childhood and adolescence. Particular interest lies in its nuances within the context of contemporary technological transformations. The monograph "The Modern Face of Friendship and Peer Relationships in the Era of the Digital Revolution" represents a comprehensive investigation into the transformation of human communication under the influence of modern technologies. It establishes the notion that social networks do not supplant traditional relationships but rather function as a dynamic extension of the real-world social environment. Of exceptional note is the integration of attachment theory into the digital context, which demonstrates that online communication styles directly reflect early emotional patterns.

The candidate's original contributions are divided into three categories:

- **Theoretical Contributions**

Dr. Angelova's theoretical work centers on conceptualizing contemporary social relationships and educational models:

- A novel theoretical framework has been developed, integrating attachment theory and interpersonal theories with modern forms of online communication and "digital intimacy."
- The qualitative characteristics of adolescent friendships have been substantiated as determined by early bonds with primary caregivers and internal working models of attachment.
- A systematic theoretical model of friendship has been delineated, encompassing six core dimensions, including qualitative parameters, individual characteristics, and interaction dynamics.
- A holistic concept of positive education has been postulated, placing well-being and character strengths on par with academic achievements.

- **Practical-Applied Contributions**

These contributions directly pertain to enhancing practices in educational and counseling domains:

- Empirical delineations have been provided for both the risks of social networks (pathological use, negative self-image) and their adaptive and compensatory functions in social anxiety.

- Specific best practices have been systematized, including programs for social-emotional learning, coaching practices in education, and structures for student self-governance.
- The role of the school psychologist as consultant, mediator, and lead expert in preventing aggression and early school dropout has been detailed.
- Specific phases and techniques of psychological counseling have been outlined, emphasizing the counselor's personal competencies (empathy, authenticity) for intervention efficacy.

- **Methodological Contributions**

The researcher's methodological efforts provide reliable tools for future studies and diagnostics in the Bulgarian context:

- For Bulgarian practice, established psychometric instruments have been adapted, including the Friendship Quality Questionnaire (FQQ), Friendship Quality Scale (FQS), and the peer attachment subscale from the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA).
- Scientifically grounded questionnaires have been presented for investigating talent development environments in sports (TDEQS) and assessing social-emotional competence (SECQ).
- Comprehensive correlational designs and rigorous methodological procedures have been employed, incorporating pilot testing, semantic structure validation, and appropriate statistical data processing.

The significance of Chief Assistant Dr. Diliانا Angelova's research work is attested by citations of her studies. The competition documents present a total of 13 citations in peer-reviewed publications.

The objective facts presented bear witness to the significance and authenticity of Chief Assistant Dr. Diliانا Angelova's scientific output and academic teaching activities. They provide grounds for the conclusion that the candidate is a scholar, researcher, and educator with experience and original contributions to the advancement of academic and applied psychology.

3. Questions to the Candidate

To what extent does "virtual empathy" activate the same neural pathways as "face-to-face" communication, and are there specific biochemical differences in digitally mediated intimacy?

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted by Chief Assistant Dr. Diliانا Angelova fully comply with the requirements of the Law on the Development of

Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LDASRB, and the corresponding Regulations of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski."

The competition candidate has presented a sufficient number of scientific publications issued after the materials used in the defense of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor," as well as for the competition to fill the academic position of "Chief Assistant." The candidate's works feature original scientific and applied contributions, which have received academic recognition, as a representative portion of them has been published in peer-reviewed journals and scientific proceedings. The theoretical developments possess practical applicability. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Chief Assistant Dr. Diliانا Angelova fully meet the requirements and profile of the present competition.

The results achieved by Chief Assistant Dr. Diliانا Angelova in teaching and research activities fully correspond to the minimum national requirements and the additional requirements of the Faculty of Pedagogy, adopted in connection with the Regulations of Plovdiv University for the Implementation of LDASRB.

Upon reviewing the materials and scientific publications submitted for the competition, analyzing their significance, and the scientific, research-applied, and practical contributions contained therein, I deem it justified to provide my positive evaluation and recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy for the election of Chief Assistant Dr. Diliانا Angelova to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, professional direction 3.2. Psychology (Positive Psychology).

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Prepared the opinion:

Assoc. Prof. Doncho Donev, PhD