

## **REVIEW**

**by Prof. Dr. Ps.Sc. Natalia Aleksandrova**

of the materials submitted for participation in the competition

for the academic position of "Associate Professor"

at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

in: 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, issue 96 of 11.11.2025 and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Faculty of Pedagogy, as a candidate, Ch. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

### **1. General presentation of the received materials**

By order No. PD-22-32 dated 09.01.2026 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic position of 'associate professor' at PU in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.2. Psychology (Positive Psychology), announced for the needs of the Faculty of Pedagogy.

Documents were submitted by a single candidate for participation in the announced competition:

Senior Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova from Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski", Faculty of Pedagogy.

The candidate presented by the s. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dilyana Angelova a set of materials on paper is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv, and includes the following documents:

1. Application to the Rector.
2. CV.
3. Diplomas for higher education and for the degree of "doctor".
4. List of scientific works.
5. Scientific works.
6. List of citations.
7. Certificate of compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements.
8. Annotations and self-assessment of the contributions of the materials in English and Bulgarian.

9. Declaration of originality and authenticity.

10. Certificate of work experience.

11. Documents for academic work.

12. Other documents.

The procedure for conducting the competition has been complied with and is in accordance with the regulatory documents. The materials submitted by the candidate for participation in the competition have been prepared accurately, in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Plovdiv.

The competition documentation is complete. The dissertation work has been published as a monograph - "Friendship, Empathy and Self-Assessment", which is not included in the evaluation of the publications for this competition. The publications for the competition for "associate professor" do not repeat the publications for acquiring the ONS "doctor" and for occupying the academic position "chief assistant". These publications are not subject to review.

For the purposes of this competition, senior asst. Dr. Dilyana Angelova has applied a total of 18 scientific works, of which 1 monograph, 1 book, 16 scientific articles, of which 13 in Bulgarian and 3 in English.

## **2. Brief biographical data of the candidate**

Dilyana Angelova was born in 1984. She received a bachelor's degree in pedagogy, majoring in Primary School Pedagogy and Foreign Language at the Plovdiv University in 2007 and a master's degree in Counseling Psychology at the same university in 2010. Dilyana Angelova completed her doctoral studies at the Plovdiv University in the field of 3.2. Psychology, doctoral program in Pedagogical and Age Psychology. In 2013, she defended her dissertation on the topic: "Relationships between friendships, empathy and self-esteem in 13-20 year olds".

D. Angelova's professional career is connected with the Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". Since 2018, she has been an assistant professor, and since 2022 and until now, she has been a chief assistant professor in the Department of Social Activities at the Faculty of Pedagogy. At the same time, she works as a psychologist in the professional football club "Lokomotiv" Plovdiv.

Dilyana Angelova's education and professional experience are in the field of developmental psychology, counseling psychology, positive relationships, social activities with children and families. Thirteen years after the defense of her dissertation, D. Angelova has accumulated academic experience, teaching and research experience, which correspond to the professional direction of the open procedure: 3.2. Psychology (Positive Psychology).

## **3. General characteristics of the candidate's activities**

Assessment of educational and pedagogical activities.

The candidate, senior assistant, Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova, is a lecturer at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the University of Plovdiv, Department of "Social Activities". She leads psychological training courses in bachelor's and master's programs. In the bachelor's programs Psychology, Social Activities, Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy she teaches the following courses: Positive Psychology, Introduction to Counseling Psychology, Developmental Psychology in Childhood and Adolescence, Developmental Psychology Part IV, Development of Friendships, Social Psychology, Psychological Foundations of Crisis Intervention. In the master's programs Applied Psychology, School and Psychology, Positive Psychology and Management Psychology she teaches Social Cognition and Behavior. Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Angelova does an excellent job with her teaching and pedagogical activities.

The candidate works actively with students: she has graduated more than 15 graduates and has actively participated in the practical training of students in the Psychology and Social Activities specialty.

After obtaining the ONS "Doctor", Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Angelova has constantly increased the level of her knowledge and skills, as evidenced by her participation in 8 trainings in our country and abroad. In our country she has participated in trainings on the topics: Teaching in an academic environment; Digital psychology; Training for working with the d2-R Attention and Concentration Assessment Test, etc. Abroad, she has undergone training under the Erasmus+ program in Komotini, Greece in 2024 and in Nice, France in 2025.

The teaching and pedagogical experience of Senior Asst. Prof. Dr. Dilyana Angelova is fully sufficient to hold the academic position of Associate Professor.

#### Assessment of the candidate's scientific and scientific-applied activity

The scientific papers submitted for review in "Positive Psychology" are focused on studying positive relationships with peers in different environmental contexts, and more precisely and including in a digital environment. In this sense, an emphasis is placed on friendships, attachment and well-being in ontogenetic and personality development during childhood and adolescence. The presented publications highlight the protective and preventive functions of friendship. In this context, the presented developments also have their structural relevance for the preparation of future psychologists, social workers, school teachers and school psychologists. Considering the direction of empirical studies in the age plan - childhood and adolescence, it is important to note that this is a period of intensive development of the personality of students, a period during which it is friendships that have their special and key importance for the formation of the future personality. The scientific research of senior assistant Dilyana Angelova is oriented towards these important, essential aspects of the personal growth of adolescents - social and psychological relationships, and within the framework of informal communication, which is a specific social and psychological challenge, determining the quality of the further realization of adolescents both in personal and professional terms. In this sense, the publications emphasize that "the quality of friendship is a key factor for the subjective well-being of young people aged 18-25."

In a personal psychological context, Dr. Dilyana Angelova correlates friendship with the phenomenon of empathy and the specificity of self-esteem, which contributes to the development and deepening of the study of friendship relationships, as well as the specifics of self-esteem mechanisms. Empirically, “strong positive relationships between the general index of friendship and support in conflict, communication and understanding, as well as intimacy and trust” are revealed, indicating that these aspects are central to the subjectively assessed quality of the relationship”. The study highlights “the importance of friendship for social learning, identity formation, the development of social emotional competence and mental well-being during childhood, adolescence and adulthood. A number of functions are considered, such as emotional support, a protective effect against stress, an influence on self-esteem and it is emphasized that quality friendships are a protective factor, while their absence leads to an increased risk of anxiety, depressive symptoms and difficult social adaptation”.

As a sports psychologist, Dr. Angelova also focuses on the positive psychological environment and the role of coach-athlete relationships and points out that "quality friendships in middle childhood support a sense of belonging, develop social competence, emotional regulation and conflict management skills, and reduce anxiety and the risk of bullying." Positive friendships are considered a protective factor that can compensate for adverse influences from the family and school environment. It is pointed out that friendship improves not only mental health and well-being, but also has positive effects on physical health. The links with attachment, prosocial behavior, social competence, emotional regulation, self-concept and coping with social anxiety are analyzed.

The scientific works submitted for review reveal Dr. Angelova as a researcher who, through them, develops, expands and deepens her research, connecting her scientific research thesis with the mental health of the individual. A leading research direction is the follow-up of adolescents aged 14–17 and the role of mental well-being by examining aspects of friendship and attachment in adolescence. These studies analyze how early attachment to parents influences relationships with peers and close friends. The theoretical approach is based on “attachment theory and subsequent research that shows that the quality of early relationships influences the ability to emotionally connect and effective social interaction during adolescence”.

The ability to emotionally connect and maintain trusting relationships with peers is considered one of the most valuable skills formed during the period of adolescence 14-17 years. with “reflections on personal and emotional development”.

Dr. Angelova’s studies also trace age-related features in the development of social competence – from early interactions with a parent to the formation of first friendships, as well as their complication at school age. It is emphasized that “family and peers are decisive factors: parental practices and play patterns influence social friendship and companionship, and friendships provide a context for the development of cooperation, fairness and emotion regulation”.

It is summarized that successful inclusion in friendship groups forms a positive self-image, stable self-esteem and interpersonal sensitivity in the early stages of child development. It is emphasized that positive relationships and friendships provide an environment that is effective

for learning and strengthening skills such as quality, full-fledged communication, self-regulation, compliance with rules and boundaries, constructive conflict resolution and confident, respectful behavior.

The research of Senior Assistant Professor Angelova shows that virtual space offers quick and easy communication, but cannot contribute to full-fledged face-to-face friendly relationships, which are key to the development of empathy, interpersonal sensitivity and deep emotional connection.

An important aspect in her publications is social pedagogical consulting, which is defined by Dr. Angelova as an independent form of social pedagogical work, including psychological and pedagogical techniques for conscious change in behavior and social functioning. It is both a factor and a prerequisite for increasing the level of conscious functioning and social competence of the child. In this context, it is emphasized that social pedagogical counseling is a key tool for developing and strengthening positive relationships and social skills among children.

A basic thesis in Dr. Angelova's research is the connection of friendships with concepts such as positive functioning, mental well-being and protective factors in development. In this spirit, it is emphasized that the quality of the relationship is more important than the quantity of social contacts.

An attempt is made to deduce the essential functions of friendship. Empirical data are presented, according to which "high quality of friendships is associated with higher self-esteem, better emotional regulation, lower levels of anxiety, depression and loneliness and better school adaptation". Friendships act as a buffer against stressful events and risk factors (family tension, school bullying, transitions between educational levels).

Considering the importance of relationship quality in scientific research, emphasis is placed on the distinction between positive and negative characteristics of friendship – support, closeness, security and constructive conflict resolution versus jealousy, dominance, hostility and exclusion. The view is advocated that when positive characteristics dominate over negative ones, this leads to a higher level of acceptance by peers and more sustainable psychological well-being, while conflictual and contradictory friendships can have a risky effect. Here, we trace how the understanding of friendship transforms by age: from an orientation towards shared activities and physical closeness (childhood) to trust, intimacy, loyalty and deep emotional commitment during adolescence. Possible gender differences are also deduced.

Publications of Dilyana Angelova emphasize the positive educational environment, which supports the mental well-being, social integration and academic achievements of children and students. It is noted that the growing number of children with mental and health difficulties, as well as the need to prevent violence and early dropout, require a comprehensive approach to school policy that integrates well-being with educational goals. It is emphasized that educational institutions have an essential role in psychosocial development, and effective cooperation between school, family and social organizations is the basis for a positive and stimulating environment. The main functions and activities of the school psychologist are described: prevention, diagnostics, counseling, needs assessment, interventions in academic, behavioral and emotional difficulties, work on the prevention of aggression and mediation

between the child, family, school and other institutions. Models are also indicated that emphasize the early identification of educational and social difficulties, the formation of a positive attitude towards school and the building of balanced lifestyle.

From the submitted references it is evident that Dr. Dilyana Angelova carries out an additional number of trainings: under the Erasmus program, training seminars and qualifications – 8 in total. A reference is presented for compliance with the minimum national requirements, as well as additional faculty requirements. From the reference Dr. Dilyana Angelova fully meets these requirements.

Summarizing my assessment and attitude towards the scientific production of Dr. Dilyana Angelova, I would like to emphasize that during the review I reflected on and presented the main directions of Dr. Angelova's research work. Regarding her theoretical searches, Dr. Angelova herself defines it as "a synthesis of theories, theoretical perspectives, respectively a variety of authors with a wide range of theoretical approaches and theoretical nuances". Dr. Angelova's in-depth theoretical and applied and research competencies would contribute to developing the perspective towards systematizing and structuring her individual theoretical profile, with a certain contribution to positive psychology in future studies. In their entirety, the works outline it as a consistent, searching and oriented not only towards theoretical perspectives and approaches, but also towards practical and applied practices, oriented towards the activities of psychologists, social workers, and educators.

Assessment of the qualities of the publication and teaching activities

The presented main habilitation work by Ch. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova is: "The Modern Appearance of Friendship and Peer Relations in the Era of the Digital Revolution", Koala Press Publishing House, ISBN 978-619-261-083-8 Plovdiv, 2025. It represents independent scientific study and reaches results that differ from conventional knowledge about friendships and peer relations in the modern world. The author sets herself the goal of studying friendships in virtual space and outlining the positive influences and other influences on the personal development of adolescents.

In the monograph, we could highlight four main parts.

The first part is dedicated to friendship, examining different definitions of friendship, typology of friendly relations, development of friendship through the views of different theories: Sullivan's interpersonal theory; Robert Selman's stage theory of social cognition and the development of friendship, etc.

The second part is dedicated to positive relationships. It includes sections on close relationships, the links between friendship, attachment and romantic relationships, and friendship as a source of social support and well-being. Based on an analysis in the light of positive psychology, an emphasis is placed on friendship as a fundamental component of psychological well-being and positive development.

The third part is dedicated to the influence of social networks and social media on close relationships, communication, and empathy in adolescence. Results of contemporary empirical research on the topic of online communication and friendship in virtual space in the context of

mental health and well-being are analyzed. Positive aspects and potential risks of online communication are discussed.

The fourth part of the monograph presents the author's own empirical research. The aim is to study the positive and negative effects of using social media among 127 respondents aged between 13 and 20. The hypotheses raised are partially confirmed. It turns out that adolescents with a secure attachment style also demonstrate security in their relationships in the online space. In addition, young people tend to spend a long time on social networks in order to maintain already established friendships and acquaintances.

The habilitation work shows excellent knowledge of the subject, skillful use of modern methodology and courage in searching for new, modern paths to well-being through friendship in the digital world.

The topic of friendship as a key factor for well-being among children, teenagers and adolescents is also discussed in several articles by the candidate. They consider: positive relationships and mental health among adolescents; friendship as a specific type of close relationship based on reciprocity, mutuality and equality between partners in contrast to family and child-parent relationships; the quality of friendships in children of primary school age in the context of mental well-being; friendship and positive relationships as key predictors of psychological and subjective well-being across different stages of development; empathy in childhood and its relationship to positive relationships with peers and parents

The candidate's academic activities - both teaching and research and publication activities - are concentrated in the field of positive developmental psychology and positive psychology in education.

The list of publications also includes those dedicated to sports and the social sphere.

#### Assessment of contributions

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Angelova has attached an author's reference of the contributions in the works she submitted for review. In her opinion, they are in two thematic areas:

1. Friendship and positive relationships with peers.
2. Positive education and consultative practice.

In both thematic areas, the author has identified both theoretical and practical-applied contributions, with which I agree.

The thematic area "Friendship and positive relationships with peers" includes the publications: the habilitation work - The modern appearance of friendship and relationships with peers in the era of the digital revolution, 2025; the articles: "Friendship - psychological aspects", 2025 and "Friendship in the context of positive social relationships and subjective wellbeing", 2025; articles 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12.

Important contributions in this direction can be mentioned:

- An analysis of the specifics of friendship, positive relationships, attachment and well-being is presented.
- Empirical evidence is presented for the protective functions of friendship and positive social relationships in adolescence.
- Friendship is analyzed as a source of social support and well-being.
- Some concepts from positive psychology are analyzed, such as the concept of positive relationships, the concept of meaning in life, altruism, self-actualization and attachment theory.
- It explains how friendship and positive relationships contribute to achieving well-being in adolescence.
- In an applied nature, the relationships between: the qualitative parameters of friendship and indicators of subjective well-being; indicators of mental functioning in adolescence are studied.
- The thematic area “Positive Education and Counseling Practice” includes publications 1, 2, 9, 10, 13, 14.
- Important contributions in this area can be mentioned as:
- A comprehensive vision of positive education has been formulated as an integration between academic learning, development of character strengths, socio-emotional competencies and well-being of students.
- Key principles of a positive educational environment have been systematized with a focus on character strengths, intrinsic motivation, inclusion, emotional security and positive relationships of adolescents.
- A comprehensive framework has been built, integrating different models and positive educational practices related to positive emotions, engagement, meaning, achievements, autonomy, personal growth, life purposefulness, self-acceptance, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, skills for maintaining fulfilling relationships, responsible decision-making.
- The need for a comprehensive approach to school policy, which should put well-being on a par with academic achievements and include student self-governance.

Overall, scientific contributions form and substantiate a new concept of friendship, positive relationships during childhood and adolescence in the context of positive education and digitalization.

#### Citations

The citations report shows that the candidate's publications have aroused academic interest. A total of 13 citations is presented. The citations are in collective volumes with scientific review.

The number of noted citations meets the requirements for holding the position of "associate professor" at the Faculty of Education of the University of Plovdiv.

#### **4. Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution**

The presented habilitation thesis and the author's publications are a personal contribution, which gives me reason to claim that the candidate Dr. Dilyana Angelova complies with the standards

of scientific ethics in connection with the procedure regulated in the Law on Academic Staff Development of the University of Sofia and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Sofia.

Within the framework of my competence, I did not find any texts that could be defined as plagiarism, and during the period of my work on the review, I did not receive any signals of such.

## **5. Critical remarks and recommendations**

Dr. Angelova cites Ryff's model of mental well-being, which includes six main components: positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental management, personal growth, goal setting and self-perception. It is emphasized that the model serves as a framework for positive education, which focuses not only on academic knowledge, but also on the development of character strengths, socio-emotional abilities, family integration and extracurricular activities, as well as reflection on the "well-being life". In this sense, it might be productive to develop the thesis of a balanced educational environment. This view is evident in the views of Dr. Angelova, but it could be developed more categorically and boldly. I recommend that Dr. Dilyana Angelova continue her research and teaching activities in the field of positive psychology.

## **6. Personal impressions**

My personal impressions are entirely positive. She manages to successfully combine teaching and research work.

## **CONCLUSION**

The documents and materials presented by Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of the University "Paisii Hilendarski".

Summarizing my assessment and attitude towards the scientific production of Dr. Dilyana Angelova, I would like to emphasize that during the review I reflected on and presented the main directions of Dr. Angelova's scientific research work. Regarding her theoretical searches, Dr. Angelova herself defines it as "a synthesis of theories, theoretical perspectives, respectively a variety of authors with a wide range of theoretical approaches and theoretical nuances". The in-depth theoretical-applied and research competencies of Dr. Angelova would contribute to the development of the perspective towards systematization and structuring of her individual theoretical profile, with a certain contribution to positive psychology in future studies. In its entirety, the works outline it as consistent, searching and oriented not only to theoretical perspectives and approaches, but also to practical and applied practices, oriented towards the activities of psychologists, social workers, and educators.

The results achieved by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova in educational and research activities fully comply with the minimum national and additional requirements of the Faculty of Pedagogy, adopted in connection with the Regulations of the

University of Sofia for the implementation of the Act on the Implementation After familiarizing myself with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific, scientifically-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and to recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy for the election of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the "Paisii Hilendarski" University in: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology (Positive Psychology).

02/26/2026

Reviewer: .....

Plovdiv (prof. Dr.Ps.Sc. Natalia Alexandrova)