

PEER REVIEW

**by Youri Pavlov Ianakiev, PhD,
- professor at Plovdiv University**

(professor, first name, last name, family name – academic title at the higher education institution or scientific organization)

of the works submitted for participation in a procedure

for awarding academic position **Associated Professor**

At the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

in: Higher Education Field 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", as a candidate participates Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

Chief Assistant Professor Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova, PhD from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv is an applicant in the procedure for the awarding of the academic position of "Associate Professor" for the needs of the Faculty of Education, announced in the State Gazette, No 96 of 11 November 2025, and published on the official website of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

1.1. Presentation of the procedure

By order No. PD-22-32 of 9.01.2026 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 field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology (Positive Psychology).

One candidate has submitted documents to participate in the announced competition:

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The set of materials on paper presented by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Angelova is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Sofia, and includes the following documents:

1. a sample application to the rector for admission to participate in the competition;
2. CV in European format;
3. higher education diploma with acquired educational and qualification degree "Master" with appendix;
4. diploma for the educational and scientific degree "doctor";
5. list of scientific works;
6. scientific papers (copies of publications);
7. separation protocols;
8. list of citations;
9. a certificate of compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements;
10. annotation of the materials under Article 76 of the PRASPU;
11. self-assessment of contributions;
12. declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
13. work experience document;
14. documents for academic work;
15. documents for scientific research activities;
16. documents relating to artistic activity;
17. documents proving that the additional requirements of the faculty have been met;
18. 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 Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act 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 documentation for the competition is complete. The dissertation work was published as a monograph "Friendship, Empathy and Self-Esteem", 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 Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Angelova has submitted a total of 18 scientific papers, of which 1 monograph, 1 book, 16 scientific articles, of which 13 in Bulgarian and 3 in English.

1.2. Presentation of the candidate

Dilyana Angelova, Ph.D graduated from the Bachelor's program "Primary School Pedagogy and Foreign Language" in 2007. In 2010, she defended her master's degree in "Counseling Psychology" with a specialization in problems in childhood and adolescence and acquired the professional qualification "Child Psychologist". Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Angelova acquired the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Psychology (doctoral program "Pedagogical and Adult Psychology") at the Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski" in 2013. Dr. Angelova's professional path is characterized by a constant striving for specialization and upgrading of expertise, moving from basic pedagogical training to narrowly profiled psychological activity and a high level of scientific research. Dr. Angelova's professional career is connected with the Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski". Since 2018, she has been an assistant professor, and from 2022 to the present, she is a chief assistant professor in the Department of Social Activities at the Faculty of Pedagogy.

The education and professional experience of Dr. Angelova are in the field of developmental psychology, counseling psychology, positive relationships, social work with children and families. Thirteen years after defending her dissertation, Dr. Angelova has accumulated academic, teaching and research experience that correspond to the professional field of the open procedure: 3.2. Psychology (Positive Psychology).

2. General characteristics of the candidate's activities

The teaching activity of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Angelova at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv is widely involved in bachelor's and master's programs. She teaches psychology 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, Development of Friendships, Social Psychology, Psychological Foundations of Crisis Intervention. In the master's programs Applied Psychology, School Psychology, Positive Psychology and Management Psychology she teaches Social Cognition and Behavior. She has made a significant contribution to the methodological provision of the educational process through the development of curricula for the Bachelor's degree in Social Activities in the disciplines Positive Psychology and Social Work, Developmental

Psychology in Childhood and Adolescence, Social Psychology, Psychological Foundations of Crisis Intervention. At the Master's Degree Program of the University of Social Sciences, she teaches the discipline "Social Cognition and Behavior" in several programs, including "Applied Psychology", "School Psychology", "Positive Psychology" and "Management Psychology".

The consistency in the candidate's scientific research can also be found in the subject matter of the scientific production:

, are dedicated to the study of friendship as a socio-psychological phenomenon in childhood and adolescence. The monograph "The Modern Appearance of Friendship and Peer Relations in the Era of the Digital Revolution" presents research on the transformation of human communication under the influence of modern technologies. The idea is confirmed that social networks do not replace traditional relationships, but function as a current extension of the real social environment. Dr. Angelova 's research shows that virtual space offers quick and easy communication, but cannot contribute to full-fledged face-to-face friendly relationships, which are key to developing empathy, interpersonal sensitivity and deep emotional connection. The habilitation thesis demonstrates 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 examine: positive relationships and mental health among adolescents; friendship as a specific type of close relationship based on reciprocity, mutuality and equality between partners in distinction from family and child-parent relationships; the quality of friendships in primary school-age children in the context of mental well-being; friendship and positive relationships as key predictors of mental and subjective well-being during different stages of development.

The candidate's scientific contributions in the field of psychology could be summarized in several areas. Dr. Angelova's theoretical work focuses on the conceptualization of contemporary social relations and educational models:

- an in-depth analysis of friendship as a source of social support and well-being is presented, including its role in self-esteem, resilience, and coping with stress across different age periods;
- a systematic analysis of the conditions under which virtual friendships can function as a legitimate source of social support (especially for individuals with increased social anxiety), but also of the limitations of digital communication related to the lack of authentic emotional closeness, empathic responsiveness, and moral responsibility in relationships has been carried out;

- friendship is presented as a positive type of relationship, critical for social, cognitive and emotional development, with specific functions – belonging, support and development of social and emotional competencies;
- integrated concepts from positive psychology (positive relationships, altruism, meaning, self-actualization) and attachment theory into a framework that explains how friendship and positive relationships support well-being;
- A theoretical model of friendship has been systematized, including six main dimensions, including qualitative parameters, individual characteristics, and dynamics of interactions.
- A comprehensive framework, a concept of positive education, is proposed that places well-being and the development of character strengths on a par with academic achievement.

These practical contributions are directly related to improving practice in the educational and consulting spheres:

- Both risk effects of social networks and potentially adaptive functions have been empirically identified ;
- Empirical evidence has been provided that quality friendships reduce anxiety, protect against bullying, develop conflict resolution skills, and promote intimate sharing, thus acting as a protective factor against risks in the family and school environment ;
- Specific good practices have been systematized, including social-emotional learning programs, coaching practices in education, and student self-governance structures ;
- The specific phases and techniques of psychological counseling are described, emphasizing the importance of the counselor's personal competencies (empathy, authenticity) for the effectiveness of the work ;
- Recognized psychometric instruments have been adapted for the purposes of Bulgarian practice ;
- Complex correlation designs and rigorous methodological procedures were applied, including pilot testing, verification of semantic structure, and adequate statistical processing of the data.

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

Dr. Angelova's academic activities, both teaching and research and publication activities, are concentrated in the field of positive developmental psychology and positive psychology in education.

3. Questions to the candidate

1. How does the advent of virtual influencers, who mimic human sharing of emotions, change the concept of authenticity in friendship and to what extent does this pose a risk to emotionally vulnerable adolescents ?
2. And if adolescents begin to form parasocial relationships with algorithms that seem "more perfect" and "more responsive" than real friends, won't this distort their criteria for real interpersonal relationships?

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Angelova meet all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADSRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ADSRB and the relevant Regulations of the University "Paisiy Hilendarski".

The results achieved by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Dilyana Svetoslavova Angelova in teaching 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 Pedagogical University for the implementation of the Law on the Education of the Republic of Bulgaria.

scientific works contain original scientific and applied contributions that have received academic recognition, as a representative part of them have been published in journals and scientific collections with scientific review. The theoretical developments have practical applicability. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Senior Asst. Dr. Dilyana Angelova fully meet the requirements and profile of this competition.

After reviewing the materials and scientific papers presented in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific, applied and applied contributions contained therein, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and 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 Angelova to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the "Paisiy Hilendarski" University in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology (Positive Psychology).

28 .02 .2026

Prepared the opinion :
(signature)

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