

REVIEW

by **Prof. Mayiana Milcheva Mitevska, D.Sc. in Psychology**
Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

(academic position, scientific degree, first name, middle name, surname – higher education institution or research organization)

of a dissertation submitted for the award of the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor” (PhD)

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

Professional Field: 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral Programme: Educational and Developmental Psychology

Author: Nikolay Iliev Dimchev

Dissertation Title: “The Relationship between Aggression and Attachment in Adolescence”

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. Kirilka Simeonova Tagareva, PhD

Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

1. General Description of the Submitted Materials

By Order No. RD-21-844/24.04.2026 of the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, I was appointed a member of the Scientific Jury for the procedure concerning the public defense of the dissertation entitled “**The Relationship between Aggression and Attachment in Adolescence**” for the award of the Educational and Scientific Degree **Doctor (PhD)** in the Field of Higher Education **3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences**, Professional Field **3.2. Psychology**, Doctoral Programme **Educational and Developmental Psychology**.

The author of the dissertation is **Nikolay Iliev Dimchev**, a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, under the scientific supervision of **Prof. Kirilka Simeonova Tagareva, PhD**.

The set of materials submitted by Nikolay Dimchev in hard copy complies with Article 36(1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv and includes the following documents:

- application to the Rector of the University for opening a procedure for dissertation defense;
- curriculum vitae in Europass format;
- minutes of the Department Council concerning the readiness for opening the procedure and the preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation manuscript;
- dissertation abstract;
- list of scientific publications related to the dissertation topic;
- copies of the scientific publications;
- list of citations identified by the doctoral candidate;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the submitted documents;
- statement regarding compliance with the specific requirements of the respective faculty (applicable only to doctoral students enrolled before 04.05.2018).

The doctoral candidate has submitted **three scientific publications** related to the dissertation topic.

The submitted documentation is complete and complies with the requirements of the **Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria**, its Implementing Regulations,

and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

No missing documents or inconsistencies have been identified. The dissertation manuscript, dissertation abstract, curriculum vitae, list of publications, evidence of compliance with the national minimum requirements, and all necessary administrative documents have been duly submitted.

No substantial overlap between the publications has been identified that would require a reduction in their number for evaluation purposes. The submitted publications are thematically related to the dissertation topic and reflect key aspects of the conducted research.

Based on the submitted documentation, it may be concluded that all formal requirements for admitting the dissertation to a public defense procedure have been fulfilled.

2. Brief Biographical Information about the Doctoral Candidate

Nikolay Iliev Dimchev was born on 12 January 1991 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. He obtained a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in 2017 and, in 2019, earned a Master's degree in Positive Psychology from the same university.

Since March 2024, he has been enrolled as a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, in the Doctoral Programme "Educational and Developmental Psychology." His scientific supervisor is Prof. Kirilka Simeonova Tagareva, PhD.

The doctoral candidate's professional experience is closely related to applied psychology and work with children, adolescents, and families. Between 2018 and 2025, he worked as a psychologist at the Complex for Social Services for Children and Families in Plovdiv. Since 2018, he has also served as a public educator at the Local Commission for Combating Juvenile Delinquency in the Yuzhen District of Plovdiv. Since September 2025, he has held the academic position of Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, where he conducts seminars for undergraduate and graduate students.

The candidate's academic background and professional experience demonstrate consistent development in the field of psychology and provide a solid foundation for the preparation of a dissertation devoted to the relationship between aggression and attachment during adolescence.

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

The topic of the dissertation is highly relevant both from a theoretical scientific perspective and from an applied research perspective. In recent years, growing attention has been directed toward aggressive behavior in adolescence due to the increasing prevalence of violence, interpersonal conflicts, school aggression, and various forms of cyberaggression. At the same time, attachment theory continues to develop as one of the leading conceptual frameworks for explaining the social, emotional, and personal functioning of adolescents.

The scientific relevance of the dissertation stems from its focus on the relationship between two significant psychological constructs—aggression and attachment—which are traditionally regarded as key determinants of psychosocial development during adolescence. Despite the existence of numerous international studies on the subject, Bulgarian psychological literature still lacks sufficient empirical research examining the complex relationships between different dimensions of attachment to parents and peers and various forms of aggressive behavior.

The relevance of the study is further enhanced by the adoption of a contemporary theoretical and methodological approach that conceptualizes aggression as a multidimensional phenomenon comprising physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility, while viewing attachment as a system of relationships with mothers, fathers, and peers. This approach contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying aggressive behavior among adolescents.

The practical significance of the dissertation derives from the potential application of its findings in the work of school psychologists, educational counsellors, social workers, and mental health professionals. The conclusions of the study may contribute to the development of prevention

programs aimed at reducing aggressive behavior through the improvement of family relationships, enhancement of parent–child communication, and strengthening of secure attachment during adolescence.

The research aim, objectives, and hypotheses are logically formulated and correspond to current trends in developmental psychology and attachment research. The investigated problem is significant both in terms of expanding scientific knowledge regarding the determinants of aggressive behavior and in terms of the practical application of the findings within educational and social contexts.

4. Knowledge of the Research Problem

The content of the dissertation demonstrates that the doctoral candidate possesses a thorough understanding of the current state of the research problem under investigation. The theoretical framework is based on a broad range of classical and contemporary sources related to aggression, attachment, and the specific characteristics of psychological development during adolescence. Major theoretical concepts and research approaches developed by leading scholars in the field are critically examined, encompassing various perspectives on the origins, manifestations, and determinants of aggressive behavior, as well as contemporary understandings of attachment and its role in personality development.

The doctoral candidate demonstrates the ability to systematize, synthesize, and critically evaluate the scientific literature. The literature review goes beyond a merely descriptive presentation of existing concepts and reveals an effort to establish logical connections among different theoretical perspectives and to highlight their relevance to the research problem. Particular attention is devoted to the relationship between attachment and aggressive behavior, providing a solid theoretical foundation for the subsequent empirical investigation.

A strong familiarity with current trends in the international scientific literature is evident, together with an effort to integrate both classical and contemporary theoretical positions. The theoretical analysis is logically structured and coherent, creating the necessary foundation for the formulation of the research aim, objectives, hypotheses, and methodology.

In summary, it may be concluded that the doctoral candidate demonstrates a sound knowledge of the research field, an ability to work effectively with scientific literature, and competence in the analytical and creative interpretation of scholarly sources.

5. Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in the dissertation is consistent with the subject, aim, and objectives of the study and provides the necessary conditions for obtaining reliable and valid results. The research design is logically justified and allows for the testing of the hypotheses formulated regarding the relationship between attachment and aggressive behavior during adolescence.

To achieve the research objectives, the doctoral candidate employs well-established psychodiagnostic instruments that are widely used in international psychological research: the **Buss–Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ)** and the **Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)** developed by Armsden and Greenberg. The selection of these instruments is appropriate to the research problem, as they allow for the assessment of both the different components of aggression (physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility) and the principal dimensions of attachment (trust, communication, and alienation).

Particularly commendable is the use of a variety of statistical methods for data processing and analysis. The study applies descriptive statistics, reliability analysis of the employed instruments, comparative analyses, correlation analyses, and regression analyses. This methodological approach makes it possible not only to identify statistically significant relationships among the studied variables but also to evaluate their predictive value.

The sample size and the organization of the empirical study are appropriate to the research objectives. Furthermore, the fundamental ethical principles governing psychological research have been observed throughout the study.

Based on the above considerations, I conclude that the selected methodology is appropriate to the research design and enables the achievement of the stated aim, the fulfillment of the research objectives, and the formulation of well-grounded scientific conclusions concerning the investigated problem.

6. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The dissertation comprises 160 pages and is structured in accordance with established academic standards for scientific research. It consists of an introduction, three main chapters, a conclusion, a presentation of scientific contributions, practical recommendations, and a bibliography. The overall structure is logically organized and consistent with the stated research aim, objectives, and hypotheses.

The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical analysis of aggression and attachment during adolescence. The author demonstrates the ability to systematize a substantial body of scientific literature and to integrate various theoretical approaches relevant to the research topic. Particularly noteworthy is the effort to construct a conceptual framework that links classical and contemporary attachment theories with current research on aggressive behavior. The theoretical analysis successfully provides the foundation for the formulation of the research model and the empirical hypotheses.

The second chapter presents the organization and methodology of the study. The methodological framework is appropriately selected in accordance with the specific nature of the research problem. The object, subject, aim, objectives, and hypotheses of the study are clearly formulated. The characteristics of the participants, the psychodiagnostic instruments employed, and the statistical procedures used for data analysis are thoroughly described. The methodological section is carefully developed and creates the necessary conditions for the reliable empirical testing of the research assumptions.

The third chapter contains the analysis and interpretation of the research findings. The empirical data are processed using contemporary statistical methods, enabling an in-depth examination of the relationships between aggression and attachment. The analysis is presented in a systematic manner, and the interpretations are grounded in the statistical findings and related to the theoretical framework discussed earlier. A particular strength of this chapter is the author's effort not only to identify relationships among the studied variables but also to examine their direction, strength, and predictive potential.

The empirical material may be considered sufficient in scope and highly relevant to the research objectives. Standardized psychodiagnostic instruments with established psychometric properties have been employed, thereby increasing the reliability of the findings. The statistical analyses applied are appropriate to both the nature of the data and the formulated hypotheses.

The validity of the conclusions is supported by both the selected research instruments and the logical consistency between the theoretical framework, empirical verification, and resulting interpretations. The findings are presented clearly and comprehensibly through tables and graphical representations, facilitating their interpretation and evaluation.

Overall, the dissertation represents an independent scientific study addressing a relevant psychological problem. It is characterized by a solid theoretical foundation, an appropriate methodological design, and a rigorously conducted empirical investigation. The results presented constitute a reliable basis for the scientific contributions and practical recommendations formulated by the author.

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

The dissertation contains clearly identifiable scientific and scientific-applied achievements. The principal contribution of the study lies in its comprehensive examination of the relationship between aggression and attachment during adolescence through the integration of theoretical, empirical, and applied perspectives.

From a scientific point of view, the dissertation contributes to a deeper understanding of aggressive behavior among adolescents by examining it in the context of emotional relationships

with significant attachment figures, namely mothers, fathers, and peers. A valuable achievement of the study is the differentiated analysis of the individual components of aggression—physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility—as well as the principal dimensions of attachment—trust, communication, and alienation. In this way, the author moves beyond merely establishing a general association between the two constructs and investigates the specific psychological mechanisms through which deficits in attachment may be linked to various forms of aggressive behavior.

A significant scientific contribution is the confirmation of the applicability of attachment theory within a contemporary Bulgarian adolescent sample. The findings demonstrate that attachment is not merely an accompanying factor but possesses predictive value with regard to aggressive behavior. This enriches existing scientific knowledge concerning the role of family and social environments in the regulation of behavior during adolescence.

Particularly important is the conclusion regarding the differentiated influence of parental attachment figures. The dissertation highlights the specific roles of maternal and paternal attachment, as well as the significance of communication, trust, and alienation within the family. This finding represents a meaningful contribution, as it allows for a more precise understanding of the risk and protective factors associated with aggression among adolescents.

The practical significance of the dissertation lies in the potential application of its findings to the development of preventive and intervention programs in educational, counselling, and social-service settings. The results may support the work of school psychologists, educational counsellors, social workers, and other professionals working with children and adolescents exhibiting behavioral difficulties. The practical recommendations focus on improving family communication, strengthening trust between parents and children, enhancing the role of fathers, and encouraging adolescents' participation in constructive peer groups.

The study also provides a valuable foundation for future research aimed at preventing deviant and aggressive behavior. Future directions may include expanding the sample, conducting longitudinal studies, investigating cyberaggression, and exploring the mediating role of the school environment in the relationship between family attachment and adolescent behavior.

In summary, the contributions of the dissertation are predominantly scientific-applied in nature and are supported by a solid empirical foundation. They consist of confirming and specifying significant relationships between attachment and aggression, providing new data derived from a Bulgarian adolescent sample, and formulating practical recommendations for prevention and psychological support. The dissertation is significant both for the advancement of scientific knowledge in the fields of educational and developmental psychology and for professionals working with adolescents and their families.

8. Evaluation of the Publications Related to the Dissertation

For the purposes of the doctoral defense procedure, the candidate has submitted three scientific publications directly related to the topic of the dissertation. These publications reflect key aspects of the theoretical and empirical research conducted and are closely connected to the investigation of the relationship between aggression and attachment during adolescence.

The publications may be classified as follows:

By type:

- Scientific articles – 2 publications;
- Conference paper published in conference proceedings – 1 publication.

By language:

- Publications in Bulgarian – 3.

By authorship:

- Single-author publications – 3.

The submitted publications are thematically related to the dissertation and present findings derived from the conducted research. No substantial overlap among the publications has been identified that would require a reduction in their number for evaluation purposes. Furthermore, no

evidence has been found that these publications have been used in other procedures for the acquisition of academic degrees or academic positions.

The content of the publications corresponds to the principal aims, objectives, and findings of the dissertation. Through these publications, the doctoral candidate has disseminated part of his theoretical considerations and empirical results to the scientific community, demonstrating scientific activity and consistency in the development of the research topic.

The submitted materials do not provide information regarding citations of the publications, impact factor, impact ranking, or specific indicators of practical implementation. Nevertheless, the publications fulfill their primary function of disseminating the results of the dissertation research and ensuring the visibility of the scientific findings.

Overall, the publication record of the doctoral candidate meets the national minimum requirements for the award of the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor” (PhD) and adequately presents the principal results of the dissertation research.

9. Personal Contribution of the Doctoral Candidate

Based on the submitted materials and the content of the dissertation, it can be reasonably concluded that the study is the result of the doctoral candidate’s independent research work. The personal contribution of Nikolay Iliev Dimchev is evident both in the development of the theoretical framework and in the organization and implementation of the empirical component of the dissertation.

The doctoral candidate independently formulated the research problem, the aim, objectives, and hypotheses of the study. He conducted the selection and analysis of the relevant scientific literature and developed the conceptual framework of the research. His personal contribution is also evident in the selection of the methodological instruments, the collection of empirical data, the statistical processing of the results, and their interpretation.

The publications submitted in connection with the dissertation are single-authored, which further confirms the candidate’s active involvement in the research process and in the dissemination of the obtained results to the scientific community.

The scientific and scientific-applied contributions formulated in the dissertation are directly related to the research conducted by the author and may, to a considerable extent, be regarded as his own achievement. The reported findings are a logical outcome of the implemented research design and reflect the candidate’s independent analytical and interpretative work.

Based on the submitted materials, I conclude that the dissertation has been developed independently and that the presented findings, conclusions, and contributions are predominantly the result of the doctoral candidate’s own scientific research activity.

10. Dissertation Abstract

The submitted dissertation abstract has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the **Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria**, its Implementing Regulations, and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The abstract is logically structured and contains the principal elements characteristic of this type of academic work, including a general description of the dissertation, the relevance of the research problem, the object and subject of the study, the research aim, objectives and hypotheses, a description of the methodology, the main findings, the scientific contributions, and the publications related to the dissertation topic.

The content of the abstract accurately and sufficiently reflects the structure and content of the dissertation. The principal theoretical concepts, methodological approach, and most significant empirical findings are presented in a concise manner. The main scientific and scientific-applied contributions are clearly outlined and correspond to those presented in the dissertation and supported by the results of the conducted research.

The abstract provides a clear overview of the aims, content, and outcomes of the dissertation research and enables the reader to understand its scientific rationale, methodology, and principal

conclusions. The text is written in an academic style, is coherent and precise, and successfully fulfills its purpose of presenting the most important aspects of the dissertation in a concise form.

Based on the above analysis, I conclude that the dissertation abstract has been prepared in accordance with the relevant regulatory requirements and adequately reflects the content, principal findings, conclusions, and contributions of the dissertation.

11. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

Several recommendations may be made with regard to the future development of the author's research work.

1. Future studies could benefit from including larger and more diverse samples representing different social and educational environments.

2. It would be of considerable interest to examine the relationship between attachment and aggression through longitudinal research designs, allowing for a more in-depth analysis of the developmental dynamics of these phenomena.

3. The findings of the present study provide a solid foundation for the development of practical prevention programs aimed at reducing aggressive behavior and promoting positive relationships among parents, peers, and adolescents.

4. A promising direction for future research would be the inclusion of additional psychological variables, such as emotional regulation, self-esteem, social support, and family environment characteristics, which could further enrich the analysis of the investigated problem.

These recommendations are entirely constructive in nature and are intended to support the further expansion of the scientific potential of the present study and the author's future research activities.

12. Personal Impressions

I have direct professional impressions of the doctoral candidate, Nikolay Iliev Dimchev, through his teaching activities at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. As a lecturer responsible for the course in which he conducts seminar classes, I have had the opportunity to observe his work with students, his preparation in the subject matter, and his overall attitude toward the educational process.

My impressions are entirely positive. Nikolay Dimchev demonstrates responsibility, professionalism, and sound knowledge in the field of psychology. In his work with students, he shows commitment, integrity, and the ability to create a positive academic environment that encourages active participation and engagement with the course content.

Alongside his teaching activities, he demonstrates a sustained interest in scientific research and a consistent commitment to the development of the research topic addressed in the dissertation. In my opinion, he possesses the necessary qualities for successful professional development as a university lecturer and researcher in the field of psychology.

13. Recommendations for the Future Application of the Dissertation Contributions and Findings

I have no substantial critical remarks regarding the dissertation. As a recommendation for future work, I would suggest that the findings of the study be utilized in the development of practical programs aimed at preventing aggressive behavior and promoting secure attachment in both school and family environments.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific and scientific-applied results that contribute to research in the fields of developmental psychology and attachment psychology and complies with the requirements of the **Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria**, the **Implementing Regulations of the Academic Staff Development Act**, and the **Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv**.

The dissertation demonstrates that the doctoral candidate, **Nikolay Iliev Dimchev**, possesses profound theoretical knowledge and professional competencies in the field of **3.2. Psychology**,

Doctoral Programme **Educational and Developmental Psychology**, and demonstrates the ability to independently plan, organize, and conduct scientific research, as well as to analyze and interpret research findings.

In view of the above, I confidently give my positive evaluation of the research presented in the dissertation, the dissertation abstract, the related publications, and the stated scientific and scientific-applied contributions. I therefore recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury award **Nikolay Iliev Dimchev** the Educational and Scientific Degree **Doctor (PhD)** in the Field of Higher Education **3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences**, Professional Field **3.2. Psychology**, Doctoral Programme **Educational and Developmental Psychology**.

Date: 05.05. 2026.

Reviewer:

Prof. Mayiana Mitevska, D.Sc. (Psychology)