STEATMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Dr Veronika Andreeva Ivanova, Ph.D. MIJ-Vama

Regarding the Order of the Rector of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" (Varna) No. 568 dated September 24, 2026, concerning appointment to the Scientific Jury for the defense of the dissertation by Maria-Stefka Dimitrova for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education "Social, Economic and Legal Sciences," professional field 3.2 "Psychology," doctoral program "General Psychology," on the topic: "Mediation and Reaching Agreement in the Process of Psychologically Overcoming Conflicts."

1. Relevance

The doctoral candidate addresses a topical issue stemming from the need to expand knowledge regarding the psychological aspects of mediation. Scientific research into relationship-based processes carries a certain risk of dogmatizing a field where pre-set models can severely restrict the necessary spontaneity, intuition, and creative drive—qualities that depend more on the individual's personality than on adherence to a ready-made, albeit scientifically verified, model. The candidate aims to explore those characteristics of the mediation process that render it more akin to a human interaction—with all its attendant surprises—than to a formal procedure. In this sense, the work’s relevance lies precisely in conceptualizing the boundaries of mediation: on the one hand, vis-à-vis the legal aspects of the procedures, and on the other, vis-à-vis psychological counseling, which employs methods distinct from legal requirements.

2. Characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation comprises 215 pages. The bibliography comprises 68 titles, 45 of which are in Cyrillic. The dissertation is structured into an introduction, three chapters—each followed by conclusions—a conclusion, a list of sources, and an appendix.

In the first chapter, the author demonstrates an ability to systematize theoretical information by outlining the general characteristics of the concept of conflict in psychology and highlighting its interdisciplinary nature as well as the lack of a unified conceptual framework. The author examines the various functions of conflict within an organization and presents both classical and contemporary typologies. The second part of the first chapter focuses on mediation, accurately presenting the different types of mediation and their significant

practical value in conflict resolution. The author demonstrates a command of precise conceptual terminology and the ability to apply research methods and adapt the methodology to the specific study.

The second chapter outlines the research methodology and methods. The objectives and research questions are presented in detail and with precision. The research design—including variables and methods—is elaborated thoroughly. Appropriate statistical analyses are employed, and the sample size exceeds the standard requirements for a dissertation, lending additional weight to the findings. The objective is aptly formulated and aligns with the topic and primary focus of the dissertation. The specific tasks are structured to facilitate the achievement of the research objective. The data presented have been processed using statistical methods appropriate for the scaled variables and distributions. The author has presented a structured model of the relationships involved in mediation.

Chapter Three presents the analysis of the results using a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach, examining individual items or groups of items across the various questionnaires. A detailed data analysis is conducted. The results reveal borderline Cronbach’s alpha values for the methodology and a weak correlation between locus of control and conflict levels; notably, while the majority of respondents exhibit an internal locus of control, conflict levels remain high. Analysis of the questionnaire's internal structure also indicates a degree of heterogeneity. These findings suggest a need for caution in drawing conclusions and indicate that factors influencing conflict extend beyond the locus of control.

The conclusions summarize the results while acknowledging the limitations inherent in any rigorous study. The conclusions, contributions, and directions for future research are presented in a critical and appropriate manner. 3. Recommendations regarding the dissertation research.

I have the following recommendations regarding the dissertation: While the study’s limitations note that only correlation analysis was used—precluding the investigation of cause-and-effect relationships—Chapter 3 nevertheless presents data derived from regression analysis. Although caution is advised regarding the conclusions due to unstable statistical results, the dissertation aims to demonstrate the author's ability to collect, process, and analyze data; the fact that results may not be entirely unequivocal does not diminish the study's value but rather raises further questions that can broaden the understanding of the role of conflict in organizational interpersonal communication. High levels of conflict do not necessarily carry a negative connotation—especially among young people; it is important to view conflict as a resource and a pathway toward necessary change and the discarding of outdated elements within the organizational structure, as any structural change requires a certain degree of disagreement with systems and structures that have outlived their usefulness.

4. Scientific and applied scientific contributions.

Overall, the dissertation provides a basis for formulating the following scientific and applied scientific contributions:

1. Important aspects of the microclimate within organizational culture have been systematized and analyzed.

2. Various theoretical models have been analyzed, and an integrative approach has been identified. 3. A detailed study of the issue has been conducted—one that also holds transformational value—regarding possible ways of conceptualizing and managing conflicts. A comprehensive examination of gender-based differences provides a new direction for differentiated psychological interventions.

4. The need to focus on the potential of mediation to improve this microclimate has been scientifically substantiated.

The abstract fully reflects the content of the dissertation. Key sections of the dissertation have been presented in three publications, comprising articles and papers from national and international conferences.

5. Conclusion

The dissertation by Maria-Stefka Dimitrova constitutes a detailed and in-depth study in the field of human relations within the workplace. Its contributions are both theoretical and practical in nature; notably, one of the work's key achievements is that it does not aim for definitive conclusions but—as is the case with any genuine scientific issue—leaves open many questions for future analysis and research. This provides grounds for me to recommend that the esteemed members of the scientific jury, upon a successful defense, vote to award the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the professional field of Psychology (3.2).

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October 8, 2026 Assoc. Prof. Veronika Ivanova, PhD