VARNA FREE UNIVERSITY
"CHERNORIZETS HRABAR"
FACULTY OF SOCIAL, BUSINESS AND COMPUTER SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

ANA ILIEVA HALIL

INTENTIONAL INFLUENCE ON UNORGANIZED SOCIAL COMMUNITIES

A B S T R A C T

of a Dissertation for the Award
of the Educational and Scientific Degree PhD,
professional field 3.2 Psychology,
PhD programme "General Psychology"

Scientific Supervisor:
Prof. Mayana Mitevska, DSc

Varna
2026

VARNA FREE UNIVERSITY
"CHERNORIZETS HRABAR"
FACULTY OF SOCIAL, BUSINESS AND COMPUTER SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

ANA ILIEVA HALIL

INTENTIONAL INFLUENCE ON UNORGANIZED SOCIAL COMMUNITIES

A B S T R A C T
of a Dissertation for the Award
of the Educational and Scientific Degree PhD,
professional field 3.2 Psychology,
PhD programme "General Psychology"

Scientific Supervisor:
Prof. Mayana Mitevska, DSc

Reviewers:
Prof. Vanya Hristova, PhD
Prof. Valeri Stoyanov, DSc

Varna
2026

The dissertation comprises 149 pages and consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. Each chapter is divided into separate sections and concludes with specific findings. The main text includes 19 tables and 12 figures. The bibliography comprises 68 references in Bulgarian and English.

The author of the dissertation is an independently enrolled doctoral student at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social, Economic and Computer Sciences, Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”, Varna.

The dissertation was discussed and approved for submission to a public defense before a scientific jury by the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Social, Economic and Computer Sciences of Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”, Varna.

The public defense of the dissertation before a scientific jury will take place on November, 19th, 2026 at 11:00 h in the Meeting Hall at Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”. The dissertation defense materials are available at the office of the Department of Psychology and at the website of the university www.vfu.bg.

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Introduction

Contemporary social processes are unfolding in the context of dynamic digital transformation, which is changing the ways in which individuals perceive and interpret information. The development of communication technologies, the expansion of social networks, and the role of algorithmic mediation have contributed to the emergence of a new social environment in which interactions take place beyond traditionally organized structures. Within this environment, unorganized social communities have become a significant context for the formation of attitudes and behaviors.

The challenges facing contemporary societies are associated with the intensity of information flows and the increasing opportunities for deliberately influencing individuals' perceptions and consciousness. Social influence is acquiring new characteristics, including scalability, adaptability, and an often covert nature, which necessitates examining it as a purposeful activity implemented through specific communication strategies.

These emerging conditions also require new research approaches. Traditional models of social influence provide a theoretical foundation but are insufficient to explain the processes occurring in digital environments. This necessitates the application of integrative approaches that account for the psychological, social, and technological factors underlying influence.

Particular importance is attributed to individual psychological characteristics, including personality traits, value orientations, and motivation for social approval, which determine the degree of susceptibility to influence. Within unorganized social communities, the role of these characteristics becomes increasingly pronounced, affecting how individuals perceive and interpret social messages.

Against this background, the present study focuses on intentional social influence as a complex phenomenon arising from the interaction between communication strategies, psychological mechanisms, and

individual factors. Its aim is to establish a comprehensive conceptual framework for explaining the processes of social influence in digital environments.

The introduction presents a conceptual model of intentional social influence that integrates communication strategies, psychological and social mechanisms, and individual personality characteristics as moderating factors.

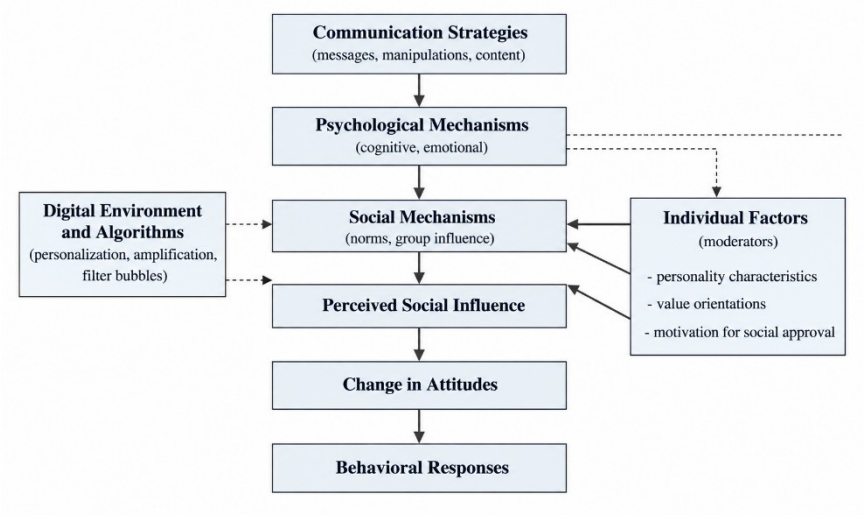


Fig. 1. Conceptual Model of Intentional Social Influence in Unorganized Social Communities

Source: Developed by the author

2. Relevance and Significance of the Research Topic

The relevance of the dissertation topic stems from the need for an in-depth examination of the processes of intentional social influence within contemporary information society and digital environments. The development of communication technologies and social networks has significantly expanded the opportunities to influence individuals' attitudes

and behaviors, thereby necessitating new approaches to the scientific understanding of this phenomenon.

In particular, the topic is highly relevant to understanding the mechanisms of influence within unorganized social communities, which are characterized by the absence of stable structures and a high degree of anonymity. This necessitates an examination of both the factors determining individuals' susceptibility to influence and the interaction between the psychological and social mechanisms through which such influence operates.

Furthermore, it is essential to analyze the role of algorithms and personalized content in structuring the information environment and amplifying particular messages. These processes create conditions for more powerful and often difficult-to-detect forms of influence, thereby introducing new challenges and requirements for research in this field.

At the same time, there is a lack of integrated scientific studies examining intentional social influence as a complex phenomenon within digital environments. This highlights the need to develop comprehensive conceptual models that incorporate psychological, social, and technological dimensions.

The significance of the present study lies in both its theoretical and practical contributions, namely, expanding scientific knowledge of social influence and establishing a foundation for developing approaches to identifying and mitigating its effects.

3. Object and Subject of the Research

The object of the research comprises the processes of social influence within unorganized social communities operating in contemporary digital environments.

The subject of the research is intentional social influence as a specific form of influence exerted through communication strategies and psychological and social mechanisms, as well as the role of individual factors—personality traits, value orientations, and motivation for social approval—in shaping susceptibility to such influence.

4. Research Problem

The research problem addressed in the dissertation concerns the insufficient understanding of the mechanisms through which intentional social influence operates within unorganized social communities, as well as the limited understanding of the role of individual psychological characteristics as factors moderating its effects.

The problem also arises from the absence of an integrated approach that brings together communication strategies, social mechanisms, and personality-related determinants within a unified conceptual framework capable of explaining the dynamics of social influence in digital environments.

5. Author's Thesis

The central thesis of the dissertation is that susceptibility to intentional social influence within unorganized social communities does not result from the isolated effects of individual factors, but rather from a complex interaction between communication strategies and psychological and social mechanisms, moderated by individual personality characteristics.

It is assumed that personality traits, value orientations, and motivation for social approval are potential factors influencing how social messages are perceived, interpreted, and accepted. In digital environments, this process is further amplified by algorithmic mediation and personalized content.

6. Aim and Objectives of the Dissertation

The aim of the dissertation is to investigate the mechanisms of intentional social influence within unorganized social communities and to analyze the role of individual psychological factors in susceptibility to such influence, with a view to developing an integrative conceptual model of the process.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives have been formulated:

1. To conduct a theoretical analysis of existing concepts and models of social influence.

2. To examine the psychological, social, and communication mechanisms underlying intentional influence.
3. To analyze the specific characteristics of unorganized social communities and digital environments as contexts in which social influence occurs.
4. To identify and examine individual factors, including personality traits, value orientations, and motivation for social approval.
5. To conduct an empirical study to identify relationships between the variables under investigation.
6. To develop and provide a theoretical justification for an integrative model of intentional social influence.

7. Research Methodology

The research methodology is based on a quantitative research approach that enables the objective measurement and analysis of relationships between the variables under investigation. The study employs a cross-sectional research design and correlation analysis aimed at identifying statistically significant relationships between individual characteristics and susceptibility to intentional social influence.

The study utilizes standardized psychometric instruments, including the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), methods for assessing value orientations, and a scale measuring motivation for social approval, adapted to the Bulgarian context. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including correlation analysis and hypothesis testing.

The selection of a quantitative research approach is justified by the need to objectively measure the relationships between the variables under investigation and to enable the statistical testing of the formulated hypotheses. In the context of studying social influence, which constitutes a complex and multifactorial phenomenon, the quantitative approach makes it possible to identify patterns that cannot be established through qualitative analysis alone.

The application of a correlational model is consistent with the research objective of identifying relationships between individual psychological characteristics and the degree of susceptibility to intentional social influence. This approach enables the examination of the direction and strength of relationships between variables without drawing premature causal conclusions, which is consistent with the nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

The specific characteristics of the digital environment as the research context also inform the choice of research design. Within dynamic, loosely structured, and network-based social communities, social influence operates through multiple simultaneously interacting factors, necessitating a methodological approach capable of accounting for their interactions.

The theoretical and methodological framework of the study is grounded in the conclusions drawn in Chapters One and Two, where social influence is conceptualized as the outcome of interactions between communication strategies, psychological mechanisms, and social processes. In this respect, the selected research approach enables an empirical examination of the extent to which these theoretical propositions are supported under real-world social conditions.

The abstract theoretical constructs examined in the theoretical part of the study were translated into empirically measurable indicators through a process of operationalization, enabling their quantitative examination and statistical analysis. This process is essential for establishing a connection between the conceptual framework and the empirical testing of the research hypotheses.

Personality characteristics were operationalized using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, which measures the principal dimensions of personality: extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. These indicators were included in the study to determine whether stable personality traits function as factors associated with susceptibility to social influence.

Value orientations were examined using a standardized assessment method designed to identify individuals' dominant value systems. This approach enables an analysis of the role of values as cognitive-

motivational filters that influence how social influence is perceived and interpreted.

Motivation for social approval was operationalized using a specialized scale that measures the extent to which individuals seek social acceptance and avoid disapproval. This indicator was included as a key psychological mechanism that may moderate the perception and self-reporting of social influence.

Susceptibility to intentional social influence was measured using a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to capture the specific characteristics of the digital environment. The questionnaire assesses aspects such as perceived social pressure, group influence, the interpretation of social cues, and the tendency to agree with dominant positions.

This operationalization enables an integrated analysis of the relationships between personality traits, value orientations, and motivational factors, as well as their role in the process of social influence, thereby establishing an empirical basis for testing the research hypotheses.

8. Scope and Limitations of the Dissertation

The limitations of the study arise from both its scope and the methodological approach employed. First, the research focuses on unorganized social communities within digital environments, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other social contexts.

Second, the use of self-report measures introduces the possibility of bias arising from subjective factors, including social desirability bias. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow for the establishment of causal relationships, but only for the identification of statistical associations between variables.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a reliable foundation for analyzing the phenomenon under investigation and identifies directions for future research.

II. LENGTH AND STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is structured into an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion, comprising a total of 149 pages. The main text contains 19 tables and 12 figures. The bibliography includes 68 references, comprising Bulgarian and international publications, as well as online sources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 4
CHAPTER ONE. Theoretical Foundations of Social Influence in Unorganized Social Communities 10
1.1. Social Influence as a Psychological and Social Phenomenon 10
1.1.1. Nature and Definitions of Social Influence 11
1.1.2. Forms and Levels of Social Influence 13
1.1.3. Conscious and Unconscious Processes 16
1.2. Major Theories and Models of Social Influence 18
1.2.1. Classical Theoretical Approaches 18
1.2.2. Models of Conformity and Persuasion 20
1.2.3. Contemporary Integrative Models 21
1.3. Social Influence in the Context of Unorganized Communities and Digital Environments 23
1.3.1. Characteristics of Unorganized Social Communities 24
1.3.2. Digital Environments and Social Interactions 25
1.3.3. Integrative Model of Intentional Influence 27
Conclusions from Chapter One 28
CHAPTER TWO. Mechanisms and Strategies of Intentional Social Influence 31
2.1. Psychological Mechanisms of Intentional Influence 32
2.1.1. Cognitive Mechanisms 33
2.1.2. Emotional and Motivational Processes 35
2.1.3. Personality Factors and Susceptibility to Influence 37
2.2. Social and Communication Mechanisms of Influence 38
2.2.1. Social Norms and Group Influence 39
2.2.2. Communication Strategies and Techniques 40
2.2.3. Media Environment and Disinformation 42
2.3. Digital Mechanisms and Counteraction Strategies 43
2.3.1. Social Networks and Digital Platforms 43

2.3.2. Algorithms and Personalized Content 45
2.3.3. Approaches to Counteracting Influence and Ensuring Protection 46
Conclusions from Chapter Two 47
CHAPTER THREE. Methodology and Empirical Investigation of Intentional Social Influence 49
3.1. Methodological Foundations of the Study 49
3.1.1. Object and Subject of the Research 51
3.1.2. Research Aim and Objectives 52
3.1.3. Research Hypothesis and Sub-Hypotheses 53
3.2. Research Organization and Design 54
3.2.1. Research Approach 54
3.2.2. Research Instruments 54
3.2.3. Sample and Respondent Characteristics 56
3.2.4. Statistical Analysis Methods 56
3.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Results 57
3.3.1. Presentation of the Results 58
3.3.2. Analysis of Social Attitudes and Dynamics 102
3.3.3. Hypothesis Testing 128
Conclusions from Chapter Three 130
CONCLUSION 134
BIBLIOGRAPHY 144

The dissertation is structured in a logical sequence that ensures a progression from theoretical analysis to the empirical examination of the research propositions. Chapter One establishes the conceptual and theoretical framework of social influence, clarifying the key concepts, theories, and models that form the foundation of the study.

Chapter Two focuses on the mechanisms and strategies of intentional influence, examining the psychological, social, and communication processes through which influence operates within digital environments. This analysis provides the theoretical foundation for the formulation of the research hypotheses.

Chapter Three presents the methodology and findings of the empirical study, through which the theoretical assumptions are tested and the role of individual factors in the process of social influence is analyzed.

This sequence ensures the internal logical coherence of the study and facilitates the integration of theoretical and empirical findings into a unified explanatory framework.

The introduction to the dissertation establishes the relevance of the research problem within the context of contemporary digital environments, characterized by the accelerated transformation of social interactions and the growing importance of unorganized social communities as settings for the formation of attitudes and behavioral patterns. Particular emphasis is placed on the expanding opportunities for intentional social influence arising from the development of communication technologies, social networks, and algorithmic mediation.

The selection of the research topic is justified by examining its theoretical significance and practical applicability, emphasizing the need to extend the analysis of social influence beyond the classical frameworks of organized social groups. The necessity of examining unorganized social communities as a distinct subject of scientific inquiry is substantiated, along with the importance of integrating psychological, social, and technological factors in explaining the processes of social influence.

The introduction outlines the theoretical foundations of the study, drawing on established concepts in social psychology that provide a framework for analyzing the interaction between individual psychological characteristics and the social context.

The introduction also defines the aim of the dissertation, which is directed toward the theoretical analysis and empirical investigation of intentional social influence, as well as the role of individual psychological factors in this process. The principal research objectives are formulated, encompassing theoretical analysis, the identification of mechanisms of influence, and the implementation of an empirical study.

The object and subject of the research are defined, with particular emphasis on unorganized social communities within digital environments and the mechanisms of intentional social influence operating within them. The main research hypothesis and the corresponding sub-hypotheses are presented, together with the methodological approach, which involves the

application of quantitative research methods and standardized psychometric instruments.

The concluding section of the introduction presents a conceptual model of intentional social influence that illustrates the interaction between communication strategies, psychological and social mechanisms, and individual personality characteristics within digital environments.

Chapter One "Theoretical Foundations of Social Influence in Unorganized Social Communities"

Chapter One develops and systematizes the theoretical framework of social influence as a complex psychological and social phenomenon that occupies a central position in the analysis of interactions within contemporary digital environments. Social influence is examined not only as a process of changing attitudes and behavior but also as a mechanism of social regulation through which individual and group positions are formed, maintained, and transformed within a dynamic communication environment. The chapter substantiates the understanding that social influence cannot be reduced either to external social pressure or to intrapsychic processes, but rather represents the outcome of a complex interaction between individual characteristics and the social context.

Section 1.1, "Social Influence as a Psychological and Social Phenomenon," provides an analysis of the nature, principal definitions, forms, and levels of social influence. Classical theoretical perspectives associated with the works of Moscovici, Kelman, Cialdini, Aronson, Wilson, and Akert are presented, alongside relevant contributions from Bulgarian psychological literature. Social influence is examined as a process that operates simultaneously at the psychological and social levels and manifests itself at the individual, interpersonal, group, and mass/network levels. Particular emphasis is placed on the interaction between external social cues and the individual's internal attitudes, motivations, and value structures.

Within the same section, a distinction is drawn between informational and normative social influence, and the conditions under which each form predominates are analyzed. The different levels at which social influence manifests itself—individual, interpersonal, group, mass,

and network—are also examined, allowing for a more precise understanding of its dynamics across various social contexts. Special attention is devoted to the conscious and unconscious mechanisms of influence, substantiating the proposition that a substantial proportion of social influence occurs at an implicit level and is not recognized by individuals as externally imposed. In this connection, the analysis extends to the digital environment, where social influence assumes a more diffuse, indirect, and difficult-to-identify character.

Section 1.2, “Major Theories and Models of Social Influence,” provides a systematization and comparative analysis of leading theoretical models, including the experimental studies of Sherif and Asch, Kelman's conceptualization of forms of influence, Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, and the dual-process models of persuasion developed by Petty and Cacioppo. The principles of social influence formulated by Cialdini are also analyzed, together with the relationships between value orientations (Rokeach), personality characteristics (Eysenck), and processes of social influence. On this basis, the chapter substantiates the proposition that social influence constitutes a multifactorial process operating through the interaction of communication strategies, group mechanisms, cognitive processes, and individual characteristics.

Section 1.3, “Social Influence in the Context of Unorganized Communities and Digital Environments,” analyzes the specific characteristics of unorganized social communities as social settings characterized by the absence of formalized structures, stable roles, and institutionalized mechanisms of control. It is demonstrated that, under precisely such conditions, social influence operates through informal mechanisms such as social proof, group validation, emotional contagion, and the pursuit of social approval. The role of the digital environment is also examined, particularly the ways in which algorithmic mediation, personalized content, and the public visibility of reactions amplify and transform the processes of social influence. The analysis substantiates the view that the digital environment is not a neutral channel but an active factor that structures individuals' informational experiences and creates conditions for the amplification of influence.

On the basis of the theoretical analysis conducted, an integrative conceptual model of intentional social influence is developed, bringing together communication strategies, psychological and social mechanisms, and individual characteristics as interconnected components of the process. The model conceptualizes social influence as a dynamic system in which the effects of influence are moderated by personality traits, value orientations, and motivation for social approval. In this way, the chapter substantiates the understanding that intentional social influence emerges at the intersection of individual and social factors and cannot be explained through unidimensional relationships.

Conclusions from Chapter One

The theoretical analysis has established that social influence constitutes a multidimensional and complex process involving cognitive, emotional, motivational, and social components that operate in close interaction with one another. It has been concluded that, within unorganized social communities and digital environments, social influence assumes a more diffuse, indirect, and difficult-to-recognize character.

It has also been concluded that individual psychological characteristics—personality traits, value orientations, and motivation for social approval—may amplify, limit, or moderate the ways in which social influence is perceived and interpreted.

In conclusion, Chapter One establishes the theoretical foundation of the study by providing a rationale for the selection of the variables under investigation and formulating the conceptual framework upon which the empirical analysis in the subsequent chapters is based.

Chapter Two “Mechanisms and Strategies of Intentional Social Influence”

Chapter Two develops the procedural and functional logic of intentional social influence, with the analytical focus directed toward the mechanisms and strategies through which influence is generated, amplified, and stabilized within unorganized social communities and digitally mediated communication. The chapter substantiates the understanding that intentional influence does not constitute a single act of

persuasion but rather a dynamic, multi-stage process of structuring social perception, in which external communicative influences are gradually internalized and transformed into subjectively experienced and rationalized positions.

Particular emphasis is placed on the fact that the key mechanism underlying this process is not direct influence but the interpretative processing of social cues, which provides the foundation for understanding influence as an indirect and often unconscious process. The psychological, social, and communication mechanisms of intentional influence do not operate in isolation but form an interconnected system in which individual components mutually reinforce and complement one another. Cognitive processes associated with information processing interact with emotional responses and motivational attitudes, thereby determining how social cues are perceived and interpreted.

Emotional mechanisms amplify the effects of cognitive processes by increasing engagement and reducing critical distance from the content. Social mechanisms, in turn, such as perceived consensus and group pressure, legitimize particular interpretations and transform them into socially validated positions.

Communication strategies function as a connecting link between these mechanisms, activating cognitive, emotional, and social processes that lead to the gradual development of stable attitudes. In this sense, intentional social influence should be understood as the outcome of the synergistic operation of multiple factors rather than as the effect of a single act of influence.

In this context, Chapter Two establishes an analytical bridge between the theoretical propositions presented in Chapter One and the empirical investigation by specifying the mechanisms of intentional social influence and providing a theoretical foundation for the formulation and testing of the research hypotheses.

Section 2.1 analyzes the internal psychological mechanisms through which social influence is perceived, interpreted, and integrated into the system of attitudes and behavioral orientations. Particular attention is devoted to cognitive processes, including selective perception,

cognitive dissonance, heuristics, automatic evaluations, and the repetition effect. It is substantiated that these mechanisms function as filters through which information is processed and structured and that, within digital environments, they may contribute to the stabilization of particular interpretations without critical rational evaluation.

The emotional mechanisms of influence are also examined, demonstrating that emotional content, affective intensity, and the moral-emotional framing of messages play a significant role in individuals' engagement. Emotional involvement emerges as a key factor in amplifying influence, as it reduces the likelihood of critical information processing and increases the tendency to share and accept content.

The section also analyzes the role of motivational processes, with the pursuit of social approval, the avoidance of social rejection, and the maintenance of a positive social identity being examined as central mechanisms underlying the internalization of social influence. It is emphasized that susceptibility to influence is not a static personality attribute but rather the outcome of interactions between personality characteristics, social identity, and contextual factors.

Section 2.2 examines the social and communication mechanisms through which individual perceptions become synchronized and transformed into group attitudes. Classical mechanisms such as social norms, perceived consensus, conformity, group pressure, the spiral of silence, and diffusion of responsibility are analyzed. It is substantiated that social influence operates primarily through the construction of a perceived social reality to which individuals adapt, rather than through direct coercion.

Particular attention is devoted to communication strategies as an instrumental component of intentional influence. Techniques such as framing, the selection and structuring of information, repetition, contextualization, and the use of propaganda techniques are examined. It is demonstrated that the effectiveness of these strategies depends on their capacity to activate psychological and social mechanisms through which particular interpretations are legitimized and established as dominant.

It is emphasized that communication strategies do not operate in isolation but rather in synergy with social mechanisms, thereby transforming social influence into a process involving the gradual construction of shared meanings and attitudes.

Section 2.3 analyzes the role of the digital environment as a structural factor in social influence. It is demonstrated that social networks, algorithms, and platform architecture are not neutral intermediaries but actively participate in the selection, prioritization, and dissemination of information. Phenomena such as echo chambers, algorithmic amplification, microtargeting, and asymmetric information environments are examined as factors that create conditions for the amplification and stabilization of particular interpretations.

It is substantiated that the digital environment structures individuals' informational experiences by limiting exposure to alternative viewpoints and creating conditions that reinforce previously established attitudes.

The concluding section presents approaches to counteracting intentional social influence, including the development of critical thinking, the enhancement of media and digital literacy, greater transparency of algorithmic processes, and the promotion of pluralism within the communication environment. It is emphasized that effective counteraction requires an integrated approach combining individual, social, and technological interventions.

Conclusions from Chapter Two

The analysis has established that intentional social influence operates through an interacting system of psychological, social, communication, and technological mechanisms. The synergy between these mechanisms transforms social influence into a process that is simultaneously effective, scalable, and difficult to recognize, particularly within the context of unorganized social communities and digital communication.

Social influence should not be regarded as the outcome of isolated factors but rather as a dynamic system in which individual susceptibility, the social environment, and technological infrastructure interact and

mutually reinforce one another. This necessitates an integrative analytical approach that takes into account the interrelationships between the individual, social, and technological levels.

The theoretical framework developed provides a rationale for the need to empirically investigate the relationships between individual psychological characteristics and indicators of perceived social influence and serves as a foundation for the formulation and testing of the research hypotheses.

Chapter Three "Methodology and Empirical Investigation of Intentional Social Influence"

Chapter Three develops the comprehensive methodological framework of the study and presents the findings of the empirical investigation conducted to identify the psychological factors associated with susceptibility to intentional social influence within unorganized social communities in digital environments.

Chapter Three performs a key function within the structure of the dissertation by establishing a transition from theoretical analysis to the empirical verification of the research propositions. In this respect, it not only presents the methods employed and the results obtained but also translates the theoretical assumptions into measurable empirical indicators. Through the operationalization of the key concepts, it becomes possible to examine the relationships between communicative influences, psychological mechanisms, and individual factors that determine the perception of social influence.

The selection of a quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational research design is substantiated, as this approach enables reliable measurement and statistical testing of the relationships between the variables under investigation. The object, subject, aim, and objectives of the research are formulated, together with a set of research hypotheses aimed at identifying the relationships between personality characteristics, value orientations, motivation for social approval, and the degree of perceived social influence.

The choice of a quantitative research design is also determined by the need to identify statistically significant relationships between variables

within a real-world social environment characterized by a high degree of dynamism and variability. The cross-sectional approach allows for the assessment of attitudes and perceptions at a particular point in time while also providing an opportunity to identify relatively stable patterns in individuals' behavior. Correlation analysis is employed as the primary instrument for examining the relationships between psychological and social factors without drawing causal conclusions, in accordance with the adopted research design.

The research instruments are presented in detail and include a researcher-developed questionnaire and standardized psychological assessment methods: the Crowne–Marlowe Social Desirability Scale, a method for assessing value orientations, and the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ). The researcher-developed questionnaire was used to collect demographic and contextual information, as well as data on social participation and perceived social influence within informal social groups.

The combination of the researcher-developed questionnaire and standardized psychometric instruments enables an integrated analysis of motivational, value-related, and personality factors, as well as their relationships with indicators of perceived social influence.

The organization and stages of the research, the characteristics of the sample, and the conditions under which the study was conducted are described, taking into account the specific characteristics of the online environment as a context for empirical data collection. The statistical methods employed are presented, including descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and the application of parametric and nonparametric statistical tests depending on the distribution of the data.

The study was conducted with a total sample of 137 respondents (N = 137), while the analyses concerning the characteristics of group participation and perceived social influence were performed on a subsample of 81 respondents who reported participating in informal social groups without an identifiable leader (N = 81).

The statistical analysis includes descriptive statistics, such as minimum and maximum values, means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis, which were used to assess the characteristics of the data

distributions. Correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between variables, while the chi-square (χ^2) test of independence and the nonparametric Kruskal–Wallis test were applied to analyze differences between groups, depending on the nature of the data and the analytical objectives.

The analytical section of the study is structured to follow a logical progression from the description of the data to the analysis and interpretation of the identified statistical relationships. The approach combines quantitative analysis with an interpretative framework, allowing the findings to be examined within the context of the psychological and social processes associated with intentional social influence.

The empirical findings suggest the need to reconsider traditional models of social influence that conceptualize susceptibility as a direct function of stable personality characteristics. The present study does not establish a statistically significant and universal relationship between basic personality traits and perceived social influence, indicating that the role of these traits is more likely to be context-dependent and indirect.

This finding may be explained by the specific characteristics of the digital environment, in which social interactions take place under conditions of high dynamism, anonymity, and information overload. In such an environment, individual responses are shaped less by stable personality characteristics than by the ways in which individuals interpret social cues within a particular context.

The role of motivation for social approval proves to be particularly significant, emerging as a key interpretative mechanism. The findings indicate that individuals with a stronger orientation toward social acceptance are more likely either not to recognize or not to explicitly report the external influence exerted on their own attitudes. This reveals an important aspect of social influence—the discrepancy between actual influence and individuals' subjective awareness of it.

Value orientations likewise do not emerge as universal predictors but instead function as selective filters that moderate the perception of social influence. This means that different value systems do not lead to

uniform levels of susceptibility but rather determine the specific ways in which social pressure is interpreted and experienced.

In summary, the findings indicate that susceptibility to intentional social influence should be conceptualized as a process mediated by interpretative and motivational mechanisms rather than as a direct effect of external influence. This necessitates a shift from linear models toward integrative models that account for the complex interaction between individual and social factors.

The analytical section of the chapter provides a systematic analysis and interpretation of the findings obtained. Descriptive statistics for the variables under investigation are presented, and the relationships between personality characteristics, value orientations, motivation for social approval, and indicators of perceived social influence are analyzed. The correlation analysis reveals an absence of statistically significant relationships involving the principal personality dimensions, while identifying several statistically significant associations involving motivation for social approval and certain value orientations.

The findings indicate that susceptibility to influence is a multifactorial and context-dependent process. The principal personality dimensions identified by Eysenck do not emerge as direct, statistically significant factors associated with perceived social influence. A more substantial role is observed for motivation for social approval, which demonstrates a statistically significant negative correlation with perceived group influence, as well as for certain value orientations that exhibit selective associations with perceived social pressure. These findings highlight the importance of motivational and interpretative mechanisms in determining how social influence is perceived, consciously recognized, and reported.

Among the principal statistically significant findings are the negative correlation between motivation for social approval and perceived group influence ($\rho = -0.41$; $p < 0.01$; $N = 81$), as well as the negative correlation between political value orientation and perceived social pressure ($\rho = -0.25$; $p = 0.02$).

A particularly significant finding of the analysis is that the identified relationships cannot be interpreted as linear and unidirectional but instead reveal a complex network of interactions between individual and social factors. This necessitates conceptualizing susceptibility to influence as a process mediated by interpretative and motivational mechanisms rather than as a direct effect of external influence. In this respect, the empirical findings support the need for an integrative model that accounts for the mediating role of individual interpretation.

The testing of the research hypotheses reveals varying degrees of empirical support. The main hypothesis is considered partially confirmed. The sub-hypothesis concerning the role of motivation for social approval receives partial and indirect confirmation, whereas the sub-hypothesis concerning personality characteristics is not confirmed. The sub-hypothesis regarding the role of value orientations receives partial confirmation through the identified selective associations, while the sub-hypothesis concerning digital engagement and personalized content does not receive sufficient empirical support based on the indicators employed.

The findings demonstrate that social influence within unorganized social communities cannot be adequately explained by simple, linear relationships between individual characteristics and perceived influence. Instead, a model emerges in which motivational and interpretative mechanisms, together with the specific interactions between individual factors and the social context, play a significant role.

Based on the empirical findings, an integrative model of intentional social influence is proposed, bringing together communication strategies, psychological mechanisms, and social processes while accounting for the differentiated role of individual factors in the perception and reporting of social influence. The model conceptualizes influence as a multilevel process in which external influences are filtered through individual psychological processes and transformed into attitudes and behavioral responses.

A significant advantage of the proposed model is that it overcomes the limitations of traditional models that conceptualize social influence as a direct relationship between an external influence and the resulting response. Instead, the model emphasizes the interpretative stage as a key

component through which external communication cues are transformed into subjectively interpreted and socially validated positions. This allows for a more precise explanation of the processes of attitudinal adaptation and behavioral response.

The concluding section of the chapter presents the principal conclusions of the study, emphasizing that, within unorganized social communities, social influence operates predominantly as an indirect, context-dependent, and interpretative process. The potential practical applications of the findings are also outlined, including their use in developing strategies for identifying, mitigating, and counteracting intentional social influence in digital environments.

In this way, the findings of the empirical study not only confirm the principal theoretical propositions but also specify and further develop them, placing particular emphasis on the interpretative nature of social influence. This provides a foundation for the development of more effective strategies for identifying and mitigating intentional social influence within contemporary digital environments.

The following general conclusions are formulated in the conclusion of the dissertation:

First, an in-depth analysis of contemporary perspectives on the study of social influence has been conducted, substantiating the relevance of the research problem in the context of the digitalization of social life and the increasing significance of unorganized social communities as environments in which influence is exerted. It has been demonstrated that these communities constitute a specific context in which social influence operates in an indirect, communication-mediated, and partially unconscious manner.

Second, an empirically grounded interpretative-motivational model of intentional social influence has been proposed, which makes it possible to explain the process of influence not as a direct relationship between external pressure and behavioral change, but as a sequence of stages: influence → interpretation → subjective reporting → attitudinal adaptation. The model integrates communication, social, and

psychological mechanisms and accounts for the role of individual factors as moderating elements.

Third, a methodological framework for the empirical investigation of intentional social influence in digital environments has been developed and applied, incorporating a combination of standardized psychodiagnostic instruments and a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to measure perceived social influence. This framework enables a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between personality characteristics, value orientations, and motivational factors.

Fourth, the role of interpretative and motivational mechanisms in the process of social influence within unorganized digital communities has been identified as a research problem and empirically investigated, thereby extending the analysis of social influence beyond the direct effects of stable personality characteristics.

Fifth, it has been established that basic personality characteristics do not function as direct and universal predictors of susceptibility to social influence. This finding refines existing theoretical propositions and highlights the need for more complex, multifactorial explanatory models.

Sixth, it has been established that motivation for social approval plays a significant role in how social influence is perceived and reported. The identified relationship indicates that motivation for social approval is associated with the ways in which group influence is recognized and reported.

Seventh, it has been established that value orientations do not operate as universal predictors but rather as selective cognitive-motivational filters that moderate how social pressure is perceived and experienced. This finding complements existing models by providing a more differentiated perspective on the role of values.

Eighth, an integrated explanatory framework has been developed that makes it possible to conceptualize intentional social influence as a multifactorial, indirect, and context-dependent process operating through the interaction of social cues, individual interpretations, and motivational mechanisms. This framework has both theoretical and practical utility for

developing strategies aimed at identifying and counteracting manipulative influence in digital environments.

Model of Intentional Social Influence

As a result of the research conducted, an empirically grounded interpretative-motivational model of intentional social influence within unorganized social communities has been developed. The model conceptualizes influence as a multistage process in which communication strategies and social cues do not directly lead to changes in attitudes but are instead filtered through the individual's subjective interpretation.

Motivation for social approval occupies a central position in the model, emerging as a key psychological mechanism associated with the way individuals recognize and report external influence. Value orientations function as additional selective filters in the perception of social pressure. Personality characteristics are incorporated as background rather than central explanatory variables, since the study did not establish them as direct and statistically significant predictors of perceived social influence.

The model substantiates the understanding that social influence within unorganized digital communities operates primarily as an interpretative and motivationally driven process rather than as the result of direct external coercion.

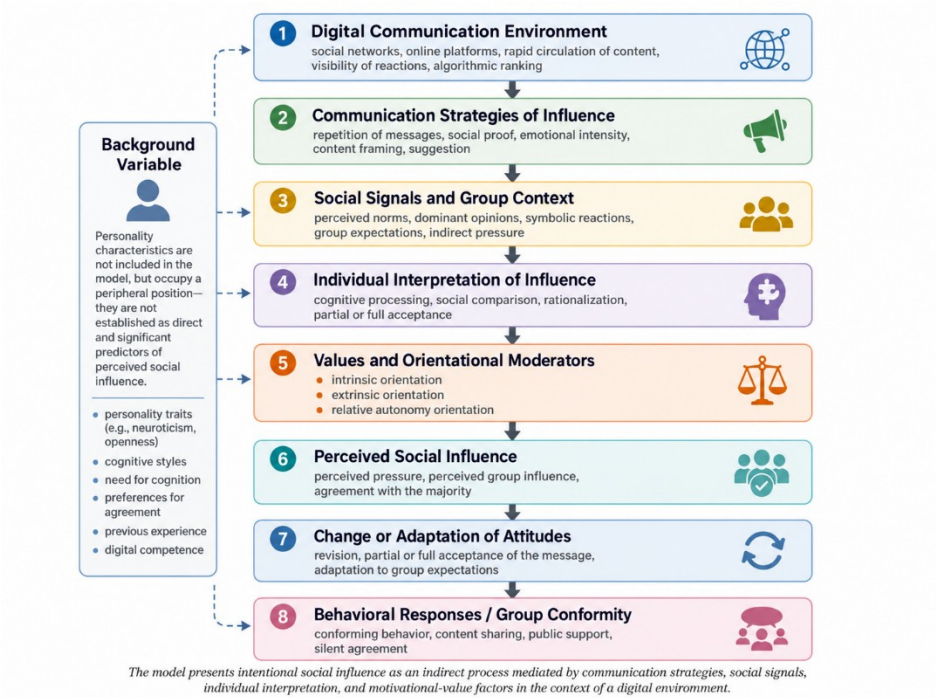


Fig. 2. Empirically Grounded Interpretative-Motivational Model of Intentional Social Influence

Source: Developed by the author

III. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Development of an Integrative Conceptual Framework of Social Influence

A comprehensive theoretical model has been developed that integrates psychological, social, communication, and digital mechanisms and extends classical theories to the context of unorganized digital communities.

2. A New Interpretation of Social Influence as an Interpretative Process

Social influence has been theoretically reconceptualized as an indirect, partially unconscious, and interpretatively structured process rather than as a direct effect of external influence.

3. Empirically Grounded Interpretative-Motivational Model

A new model of intentional social influence has been proposed, describing the process as a sequence of stages:

influence → interpretation → subjective reporting → attitudinal adaptation, with motivation for social approval playing a key role.

Scientific and Practical Contributions

1. Development of a Methodological Framework for Research

A set of research instruments has been developed and applied, combining standardized assessment methods and a researcher-developed questionnaire, enabling the empirical measurement of social influence in digital environments.

2. Identification of Psychologically Significant Factors with Practical Relevance

The significant role of motivation for social approval in the ways social influence is perceived and reported has been established, along with the selective role of value orientations as cognitive-motivational filters. The findings have practical applicability in the analysis of manipulative communication practices and behavioral patterns..

3. Foundation for the Development of Counteraction Strategies

The findings can be used to develop practical approaches for identifying, mitigating, and preventing manipulative influence in social networks and digital communication.

IV. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

1. **Halil, A. (2024).** A Four-Stage Model of Mass Media Influence. In: *Proceedings of the XXIII International Scientific Conference "Applied Psychology and Social Practice"*. Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", University Publishing House, ISSN 1314-8397.

2. **Mitevska, M. & Halil, A. (2024),** From Theory to Practice: Psychological Models of Intentional Influence and Their Impact on Quality of Life. *International Journal of Management Studies and Social Science Research*, Vol. 6, Issue 6 (November–December), ISSN 2582-0265, https://ijmsssr.org/paper/IJMSSSR001445.pdf.
3. **Halil, A. (2026).** Intentional Social Influence in Unorganized Social Communities: Psychological Factors and an Empirical Investigation. *e-Journal of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"*, Issue 25, ISSN 1313-7514, https://ejournal.vfu.bg/index.php/vfu/bg/article/view/286
4. **Halil, A. (2026).** Social Influence as an Interpretative Process: An Empirically Grounded Model in Digital Communities. *e-Journal of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"*, Issue 25, ISSN 1313-7514, https://ejournal.vfu.bg/index.php/vfu/bg/article/view/311

The findings of the dissertation research have been presented and subjected to academic discussion through publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals and participation in international scientific conferences.