REVIEW

by Prof. Vanya Gospodinova Hristova. PhD., VFU Chernorizets Hrabar
Member of the Scientific Jury pursuant to The Rector of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar"
for on the procedure for awarding the degree of PhD of Psychology
by Ana Khalil,
professional field 3.2. Psychology

I. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

In today's increasingly globalized world and amid rapid digitalization, social interactions are undergoing significant changes that affect not only the way people perceive information, but also the mechanisms by which they process and interpret it.

The rapid pace of development in communication technologies and social media, as well as the dominant role of algorithms in the exchange of information, are contributing to the emergence of a new type of social environment. Within this environment, interactions are increasingly taking place outside the framework of traditional institutional and organizational structures. It is precisely in this context that informal and unorganized social communities are becoming a key factor in shaping public attitudes, values and patterns of behavior.

From this perspective, Ana Ilieva Khalil's dissertation examines a timely and significant issue from a global perspective, namely, the study of the processes of deliberate social influence in the context of the modern information society and the digital environment in which it primarily operates.

The study aims to uncover the mechanisms of deliberate social influence occurring in unorganized social communities, as well as to analyze the role of individual and psychological factors in susceptibility to this influence, with the ultimate goal of developing and applying an integrative conceptual model of this process.

Ana Ilieva Khalil's dissertation is 149 pages long, and its content is organized into an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. It includes 19 tables and 12 figures. A total of 68 sources in Bulgarian and English are cited.

The introduction presents the rationale for the choice of research topic, as well as the role of the problem under consideration from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

The parameters necessary for the dissertation research are defined, namely the object and subject of the study, the main objective of the dissertation, and the research questions to be addressed.

II. DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF THE CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

The structure of the dissertation is logically organized and designed to support the comprehensive exploration of the research problem, the testing of the research hypothesis, and the research questions derived from it.

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Chapter 1, “Theoretical Foundations of Social Influence in Unorganized Social Communities,” is theoretical in nature and consists of three sections. It presents an in-depth theoretical overview of social influence as a psychological and social phenomenon, describing the nature and definitions of social influence, its forms and levels, as well as the conscious and unconscious mechanisms of influence, with an emphasis on the fact that a significant portion of social influence occurs at an implicit level and is not recognized by individuals as externally imposed.

The classical theoretical approaches and contemporary integrative models of social influence have been systematized and analyzed, leading to the conclusion that social influence is a multifactorial process that occurs through the interaction of communication strategies, group mechanisms, cognitive processes, and individual characteristics.

The study also analyzes the specific characteristics of unorganized social communities as an environment characterized by a lack of formalized structure, stable roles, and institutionalized control mechanisms. It has been established that it is precisely under such conditions that social influence is exerted 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, where algorithmic mediation, personalized content, and the public visibility of reactions amplify and transform the processes of social influence.

The chapter concludes with a summary that justifies the selection of the variables under study and formulates the conceptual framework upon which the empirical analysis in the dissertation is based.

Chapter 2, “Mechanisms and Strategies for Deliberate Social Influence,” presents the psychological mechanisms of deliberate influence, with an emphasis on cognitive mechanisms, the influence of emotions and motivation, and the identification of personality factors that influence deliberate influence. It also examines the social, communicative, and digital mechanisms of influence, as well as strategies for countering it.

Chapter 3, “Methodology and Empirical Study of Deliberate Social Influence,” is devoted to the methodology and procedures of the empirical study. The purpose, objectives, subject matter, hypotheses, and methods of data analysis are precisely defined. The sample of study participants includes 137 respondents over the age of 18.

A combined set of instruments, including an original questionnaire and standardized psychological measures, was used to collect the necessary information. The selection of instruments is consistent with the theoretical framework of the study and with the need for a multifaceted analysis of the motivational, value-based, and personality factors associated with susceptibility to deliberate social influence.

An analysis was conducted of the results obtained from the empirical study, describing the variables under investigation in the dissertation as well as the relationships between them.

The results are interpreted in terms of the extent to which they confirm the hypotheses. Based on this, conclusions are drawn and possibilities for practical applications of the dissertation’s findings are proposed.

The thesis is written in a logical manner, and the doctoral candidate demonstrates a thorough understanding of the subject matter and the ability to establish logical connections between the theoretical approach and the resolution of practical issues.

The results obtained are interpreted in terms of the extent to which they confirm the hypotheses. Based on this, conclusions are drawn and possibilities for practical applications of the dissertation's findings are proposed.
The conclusion summarizes the findings of the dissertation. The conclusions drawn follow logically from the text, are sound, and are directly related to the specific subject matter.

III. ABSTRACT AND PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

The abstract of the dissertation accurately and faithfully reflects the dissertation, and the publications based on it are sufficient and cover essential aspects of the doctoral candidate's work.

I accept the contributions outlined by the doctoral candidate, and I would like to emphasize some of them once again:

- ✓ An integrative conceptual framework has been developed that complements classical theories of social influence, and a comprehensive theoretical model has been constructed that unites the psychological, social, communicative, and digital mechanisms of this influence.
- ✓ As a result of the dissertation research, a new interpretation of social influence as an interpretive process has been developed.
- ✓ A new model of intentional social influence has been proposed, which describes the process as a sequence: exposure → interpretation → subjective evaluation → attitudinal adaptation, with the motivation for social approval playing a key role.
- ✓ The practical significance lies in the fact that the results of the dissertation research contribute to the development of practical approaches for identifying, limiting, and preventing manipulative influence on social media and in digital communication.

IV. CRITICAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

I have no critical comments regarding the substantive aspects of the main theses and their substantiation in the dissertation. During the development of the dissertation, and in my capacity as a reviewer, the doctoral candidate made a conscientious effort to address the comments made.

V. **CONCLUSION OF THE DISSERTATION**

The dissertation presented by Ana Ilieva Khalil constitutes an independent scientific study. In it, the author demonstrates her in-depth theoretical knowledge and her skills in conducting and interpreting experimental research. The dissertation makes contributions in both theoretical and practical-applied aspects.

In conclusion, on the basis of the above, I propose the distinguished members of the Scientific Jury to award the PhD. of General Psychology to Ana Ilieva Khalil in the professional field 3.2. "Psychology".

October 18, 2026

Prepared the review:
(Prof. Vanya Hristova, PhD.)