STATEMENT OF OPINION

by

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With regard to Order No. 566 of the Rector of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar" dated 24.09.2026 on the appointment of the Scientific Jury for the defence of the doctoral dissertation of ANA ILIEVA KHALIL in professional field 3.2 "Psychology", doctoral programme "General Psychology", entitled "Deliberate Influence on Unorganised Social Communities"

1. **Relevance.**

The dissertation of ANA ILIEVA KHALIL addresses and fills a gap in the existing research on deliberate social influence as a complex phenomenon in the digital environment. The topic is relevant for understanding the mechanisms of influence in unorganised social communities, which are characterised by the absence of stable structures and a high degree of anonymity. The study examines both the factors that determine individuals' susceptibility and the interplay between the psychological and social mechanisms of influence.

Special attention is paid to the need to analyse the role of algorithms and personalised content, which structure the information environment and amplify certain messages.

The topic is undeniably relevant for research, and not only within a single scientific field.

The significance of the study lies in expanding scientific knowledge about social influence and in providing a basis for developing approaches to its recognition and limitation.

2. General characteristics of the dissertation.

The well-defined relevance of the problem addressed in the dissertation, and the possible ways of penetrating the essence of the phenomenon under study, find adequate realisation in the developed content. In structural terms, the dissertation comprises 149 pages and consists of an introduction, a main body in three chapters, a conclusion and a list of references. The main text contains 19 tables and 12 figures. The list of references comprises 68 titles in Bulgarian and English.

The first chapter presents social influence as a psychological and social phenomenon, including its essence, definitions, forms and levels of social manifestation. It covers the main theories and models of social influence, examines models of conformity and persuasion, and discusses the characteristics of unorganised social communities and of the digital environment with its specific features.

The second chapter sets out in detail the psychological, social and communication mechanisms of influence, as well as strategies for counteracting it.

The third chapter focuses on the methodology and the empirical study of deliberate social influence.

The theoretical part of the dissertation demonstrates the doctoral candidate’s understanding of the subject matter, an interdisciplinary approach to it, and the ability to critically evaluate existing models and the results of empirical studies.

The organisation of the empirical study is well structured. The object and subject of the study are defined, as well as the main aim of the dissertation.

The aim is broken down into six research tasks.

The selection of methods and the command of the principles governing their use meet the standards of training for psychologists in the field of general and social psychology.

Overall, the empirical study was planned and conducted on the basis of a model developed by the doctoral candidate herself. This is an indication of the depth of her systematic engagement with the subject matter.

The abstract fully reflects the content of the dissertation.

I have found no evidence of plagiarism by the doctoral candidate. The literature sources have been used correctly.

3. Comments and recommendations.

I have the following recommendation regarding the dissertation:

- The number of sources should be increased, and the literature review should be extended to include studies from the last 5 years.

This suggestion does not diminish the scientific value of the presented work.

4. Contributions

Overall, the dissertation provides grounds for formulating contributions in the following directions:

- Conceptualisation and investigation of a model that integrates psychological, social, communication and digital mechanisms and extends classical theories to the conditions of unorganised digital communities.

- Conceptualisation of social influence as an indirect, partly unconscious and interpretively structured process, rather than as a direct effect of external pressure.

- Development and application of a research toolkit enabling the empirical measurement of social influence in the digital environment.

The results of the study can be used to develop practical approaches for the recognition, limitation and prevention of deliberate influence in social networks.

5. Conclusion.

The presented dissertation is a timely study in a significant area of psychological knowledge. Its overall structure and contributions give me grounds to recommend that the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury vote to award the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 3.2 Psychology, “General Psychology”, to ANA ILIEVA KHALIL.

Varna
28.10.2026

Prepared by:
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