ACADEMIC OPINION

by Prof. Mayiana Milcheva Mitevska, DSc in Psychology

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Member of the Scientific Jury appointed by Order No. 591 of 29 September 2026 of the Rector of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"

Regarding: Dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD)

Field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences

Professional field: 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral programme: General Psychology

Author: Hulud Ghadir

Title: "Influence of School Environment on Achievement Motivation in Secondary School Students in Israel"

Scientific supervisors: Prof. Lyudmil Georgiev, DSc in Psychology, and Assoc. Prof. Ivaylo Lazarov, PhD

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Doctoral Candidate

By Order No. 591 of 29 September 2026 of the Rector of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", I was appointed an external member of the Scientific Jury for the defence of the dissertation by Hulud Ghadir entitled "Influence of School Environment on Achievement Motivation in Secondary School Students in Israel", submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in professional field 3.2. Psychology, doctoral programme "General Psychology". The doctoral candidate is pursuing independent doctoral study at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social, Economic and Computer Sciences, Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar". For the preparation of this academic opinion, I was provided with the dissertation, its abstract, and a statement of compliance with the minimum national requirements, including a list of publications related to the topic.

The dissertation is written in English and comprises 161 pages. Its contents include an introduction, four main chapters, a bibliography, and appendices. Ten statistical tables are presented, summarising the characteristics of the sample, the reliability of the research instrument, and the principal empirical findings. The work is structured in accordance with the logic of scientific research: from the theoretical framework and formulation of the research problem, through the methodological design and empirical analysis, to the interpretation of the findings and the formulation of practical recommendations. Taken as a whole, the submitted materials allow for a

reasoned assessment of the theoretical foundations, methodological choices, and scientific and applied outcomes of the research.

2. Relevance of the Topic

The topical relevance and scientific and applied significance of the dissertation problem emerge from the understanding that achievement motivation is one of the central psychological mechanisms determining students' attitudes towards learning activities, their academic engagement, their perseverance in overcoming difficulties, and their pursuit of the successful attainment of personal educational goals. Amid dynamic social changes, increasing educational demands, and the rapid introduction of digital technologies, the school environment acquires particular importance as a system of organisational, social, psychological, and pedagogical interactions. The doctoral candidate's endeavour to examine the school environment not merely as a set of material and organisational conditions but as a complex psychological system in which school climate, interpersonal relationships, leadership, teaching methods, and technological opportunities interact deserves a positive assessment.

The specific significance of the research is also determined by its sociocultural context. The Israeli education system is characterised by cultural diversity, differences in socioeconomic conditions, and a variety of educational practices, which provide grounds for examining the influence of the school environment on motivational processes. I also consider the issue addressed in the dissertation concerning the role of technology and artificial intelligence in contemporary education to be particularly timely. This research aspect broadens the traditional understanding of the educational environment and raises the question of the psychological prerequisites for effective technology-supported learning. In this respect, the selected topic is timely, socially significant, and consistent with contemporary directions in the development of educational, social, and organisational psychology.

3. Knowledge of the Research Problem

The theoretical part of the dissertation demonstrates familiarity with the principal concepts and research approaches concerning achievement motivation and the school environment. The doctoral candidate systematically considers the nature of the school environment, academic motivation, achievement motivation, academic self-efficacy, self-assessment of one's own abilities, goal orientation, fear of failure, causal attributions, and sense of school belonging. Particular attention is paid to the psychological characteristics of teacher–student relationships, group processes in the classroom, social support, psychological safety, and school culture. I positively assess the consideration of school leadership as a significant organisational and psychological factor influencing learning conditions, norms of interaction, and students' experience of support.

The theoretical analysis demonstrates an effort to integrate the individual-psychological and social-organisational levels of motivational processes. Previous empirical studies are reviewed, and the need for a comprehensive investigation of the various dimensions of the school environment in the context of secondary education in Israel is substantiated. I consider that the doctoral candidate demonstrates the necessary theoretical preparation and the ability to systematise scientific information relevant to the subject of the dissertation research.

4. Research Methodology

The methodological design of the study is governed by its principal objective: to establish assessments of the various dimensions of the school environment and their relationship with achievement motivation among secondary school students in Israel. A descriptive-analytical research approach was applied, using quantitative methods for collecting and processing empirical data. The study was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year and covered a total of 317 participants, including 283 students and 34 teachers. The gender distribution comprises 219 female and 98 male participants. The principal research instrument was a questionnaire containing 57 statements organised into six substantive dimensions: physical school environment; teacher–student relationships; classroom climate; school leadership; curriculum and teaching methods; and technology and artificial intelligence.

With regard to psychometric characteristics, the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The overall value was $\alpha = 0.852$, indicating good internal consistency of the instrument used. The values for the individual dimensions ranged from 0.702 to 0.871. IBM SPSS, version 25.0, was used for statistical processing. Descriptive statistical indicators and a one-sample t-test are presented to test the statistical significance of deviations in mean ratings from a reference value of 3. The research methodology makes it possible to describe and compare participants' perceptions of the different aspects of the school environment.

At the same time, a methodological limitation must be acknowledged. The one-sample t-test used makes it possible to establish whether the ratings differ significantly from a specified reference value, but it is not sufficient to demonstrate causal relationships between the school environment and achievement motivation. Accordingly, the results should be interpreted primarily as empirical evidence concerning the perceived motivational significance of the individual dimensions of the school environment. This methodological characteristic does not diminish the value of the research conducted, but it points to opportunities for the subsequent application of correlational, regression, and multivariate statistical models for a more in-depth examination of the interrelationships among the psychological constructs under consideration.

5. Characteristics and Assessment of the Dissertation and Its Contributions

The dissertation constitutes a comprehensive study of the psychological dimensions of the school environment and their significance for the formation and maintenance of achievement motivation. Chapter One develops the theoretical foundations of the study through an analysis of motivational processes, the social-psychological characteristics of school climate, pedagogical interactions, and organisational learning conditions. Chapter Two presents the methodological model, the study population, the characteristics of the participants, the structure of the questionnaire, and the statistical procedures used. Chapter Three contains the empirical findings, presented through descriptive statistics and the testing of research hypotheses. Chapter Four is devoted to the interpretation and discussion of the findings, the formulation of conclusions, and the development of practical recommendations.

The empirical analysis reveals high mean ratings across all the examined dimensions of the school environment. Of particular significance is the finding that classroom climate received the highest rating among the factors analysed. This draws attention to the psychological importance of immediate social interactions, a sense of security, mutual respect, support, and the quality of communication within the student group. The dimensions that follow in terms of their relative ratings are the curriculum and teaching methods, the physical school environment, teacher–student relationships, school leadership, and technology and artificial intelligence. The findings are related to the seven research hypotheses formulated, with the doctoral candidate reporting statistically significant deviations of the ratings from the selected reference value. From a scientific perspective, a particularly important conclusion is that the motivational potential of the school environment should be considered comprehensively. Material conditions, pedagogical approaches, and technological solutions matter, but their effective functioning is associated with the social-psychological atmosphere and the quality of interpersonal relationships.

From the standpoint of scientific value, several mutually complementary contributions may be distinguished. At the theoretical level, contemporary theoretical propositions concerning the relationship between the school environment and achievement motivation have been systematised, and an integrative approach to the examination of organisational, pedagogical, and social-psychological factors has been proposed. At the empirical level, data have been obtained on the perceptions of students and teachers within the Israeli education system regarding the motivational significance of six principal dimensions of the school environment. As a distinct finding, the leading position of classroom climate among the dimensions examined has been established on the basis of the mean ratings obtained. This finding is significant for understanding the social-psychological prerequisites of academic engagement. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of the school environment has been broadened by including technology and artificial intelligence as a separate research dimension. From a scientific and applied perspective, practical guidelines have been

formulated for improving school policies, pedagogical interactions, organisational climate, and mechanisms of student support. The contributions are predominantly empirical, systematising, and scientific-applied in nature, and they provide a foundation for subsequent research in educational and social psychology.

6. Assessment of Publications and the Doctoral Candidate's Personal Contribution

The submitted scientometric statement lists three sole-authored scientific publications related to the dissertation topic, published in 2025. The first publication, "The effect of school environment on achievement motivation among high school students in Israel", addresses the central research problem of the school environment and achievement motivation. The second publication, "Integrating technology and artificial intelligence in secondary education: impacts on learning motivation and academic achievement", focuses on the technological and digital aspects of the educational environment. The third publication, "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Achievement Motivation among Secondary School Students from an Educational Psychology Perspective", analyses the psychological significance of artificial intelligence for academic motivation.

Two of the publications appeared in the electronic scientific journal of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", while the third was included in the proceedings "Applied Psychology and Social Practice". The publications correspond thematically to the principal strands of the dissertation research and demonstrate consistency in the doctoral candidate's scientific interests. According to the submitted scientometric statement, 50 points have been reported under Group A and 30 points under Group G, thereby meeting the stated minimum national requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD). The fact that the publications are sole-authored provides grounds for recognising an individual authorial contribution to the presentation and public dissemination of the scientific findings. I positively assess the consistency between Hulud Ghadir's dissertation topic and publication activity.

7. Dissertation Abstract

The submitted dissertation abstract is written in Bulgarian and comprises 41 pages. It presents the principal characteristics of the dissertation research, including the relevance of the topic, the object and subject of investigation, the research aims and tasks, the methodological design, the empirical findings, and the main conclusions. The content of the abstract makes it possible to follow the logic of the scientific investigation and the principal findings obtained by the doctoral candidate. The presentation of the empirical findings in the context of the formulated research hypotheses, as well as the endeavour to derive practically applicable recommendations, deserves a positive assessment. I consider that the abstract reflects the essential aspects of the dissertation and fulfils its principal purpose of presenting the research to the scientific community.

8. Recommendations for the Future Use of the Dissertation Contributions and Findings

The results obtained outline prospects for the further development of research into achievement motivation and the psychological characteristics of the school environment. I recommend that Hulud Ghadir's future research be directed towards deepening the analysis of the psychological mechanisms through which school climate, social support, and pedagogical interactions are associated with academic motivation. Particularly promising is the application of multivariate statistical models that would enable examination of the relative contribution of different factors and the possible mediating and moderating effects of psychological variables such as self-efficacy, school belonging, psychological safety, and academic anxiety.

Comparative studies involving different types of schools, age groups, and sociocultural communities in Israel are also recommended. Further investigation of the role of artificial intelligence in the educational environment likewise offers substantial scientific potential, particularly with regard to students' autonomy, self-regulated learning, intrinsic motivation, and the quality of human–technology interaction. The practical application of the findings could be directed towards developing professional development programmes for teachers, improving school management, and establishing a psychologically supportive educational environment. These recommendations are constructive in nature and do not diminish the significance of the scientific and applied findings achieved.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation submitted by Hulud Ghadir, entitled "Influence of School Environment on Achievement Motivation in Secondary School Students in Israel", addresses a current and significant problem in contemporary psychological science. The study is distinguished by a clearly formulated research focus, an integrative examination of the psychological and organisational characteristics of the school environment, an empirical investigation that has been carried out, and practical recommendations derived from its findings. Notwithstanding the methodological limitations indicated, the dissertation contains scientific and scientific-applied results of a contributory nature that enrich empirical knowledge of the psychological prerequisites of achievement motivation in secondary education.

The doctoral candidate demonstrates the requisite theoretical knowledge, research skills, and capacity to investigate a scientific problem independently in the field of psychology. I consider that the submitted dissertation meets the principal scientific requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) under the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the applicable regulatory requirements of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar". On the basis of the foregoing, I give my POSITIVE ASSESSMENT of the dissertation and propose that the esteemed members of the

Scientific Jury vote to award the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD) to HULUD GHADIR in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, doctoral programme “General Psychology”.

Date: …… 2026 Prepared by: ……

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