

# REVIEW

## on the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Psychology"

**of a dissertation on the topic:** "The influence of new family members on sibling relationships - a study of differentiation, parental attitudes and conflict resolution skills".

**Professional field:** 3.2. "Psychology"

**Doctoral program:** "General Psychology"

**Doctoral student:** Lilah Schwartz-Peleg, VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar",  
Department of Psychology

**Scientific supervisor:** Prof. Dr. Sevdzhihan Eyubova

**Reviewer:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsvetan Petrov Petkov, in accordance with the  
Order of the Rector of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" № 193 of 27.03.2026

### I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

Sibling relationships are among the most enduring interpersonal bonds in a person's life. From early childhood to adulthood, these relationships are central to emotional development, the formation of personal identity, and the acquisition of social and interpersonal competencies. Unlike other family relationships, sibling relationships typically persist throughout life and are completely reorganized in response to developmental transitions and structural transformations within the family. Despite their relevance, research on sibling relationships has long remained on the relative periphery compared to research on parent-child and marital relationships. It is only in recent decades that the academic literature has begun to systematically examine the complexity of adult sibling interactions and their role in the psychological state and functioning of

the family. One key transition that reflects the dynamics in this subsystem is marriage: the integration of a spouse (son-in-law or daughter-in-law).

From this perspective, Lilach Schwarz-Peleg's dissertation examines the ways in which the arrival of new family members influences relationships between adult siblings. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from family systems theory, attachment theory, and Bowen's concept of self-differentiation, the study aims to deepen understanding of the psychological and relational mechanisms that shape sibling dynamics during family expansion.

Lilach Schwarz-Peleg's dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and six appendices containing research tools and questionnaires. The total volume is 195 pages, includes 7 tables and 9 figures. 98 sources in English and Hebrew are cited.

The parameters necessary for the dissertation research are defined, namely the object and subject of the research, the main goal of the dissertation, and the tasks set for solving. The sources are used correctly with precisely formatted references.

## **I. CHARACTERISTICS AND EVALUATION OF THE CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION.**

The content of the dissertation demonstrates in-depth knowledge of theoretical and empirical research in the field of family psychology.

The structure is logically constructed and subordinated to the comprehensive development of the research problem, the verification of the research hypotheses and the research questions arising from them.

**The introduction** is conceptually well-structured and fulfills its main functions – it introduces the reader to the issues, argues the significance of the study and clearly outlines its focus. The topic of relationships between siblings in adulthood, especially in the context of the inclusion of new members

(partners), is current and relatively poorly developed in the scientific literature, which gives the study high scientific and practical significance.

The first chapter, “**Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**” is entirely theoretical and contains six paragraphs. The literature review traces the development of scientific ideas about sibling relationships – from classical psychoanalytic concepts to contemporary systemic approaches. Key authors and theories are included, emphasizing the insufficient development of the problem in adulthood. Particularly valuable here are:

- the integration of different theoretical perspectives;
- the substantiation of the importance of parenting styles;
- the consideration of differentiation and conflict competence as key factors;
- the formulation of clear research questions.

In the second chapter “**Key Concepts and Theoretical Perspectives**” the author examines the quality of sibling relationships through various dimensions such as closeness, rivalry, and conflict. The concept of self-differentiation is developed in detail, tracing its role in regulating interpersonal interactions.

A particular strength of the chapter is its systematicity and logical consistency. The theoretical constructs are well explained and related to the research problem.

The third chapter “**Research Methodology**” describes the instruments used, the sample and the procedure for collecting and processing data. The combined methodological approach used (quantitative and qualitative) is adequate and allows for the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, which enriches the analysis and is particularly suitable for the study of complex socio-psychological phenomena.

The fourth chapter “**Results and Discussion**” contains the results of the study and their interpretation. The data are presented systematically, with

connections made between the main variables. The discussion is well-reasoned and demonstrates the ability to critically analyze and compare with existing scientific research.

The conclusion summarizes the results obtained from the dissertation research. The conclusions follow from the text, are logical and are directly related to the specific issue.

Overall, the content of the dissertation is characterized by logical consistency, scientific validity and clarity of presentation. The work has both theoretical and practical value. It addresses a significant and insufficiently researched problem by integrating theoretical analysis and empirical research.

## **II. ABSTRACT AND PUBLICATIONS ON THE DISSERTATION**

The abstract of the dissertation truly and accurately reflects the dissertation, and the publications on it are sufficient and include essential aspects of the doctoral student's work.

The author's participation in obtaining the **contributions** to the dissertation are adequately reflected, both from a scientific and practical perspective:

- The study reframes adult sibling relationships by identifying the entry of in-laws as a distinct transitional moment in the development of the family life cycle;
- The study shows that adult sibling relationships are dynamic, not static, and continue to evolve as family structures expand through marriage and the integration of new family members;
- The study advances systemic family theory by offering an integrative framework that links Bowen's concept of self-differentiation, perceived parental favoritism, and conflict resolution processes in explaining variation in the quality of adult sibling relationships;

- The study offers a broader conceptual understanding of how psychological and relational variables interact during periods of family transformation;
- The study highlights complex relational dynamics involving loyalty tensions between commitment to a partner and emotional attachment to siblings, including an insider–outsider process in the integration of in-laws into the family system;
- The study offers a methodological framework for examining sibling relationships during periods of family transformation by integrating quantitative survey data and qualitative semi-structured interviews;
- The study applies established research instruments to measure the quality of sibling relationships, self-differentiation, perceived parental favoritism, and conflict resolution skills, along with a qualitative interview protocol developed for this study;
- The results may assist family therapy, psychological counseling, and relationship counseling by better understanding communication, loyalty, and conflict in extended family systems.

Four publications are cited in the dissertation, which present substantial parts of the work.

### **III. CRITICAL NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

I have no critical remarks on the essential aspects of the main theses and their proof in the dissertation. In the course of developing the dissertation work and in my capacity as a reviewer, the doctoral student tried in good faith to reflect the notes made.

### **IV. CONCLUSION:**

The presented dissertation work of Lilach Schwarz-Peleg has the character of an independent scientific study. With it, the author reveals his in-

depth theoretical knowledge and skills in conducting and interpreting empirical research. The dissertation contains contributions in both theoretical and practical aspects.

**Based on the above, I propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Lilach Schwarz-Peleg in "General Psychology" professional field 3.2. "Psychology".**

the city of Varna  
11.06.2026

Reviewer:  
(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsvetan Petkov)