СОФИЙСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
„СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ФИЛОСОФСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ

SOFIA UNIVERSITY
St. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI
FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

Review

prepared by Prof. YOANA YANKULOVA, PhD, D.Sc.

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Social, Organizational, Clinical and Educational Psychology

Subject: Materials submitted for review in connection with the announced competition for the award of the academic position of „Associate Professor“ in Higher Education Field 3: Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.2. Psychology, in the following academic disciplines: “Psychology of Terrorism and Negotiation”, “Business Negotiations”, “Management Psychology”, “Psychology”, and “Psychological Interviewing, Interrogation and Confession”, at the Department of “Psychology and Police Management”, Faculty of Police, Academy of the Ministry of Interior. This review statement has been prepared pursuant to Article 49, paragraph 4, item 4 of the Ministry of Interior Act, in conjunction with Article 4, paragraph 2 of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and Article 57, paragraph 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria, on the basis of an Order issued by the Rector of the Academy of the Ministry of Interior (No. 4581з-2169/ 14 October 2026) appointing the academic jury in connection with the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette (Issue No. 73/ 14 August 2026). **Candidate in the competition:** DIANA ANCHEVA BOZHANOVA

1. Brief Professional and Academic Profile of the Candidate

D. Bozhanova holds a Master's degree in Psychology from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and a doctoral degree in Psychology (specialisation: “Activity Psychology”) from the Academy of the Ministry of Interior (2024). Her professional career began in 1993 as a psychologist at the Institute of Psychology of the Ministry of Interior, and since 2016 she has held the academic position of Senior Lecturer at the Academy of the Ministry of Interior. Her professional career combines extensive practical experience within the Ministry of Interior with teaching and research activities. Her academic interests are primarily in the fields of criminal, police and crisis psychology, the psychology of negotiations, lie detection and professional psychodiagnostics. The scholarly output submitted for the competition addresses both important theoretical issues and specific applied aspects of psychological knowledge relevant to the work of Ministry of Interior officers.

2. Evaluation of the Candidate’s Scholarly Works

The submitted scholarly output comprises three monographs and publications addressing issues in the fields of applied and police psychology. These works cover various thematic areas, including the psychology of lying and crisis negotiations, terrorist behaviour, professional burnout and interaction with vulnerable groups in police practice.

More specifically, the monograph *Verbal Indicators of Lying* examines the possibilities of identifying deceptive behaviour through the analysis of verbal communication patterns. A substantial part of the work is devoted to presenting and systematising scientific perspectives on the psychology of lying, formulating an original definition and identifying specific verbal indicators. A positive feature of the monograph is the

author's effort to link leading theoretical concepts to specific professional situations requiring an assessment of the credibility of the information provided. Particular attention should be paid to the proposed comprehensive model of verbal indicators and the practical guidelines developed for their use in interrogation and operational interviewing. These elements considerably enhance the applied value of the monograph and directly orient it towards the needs of police practice. It should, of course, be borne in mind that individual linguistic features cannot, in themselves, be regarded as unequivocal evidence of deception. They must therefore be interpreted within the context of the relevant communicative situation. The questionnaire developed for determining the chronological age of migrants is also undoubtedly among the practical merits of the work. Its initial pilot testing indicates potential applicability in the work of the relevant police structures; however, its use as a psychodiagnostic instrument requires further examination of its psychometric properties, including reliability and validity, in future research. Consequently, the monograph represents a significant contribution to the field of the psychology of lying, with its main strengths lying in the synthesis of leading scientific perspectives, the formulation of an original model and the practical application of specialised psychological knowledge to police communication.

The monograph *Negotiations in Hostage Crises* examines the psychological, communicative and organisational aspects of the negotiation process in high-risk situations. In this regard, the characteristics of hostage-takers and hostages, the possibilities for building trust, approaches to psychological influence and the organisation of the negotiation team's work are analysed in depth. Particular attention is given to the interaction between negotiators and the relevant command and tactical structures as an essential element in managing such crisis situations. The author's approach is commendable in that it considers negotiations not merely as a communicative process between the immediate participants, but also as a specific activity requiring precise coordination, organisational preparation and consideration of the dynamics of the particular incident. The scientific contributions of the work, which emerge from the synthesis of psychological concepts and the possibilities presented for adapting them to the specific nature of hostage crises, are primarily theoretical, applied and methodological in character. The practical significance of the monograph lies in the potential use of the accumulated and systematised psychological, communicative and organisational approaches in the professional training of specialists involved in conducting crisis negotiations.

The monograph *Conducting Negotiations in Demonstrative Suicide Attempts* was published on the basis of the doctoral dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor. Its research foundation includes an analysis of 130 crisis cases from the practice of the Institute of Psychology of the Ministry of Interior (2010–2020), as well as a survey involving 268 Ministry of Interior officers. The findings were used to examine the characteristics of crisis situations and to summarise professional assessments of the application of the negotiation method. A comparison with the doctoral dissertation reveals no substantial differences in the theoretical and empirical foundations of the research, nor any additional findings that would justify the identification of a new scientific contribution.

The articles *The Personality of the Terrorist* and *Hate Speech: A Different Psychological Perspective* are characterised by their review and analytical approach and address issues related to terrorist behaviour, radicalisation and aggressive communication. These publications broaden the thematic scope of the scholarly output beyond crisis negotiations and the psychology of lying. However, some of the conclusions drawn would benefit from more in-depth empirical substantiation in future research.

The co-authored publication *Burnout Syndrome: Risks of Professional Burnout among Fire Safety and Civil Protection Officers and Its Relationship with Satisfaction with Professional Development* presents the findings of an empirical study involving 396 participants. On this basis, the manifestations of professional burnout and their relationship with job satisfaction and professional development are analysed. The publication has practical value because it also addresses the psychological well-being of employees in the fire safety and civil protection system. However, the findings should be assessed in light of certain limitations relating to the operationalisation of the constructs under investigation, the way they were measured and the predominantly descriptive nature of the analysis. Since these factors limit the possibility of drawing more definitive conclusions about the relationships identified, the findings should be interpreted with a degree of methodological caution.

The article *Psychological Aspects of Working with Older People as Victims and Witnesses of Crime* analyses age-related and psychological characteristics of older people as a vulnerable group with whom police officers interact in certain situations. It examines specific aspects directly relevant to communication and information gathering from older people, while taking their individual characteristics into account in cases where they are victims or witnesses of crime. The publication has applied and methodological value, as it emphasises important aspects of professional interaction between police officers and this vulnerable group.

In summary, the submitted scholarly output demonstrates the author's sustained thematic interest in the fields of criminal, police and crisis psychology. More clearly defined original works with a practical focus are evident in the areas of the psychology of lying and negotiations in crisis situations. In addition, the candidate has submitted publications that are predominantly review-based and analytical in nature. Critical remarks have been made, relating mainly to the methodological substantiation of certain studies, which could be further developed in future research.

3. Citation Impact and Compliance with the Minimum National Requirements

According to the submitted report, 11 citations of the candidate's scholarly publications and monographs have been recorded, accounting for a total of 70 points. These references indicate that some of her works have been taken up in subsequent scholarly publications and used by other authors in the relevant thematic fields. When evaluating citation activity, the nature of the citing sources should also be taken into account, including their academic orientation and institutional affiliation. The number of citations alone, however, is not sufficient to provide a comprehensive assessment of scholarly impact. The nature of the citing publications, the academic standing of the journals and the way in which the candidate's works have been used in them are also relevant.

According to the data in the submitted report, the candidate has accumulated a total of 432.5 points under indicator groups A, B, C and D for Professional Field 3.2 “Psychology”. This total includes the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (2024), the monograph *Verbal Indicators of Lying*, submitted as the habilitation work, two additional monographs and four scholarly publications. The report does not list any publications in scientific journals indexed in internationally recognised databases. This circumstance is taken into account when assessing the international visibility of the scholarly output, but is not regarded, in itself, as sufficient grounds for lowering the assessment of the other research results or their significance.

4. Scientific and Applied Research Contributions

On the basis of the analysis of the submitted scholarly works, several main areas can be identified in which the candidate has focused her research efforts and achieved specific scientific and applied results.

1. The contributions to the psychology of lying consist in the systematisation of verbal indicators of deceptive behaviour and the development of a comprehensive model for identifying them in the context of police communication. The formulation of an original definition of lying and the practical guidelines provided for using the indicators discussed in interrogation and operational interviewing also constitute important contributions.
2. Contributions based on research findings relating to negotiations in crisis situations involving demonstrative suicide attempts can also be identified. For this purpose, specific cases from the practice of the Institute of Psychology of the Ministry of Interior were analysed, together with a survey conducted among Ministry of Interior officers, and professional assessments concerning the application of the negotiation method were summarised. The work has an empirical and applied orientation and contributes to the synthesis of accumulated professional experience in this specific field. However, its similarity to the doctoral dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor should be taken into account when determining its independent scientific contribution.
3. The scientific contributions relating to negotiations in hostage crises emerge from the synthesis of psychological concepts, communication strategies and organisational principles. They concern the work of negotiation teams, interaction among negotiators, hostages and hostage-takers, coordination between

negotiation and tactical structures, and the adaptation of these approaches to the specific nature of the negotiation process in hostage crises.

4. The publications in the field of applied and police psychology broaden and complement the thematic scope of the submitted scholarly output through analyses of issues concerning various aspects of police activity. Their contributions are predominantly analytical, review-based and applied-methodological in nature, and consist in presenting and discussing the psychological aspects of terrorist behaviour, aggressive communication, professional burnout and interaction with older people when they are victims or witnesses of crime.
5. In the field of practical psychodiagnostics, a questionnaire has been developed and piloted for the preliminary assessment of the chronological age of migrants. It is intended to support the initial assessment carried out by the relevant police structures. The instrument has a specific practical orientation and potential for application in particular professional situations. However, since its diagnostic value and the limits of its applicability have not yet been sufficiently clearly established, further psychometric testing in future research is necessary.

In summary, the scientific and applied contributions of the submitted works are concentrated primarily in the fields of the psychology of lying, crisis negotiations and the application of psychological knowledge in police practice. Other works have an analytical, review-based and applied-methodological orientation and complement the thematic scope of the scholarly output. Together with the candidate's extensive professional experience, they demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and her ability to competently and appropriately link psychological theory with the performance of specific professional tasks.

5. Overall Assessment and Conclusion

The analysis of the submitted scholarly output reveals a consistent thematic focus in D. Bozhanova's publication and research activities on issues in criminal, police and crisis psychology. A significant strength of her professional profile is her extensive practical experience within the Ministry of Interior, combined with teaching and research activities at the Academy of the Ministry of Interior. The submitted works are thematically related to the needs of police practice and address issues of specific professional relevance. More clearly defined scientific and applied research results are evident in the areas of the psychology of lying and crisis negotiations. Her efforts to systematise psychological knowledge and apply it to the resolution of specific professional tasks deserve a positive assessment. At the same time, certain limitations in the submitted scholarly output should be acknowledged. Some publications are predominantly review-based and analytical in nature, while the empirical substantiation and methodological justification of certain works could be further developed in future research. It should also be noted that a comparison of the monograph *Conducting Negotiations in Demonstrative Suicide Attempts* with the doctoral dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor reveals no substantial theoretical or empirical advancement with regard to the data and research findings presented. Notwithstanding these limitations, my overall assessment of the candidate's professional development and the main areas of her research activity remains positive. Furthermore, on the basis of the analysis of the scholarly works and the additional documentation submitted, I consider that D. Bozhanova also meets the legal and academic requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 3.2 “Psychology”.

IN CONCLUSION, I recommend that the respected Academic Jury support the election of DIANA ANCHEVA BOZHANOVA to the academic position of Associate Professor in Higher Education Area 3 “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”, Professional Field 3.2 “Psychology”, for the needs of the Department of Psychology and Police Management at the Faculty of Police of the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, in the following courses: “Psychology of Terrorism and Negotiation”, “Business Negotiations”, “Management Psychology”, “Psychology”, and “Psychological Interview, Interrogation and Confession”.

9 November 2026 Reviewer: ……..

(Prof. Yoana Yankulova)