OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Georgiev Dimitrov, D. Sc

on the materials submitted in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor"

by Dr. Diana Ancheva Bozhanova

Dr. Diana Ancheva Bozhanova has submitted several highly valuable scientific works for participation in the competition. I will begin with the monograph Verbal Indicators of Deception, Sofia, 2026, published by Avangard Prima, ISBN 978-619-279-257-2.

The monograph ‘Verbal Indicators of Deception’ comprises 164 pages and consists of four chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The bibliography includes 78 sources, predominantly in English and Russian, which testifies to the author's thorough familiarity with contemporary scientific literature. The work is richly illustrated with examples from real practice and from seminar classes with cadets at the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, which lends it a distinctly practical orientation.

The content is logically structured. The first chapter examines the nature of deception; the second is devoted to its detection and traces the evolution of methods for this purpose. The third chapter, the core of the study, presents a detailed systematization of verbal indicators of deception: linguistic errors, evasive answers, delayed responses, appeals to moral authority, irrelevant information, short stories, the role of memory, embedded lies, grammatical rules, speech dysfunction, and assessment of the validity of statements. The fourth chapter has a clearly applied character and presents tactics for detecting deception during interrogation or operational interviews, including manipulative techniques and a questionnaire for determining the age of immigrants.

The scientific and applied contributions of the work can be summarized in several directions. The author makes a successful attempt to systematize the verbal indicators of deception scattered throughout the scientific literature, arranging them in a logically consistent framework applicable to police practice. An indisputable contribution is also her own field experiment with cadets from the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, which provides the author with an empirical basis for her observations on the verbal behavior of liars and truth-tellers. The work also offers concrete, practically applicable tactics for detecting deception in the context of interrogation, which makes it valuable both for serving police officers and for lecturers and trainees within the Ministry of Interior system. As an original contribution with clear practical value, the study on determining the age of illegal immigrants should also be noted – a topic that is particularly relevant yet insufficiently researched in Bulgaria.

Overall, the monograph represents a thorough, well-structured, and practically oriented study that fills an existing gap in Bulgarian scientific literature on the problem of non-instrumental lie

detection. The author demonstrates excellent theoretical preparation, extensive practical experience, and the ability to synthesize scientific knowledge into tools applicable to police practice.

Dr. Bozhanova also presents two other published monographs.

The first, ‘Negotiations in Hostage Crises’ (2025), represents a thorough and practically oriented study of negotiations as a method for resolving hostage crises in police practice. The author traces the historical development of the method while also presenting her own experience as a negotiator and participant in FBI training. Particularly valuable are the sections on the teamwork of the negotiation team, the role of situation boards, dealing with demands and ultimatums, as well as the detailed analysis of the Stockholm syndrome and the behavior of hostages and hostage-takers. The work combines a solid theoretical foundation with concrete practical guidelines and has direct applied value for Ministry of Interior officers.

The second, entitled ‘Conducting Negotiations in Demonstrative Suicide Attempts’ (2024), builds upon the author's dissertation and represents a comprehensive study of crisis intervention in demonstrative suicide attempts. It combines a thorough theoretical review of the factors of suicidal behavior with a detailed presentation of the stages and tactics of the negotiation process – from initial contact and suicide risk assessment to active listening, building trust, and achieving behavioral change. Particularly valuable is the practical orientation of the work – concrete techniques, example phrases, and an analysis of three real cases that illustrate both successful interventions and mistakes made. The work fills a significant gap in Bulgarian scientific literature and has clear applied value for psychologists and police officers working with individuals in suicidal crisis.

I would also like to draw attention, in a few words, to Dr. Bozhanova's dissertation itself. It is entitled ‘Conducting Negotiations in Demonstrative Suicide Attempts’. The content is logically structured: the first section examines the theoretical aspects of suicide and suicide attempts – historical and philosophical perspectives, major theories, and a detailed classification of factors; the second is devoted to the method of "negotiation," its essence, typology, psychological foundations, and specific application in police practice; the third presents the results of the empirical study conducted. The empirical part is particularly valuable: the study covers 130 cases of demonstrative suicide attempts for the period 2010-20, analyzed through content analysis of checklists and official reports, as well as a survey among 268 officers from various structures within the Ministry of Interior system. A number of significant conclusions have been drawn, and the scientific and applied contributions are clearly articulated: for the first time in Bulgaria, a summary and analysis of the work of police structures in managing crisis incidents involving demonstrative suicide attempts has been carried out, and the possibilities of conducting negotiations specifically in this type of incident have been studied; indicators of suicidal behavior with direct practical value have been identified. Overall, the work represents a thorough, well-

structured, and practically oriented study, and the author demonstrates excellent theoretical preparation and the ability to synthesize results into concrete recommendations for police practice.

I also draw attention to the articles submitted by Dr. Bozhanova for participation in the competition.

1. 'The Language of Hate – A Different Psychological Perspective' offers an original psychological reading, examining hate speech not only as an attitude towards certain groups but also as an established style of everyday communication. The author skilfully connects socio-psychological theories with concrete observations of Bulgarian reality after the democratic changes. Particularly valuable is the idea that an aggressive style of communication is perceived as the norm and even as assertive behaviour, which makes the text relevant and with a clear practical orientation. The article is well structured, with clear argumentation and a convincing conclusion about the risks of dehumanization and the loss of moral guidelines in society.

2. 'The Personality of the Terrorist' is a thorough and balanced analysis of the personality traits of individuals engaged in terrorist activity. The author correctly notes that a universal profile of the terrorist is difficult to construct, yet she succeeds in synthesizing numerous research positions. Particularly valuable is the attempt to distinguish between the leader and the executor in a terrorist organization, as well as the analysis of the role of social identity and group belonging. The article is relevant, well-argued, and has direct practical value for the work of security services.

3. 'Burnout Syndrome – Risks of Professional Burnout among Fire Safety and Population Protection (FSPP) Employees and Its Relationship with Satisfaction with Professional Development' (co-authored) is devoted to a relevant and insufficiently researched problem in Bulgaria – professional burnout among FSPP employees. The authors demonstrate good theoretical preparation by presenting the essence of the syndrome and its three key dimensions. Particularly valuable is the empirical study conducted among 396 employees, which establishes a relationship between burnout levels and professional satisfaction, as well as differences between individual areas of activity. The conclusions and recommendations are concrete and applicable, which makes the article useful both for the FSPP management and for psychologists within the Ministry of Interior system.

As regards the scientific metrics, Dr. Diana Ancheva Bozhanova provides evidence that she fully meets the minimal national requirements. Further, I do not find, nor do I have any information about, plagiarism in her works.

Based on the foregoing, I confidently recommend to the respected scientific jury to award Dr. Diana Ancheva Bozhanova the academic position of 'Associate Professor'.

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