

Review

by Prof. Dr. Georgi Panov, DMS,

Head of the Department of "Nervous Diseases, Psychiatry and Psychology",

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of the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, in the scientific specialty "Social Psychology".

In the competition for an associate professor, announced in the State Gazette, issue 91/29.10.2024 and on the website of Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas, for the needs of the Department of "Nervous Diseases, Psychiatry and Psychology" at the Faculty of Medicine, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova from Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" participates as a candidate.

Brief biographical data

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova was born on 08.04.1969 in the city of Burgas. She obtained a bachelor's degree from Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski", specialty "Primary School Pedagogy" and a master's degree from the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas, specialty "Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy". She has specializations in Defectology and Alternative Didactic and Methodological Technologies in the Educational Process. She holds two educational and scientific degrees "doctor" - in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, in the scientific specialty "Social Psychology" from Burgas Free University and under code 05.07.01. Theory of Education and Didactics from Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski" - Blagoevgrad. Since 2016. is an associate professor in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.9. Tourism (Management ethics and psychology in tourism).

From 2010 to 2017, he was successively an assistant and chief assistant at the College of Tourism at Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" – Burgas, and from 2017 to the present, he is an associate professor at the Faculty of Medicine at Burgas State University

“Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov” – Burgas. He is a member of the Burgas Association for Ecological and Rural Tourism.

The candidate presents 7 certificates issued by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Arts – Demographic Institute in: General Psychotherapy; Special Psychotherapy; Psychotherapeutic Methods and Practices; Conceptual Foundations of Applied Psychoanalysis; Psychoanalytic Therapy; Clinical Practice of Psychoanalysis and Applied Social Psychology

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova is the only candidate in the competition. The inspection of the documents shows that no violations of the competition were committed. The legal requirements and the requirements of Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas were complied with.

General description of the submitted materials

The candidate, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova, participates in the competition with: 1 monograph; 3 textbooks and 16 articles and scientific reports. Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in the literature (known citations) - a total of 32 citations by Bulgarian and foreign authors.

General characteristics of the candidate's activities

Educational and pedagogical activity (work with students)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova has a higher pedagogical education and has extensive experience as a university lecturer. Her work biography shows that she has taught at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski" - Blagoevgrad; Institute of Education and Management - Blagoevgrad; VUARR - Plovdiv and from 2009 to the present at the Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas. He successively holds the academic positions of "assistant" and "chief assistant" at the University of Tourism and Research - Plovdiv and at the College of Tourism at Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov". He currently holds the academic position of "associate professor" at the Faculty of Medicine at Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov".

The planned classroom workload of the candidate for the academic year 2024 - 2025 for the "Professional Bachelor", "Bachelor" and "Master" fully meets the required minimum of hours worked.

The candidate has prepared curricula and delivers lectures and seminars in the following academic disciplines: Personality Psychology; Applied Psychology; Social Psychology; Theory and Practice of Psychological Counseling; Management Psychology; Psychology of Organizational Behavior; Social Psychology in Tourism; Management Business Ethics; Ethics in Tourism.

The analysis of the scientific publications of Dr. Stefanova shows that there is a close connection between her scientific research and teaching activities. She is the author of 3 independent textbooks that meet the requirements for educational literature, are developed on the topic of the competition and have a good scientific and methodological level. The candidate has actively participated in national, regional and university research projects, which has enriched and updated his knowledge and experience as a teacher and researcher.

I assess the educational and pedagogical activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova as fully meeting the requirements of Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" for obtaining the academic position of "Associate Professor".

Scientific and scientific-applied activities

For participation in the competition, scientific production is presented, which is in accordance with the field of higher education, the professional field and the scientific specialty of the announced competition and includes: 1 independent monograph with a volume of 211 pages; 3 textbooks with a total volume of 462 pages; 16 publications, of which 10 independent, 5 first author, 1 co-author; participation in 7 international and 4 Bulgarian conferences; Participation in 5 projects, of which 3 national, 1 regional and 1 university. 32 citations were noted in monographs, textbooks, textbooks, articles in refereed and peer-reviewed publications and reports from Bulgarian and international conferences.

The candidate's publications cover the period 2018 - 2024, which includes 6 years of active research and teaching activity. The scientific level of the scientific production submitted for review can be qualified as very good. The publications are developed at a high scientific level, treat current problems in social-psychological theory and practice and are directly related to the current competition. The citations report makes it clear that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova is a well-known researcher in the scientific community. The presented reports have been presented at significant scientific forums, some of them at international ones, and the articles have been published in refereed and/or peer-reviewed scientific journals, some of which abroad.

The review of the candidate's publications in his research activity gives grounds to distinguish the following thematic areas: 1) Social Psychology; 2) Applied Psychology; 3) Personality Psychology; 4) Psychology of Consumer Behavior; 5) Social Psychology in Tourism.

The main results in the scientific and scientific-applied analysis of psychological theory and practice can be reported as follows: In this competition, Assoc. Prof. Stefanova applies with an independently published monograph "Attitudes and Behavior of Consumers in Choosing a Tourist Destination. Social and Psychological Aspects", which was prepared on the basis of a defended dissertation. In it, the author presents the theoretical foundations of the study of consumer attitudes, analyzes various aspects of consumer and tourist behavior and indicates the psychological interrelationships between them. He examines the basic theories in social psychology about attitudes, deduces the main factors for their formation and correctly presents the design of the study, the analysis of the results and the conclusions from the empirical study. The original author's methodology used enriches scientific knowledge with the analyses, conclusions and prescriptions in relation to the psychology of consumer behavior in tourism, and a significant scientific result can be reported in relation to the clustering of target groups, models, conclusions and recommendations, which can serve as a valuable guide for the future development of the industry.

The book "Psychology of Personality" covers in a relatively detailed plan the topics of personality in the social environment, with significant attention paid to various theories and typologies of personality. The content is presented briefly, systematically, accessible, but also scientifically correct and can be useful for both students and specialists working in various applied branches of psychology and pedagogy.

In "Social Psychology" the author makes a successful attempt to structure in 4 chapters the historical and contemporary development of psychology, the place of social psychology in scientific knowledge, communication as a socio-psychological phenomenon, as well as the specific features of the small group. The principles and research methods, the concepts of social psychological analysis, the social role, social status and behavior of the personality, communication and social relationships, classifications and theoretical approaches for studying small groups are consistently examined.

The book "Social Psychology in Tourism" is addressed primarily to students of the specialty "Tourism" and to all those employed in the tourism industry. The author examines

the socio-psychological aspects of tourist service and analyzes in detail new elements of social psychology in tourism. A little-studied area is also covered, namely visual psychodiagnostics and its application in tourism. Visual verbal and non-verbal matching are examined in detail. Special attention is paid to the socio-psychological characteristics of tourists of different nationalities, which specialists involved in the tourism industry should know.

The articles and reports submitted for review clearly reflect the categorical interest of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova in the study of social psychology problems, especially in tourism. She demonstrates experience and skills in systematizing and critically evaluating theories and methodological approaches in the researched scientific fields, in clearly defining problems and formulating guidelines for solving them. The candidate has an affinity and ability to closely connect scientific research with their practical applicability. The analysis of the scientific materials shows that the scientific research activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova contains analytical, logical, scientific correctness and constructiveness. The relevance of the researched issues, its economic significance and its practical applicability give me reason to conclude that the peer-reviewed scientific production of the candidate for associate professor meets the requirements for holding the academic position.

Scientific and applied scientific contributions

In the above-mentioned main areas of research activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova, the following contributions of a theoretical and practical-applied nature stand out:

- ✓ Basic concepts in the theory of consumer behavior are defined;
- ✓ The construct “attitude” is presented and its conceptual framework is comprehensively developed;
- ✓ The strategic aspects and psychological interrelationships between attitudes and behavior are objectified and the main factors influencing them are determined;
- ✓ A theoretical model and its empirical aspect are derived, through which all relevant attributes for predicting human behavior can be specified;
- ✓ A methodological toolkit is designed and the importance of applying psychological knowledge in the tourism industry is noted;
- ✓ Numerous psychological theories and typologies of personality are indicated and the function of public consciousness for its formation is established;

- ✓ The influence of social psychology on various social sectors and on the mechanisms of mutual influence and interaction between individuals, groups and communities is proven;
- ✓ The application of visual psychodiagnostics in the field of tourism is found;
- ✓ The socio-cultural and psychological aspects in the tourism industry are examined and the modern interdisciplinary direction "social psychology in tourism" is clarified.

I believe that the scientific and applied contributions presented enrich the scientific knowledge of social psychology in a theoretical and practical aspect, present in a synthesized form the most important scientific achievements of the candidate and have a specific relevance to this competition. I accept the report on the contributions made by Assoc. Prof. Stefanova and I believe that her self-assessment is correct. The presented list of citations proves the interest in the scientific publications of the candidate, which have clearly received public recognition and are used by the scientific community.

In accordance with the requirements for holding the academic position of "associate professor", the candidate meets the minimum national requirements and the recommended criteria of Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, in the scientific specialty "Social Psychology". In total, Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Stefanova has achieved 920 points in all groups of indicators with a required minimum of 750 points.

Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution

The comprehensive review of the submitted scientific works gives me reason to believe that the candidate has a high level of literary awareness of the researched problems. The good mastery and successful use of the main modern research approaches is impressive, as well as the ability to systematize and critically interpret classical and new theories, to formulate and defend one's own theses. On this basis, the personal contribution of Assoc. Prof. Stefanova is also evident, expressed mainly in in-depth research, creative interpretation and further development of the theory and methodology in the field of social psychology and psychology in tourism. I accept all submitted publications as having a direct or indirect relationship to the competition for associate professor. I have no doubt about the personal contribution of the candidate in the publications submitted for consideration, as well as that the reflected contributions and obtained results are her personal merit.

Critical remarks and recommendations

No serious weaknesses were identified in the texts submitted for review, but it was found that in individual publications the factual knowledge and inductive generalizations characteristic of academic literature prevail, without reflecting the author's view. This in no way belittles the significance of the candidate's scientific production. The submitted works have a well-structured linguistic text, the style is academic, in-depth and understandable, the objectives are clearly and precisely formulated, the studies are in-depth and accurately substantiated. The reference and bibliographic apparatus has been used correctly. I recommend that the candidate publish in reputable journals and participate with reports at international conferences abroad. For better dissemination of the obtained scientific results and increase in citation by foreign authors, to publish in English.

Personal impressions

I have known the candidate since she joined the Department of "Nervous Diseases, Psychiatry and Psychology". Her work is distinguished by thoroughness, systematicity and consistency in the chosen scientific field. The scientific and teaching activities of Assoc. Prof. Stefanova are distinguished by their interdisciplinary nature and cover a wide range of areas of psychology, pedagogy and tourism. This is a strong indicator of the diverse interests and creative path of the candidate and gives greater prospects for future scientific development. I am convinced that Assoc. Prof. Stefanova possesses all the professional qualities to occupy the academic position of "Associate Professor" in social psychology - scientific erudition, teaching approaches, collegiality and responsibility.

In conclusion, taking into account the above, I propose that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sonya Stefanova be elected as an "Associate Professor" at Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, in the scientific specialty "Social Psychology".

13.03.2025

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(Prof. Dr. Georgi Panov, DMS)