

## REVIEW

about the works of **Dr. Irina Topuzova**

Chief Assistant Professor at the International Business School, Botevgrad 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 (Work and Organizational Psychology)

announced in the State Gazette, issue 8 of 28 January 2025, for the needs of the International Business School, Botevgrad

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### **1. Information about the competition and the candidate for participation**

The competition in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (Work and Organizational Psychology) has been announced in the State Gazette, issue 8 of January 28, 2025, for the needs of the International Business School, Botevgrad. The review was assigned by decision of the Scientific Jury, determined by Order 032/31.03.2025 of the Rector of the International Business School, Botevgrad.

The only candidate in the competition is Dr. Irina Topuzova, Chief Assistant Professor at the International Business School, Botevgrad. The documents submitted by the candidate for the competition meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its application for occupying the academic position of Associate Professor.

Irina Topuzova graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Primary School Pedagogy and English in 2007 and a Master's degree in Legal Psychology in 2010 from the South-West University "Neofit Rilski". In 2016 she obtained the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in the professional field 3.2 Psychology, Doctoral Program "Occupational Psychology and Professional Psychodiagnosis" with the defense of her doctoral dissertation on "Educational Reform and Motivation of the Academic staff".

Dr. Irina Topuzova has extensive administrative and organizational experience in the

Dean's Office of the Faculty of Philosophy of South-West University "Neofit Rilski". At the same university, she was initially a part-time assistant professor since 2011, an assistant professor since 2016, and since 2018 she has been a Chief Assistant Professor in Psychology (Work and Organizational Psychology) at the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy of South-West University "Neofit Rilski". Since 2021 she has been a Chief Assistant Professor in Work and Organizational Psychology at IBS - Botevgrad. Her teaching workload and research interests are in the field of work and organizational psychology with a focus on leadership, organizational culture, organizational change and employee motivation. She is a Head of the Master's programs in Business Psychology, Human Resource Management and Work Psychology and Organizational and Business Psychology (in English) at IBS – Botevgrad.

In addition to her administrative, teaching and research activities, Irina Topuzova actively participates and has a long-term participation in a number of international university projects funded by Horizon 2020, Erasmus and the 7th Framework Program of the EU. She has experience as Editor-in-Chief of the journal "Psychological Thought", PsychOpen, (Scopus), South-West University "Neofit Rilski". Irina Topuzova is an expert - external evaluator under the Erasmus+ Program, Human Resources Development Center (HRDC) and Secretary of the Work and Organizational Psychology Section of the Society of Psychologists in Bulgaria. Her entire career so far has been characterized by the consistent development and accumulation of diverse scientific expertise and extensive organizational and practical experience in the field of work and organizational psychology.

## **2. Evaluation of scientific papers**

Dr. Irina Topuzova participated in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor with a scientific output of 14 publications, of which 2 independent monographs, 1 book developed on the basis of the dissertation, 1 study and 4 articles in Bulgarian, and in English and co-authorship – 1 chapter of a collective monograph, 1 study and 4 articles, and the study and two of the articles have been published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information (Scopus & WoS). A balance has been achieved between solo and co-authored publications, which testifies to the fact that Dr. Irina Topuzova has the qualities and skills of an autonomous researcher, as well as being able to work in collaboration and interaction with other researchers, including in an international context.

The monograph "Organizational Culture and Leadership. Cultural Leadership Code"

(2025, Botevgrad: IBS Publishing House. ISBN: 978-619-7610-34-5 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15068456>) is essentially the habilitation work of Dr. Irina Topuzova. It provides an in-depth and reasoned reading of the existing views and theories regarding leadership and organizational culture, covering the stages in the development of research paradigms. Based on the typologies of organizational culture and leadership styles, Dr. Irina Topuzova applies the concepts of leadership and cultural code, which is proposed as an enrichment and modern continuation of the theories of leadership and culture. It integrates the existing typologies and is based on the tradition of metaphorical representation of organizational culture and leadership models inherent in a given type of culture.

As a result of a thorough theoretical analysis, she derives seven cultural leadership codes, each of which is reasoned based on the same criteria and theoretical framework. As a starting point for comparing the cultural codes proposed by Dr. Irina Topuzova, the model for the study of culture of H. Hofstede and the model for organizational diagnosis of M. Weisbord are applied. The application of the same conceptual framework for the differentiation of cultural leadership codes makes it possible to make comparisons between cultural leadership codes, to identify similarities and differences between them, and to trace to what extent changes can be made in organizational culture. The monograph is an integrated and in-depth approach to the study of culture and leadership and argues the author's concept of cultural leadership codes. A creative approach has been applied to the separation of cultural leadership codes, which is in sync with the tradition in this issue so far, but goes beyond the established framework and goes beyond it by presenting original scientific searches of the author.

The use of H. Hofstede's model for the characteristics of culture allows to take into account the cross-cultural perspective in the study of leadership and organizational culture, and this makes it possible to validate, test and put into practice in different types of organizations in different sociocultural contexts.

In the monograph "Psychological Dimensions of Organizational Effectiveness" (2025, Botevgrad: IBS Publishing House. ISBN 978-619-7610-40-6, <https://zenodo.org/records/15105625>) discusses one of the key and emblematic problems of work and organizational psychology. A detailed review of the existing views on organizational effectiveness is made, highlighting the set of individual and organizational factors that determine it. The results of an original study are presented, focusing on the importance of organizational

culture, approaches and practices in human resource management, and the parameters of organizational effectiveness as defined by Weisbord's model for organizational diagnosis. The diagnostic tools used have appropriate psychometric qualities, and the analyses are based on the results of statistical methods, including one-factor analysis of variance, correlation and regression analysis.

The published book on the basis of the defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" is not evaluated, but participates in the formation of quantitative indicators for the candidate's compliance with the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" (see Topuzova, I. Motivation Management. Applying a Model for Motivational Diagnosis in a University Environment. 2024, Botevgrad: IBS Publishing House. ISBN: 978-619-7610-30-7 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14713163>). Although it contains the main results and contributions of the dissertation, a scientific publication is presented that focuses on the management of motivation in a university environment and on the construction of a practical model that can be applied in carrying out changes in the higher education system. It has served to manage changes in higher education.

The chapter of a collective monograph is co-authored with a team of international academics and is published by a reputable publisher of scientific literature (Academic gendered citizenship, 2020, Palgrave Macmillan). The topic of the monograph is extremely topical and covers the leading concepts of gender psychology, academic civic behavior, career development in science. This publication focuses on work-life balance with a focus on family, coping strategies, and empowering women in science. On the basis of qualitative research, a comparison is made of the models and paths for career development in universities in different countries - Denmark, Ireland, Turkey, Bulgaria, which allows to establish the role of the family and career advancement of women in an academic environment.

The studies and articles with which Dr. Irina Topuzova participated in the competition expand and specify the problems summarized in the monographs, without repeating them in terms of content. The main motivational trends for working in the scientific field, the barriers to women's academic career development, women's leadership in science, as well as strategies for achieving work-life balance are examined.

Thus, the presented scientific production focuses on leading problems of contemporary work

and organizational psychology, namely motivation, career development, leadership, organizational culture and organizational effectiveness.

### **3. Scientometric indicators and citations**

The scientometric reference fully complies with the current regulatory requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its Implementation and the Regulations of the International Business School. The application not only meets the minimum criteria for the six groups of indicators for participation in the competition, but also with a score of a total of 563 points exceeds the required minimum for occupying the relevant academic position.

I have not found evidence of plagiarism in the submitted scientific papers and I am not aware of any evidence of plagiarism in the overall scientific production of the candidate.

In the attached reference for the citation, an impressive number of 187 citations in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in a world-famous database of scientific information is indicated, of which 114 citations are in Scopus and 73 citations are in Web of Science. Citations in world-famous databases make it possible to establish the recognition of Dr. Irina Topuzova in gender studies, women's leadership in science, academic career and gender equality and reveal the significance of her scientific results and contributions.

### **4. Scientific contributions**

The contributions of Dr. Irina Topuzova correspond to the content of her scientific publications. I would take the liberty of integrating these contributions into several large groups.

First of all, I would like to emphasize that in her two independent monographs she puts from a different perspective the question of the relationship between organizational culture, leadership and organizational effectiveness, which has been the subject of research and practical interest for several decades. With her well-grounded concept of the cultural leadership code and the relationship between culture and parameters of organizational effectiveness, Dr. Irina Topuzova answers a number of questions and thus contributes to the application of well-tested, but also new, relevant and modern theoretical constructs in research practice. It has a scientific consistency in its research pursuits and deepens and enriches these problematic areas that are significant for organizational psychology. Dr. Irina Topuzova substantiates both a theoretical

framework for the study of culture and leadership in modern organizations, and provides evidence on the organizational factors that affect the effectiveness of modern organizations. Despite the undeniably accepted connection between organizational culture, leadership and effectiveness, there is a deficit of reasoned and comprehensively sound theoretical models to be tested and applied in practice, and it is in this direction that the contributions of Dr. Irina Topuzova's scientific production can be considered.

The cross-cultural perspective on leadership and organizational culture is also taken into account, as well as the specific internal organizational factors that characterize the individual cultural leadership codes such as strategy, structure, goals, supporting mechanisms, attitude to change. A comprehensive model of organizational effectiveness is presented, which covers organizational culture, human resource management practices and performance evaluation factors.

The motivation for working in a university environment has been studied and a number of factors that determine it have been identified, including remuneration, social benefits, managerial approaches and human resource management practices. The established regularities are relevant to the management of higher education and can be applied in the process of changes and transformation of the higher education system.

The problems of career development in academia and in particular, the discovery of potential barriers that limit it, as well as the prerequisites for equality/gender inequality are a recognized but under-researched problem that needs further research. In this respect, the results of Dr. Irina Topuzova's research outline trends in career development and represent a good theoretical and empirical basis for future research.

A focus is placed on leadership in an organizational environment, and, on the one hand, this is considered in the context of organizational culture and cultural leadership code, and on the other hand, the specifics of leadership and management practices, including mentoring and sponsorship, are brought out in an academic context.

What is a distinctive feature of Dr. Irina Topuzova's scientific production can be summarized in two main areas, which, in principle, are not sufficiently studied and represent a contribution to organizational psychology not only in our country, but also in general. They relate to the emphasis on research in a university environment, and the results of which can be applied in the management of changes in the higher education system. At the same time, the specifics of career development in science in the context of gender and women's equality studies are

emphasized, as well as organizational practices that would support and facilitate the career development of young people in an academic environment.

## **5. Personal impressions of the candidate**

My personal impressions of Dr. Irina Topuzova are long-standing and are based on reviewing her dissertation, her participation in scientific forums and her activities as secretary of the Department of Occupational and Organizational Psychology at the Society of Psychologists in the Republic of Bulgaria. She has consistency, organization and correctness, skills to work with people and this makes her extremely valuable in joint scientific interaction, which is also proven by her participation in a number of international projects.

## **6. Notes and recommendations**

I have no significant remarks and recommendations that affect the quality of scientific production. The presented scientific papers in quantitative and qualitative terms exceed the criteria for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" and worthily present the candidacy of Dr. Irina Topuzova. As a potential recommendation for future scientific development, I believe that it can expand and enrich with new psychological constructs the scope of the studied problems, taking into account its previous achievements and results in the field of organizational culture, leadership, career management in the higher education system.

## **'Conclusion**

I express my positive assessment of the candidacy for Associate Professor, based on the overall research and teaching activity of the candidate and achievements in the field of work and organizational psychology. With her scientific production, Dr. Irina Topuzova contributes to the modern appearance and development of work and organizational psychology in our country, and the regularities established by her have a high theoretical, empirical and practical-applied value. I recommend to the Scientific Jury to propose that Dr. Irina Topuzova be selected according to the established procedures for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor", in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology (Work and Organizational Psychology) at the International Business School, Sofia. Botevgrad.

23.04.2025

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Snezhana Ilieva