

SCIENTIFIC JURY MEMBER'S OPINION

by Ergyul Tair Redzheb, DSc., Professor in the field of Psychology, Affiliation: Psychology Department, Institute for population and human studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Regarding on competition procedure for the position of Associate Professor in the field 3.2 Psychology (Work and Organisational Psychology), Announced by State Gazette, Issue 8/28.01.2025

The statement is prepared following Order No 32/31.03.2025 of Rector of International Business School, Sofia

Candidate's information

In the competition procedure 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), published in State Gazette, issue 8 of 28.01.2025, announced by the International Business School, Sofia, the only candidate is Chef Assistant Professor Irina Topuzova, PhD. She holds a master's (2010) and doctoral (2016) degree in psychology from the South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad. Her work experience includes administrative (2007-2015) and teaching (2016-2021) activities at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski", and since 2021 she has been a Chef Assistant Professor in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (Work and organizational psychology) at the International Business School, Sofia.

For her participation in the competition, Topuzova, PhD has presented a total of 14 scientific publications, of which two monographs, one book published on the basis of a defended PhD dissertation, one chapter of a collective monograph (in English), two studies (1 in a refereed and indexed journal in the international databases WoS & Scopus) and eight articles (2 in refereed and indexed journals in the international databases WoS & Scopus). Half of the author's scientific publications are independent (mainly in Bulgarian), and the other part is the result of joint work in teams (mainly in English). The candidate's publication activity provides evidence of both the individual contribution to the development of significant scientific publications in the field of Work and organizational psychology in Bulgaria, and the dissemination of scientific results internationally. The reference for the total number of citations of the candidate in reputable

scientific publications indexed in global databases for scientific information, for example in Scopus, amounts to 116, h-index 3 and testifies to the significant influence of the published works and their wide reflection in the scientific community.

The scientific publications provided by the candidate for evaluation in the competition, as well as their citation, fully cover and exceed the minimum national requirements set out in Art. 2b, para. 2 and para. 3 of the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Rules for the Application of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act for holding the academic position of Associate Professor in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology.

Evaluation of the obtained scientific and applied scientific results

Topuzova's scientific interests cover various thematic areas in Work and organizational psychology, and I will summarize the following few:

First, organizational culture and leadership (Топузова, И. 2025. *Организационна култура и лидерство. Културен лидерски код*. Ботевград: Издателство на МВБУ. ISBN: 978-619-7610-34-5), with a focus on the essence and typology of cultural leadership codes with an emphasis on the effectiveness of leadership interventions, especially in periods of crisis and transformation. The proposed approach enriches the theoretical framework regarding the interaction between external cultural factors and internal organizational dynamics. A number of specific dimensions of the cultural leadership code (diversity, hybridity, etc.) have been traced, which determine the processes of adaptation and development, and the role of the integrated approach to managing organizational culture through adaptive leadership interventions and innovative solutions is highlighted.

Second, organizational effectiveness (Топузова, И. 2025. *Психологически измерения на организационната ефективност*. Ботевград: Издателство на МВБУ. ISBN 978-619-7610-40-6; Илиева, С., Топузова, И. 2016. Организационна ефективност и мотивация на университетските преподаватели. „*Лидерство и организационно развитие*“, (90-99), ISBN 978-954-07-4129-1, Ун. изд. „Св. Кл. Охридски“) with a focus on the psychological factors determining the effectiveness of organizations. Empirical results on cultural orientations and leadership styles in five higher education institutions in the country were analysed, deducing the interaction between internal organizational factors and individual characteristics that influence the effectiveness of management models in the public sector.

Third, comparative studies of human resource management practices (Топузова, И. 2024. Практики за управление на човешките ресурси и организационна привързаност при работещи в онлайн и във физическа среда. *Научни трудове на МББУ*, Том 16, 58 – 77. ISSN: 1313-0846; Ilieva. S, Topuzova, I. 2016. Changes in human resource management practices and work motivation in academic environment. “*Achieving excellence in education, employment and human resource management*” (pp.147-162), ISBN: 978-1-5323-2195-5). Based on theoretical and empirical analysis, the significant role of human resource management practices in building affective and normative commitment according to the type of work environment (especially in hybrid and remote) is deduced. The results obtained have practical value for the development of management policies aimed at maintaining the engagement and sustainability of human capital in organizations.

Fourth, mentoring, career practices and academic environment (Topuzova et al., 2016. Perpetuating academic capitalism and maintaining gender orders through career practices in STEM in universities. *Critical Studies in Education*, 60(2), 205-225; Topuzova et al. 2019. Mentoring and sponsorship in higher education institutions: men’s invisible advantage in STEM? *Higher Education Research & Development*, 39(4), 764–777; Tan, M. G., ..., & Topuzova, 2020. Family, Career Progression and Gendered Academic Citizenship. *Gendered Academic Citizenship: Issues and Experiences*, 131-163). Based on quantitative and qualitative data collected within the framework of an international project in Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland and Turkey, career practices and gender divisions in the natural, technical, engineering sciences and mathematics are studied. The interrelationships between the market orientation of higher education and gender practices, the role of institutional frameworks and cultural expectations regarding inequalities, etc. are highlighted. The family environment is underlined as a significant resource for support in the career development process of female researchers, and mentoring and sponsorship as important means of compensating for inequalities in an organizational environment.

Fifth, motivation and job satisfaction in an academic environment (Топузова, И. 2016. Структура на мотивацията за работа и взаимовръзки с удовлетвореността от труда при университетски преподаватели. „*Лидерство и организационно развитие*“, (460-471), Ун. изд. „Св. Климент Охридски“, ISBN 978-954-07-4129-1; Ilieva. S, Topuzova, I. 2016. Changes in human resource management practices and work motivation in academic environment. “*Achieving excellence in education, employment and human resource management*” (pp.147-162),

ISBN: 978-1-5323-2195-5). On the one hand, quantitative and qualitative methods are used to track the mechanisms through which reforms in the management of academic staff affect individual and collective motivation, and on the other hand, the relationships between motivation and job satisfaction are analysed. Intrinsic aspects of work (e.g. autonomy, achievement, etc.) are leading motivators in an academic environment, while extrinsic motives (e.g. pay) have less weight.

Assessment of the received scientific and scientific-applied contributions

The scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the research activity of Chef Assistant Professor Irina Topuzova, PhD can be summarized in several main directions.

In theoretical terms, the formulation of the concept of a cultural leadership code and the expansion of the understanding of the relationship between cultural features and the effectiveness of leadership stand out. The developed integrative model with specific cultural characteristics and leadership behaviors has its applied contribution to the diagnosis and optimization of management practices, providing organizations with a toolkit for the development of adaptive leadership strategies. Specific recommendations have been made for building a sustainable organizational culture that encourages innovation, responsibility and effective management. Based on detailed analyses, policies have been proposed that can be implemented to improve institutional processes in the public sector.

A scientifically based model for the analysis of motivational factors in the academic environment is proposed, which takes into account both individual and organizational influences. The critical role of factors such as recognition and professional development on productivity is demonstrated, which contributes to the optimization of remuneration policies with a long-term effect and helps to address challenges in human capital management in the academic sphere.

The key role of psychological factors such as emotional intelligence, organizational support and perceptions of justice in the workplace for organizational effectiveness is demonstrated. The implementation of policies for work-life balance improves not only employee satisfaction, but also their productivity. Practical guidelines are formulated for the implementation of flexible work practices to increase productivity in various professional sectors.

The structural barriers to career development in an academic environment are identified. The social and institutional factors that hinder the career advancement of women in science are demonstrated. The effectiveness of mentoring and sponsorship practices for the career development of young scientists, especially women and representatives of marginalized groups, is noted.

Practical solutions are proposed to promote equality of various vulnerable groups, based on successful European models.

Critical comments, recommendations and questions

I have no critical assessments and comments regarding the presented theoretical conceptualizations, the formulation of the empirical research, the analysis and summaries of the results obtained in the candidate's works.

Summary conclusion

The scientific works presented by Chef Assistant Professor Irina Topuzova, PhD are evidence of the presence of a consistent interest in significant problems in the field of Work and organizational psychology. The implemented analyses and studies have a significant contribution to revealing the essence and factors that determine organizational culture and leadership, career practices, equality and development in the field of higher education, strategies for effective management in the academic and public sectors, etc. Based on the scientific works presented in the competition, an analysis of their significance and the contributing moments contained in them, I give my positive assessment of the candidacy of Chef Assistant Professor Irina Topuzova, PhD 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).

25. 04. 2025

Sofia

Signature:

prof. Ergyul Tair Redzheb, DSc.