

ВЕЛИКОТЪРНОВСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ  
"СВ. СВ. КИРИЛ И МЕТОДИЙ"



ST. CYRIL AND ST. METHODIUS  
UNIVERSITY OF VELIKO TARNOVO

## **REVIEW**

**by prof. Velislava Atanasova Chavdarova, PhD**

**University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. Cyril and St. Methodius"**

### **Of a Dissertation**

**ROLE OF EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS AND ATTACHMENT  
STYLES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS**

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Degree "Doctor"

Field of Higher Education: 3. Social and Legal Sciences, Security and Defence,  
Professional Field: 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral Program „General Psychology“

Submitted Work: Dissertation, Summary of the Dissertation

Academic Supervisor: Prof. Irina Zinovieva, Dr. Sc.

## **1. Relevance of the scientific problem in the dissertation**

The work submitted for review undoubtedly falls into the research profile of general psychology, saturated with many achievements but also with many debatable and still unresolved questions. Its scientific and applied status generates the problematization of some topics, including the specificity of subjective experiences of closeness and connectedness with a romantic partner and their relationship to highly valued psychological constructs such as mutual trust and validation, empathy, and acceptance. The psychological analysis of conflict, management, and interpretation is complex and can be a significant source of stress. Determining what constitutes effective communication during conflict is essential in helping couples keep their relationships healthy.

The topic is relevant because it is related to the challenge of looking for a reasoned answer, on the one hand about what are the factors that determine the importance of attachment for conflict resolution, on the other hand about what determines relationship satisfaction, and what are the ways for its healthy functioning. This response immanently contains the operationalization and explanatory value of early maladaptive schemas and satisfaction with family life as a function of attachment styles formed in childhood. On the other hand, the importance of the topic is also determined by the lack of scientific research related to emotional expressivity and its influence on partner relationships, in which attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, conflict resolution, and intimate relationship satisfaction are involved.

The research focus is current, exciting, and dissertational. Undoubtedly, the request responds to an ominous communication and social problem of our time, developed in the specific perspective of directing the attention of psychologists to what is needed to improve the satisfaction of romantic relationships between partners.

## **2. Ph.D. candidate observations**

The deposited documentation is in order and meets all the criteria regarding the procedure for conducting the present defense. The information from Vladimir Marinov's autobiography testifies to a step-by-step and dignified path to professional realization in psychology. The author worked as a school psychologist and vocational guidance specialist. His current interests link his professional helping activity as a clinical psychologist with the expert scientific analysis of partner relationships realized in the dissertation work.

### **3. Observations regarding the dissertation and the abstract**

The dissertation contains of 233 pages, of which 190 are main text, tables, and graphics. The research is presented in 6 figures and 55 tables. The text is conceptualized in an introduction, seven main chapters structured in subchapters, a conclusion, as well as a set of appendices illustrating the methodological toolkit that ensured the realization of the empirical research. The list of used literature includes 426 sources in English, Bulgarian, and Spanish.

The theoretical basis of the development of the current work as academic, adequate to the problem, and sufficiently innovative was assessed and approved. Synthesized and intelligent, the introductory text reveals the motivation and intent of the doctoral student's research efforts and the need to investigate other gender differences in attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, emotional expressiveness, conflict resolution, and relationship satisfaction, education, age, and other demographic factors. The formulated goal, objectives, and leading hypotheses of the entire dissertation form an expectation on the part of the reader to learn more about the determinants of satisfaction in romantic relationships.

The thesis on which the author's analytical reasoning is focused is that intimate relationships are the basis of human existence, and the quality of romantic relationships largely determines the quality of life. Intimacy in romantic relationships is an essential factor contributing to positive relationship outcomes. Logically, partners who testify to high levels of intimate relationship satisfaction tend to maintain long-term and stable relationships, and vice versa - dissatisfaction with intimate relationships is one of the main reasons for ending relationships. The Ph.D. student cites several studies focusing on attachment styles, maladaptive schemas, some of which emphasize emotional expressiveness and interpersonal conflict. In-depth and expertly reasoned answers are sought to questions such as: what role do attachment styles play in the way we communicate and connect with intimate partners; what strategies do people use when dealing with interpersonal conflicts; are there personality traits that explain trends in our relationship satisfaction behavior; what is the role of emotional expressiveness and does it modulate human relationships.

The research interest of the present dissertation is motivated by the idea of elucidating the significance of the emotional "expressiveness" variable tested in a research design in a Bulgarian sample involving attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, conflict resolution, and intimate relationship satisfaction.

The first main chapter has an analytical-interpretive character, revealing the essence of attachment styles, considered a component of human genetic coding. The analysis focuses on the early maladaptive schemas presented in Geoffrey Young's therapy, initially designed to optimize Beck's traditional cognitive therapy, integrating elements of John Bowlby's attachment theory to deepen the understanding of emotional development in children and the structure of emotional intelligence. Theories of attachment, conflict resolution styles, relationship satisfaction, emotional expressiveness, and romantic relationship satisfaction are accurately and thoroughly presented.

Vladimir Marinov has not only correctly but also thoroughly analyzed the logic of established social science approaches to explain the relationship between attachment styles and conflict resolution styles with satisfaction in intimate relationships and the role of the positive emotional facet and its mediating role between secure styles of attachment and satisfaction from intimate relationships.

I believe that the dissertation's theoretical framework enriches the research model, increasing its heuristic potential. I value this systematic conceptualization as a contribution to general psychology's theory, practice, and methodology.

Undoubtedly, the most significant contribution of the dissertation research is related to the empirical verification of the associations between adult attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, conflict resolution styles, emotional expressiveness, and romantic relationship satisfaction.

Three hundred-eight participants aged 14 to 74, identifying themselves as heterosexual, took part in the empirical study. The sample is well-balanced in gender and age and sufficiently representative regarding the number of respondents.

The study used integrated qualitative and quantitative methods to describe and examine attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, expressiveness and

conflict resolution styles, and levels of romantic relationship satisfaction. The results show a high degree of reliability of the used instrumentation.

The conclusion regarding the methodology of the empirical study is that the research design is described precisely, in detail, and comprehensively. The subject, object, purpose, and tasks are clearly stated. The verification of the established hypotheses was carried out employing an excellent methodological toolkit.

The conclusions and generalizations drawn derive directly from the data obtained and skillfully demonstrate the analytical and research abilities of the doctoral student.

Regarding the qualitative and quantitative qualities of the dissertation work, I consider that the doctoral student has fulfilled the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of LDASRB and respectively, according to Art. 24, para. 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the LDASRB.

The publications submitted are relevant to the dissertation topic and demonstrate research erudition. The abstract summarizes and accurately reflects the content of the dissertation work.

I believe that no violations are registered in relation to the procedure and the quality of the presented scientific production. The dissertation is an original scientific work with undoubted merits.

#### **4. Scientific Contributions**

Accepting the contributions formulated by the doctoral student, I find a reason to emphasize the most significant ones:

**From a theoretical aspect, the following scientific contributions can be found:**

- By using an integral research approach, information on attachment styles, maladaptive schemas, and conflict resolution styles in partner couples has been studied and systematized. The findings and analytical observations are the basis for formulating conclusions and describing the author's model, taking into account the direct relationships between the variables and their mediating effects;

- The influence of the concepts of "secure attachment style" and "relationship satisfaction" on romantic satisfaction is not only directly but also indirectly, thoroughly and comprehensively positioned;
- For the first time, the role of the variables influencing indirectly (mediating) attachment styles and satisfaction with intimate relationships in a Bulgarian sample was distinguished;
- The predictors that complexly influence and determine the change of romantic relationships in a dynamic plan have been studied.

**In the applied aspect, the following scientific contributions can be found::**

- The relationship between attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, emotional expressiveness, conflict resolution styles, and satisfaction with romantic relationships was verified;
- Adapted for the Bulgarian socio-cultural context are four questionnaires that allow assessment of possible early maladaptive schemas, conflict resolution styles in intimate relationships, attachment styles through an economical short scale, and satisfaction with romantic relationships.
- An innovative model and practical tool for measuring and evaluating the determinants of change in romantic relationships is proposed;
- It has been established that in the Bulgarian socio-cultural context, the emotional deprivation scheme has a significant indirect effect on relationships;
- The research model is comprehensively described. The subject, object, purpose, and tasks are precisely stated. An adequately structured methodology for the study of the measured values was applied.
- The verification of the established hypotheses was carried out utilizing appropriate tools and statistical processing of the data. The qualitative comparative analysis of the results was carried out correctly.
- The role of emotional deprivation on maladaptive schemas and their indirect effect on relationships, accepted as the basis for adequate psychotherapeutic intervention, has been empirically proven;

- Adapted questionnaires can be applied both in the process of research work and for personal counseling
- Formulated conclusions are relevant to the specific study, and the summary has realistic applicability.
- As the most significant contribution, I define the correctly and thoroughly formulated findings and recommendations based on the conducted research and aimed at the specialists - psychologists and psychotherapists, determining their mediating role concerning the correlation between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction.

### **5. General notes, discussion, recommendations.**

In order to popularize the dissertation work, I recommend that it be published as a book, as it will be useful to a wide range of specialists in the field of scientific knowledge and applied psychology.

### **Conclusion.**

Based on the above analysis of the dissertation on the topic "ROLE OF EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS AND ATTACHMENT STYLES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS," I give my POSITIVE evaluation of the work and confidently recommend the respected Scientific Jury to award Vladimir Marinov, Ph.D. student at the Department "General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology" at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" educational and scientific degree "**doctor**" in Higher Education Area: 3. Social, Economic and Legal sciences, Professional direction: 3.2. Psychology - General Psychology.

07.07.2023

Reviewer: .....

(signature)

Veliko Tarnovo

Prof. Velislava Chavdarova PhD