



REVIEW OF DIPLOMA THESIS

Review type: Opponent's Review

Author of the diploma thesis: Sofya Kuznetsova

Title: Taking care of an elder relative: options in Russia

Author of the review: Mirna Jusić

Evaluate the diploma thesis based on the following considerations (not necessarily in this order):

1) *Factual benefits of work and its added value;*

The author's work has two main aims: examining the current state of elderly care service provision in Russia, including challenges in this realm; and understanding the state's service provision tendencies in relation to the theoretical concepts of familisation / defamilisation.

The work's added value is that it provides a comprehensive overview of the sector of elderly care in Russia and applies the theoretical concepts of familisation / defamilisation to realm of long-term care in Russia. The latter have, according to the author, not been applied to realm of elderly care services in Russia to date. Moreover, the author also provides policy recommendations on how to improve elderly care in Russia.

2) *Setting and answering research questions;*

The author poses two research questions: 'Is the state more supportive of familisation or defamilisation in the elderly care sector in Russia?' and 'What are the problems in the content of the elderly care services' options provided by the state in Russia?'

The author has answered both research questions in her work in a systematic manner.

3) *Structure of work;*

The work is clearly and logically structured.

4) *The factual accuracy and convincing of the argumentation;*

The argumentation in the author's thesis flows well and claims are supported by evidence. In the "Public problem" section the author makes a convincing case for why there will be a rise in the demand for elderly care in Russia, drawing on different sources. In the results section ("Elderly care services in Russia"), she provides a



comprehensive overview of the existing research on the subject to date, and proceeds with analyzing care services and various related benefits provided by the state, relying on official documents.

A few smaller issues/questions regarding to the “Public problem” section: on p. 8, the data the author provides concerning the number of working (elderly) persons is somewhat contradictory. Has the percentage of working elderly persons increased or decreased? I also wonder whether, on top of p. 9, we are really dealing with contradictions in terms of whether the health situation of the elderly is worsening (as official government sources appear to indicate) or improving (as the WHO seems to suggest), or whether the WHO and the government have maybe considered different indicators? Regarding social exclusion (pp. 9-10), it would have been useful to include some estimates on the extent to which elderly persons are socially excluded in Russia, if such data is available.

Some issues/questions regarding the “Elderly care services in Russia” section: on p. 18, the author mentions that the non-governmental sector is also present in care services, but will not be the focus of the current work. Given that the work points to the role of NGOs as service providers multiple times, maybe a justification for why their role will not be studied should have been included.

Moreover, on p. 38, the data on older adults receiving state care services seems a bit contradictory, as the author states that 97.6% of older adults do not receive such services, but 90.7% of seniors belong to some group of disability; 99% of those not receiving services state they do not experience limitations in performing essential tasks. Maybe this could be clarified during the defense.

With regards to the section on pensions and benefits (pp. 46-47), my question is whether there are some benefits that are specifically related to the provision of care, i.e. a carer’s benefit or a benefit that a person in need of LTC can use to pay for care?

5) *Sophistication and application of theoretical approaches;*

Relying the concepts of familisation / defamilisation for this type of study is appropriate and makes for an interesting angle to study elderly care in Russia. Nevertheless, it would have been good to incorporate, in the theoretical section, a more nuanced overview of the familisation / defamilisation literature. The author mainly refers to Lohmann and Zigel (2016) and refers to their conceptual dimensions of defamilizing/familizing policies in Figure 1 (p. 13). Nevertheless, the concept of defamilisation / defamilialization has a longer history and goes back to Lister (1994) and McLaughlin and Glendinning (1994) and was subsequently also used by Esping-Andersen (1999). Moreover, Leitner (2003) and Keck (2010) have also developed classifications similar to the one by Lohmann and Zigel (2016). Thus, it would have been useful to have incorporated a more comprehensive discussion of the concept, in order to understand in more depth the approach that Lohmann and Zigel (2016) are suggesting when studying (de)familisation.

Moreover, while the author includes a detailed discussion of what may constitute



familising or defamilising policies, and rightly points out that a state may simultaneously implement both, she does not further explain the classification of policies into defamilizing or familizing ones, as presented in Figure 1 (p. 13), i.e., for instance, what 'optional individualism, 'optional familalism' or 'implicit familialism' constitutes. It is unclear, moreover, whether the author will be applying these conceptual dimensions, in line with Figure 1, to her own research. In the results section and conclusion, these categories have not used; when analyzing specific types of support, the distinction between familisation, middle, and defamilisation is made (p. 55). Using Lohmann's and Zagel's dimensions may have resulted in a more nuanced analysis and discussion.

6) *Methodological approach and application of particular methods and approaches;*

The author relies on a document analysis, and next to official government sources, incorporates media sources as well, which as an approach is appropriate for the type of research aims pursued. The author provides a list of the type of sources analyzed. While the author explains that sources are analyzed in line with the two research questions, it would have been good to have elaborated in greater detail how the author has analyzed official documents or media reports (for instance, what type of information was taken into consideration). It would have also been beneficial to know more about the media reports analyzed, for instance how many and what kind of media reports were chosen, and how they were selected. It would have also been good to have discussed the limitations of the methodological approach chosen.

7) *Use of literature and data;*

The author uses appropriate and a wide range of literature / data. Urkund has not identified problems with referencing.

8) *Stylistic and text editing (quote, text layout, etc.).*

This is a well-written academic work, and the style and layout are appropriate. Some minor grammar issues pertaining to sentence structure can be identified. On pages 38-43, statistical data is presented and discussed in paragraphs. Placing such data in tables or graphs would have been more reader-friendly.

9) *Question for defense (not obligatory)*

I have raised a couple of points and questions above which the author may respond to during her defense.

For the above reasons, I recommend the diploma thesis for the defense.

My grading is "B".

Date: 7 September 2022

Signature: