Tutor's evaluation of Ulpan Alimova's master thesis
„Mortality trends and patterns in the Caspian region of the Republic of Kazakhstan"

Ulpan Alimova's master thesis „Mortality trends and patterns in the Caspian region of the Republic of Kazakhstan" consists of 87 pages of text and 13 pages of appendices. The text part of the thesis has a standard structure and it is divided into seven chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. It also contains lists of charts, pictures, abbreviations and bibliography as well as Internet sources.

The submitted thesis goal was to analyse development of mortality according to age, sex and major groups of death causes in the Caspian region from 1999 to 2008. Her effort was focused on cognition of the level and structure of mortality differences in the region. Observed regional mortality levels and structures were compared with comparable characteristics for the Republic of Kazakhstan and the neighbouring region of Western Kazakhstan. Particular key chapters of the submitted thesis focus on theoretical background, methods and results of author's research. In the initial chapter, she outlines the framework of the work, with its coverage of time, territory and content, including objectives and hypotheses specification. In the theoretical chapter, Ulpan Alimova mainly included a discussion on the factors influencing mortality, while the methodological part deals not only with the presentation of the applied methods, but also with the issue of data sources, including an introduction in the issue of the quality of input data. Results of the analysis are presented in two parts. They are devoted to standard examination of mortality by age and sex and to the study on mortality by causes of death and its results discussion.

The submitted thesis can be positively assessed due to its analytical part where the author shows good knowledge of basic methods of mortality analysis such as the construction of life tables, the method of standardisation and the calculation of some special indicators such as contributions to the change (difference) in the life expectancy at birth by age, sex and causes of death as well as the calculation of confidence intervals for some indicators affected by significant signs of randomness due to the rather small size of the used statistical samples. Presentation of results is another part of the work one can be also positively assessed. Elaboration and computer processing of the text and charts can be also described as good.

In the given context it is a pity that some parts of the text mirror author's low time budget, partly due to the problems with the availability of basic demographic data for the areas under observation.

I see the following substantial flaws in the submitted thesis:
1. Quite insufficient work with bibliography, due to which it is almost possible to reject the defence of the thesis. Its text includes the passages that use some expert source, but without a quotation (such as the first two sentences of the thesis; the third and fourth paragraphs on page 14; the first, fourth and fifth paragraphs on page 17; and the first to third paragraphs on page 19, etc). As far as the list of bibliography is concerned, there are some studies (Arriaga, Bennett, Burcin and Kučera, Brainerd, Charlton and Velez, Chang, Cockerham et al., etc) to which there is no reference in the text. The collective studies are usually also imperfectly quoted.
2. The text of the thesis, the part devoted to the discussion on expert literature in particular, is quite chaotic and its individual paragraphs are often inserted in an almost random way, without any logical coherence. One can find a similar degree of confusion in the final parts of the thesis. There the author discusses for instance the mortality assessment results in structures that were not subjects of her analysis (avoidable or alcohol-related mortality).
3. The author also faces a problem of clear formulation of ideas in some parts of the thesis, see, e.g., the pages 74, 75, 78, etc.
4. There is a very little room devoted to the context of mortality and its social and economic environment in the given regional framework.

Regardless the above mentioned critical remarks I can state that the author has proved her expertise by compiling her thesis independently, with the use of the described literature and the resulting text fulfils the basic requirements of a master thesis in Demography. Hence I recommend Ms. Ulpan Alimova's thesis „Mortality trends and patterns in the Caspian region of the Republic of Kazakhstan" for defence.

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tutor