

**Assessment of the doctoral thesis of Zhaniya Karmenova: Changing patterns of marital and reproductive behaviour of young women in the urban settlement (on the example of Ust-Kamenogorsk, East Kazakhstan oblast, Kazakhstan)**

The PhD thesis addresses fertility and nuptiality patterns in East Kazakhstan oblast and also focuses on population behaviour of young people in Ust Kamenogorsk city. The work examines recent trends, including ethnicity and migration issues. The role of contextual factors as well as of values and attitudes is explored.

The PhD thesis comprises 174 pages including annexes. It is divided into four sections, an introduction, and a conclusion. The introductory part entitled “*Differentiation of marital and reproductive behavior in Kazakhstan: the impact of ethnic structure or the growth of urbanization?*” captures well the main message of the dissertation: to what extent are the changes in the demographic family indicators influenced by value shifts, ethnic and cultural diversity and what impact does intense immigration of rural population to cities (ruralisation) have. Additionally, the author defines the objectives and summarizes the recent changes in the history of Kazakhstan (starting with the independence from the Soviet Union in 1991). The delimitation of the topic benefits from the author’s knowledge of local conditions. The strength of the study consists of a well-designed and structured topic. Some data limitations hindered the use of all suitable demographic methods. To overcome this gap, the author conducted her own surveys.

The first chapter addresses the theoretical framework and is subdivided into: 1) Overview of the literature, 2) Definition of marriage and nuptiality including the history of marriage in Kazakhstan, 3) Definition of fertility, fecundity and reproduction behaviour, and 4) Data sources and methods. The overview of the literature lists the most relevant publications related to marriage and family. This chapter includes foreign as well as Russian and local authors. The theories cover not only recent but also historical perspectives. Due to the recent and dramatic socio-economic transformation of the Kazakhstani society, the ongoing demographic changes reflect rather mixed trends, therefore they might be explained by multiple theories. To see the whole picture, the author discusses a lot of theories, not relying on a single one. Next, the subject of marriage history in Kazakhstan (which is different from the European experience) is discussed in order to facilitate a better understanding of recent changes not only in marriage patterns but also in contemporary attitudes towards marriage and family. The same thorough approach is used when describing fertility and reproductive history and behaviour contexts. Studies on family reproduction are frequently limited in terms of regional and local data sources. That is also the case of this work and the reason why the author carefully described the relevant data sources and their limitations regarding Kazakhstan and Est Kazakhstan region. In order to expand the material (data), the author conducted her own surveys on reproductive behaviour and attitudes (2009 and 2016) in the city Ust Kamenogorsk, East Kazakhstan. It is a pity that the questionnaire is not included in the annex as it has been promised on page 49: *Questions from the survey questionnaires that were used in this study are included in the appendix.* Only basic description of variables used for the analysis is included in the appendix, not the whole questionnaire (despite being written in Russian or Kazakh languages).

Since its independence, Kazakhstan has experienced turbulent socioeconomic transformations. Accordingly, chapter 2 properly addresses the impact of these changes on the demographic trends, including a short historical overview. The ethnic structure of Kazakhstan regions (primarily numbers of Kazakhs vs Russians) has been changed as documented in figures 1a, and 1b (page 61). Here, instead of the term “a distribution” it would be better to title the figures as proportions or share or percentages. The term distribution could be misleading as in ethnic distribution across regions rather than within regions. Determinants influencing demographic patterns are separated into two categories - economic and social. Economic determinants (measured by GDP, labour force participation of women, income per capita, etc) are discussed within corresponding backgrounds, thus proving expert knowledge by the author. Social factors are measured using school attendance indicators and pre-school participation rate. Similarly, in this section, the commentary text is highly valuable due to a good understanding of local conditions. Then, the chapter 2 shows a description of main trends of demographic indicators for Kazakhstan and East Kazakhstan (net migration rate, natural population change, total fertility rate, mean age at childbearing, extramarital births, marriage rates). The author specially looks for the signs of the second demographic transition theory in terms of recent population trends and some other selected additional indicators.

The core section is original and is based on the author's own surveys, conducted on *Marital and reproductive behaviour of women (aged 18-29) in Ust-Kamenogorsk*. First, descriptive characteristics and distributions are thoroughly presented and commented on. Next, multidimensional statistical approach (binary logistic regression) showed the effects of selected indicators for getting married or for having a child. The survey results show differentials in behaviour and attitudes of Kazakhs and Russians and those living from birth in Ust Kamenogorsk against those moving in before or after the age of 10. The sub-chapter focusing on the value orientation and attitudes shows the differences between the two major ethnicities but also the shift over time. The last (fourth) chapter addresses the impact of public policy on the family institute in Kazakhstan. The author explores family conditions in the contexts of various policies.

The author of the doctoral dissertation, Zhaniya Karmenova, proved the ability to delimit the topic, to work independently, to use appropriate methods, and more particularly to comment on the results. In addition, she conducted her own surveys and prepared an article for the Czech journal *Demografie*. The proposed dissertation complements well the theoretical and analytical approaches. Therefore, I recommend the doctoral thesis to be accepted for submission.

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