

Opponent review of Master Thesis:

Asan Abdrakhmanov:

Perinatal mortality in Kazakhstan and the potential for its reduction

Analysis of perinatal mortality in Kazakhstan is highly relevant demographic topic for Master Thesis and particularly relevant for the future societal and health development in Kazakhstan. At least one reason is clearly given in the “Introduction”: under-five mortality reduction is understood to be the key development goal in those countries where the child mortality is still high. To develop programmes towards reduction of child mortality it is necessary to have more detailed analysis at disposal. The author concentrated on perinatal mortality as any research related to Kazakhstan was missing. The research goal was to identify the role of social and demographic determinants of perinatal mortality in Kazakhstan and to assess the usefulness of these determinants for reduction of perinatal deaths. The author worked systematically to follow the appropriately stated goal. His attempt to incorporate his findings into national policy recommendations is very useful.

Thesis consists of Introduction, Theoretical part, Methodology, Analysis, Discussion of results, National policy, and Conclusion. In a broader “Introduction” he gives the ideas and scientific relevance of his work. He also reviewed existing studies and surveys on national or international basis. In this part he asked four questions that are further developed into hypothesis in the next parts. In the theoretical part he specifies the concept and gives the definitions with graphical illustrations together with the international recommendations. Within the theoretical background he discussed European infant and perinatal mortality studies to better understand the possible effect of various factors. In his own work he analysed the effect of demographic factors: sex of child, mother’s age, child’s birth order, and the effect of social factors: place of residence and marital status of mother. The next chapter is description of data sources and methodology of his analysis. He used both published and unpublished data to get the intended results. He is aware of the fact that reliability and quality of the data seriously affect the results of the study. That is why he devoted enough attention to this problem. In the sub-chapter “Methods” he explained the calculation of standardized perinatal mortality rate. To find the associations between the risk factors and perinatal deaths he used the logistic regression model.

The key chapter is the chapter “Results” that is devoted to discussion of findings. He analysed the trends and variations in perinatal mortality in Kazakhstan in which the change in definitions played important role. Differences in perinatal mortality between urban and rural areas are analysed in more detail. The author gives some contradictory explanations: one based on the better accessibility and quality of medical care in urban areas and second one based on higher consumption of alcohol and smoking together with high level of induced abortion. Finally, findings based on application of logistic regression are confronted with hypotheses. In the chapter related to national policy the results are summarized to be useful for developing the strategy for perinatal care improvement in Kazakhstan.

The submitted work has very well elaborated structure, sufficient extent, extensive references, and good level of technical processing. It could be said that author worked very well to meet the requirements of diploma work. He managed to link up his demographic knowledge with practical use. In my view the submitted work meets all criteria for master thesis in demography. I recommend this work to be defended.