Opponent review of Doctoral thesis:

Dinara Ualkenova:

Family structures, trends and prospects in the East-Kazakhstan region

Study of family diversification, changes in family structures and in marital relationships is particularly relevant for demography as it could have a significant effect on fertility behaviour. Shifts in family institute that have been under way in Kazakhstan society are considered as the crisis of the traditional family. Like in other more developed countries the ongoing transformation of family in Kazakhstan is a product of the profound societal changes in which rather complex factors play a role. In the introductory chapter the author emphasised particularly the individualization process – the rise of personal freedom and emancipation of women. Among the recent trends increase in divorce rates and marriage dissolution, the increase in the number of one-parent families, the widespread increase in abortions and extramarital births are mentioned on the page 14. Has abortion rate increased in Kazakhstan recently? If yes, than it is rather in contradiction with recent trends registered in most Eastern European countries? Do you have any explanation for such development? In the introduction the multiethnic structure of Kazakhstan is stressed and it is explained at the same time that more homogeneous part of Kazakhstan should be studied in order to get consistent result. Could you explain why did you choose the East-Kazakhstan region?

The submitted work has an appropriate content, logical structure, and sufficient extent of 171 pages of the text. Besides, the used questionnaire was included in the appendix. In the chapter "Introduction" the purpose of the study is defined as an investigation of modern family types and their contribution to population development. The intended research was further described together with presentation of the outline of the study. Interestingly, the author continues with presentation of research questions and related hypotheses again in chapter 2.6 (on page 47) which is rather exceptional. Nevertheless it could be understood that after giving the theoretical overview and summary of the findings from other studies the research questions could be better specified as well as important factors that should be paid more attention in the analysis when possible hypotheses are tested in the research. Similarly, description of data source and explanation of methods of statistical analysis used in the study does not create a separate chapter. Instead, they are a part of Theoretical framework.

The core of the work is the analysis of survey data from Family Transformation Survey that was organized in 2008 within the research project "Internal factors of development of the East-Kazakhstan region". Thus the submitted work seems to have rather broader scientific relevance and can serve as the starting point for further analysis in this field. The author is aware of the fact that more detailed insight into the attitudes, opinions and behaviour of respondents can help to understand the recent trends in family diversification. The survey design and sample size determination is included into chapter 3 "Descriptive findings. Relatively enough place was devoted to description of respondents and ANOVA test of differences between groups of respondents in order to find statistically significant differences between groups of respondents. It has been proved that marital status of respondents is important variable in explanation of attitudes and thus gives a relevance to the research. Although most of the tables and figures are well selected and give relevant or interesting information, it is not clear whether all of them are based on the same survey data as the "Source" below figures is not unified. For example: in Figures 1-14 there are "author´s calculation", in Table 14 there is "Family transformation survey, 2008", and in Table 15 there is "SAS output".

The analysis of results consists of simple comparative tables giving the first insight into the topic in chapter 4 and the key part based on application of multistate approach in chapters 5 to 7. She found out that the majority of women have accepted the emancipated style of life due to the specific life circumstances as divorce, separation, widowhood, or birth of wedlock. On the other side married women still act more traditionally. Nevertheless, marriage continues to be a "value" particularly for divorced women. Quite striking is the fact that relatively high proportion of women regardless the marital status or the age of respondents use the modern and effective methods of contraception (condom, pills or IUD) in Figures 42 and 43, however, the average number of experienced abortions is high (Figure 46). In Figures 48 (page 111) and 49 (page 112) there is a mistake in the axis x (it is not marital status). In the next part the advanced methods of analysis are used (Kaplan-Meier, Cox proportional-hazards, and regression models) first to model the family dissolution process among women in East-Kazakhstan. She provided methodological guidelines followed by systematic presentation of all the results. Similarly she continued in the chapters 6 and 7 where the impact of marital instability on woman´s fertility and re-partnering after dissolution of marriage is analysed. Final results were discussed and confronted with previously stated hypotheses and summarized in final chapter "Conclusion".

Dinara Ualkenova has proved the ability to apply advanced statistical methods as well as to comment results with good level of knowledge of specific topic. She used readable English and ideas can be easily to follow. She has proved the ability to make a research using various methods and bringing relevant interpretation. In my view the submitted work meets all the criteria for the Doctoral thesis. I believe that she is able to defend her work successfully. I recommend this work to be accepted.

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