Attitudes Towards Poverty: A Critical Review

Author: Ganbolor Orkhon
Thesis: Attitudes Towards Poverty

Opponent: Peter Bolcha

The topic is not very original, but is still within the average level of theses of Faculty students. The author provides empirical tests of bundle of hypotheses. These are founded in theoretical background. The results are (briefly) commented and (again briefly) confronted with relevant research.
The language is very good – the style of writing as well as the grammar (even thought some cumbersome formulations can be found). The structure of empirical part is straightforward and logical. This is not the case of theoretical part: with some exceptions, the chapters do not follow logical link (and the reader does not really know what and why follows).

I have several caveats/comments:

1. The theoretical part is not only strange in stucture, but contains a lot of information unnecessary for measurement. Why do we read about beliefs connected to beauty (p. 18-9), classism (p. 21), cognitive and institutional distancing (p. 22-24) and theories of poverty (p. 26)? These theories are neither linked with the basic line of thesis nor used in empirical part.

2. On the other hand, the energy and time could have been rather invested into clarification of hypotheses (clearest is chap. 1.2.1. and those connected to political orientation); the least clear I consider the responsibility hypotheses explanation.

3. While using ANOVA, third factor is never taken into account (not even mentioned).

4. Are all four hypotheses (within a set) mathematically possible? Perhaps not. I am not sure if this is standard way of research. It reminds me data-mining. But maybe I am wrong.

5. Why "a belief in God" proved to be insignificant? The author seems to forget to apply the theory she mentions in her own thesis.

6. (minor) p. 7: are sickness or physical handicap a "social cause of poverty"?

Generally: the thesis is of average quality. In my opinion, in order to get better grade than "dobře", the author should reallocate her potential towards more clear theoretical part and more subtile empirical analysis (the analysis is correctly done, but appears mechanical to me – what is missing is deeper analysis and interpretation). On the other hand, I appreciate English (choice of language and also the way of its use) and also great amount of theoretical literature processed.

Q1: What could be the third factor influencing the responsibility attitudes? How could we incorporate this in measurement?
Q2: Please, clarify purpose of chapter 1.4. for your measurement.

Prague, 16. 8. 2011
Peter Bolcha