

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

Student:	Vojtěch Nedvěď
Advisor:	Mgr. Michal Paulus
Title of the thesis:	What Are the Elements with Strongest Impact on Life Expectancy? A Study Focused on the United Mexican States During Recent Years

OVERALL ASSESSMENT (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

Please provide your assessment of each of the following four categories, summary and suggested questions for the discussion. The minimum length of the report is 300 words.

Contribution

The thesis contributes to the existing literature on life expectancy (LE) primarily empirically. The author provides much more coherent empirical analysis of the LE determinants for Mexico than the existing studies which a) suffer from missing major predictors which are generally being used in papers on LE determinants or b) are using just cross-section data. In addition, in his hypotheses the author has focused on those predictors whose effects are still being discussed by researchers (effects of those predictors are sometimes ambiguous).

Even though any form of contribution is not mandatory for a bachelor thesis the author presents valuable results for researchers interested in health economics of Latin America and Mexico. Therefore I evaluate this aspect of the thesis as „above-standard“.

Methods

The methods of the thesis are based on panel data estimation techniques. The author runs necessary statistical tests whose results are presented. The author at first estimates the benchmark model, then focus on each hypothesis separately while concluding with joint test of significance of all three predictors examined by the hypotheses. This “step-by-step” procedure allows us to see effects of gradual inclusion of the predictors into the benchmark model concluding with the joint test.

The robustness check relies on the PCA analysis whose methodology and potential weakness of the PCA application on the author’s data is well discussed (p. 33, chapter 3.4.2). In the robustness check the author controls for the possible effects of additional LE determinants divided into four main groups (economic, social, healthcare and environmental variables). In the second part of the robustness check the author also redesigns the model to examine potential too high correlation between the main tested predictors and principal components from the same variable group.

I regard the treatment of all methods as satisfactory with good discussion of possible weaknesses of his approach and available data.

Literature

The literature review chapter is divided into four main parts. At first, the author covers papers investigating general determinants of LE, which are then divided into main groups used for author’s empirical analysis: economic, social, healthcare and environmental variables. Then studies on the region of the interests (Latin America) are covered. Third part of the review is devoted to the papers examining LE determinants of Mexico. At the end the author derives hypotheses from the presented treatment of literature. All parts of the review are composed of extensive discussion of existing papers while the hypotheses reflect existing academic studies and focus on those predictors whose effects are regarded as ambiguous by several scholar and are therefore still being discussed in academic literature.

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Manuscript form

The thesis is well structured. However I would recommend the author to check the thesis once again to improve the fluency of the text and correct several typos (e.g. literature references on page 11, 2nd paragraph, coefficient symbols for equation 8 on page 35, missing one PC group in equation 11, etc.).

Summary and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

In my opinion the author has written very good thesis which contributes to the academic literature and presents interesting empirical results. I also appreciate extensive robustness check chapter where the author not only investigates the effect of the other determinants but is examining very important issue of possible multicollinearity between variables. The author also examined vast amount of relevant literature and formulated its hypotheses accordingly.

However, I would recommend the thesis to be once again proof checked for some typos. Also, the fluency of the text and writing style can be improved.

Therefore, I grade the thesis as A with 91 points.

I would formulate following questions for the author:

- 1) How does the author's data limit the results of the study? Which results are from the perspective of available data the most and the least reliable?
- 2) The author tries to investigate the determinants whose impacts are ambiguous. Do the presented results shed a light on their impact? Can be the results generalized? Why yes or not?
- 3) How would he assess the importance of the multicollinearity in his data? Is the multicollinearity still relevant issue even after the robustness check?
- 4) The author just slightly touches the policy implications of his results. Can he formulate them in more details?

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SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	30
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	28
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	20
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	13
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	91
GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)	A

NAME OF THE REFEREE: *Michal Paulus*

DATE OF EVALUATION: **2.9.2018**



Referee Signature

EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:

CONTRIBUTION: *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

Strong	Average	Weak
30	15	0

METHODS: *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

Strong	Average	Weak
30	15	0

LITERATURE REVIEW: *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

Strong	Average	Weak
20	10	0

MANUSCRIPT FORM: *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

Strong	Average	Weak
20	10	0

Overall grading:

TOTAL	GRADE
91 – 100	A
81 - 90	B
71 - 80	C
61 – 70	D
51 – 60	E
0 – 50	F