

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

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

Student:	Lubomír Janšta
Advisor:	Mgr. Jindřich Matoušek
Title of the thesis:	What makes children feel good about their work: experimental investigation.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

The thesis submitted by Lubomír Janšta studies how perceived meaning influences child performance, mood and enjoyment when they are performing tasks mimicking work. Lubomír links his research to the work environment as people devote approximately one-third of the day to their jobs and consequently start to perceive their work as a place where they can fulfil themselves. Lubomír investigates his research questions through an economic experiment in which he manipulates the level of perceived meaning, or more specifically the level of acknowledgement expressed by the experimenter to the subjects for completed tasks. Subjects of the experiment were asked to perform a relatively simple task of finding two consecutive letters of „v“ (ie. „vv“) in a sheet of randomly generated streams of letters. He distinguishes three treatments with respect to the level of acknowledgement: I) Recognized, II) Ignored, and III) Shredded.

The experiment is inspired by the paper of Ariely (2008) but differs in use 15 and 16-year-old high school students compared to university students in the original experiment. The experiment was conducted among first-year grammar-school students. This pool provides a sample of 91 students evenly distributed into three classes according to their results in a national comparative test for high-school admission. Results of Lubomír's experiment suggest that children performed better when carrying out meaningful work represented by verbal recognition of the experimenter. Specifically, participants achieved to finish 10% fewer tasks in the ignored condition, and 12% fewer tasks in shredded condition compared to recognized treatment. Among other partial results, male subjects were positively impacted by the experimenter's acknowledgement in terms of their performance.

Contribution

Contribution of Lubomír's thesis is in the subject pool of high school students that was used for his experiment. Even though there is a lot of especially psychological literature devoted to the behaviour of children, I am not aware that there would be much attention placed to the meaning of work among children. I, therefore, consider this thesis being innovative for the bachelor level.

Methods

Lubomír provides a thesis with simple yet clearly documented methodology of economics experiment. He clearly states his research task, describes treatments that he executes and the process of this execution. Furthermore, he provides the reader with some limitations of his procedure. Even though largely inspired by the original paper by Ariely (2008), I appreciate that Lubomír transferred the methodology to the different subject pool, planned and executed the experiment by himself. He managed this task well to a bachelor level student.

Despite being satisfied with a bachelor-level methodology, I point out a shortcoming. The core of the economic experiments is in rewarding participants with incentives, either monetary or non-monetary, such as sweets, toys etc. in case of children. This experiment lacks such incentives, except, possibly, the joy from omitting the class contents that can be present among high school students. Even though Lubomír did not have any funding for his experiment and therefore could not afford to use such incentives, which is understandable in his case, I lack a section where he would discuss this shortcoming.

After the description of the experiment, Lubomír provides the reader with the exhausting section where he provides descriptive statistics of the experimental data, in my opinion to a slight detriment of the subsequent analysis. The descriptive statistics section is unnecessarily large compared to the section where further analysis is provided. Lubomír uses only simple statistical tests for testing his hypotheses, while he provides robustness checks occasionally.

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Results of this thesis clearly suffer from a small subject pool that was utilized for this experiment, the power of the tests are not high. A bigger pool of students, however, could not have been utilized due to the absence of funding.

Literature

The literature of the topic is well-reviewed and described in the second chapter of the thesis. References in the rest of the thesis are scarce. Occasionally, I missed a reference throughout the text that would anchor certain statement to a particular piece of literature. The whole text, nevertheless, meets academic standards of the bachelor level.

Manuscript form

In the case of the manuscript form, there are several deficiencies, but overall the level of formal correctness of this thesis is sufficient.

Summary and suggested questions for the discussion during the defence

I am pleased to summarize that Lubomír Janšta managed all aspects of a bachelor thesis at a satisfactory level. The thesis shows the author's knowledge of both the presented topic as well as analytical methods. I found the topic of Lubomír's thesis interesting. Last but not least, I strongly appreciate that Lubomír made significant progress during the time he worked on his thesis.

I recommend the thesis to defence at the IES FSV UK. Based on the quality of the thesis and my best knowledge I suggest the grade "B."

Suggested questions for the defence:

- Discuss the limitation of not using the monetary/non-monetary incentives in the experiment.
- On page 19 in chapter 5.2. why do you refer to uncomplete sheets as cheating? The topic does not seem to be well described throughout the thesis.

References used in the report

Ariely, D., Kamenica, E., & Prelec, D. (2008). Man's search for meaning: The case of Legos. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 67(3-4), 671-677.

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
Contribution (max. 30 points)	25
Methods (max. 30 points)	24
Literature (max. 20 points)	16
Manuscript Form (max. 20 points)	16
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	81
GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)	B

NAME OF THE REFEREE: Jindřich Matoušek

DATE OF EVALUATION: 16.8.2019



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