

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

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

Student:	Vojtěch Válek
Advisor:	Mgr. Barbara Pertold-Gebicka, M.A., Ph.D.
Title of the thesis:	The impact of COVID-19 on election outcomes: The case of the Czech Republic

OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

Short summary

The thesis is quite early to what will surely become a large field of study, namely the economic, social and political impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The question of how the spread of the virus impacted election results is of high interest not only in Czechia, and the author uses appropriate range of tools for a bachelor's thesis to test the hypothesis that number of infected individuals and deaths affected the election results.

Contribution

Given the limited amount of research that has been produced on the pandemic due to its being a very recent event, the thesis should be viewed as pioneering work in a field where little literature exists. This is also the main contribution of the thesis – especially given its local focus, the thesis seeks to answer previously relatively unexamined questions. The work also acknowledges that there is limited data, as there has been limited number of elections since the pandemic (and typically at most one per country).

Methods

The author pays appropriate attention to pre-analyzing the data for multicollinearity and other potential issues with the dataset. Some variables, such as 'Believers' would benefit from more precise definition and reasoning for their inclusion, although their meaning is implied. The author gives sufficient exposure to the methods used and their properties and required assumptions.

Less precision is involved when discussing various panel data methods. It would be better to avoid vague statements such as '*The fixed effects estimation has a few more assumptions that are somehow of an extended version of the assumptions for the OLS estimator.*'

Appropriate methods are used to test the assumptions of various methods and to choose between the describe **methods**.

In some sections, the author in their discussion describes the possible effect of various age groups in dependence on the pandemic's proliferation. It might be interesting therefore to include interactions of COVID cases and age variables in the model.

It might furthermore be worth to think a bit more about the data involved. Given the very high R-squared values, it might be worth rethinking whether causal relationship is actually being captured. For instance, both voter turnout and COVID cases could be correlated with existing (or previous) pandemic measures, which are not included in the models.

Literature

While the author acknowledges that literature is limited for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and gives well-supported reasons for inclusion of most control variables, it might have been worthwhile looking also at existing literature of other *vis major* forces influencing elections and the methods and

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procedures used in those cases. While the claims in the work are generally well referenced, the citation style is somewhat inconsistent.

Manuscript form

The manuscript is logically structured and properly referenced.

A few notes I would make is to be more careful about proper capitalization of headings and subheadings in English. It's also better for consistency's sake to use either plural or singular form when referring to the author throughout the entire work. In some sections, the work would benefit for more proofreading.

Overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

The thesis fulfills the requirements for a bachelor thesis at the Institute of Economic Studies, and I therefore recommend it for the defense and suggest a grade B.

For the defense, I would suggest more discussion on the following issues:

- Could it be possible that another non-measure variable could be a determining factor both for current COVID cases and voter turnout (and support for government parties), such as pandemic measures imposed in the current or past periods? Speaking of which, it might be of interest to introduce lagged variables, as the impact of measures (or deaths or cases) on preferences might not be immediate.
- It might be worth considering testing for joint significance of pandemic-related variables rather than individual one.
- More literature exists on the 2020 US election. While this is briefly mentioned in the Literature Review, more comparative analysis of the impact of the pandemic in the US and Czechia would be beneficial, as well as more specific examination of whether the pandemic harmed specifically ruling parties, or parties / candidates with similar political leaning.

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution (max. 30 points)</i>	30
<i>Methods (max. 30 points)</i>	25
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Manuscript Form (max. 20 points)</i>	18
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	88
GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)	B

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NAME OF THE REFEREE: Jan Mošovský

DATE OF EVALUATION: August 21, 2022

Digitálně podepsáno (21. 8. 2022)
Jan Mošovský

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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.*

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.*

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

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.*

Overall grading:

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