

REPORT ON MASTER THESIS
CENTER FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND GRADUATE EDUCATION

STUDENT:	Sija Lui
ADVISOR:	Andreas Menzel
TITLE OF THE THESIS:	Effects of one school meal program on mothers' labor supply: Evidence from China

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

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

CONTRIBUTION:

The thesis seems to be novel to me in particular with the combination of the country of the study (China) and the effects of the meal-policy for school children on mothers' labor market supply. Somewhat, the thesis explores one of the mechanisms discussed in Fang and Zhu (2022) and replicates the main idea of Lundborg et al., (2022), which studies a similar setting in Sweden. To sum up, there is of course already existing literature on this topic, but the depths how this kind of policy intervention is studied with Chinese data is novel and very informative.

METHODS:

The thesis mainly applies a staggered DID approach that employs the spread of the policy intervention across Chinese provinces and compares mother's intensive and extensive labor market participation based on reform exposure. The identifying assumption of the DID are well executed and discussed, and also shown in the event-study plot in Figure 3. The student should use figures more extensively to discuss the findings (i.e., Figure 3). Some estimation difficulties of staggered-DID approaches could have been discussed in more details, but this will go beyond a Master's thesis.

LITERATURE:

The literature section is extensive and the author focuses too extensively on literature that investigates the effects of similar policy intervention on direct outcomes on pupils. However, this literature on the effects on child outcomes itself would only be a minor contribution and can be reduced. Moreover, the extensive literature review in the introduction is a bit misleading and the transition from the literature to the specific study object and setting comes late.

MANUSCRIPT FORM:

In most parts, the manuscript is done properly and wording and writing are smoothly. However, the author should put more emphasis on formatting tables and equations. Often, Tables spread over page brakes (Table 6 and many others) and formatting is ugly such as in Table 4 (numbers spread in different lines). A simple way to do the formatting of tables better is to summarize all control variables in a line called "Controls: Yes"). Equation (3) is poorly edited. Figures are also poorly described. For example, in many figures it is not mentioned which outcome variable the figure is showing.

The introduction can also be improved by pointing to the research question more stringently and earlier. Most of the introduction deals with nutrition programs on child-development. Only after some pages, the reader learns that this thesis does not focus on the effects of children, but on the effects of parents. Reframing can improve the readability and will better highlight the contribution.

SUMMARY AND SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION DURING THE DEFENSE:

Summary: This is a good to very good thesis. The student demonstrate that she can work with data and plot convincing event-study results. The thesis would benefit from a more stringent framing and wording, and better editing of important tables.

Potential question for the defense:

- Are the findings specific to some cultural norms in China or would we expect the same impacts in the USA or Europe? Why yes/why not?
- How does the finding relate to the paper by Kleven et al. (AEJ: Economic Policy, 2020), see: <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.20210346&&from=f> ? This paper finds that the “staggered” extension of child care does not affect mothers’ labor market supply. How is this study comparable to the thesis here?
- The student should discuss Figure 3 in more details: What is the plot showing? To which tables the plot refers the most? (Problem: Figure 3 is really cool, but it is mainly used for the discussion of the parallel trend and not the outcome).
- The student should explain Table 4? Why should this be an event-study plot?

Please indicate whether you recommend the Thesis for defense or not.

I recommend the thesis for defense.

~~I do not recommend the thesis for defense.~~

TEXT ORIGINALITY CONTROL

I confirm that I acquainted myself with the report on the originality of the text of the thesis from

Theses Turnitin Original (Urkund)

Comments on the reported results:

Plagiarism checks were automatically processed by CU. Sija Lui’s thesis does not show huge signs of plagiarism, in particular not for passages with own contribution. “Turnitin” reports some large overlaps of some paragraphs with 2 sources. These sources are papers that study a similar intervention and the sources are cited in the thesis correctly. So far, this seems to be fine. However, some conclusions of the thesis seem to follow the wording of one of these papers. Given that the findings are similar, this is understandable but more caution would be nice.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, please see the page 3)

CATEGORY	POINTS
Contribution (max. 30 points)	28
Methods (max. 30 points)	28
Literature (max. 20 points)	15
Manuscript Form (max. 20 points)	10
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	81
GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)	B

NAME OF THE REFEREE: Christian Ochsner

DATE OF EVALUATION: August 30, 2023



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