

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>South Korea's challenge: Low fertility rate and Government's policies to enhance fertility rate</b>
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	<b>David Shin</b>
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	<b>Mgr. Lukáš Hájek, M.A., Ph.D.</b>

**Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the five numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).**

**1) Theoretical background:** The thesis works on a rich theoretical background since a review and an application of three theories (economic, familial, and cultural) are the central issue of the thesis. The major drawback resides in the fact that the three theories come from Western countries while the author applies them to South Korea. Even though the author admits the potential problem (p. 13), only a few remarks address the issue in the thesis. Since applying the three theories is crucial within the thesis' research design, at least a separate subchapter dealing with the very difference would be helpful.

**2) Contribution:** Undoubtedly, the thesis has its merit. To be more specific, the description of the theoretical background, as well as the analysis of the South Korean case, are comprehensive and enriching. However, the limits of the contribution are clear, especially in part on conclusions. The findings are rather indeterminate and based on them, the author employs formulations, such as "the author believes" (p. 74). The problem is that most of the findings come from an analysis that is interesting and enriching, however, lacking evaluation criteria (see below). As a result, the authors' decisions about the set hypotheses and research questions are not convincing enough.

**3) Methods:** The presented thesis is "an intensive study focusing on critical analysis and systematic investigation of South Korean case" (p. 12). The author has managed to select appropriate theories that can be applied to the South Korean problem of the low fertility rate. Since there are three theories, the author asks three research questions and builds three hypotheses (p. 36). Nonetheless, the phenomena in the hypotheses are not always operationalized in a measurable or at least decisive form. To be more specific, while most of the variables are easily measurable, the author prefers rather indirect descriptions of the relationships that cannot lead to convincing findings. It would be probably more beneficial to select only one of the theories and elaborate on its contribution in much more detail than to deal with three theories rather superficially, albeit engagingly. To be more specific, for instance, while only three indicators are taken into account to decide on Leitner's concept of familisation, that is not complex enough (p. 61). A similar problem applies to the evaluation of the cultural theory as the author admits that "there are many more factors influencing fertility behaviours" (p. 73) to explain why it is not possible to fully assess the respective hypothesis. To summarize, the method of the thesis is not applied in a proper form since the evaluation criteria of the method are not clear.

**4) Literature:** The manuscript is based on extensive and well-selected literature. The author works with the literature in the right way as these are interpreted and applied appropriately. However, the description of the theories from literature is sometimes confusing as a straightforward explanation is missing at the expense of repeated indirect expressions.

**5) Manuscript form:** The manuscript is written in proper English and academic style of expression. The typos are only occasional (e.g., "ass" in p. 10 or "ween" in p. 22). Some grammatical mistakes are repeated throughout the text (e.g., capitals in "State", "Parental leave" or "Maternity leave"). Title capitalizations are not always in a proper form (e.g., p. 18 and 36). While some paragraphs are

indented by an empty line, others are not (e.g., p. 12). There are two chapters numbered with no. 1. In-text citations are in the right form, which applies mostly to the bibliography as well. However, not all items in the bibliography have the same form (compare Anderson & Kohler 2013 and 2015 in p. 75). Graphs and tables are labelled in the right form, including appendices. Nonetheless, the text is sometimes quite hard to read since relevant information is not always available. For instance, the data from KGSS are only interpreted in the text, and specific figures are missing (pp. 61-63). Their raw description in the appendices is not a sufficient substitute. As a result, the author interprets the data with words, such as “the most”, without further details (p. 63). The central issue of the fertility rate is not depicted in detailed numbers before the appendices (p. 88). Importantly, such a case description should come before the very analysis. Besides this, some details should not be described in long summaries but rather in graphs (e.g., p. 55). Last but not least, the author has not avoided some mistakes, such as the coronavirus pandemic began in 2018 (pp. 35 and 55).

*Box for the thesis supervisor only. Please characterize the progress in the working out of thesis (e.g., steady and gradual versus discontinuous and abrupt) and the level (intensity) of communication/cooperation with the author:*

**Suggested questions for the defence are:**

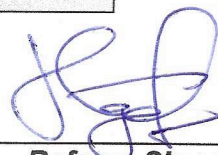
- “Which of the three theories explains the low fertility rate in South Korea the best?”
- “What are the criteria for such a decision and why have you chosen them?”
- “What are the implications of your findings for the government’s policies?”

**I recommend the thesis for final defence.**

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20 points)</i>	18
<i>Contribution (max. 20 points)</i>	12
<i>Methods (max. 20 points)</i>	8
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	18
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20 points)</i>	13
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)</b>	<b>D</b>

**DATE OF EVALUATION: January 16, 2022**



**Referee Signature**

**Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:**

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	<b>A</b>	= outstanding (high honour)
81 – 90	<b>B</b>	= superior (honour)
71 – 80	<b>C</b>	= good
61 – 70	<b>D</b>	= satisfactory
51 – 60	<b>E</b>	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	<b>F</b>	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.