

dr hab. Aleksandra Kowalska, prof. UMCS  
Department of Microeconomics and Applied Economics  
Institute of Economics and Finance  
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland

Lublin, 15.03.2024

**Review of the doctoral dissertation on *Sustainability in middle-income countries* by mgr Laeeq Razzak Janjua**

Supervision: Prof. dr hab. inż. Jacek Szoltysek

### **1. Introduction**

This review was prepared on the basis of the written request of dr hab. Katarzyna Szczepańska-Woszczyzna, prof. AWSB for my evaluation of the doctoral thesis on *Sustainability in middle-income countries* written by mgr Laeeq Razzak Janjua.

The review was developed pursuant to Article 187 of the Act of 20 July 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science (Dz. U. 2018, item 1668 as amended). According to this Polish law, **the PhD dissertation should offer a genuine solution to the scientific problem and demonstrate a general theoretical knowledge of the candidate in a given discipline.**

### **2. The title**

The title is concise and communicate the contents of the dissertation quite well. However, it is very general and could be rethought.

### **3. Problem statement**

The author provided the adequate scientific rationale for the choice of the subject of his research. I appreciate that he showed the important role of middle income-countries (MIC) in the global economy taking into account the specificity of key vectors for economic growth in these countries (Chapter 1). The author rightly stated that international relations determine sustainable economic growth in MIC. He correctly identified major determinants of this growth including (i) internal and external financial flows, (ii) international trade conditions and the outcome of this trade, (iii) political, economic and institutional governance.

I think that the author should show the list of MIC in the Introduction. I appreciate the efforts made by the author to use appropriate and relevant terminology related to sustainable development concept. I am sure it was problematic. In general, he used proper terminology associated with a new discipline of international relations. I just have one comment concerning this terminology. In the discipline of international relations, the term “State” is usually used instead of the term “country”.

The author was clear stating the problem and provided sufficient reasoning for choosing the subject of his research. He convinced me that what he explored and proved is important for the global politics, economy and society.

#### **4. Research objectives, questions and hypothesis**

The aim of the study was properly stated. The research questions raised by the author are adequate, accurate, and relevant in relation to the purpose of the analysis. I think that three proposed hypothesis should have been improved further. I have to say, however, that the author framed his research very well.

#### **5. Methods**

The author made an appropriate decision on the methodology he employed in order to resolve the stated research problem. I appreciate that he described both advantages and limitations of panel data analysis. The Driscoll-Kraay standard error approach has been used within the scope of panel data analysis in previous studies in order to examine the relationship between a set of control variables and economic growth. This gives the strong reasoning for the choice of this method.

I expected a bit more detailed description of research methodology in Chapter 1 including information about the regression analysis. Nevertheless, the author thoroughly explained the methodology employed in Chapter 3.

#### **6. Substantive evaluation of the dissertation concerning theoretical background, results, discussion, and conclusions**

The author properly selected and described the theories of economic growth which gave the background to further analysis. Theoretical background presented in Chapter 2 underpins the selection of factors having an impact on sustainable economic growth in middle-income countries. I appreciate that the chapter regarding theoretical issues and research framework is

the end result of his critical thinking. **The author has proved he knows and understands the theories of growth specific to the discipline of international relations (and subdiscipline of international political economy).**

The author showed the challenges regarding meeting economic, social and environmental goals in MIC and exposed the fact that all three pillars of sustainable development are mutually interconnected. This is reflected in the research hypotheses and the entire research framework. It needs to be pointed out that Figure 2 synthetically demonstrates the research framework. This clearly explains what was going to be done.

Based on the thorough literature review, the influence of previously selected factors on sustainable economic growth in MIC was explained. The analyzed factors are related to foreign direct investments, remittance inflows, foreign aid, internal financial systems, international trade, and human capital in MIC. It is worth noting that numerous references were made to the results of other studies regarding these impacts. Thus, the candidate showed the current state of knowledge in this field.

The statistical analysis were conducted correctly and in a reliable manner. The author quite clearly explained the constructed model. Although, the names of variables could have been more informative. The author prepared a comprehensive data analysis report but it was not easy to go through it. It would be really helpful if the author put notes below the tables, especially in the conclusion part. It would be more clear for a reader what the values in the tables mean.

It is worth mentioning that he carefully chose the model variables. For instance, the measures of the performance of governments (governance variables) include the political stability index, the voice and accountability index, the government effectiveness index, the regulatory quality index, the control of corruption index and the rule of law index. The governance indicators have been monitored by the World Bank Institute for all the States since 1996.

In Poland, it is not common to include a discussion part in the doctoral dissertation in the field of social sciences. However, the discussion was highly needed in this particular case. The discussion allowed the readers to understand what the results of research really meant.

The description of the research results should be more concise and more clear to the reader. Some of the tables could be set out in the appendices. The dissertation runs to over 450 pages. I think the PhD thesis should be shorter.

The structure of the PhD thesis is not typical for the dissertations prepared in the discipline of international relations, however, it is well thought-out and coherent. As far as I know, the authors of the dissertations prepared in this discipline very rarely build a statistical model which estimates the relationship between variables. **I conclude that the author of this dissertation developed a genuine solution to the well-stated scientific problem and proved to be able to independently conduct scientific work.**

The author tried to summarize the results of his research in the Conclusion part. I am a bit disappointed in this section. The author should have gone deeper into the research topics. He should have seek to answer the following questions: “Why is it like that?”; “What is behind different results for countries from the selected sub-groups?”; “What does it mean for these countries?”.

I appreciate the author formulated a set of policy recommendations addressed to policy makers in MIC. However, I would prefer him to write an essay. For instance, environmental issues are almost never “black and white”. Compared to fossil fuels, solar energy is considered a key form of renewable energy in terms of reducing energy-related greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. However, there are potential environmental risks of the use of solar cells. Thus, making a list of short policy recommendations is not enough. This begs the following question: What are the potential environmental hazards of photovoltaic panels? **(1)**

The author wrote “Government should promote public-private partnerships in education”. I would like him to tell us more about it. **(2)**

I have one more question to the author of this dissertation: What does the Environmental Kuznets Curve suggests? **(3)**

## **7. Editing**

The doctoral dissertation is well-written. The language is clear and easy to understand. Minor editing of English language could be required. There are not many typos and grammar mistakes in the main text. I do not like the idea of the use of capital letters in the table of contents. Nevertheless, the PhD thesis was carefully prepared and it was a pleasure to read it.

## 8. Conclusions

I am glad to express a positive general assessment of the doctoral dissertation on *Sustainability in middle-income countries* by mgr Laeeq Razzak Janjua. This elaboration satisfies all of the legal requirements for doctoral thesis in Poland. The PhD thesis demonstrates a general theoretical knowledge of the candidate in the discipline of international relations (and subdiscipline of international political economy) and offers a genuine solution to the well-stated scientific problem. The author has proved he is able to conduct scientific research independently using appropriate methods.

I request that the doctoral dissertation on *Sustainability in middle-income countries* by mgr Laeeq Razzak Janjua be accepted and publicly defended.

Aleksandra Kowalska