

# Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

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

<b>Student:</b>	Denisa Urbanová
<b>Advisor:</b>	PhDr. Mgr. Jana Votápková, Ph. D.
<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	How Does Motherhood Influence Drinking Habits? An Investigation of Alcohol Consumption Among Women in the Czech Republic.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

### Short summary

The thesis makes a significant and well-defined contribution by investigating the impact of motherhood on alcohol consumption. It aims to explore how having children and taking on various social roles (such as becoming a mother, wife, and being employed) influence self-reported alcohol consumption frequency among women in the Czech Republic. The findings reveal that for Czech mothers, the effects vary by age. Younger women with children in their household tend to consume less alcohol, whereas older women, who have more children or balance multiple social roles, exhibit increased alcohol consumption.

### Contribution

The contribution is clearly stated, as highlighted in the previous section. However, the thesis does not address the potential applications or implications of the findings for policymakers by giving some recommendations.

### Methods

The applied statistical methods are appropriate for a bachelor's thesis. However, more evaluation could have been given to the used data. There is almost no preliminary analysis and description of the data presented in the thesis, which reduces the credibility and robustness of the results. I find several potential points for improvement and describe a few selected ones below.

In the description of the dataset, I would appreciate knowing the size of the sample and when and how exactly the data was collected (this could be mentioned also in the introduction) and some description of the sample – for example, the percentage of childless women, women with one, two, three, children in the sample compared to some similar statistics of the population, ... Is the sample representative of the Czech society?

The author excludes observations for which the data on self-reported alcohol consumption (i.e. the dependent variable) is missing without any further analysis. Since alcohol consumption is a relatively sensitive matter, I would fear that it can happen that women who have problems with heavy drinking would choose not to answer. This could potentially bias the results significantly. On a similar note, since the dependent variable is the self-reported frequency of alcohol consumption, it is possible that women who use it more often could underreport their actual consumption. I know that it is the characteristics of the data and the author can not really do much about it, however, I believe that it should be mentioned that the results could suffer from such biases. Unfortunately, I did not see anything about it mentioned in the thesis. Ideally, the author could have looked into the issue of missing variables further prior to just excluding them, without even mentioning the proportion of the original dataset that suffers from this issue.

Further, the author excludes women who have more than three children aged less than 13 living with them in their household – “*in order not to bias the results since there are only a few of them*” and argues that “*by this adjustment, individuals characterized by high numbers of children and reliance on social benefits will be eliminated*”. I would appreciate knowing the percentage of the sample of such women. It might be true, that many of such women rely on social benefits. However, without any

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supporting evidence, I see it as a quite bold statement and without elaborating on the potential bias introduced to the estimated coefficients by including them. Since the dataset provides the information on income of the household and the highest attained education of the women and their employment, it should be relatively easy to check this assumption and provide at least some supporting evidence of its relevancy before the exclusion of such women from the analysis. I would also appreciate knowing the results also if this group is included and what is for example their most common response to the question on alcohol consumption frequency. This would give us an idea if there is a bias present and if it is what is its direction.

On the side of explanatory variables, I would welcome some robustness checks or alternative specifications. For example, for the number of children the used methods assume that the marginal change of having an additional child is the same regardless of whether it is a first, second, or third child. It would be nice to see if the results potentially differ and if for some of these changes, the effect differs or is more pronounced compared to others. Similarly for age – is it possible that the effect of becoming older on alcohol consumption changes as we age? I would also welcome some descriptive statistics of the dependent variable for the different categories – different age groups, different numbers of children, and different incomes. It might be interesting to see these statistics and uncover if the potential source of differences (if there are any) can be caused for example by the different ages of the children, employment, etc.

Similarly "The plot illustrates that most women have children under the age of 13 between the ages of 25 and 50." Based on that the author considers only women from this age group. I would appreciate knowing the exact shares of the sample, etc., since from the graph I can see that it is quite common to live in a household with at least one child for women above the age of 60. The author correctly states that the problem is that the variable child measures the number of children living in the household, but what are the implications? Couldn't it result in any biases in the estimated effects since the aim is to evaluate the effect on mothers? I believe that the author could have elaborated on this matter or at least pointed out the potential biases. Not only briefly mention it in the conclusion.

## Literature

The literature review is rather scattered. It would benefit from refining as the author jumps from one finding to another contradicting back to the first argument within one paragraph. Sometimes the claims appear contradictory to me, for example the last sentence of the paragraph:

*"Specifically, younger Finnish women were 11.6% likely to drink heavily (older 4.9%) if they had children, were employed, and married. On the contrary, they were only 1.2% likely to drink heavily (older 0.5%) when possessing none of these roles. This supports the idea that women with more responsibilities and structured lives tend to drink less, possibly due to limited opportunities for alcohol consumption."*

I would consider married, employed mothers to have more responsibilities (and presumably more required structure) in their lives than those possessing none of those roles.

Sometimes the citation is in the middle of the paragraph when it would be more suitable at the end – for example:

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*“By contrast, in an investigation among white and African-American women, a positive effect of parental roles on heavy drinking was found among African American women (Darrow et al. 1992). Specifically, the findings suggested that the individual’s multiple roles as an employee and parent created stress, which in turn contributed to increased alcohol consumption, in particular heavy drinking.”* Or the paragraph between pages 6 and 7, etc.

On some occasions, the author presents claims that, in my opinion, should be supported by a citation. An example could be the first paragraph of the introduction or in the discussion of the potential effect of age on drinking: *„We suppose that age will affect the drinking frequency negatively since older women are likely to be more experienced in life and thus unlikely to succumb to alcoholism due to some potential difficulties they might face.”* Also: *“It is anticipated that income level can affect alcohol consumption in the way that higher-income people might buy and therefore consume more alcohol. However, we do not expect income to have large effects on alcoholism.”* Here in particular the opposite argument could also be true, since the author herself often mentions the reason for excessive alcohol consumption could be stress and duty overload. For low-income households, without the excess to other sources that could help them to overcome this, I would expect the tendency to drink often to be higher. What did the previous studies find? On the other hand, for other variables (especially those of primary interest to the thesis) the author properly cites other studies and elaborates on possible outcomes.

I appreciate the chapter on the potential impact of social media on alcohol consumption among women.

## Manuscript form

The thesis is nicely typeset in Latex in good English with only a few styling mistakes. Tables and figures are correctly labeled. I would welcome a more detailed description of the presented data and results in the tables and figures. I would also suggest using more self-explanatory variable names in the tables, for example instead of par – partner, instead of inc – income, child – number of children (child could also be just a dummy), ...

Also the discussion about the potential signs of the estimated effects of the included independent explanatory variables would be in my opinion more suitable for literature review than for the chapter on data. I would move the discussion about the goodness of fit from the beginning of the Results to the section on methodology. If someone is interested in the results, they are likely to trust the author of the study to choose the appropriate methodology and they look for the actual results. And only if they are interested in more detail, would they examine the goodness of fit of the models and similar statistics.

The author only mentions one potential drawback of the used data but only in the conclusion. It would be better to address them sooner and to address more of them in more detail (some are mentioned in the report above).

## Overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

The results of the Turnitin analysis do not indicate significant text similarity with other available sources.

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Even though there is potential for improvement in the thesis, in my view, the thesis fulfills the requirements for a bachelor thesis at IES, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, I recommend it for the defense and suggest a grade B.

## Suggested questions for the defense:

- 1.) Using the findings of the thesis, what measures would the author suggest to policymakers? What could be the reason for the difference between young and older women in the effect of motherhood on their alcohol consumption?
- 2.) The author focuses solely on women and the impact of becoming a parent on their alcohol consumption. Why did she decide not to include men in the analysis of the effect of having children on alcohol consumption? It would be useful to know the results for them to be able to compare them.
- 3.) As mentioned in the report, I fear that the simple exclusion of observations with missing data for the dependent variable (i.e., self-reported alcohol consumption) can lead to substantial bias in the results. What is the opinion of the author on this? Is there any indication of such bias? How many observations had to be excluded based on that? Is there any common pattern among the excluded women (for example, in the number of children, education, or income)?
- 4.) The author correctly states that the problem is that the variable "child" measures the number of children living in the household. What are the implications? Couldn't this result in any biases in the estimated effects since the aim is to evaluate the effect on mothers?
- 5.) The method used assumes that the marginal effect of every child welcomed into the life of the woman is the same. I would be interested in the potential differences of going from zero children to one, from one to two, etc. Does the author have any opinion on the potential differences among these changes in the number of children? How would she proceed if she wanted to evaluate this question?
- 6.) Why did the author decide to use logit instead of probit (or both)? What is the reason for using model 2 instead of model 1 for the computation of predicted probabilities (i.e., why does the author exclude the interactive terms in model 2)?

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	30
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	23
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	15
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	15
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b> (max. 100 points)	<b>83</b>
<b>GRADE</b> (A – B – C – D – E – F)	<b>B</b>

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**NAME OF THE REFEREE:** *Anna Kúdel'ová*

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** 20. 05. 2024

*Digitally signed (20. 05. 2024):*

Anna Kúdel'ová

**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.*

**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