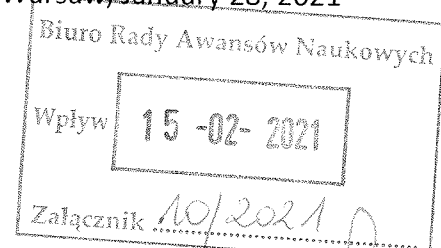


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A review report on **Rivka Sigal's** doctoral dissertation

***The Effect of Psychological Capital on Employment-Oriented Behaviour of  
Israeli Arab Women***

*(Wpływ kapitału psychologicznego na zachowania nakierowane na znalezienie  
zatrudnienia wśród arabskich kobiet w Izraelu),*

supervised by **dr hab. Piotr Michoń, University Professor**  
and submitted at the Poznań University of Economics and Business

**1. Formal basis of review**

This review was commissioned by Prof. dr hab. Barbara Jankowska, Head of the Scientific Promotion Council, Poznań University of Economics and Business on 30 November 2020.

According to statutory requirements, a doctoral dissertation should provide an original solution to a scientific problem and demonstrate the candidate's general theoretical knowledge in a specific scientific discipline. A doctoral dissertation must solve a defined research problem, which has not been solved before. The research problem should be explained with scientific methods and tools, which should indicate potential ways of solving it. The dissertation must also analyse the current state of knowledge in the research area and should also present a solution to the problem described by the doctoral student. Following these requirements, I adopted the following criteria to assess Ms Rivka

Sigal's doctoral dissertation: the choice and significance of the research problem, the correctness of formulation of the research goals and hypotheses, the research methodology, structure of the dissertation and the author's research skills.

Detailed explanations and comments can be found in individual sections of this review.

## **2. Structure of dissertation**

Ms Rivka Sigal's dissertation is a theoretical and empirical study of the influence of psychological capital on the behaviour of women in Israel, with a special focus on Arab women, who are seeking employment. The dissertation with attachments has 265 pages, including 209 pages in the descriptive part. It consists of 4 chapters and introduction, abstract, concluding remarks, references and appendices. The dissertation is divided into two parts: part one with theoretical research and part two with empirical studies. Their structure is described below. The dissertation is supplemented by a reference list with 269 items – books, journals and legal acts. The dissertation also includes graphic presentations (7), tables (42), and a full-scale questionnaire survey.

Part one is divided into two chapters. The first chapter starts with an introduction of the research population – inactive population. It is followed by a discussion on the economic, social and personal consequences of inactivity. The author presents a literary review of barriers to employment: education, location and infrastructure, health, culture, and social policy. The discussion in this chapter simultaneously presents the theoretical aspect and demonstrates the case of Arab women in Israel. The second chapter presents the scene for a possible solution and explains why the current research variables were chosen. It is divided into three subchapters: the employment enhancement field, in which the readiness for change independent variable was chosen through the 'scale of diagnosis'; presentation of the psychological capital variable; presentation how the outcome measure variable was developed, specifically oriented to the economically inactive population.

Part two has an empirical character. It is divided into two chapters. The first one – Chapter Three, presents the first research design – cross-sectional analysis, using the Israeli

CBS 2017 social survey. The last chapter is a self-collected non-random survey study based on the snowball sampling technique. In each chapter the author presents aims, the research question and hypotheses, describes methodologies and the research population, presents the results, discussion, limitations and suggestions for future research. In the final part of the dissertation there are concluding remarks about the main findings and final thoughts of the whole study, the theoretical contribution, as well as the practical implementation, followed by limitations and suggestions for future research.

In my opinion, the dissertation has an exemplary structure. Each chapter starts with an introduction to the problem, which is followed by a discussion on its theoretical aspects, presentation of the research results, discussion on other studies and research barriers. The content in individual chapters is logically ordered and the chapters are appropriately arranged for analyses and deliberations. The author aided the review of her dissertation by pointing to some shortcomings and drawbacks. She noted what she had failed to achieve, which proves her high research awareness. She also showed to what extent further analyses can be made.

The dissertation introduced new elements to the scientific cognition process. Firstly, it is an attempt to combine psychological and economic research with a simultaneous broad socioeconomic analysis. Secondly, the author skilfully combined the analysis of EOB, PsyCap, and RFC measures. Clear aspects of behavioural economics and socioeconomics show that the author has the right qualifications to work on interdisciplinary problems. The in-depth review of the results of other scientists' studies and the author's own research resulted in the formulation of important and extremely cognitively interesting conclusions. Although there have been numerous studies on behavioural economics, the issue undertaken in the dissertation broadens achievements in this research area.

### **3. Selection and significance of research problem**

Ms Rivka Sigal analysed a very important problem of the influence of psychological capital on behaviour in the labour market, where she combined social sciences and

psychology. The problem has extremely wide-ranging social, legal, administrative, and political implications. Therefore, its cognitive significance in contemporary society is constantly growing. The in-depth analysis of the issue shows that women from rural areas in Poland face similar problems, especially the inhabitants of former state-owned farms and peripheral areas. It is a pity the author did not use Polish studies to compare this situation. However, such comparisons would be difficult, because publications concerning this issue are usually available only in Polish.

The worse situation of Arab women in the Israeli labour market may be a matter of concern for social politicians and social workers, and above all, for social services. Therefore, a broad discussion on labour market integration measures seems to be necessary. Again, we can strongly associate this situation with the rural labour market in Poland and draw analogies between the group studied by the author of the doctoral dissertation and rural women in Poland. It is necessary to conduct comprehensive research to determine the effectiveness of the aid measures policy as well as the necessary changes to counteract or eliminate the effects of the worse position of Arab women. Ms Rivka Sigal's research meets these needs.

I consider the topic of the dissertation important and justified. It may be interesting not only for me as a reviewer but also for potential readers. It is topical and extremely important in view of the problems of Arab women in the labour market in Israel.

#### **4. Research question, hypotheses, method**

The research question at the heart of this thesis is: *How do psychological capital and readiness for change affect the employment-oriented behaviour of economically inactive Israeli Arab women?*

The research question leads to the following hypotheses:

1. The PsyCap level of economically inactive Israeli Arab women is lower than that of inactive Jewish women. Economically inactive Arab women are less ready for change than inactive Jewish women.
2. The stage of readiness for change (RFC) of economically inactive Israeli Arab women is pre-contemplation or contemplation rather than action.

3. The higher the PsyCap is, the higher the stage of readiness for change (RFC) is.
4. The PsyCap level positively affects the employment-oriented behaviour of Israeli Arab women.
5. The higher the stage of readiness for change (RFC) is, the higher the probability of employment-oriented behaviour of Israeli Arab women is.
6. The relationship between PsyCap and employment-oriented behaviour is mediated by stages of readiness for change: the higher the PsyCap is, the greater readiness for change is, which leads to a higher probability of performing EOB.

It is particularly valuable that the author's hypotheses are set in world scientific research. The author indicates what has already been observed in other countries and groups. This proves her good knowledge of publications on this subject. The research question and hypotheses are then explored in a descriptive correlative study, using two research designs:

1. A cross-sectional analysis, using the Israeli CBS 2017 annual social survey. The sample includes 2,568 women respondents, 1,950 of whom were Jewish (73.8 per cent), 618 were Arabs (23.4 per cent) and 73 were defined as others or Atheist (2.8 per cent). The aims of this preliminary comparative approach study were: (1) to reveal whether the research variables (PsyCap, RFC and EOB) were relevant and could serve to measure the research population; (2) to explore the relationship between the variables.
2. A non-random survey study based on the snowball sampling technique. The sample included 49 inactive Arab women from the northern borderland of Israel. The aim of this supplementary study was to reveal the in-depth relationships between the variables and examine to what extent they could serve as tools to indicate effective enhancement programmes for inactive Arab women.

The two research methodologies and metrics, objectives and reasoning, limitations and suggestions for future research are elaborated on in Chapters Three and Four. To conclude, the aim of the study as well as the main and specific problems were justifiably chosen for the subject of the doctoral dissertation. The timespan of the research was reasonable as it enabled the observation of changes over time.

The author of the doctoral dissertation correctly selected and used a set of scientific research methods, including the analysis of scientific publications as well as the descriptive and comparative methods. It is slightly regrettable that she practically overlooked Polish publications in her scientific research. While the author's descriptive methods deserve recognition, it seems that she did not criticise the existing scientific literature with due boldness. Nevertheless, her normative reasoning also deserves due respect. The author accurately selected the statistical methods for analysis.

In view of the author's contribution to scientific research (including her own research), she proved to have acquired the necessary research skills for scientific work. She correctly selected the research data and processed them with appropriate statistical tools. They were useful to achieve the research goals and verify the hypotheses. The subjective, objective, spatial and temporal scope of the dissertation was substantively justified.

#### **5. Formal aspects – assessment and comments**

The dissertation is well-composed and edited, with correct spelling and punctuation. It is linguistically correct in terms of style and communicativeness. The author used the correct terminology of economics and related sciences, which proves that she has mastered the rules of writing scientific publications at this level. There was only a small number of editorial omissions, which can be ignored without giving details. Perhaps the frequent use of abbreviations makes the analysis unreadable for those who do not use indicators proficiently.

There is no inconsistency between the formal elements and the actual content of the dissertation. The author did not make any methodological, cognitive or research borrowings, so the dissertation should be considered original.

The author correctly and adequately selected reference publications to justify and analyse economic issues. However, her analysis of the labour market lacked references to a few important publications, such as *'Neither Unemployment Nor Social Policy'* by Jules Gazon or studies by M. K. Jones. Also, she did not make references to scientific publications on social entrepreneurship, which is a response to the challenges of the

labour market for people excluded from it. However, the lack of these items did not lower the quality of the dissertation.

As mentioned earlier, the goals of the dissertation were correctly and logically formulated. They have both the cognitive and applicatory dimension and are logically linked with the research hypotheses.

Although there are some ambiguities, imprecise definitions and mental shortcuts in the dissertation, it has significant cognitive value.

If the author writes a book in the future (hopefully), she should pay more attention to the women who are not employed but do not want to find and start a job for cultural reasons. This aspect was only briefly described in the dissertation. The author also did not write much about the unpaid work done by Arab women. This issue is worth elaborating on.

When the author was describing the poverty indicator on page 58, she did not explain exactly which indicator was meant. Presumably it was the at-risk-of-poverty indicator. There are few charts in the dissertation, which is a drawback. Some data presented in the tables would be clearer for readers if they were presented graphically. Another drawback is the small research sample. In consequence, it may be difficult to generalise and refer the results to the entire group under study. However, the author noticed it herself and warned against a simple generalisation.

The questions that arise are whether the research methods can be applied to the entire non-working community and whether they are adequate to women excluded for non-economic reasons.

Regardless of these minor remarks, the research was done very carefully and reliably. The dissertation is extremely inspiring and interesting.

## **6. Conclusion**

Despite the remarks given above, my review of the dissertation is positive. The selection of the topic, research assumptions and methodological approach, as well as the

substantive and formal value of the dissertation meet the requirements laid down in Article 13.1 of the Polish Law on Academic Degrees and Titles and Degrees and Titles in Arts of 14 March 2003. Therefore, I request that the Scientific Promotion Council of the Poznań University of Economics and Business permit Ms Rivka Sigal to take a public exam for the doctoral degree.

The author correctly designed and conducted the research, selected appropriate methods to verify the research hypotheses and formulate conclusions. The analysis of Ms Rivka Sigal's doctoral dissertation showed that it is an interesting study on the influence of psychological capital on the behaviour of Arab women seeking employment in Israel. The value of the dissertation lies in its documented and empirically illustrated multidimensional analysis, supported by extensive references to scientific publications. In this way the author showed that she had acquired the right research skills. The dissertation provides an original solution to a scientific problem and proves that its author has gained appropriate theoretical knowledge and the ability to independently conduct scientific research.



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