



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***IMPACT OF TRADE OPENNESS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH,
UNEMPLOYMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IN OIC
COUNTRIES***

SAJID ALI

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**IMPACT OF TRADE OPENNESS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH,
UNEMPLOYMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IN OIC COUNTRIES**

By

SAJID ALI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

April 2021

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**IMPACT OF TRADE OPENNESS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH,
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By

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April 2021

Chairman : Zulkornain Bin Yusop, PhD
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Today, the world is in favor of trade openness because open countries grow faster, are more productive, and have improved environmental quality than closed economies. The main objective of the thesis is to analyze the impact of trade openness on economic growth, unemployment, and environmental quality in OIC countries. Many studies argued that cross-sectional dependence exists among countries due to economic shocks and unobserved components as a result of trade openness (Arain et al., 2019; Dogan et al., 2020; Meo et al., 2020). The traditional econometric techniques give ambiguous outcomes in the presence of cross-sectional dependence and heterogeneity. So, in this study, a new technique ‘Dynamic Common Correlated Effects (DCCE)’ proposed by Chudik & Pesaran (2015), is applied on panel data to deal with the above-mentioned issues. Moreover, for quantile-based analysis, another novel technique, “Quantile-on-Quantile (QQ)”, developed by Sim & Zhou (2015), is applied. Out of total 57, 49 OIC countries are selected for panel data analysis due to data availability.

The first objective of the thesis explored the impact of trade openness on economic growth in OIC countries. The results of DCCE estimation state that there is a positive impact of trade openness on economic growth in the overall sample of OIC countries. Trade openness has a positive and significant relationship with economic growth in the case of higher-income OIC countries, whereas it decreases growth in the case of lower-income OIC countries. A quantile-based analysis indicates a positive association between trade openness and economic growth in the majority of OIC countries which support the trade-led growth hypothesis. The results tend to support the call for the continuation of trade openness policy for overall OIC countries and higher-income OIC countries.

The second objective of the thesis has analyzed the impact of trade openness on unemployment in OIC countries. The DCCE estimation shows that trade openness has a negative and significant association with the unemployment rate in overall and lower-

income OIC countries and a positive correlation with unemployment in higher-income OIC countries. A quantile based analysis indicates that trade openness increases unemployment in the majority of capital-abundant OIC countries and decreases unemployment in the majority of labor-abundant OIC countries. The results tend to support the call for the continuation of trade openness policy for overall OIC countries, lower-income OIC countries and labor-abundant OIC countries.

The third objective is related to the impact of trade openness on environmental quality in OIC countries. Results of DCCE estimation identify a negative association of trade openness with CO₂, N₂O and CH₄ emissions, while the positive relationship with the ecological footprint in overall OIC countries and higher-income OIC countries. On the other hand, trade openness has a positive association with all environmental indicators in lower- income OIC countries. A quantile-based analysis indicates a negative impact of trade openness on CO₂ emissions and a positive impact on the ecological footprint in the majority of open OIC countries. It is recommended that if OIC countries continue with trade openness policies, energy sector reforms, and maintain sustainable use of biocapacity, then they will be able to combat environmental issues.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

KESAN KETERBUKAAN PERDAGANGAN TERHADAP PERTUMBUHAN EKONOMI, PENGANGGURAN DAN KUALITI ALAM SEKITAR DI NEGARA OIC

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Pada hari ini, dunia menyokong keterbukaan perdagangan kerana negara yang lebih terbuka akan berkembang lebih cepat, lebih produktif, dan mempunyai kualiti persekitaran yang lebih baik daripada ekonomi tertutup. Objektif utama tesis ini adalah untuk mengkaji kesan keterbukaan perdagangan terhadap pertumbuhan ekonomi, pengangguran, dan kualiti alam sekitar di negara OIC (Pertubuhan Kerjasama Islam). Banyak kajian berpendapat bahawa pergantungan keratan rentas wujud di antara negara kerana kejutan ekonomi dan komponen yang tidak dilihat akibat dari keterbukaan perdagangan (Arain et al., 2019; Dogan et al., 2020; Meo et al., 2020). Teknik ekonometrik tradisional memberikan hasil yang tidak jelas dengan adanya pergantungan keratan rentas dan heterogeniti. Maka, dalam kajian ini, teknik baru 'Dynamic Common Correlated Effect (DCCE)' yang dicadangkan oleh Chudik & Pesaran (2015) digunakan keatas data panel untuk menangani masalah yang dinyatakan di atas. Tambahan lagi, untuk analisis berdasarkan 'quantile', teknik baru, 'Quantile-on-Quantile (QQ)' yang dibangunkan oleh Sim & Zhou (2015) juga digunakan. Dari 57 negara OIC, 49 dipilih untuk berdasarkan kebolehdapatan data.

Melalui objektif pertama tesis iaitu untuk meneroka kesan keterbukaan perdagangan terhadap pertumbuhan ekonomi, hasil analisis DCCE menunjukkan bahawa keterbukaan perdagangan memberikan kesan positif terhadap pertumbuhan ekonomi bagi keseluruhan sampel negara OIC. Keterbukaan perdagangan mempunyai hubungan positif dan signifikan dengan pertumbuhan ekonomi bagi negara OIC yang berpendapatan tinggi. Analisis berdasarkan 'quantile' menunjukkan hubungan positif antara keterbukaan perdagangan dan pertumbuhan ekonomi di kebanyakan negara OIC. Hasil kajian ini adalah bertepatan dengan saranandasar keterbukaan perdagangan bagi keseluruhan negara OIC dan negara OIC yang berpendapatan tinggi.

Berdasarkan objektif kedua tesis iaitu mengkaji kesan keterbukaan perdagangan terhadap pengangguran di Negara OIC, analisis DCCE menunjukkan bahawa keterbukaan perdagangan mempunyai hubungan negative dan signifikan dengan kadar pengangguran bagi keseluruhan negara OIC yang berpendapatan rendah dan sebaliknya positif bagi pengangguran di negara OIC yang berpendapatan tinggi. Analisis berdasarkan 'quantile' menunjukkan bahawa keterbukaan perdagangan meningkatkan pengangguran di negara OIC yang mempunyai limpahan modal dan mengurangkan pengangguran di negara OIC yang mempunyai limpahan tenaga buruh. Hasil kajian umumnya cenderung menyokong tuntutan untuk melanjutkan dasar keterbukaan perdagangan untuk negara OIC secara keseluruhannya, negara OIC yang berpendapatan rendah dan negara OIC yang mempunyai limpahan buruh.

Objektif ketiga adalah berkaitan dengan kesan keterbukaan perdagangan terhadap kualiti alam sekitar di negara OIC. Analisis menunjukkan hubungan negative di antara keterbukaan perdagangan dengan pelepasan CO₂, N₂O dan CH₄, sementara hubungan positif dengan jejak ekologi di negara OIC keseluruhan dan negara OIC yang berpendapatan tinggi. Sebaliknya, keterbukaan perdagangan mempunyai hubungan positif dengan semua petunjuk persekitaran di negara OIC yang berpendapatan rendah. Analisis berdasarkan 'quantile' menunjukkan kesan negative keterbukaan perdagangan terhadap pelepasan CO₂ dan kesan positif terhadap jejak ekologi di kebanyakan negara OIC. Ini bermakna jika negara OIC terus mengamalkan dasar keterbukaan perdagangan, reformasi sektor tenaga dan memastikan penggunaan 'bio-capacity' yang berkelanjutan, maka mereka akan dapat menangani isu alam sekitar.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
DCCE	Dynamic Common Correlated Effects
CSD	Cross-sectional dependence
QQ	Quantile-on-Quantile Regression
QR	Quantile Regression
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
TOP	Trade Openness
HCAP	Human Capital
INP	Institutional Performance
PEX	Public Expenditure
PCAP	Physical Capital
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
UN	Unemployment
INF	CPI Inflation
ENC	Energy Consumption
URB	Urbanization
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
N ₂ O	Nitrous Oxide
CH ₄	Methane
ECF	Ecological Footprint
EKC	Environmental Kuznets Curve

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Overview

Today, the world is in favor of trade openness because open economies grow faster (Sachs & Warner, 1995), are more productive (Kim & Lin, 2009), and have higher per capita GDP (Antweiler, Copeland, & Taylor, 2001) than closed economies. Trade openness is the core feature of the international theory of trade that can foster economic growth in both developing and developed economies (Grossman & Helpman, 1991; Sakyi, Villaverde, & Maza, 2015). It promotes supply-side growth by helping to use resources more efficiently, fostering competition, and encouraging the ideas and knowledge across national boundaries (Parikh, 2006). There is a significant body of literature providing evidence that trade openness contributes significantly to economic development (Mckinnon, 1973; Sakyi et al., 2015; Gnanangnon, 2018; Araz & Wardani, 2019; Raghutla, 2020). Contrary to the benefits of trade, it has also been argued that an increase in openness might restrain economic growth if a country has more focus on those sectors which have a comparative disadvantage (Lucas 1988; Young 1991; Polat, Shehbaz, Rehman, & Satti, 2015). It also adversely affects economic growth in the economies that produce low-quality products (Mendali, 2019).

The recent literature suggests that trade openness affects unemployment in different ways. However, the degree of the impact of trade openness on unemployment is still controversial (Blanchard, 2006; Felbermayr, Prat, & Schmerer, 2011). The theoretical background of trade-induced unemployment is traced back to Ricardo's¹ theory of comparative advantage relying on the relative differences of technology, explaining that trade openness leads to reduce the level of unemployment. Later on, Heckscher-Ohlin's² theory of comparative advantages argues that trade-induced unemployment relies on the international variations in relative factor endowments implying that trade openness increases unemployment in capital-abundant economies. Due to trade openness, the relative return of capital increases in such countries (due to the lower price of capital-intensive goods) leads to an enhancement in capital demand compared to labor and hence unemployment increases. In contrast, trade openness decreases capital demand in labor-abundant countries, which leads to enhance labor demand and reduce unemployment (Dutt, Mitra & Ranjan, 2009).

Depending on the extent of industrialization and globalization in an economy, trade openness has a harmful or positive impact on environmental quality through a variety of channels (Destek & Sinha, 2020). Pollution haven hypothesis (PHH) argues that an economy of host country with loose or slack regulations about environment gets dirtier due to trade openness (Copeland & Taylor, 1994; Baek & Koo, 2009). Grossman &

¹ See Ricardo (1817)

² See Heckscher (1919) and Ohlin (1933)

Krueger (1991) and Antweiler et al. (2001) decomposed the effects of trade openness on the environment into technique, scale and composition effects. According to scale effect, the economy expands as a result of trade openness. The pollution in the economy rises as more natural resources and energy are consumed. The technology effect describes how the quality of the environment improves as income rises. When a country opens up to trade; the composition effect of trade openness shows a variation in the constituents of its output. If comparative advantages of a country favor clean industries, trade openness will result in a movement away from dirty or polluted goods and services toward clean goods and services. It has been noted that the manufacturing of dirty commodities requires more capital, but the output of clean goods requires more use of human capital or labor. A country that adjusts its production towards capital-intensive items would produce more pollution, whereas an economy that shifts its output towards labor-intensive products or away from capital-intensive products will produce less pollution (Shao, Wang, Zhou, & Balogh, 2019).

There are fifty-seven countries representing the Muslim population in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). OIC countries have been selected for this study due to various reasons. OIC countries are lack behind in major macroeconomic indicators i.e. economic growth, unemployment, inflation and environmental quality (SESRIC, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). Despite their decades of political independence, OIC countries have failed to achieve any remarkable economic achievement. Although OIC countries have sufficient potential and actual resources to make significant contributions to such diverse sectors, none of these is reflected in their visible social and economic development. Indeed, the relevant ratings for the development of a country, i.e. export and import figures, Gross Domestic Product, unemployment rate, environmental quality, and other macro-economic indicators, indicate that OIC countries lag behind other developed and non-OIC developing countries (Ghani, 2011; Kayadibi, 2015; SESRIC, 2019a).

1.1.1 Recent Economic Trends in OIC Member Countries

OIC countries are facing multiple challenges with regard to the key economic indicators. Higher unemployment, low skilled labor, lack of foreign direct investment, lack of investment in new skills, deficits in the balance of trade and the degradation of the environment are some of the economic challenges observed in many OIC countries (SESRIC, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

1.1.2 Trends in GDP

The OIC countries have significant economic potential in a variety of disciplines and sectors, including energy, agriculture, and human resources, and they form a vital strategic trade region. Despite 23.4% of the world's population, OIC economies account for only 15.6% of the world's total GDP (SESRIC, 2019). GDP growth in overall OIC countries decreased to 3.9% in real terms in 2018, compared to 6% in 2013 (Figure 1.1). In non-OIC developing countries, GDP growth rates have been above the low-income OIC countries. In 2018, the average growth rate in overall OIC countries, high-income OIC countries and lower-income OIC countries is 3.9%, 3.03%, and 4.53%, respectively. On the other hand, the average growth rates in the world, non-OIC developing countries, and developed countries are 3.8%, 1%, and 2.1%, respectively.

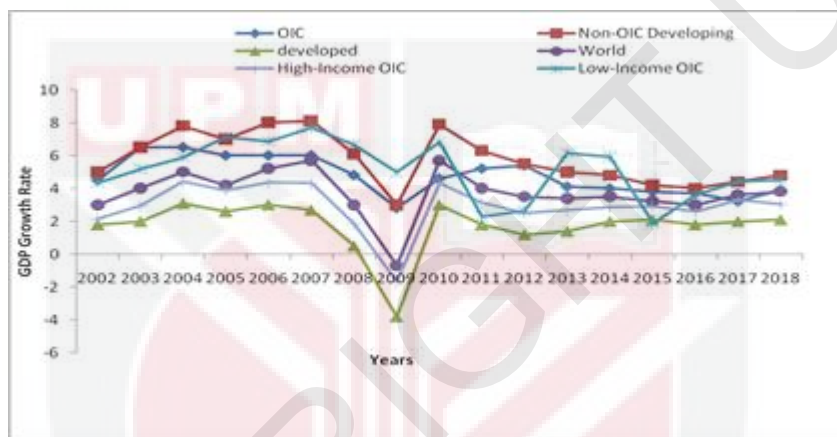


Figure 1.1 : GDP growth in the world versus OIC countries. [Source: Author's own calculation based on SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

1.1.3 Trends in FDI

Figure 1.2 reveals the FDI inflows in OIC countries compared to develop and non-OIC developing economies. The total FDI inflows in OIC economies were US\$ 51 billion in 2005. The total FDI inflows to OIC countries were estimated as US\$ 110 billion in 2015, which was decreased from US\$ 142.9 billion in 2012. The share of the OIC group in non-OIC developing economies amounted to 15.4% in 2016.

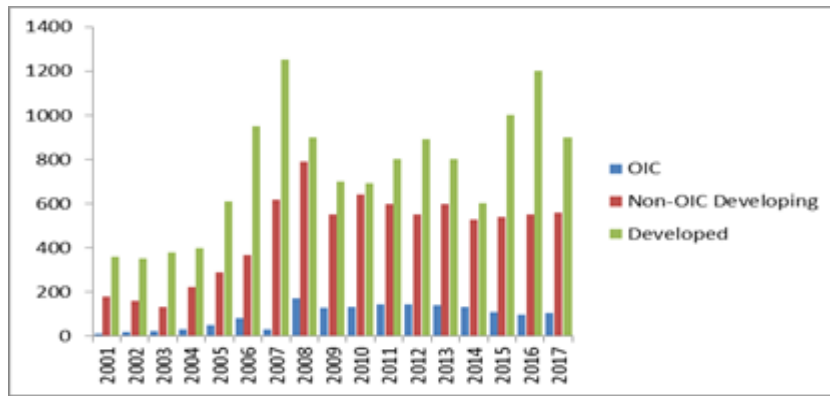


Figure 1.2 : FDI inflows (US\$ Billions). [Source: Author’s own calculation based on SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

1.1.4 Trends in Trade Openness

Trade openness of OIC countries is given in figure 1.3. It is shown that since 2005 trade openness in OIC countries is below than trade openness in the world in most time period. Only during 2010-2012, the trade openness is above the world level. The possible reason for high trade openness in OIC countries than world average during 2010-2012 is that mostly non-OIC countries were less affected by the global financial crises of 2008-2010 due to their heavy dependence on oil exports (for oil-producing OIC countries) and agri-based economies (OIC-underdeveloping countries).

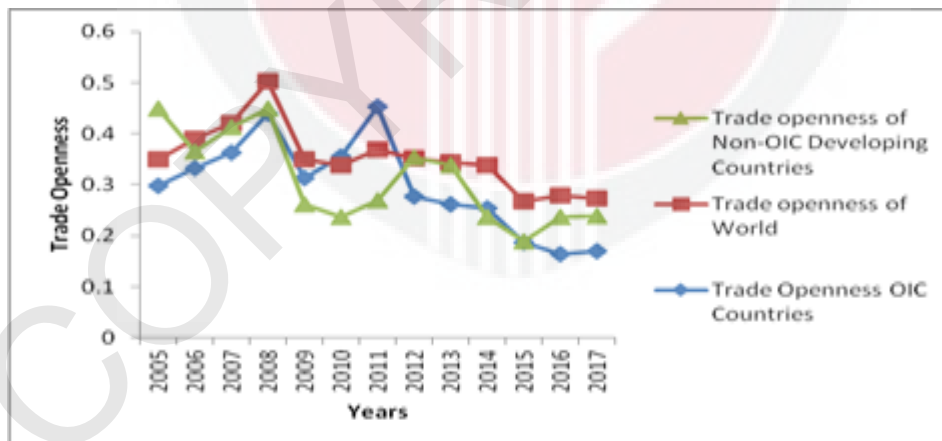


Figure 1.3 : Trade openness (Proxied by exports plus imports divided by GDP). [Source: Author’s own calculation based on SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

1.1.5 Trends in Unemployment

Between 2000-2009 and 2014-2017, in comparison to the rest of the world, developed economies, and non-OIC developing economies, OIC economies have much higher average unemployment rates (Figure 1.4). During 2000-2009 and 2014-2017, the unemployment in OIC economies is higher than in non-OIC developing countries and developed countries of the world due to various reasons like less-skilled workers, low trade openness and low technological progress in OIC countries than other groups of countries. Only during 2010-2013, the unemployment level in developed countries is higher than both OIC countries and non-OIC developing countries because developed countries were more hit by the global financial crises of 2008-2010 due to more financial development compared to OIC countries, which resulted in higher unemployment in subsequent years. The total unemployment rate in OIC countries has fluctuated between 7.4% and 9.1% since 2000. In developed countries, the average unemployment rate has fallen below the rates which were observed in OIC economies since 2014 and reached 5.9 percent in 2017, compared to 7.5 percent in OIC.

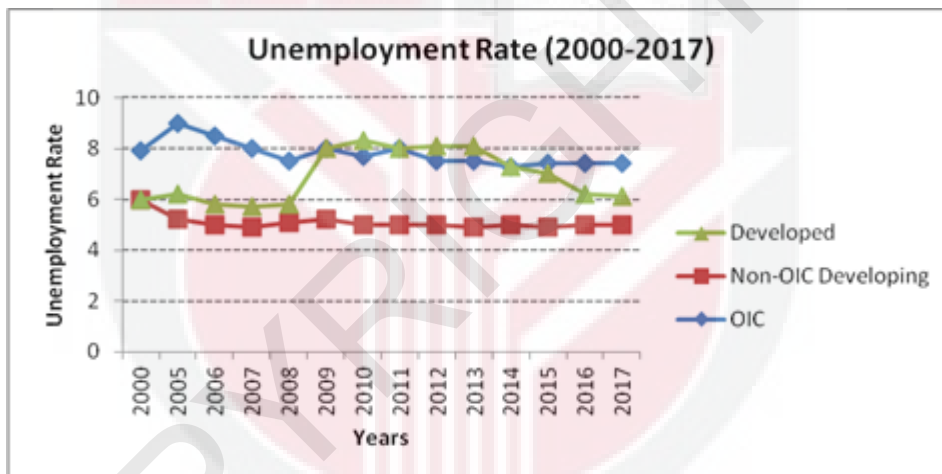


Figure 1.4 : Unemployment rate in OIC countries (2000-2017). [Source: Author’s own calculation based on SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

1.1.6 Environmental Quality in OIC Countries

Generally, GHG emissions include N₂O, CO₂, CH₄ and F-gases³. Figure 1.5 shows that the level of GHG emissions in OIC countries was 3.3 thousand MtCO_{2e}⁴ in 1990, while in 2017, it is 7.0 thousand MtCO_{2e} (World Resources Institute, 2018). Among OIC countries, Iran has the highest level of CO₂ emissions, followed by Indonesia, Turkey and Kazakhstan (see Appendix-Table 2).

³ fluorinated gases, i.e. perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride and hydro-fluorocarbons.

⁴ metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent

GHG is mainly produced from transportation, burning fuel, industry and transportation. Indeed, fuel consumption is much higher in oil-exporting countries and newly industrialized emerging economies. As illustrated in Figure 1.5, carbon dioxide (CO₂) contributes most of the world's emissions since the 1990s. CO₂ is mainly produced from burning fuel for domestic use, industry, and transportation.

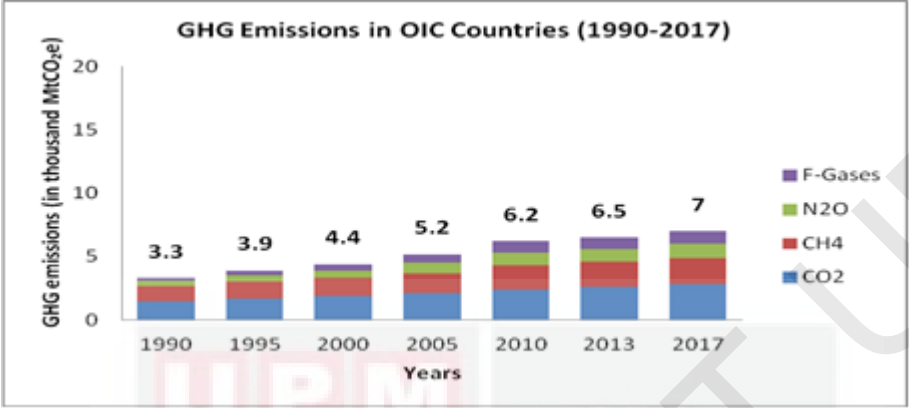


Figure 1.5a : GHG emissions in OIC countries (1990-2017)

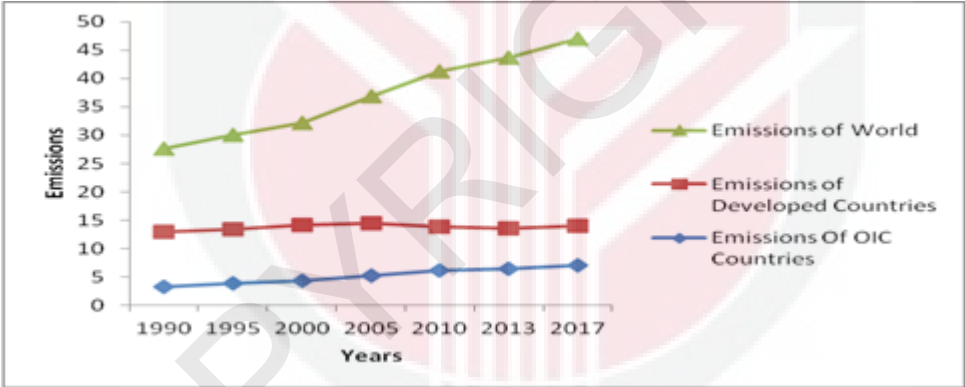


Figure 1.5b : GHG emissions in OIC countries versus world (1990-2017). [Source: Author's own calculation based on SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

Figure 1.5b shows that although GHG emissions in OIC countries are below the world and developed countries, the amount of GHG emissions is continuously increasing.

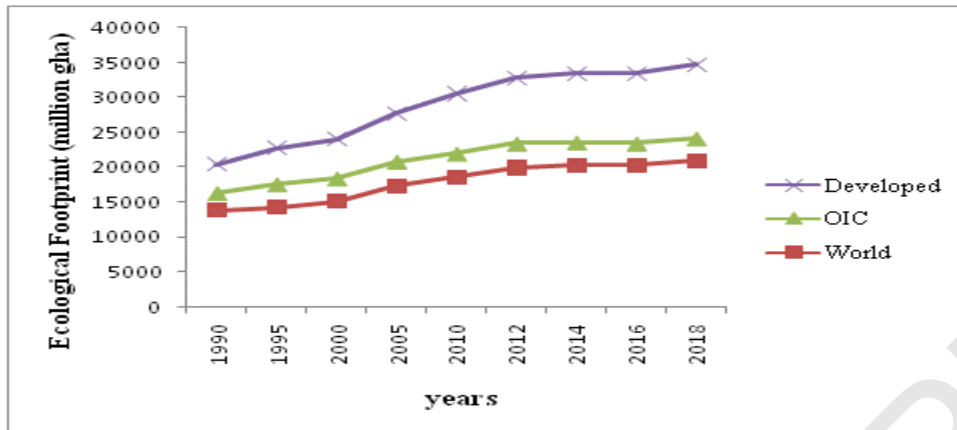


Figure 1.6 : Ecological footprint in OIC countries versus world (1990-2018). [Source: Author's own calculation based on SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

Figure 1.6 shows that the ecological footprint in 1990 for OIC countries are 17000 million global hectares (gha), while the average value for the world and developed countries is 14500 and 24000 million gha, respectively. In 2018, the amount of pollution in the form of ecological footprint reached the amount of 22000, 21000, and 35000 million gha for OIC countries, world and developed countries, respectively.

1.2 Relationship of Trade openness with GDP, Unemployment and Environmental Quality in OIC Countries

The relationship of trade openness with GDP, unemployment and environmental quality in OIC economies are shown in the below figures through scatter plots.

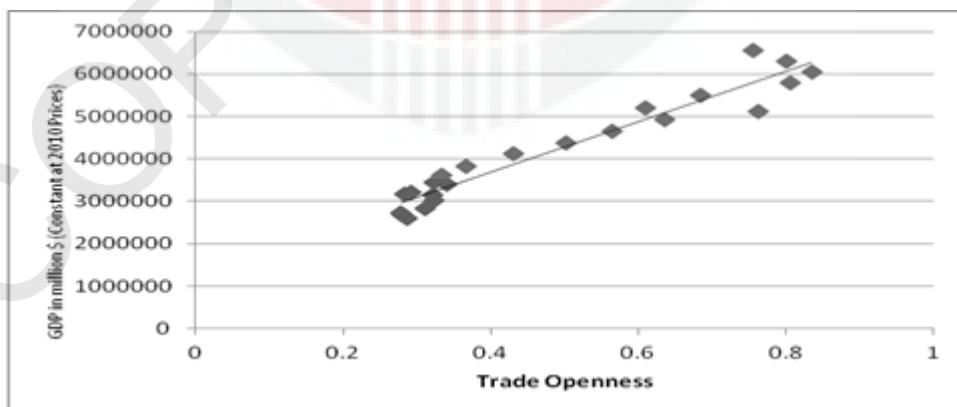


Figure 1.7 : Trade openness and GDP (1995-2017). [Source: SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

In figure 1.7, the association between trade openness and GDP in OIC economies is shown. It depicts from the above diagram that there is a positive relationship between trade openness and GDP in OIC countries.

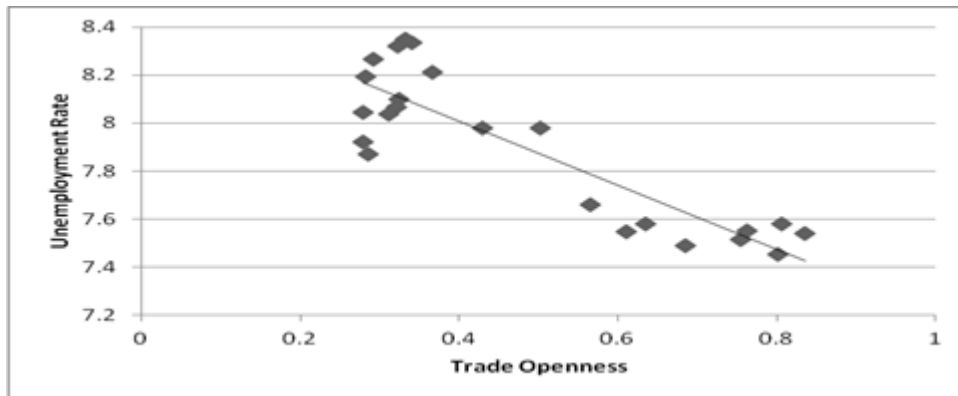


Figure 1.8 : Trade openness and unemployment (1995-2017). [Source: SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

In figure 1.8, the negative relationship between trade openness and unemployment in OIC countries is shown.

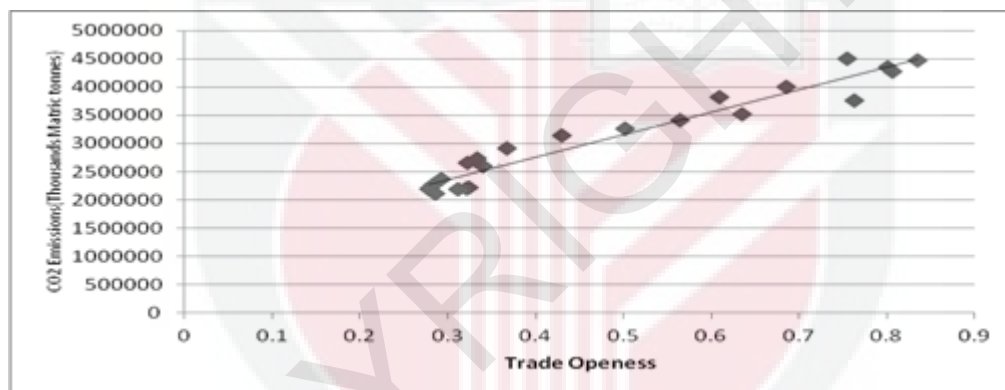


Figure 1.9 : Trade openness and environmental quality (1995-2017). [Source: SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

In figure 1.9, the CO₂ emissions are used as a proxy for environmental quality. It depicts from the above figure that there is a positive association between trade openness and CO₂ emissions in OIC economies.

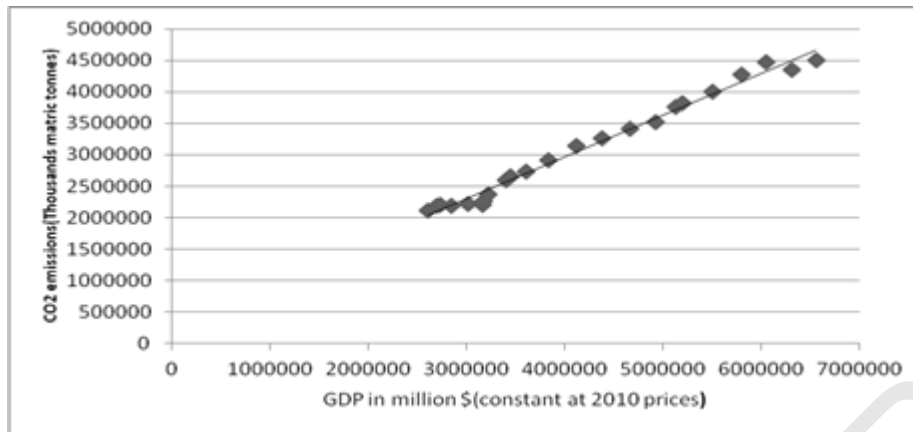


Figure 1.10 : GDP and CO₂ emissions (1995-2017). [Source: SESRIC Economic Outlook of OIC (various issues)]

In figure 1.10, the relationship between GDP and CO₂ emissions in OIC countries is shown. It depicts from the above figure that there is a positive association between GDP and CO₂ emissions in OIC countries. According to the technique effect, pollution will be reduced after the increase in income (Grossman & Kruger, 1991; Antweiler et al., 2001). But in the above diagram, the relationship is against this theory in the case of OIC countries.

1.3 Statement of Problem

The macroeconomic performance of the countries can be accessed from various aspects like growth, inflation, unemployment, trade balance and environmental quality. But in the case of OIC countries, the economic growth, unemployment and environmental issues are highlighted due to the poor performance of OIC countries in these areas⁵. Although there are many other factors (inflation, fiscal and monetary policies, interest rate, and debt, etc.) that affect economic growth but trade openness is chosen for this study because in OIC countries, the value of trade openness is less than the world average (see figure 1.3). So, there is a need to see the effect of trade openness on economic growth in OIC countries.

The GDP growth rate of low-income OIC countries is less than the non-OIC developing economies of the world, which is one of the main problems (figure 1.1). So, there is a need to determine the factors which are responsible for this low growth rate in these OIC countries. Trade openness in OIC countries is also below the trade openness in the world (figure 1.3). The association between trade openness and GDP in OIC countries is positive, as shown in scatter plots (figure 1.7). This relationship is according to the theory of endogenous growth, which says that the impact of trade openness on GDP growth is positive through the transfer of technology. So, there is enough reason to still believe that researchers should re-examine the clear relation of trade openness and economic growth in OIC countries.

⁵ See SESRIC (2018a, 2018b), SESRIC (2019a, 2019b, 2019c)

High unemployment rates, low skills, high prevalence of skills mismatch, and high informal unemployment are some of the labor market characteristics and problems observed in many OIC economies (SESRIC, 2018b). In comparison to the rest of the world, OIC countries have much higher average unemployment rates (figure 1.4). At the individual country level, the unemployment rate greatly varied among OIC countries, i.e., Qatar, Benin and Bahrain have the lowest unemployment rate (0.2%, 1% and 1.3%, respectively) among OIC countries in 2017. However, unemployment is a serious problem in Gambia, Palestine, Mozambique and Comoros, with an unemployment rate of 29.7%, 24.9%, 24.4% and 20%, respectively (OIC Labor Market Report, 2018). The relationship between trade openness and unemployment in OIC countries is negative, as shown in scatter plots (figure 1.8). Ricardian⁶ theory of unemployment relies on the relative differences of technology, explaining that trade openness leads to reduce the level of unemployment. Heckscher-Ohlin's⁷ theory of comparative advantages argues that trade-induced unemployment relies on the international differences in relative factor endowments implying that trade openness increases unemployment in capital-abundant countries and decreases unemployment in labor-abundant countries. Mostly, the lower-income countries are labor-abundant while higher-income countries are capital abundant (Samimi, Lim & Buang, 2013). So, there is a need to reinvestigate the determinants, which will define the relationship between trade openness and unemployment under comparative advantage theories in OIC countries by dividing OIC countries into various panels like lower-income, higher-income and overall OIC countries.

Due to trade openness, the volume of production and trade in OIC countries is expanding; hence energy consumption and the use of natural resources are also increasing, which creates pollution. The level of GHG emissions in OIC countries was 3.3 thousand MtCO_{2e} in 1990, which reach 7.0 thousand MtCO_{2e} in 2017 (see Figure 1.5a). The ecological footprint in OIC countries has been growing from 17000 million global hectares (gha) in 1990 to 19000 million global hectares in 2010 and 22000 million gha in 2018 (Figure 1.6). So, finding the macroeconomic factors which are responsible for the environmental quality of OIC countries is one of the main problems in OIC countries. Some high-income or oil-producing countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, etc., are highly polluted even without extensive trade. The possible reason for high pollution in these countries may be the use of energy consumption, oil extraction, production of dirty goods etc. So, there is a need to see to which extent trade openness affects the environmental quality of these countries. Trade openness is a most important factor which affects environmental quality according to various hypothesis and theories like pollution halo hypothesis, pollution haven hypothesis, and environmental Kuznets curve. The association between trade openness and CO₂ emissions in OIC countries is positive, as shown in scatter plots (figure 1.9). According to the theory of Grossman & Kruger (1991) and Antweiler et al. (2001), the relationship between trade openness and pollution is positive under scale effect while under composition effect, this relationship is positive only if a country produces capital-intensive goods (dirty goods). According to the technique effect, pollution will be reduced after an increase in income (Grossman & Kruger, 1991; Antweiler et al., 2001). While examining the trade openness-environmental quality nexus, a great majority of literature uses only CO₂ emissions as a proxy for environmental quality, which is an insufficient measure to capture environmental effects. Policymakers can be misleading when only CO₂ emissions are used exclusively as a proxy for environmental

⁶ See Ricardo (1817).

⁷ See Heckscher (1919) and Ohlin (1933).

quality. So, more inclusive environmental variables like CH₄, SO₂ and N₂O emissions and ecological footprint should also be used to obtain robust findings. So the relationship of trade openness and environmental quality should be re-examined for OIC countries by using various environmental indicators.

Trade openness also plays a part in the environmental Kuznets curve (EKC). During the growth process, environmental quality first degrades and then begins to improve after reaching a certain threshold. This inverse U-shaped GDP-pollution pattern is called the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC)⁸ (Grossman and Krueger, 1991, 1995; Antweiler et al., 2001). Generally, the negative impact of economic growth on environmental quality at the initial phase of development is due to the scale effect of trade openness and increased energy consumption. However, it would have a positive impact on the environment at the subsequent stage due to the technique and/or composition effect of trade openness (Mrabet & Alsamara, 2017; Lan, 2017; Destek et al., 2018). It is also evident in theory that the existence and shape of EKC (like turning or threshold point) depends on the level of income of the countries. OIC countries have been placed under different income groups according to the classification of World Bank⁹ like lower-income, lower-middle-income, upper-middle income and high-income OIC countries. Various groups of OIC countries may have different effects of trade openness on environmental quality. So there is a need to re-examine the trade-environment nexus to see that how OIC countries with different income groups respond under the EKC hypothesis.

Many studies argued that cross-sectional dependence exists among countries due to economic shocks and unobserved components as a result of trade openness. In this era of modernization, due to trade openness, economic changes in other countries have significantly affected each other. The traditional methodologies like GMM, AMG, fixed effect and random effect ignore the issues of cross-sectional dependence and heterogeneity and assume homogeneity in data, and only permit to change the intercepts of cross-sectional units. Therefore, now there is a need to be more focused on the above issues by using some new methodology that can tackle the above-mentioned issues while examining the impact of trade openness on economic growth, unemployment and environmental quality in OIC countries. Moreover, the previous studies, especially panel-based methodologies, analyze the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables by using absolute or whole variables. On the other hand, the effect of different quantiles of the independent variable on different quantiles of dependent variables may differ. So, there is a need to use some quantile-based approach to study the impact of different quantiles of trade openness on different quantiles of economic growth, unemployment and environmental quality in OIC countries.

After the above discussion, we can conclude that the role of trade openness in explaining the relationship with economic growth, unemployment and environmental quality in OIC countries is still a debatable issue that needs to reinvestigate by using some new econometric techniques.

⁸ This relationship resembles the inverse-U shaped GDP- income inequality pattern defines by Kuznets (1955).

⁹ See Table 3.5 in Chapter 3.

1.4 Research Questions

After discussing the research problems above, the present study intends to address the following questions:

- Does trade openness has a role to play in stimulating the economic growth of OIC member countries?
- Is there any empirical link between trade openness and unemployment in OIC member countries?
- Does trade openness has any impact on environmental quality in OIC countries?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to analyze the impact of trade openness on economic growth, unemployment and environmental quality in OIC member countries.

Specifically, the study intends to empirically:

1. Analyze the impact of trade openness on the GDP growth of OIC economies.
2. Investigate the impact of trade openness on unemployment in OIC countries.
3. Find the relationship between trade openness and environmental quality in OIC countries and also check this association in the context of the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC).

1.6 Significance of the Study

The volume of the literature on the impact of trade openness incorporating growth, unemployment, and environmental concerns in OIC countries is far less (Konac, 2004; Azam, 2016; Ebaidalla, 2016; Mirjalili & Fard, 2019). Hence, this study will contribute to the existing literature by analyzing the impact of trade openness on economic growth, unemployment and environmental quality in OIC countries.

There is currently little consensus on whether openness, rather than other macroeconomic determinants, is the driving force behind economic growth in OIC countries. Such controversies in empirical evidence suggest that there is still more research to do. So this study will bridge the gap in this regard. Both policymakers and researchers are interested in the OIC group of countries since these countries have a smaller proportion of global trade and place less emphasis on economic growth than other non-OIC countries. Very few studies have defined the openness-growth nexus in the context of OIC member countries.¹⁰ This study will also be helpful for making better policies for the

¹⁰ See Ranjbar & Elmi (2010), Ghani (2011), Saba & Abbas (2016).

macroeconomic performance of OIC countries. Hence, this study would be helpful for policymakers to make decisions about the role of trade openness to enhance its effect on economic growth in OIC economies. On the basis of the findings, this research will provide beneficial ideas, opening up new avenues for future research.

The unemployment variable in this study would be able to lend insight as to how trade openness improves or worsens the unemployment situation in OIC countries. The results of this research can be helpful for the implementation of economic policy by OIC countries, particularly regarding adjustments to trade policies to address the nation's unemployment problem. The findings of this study, which relate trade openness with unemployment, will evaluate how OIC countries are using trade openness policies to better understand the potentials of business and employment opportunities in the economy.

It is a crucial study that elaborates the trade-environment nexus with reference to the environmental Kuznets curve (EKC) in OIC countries. A great majority of EKC literature uses only CO₂ emissions as a proxy for environmental quality, which is an insufficient measure to capture environmental effects. Policymakers can be misleading when CO₂ emissions are used exclusively as a proxy for environmental quality. So, more inclusive environmental variables are used to obtain robust findings. So, this study addresses the environmental issues in a modern context by considering three GHG emissions, i.e., CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, along with another important proxy of environmental quality called the ecological footprint.

The findings of the present study would also be a compliment to the methodological context. A new panel data technique, “Dynamic Common Correlated Effects (DCCE)” is helpful to deal with the issues of cross-sectional dependence, serial correlation and heterogeneity. The quantile-based analysis of the variables has its own importance. The present study also applies the advanced ‘Quantile-on-Quantile’ method, which has the ability to combine the basics of non-parametric estimation and quantile regression analysis. Thereby, this methodology inclines to estimate the asymmetric impacts of quantiles of one variable on the quantiles of another variable, and the outcomes have the capability to address the queries enquiring the association of trade openness with economic growth, unemployment and environmental quality at both upper and bottom quantiles of the data distribution and contingent on the size and sign of trade shocks and economic state (recession or expansion).

1.7 Organization of the Study

Chapter one covers the complete introduction of the study. Chapter two will provide a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature, which is related to the main issues. Chapter three of this study will describe the research methodology and model specification. Empirical results will be presented in chapters four, five and six. In the end, chapter seven will conclude the thesis with an overview of the study, a summary of findings, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations.



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