

Behind the “Asylum Lottery:” Sources of Cognitive Bias among Asylum Decision-makers

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Psychology at the Frontiers: Asylum Interviewing and Decision Making [Psych-AID]

The "lottery": Disparities in asylum outcomes



Between ≠ EU countries

e.g., Aghan nationals in 2020:



94% in Italy



2% in Bulgaria

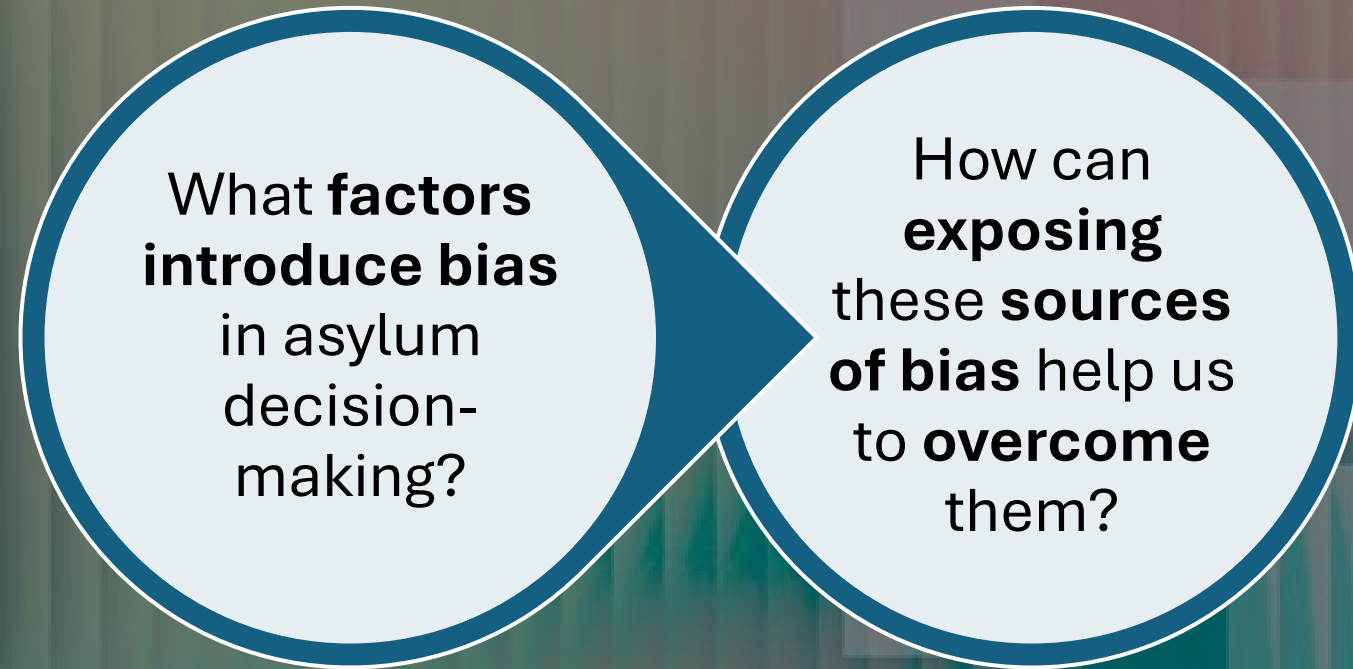


Same country,
≠ decision-makers



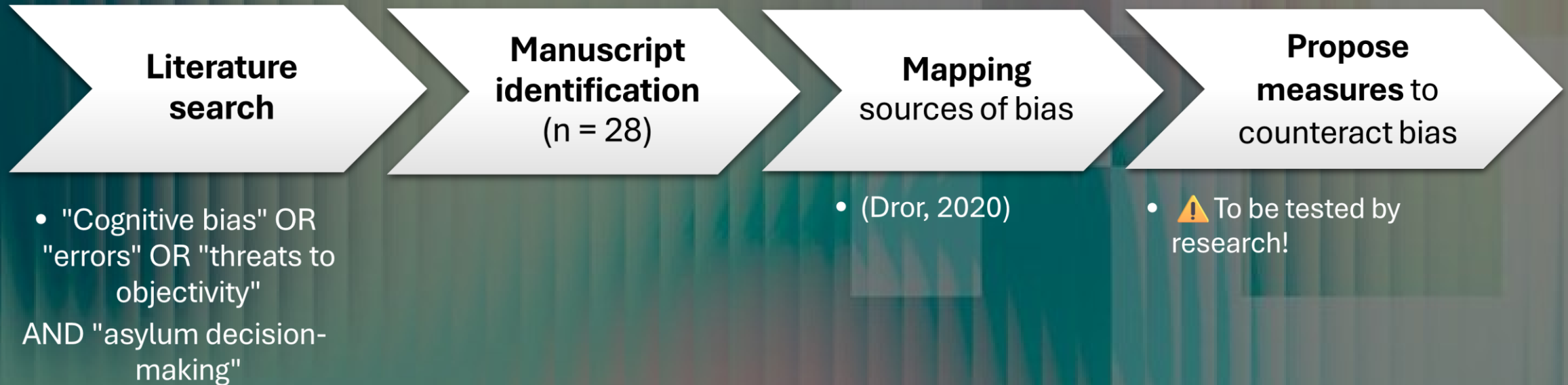
Same country,
≠ time periods

Research questions

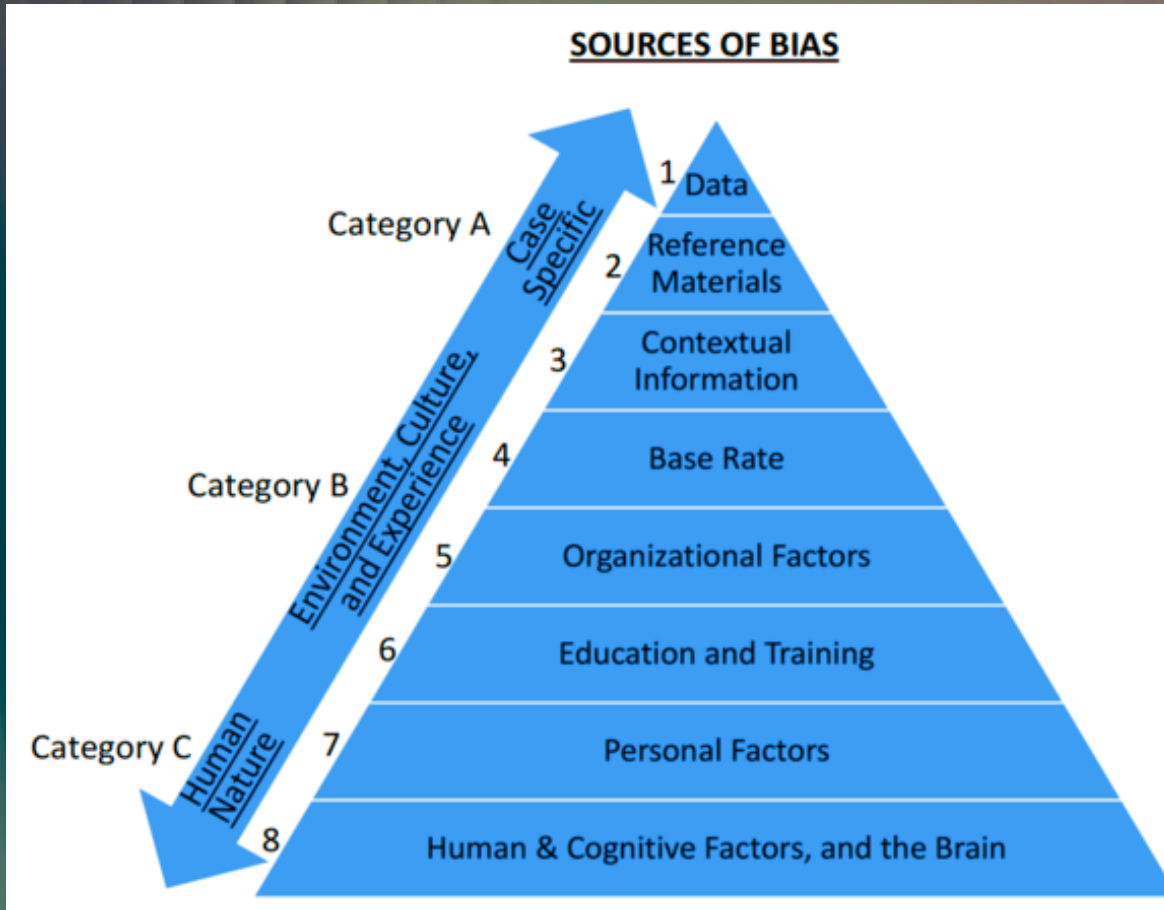


Materials & methods

- Theoretical paper



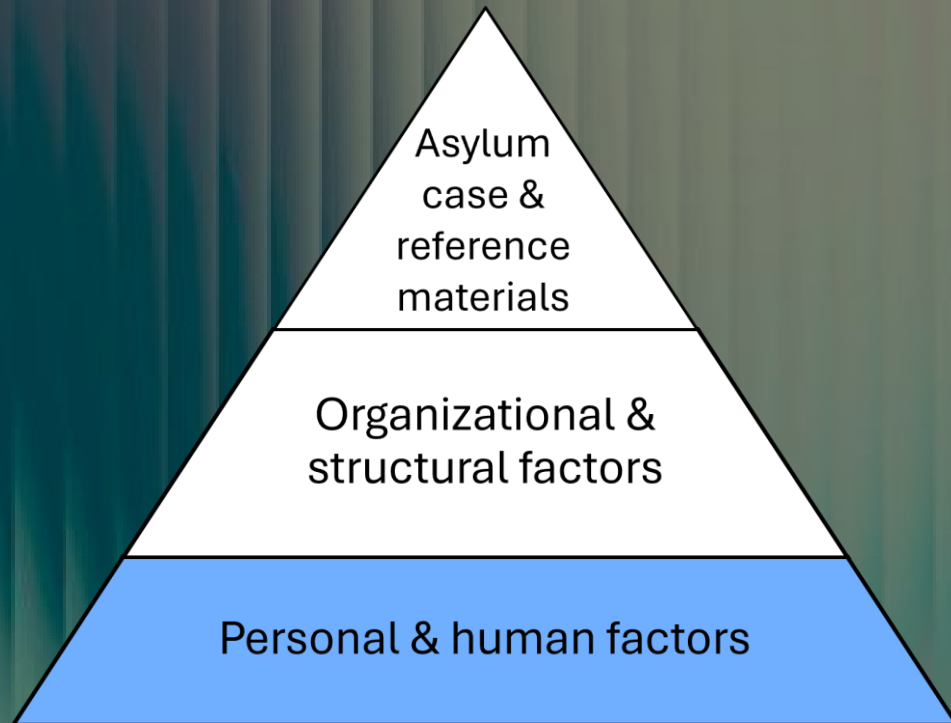
Taxonomy of bias in expert decision-making



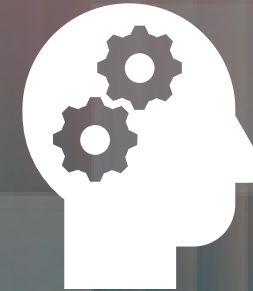
Reproduced from Dror (2020)



The asylum decision-maker is a human being



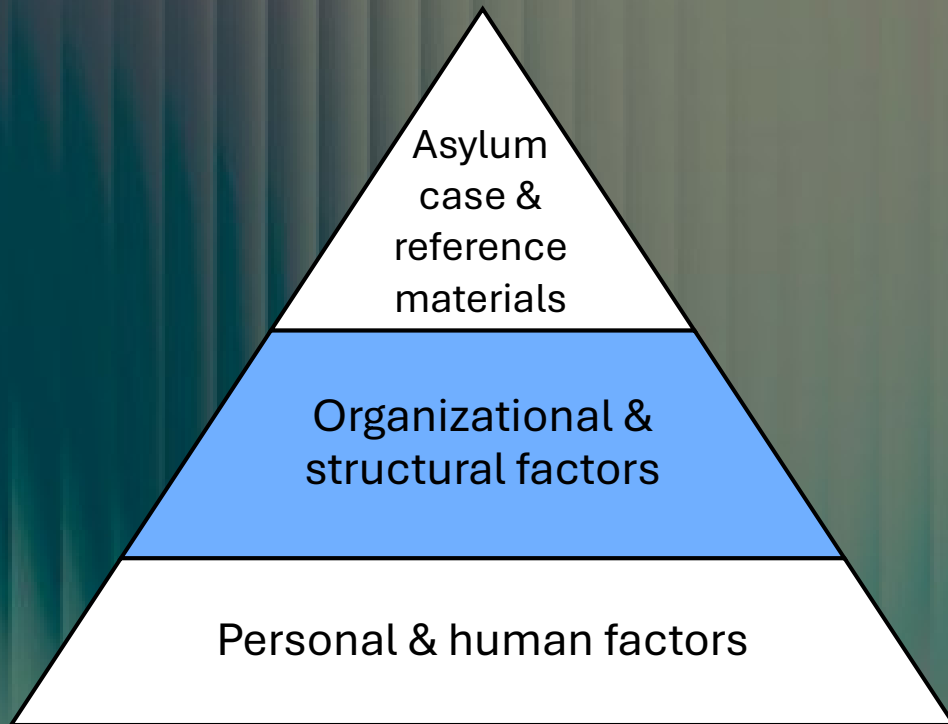
Adapted from Dror (2020)



- ❖ Confirmation bias
- ❖ Stereotypes & assumptions
- ❖ etc...

(e.g., Kendall, 2020; Jensen, 2023; Marouf, 2011)

Results — Structure of decision-making body



Adapted from Dror (2020)

- Decision-making structure



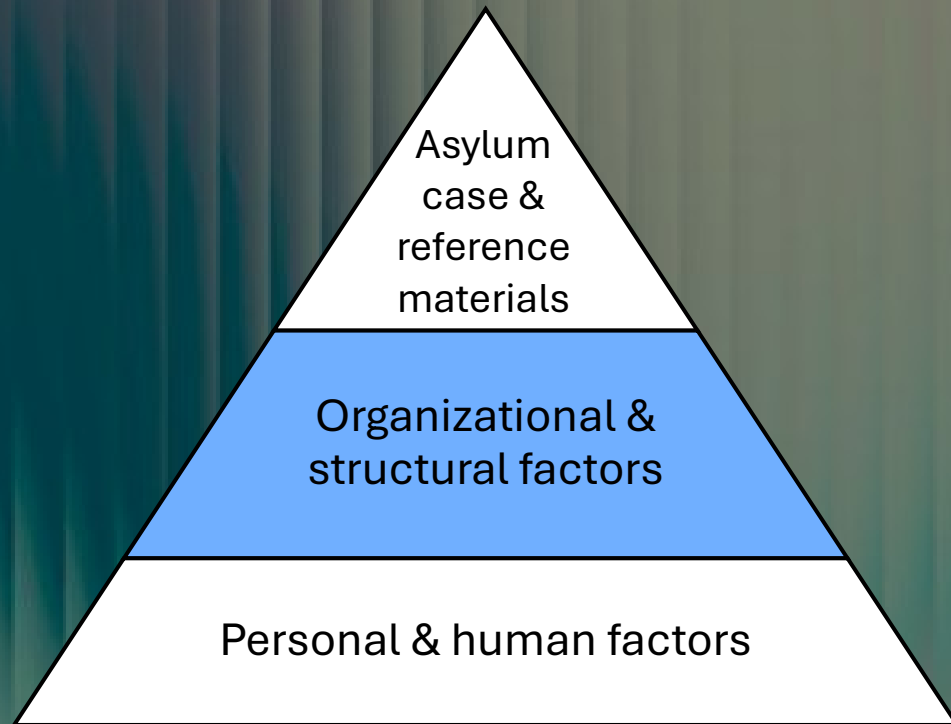
❖ Risk of groupthink



❖ Emotional detachment

- Number of panel members
 - ❖ Fewer judges → Lower chance of granting appeal

Results — Composition of decision-maker's caseload

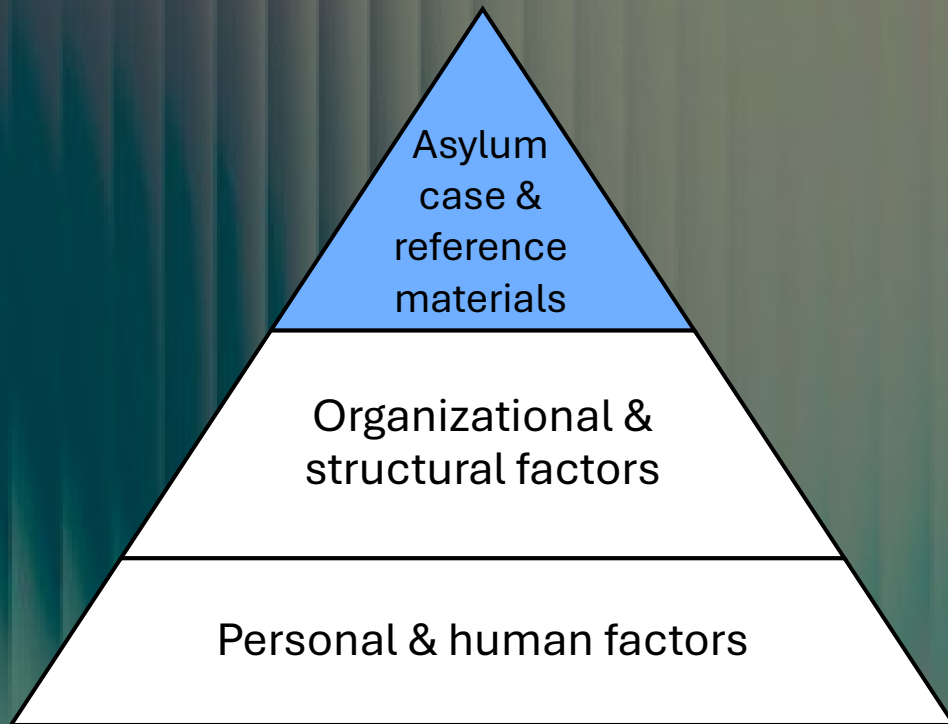


Adapted from Dror (2020)

- Cases displaying unique characteristic
(e.g., *rare female applicant*)
 - ❖ novelty bias
- Timing & order of case presentation
 - ❖ gambler's fallacy

(e.g., Ecker et al, 2020; Chen, 2016)

Results — Asylum case & reference materials



Adapted from Dror (2020)

- Exposure to task-irrelevant contextual information
 - ❖ (e.g., applicant's history of petty crime)
- Reliance on incomplete country-of-origin information (COI)
 - ❖ Availability heuristic

(e.g., Gupta, 2016)

Proposed measures to minimize bias

- Diversify decision-makers' caseloads (e.g., using case distribution softwares)
- Test effect of different panel structures on decision accuracy

Organizational &
structural factors



- Presenting only task-relevant case information

Asylum case &
reference
materials



Key takeaways

Structural & case-specific sources of bias should not be overlooked

Evidence-based ≠ practically feasible

Consistency ≠ accuracy!

Thank you for your attention!

Questions?

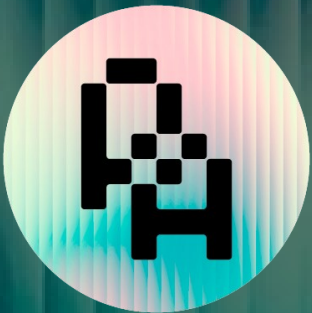


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