

What level of detail is sufficient in asylum interviews?

Rasmus Ahlgren, Jenny Skrifvars, Laura Stevens

Faculty of Human and Social Sciences

Åbo Akademi University

rahlgren@abo.fi



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

Background

- Asylum decisions in Finland based on asylum interviews
- To determine the validity of the applicants claim, a credibility assessment is made
- Credibility assessment guidelines (EUAA, 2024) list level of detail as one of five criteria to be used

Credibility assessment – level of detail

- Earlier studies suggest the threshold for “sufficient detail” can change based on outside factors (Vanto et. al., 2022)
- Interviewing style, or number of questions can impact level of detail (Skrifvars et. al., 2020)
- Risk of alternative reasons for lack of details being overlooked
- Officials’ expectations of level of details provided might be unrealistic (Skrifvars & Sui, 2022)

Current study

- What is the level of detail required for a positive credibility finding in Finland?
- Does the number of questions affect this judgement?
- Real Finnish asylum cases ($n = 30$) from 2017-2018
 - 18 rejected, 12 granted

Coding of topics and questions

- A topic was a theme or event that was mentioned In the decision
- For each topic, relevant question-answer pairs were identified
- Topics in three categories;
 1. Level of detail sufficient
 2. Level of detail insufficient
 3. Level of detail not mentioned for topic
- Level of detail from a previous study on the same sample (Skrifvars et. al., 2022)

One big problem!

- When asylum is granted, credibility indicators not addressed in the decision!
- We chose to then assume that topics related to the legal grounds for asylum in the positive decisions were deemed as credible
 - Eg. Political opinion, ethnicity
 - Not all topics in the case
- Problematic in many ways

Topics

- 135 topics from 30 cases.
- The minimum number of topics in a case was 1 and the maximum number of topics was 8.
- 9 topics were assessed as sufficiently detailed, 41 as insufficiently detailed and in 85 topics, detail was not mentioned.

Methods

- A series of multilevel logistic regressions with level of detail as outcome as function of total number of details, case outcome and number of questions asked

Results - descriptives

Table 2

Average number of details separated by assessment and case outcome

Assessment/Decision	Average number of details	Median	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Sufficiently detailed	87.78	55	53.54	32	189
Insufficiently detailed	57.88	50	42.28	8	226
Detail not mentioned	69.46	37	95.19	3	572
Asylum granted	72.43	47	84.14	3	504
Asylum rejected	63.32	38	77.87	8	572

Results

- No consistent cutoff point for amount of details was found
 - Amount of detail provided did not predict the topic being deemed sufficiently detailed or insufficiently detailed
- Topics were more likely to be considered sufficiently detailed when asylum officials asked more questions about it
- Topics were more likely to be considered insufficiently detailed when the case was rejected

Takeaways?

- Is level of detail too subjective as a criteria?
- Is it useful as a criteria?

Thank you for your attention!



Rasmus Ahlgren, rahlgren@abo.fi
co authors: Jenny Skrifvars jenny.skrifvars@abo.fi,
Laura Stevens l.stevens@uos.ac.uk
Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland



@PsychAID



@psychaid.bsky.social