



Gender-based violence among asylum seeking women - a literature review

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The aim of this Bachelor's thesis was to investigate based on existing literature which forms of gender-based violence asylum seeking women experience and how they are recognized in the asylum process. The theoretical framework of the thesis included the definitions of an asylum seeker and a refugee as well as defining the term woman, different forms of violence, gender-based violence and violence against women.

The chosen method for the thesis was literature review. The chosen data was gathered using systematic literature search in well-known scientific databases. Following the research, five scientific articles were chosen to be analyzed using the content analyzing method.

The main discovery of the thesis was that asylum seeking women experience gender-based violence in many different forms. The prevalence of gender-based violence does not differ greatly among the areas where women are from, even though some forms might be more common in certain areas. According to the studies, asylum seeking women often experienced multiple forms of gender-based violence by multiple perpetrators. Forensic and medical affidavits have been proven to strengthen women's asylum claims but they must be requested by a lawyer. The victims of gender-based violence should be guaranteed a fair asylum process, be seen as vulnerable and as survivors and victims of torture. Non-refoulement should be guaranteed. Based on the results of this study, one could see that gender-based violence is sadly common among asylum seeking women and can have long lasting consequences. This topic should be studied more and the victims of gender-based violence should be recognized in the asylum process as survivors of torture and be granted asylum or secondary protection.

Keywords: Asylum seeker, women, gender-based violence, asylum process

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1 Introduction

Violence can be found in all societies. Violence can be hiding in many different forms and sometimes it can be so well hidden it stays unrecognized. This thesis is a literature review. In this thesis we will be looking into the gender-based violence that is found in asylum seeking women and how it is recognized in the asylum-seeking process. Five scientific articles were chosen based on inclusion criteria to be analyzed and they are geographically divided to USA, Uganda and EU which includes data from France and Greece. To narrow down the topic, it will only focus on experiences of women.

Even though, all genders can be affected by gender-based violence, the most common victims are women and girls experiencing violence done by men. Women often can be a victim of gender-based violence that is hugely influenced by the power inequality between the genders (European Institute for Gender Equality 2020). Still, it is important to recognize that all genders can be victims of gender-based violence. Because of this, I thought it would be important to raise awareness of the already quite vulnerable group of asylum-seeking women.

As a motive for the thesis were also new reports by The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations (HEUNI) has published in 2019 and 2020. Firstly, the Handbook on counselling asylum seeking and refugee women victims of gender-based violence (2019) and secondly the UNSEEN VICTIMS - Why Refugee Women Victims of Gender-Based Violence Do Not Receive Assistance in the EU (2020).

Personally, I have been working with asylum seekers for over a year and few months of my experience intensely with asylum seeking women. Having been able to see the vulnerability, strength and all the emotions really pushed me towards this topic and client group.

Firstly, in this thesis is introduction to the theoretical framework. Theoretical framework includes definition of asylum seeker and the term woman. They are introduced because the thesis is studying asylum seeking women. Following, there are introductions to different forms of violence; physical emotional, sexual and economical. Following will be opened the terms gender-based violence and violence against women. Following theoretical framework, the methodology of the thesis will be introduced in great detail. Results come after methodology and to finish the thesis there is discussion and conclusion.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter we will be looking into what does asylum seeker mean and how asylum is sought. Asylum process is explained in general and process in the USA more in detail, since most of the studies used were from there. Refugee will also be explained, since it is often talked in unison with asylum seeker. For the purpose of the thesis, the term women must also be defined. The term asylum seeker and asylum seeking are explained before gender-based violence, because the violence is only studied among asylum seeking women so understanding the target group firstly is important.

2.1 Asylum seeker & seeking asylum

Asylum seeker is a person, who has left their home country or the country of permanent residence in a seek of international protection. To receive asylum, the asylum seeker must have left the home country or country of permanent residence for fear of persecution on basis of your origin, religion, nationality, membership in a certain social group or political opinion and you cannot be granted safety based on the protection of the authorities in your home country or country of residence. Asylum seeker has not yet received a decision on their application for international protection. (Finnish Immigration Service a 2020.)

There are many reasons people might be leaving their homes to seek international protection. These reasons could be for example escaping war, insecurities or persecution. The people fleeing often reside in the neighboring countries of the place they are fleeing from. To seek asylum, asylum seeker must submit an application for asylum (Ministry of the Interior n.d.). Seeking asylum is a human right, which means that everyone has a right to enter another country to seek asylum. There is over 70 million people, who have been forcibly removed from their home because of conflict, persecution or natural disaster. Over 80% of asylum seekers/refugees reside in developing countries (Amnesty International n.d.).

The people who have fled their countries to seek asylum differ a lot from people who immigrate on different reason. These people have had to leave their countries because of compelling reasons, and they might have a traumatic experience both in their countries of origin or their journey to safety. Above all, the whole journey to asylum has been about staying alive so many strong emotions and reactions come rise up in the country of safety. The whole asylum process can be long, and it has the continuous uncertainty in the waiting time and the fear of being deported. The asylum seekers life has been left on hold because of the uncertainty in situation does not allow for future thinking. This uncertainty and waiting can affect already traumatized asylum seekers by adding the anxiety and the probability of psychological problems. (Allinen-Calderon, Kanervo & Nurmi 2011.)

The Istanbul convention is a convention set by The council of Europe. It is human rights treaty done to prevent and fight all forms of violence against women. The treaty also promotes equality between genders. This treaty has been signed by all EU member states. (European Commission n.d.) In the Istanbul convention (2011) gender-based asylum claims were for the first time introduced. The convention binds all EU members to recognize gender-based violence against women as form of persecution. Also, the convention binds EU member states to take needed measures for gender-sensitive asylum procedures which include for example gender-sensitive interpretation. In addition, they presented the EU member states to start gender-sensitive reception procedures, support services and gender guidelines. This conventions purpose in general was to protect women against all forms of violence, create framework, policies and measure for protection of women. The convention wanted to aspire to create violence against women and domestic violence free Europe.

Asylum seeking processes vary from different places. The EU has adopted a uniform system called Common European Asylum System. It is very important to a place that share open borders and freedom of movement to have a common approach to protection of the refugees. This creates a strong co-operation between the countries. In this system they have made different directives to guarantee the fairness of the asylum procedures around the EU. When following these procedures, the asylum seekers should be treated in dignified manner and fair way and the application should be done in unified way so the outcome would be similar no matter where the application was done. Detention is also seen as the last case scenario within this common European asylum system. (European Commission n.d.)

In the USA, Asylum can be seeked by filling and sending a form for Application for Asylum and for Withholding of Removal withing one year of arrival to the United States. The application process is free. After this application the applicant will receive receipt number by mail with which case process and status can be checked online. (U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services a 2020.) After applying for the asylum, the applicant will be invited to an asylum interview. These interviews will be scheduled following three types of order of priority. First priority is for applicant's whos' interview had to be rescheduled requested by the applicant or because the need of USCIS. Second priority is for the applications that been waiting for 21 days or less. Last priority list is all other applications, which will be scheduled starting with the newest and working towards oldest. There is also a possibility to apply for urgent interview scheduling. (U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services 2018.) After the interview the Asylum officer makes decision on eligibility of asylum and supervisory asylum officer reviews the decision. More often the applicant will be invited to the asylum office to receive their decision after two weeks of the interview (U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services b 2020.)

2.2 Refugee

Refugee is a person, who has been granted international protection outside of their home country or permanent country of residence. Person who has been granted international protection has a justified reason to fear persecution in their home country or country of permanent residence, hence they have been granted asylum. The fear of persecution has to be based on the persons origin, religion, nationality, membership in a certain social group or political opinion (Suomen pakolaisapu n.d.). Person can become a refugee by seeking asylum or coming to a country as a quota refugee (Ministry of the Interior n.d.).

Anyone can be facing the need to leave their home regardless of wealth, gender age, and life situation. Over half of the world's refugees are children and their number is raising all the time. Most of the refugees reside in the neighboring countries and in developing countries. Over half of the refugees in the world come from five countries; Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South-Sudan and Myanmar. Only 5,1% of the refugees reach EU for example. Interestingly, people fleeing from natural disaster is the most common reason people are fleeing and this number could be raising more and more in the future. (Suomen pakolaisapu, n.d. b.)



Figure 1 The biggest countries people are fleeing from (UNCHR Global report 2019)

2.3 Defining the term “woman”

As relating to my topic, it is important to define what the word “woman” means in this thesis. Merriam Webster (n.d.) dictionary defines the women as an adult female person. This definition is valid, but there is still way more to this term. In this chapter I will be opening how the tern woman will be defined in this thesis. All definitions mentioned below are meant when speaking about women regarding this thesis.

A person can identify as a woman by sex, gender and gender identity. Sex means the biological and physiological characteristics that someone has been born with, for example chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. This can be divided to female, male and intersex. Gender refers to women, men, girls and boys which are socially constructed roles with the assigned norms and behavior. This means, that they can differ from society to society and be ever changing. (World Health Organization 2020.)

When talking about the gender identity of a person, it means the gender they have a deeply felt internal and individual experience of which gender they belong to. This can correspond to persons physiological sex or it might not. Strict gender norms and expectations can affect people with diverse gender identifies in negative manner in violence, stigma and discrimination as a result. This group are also at higher risk of mental health problems. (World Health Organization 2020.)

Transgender is a term used for a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they have been born to. Some transgender people might go through transitioning, which means they want to align their body with their gender identity. This can mean taking hormones prescribed by doctor and undergoing surgeries. Not all people can or will go through this procedure, but it does not change their identity. Transgender is not a noun but an adjective, so to use sensitive language when referring to a person would be to use that someone is transgender person or/and man/women. (GLAAD n.d.)

The most important step forward in protecting women's rights was the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (1979). This convention was forward thinking of bringing the female rights to the focus. This convention was ratified on 1986 in Finland. After this there has been some conventions, campaigns and studies related to equal rights and treatment of women. (Allinen-Calderon, Kanervo & Nurmi 2011.)

3 Violence

In this chapter the key terms of the thesis will be explained. Firstly, there will be definition what violence actually means. Secondly, there will be definitions to different forms of violence. After that, there will be definitions of gender-based violence and lastly the violence against women.

Violence is an inevitable part of our everyday life. No country, community or person can say they are completely free of violence. We see violence every day and everywhere, in real life, movies, tv-shows, even music. Nelson Mandela (2002) wrote that violence can be especially noticed in places that do not have democracy, good human rights and governance.

World Health organization WHO defines violence as; *“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”*. (World Health Organization 2002.)

In these following chapters the different terms of violence will be explained. Firstly, there is a short introduction to different forms of violence. Secondly, there will be a definition of the center term of the thesis; gender-based violence. Lastly, there is a definition to violence against women.

3.1 Different forms of violence

In general, violence can be divided to four different main categories. These categories are: physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence and economic violence. These main categories are often overlapping.

Physical violence includes all violence that are done in a physical way. These can mean for example spitting, punching, kicking, slapping, throwing and choking to name a few. Physical violence can be the first form of violence, but more often for example in relationships emotional violence comes before the actual physical violence. All types of physical violence are condemned act. (Naistenlinja 2017.)

Emotional violence is a violence that affects negatively on persons self-confidence. Emotional violence is the most common form of violence, since all other forms include aspects of emotional violence too. Emotional violence can be sometimes difficult to identify but it is also a crime. Examples of emotional violence could be constant criticism, obsessive jealousy, name-calling, lying, threats of violence or destroying the victims property. (Naistenlinja 2017.)

Sexual violence is all acts in sexual manner in which the victim has no right to decide about their own sexuality. Consent is the key in all sexual matters and it can also be taken away at any time. The right for sexual self-determination is not dependable on how the person dresses or acts. The only one responsible for the violence is the perpetrator. Sexual violence can be for example unwanted touching or attention, sexual comments, sex as result of intimidation, manipulation or extortion or in worse scare scenarios; rape. (Naistenlinja 2017.)

Economic violence is violence regarding financial decision making. Everyone should have the right to decide on how they use their money and property. Even in relationships both should have the equal rights to make the financial decisions. Economic violence can be found in rich and poor. In economic violence, there is continuous control and exploitation in the victim's financial decisions. This can affect the victim's faith in their own ability to make financial decisions. Economic violence can have different forms of controlling behavior such as; restriction of the use of bank account or card, limiting someone to an allowance, taking financial decisions alone or being forced to take debt or credit to name a few. (Naistenlinja 2017.)

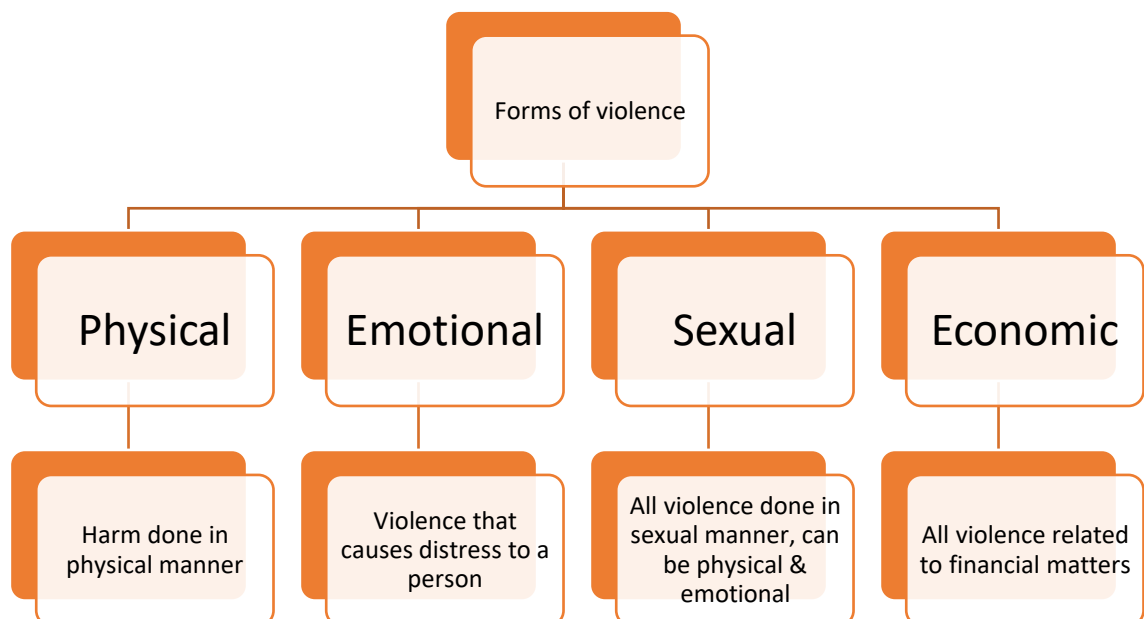


Figure 2 Forms of violence (Built based on Naistenlinja 2017)

3.2 Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a form of violence against someone based on their gender.

Gender-based violence can be met in all genders, but more commonly it is violence experienced by women and girls done by men or boys. Gender-based violence is often experienced because of the power inequalities between the perpetrator and the victim. (European Institute for Gender Equality 2020.)

Gender-based violence and violence against women are two terms that are often talked in unison. This could be because of the commonness of gender-based violence happening to a woman and a girl. To understand the concept of gender-based violence, it is important to look deeper than just the gender norm of male and female. There are people, who identify with being male and female, some might not identify with either and some with both. This narrow view of gender-based violence leaves people out, who could be suffering from this type of violence, for example people who do not present the traditional gender norms. Even though, men suffer from gender-based violence more rarely than women, the men victims of gender-based violence experiences should not be neglected and dismissed. (Council of Europe portal 2020.)

To give examples of forms of gender-based violence I will be using the one's HEUNI found on the report; counselling asylum seeking and refugee women victims of gender-based violence (2019). These forms were: domestic / intimate partner violence, sexual assault / sexual harassment stalking, female genital mutilation / FGM, forced marriage, honor-based violence and trafficking in human beings.

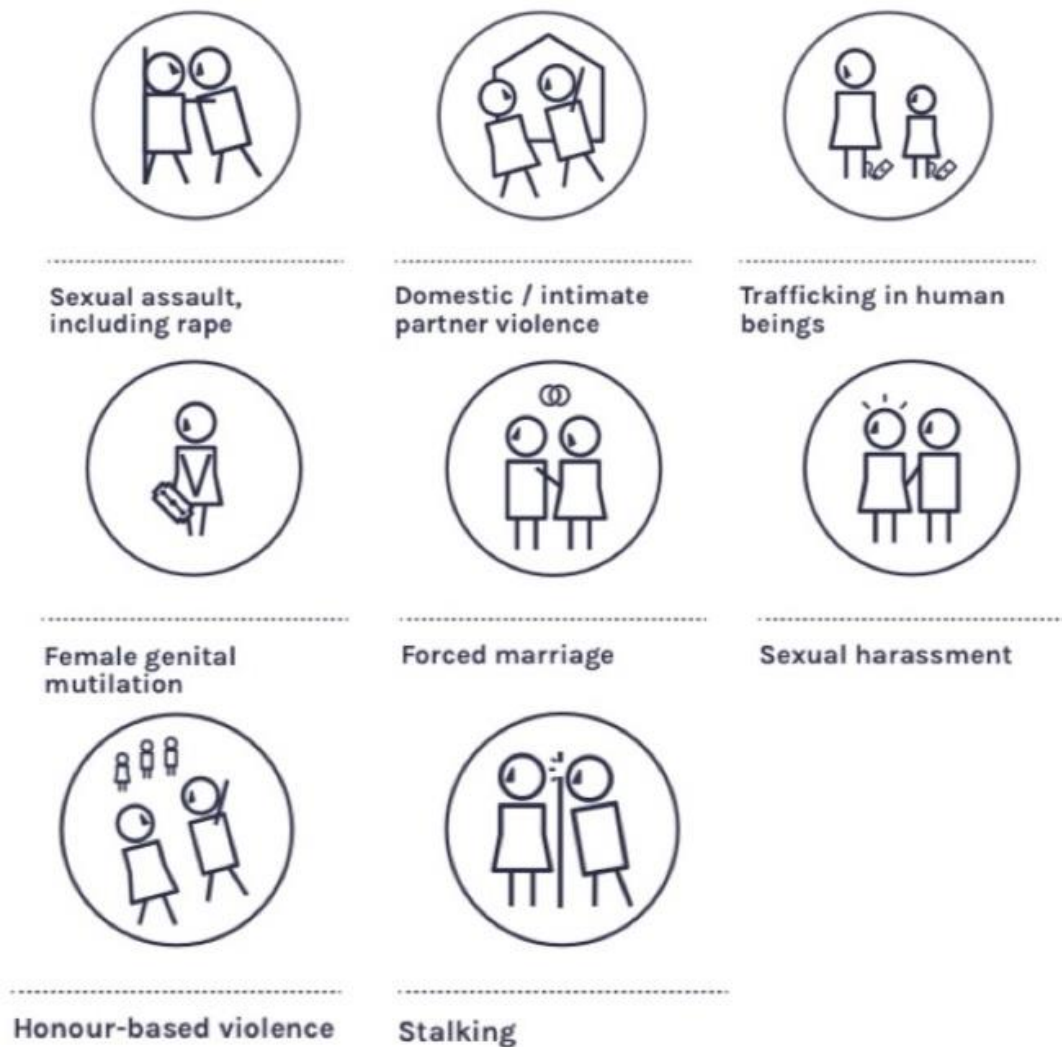


Figure 3 Forms of gender-based violence found in HEUNI, on counselling asylum seeking and refugee women victims of gender-based violence (2019)

Domestic and intimate partner violence is a broad problem in all communities in the world. Anyone can be victim of this violence regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation for example. Domestic and intimate partner violence is a pattern of violent behavior to gain or maintain power over an intimate partner, family member or other relative. This abuse can take forms of mental, physical, economical or sexual nature. More often than not the violence incidents happen frequently and develop severity. In worst case scenarios this might cause serious physical injury or death. (UN n.d.)

Sexual harassment and sexual assault can be visible in different forms. These can be unwanted sexual comments, unwanted touching, forcing to watch porn, rough and violent sex and worst-case scenario rape. In all sexual situation, the consent is the key. All unwanted sexual behavior towards someone is sexual harassment or assault. These experiences can be

very traumatizing and create trust issues. There can come also negative effects on body-image and sexuality and relationships for a long time. (Nollalinja n.d.)

Stalking is any pattern of behavior which has no real purpose but to annoy, terrorize or harass the victim. Typically stalking includes repeated telephone calls, unwelcome letters or gifts by mail, surveillance at work, home or any place the victim is known to be. (UN n.d.)

Female genital mutilation / FGM According to World health organization (2020a) female genital mutilation, FGM as shortened means all procedures that include the partial or total removal of external genitalia or any injury targeted to female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM is a practice that is often carried out by a traditional circumciser who is also in central role in the community. Most often this procedure is done on a minor.

FGM can be divided to 4 different types (Figure 4). First type is the partial or total removal of clitoral glans and/or the hood. Type 2 is the total or partial removal of the clitoral glans and hood and the labia minora with or without removal of the labia majora. Type 3 is also known as infibulation; in it the opening of the vagina is narrowed by creating a covering seal. This can be done by cutting and repositioning the labia minora /majora by stitching for example. This can be done with or without the type 1. Type 4 includes all other harm done with non-medical purposes, such as pricking, piercing, burning... (World Health Organization 2020a.)

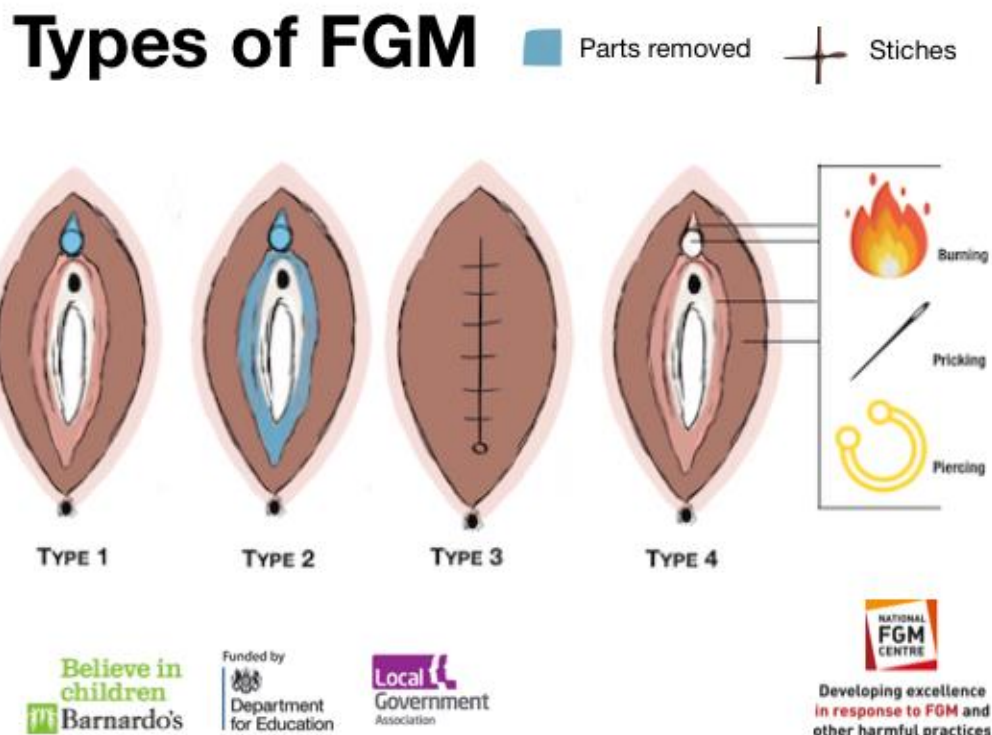


Figure 4 Types of FGM (National FGM centre)

Interestingly enough, female genital mutilation is carried out by the elderly people of the community, most often done by women to another women, but it is still considered gender-based violence. On other hand, in some populations FGM can be carried out by health practitioners, male barbers, members of secret society, herbalists or female relative. (UNFPA 2020.)

Forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both of the spouses have not consented on getting married. In these marriages one or both spouse can be pressured or forced to marry by blackmail, threats or / of violence, or exploited on basis of vulnerable position such as being a minor, dependence of community or a disability. This pressure is often inflicted by the family or the community. (Ihmiskauppa n.d.)

The reasons for forced marriages are many. For example, the cultural aspects can play a role. Forced marriage could also be a way to gain residence permit in a country. Refusing this kind of marriage could lead to serious consequences such as honour based abuse or even killing and neglect of the community or family. More often women and girls are forced into marriage, but it is not unheard for men and boys to be forced into them. (Ihmiskauppa n.d.)

Honor-based violence are act's that are done to protect the communities or families so called "honor". These codes of honor are usually set by the male relatives or community of the family and the person who breaks them must be punished for bringing shame upon the family or community. The reasons for honor-based violence can be many. To name a few these could be for example women being too independent, too westernized, using social media, disobeying the men in the family, being victim of sexual assault, being part of sexual minority or having mental or physical illness. (Gregory, Fox & Howard 2020.)

Honor based violence can have many different forms such as house arrest, threats to kill, starvation, denied access to education, internet or passport and forced abortion or marriage. The most brutal form is the honor-based killing. The act when someone kills someone else because of this shame the person brought to the family or community is often seen as heroic act in the communities or family where the killing has been committed. These killings have four main characteristics which are that the killing is more often planned by the family of birth rather than marriage, the perpetrator does not do it alone, this makes the honor restoring collective rather than individual. For the killing, suspicion is enough, no real proof or evidence is needed and lastly, they are more often planned organized crime rather than crimes of passion. (Gregory, Fox & Howard 2020.)

Trafficking in human beings can be found in every region of the world. It has been estimated to be third largest source of illegal income in the whole world and out of popular believe, human trafficking can also be happening within one country (Police 2020). Human beings are being sold, bought and traded like objects. These victims of trafficking end up in trafficking

by being deceived, forced or abducted. Human trafficking is often discussed in unison with smuggling, but these are two different things. Human trafficking is involuntary, and smuggling is voluntary. Later on, smuggling can also become human trafficking if the person is for example forced to pay off smuggling dept. Refugees and displaced people are often especially at risk of being trafficked. These people have fled their countries, leaving their familiar surroundings losing their community support networks and end up being isolated socially and culturally. These factors make refugees and other displaced people especially easy target for traffickers. (UNHCR n.d.)

3.3 Violence against women

Violence against women is a major violation on human rights. Most commonly it is violence done by an intimate partner. This very serious Human rights violence is sadly common in all parts of the world. Violence against women is sadly common, 1 in 3 women have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence done by an intimate partner or someone else. This violence can have negative effects on these victims physical, mental sexual and reproductive health. Conflict, post conflict and displacement can also make the problems and violence women feel worse and create even new forms of violence. (World Health Organization 2017.)



Figure 5 Gender-Based violence (European institute for Gender Equality 2020)

In the Istanbul convention (2011) violence against women is explained as; *“violence against women” is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life;”* .

Experiences of violence damage and affect hugely in the overall wellbeing of the women and in worst case situations can end in death of the woman. Women can experience violence in all parts of their life, from being born to when they pass away. Women with immigration background have especially high risk of being victims of discrimination because of their gender, ethnic origin and their status of a person with immigration background. It is important to recognize that violence against women is experienced in all countries, social classes and all religions, still some women have higher probability to become victims of violence. The women with higher probability to become victims of violence are for example people with disabilities, sexual- and gender minorities and elder women. This violence women experience is also very expensive on society because of the direct and indirect consequences. These costs can for example come through medical bills, social- and laws sectors costs and child protection. (Allinen-Calderon, Kanervo & Nurmi 2011.)

There are many factors that play a role on whether the women seek help or not. These factors can be for example social status, literacy and the experiences and knowledge from the past on women's rights and help in the moment of violence. The violence against women can for example not be seen as a violence same way if it is done by intimate partner than if a random person would be the one doing the harm. In these situations the violence is often left unfound and women might be suffering from it for a long time without no one knowing. Recognizing that one is experiencing violence can also be difficult because of the cultural and religious perceptions on women's status and rights. (Allinen-Calderon, Kanervo & Nurmi 2011.)

4 Methodology

This chapter will open up the methodology of the thesis. Firstly, there will be the research questions. After this literature review and systematic literature search will be explained. Following are the data collection steps and the chosen data will be introduced. Lastly there will be introduction to the analyzing method and the reliability and ethical principles.

4.1 Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to find out which forms of gender-based violence can be found among asylum seeking women and how are they recognized in the asylum process. To answer the aim of thesis, the research questions were formed.

1. Which forms of gender-based violence are found in women seeking asylum?
2. How are these forms of violence recognized in asylum process?

4.2 Literature review & systematic literature search

To understand what literature review is, you can use example: every research you decide to use is a single jigsaw piece, when you combine single jigsaw pieces, you get the full completed jigsaw (Aveyard 2010). In shortness, you create a new research from collecting data from already existing researches. Literature reviews can be divided to three different forms. These forms are descriptive, systematic and meta-analysis (Salminen 2011). Literature review in shortness is an examination of certain topic based on the existing research. Literature review can be its own method or part of a study (Efron & Ravid 2018).

In a successful literature review the writer is able to present a great and critical knowledge of the topic, compare different studies, theories and researches while revealing gaps in them. In a great literature review you should also be able to find points and views that should be explored more in the future studies. (Efron & Ravid 2018.) To write a successful literature review you have to really get familiar with the topic. You must read numerous of different articles, books, researches and studies before you can even start thinking of writing. This I got familiar with in really early stages of my thesis. But on the other hand, it is also way easier to write a text when you know your topic firsthand.

Literature review is said to be one of the most important parts of academic writing and has been said that nothing is new but everything is based on existing knowledge (Oliver 2012). To write a successful literature review based on Harvard guide on literature review (2011), you

should follow these five steps; Framing the question, searching literature, managing results, unite/link the research, write the review (Figure 6.)

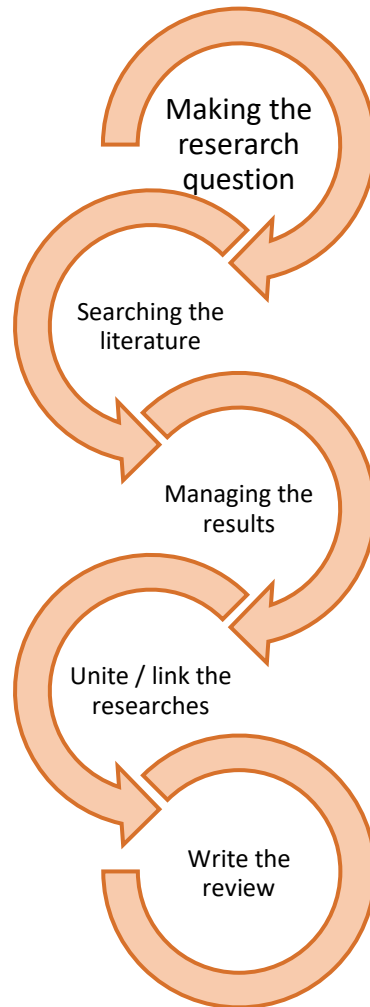


Figure 6 Literature review process (Built based on Harvard guide: The Literature Review : A Research Journey 2011)

Baumeister and Leyryn's (1997) describe the five reasons and goals of literature review. Firstly, to develop the already existing theory and build new one. Secondly, to assess and evaluate already existing research. Thirdly, to be an overview of a certain topic. Fourthly to recognize problems in the existing research and lastly to describe the historical development of certain theories or studies.

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start thinking of writing. This I got familiar with in really early stages of my thesis. But on the other hand, it is also way easier to write a text when you know your topic firsthand.

Because this is a bachelor thesis, I will be using some systematic elements in the literature review process. This element is the systematic literature search which is the data collection. By adding some systematic elements in the literature review you add the academic value of the text and add the traceability of it. This means, the same results can be gotten again.

The key element of systematic literature search is that all steps have been planned and explained well. This makes it so, that the research can be made again perfectly same. In this style of search the literature is also searched as broadly as possible. In the systematic search you have to have pre planned inclusion and exclusion criteria, which leads you to the literature. To start the search, first you have to form a research question. After that you split the search into key words and choose the databases you are going to use. Then you go to these databases and explain in detail your search words and search settings. After doing the searches you mark the findings, start going through them based on your inclusion and exclusion criteria (Kunttu 2017.)

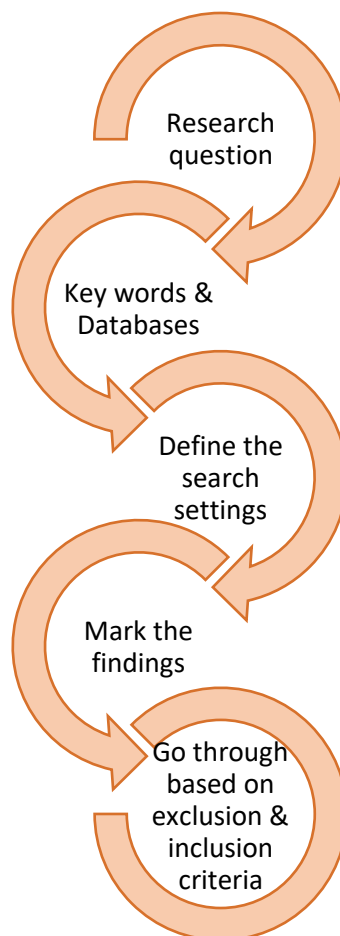


Figure 7 Steps of systematic literature search (based on Kunttu 2017)

In the later chapters the steps will be gone through and the qualified data will be introduced.

4.3 Data collection

Before creating the real inclusion and exclusion list and search words, many test searches were done. The test searches were done to see if the topic was studied enough. The test searches used many different words, that in the end were not used. These test searches were huge help in narrowing the results down, since in the first searches the need for narrowing was prominent.

When doing my test searches, I realised I had to be more exact to get better searches. For my search words in the end I chose: “Gender-based violence”, “asylum seeking”, “women” and “violence”. I chose that all the words had to be included so the search was more precise. I also did some advanced search criteria so I could narrow the search results, these were the years 2015-2020 and I was only searching for research articles, scholar journals (peer reviewed) and abstracts. In my search I decided to choose peer reviewed scholar journals, so they are more reliable and not biased. Under, you can see the search criteria in a table.

Based on the research questions and test searches the inclusion and exclusion criteria were formed. In the inclusion criteria I have; made between 2015-2020, English language, answers research question, full text in search site or can be found online for free and must include the terms or be close to them. In the exclusion criteria I have: Older than 2015, unknown language, does not answer the research question, no full text online for free and other types of violence than gender-based. Below you can see the the inclusion and exclusion criteria in a figure.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Between 2015-2020	Older than 2015
English	Other language
Answers the research question	Doesn't answer the research question

Full text in search site or can be found online for free	No full text online for free
Must include terms or be close to them	Other types of violence than Gender-based

Figure 8 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Search criteria		
2015-2020	Terms: Gender-based violence AND Asylum seeking AND Women AND Violence	Research Articles, Scholar Journals (peer reviewed) Abstracts

Figure 9 Search criteria

For the search databases I chose the ones Laurea University of Applied Sciences has a licence for. I was doing a research which ones to use from the broad section I found on Laurea Libguides, (2020) social services section. After some research I ended up choosing Ebook central, ScienceDirect (Elsevier), ProQuest central and EBSCOhost combined search.

Ebook central is an interdisciplinary e-book collection that has more than 190 000 ebook titles. ScienceDirect (Elsevier) is database that holds over 2000 scholarly journals which main subjects are science, technology and health- and social sciences. ProQuest central is an database which holds over 8000 full texts in different subjects such as economics, health and social sciences. Lastly, I used EBSCOhost combined search which covers all the different

EBSCO-databases, between these all there are many thousand titles to choose from. (Laurea Libguides - social services, 2020)

When starting to do the search, I made the table for the searches ready. Previously you can find the search settings that were used to conduct the searches. In this chapter the actual search process will be explained.

In my first search, I got 842 results. After this search I read all the titles of the results, after this narrowing I ended up with 26 results. With these 26 results I read the abstracts. After the abstract reading, I ended up with 11 results I would end up reading the whole text. After reading these 11 full texts, I ended up with my chosen 5 researches.

	Ebook central	ScienceDirect (Elsevier)	ProQuest central	EBSCOhost combined search	Total
First search result	241	266	327	8	<u>842</u>
Title narrowing	0	10	13	3	<u>26</u>
Abstract narrowing	0	4	6	1	<u>11</u>
Read full text	0	4	6	1	<u>11</u>
Used in thesis	0	1	3	1	<u>5</u>

Figure 10 The search results

What surprised me the most about the search process was the sheer amount of not useful researches and literature to my topic. Somehow, I thought there would be way more relevant research since my research question is quite broad. But, in the end I am happy with the chosen five researches I ended up with. All of them have quite different viewpoint but I am

sure this will make the analyzing phase of the literature more interesting to me and the reader. Now, the chosen data will be introduced before the chapter about data analysis method.

First chosen research was written by Aguirre, Milewski, Shin & Ottenheimer and published in 2020. The title of the research is *“Gender-based violence experienced by women seeking asylum in the United State: A lifetime of multiple traumas inflicted by multiple perpetrators.”* The research is studying the gender-based violence experiences on women asylum seekers in the USA. The study included 85 cis-gendered asylum-seeking women and the research was done from affidavits. The main findings of the study were that gender-based violence was found in many forms done by multiple perpetrators. This research was only that defined the term woman regarding their study and excluded transgender women from results. This was justified because the discrimination and patterns of violence differ extensively from the rest.

Second chosen research was written by Baranowski, Wang, D’Andrea & Singer and was published in 2019. The research was titled as; *“Experiences of gender-based violence in women asylum seekers from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala: a retrospective, qualitative study.”* The study was done in the USA. The purpose of the study was to find out the forms of persecution experienced in these areas and the physical and psychological effects of them. The study included 70 asylum seeking women and the data was collected from in-depth interviews. The main findings of the study were that the women asylum seekers were exposed to systematic violence in their countries of origin and displayed many psychological consequences of it.

Third chosen research was done by Lever, Ottenheimer, Teysir, Singer & Atkinson in the USA and was published in 2018. The research is titled as; *“Depression, Anxiety, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and a History of Pervasive Gender-Based Violence Among Women Asylum Seekers Who Have Undergone Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Retrospective Case Review.”* The study included 13 female asylum seekers and was done by standardized questionnaires and affidavits. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the frequency of anxiety, depression, PTSD and experiences of violence on women who are seeking asylum based on FGM/C. The main findings of the research were that depression, anxiety and PTSD were found in almost all women studied and that FGM was only part of the trauma experienced.

Fourth chosen research was done by Kwiringira, Mutabazi, Mugumya, Kaweesi, Munube & Rujumba in Uganda in 2018. The research is titled as; *“EXPERIENCES OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AMONG REFUGEE POPULATIONS IN UGANDA: EVIDENCE FROM FOUR REFUGEE CAMPS.”* The study was done with 16 women and the data collection methods were focus

group discussions and in-depth interviews. The main purpose was to collect refugee experiences of gender-based violence among refugees in Uganda. The main findings of the study were that corruption plays a negative role on reporting violence, it is not uncommon to stay with perpetrators and it can continue even in the asylum country. Violence can be done systematically or randomly.

Last chosen research was done by Freedman in 2019. The research was titled as; *“THE USES AND ABUSES OF «VULNERABILITY» IN EU ASYLUM AND REFUGEE PROTECTION: PROTECTING WOMEN OR REDUCING AUTONOMY?”* The study was done by Interviews with asylum seekers, (Greece & France) ngos and associations supporting refugees, and with representatives of various European and international organisations concerned with refugee support and protection and/or with border control and immigration policies. The purpose of the study was to study what being vulnerable means, what makes an asylum seeking women “vulnerable” in EU standards and the positive and negative effects of it. The main findings were that there are many positive and negative effects of being classified as vulnerable. The title vulnerable should be broadened as its current definition it leaves many out.

4.4 Content analysis method

As the analysing method for my thesis I have chosen content analysis method. In this chapter I will be explaining what this method means and what steps will it follow.

When talking about content analysis, it can mean few things. It can be a way for analysing qualitative studies and for example interviews, but it can also be its' own method. When content analysis is its own method, it can be done it systematic or objective way. Content analysis is also a great method for analysing even the most unstructured sources (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.)

In content analysis, the data is collected to be in summarised in to general form. The knowledge and information collected in the analysis is only to make conclusion and that is why the method is also criticized for this unfinished way of conducting analysis and results. In this case, the researcher can have explained the analysing phase very detailed but have not been able to make conclusion they have wanted so they present the analysing as the result. Content analysing is often confused and talked in unison with content breakdown method. In content analysis you are breaking down the data with verbal way and in content breakdown you make it more numeral and quantitative Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.)

Content analysis method can be broken into three parts. Simplifying, clustering and Abstraction. (Figure 11)



Figure 11 Content analysis process (based on Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018)

Firstly, you will be breaking down and simplifying the data and leaving all unnecessary parts of the text out. This can mean for example splitting the text to sections and colour coding the relevant data by separating them to different categories. After colour coding is done, all the parts must be simplified.

Normal sentence	Simplified sentence
<p>“Not surprisingly, the women disclosed fears related to the dangers they would face if forcibly returned to their countries of origin. One woman explained, “I feel very fearful, I know what is waiting for me in my country,” and another observed, “Now that they know I have escaped, if I return, I am dead.”” (Baranowski et al. 2019.)</p>	<p>Fear of deportation</p>
<p>“Some of the asylum seekers were released to the community after a few days, while others were transferred to immigration detention centers. One asylum seeker reflected on the impact of detention by stating, “We don’t have our liberty, and that makes us sad.”” (Baranowski et al. 2019.)</p>	<p>Community and detention</p>

Figure 12 Example of simplifying the data

After you are done with the breaking down and simplifying part you will be moving to clustering. Clustering is the second step of content analysing method. In it you will be grouping the different parts that you found in the simplifying and breaking down part to unified groups under a subclassification. In the clustering phase you have to read and

understand and collect all the matching simplified parts together and make a subclassification for them.

Simplified sentences	Clustering	Subclassifications
Emotional, physical & economic GBV Abuse from smugglers	Cluster 1. Emotional, physical & economic GBV Verbal assault, physical assault, sexual assault, threats of death	Forms of GBV
Verbal assault, physical assault, sexual assault, threats of death Vulnerability during journey	Cluster 2. Vulnerability during journey Abuse from smugglers	The Journey

Figure 13 Example of the clustering

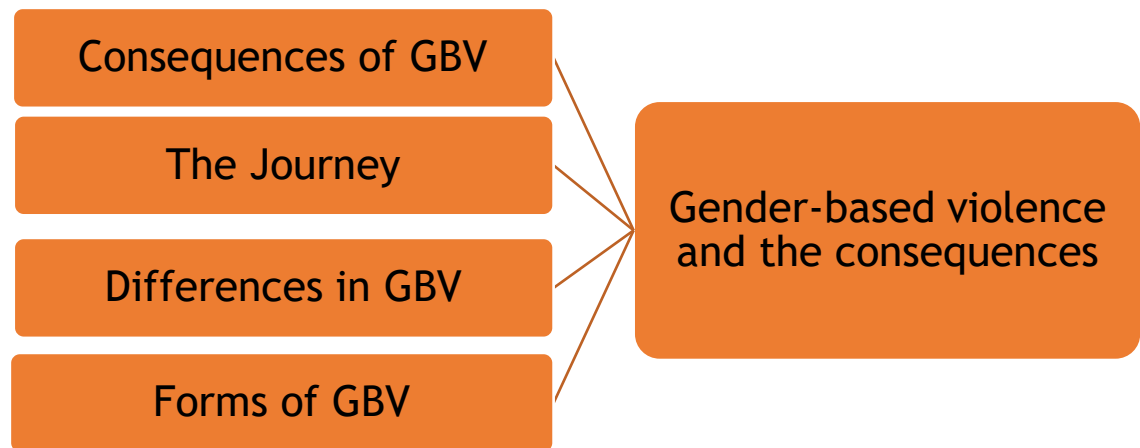


Figure 14 Example of the creating mainheading

Last part is the abstraction phase. In it you will be sectioning the subclassifications to a main heading or main theoretical concept. It is important to keep going with the abstraction for as long as you can while keeping the main view of the data clear (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.)



To Figure 15 Example of abstraction

To start with the analyzing phase I decided to color code all the relevant parts regarding research questions from the data. For the color-coding blue was for gender-based violence, green was for asylum process, yellow for causal connection and pink for the perpetrators. When then color-coding was done was the time for simplifying. To simplify the data, I went through all the color-coded parts and simplified them. In this part some unnecessary parts were also skipped, because of the lack of relevance regarding the research questions.

After the simplifying was done, the clustering phase of the analysis started. In the clustering phase I went through all the simplified sentences, clustered them together to groups and gave them subclassifications. After clustering all the subclassifications, it was time to give the main headings for the subclassifications. After the clustering phase was done, the results was abstracted as women victims of gender-based violence seeking asylum.

4.5 Reliability and ethical principles

This thesis will be following the Responsible conduct of research (Finnish Advisory Board on research integrity 2012). The responsible conduct of research has nine steps which I will be explaining shortly.

The research must follow the criteria that are supported by the research community which are integrity, meticulousness and accuracy in doing the research and recording, presenting and evaluating the results. The research must be done openly and in responsible fashion by using the recognized scientific knowledge, by using correct citing and giving the cited researchers the respect, their work deserves. The research must be done using scientifically

knowledge method in planning and doing the research and recording the data collected during the research method. If there is the possibility of conflict of interest, the person must refrain from all research-related evaluation and decision-making (Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity 2013).

European commission (2020) has made a guidance note on how to do ethical research on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. In the guidance note they recognize the extra common vulnerability and principles how to do such research with ethics. In the guidance note they set general principles, which include care and sensitivity when working with the group, to be objective and transparent, respect for the persons ethnicity, language, religion, gender and sexual orientation, to be extra careful with the identification, to respect the ones values and their own decisions. Because this thesis is studying and analyzing already existing research, this should have been done already, but this thesis will still follow the ethical guidelines on how to do ethical research of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. This was taken aware as a sensitive use of words.

When looking at reliability of the literature review, the first thing would be to start by looking the sources I ended up using. Are they reliable, peer reviewed and well sourced? From the databases chosen, one would assume the sources to be reliable. Because in all research and studies, the one of the aims is to avoid mistakes, it is important to prove the validity. This can be done in many ways, for example in tracing the search, two researches come to same result (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2001). For this thesis, the data collection was done in systematic way, explaining all the steps and results of these steps for traceability, which makes the results more reliable.

For such vulnerable group, I personally feel more comfortable still studying already existing studies and collecting it together, rather than doing my own research study. For such thing, I would like to be more prepared and sensitive, so I think the broadness of a thesis is too small for such research.

5 Results

In this chapter the analyzed data will be presented as result for the research questions. The five chosen researches are from USA, Uganda and EU. The result chapter is divided to two different sections: Gender-based violence and the consequences and Asylum process for victims of gender-based violence. With these two sections I wish to understand the process of a women seeking asylum who are victims of gender-based violence.

5.1 Gender-based violence and the consequences

When looking at forms of gender-based violence regarding the data analyzed we can see many same forms appearing multiple times withing different data and some being more uncommon. Lever, Ottenheimer, Teysir, Singer & Atkinson (2018) mentioned that there is gender-based violence in form of physical, emotional and sexual. In the study many different forms of gender-based violence was found. These included for example fear of violence, intimate partner violence, forced marriage or threat of it, FGM and polygamy. The study also pointed that these women have been experiencing many types of violence, not just one.

When, Baranowski, Wang, D'Andrea & Singer (2019) mentioned these three forms of violence; emotional, physical and sexual but also economic form of gender-based violence. Different types of abuses were mentioned such as kidnapping, sexual assault, forced recruitment and bribes. Also, visible in their study was the gang violence. The abuse was often done by gangs which rule the cities, and these gangs would also collect money which is called "renta" from the people living in the area. The data brought out the fear of death and control these women were experiencing. These abuses create feeling of disempowerment among women. In worst case scenarios the abuse could end up in femicide which is the intentional killing of women, because they are women.

Aguirre, Milewski, Shin & Ottenheimer (2020) recognized in their study many different forms of gender-based violence, such as verbal harassment, physical abuse, sexual abuse and femicide. Sexual abuse would most commonly be done as rape which also includes gang rape. Sexual abuse was also recognized in forms of forced or threat of marriage, sex trafficking and FGM. Emotional abuse was also present in the data, this form of violence included degradation, control and isolation, neglect, harassment, stalking and threats of serious violence and murder. Serious violence was also common which included punching, kicking, stomping, burning, choking and assault with and object or weapon. The perpetrators recognized in the data were family members (immediate or extended), partner, friends, political groups, state, gangs, pimps or strangers. There were more often many perpetrators rather than just one.

Kwiringira, Mutabazi, Mugumya, Kaweesi, Munube & Rujumba (2018) had mentioned many forms of gender-based violence experienced by asylum seekers and refugees. The forms of violence are emotional, sexual and physical. In emotional range you can find psychological abuse, verbal abuse and family neglect. Rape, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and being infected with HIV purposely are in the sexual types of abuse. Wife beating was also mentioned and how this is often seen justified use of force for men in patriarchal societies. In the data the perpetrators were often partner or strangers. Poverty also affects the reporting of crimes negatively. People see the cost of transport to go report for example too high.

The gender-based violence does not end necessary when person has left the home country or country of permanent residence. Freedman (2019) especially brought out the dangerousness of the journey these women take in search for safety from gender-based violence. The talk around the dangerousness of the journey especially boomed during the refugee crisis from 2014 onwards. Especially the risky routes to Europe caused many deaths at the sea and EU borders. The danger of the journey is especially high for women because they are in heightened risk of facing sexual and gender-based violence. Many have to use smugglers on the journey and might face violence in the form of paying for the journey. Forms of violence can also be found in groups which often stays unseen because the men are assumed to protect the women travelling with them. Baranowski et al. (2019) also mentioned about a woman who dressed as a man during the trip to remain safe.

It is important to not generalize the violence experienced and say all women experience it the same way. To conform the statement Aguirre et al. (2020) found in their study that transgender women experiences of violence and pattern of it differ substantially. They also notified, that gender-based violence can happen in any region with no real significant differences. Still, women who live in poverty, migrant women and women living in post-conflict or post disaster zones are most often affected. Some forms are more common in some areas such FGM is more common in African nations and Indonesia, Dowry killings in South Asia, Rape and sexual slavery as weapons of war in Democratic republic of Congo, Yemen and Myanmar and Femicide in central and South American countries. Kwiringira et al. (2018) also stated that forms of violence are heightened in areas and places which lack basic needs, have unequal power relations and low number of protection agencies.

Even though, the gender-based violence might end in the country of safety, many consequences of the violence experienced may follow. Complex trauma, ongoing family separation anxiety, social stigmatization and food and housing insecurity are few burdensome affects of GBV (Aguirre et al. 2020). Baranowski et al. (2019) found consequences of the violence such as physical injuries, infections, unwanted pregnancies, miscarriage and symptoms associated with depression, fear for the family, anxiety and suicidality. Kwiringira et al. (2018) brought out the consequences such as sexually transmitted diseases,

psychological chronic pain, physical disability and substance abuse. In the study done by Lever et al. (2018) also mentioned that asylees have significantly higher scores on measures of past trauma, symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD and on all dimensions of post-migratory difficulties than immigrants.

5.2 Asylum process for victims of gender-based violence

Baranowski et al. (2019) wrote on their report how women are fleeing gender-based violence from northern triangle and they meet criteria as survivors of torture and need asylum. The systematic violence in the region they are fleeing from has no effective law enforcement and governmental protection. These women have also tried first hiding within country, but it has not been possible due to the lack of protection from the government. In conflict and displacement settings there is higher risk of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence. Refugee convention and protection prohibits non-refoulement, meaning the return of refugees to a country where their lives would be endangered.

The grounds for granting asylum are quite slim. Only Aguirre et al. (2020) and Lever et al. (2018) stated that the women were seeking asylum on basis of “membership in a particular social group”. Lever et al. (2018) stated that there has been an increase in the number of women applying for asylum on basis of FGM, which is one form of gender-based violence. Still among these women who have been reported to have undergone FGM there has been other forms of gender-based violence as well. Many women are still trying to reach Europe to escape conflict violence and persecution in search for safe home for them and families (Freedman 2019).

In the EU it is obligation for countries to identify vulnerable asylum seekers. This creates great benefit for women who have or are at risk of being victims of gender-based violence and can be great strength in asylum process. This is interestingly enough, since the main convention of the status of refugee does not speak about the vulnerability of specific group. These guidelines regarding vulnerability of specific group are done by UNHCR. These guidelines create special guarantees for victims of human trafficking, rape or serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence. How vulnerability in EU is assessed emphasizes physical dependency or weakness and completely neglect the more complex causes and forms of vulnerability, which might leave rest of vulnerable people in the shadow. (Freedman 2018.)

Aguirre et al. (2020) stated that almost half of the people who were granted asylum in the USA were women. Forensic medical evaluation is a great strength for asylum seekers asylum claims, but their legal argumental weight should be still added. Asylum seeker can get to the forensic medical evaluation if their legal representative requests for it. There has also been

made new legal guidance that weakens the claim for asylum on the basis of severe gender-based violence. There might also be great underestimations of the whole situation when the focus is strongly on the main abuses or the cases found in the forensic evaluation. The legal and medical documents should capture the full extent of the abuse, regarding the type, duration and perpetrators. Baranowski et al. (2019) also noted that mental health correlates of trauma must be acknowledged during immigration proceedings and determination of credibility and analysis of physical and psychological evidence of human right violations affidavits should be presented to immigration court. These cannot be guaranteed to be understood through the lens of gender-based violence for international protection. The traumas of the past and the current situation has been shown to affect the ability to testify effectively during asylum hearings why supporting affidavits are very important.

Lever et al. (2018) explains how the asylum-seeking process has its' own dynamic when compared to other immigration settings and reasons. It has great uncertainties and has been shown to cause stress and affect health negatively. It might also be disempowering for women, since in the statistics women and children are categorized together, which takes away women adult independence and autonomy (Freedman 2019). Great stress factor during asylum process is the possible deportation, it might even cause suicidal thoughts when the fear in home country would also be death. Also been send to detention center takes away liberty and freedom of the moment, which can also affect negatively the overall wellbeing in the process. Fear increased stress may also decrease memory performance so the women might not be able to tell their experiences in great detail. (Baranowski et al. 2019.)

6 Discussion & Conclusion

In this last section of the thesis firstly there will be the discussion of the results. Following will be the conclusion of the thesis. After this will be the further development ideas. Last part of the thesis will be my personal reflections of the thesis process and professional growth.

6.1 Discussion of the results

The main points of this discussion regarding the results can be divided to four different sections. These sections are, the major findings, meaning of the findings, limitation of the findings and why do the findings matter. Without the whole theoretical framework, the findings and results would be impossible to understand. Theoretical framework included: asylum seeker & seeking asylum, refugee, definition of woman regarding this thesis, violence, forms of violence, gender-based violence and violence against women,

The major findings of this study were the broadness and diversity of gender-based violence among asylum seeking women. Many different forms of gender-based violence done by multiple perpetrators were found in all the analyzed data. All four forms of violence were recognized: emotional, physical, sexual and economic. This really suggests that it is impossible to generalize which forms of gender-based violence asylum seeking women experience and who is the perpetrator. The diversity, length and seriousness of gender-based violence and consequences of it are individual. It is still important to recognize that all forms of violence are reprehensible act.

The other major finding of the study was the uncertainty of the asylum process. The asylum process itself is rather uncertain but then as a victim of gender-based violence it might be even more challenging. The results emphasized the importance of a lawyer, since all medical and forensic affidavits must be asked by them. This could create inequality during the asylum process, if the asylum seeker has not gotten the needed legal advice before hand. The consequences of gender-based violence could also weaken memory which could make reciting the happened violence to be inconsistent during asylum hearing.

Because the thesis was only analyzing five different researches, it is important to pay attention to the limitation of the results. With five different studies, from three different continents, it is impossible to make a clear statement of the phenomenon. This is why, the result section of the literature review should be recognized as a small gathering of data and not the whole scope of the problem. All the analyzed data were peer reviewed before publishing which could implement the reliability of them. In one of the studies, the

participants were chosen by camp leader, which could create a limitation to a full diversity of the situation.

The findings of the results really matter, in a sense of providing fair asylum process for asylum seeking women who are victims of gender-based violence. Vulnerabilities should be recognized in early phase to guarantee the support during asylum process and thus creating fair asylum process. To recognize the group women asylum seekers, who are victims of gender-based violence is already creating awareness on the phenomena. Without recognizing the vulnerability and the real extent of the group, nothing will ever change.

6.2 Conclusion

The thesis process was very intense one. The whole timeline for the thesis to be done from beginning to the end was set determinately and after that started the hard work. The current covid-19 situation luckily did not affect this thesis, like it has been affecting many others, since this thesis was done using literature review method.

Because of the sensitivity and vulnerability of the target group extra caution with ethical guidelines had to be done. The whole thesis is supposed to be objective view of the phenomena without judging or stigmatizing anyone. Sensitivity and correctness of words used were considered during this process. Due to the vulnerability of the target group, literature review was decided to be chosen method rather than conducting own research on the target group.

The main point of the whole thesis was to find answers to the research questions. This thesis had two research questions. Which forms of gender-based violence are found in women seeking asylum? How are these forms of violence recognized in asylum process? The results of the thesis could be understood, because of the theoretical framework set in the beginning of the thesis.

Major findings of the thesis were that gender-based violence can be found in many different forms done by multiple perpetrators. The fairness of asylum process was put on pedestal. The importance of lawyer and legal help and knowledge was recognized as vital. Seeing the past situation as a whole rather than only the violence was also found important regarding the asylum process.

To summarize, this thesis was important to be done as a tool to raise awareness among the problem. Even one more person being aware of gender-based violence among asylum seeking women and the process of it is a success.

6.3 Further development ideas

Like often when doing a literature review, one comes up with further development ideas to fill gaps in already existing studies. This literature review was no exception regarding this. Already when starting with the research and the analyzing part of this thesis, the lack of accurate studies really hit hard. I have divided these thoughts to four sections; guaranteed fair process, raising awareness, reliability and example of a possible study.

To get clearer picture of the situation, the fair and supported asylum process should be guaranteed. Like it was mentioned before in the thesis, EU has developed asylum process so, that the decisions would be same wherever the claims for asylum have been told. To make the process even more fair for everyone, systematic change should be done. Everyone should have the equal starting point and legal help should be guaranteed even without the person having to ask for it. In some cases, the only time asylum seeker is in contact with lawyer is when they have to make an appeal. Strong and trusting connection with lawyer would be beneficial for the general knowledge on what to tell during asylum hearing, focusing on the important parts and having someone for support when own memory or package becomes too much. Vulnerability of the asylum-seeking people should be recognized early on and this vulnerability should be taken into account when making the decision. There should be no wrong decisions.

Raising awareness about gender-based violence should be done in worldwide level. Without raising awareness, having people talk and recognize this form of violence, no change will ever be made. If this awareness is not done already in the country of origin or permanent residency, it should be done in the country the person is seeking asylum in. This has to be done, in order to have these people recognize that any form of violence is not okay. When making gender-based violence visible and known the real picture and extend of it is shown. Ignorance might be bliss, but it should not be. The hidden costs of the gender-based violence are way worse than early recognition and help.

Because the sheer number of studies used in this thesis was so little, it is important to recognize that the result cannot be talking of all women victims of gender-based violence. To understand the real number and length of the problem, it should be studied in way higher capacity. The lack of relevant and accurate studies on the topic have definitely affected the reliability of the study. So, when making statements in the result section, they are all based on the studies used.

When thinking of the process as a whole concept; a case study from beginning to the end of the process would be a great way to really see the process as a complete journey. This kind of study would also be beneficial when looking and developing reception centers around the world of the work they do. The good and bad practices done in reception centers regarding

vulnerable people and recognizing a person in vulnerable situation would also be brought to day light if the study was done from when entering the country until the decision and possible appeal. The sensitivity of the asylum process and the role of the lawyer would also have to be in center, since everyone has the right to legal aid on their asylum process. This kind of study would have to be done in extreme sensitivity and have the persons complete acceptance and consent because of the sensitivity and vulnerability of the topic. The anonymity should also be guaranteed as per usual.

6.4 Personal reflections

First time, when the thought of working with asylum seekers came to my mind was during my exchange in a field visit to a housing unit for underage asylum seekers. Few days after, I send my application for a work placement in a reception center and here we are. Finishing thesis about a topic that is so important and interesting to me, about the client group I feel the most passionate about.

Thesis as a process has been very intense one. I had fairly short time for the whole process, many long days in a library, frustration and many more emotions. Sometimes during the process I had a strong feeling of being stuck, but with hard work and effort it all really was worth it. Like it has been said, do not wait for motivation but work for it really was and is true. Also, who would have thought, that methodology could be so fun and interesting.

Many emotions and questions were going through while working on this thesis. Sadness and disbelief on how world can be so cruel, excitement and passion about the topic and feeling of wanting to do more. With Bachelor's thesis, you cannot change anything but at least I can feel happy and proud for bringing attention to such important topic. Various times during the process the reality of things really strike me. How much strength the fleeing and starting completely over, living in such uncertainty with many fears.

Doing this thesis has really thought me how important it is to be vocal about things you care about. Not turn blind eye but face the reality with how it is. Without people making the change and bringing attention to topics, there is nothing. I know, because of this process, I will be more sensitive, thoughtful and better social services professional in the future.

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Appendices

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Authors & Name	Year & Place	Purpose of the study
Aguirre, Milewski, Shin & Ottenheimer. Gender-based violence experienced by women seeking asylum in the United State: A lifetime of multiple traumas inflicted by multiple perpetrators	2020. USA	Characterize the forms of violence experienced by the <u>asylum seeking</u> women in USA
Baranowski, Wang, D'Andrea & Singer. Experiences of gender-based violence in women asylum seekers from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala: a retrospective, qualitative study.	2019. USA	To find out the forms of persecution experienced in these areas and the physical and psychological effects of them
Lever, Ottenheimer, Teysir, Singer & Atkinson. Depression, Anxiety, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and a History of Pervasive Gender-Based Violence Among Women Asylum Seekers Who Have Undergone Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Retrospective Case Review.	2018. USA	To evaluate the frequency of anxiety, depression, PTSD and experiences of violence on women who are seeking asylum based on FGM/C
Kwiringira, Mutabazi, Mugumya, Kaweesi, Munube & Rujumba. EXPERIENCES OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AMONG REFUGEE POPULATIONS IN UGANDA: EVIDENCE FROM FOUR REFUGEE CAMPS.	2018. Uganda	Collect refugee experiences of gender-based violence among refugees in Uganda.
Freedman / THE USES AND ABUSES OF «VULNERABILITY» IN EU ASYLUM AND REFUGEE PROTECTION: PROTECTING WOMEN OR REDUCING AUTONOMY?	2019. Spain	Studying the “tittle” of being vulnerable, what makes a women asylum seeker “vulnerable” in EU standards. The positive and negative effects of it.