Orthopedic Personal Statements: A Thematic Review

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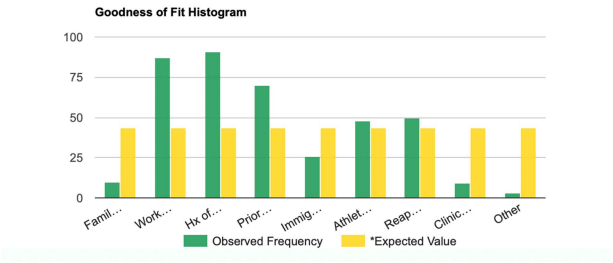
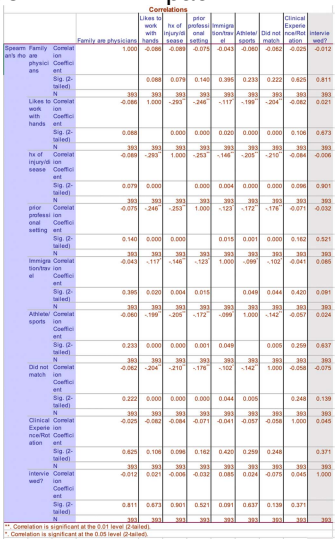
INTRODUCTION: Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) is a tool utilized by graduating medical students for residency application. A critical component is the Personal Statement, which is viewed as an opportunity as a characteristic identifier. The utility of Orthopaedic Surgery personal statements are questioned based on suspected congruity of the content within personal statements. Previous studies within Emergency Medicine, Dermatology, and Radiology identified as many as 18 common thematic elements with some elements correlated to matched candidates. The goal of this study was to identify and categorize the thematic elements found within the 2021-2022 ERAS personal statements of Orthopaedic Surgery applicants at a single institution and assess correlation between thematic elements and likelihood of interview invitation.

METHODS: De-identified personal statements among 2021-2022 ERAS applicants were reviewed by the research staff and categorized into 8 themes: family of physicians, enjoy working with hands, history of injury/disease, prior professional setting, immigration/travel, athlete/sport, reapplication, clinical experience/rotation, and other. 394 applications passed initial screening filters and 49 applicants were granted an interview. Proposed themes that were collected included: family of physicians, working with hands, history of injury/disease, prior professional setting, immigration/travel, athlete/sports, re-application, previous clinical experience, and others. Chi-squared was utilized initially to analyze categorical themes and Spearman bivariate correlation analysis was performed to determine respective correlation.

RESULTS: Goodness of fit Chi-squared analysis within themes was statistically significant (χ^2=209.5, p<0.001). Of the number of applicants offered an interview 10% were family of physicians, 13.8% enjoyed working with their hands, 12.1% had a history of injury/disease, 10% prior professional setting, 23.1% immigration/travel, 14.3% athlete/sport, 6% reapplication, and 22% clinical experience/rotation. There was not a statistical difference between each individual categorical themes and interview selection (p>0.05).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: Within our single institution, our study did observe some themes that were more prevalent. This observation appears to show predilection of applicants to write about particular themes. However, our study failed to observe any correlation between thematic elements and interview invitations suggesting that personal statements may not provide impact in interview selection.





Correlations

			Family are physicians	Likes to work with hands	hx of injury/disease	prior professional setting	Immigration/travel	Athlete/sports	Did not match	Clinical Experience/Rotation	interviewed?
Spearman's rho	Family are physicians	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-0.066	-0.089	-0.075	-0.043	-0.060	-0.062	-0.025	-0.012
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.068	0.079	0.140	0.395	0.233	0.222	0.625	0.811
		N	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
	Likes to work with hands	Correlation Coefficient	-0.066	1.000	-.293**	-.246**	-.117*	-.199**	-.204**	-0.082	0.021
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.068		0.000	0.000	0.020	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.673
		N	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
	hx of injury/disease	Correlation Coefficient	-0.089	-.293**	1.000	-.253**	-.148**	-.205**	-.210**	-0.084	-0.006
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.079	0.000		0.000	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.901
		N	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
	prior professional setting	Correlation Coefficient	-0.075	-.246**	-.253**	1.000	-.123*	-.172**	-.176**	-0.071	-0.032
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.140	0.000	0.000		0.015	0.001	0.000	0.162	0.521
		N	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
	Immigration/travel	Correlation Coefficient	-0.043	-.117*	-.148**	-.123*	1.000	-.099*	-.102*	-0.041	0.085
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.395	0.020	0.004	0.015		0.049	0.044	0.420	0.091
		N	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
	Athlete/sports	Correlation Coefficient	-0.060	-.199**	-.205**	-.172**	-.099*	1.000	-.142**	-0.057	0.024
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.233	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.049		0.005	0.259	0.637
		N	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
	Did not match	Correlation Coefficient	-0.062	-.204**	-.210**	-.176**	-.102*	-.142**	1.000	-0.058	-0.075
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.222	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.005		0.248	0.139
		N	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
	Clinical Experience/Rotation	Correlation Coefficient	-0.025	-0.082	-0.084	-0.071	-0.041	-0.057	-0.058	1.000	0.045
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.625	0.106	0.096	0.162	0.420	0.259	0.248		0.371
		N	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393
	interviewed?	Correlation Coefficient	-0.012	0.021	-0.006	-0.032	0.085	0.024	-0.075	0.045	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.811	0.673	0.901	0.521	0.091	0.637	0.139	0.371	
		N	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393	393

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).