Elyas Saif

elyas.saif@hanken.fi
simco177.github.io/ElyasSaif



EDUCATION

PhD Economics 2027 (expected)
Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland

MSc Economics 2016
Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland

BA Economics 2013
Wesleyan University, Connecticut, USA

IB Diploma 2009
United World College of the Adriatic, Trieste, Italy

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Consumer and Household Finance, AI and Machine Learning in Economics, Applied Econometrics

JOB MARKET PAPER

How Predictable is Household Financial Distress?

I examine the ex-ante predictability of consumer financial distress (CFD) using nationally representative Finnish household-level data for the period 2008–2017. Unlike studies that focus on consumer default, this predictive study uses machine learning methods (ML) to analyse the predictability of CFD from the perspective of the consumer rather than the lenders. This study provides insights into the overall accuracy of ML in predicting CFD, revealing significant variability in predictability between households with and without prior experience of distress. Specifically, I find that predictability is nearly perfect for households with prior distress but significantly lower for those without. This demonstrates that predictions of CFD can be used to accurately target support measures to households most likely to experience persistent consumer financial distress. The findings of this study hence contribute to the literature on consumer financial protection — which focuses on causally identifying measures that mitigate suboptimal borrowing decisions and consumer financial distress — by considering a predictive dimension that complements this causal focus. With more accurate predictions of CFD, consumer protection measures, such as advice on how to cope with CFD, can be targeted to households that are at greatest risk.

WORKING PAPERS

Interhousehold Private Monetary Transfers: Recipient Financial Distress and Forecast Errors

Interhousehold Giving and Unexpected Financial Shocks

SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

Helsinki GSE Labor and Public Economics PhD Seminar 2026
Helsinki GSE Industrial Organization PhD Seminar 2025
Hanken Economics Seminar, Hanasaari Island, Espoo 2024
Helsinki GSE Industrial Organization PhD Seminar 2023
Helsinki GSE Industrial Organization PhD Seminar 2022

GRANTS

OP Pohjola Research Foundation — €29,000 2026, 2025, 2023, 2022
Hanken School of Economics — €25,000 2024
Yrjö Jahnsson Foundation — €24,000 2021

REFERENCES

Ari Hyytinen
Professor of Economics
Hanken School of Economics
ari.hyytinen@hanken.fi

Benjamin Maury
Wahlroos Professor of Finance
Hanken School of Economics
benjamin.maury@hanken.fi

Topi Miettinen
Professor of Economics
Hanken School of Economics
topi.miettinen@hanken.fi

TEACHING

University Teacher 2026, 2025, 2024, 2023, 2022

Quantum I: Data-Driven Decision Making

Hanken School of Economics | Faculty Lead: Benjamin Maury

Lecture topics:

- Introduction to Python Programming
- Data Analysis with Pandas
- Agentic AI Workflows for Data Analysis
- Database Querying with SQL
- Integrating Python, SQL, and BI Tools
- Automating Data Updates with SQL

Guest Lecturer 2025, 2024

Analytics Across Business Domains

Hanken School of Economics | Faculty Lead: Yanqing Lin

Lecture topics:

- Python Fundamentals for Machine Learning
- Predictive Machine Learning in Economics

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE PRIOR TO PHD

Financial Controller Sept 2017 – Dec 2018

Nissan Nordic Europe, Espoo, Finland

- **Financial Reporting**: Generated financial reports using Excel (VLOOKUP & PivotTable)
- **Report Automation**: Reduced Excel report preparation time by 75% via SQL automation
- **Financial Analysis**: Analyzed transaction data, supported audits, and identified duplicate payments, saving EUR 10K
- **Process Documentation**: Documented data-processing workflows to ensure reproducibility
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration**: Worked with different departments on reporting, customer claims and inquiries, and preparing marketing campaigns

Paid Research Project (AR/VR in Real Estate Project) Feb 2017 – May 2017

Aalto University in collaboration with Nokia Corp., Espoo, Finland

- **Stakeholder Engagement & Requirements Gathering**: Interviewed real-estate stakeholders to understand their processes, identify needs, and document requirements for AR/VR solutions
- **Data Analysis**: Analyzed interview data, identifying patterns and insights for Nokia

Assistant Business Analyst — Summer Internship Jun 2015 – Aug 2015

Forte Group Inc., Minsk, Belarus

- Researched Belarusian IT companies' core competencies and markets for their services; presented findings to the regional manager
- Compared wage growth in the Belarusian IT industry with that of other countries

SKILLS

Stata (**Advanced**): Constructing a longitudinal panel dataset from annual waves of Statistics Finland's Income Distribution Survey (IDS) using unique household identifiers, data cleaning & variable construction (using loops), econometric analysis using fixed effects, DiD, and 2SLS

Python (Advanced): NumPy, Pandas, scikit-learn, Matplotlib, Seaborn, and imblearn

SQL (Advanced): SQL database design and data queries

Power BI / Power Platform (Advanced): Power Query, data modelling, Dataverse schema, and Dataverse–Power BI integration

Excel (Advanced): VLOOKUP, filters, aggregation functions, PivotTables, and macros

AI Assisted Development (Advanced): Rapid prototyping with Agentic AI

Git/GitHub (Intermediate): Version control and project documentation

R programming (**Intermediate**)

Languages: English: full working proficiency; Arabic: native; Russian: native; Italian: conversational; German: conversational; Finnish: basic