EXPLORING INTERVIEWEE PREFERENCES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VIRTUAL VS IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

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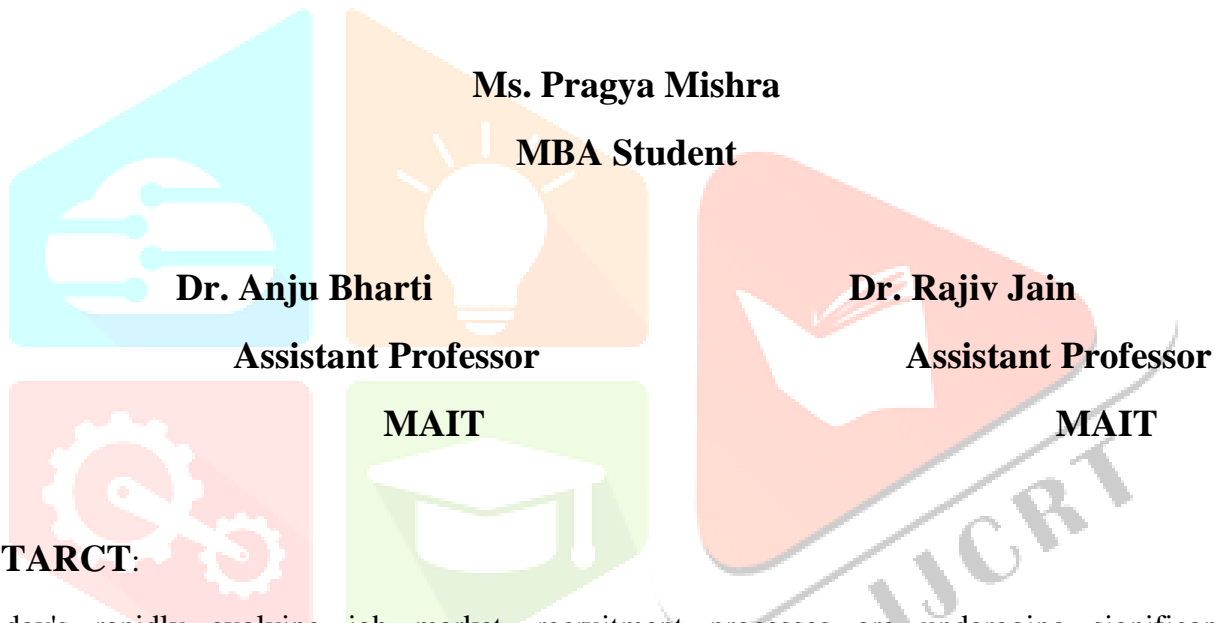
ABSTARCT:

In today's rapidly evolving job market, recruitment processes are undergoing significant transformations driven by technological advancements and changing workplace dynamics. The emergence of virtual interviews, alongside traditional in-person interviews, presents recruiters and organizations with new opportunities and challenges in identifying and assessing talent. However, there exists a gap in understanding how interviewees perceive and experience these different interview formats, with most published research focusing on employers' viewpoints. Therefore, the overarching goal of this study was to fill this gap by examining the preferences, perceptions, and experiences of interviewees participating in virtual and in-person interviews. This study delves into the comparative analysis of contemporary virtual interviewing practices and traditional in-person interviews from the perspective of interviewees.

Key Words: workplace dynamics, interviews

INTRODUCTION:

In today's dynamic and rapidly evolving job market, the recruitment process plays a pivotal role in shaping the success and growth of organizations. The interview phase is a crucial part of the process as it provides candidates with the chance to highlight their abilities, backgrounds, and fit for a particular position. The increased adoption of technology in recruitment, coupled with the globalization of labour markets, has led to the prevalence of virtual interviews. Traditionally, in-person interviews have been

the cornerstone of recruitment, offering direct face-to-face interaction and the chance for recruiters to assess candidates holistically. But as technology has advanced and the workforce has become more remote, virtual interviews have become a competitive option that provide recruiters and applicants alike accessibility, convenience, and flexibility.

The emergence of virtual interviews has marked a significant departure from the traditional interview format, offering a novel approach that overcomes geographical barriers and leverages the convenience of digital communication platforms. Virtual interviews have become popular as a competitive option to in-person interviews, allowing recruiters to access a larger pool of candidates and streamline their operations. This is due to the widespread use of video conferencing tools and virtual collaboration platforms. This shift has been further accelerated by global events such as the COVID- 19 pandemic, which underscored the need for remote work solutions and reshaped the way organizations conduct their operations.

While virtual interviews offer undeniable benefits in terms of accessibility, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness, they also present unique challenges related to communication dynamics, technological constraints, and candidate experience. Understanding how candidates perceive and navigate these different interview formats is essential for recruiters and organizations seeking to optimize their recruitment processes, enhance candidate experiences, and foster a competitive edge in the talent market.

Types of Interviews:

Types of interviews based on the structure, format, and dynamics of the interview process:

1. **Structured Interviews:** In structured interviews, the interviewer asks a set of standard questions, often based on the job requirements and competencies. The questions are standardized and asked in the same order to all candidates, allowing for consistency and comparability in evaluations.

2. **Unstructured Interviews:** Unstructured interviews are a type of interview in which questions are not pre-planned, it involves open-ended questions that allow for more flexibility and spontaneity in the conversation. The interviewer may explore different topics based on the candidate's responses, allowing for a deeper understanding of their background, experiences, and personality.

3. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews combine elements of both structured and unstructured approaches. While there is a set of predetermined questions, the interviewer has the flexibility to deviate from the script and probe further based on the candidate's responses. This format allows for a balance between consistency and adaptability.

4. **Stress Interviews:** Stress interviews are designed to put candidates under pressure to assess their ability to handle stress and perform under challenging circumstances. Interviewers may use aggressive questioning, interruptions, or provocative statements to gauge the candidate's composure and resilience.

5. **Behavioural Interviews:** Behavioural interviews focus on assessing a candidate's past behaviour and experiences to predict future performance. Interviewers ask questions about specific situations, actions taken, and outcomes achieved, aiming to uncover key competencies and skills relevant to the job role.

6. **Group Interviews:** Group interviews involve multiple candidates being interviewed simultaneously by one or more interviewers. This format allows for direct comparison

between candidates and assesses their ability to interact, communicate, and collaborate in a group setting.

7. Panel Interviews: Panel interviews are the types of interviews, where a group of interviewers assess the candidate. This includes HR managers, team leaders and other professionals. Each panel member may ask questions or evaluate the candidate from their perspective, providing a comprehensive assessment.

8. Sequential Interviews: Interviews where a candidate meets with multiple interviewers one after the other, either on the same day or across multiple days. Each interviewer assesses different aspects of the candidate's qualifications and fit for the role.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ramachandran & Dulloo (2023) explained in their paper that thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic and technology developments, in-person interviews have changed significantly in the last few years. Virtual interviews have become a practical substitute that allow remote conversations between hiring companies and candidates. Still, not much is known about how job seekers or candidates are responding to this novel interview format. The current study intends to investigate these changing interview paradigms, examine candidates' attitudes towards the virtual interview format, pinpoint motivational trends, and pinpoint difficulties encountered during virtual interviews. The results show a complex picture of the candidates' experience, highlighting both good and bad elements. The research's conclusions offer insightful advice that can help interviewers and employers make the most of virtual interviews.

Khetre, Thakare & Kamble (2023) explained in their paper that in 2020, virtual canvassing became essential for most firms as social distancing orders abruptly ended in-person employment interviews. Virtual canvassing will still be an option for gift entrance, depending on the circumstances. Experts believe that in the future, virtual interviews will happen more frequently. This essay will examine future hiring practices that will be more effective. The major data source for this study is a questionnaire, and secondary data from earlier research studies and articles is reviewed. The majority of HR managers believe that while virtual approaches will become the new norm in the years to come, in-person interviews will still be the most effective way to assess an applicant's talent and make a more suitable hiring decision. Combining the two approaches can help an organisation, depending on the circumstances.

Gangwani, Singh, Jadhav & Singh (2023) explained in their paper that in the dynamic world of hiring, virtual interviews are quickly taking the place of traditional in-person interviews as a popular option. The question of whether virtual interviews are more successful than in-person ones is investigated in this study. This study looks at a number of factors in an effort to fully analyse the benefits and drawbacks covering the hiring process, candidate experience, financial effectiveness, and environmental effect. The findings of this research offer valuable insights for companies seeking to enhance their recruitment processes and select the most appropriate interviewing method for their goals. By examining the unique benefits and drawbacks of both in-person and virtual interviews, this study adds to a thorough understanding of the advantages of each format and ultimately helps businesses make informed decisions about their interviewing strategies.

East & Zatkin (2023) described in their paper that social class perceptions have an effect on several organisational dimensions. The use of virtual job recruiting and selection has expanded in recent years due to changes in the interview process. This study looked at how perceived social class affected the likelihood of employment in a virtual interview. In particular, my hypothesis was that applicants who are seen as belonging to a higher social class will be considered more qualified than those who are seen as belonging to a lower social class. Two experimental social class alterations were used in conjunction

with a vignette methodology to gather data through Qualtrics. A convenience sample was gathered, and 77 responses in total were examined. The results show that there was no relationship between perceived social class and employment likelihood using independent samples t-tests. The study's conclusions can be applied to enhance knowledge of virtual interviews and prejudices in the hiring process, even though the results did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between perceived social class and hire ability.

Lobe, Morgan, & Hoffman (2022) explained in their paper that owing to the growing prevalence of online qualitative interviewing techniques, we offer a methodically structured assessment of their benefits and drawbacks when compared to conventional face-to-face interviews. Specifically, we outline the methods used for both in-person and videoconference individual, dyadic, and focus group interviews. This generates five distinct domains for comparison: finance and logistics, recruitment, ethics, research design, and moderating and interviewing. Each section is concluded with a series of recommendations, and future directions for online interviewing research are also discussed.

Johnson, Scheitle, & Ecklund (2021) described in their paper that qualitative interviews conducted in-person are typically regarded as the gold standard, with other methods being inferior. Nonetheless, there have been claims that interviews carried out remotely by phone or videoconference, for example, should be regarded as on par with or even better than interviews conducted in person. The tiny sample size employed to compare modes has constrained evaluations of these assertions. We examine more than 300 interviews that were done over the phone, via Skype, and in person. According to our findings, in-person interviews are clearly superior to the other two modes when it comes to producing conversation turns, transcripts with plenty of words, and field notes. However, they are not substantially different in terms of interview length in minutes, subjective interviewer evaluations, or substantive coding. We arrive to the conclusion that, while remote interviews may be beneficial or required in some circumstances, the depth of information gathered from them is probably compromised.

Jenne & Myers (2019) explained in their papers that online video interviews are becoming more widely recognised by qualitative researchers as a dependable tool; yet, many still have concerns regarding rapport and data quality. We assess the interview venues in terms of rapport, suitability for sensitive themes, interview time, and scheduling concerns noted by previous research, drawing on two distinct interview projects done in private via Skype, public via in-person settings, and private in-person settings. The results of an analytical comparison of these two data corpuses indicate that, in stark contrast to earlier research, (1) private interviews conducted in-person or over Skype result in a greater sharing of extremely personal experiences, and there is little difference in this exceptional disclosure between the two types of interviews; (2) conducting private interviews over Skype does not result in an inappropriate reduction or excess of rapport.

Shapka, Domene, Khan & Yang (2016) described in their study, that quantity and quality of data from in-person and online interviews with teenagers were compared. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirty participants in grades 10 through 12, either in-person or via instant messaging. The findings showed that online interviews produced fewer words, took longer to complete, and required more rapport- building; however, there were no significant differences in the formality or degree of self-disclosure, the quantity and type of themes that emerged, or the depth to which the themes were discussed. The results indicate that the mode of data collection (online versus face-to-face) has no effect on the quality of the data, even though it takes longer and produces fewer words.

Sears, Zhang, Wiesner, Hackett & Yuan (2013) explained in their paper that the authors hope to investigate how videoconferencing (VC) technology affects interviewer perceptions and applicant responses during the most popular method of job selection— the employment interview. Their research is based on ideas of procedural justice and media richness. Face-to-face (FTF) interviews and simulated venture capital (VC) rounds involved MBA students. Interviewer attributes and applicant opinions on procedural justice were gathered. The interviewers rated the applicant's affective response, perceived competence, overall interview performance, and ultimate hiring recommendation.

Candidate believed that there was less of an opportunity to perform in VC interviews, and that there was less information available for selection. Additionally, they felt that VC interviews were less about the job than FTF interviews, and in VC interviews, they gave their interviewer considerably lower marks for personability, reliability, competence, and physical appearance. Lastly, candidates who participated in venture capital interviews scored lower on affect (likeability) and in the interview process, and they were also less likely to be recommended for the job. according to the authors' findings.

Chapman, Uggerslev & Webster (2003) explained in their paper that this field study looked at how applicants (N = 802) felt about in-person interviews vs technology- mediated ones for 346 organisations. Interviews conducted in person were viewed as more equitable and resulted in higher intents to take the job than interviews conducted over the phone or through video conferencing. Face-to-face and telephone interviews yielded greater perceived interview outcomes than videoconferencing. The association between the medium of the interview and opinions of fairness was mitigated by self- monitoring. In particular, this association was (a) not significant for video conferencing interviews, (b) negative for telephone interviews, (c)positive for in-person interviews. Furthermore, the association between the perceived fairness of the interview and the quantity of offers an applicant received was controlled. In face-to-face interviews, the number of offers and perceived fairness had a positive correlation, but in technology- mediated interviews, it had a negative correlation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective of the study
Major objectives of the research work include:

- To compare interviewees' preferences and experiences between virtual and in- person interview formats.
- To identify the perceived advantages and challenges of virtual and in-person interviews from the interviewee perspective.

Type of Research: This study employs a **Quantitative Research** methodology, involving the collection and analysis of numerical data from a sample of interviewees to compare their preferences regarding virtual and in-person interviews.

Sources of data collection:The study is a **Cross sectional** study, where data is collected at a single point in time to compare interviewee perceptions of virtual and in-person interviews. This design allows for the examination of differences between the two interview formats based on the responses of participants.

SAMPLE SIZE: The sample consist of 120 respondents both male and female.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE: The sampling technique for this study used is **Convenience Sampling technique** which is a type of Non probability sampling technique.

FINDINGS

- Majority of respondents are aged 30 years and below comprising 73% of the total sample.
- Gender distribution is relatively balanced, with males slightly outnumbering females.
- Respondents' educational qualifications are evenly split between Bachelor's and Master's degrees, with each comprising 45% of the sample.
- Employment status among respondents is diverse, with the majority being employed full-time, followed by students.

- All respondents have prior experience with interviews, with the majority experiencing both virtual and in-person formats.

- Opinions vary regarding the convenience of virtual interviews, with a significant majority of respondents, 56.7% in total agreeing that they are more convenient than in-person interviews. Conversely, 19% of respondents disagree with this statement.

- A majority of respondents, accounting for 66.7%, believe that in-person interviews allow for better personal connection with interviewers. Conversely, 13% of respondents disagree with this statement.

- Virtual interviews are perceived as more cost-effective by a majority of respondents, with 76.6% in total either agreeing or strongly agreeing.

- In-person interviews are believed to facilitate better assessment of non-verbal cues by a majority of respondents, with 73.3% in total either strongly agreeing or agreeing. while only a minority disagree with 6.7%

- Opinions on whether virtual interviews enhance engagement and interaction with interviewers vary. The majority either disagree or remain neutral (73.2%), while only a minority agree or strongly agree (26.7%).

- The majority of respondents, comprising 63.3%, either agree or strongly agree that in-person interviews offer a more authentic representation of interviewees, while only a minority disagree with 12.5%.

- The majority of respondents, comprising 76.6%, either agree or strongly agree that virtual interviews are more prone to technical difficulties and connectivity issues. While a smaller proportion, constituting 5%, disagree with it.

- Respondents' opinions on interview settings are divided, with approximately 35.8% finding virtual interviews comfortable, 35.8% finding in-person interviews comfortable, and 28.3% finding both interview formats comfortable.

- The preference for in-person interviews is strong, with 75% of respondents believing they offer a better chance to experience the company's work environment and culture.

- Nervousness during interviews is prevalent among respondents, with 43.3% feeling nervous during both virtual and in-person interviews, while 26.7% experienced nervousness only during in-person interviews, and 7.5% solely during virtual interviews.

- Challenges during virtual interviews include technical issues/connectivity problems, lack of personal connection with the interviewer, difficulty showcasing non-verbal cues, and distractions in the environment.

- Challenges during in-person interviews include travel logistics, feelings of nervousness or anxiety, pressure to perform, and difficulty interpreting non- verbal cues from interviewers.

- Preference for interview format is relatively balanced among respondents, with 46.7% preferring in-person interviews, 45% preferring virtual interviews, and 8.3% expressing no specific preference. This suggests a diversity of views regarding interview formats.

- Reasons for preference include convenience, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness for virtual interviews, and better personal connection and ease of expression for in-person interviews.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study aimed to explore and compare contemporary virtual interviewing practices with traditional in-person interviews from the perspective of interviewees. As the dynamics of work environments evolve, fuelled by technological advancements and shifting societal norms, the traditional in-person interview faces a formidable challenger: the virtual interview. One of the key findings of this study is the relatively balanced preference for interview formats among respondents, with 46.7% preferring in-person interviews, 45% preferring virtual interviews, and 8.3% expressing no specific preference. The study has shed light on the perceived advantages and challenges associated with each interview format. Virtual interviews have been lauded for their convenience and cost-effectiveness, offering a viable solution for overcoming geographical barriers and streamlining the interview process. Conversely, in-person interviews are valued for their ability to foster personal connections and provide an authentic representation of interviewees, accompanied by logistical challenges and heightened nervousness.

These findings underscore the importance of understanding interviewee preferences for recruiters and employers. Tailoring interview formats to align with interviewee needs and expectations, whether through flexible scheduling, technical support for virtual interviews, or cultivating welcoming in-person interactions, can significantly enhance the interviewee experience. ultimately improving the effectiveness and fairness of the recruitment process in evolving employment landscape.

In summary, the insights gained from this study contribute to the ongoing conversation surrounding recruitment practices, highlighting the importance of adaptability, inclusivity, and continuous improvement in meeting the evolving needs of interviewees in today's dynamic job market. It is essential for organizations to continually evaluate and improve their interview processes based on feedback and emerging trends in recruitment practices. By embracing innovation and leveraging technology, organizations can enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and overall quality of the interview experience for all stakeholders involved.

SUGGESTIONS

- Integrate a hybrid approach to the recruitment process, utilizing virtual interviews for initial screenings and in-person interviews for technical assessments and HR rounds. This balances efficiency with thorough evaluation, optimizing the recruitment experience for both interviewees and interviewers.

- Offer interviewees the option to choose between virtual and in-person interviews to accommodate their preferences and needs.

- Develop standardized assessment criteria for both virtual and in-person interviews to ensure consistency and fairness in the evaluation process. This can help mitigate biases and ensure that all are evaluated based on the same criteria.

- Offer flexible interview scheduling options to accommodate interviewees' availability. This includes hybrid interview formats and alternative time slots, such as evenings or weekends.

- Implement training and resources for interviewers to effectively conduct both types of interviews, ensuring a seamless transition between formats based on interviewee preferences.

- Provide technical support and resources to address challenges related to connectivity and technical issues encountered during virtual interviews. This can improve the overall experience and perception of virtual interviews.

- Provide resources and guidance to interviewees experiencing nervousness during interviews. This includes tips for setting up a professional virtual interview space and offering mock interview sessions.
- Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of both virtual and in-person interview processes, gathering feedback from both interviewees and interviewers. Use this feedback to identify areas for improvement and implement changes accordingly.
- Provide training for interviewers to enhance their skills in conducting virtual interviews effectively. Focus areas include establishing rapport, interpreting non-verbal cues, and managing the digital interview environment.

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APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions   Responses 120   Settings

Exploring Interviewee Preferences: A Comparative Analysis of Virtual and In-Person Interviews.

B *I* U ⊖ X̶

Hello! My name is Pragya Mishra, a student at Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Technology and I'm conducting a research study on interviewee perspectives. This questionnaire is part of my project, which aims to gain insights into the experiences, preferences and perceptions of individuals regarding in virtual and in-person interviews.

Please take a few moments to answer the following questions honestly. Your responses are confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Thank you for your participation!

Name *

Short answer text

Age *

1. 25 and below

2. 26-30

3. 31-35

4. 36-40

5. 41 and above

Gender *

1. Male

2. Female

3. Other

Educational background *

1. Bachelor's Degree

2. Master's Degree

3. Doctorate or Professional Degree

4. Other

Employment Status *

1. Employed Full-time

2. Employed Part-time

3. Unemployed, actively seeking employment

4. Unemployed, not currently seeking employment

5. Student

6. Other

Have you participated in interviews before? *

1. Yes

2. No

If yes, which interview format do you have experience with? *

1. Virtual

2. In-person

3. Both

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding virtual and in-person interviews:

Description (optional)

Virtual interviews offer greater convenience compared to in-person interviews. *

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neutral

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

In-person interviews allow for better personal connection with interviewers. *

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neutral

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

Virtual interviews are more cost-effective than in-person interviews. *

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neutral

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

In-person interviews facilitate better assessment of non-verbal cues. *

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neutral

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

Virtual interviews enhance engagement and interaction with interviewers.

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neutral

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

In-person interviews provide a more authentic representation of interviewee.

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neutral

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

Virtual interviews are more prone to technical difficulties and connectivity issues.

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neutral

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

Which interview format, in your opinion, provides a more comfortable setting for interviewee?

1. Virtual interviews

2. In-person interviews

3. Both

Which interview format offers a better chance to experience the company's work environment and culture? *

1. Virtual interviews

2. In-person interviews

3. Both

In your experience, do you typically feel nervous during interviews? *

1. Yes, during virtual interviews

2. Yes, during in-person interviews

3. Yes, during both virtual and in-person interviews

4. No, I don't feel nervous in interviews

What are the main challenges you face during virtual interviews? (Select all that apply) *

☐ Technical issues or connectivity problems

☐ Lack of personal connection with interviewer

☐ Difficulty showcasing non-verbal cues

☐ Distractions in the environment

☐ None

☐ Other

What are the main challenges you face during in-person interviews? (Select all that apply) *

☐ Travel logistics

☐ Nervousness or anxiety

☐ Difficulty interpreting non-verbal cues from interviewers

☐ Pressure to perform in a face-to-face setting

☐ Inconvenience of scheduling and commuting

☐ None

☐ Other

Considering your past experiences and preferences, which format would you prefer for future job interviews? *

1. Virtual

2. In-person

3. No preference

What are the main reasons for your preference? (Select all that apply) *

☐ Convenience

☐ Flexibility

☐ Cost-effectiveness

☐ Reduced Travel Time

☐ Ease to express

☐ Technical difficulties

☐ Better Personal Connection & Rapport Building

☐ Assessment of Non-verbal Cues and Body language

☐ Enhanced Engagement and Interaction

☐ Other