



Beyond Face-to-Face: Delving into Candidates' Perspectives on Virtual Interviews

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Abstract

In recent years, the traditional face-to-face interview has undergone a significant transformation due to technological advancements and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual interviews have emerged as a viable alternative, enabling remote interactions between candidates and employers. However, little is known about candidates or job applicants' reactions to this new mode of interview. In this context, the present research aims to delve into the shifting paradigms of interviews, explore the perspective of candidates towards the virtual mode of interview, identify patterns of motivation, and identify challenges faced in virtual interviews. Through an extensive survey and in-depth interviews, a diverse range of candidates from various industries are asked to reflect on their virtual interview encounters. The findings highlight a nuanced understanding of the candidates' experience, revealing both positive and negative aspects. The insights from this research provide valuable guidance for employers and interviewers seeking to optimise virtual interviews. Understanding candidates' perspectives and addressing their concerns can help organisations improve the virtual interview process, foster a positive candidate experience, and enhance recruitment outcomes.

Keywords – challenges, face-to-face interview, motivation, perspective, remote, shifting paradigms, technological advancements, virtual interview.

INTRODUCTION

In the fast-paced digital era we live in today, technology continues to revolutionise various aspects of our lives. The world of recruitment and job interviews is no exception, as virtual interviews have emerged as a prominent alternative to traditional face-to-face meetings. With

the rapid advancement of communication tools and platforms, employers and candidates alike are exploring the benefits and challenges of conducting interviews in a virtual setting. A growing army of recruiters is likewise turning to videoconferencing solutions to screen and interview candidates, with many now making it a key part of the hiring process. Digital communications tools such as artificially intelligent job outreach programmes and text messaging are also increasingly being implemented as a means of connecting with candidates. The Gartner HR Survey shows 86% of organisations are conducting Virtual Interviews to hire candidates. LinkedIn, Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft, PwC, Intel, and others are now relying on virtual interviews in lieu of face-to-face interviews.

A virtual interview is an interview that takes place remotely, sometimes over the phone or system, but often using technology like video conferencing and other online communication platforms. Virtual interviewing (VI) is an umbrella term that refers to a variety of computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools used to screen, recruit, and hire employees in geographically dispersed locations (**Evuleocha, 2002**). The rise of virtual interviews can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, globalisation and remote work opportunities have transformed the way organisations recruit talent. Companies now have the ability to tap into a global talent pool without the limitations of physical proximity. Virtual interviews eliminate the need for travel expenses and logistical challenges, making them more efficient and cost-effective for both employers and candidates. Secondly, with growing awareness of environmental sustainability, virtual interviews are preferred as they contribute to reducing carbon emissions associated with travel. By eliminating the need for physical transportation, they help minimise the ecological footprint of recruitment processes. Virtual interviews offer unique opportunities for employers to assess candidates' skills and suitability for remote work. It allows them to evaluate candidates' digital literacy, communication skills, and ability to adapt to virtual collaboration tools—a valuable consideration in today's increasingly remote and hybrid work environments. Additionally, the widespread adoption of virtual interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the need for organisations to adapt their recruitment processes. With travel restrictions and social distancing measures in place, companies had to quickly pivot to remote hiring practises to ensure business continuity. Amazon cancelled most in-person interviews and set up virtual interview portals for candidates to connect with recruiters via Amazon Chime, the company's videoconferencing software. Google conducted interviews for hiring candidates using Google Hangouts or the videoconferencing service BlueJeans. LinkedIn conducted their interviews virtually via

BlueJeans. While many of the platforms being used to facilitate hiring have been available for years, their use has increased tremendously in recent months.

Despite the growing prevalence of virtual interviews, there are unique challenges and considerations associated with this mode of interviewing. The absence of face-to-face interaction and the reliance on technology introduce novel dynamics that impact candidates' experiences and perceptions. The transition from traditional face-to-face interviews to virtual interviews represents a significant shift in the recruitment landscape. With the above context, this research is titled "*Beyond Face-to-Face: Delving into Candidates' Perspectives on Virtual Interviews.*" A comprehensive exploration of candidates' perspectives on virtual interviews and delving into the shifting paradigms of interviews by identifying patterns of motivation and challenges and obstacles faced in virtual interviews are the objectives of this research. By gaining insights into candidates' experiences, organisations can adapt their practises to maximise the benefits of virtual interviews while addressing the associated complexities.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

Evuleocha (2002) discussed the employment interview and its role in virtual recruiting, virtual interviewing within the framework of computer-mediated communication (CMC), organisational applications of virtual recruiting systems, virtual organisational communication and how its attributes lend themselves to implementing virtual interviewing in organisation and whether or not virtual interviews will replace traditional interviews. The study reports that Virtual interviews will inevitably play a prominent role in human resource management activities. Virtual Interviews help HR practitioners locate and attract qualified applicants in a competitive labour market. The paper has argued that Internet-based recruiting will grow. By expanding HR procedures to include the Internet, recruiters can benefit from an inexpensive, convenient, and innovative process to attract potential employees. Employers can minimise the risk of discrimination claims by supplementing electronic recruiting with more traditional sources. Their study inferred that compared to face-to-face communication, virtual communication appears to increase the overall amount of communication between or among communicating parties; however, virtual interviews are not a substitute for face-to-face interviews. **Chapman et al. (2003)** argue that the number of job offers is positively correlated with face-to-face interviews.

The Virtual interview format offers several benefits, including reduced stress and improved time efficiency related to travel, coordination of time off for multiple interviews during a

busy schedule, and substantial cost savings related to flights and travel accommodations, which are invaluable as student debt continues to increase (**Melendez et al., 2012; Pasadhika et al., 2012; Watson et al., 2017**). Another silver lining of online interviews lies in the potential immediacy of transcription during the interview analysis period. Online software such as Zoom can automatically record and transcribe the whole online interview. Even though transcribing carefully can be an excellent way to rethink and develop new ideas, it is a time-consuming and costly process. The increase in smartphone use and changing demographics of the Indian people (**Dulloo, 2018**) come in favour of virtual and digital interviews supporting the government's Digital India Programme. Cost is found to be an important consideration for the applicants, due to which the virtual mode of interviews is more preferred **Watson et al. (2017)**. Another research study suggested that interviewees of younger age and higher education levels prefer video interviews as compared to older people with mediocre education (**Udeagu, 2017**). According to recent research (**Suen et al., 2019**), technology-mediated interviews can help employers and job candidates save time and money. However, job aspirants still prefer in-person interviews over technology-mediated interviews despite their substantial benefits in order to demonstrate their social skills and feel less intimidated by hiring managers (**Blacksmith et al., 2016**). Highly automated hiring processes might be regarded unfavourably for the majority of service positions where employees must often contact consumers at work due to a lack of social presence and fairness (**Langer et al., 2019**). Hospitality managers favoured video interviewing for convenience and cost savings but found it disadvantageous due to the lack of in-person contact and potential technological malfunctions (**Guchait et al., 2014**).

The increased number of smartphones during the last several years (**Dulloo, 2018**) and the availability of low-cost, high-speed PCs and internet connections (**Dulloo, 2018; Dulloo, 2021**) have made it easier and more convenient for candidates to connect to virtual platforms 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. **Pavlina (2020)** assessed the virtual onboarding experiences of new hires at companies in the technology industry. The study explored the current practises of technology companies for virtually onboarding new hires and the self-identified needs of recent new hires in this industry. The study found that tech companies focus most heavily on formal orientation sessions, one-on-one meetings, and group meetings when virtually onboarding new hires. The study also identified key themes around what new hires find most important during virtual onboarding: Logistics is an important consideration during the new hire onboarding experience; new hires want to connect with others, both on

the individual and community levels; and new hires want their employers to be empathetic towards them. **Jones et al. (2020)** featured important steps to guide applicants to optimal performance on virtual interviews, a format that may not be familiar to many prospective trainees. Their study reported concerns and perceptions of candidates regarding virtual fellowship interviews than in-person interviews. **Seifi et al. (2020)** studied the perceptions of medical students and residents on the use of virtual interviews for residency applications in lieu of face-to-face interviews. Results highlight that face-to-face interviews are preferred by both medical students and residents compared to virtual interview services in normal circumstances. However, both groups agree that programmes should offer the option of having virtual interviews as an available choice. Distance to an interview location and the type of medical school were the factors that had a significant impact on perceptions of using virtual interviews.

Hiring processes changed drastically over the past two years as the pandemic forced interviews and candidate assessments to occur remotely. **Davis et al. (2020)** demonstrate that even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual interview strategies had shown promise. It also states that virtual interviews may not completely replace in-person interactions, but they may offer distinct advantages, including lower cost, reduced travel, and scheduling flexibility. Disadvantages are also present, such as the loss of meaningful casual interactions and the introduction of potential biases. The video format may introduce novel information about the applicant from glimpses of their environment, including religious symbols, evidence of family structure, or the physical state of their environment, which may reflect socioeconomic status. In addition, novel biases may occur, such as bias against applicants who appear to struggle with technology or prefer one format over another. **Robinson et al. (2021)** studied the beliefs of most applicants and programme directors in the CT fellowship programme towards the future prospects of virtual interviews. Seventy-nine percent of programme directors and 55% of applicants either agreed or strongly agreed that virtual interviews should be offered in the future. The majority of the participants did not think that virtual interviews should be a complete replacement for in-person interviews. Twenty-five percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that virtual interviews negatively impacted their chance of matching one of their top applicants or programmes. **Dulloo (2022)** remarked that Information Technology has made services easily accessible through the use of cost-effective technologies. The Harvard Business Review reports that nine out of ten companies currently use artificial intelligence (AI) in job interviews (**Jaser et al., 2022**).

Technologies based on artificial intelligence (AI) have become a potent force for changing user interactions and experiences, resulting in substantial changes (Sayee Darshini and Dulloo, 2023). Advancements in technology have resulted in significant changes in the field of human resources, Brindha and Dulloo (2023) emphasised the use of predictive HR analytics by organisations to improve hiring decisions. Arun and Dulloo (2023) claim that "digital disruption," triggered by rapid shifts in technology, has fundamentally changed how firms function and build value. All the recent technological advancements offer extraordinary promise for efficiency, ease, and higher levels of satisfaction (Muthukkumar and Dulloo, 2023; Santosh and Dulloo, 2023; Suthakaran and Dulloo, 2023).

II. RESEARCH GAP

There is a dearth of evidence supporting the efficacy of Virtual Interviews. Since virtual interviews are incorporated to screen job applicants, it is important to examine candidates' perspectives towards this new digital mode of interview. There is an opportunity for the researcher to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of Virtual Interviews. This study will fill the gap in the literature by studying the general feelings of candidates towards the virtual mode of interview and by identifying the patterns of motivation and challenges faced by candidates in the virtual mode of interview.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

As virtual interviews are set to become the new norm, it is essential for both scholars and practitioners to examine the candidates' perspectives from various domains towards this new digital mode of interview. Thus, the objectives framed for the research are:

RQ1: What is the perspective of the candidates towards the virtual mode of interview?

RQ2: What are the patterns of motivation towards the virtual mode of interview?

RQ3: What are the patterns of challenges / obstacles faced in the virtual mode of interview?

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is descriptive research. The sampling technique used is convenience sampling. A total of 160 respondents are included in the sample. Both primary and secondary data are used for the collection of data in this study. Primary data is collected using questionnaires, and secondary data is collected through journals, publications, magazines, newspapers, etc. Through an extensive survey and in-depth interviews, a diverse range of candidates from various industries are asked to reflect on their virtual interview encounters. The data collected is analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' is used to collect responses from candidates towards virtual interviews.

V. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

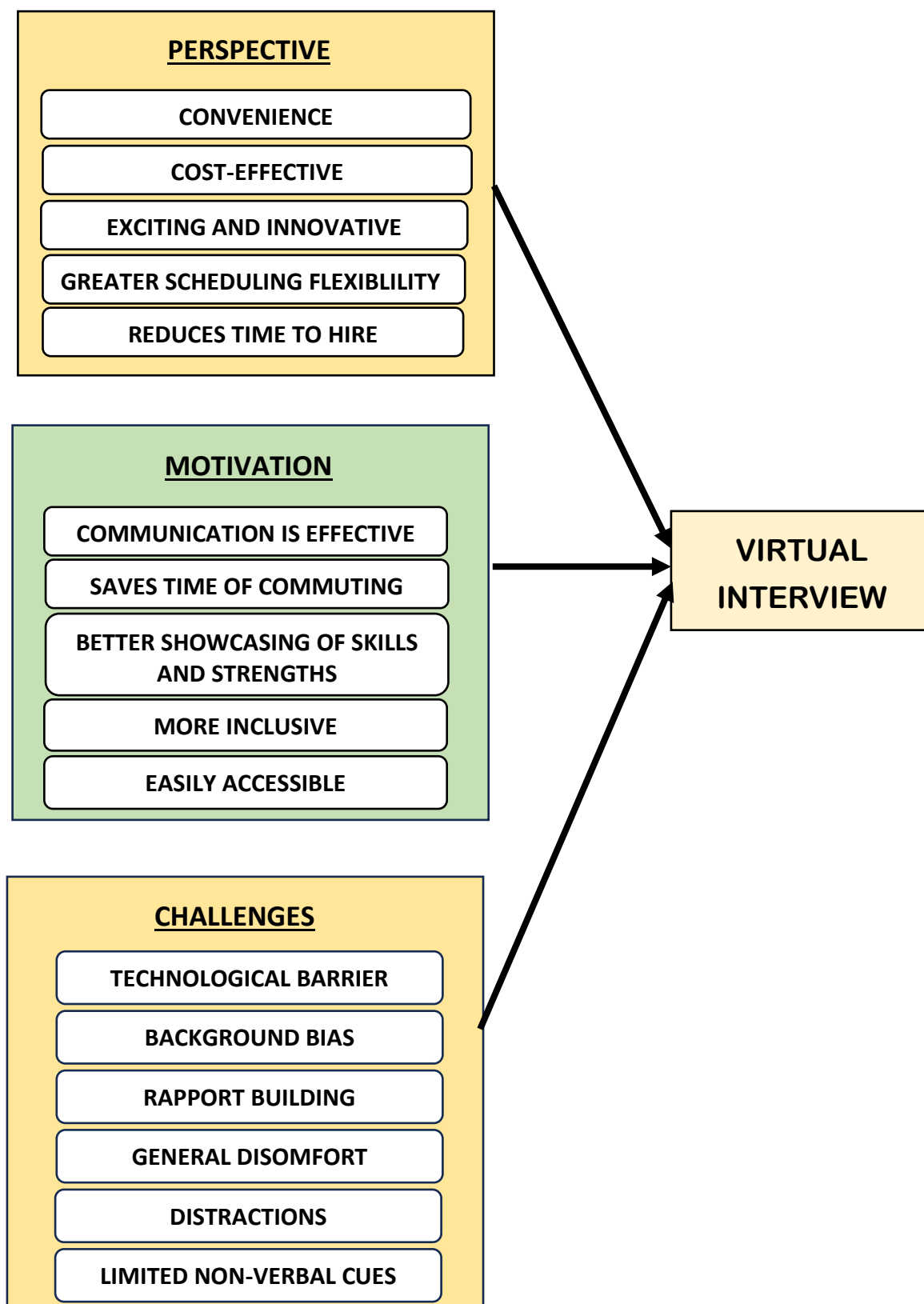


Fig. 1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In a LinkedIn survey, 81% of talent executives and recruiters concur that virtual recruiting will continue post-COVID-19. In contrast, 70% of respondents believe virtual hiring will replace traditional hiring practises and become the new standard of hiring. For the purpose of this study, a total of 160 respondents from across India have been used to collect data. Some of the key findings from the data analysis are listed below:

1) AGE OF RESPONDENTS

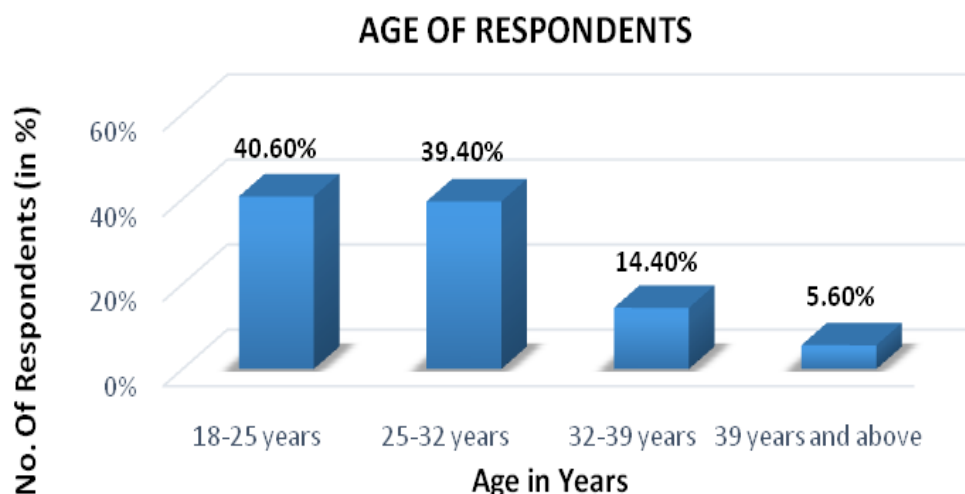


Fig. 2 Age of Respondents

From the Fig. 2, it can be inferred that 40.6% of the respondents fall in the age category of 18-25 years, 39.4% of the respondents fall in age category of 25-32 years, 14.4% in 32-39 years age group and only 5.6% are 39 years and above.

2) GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

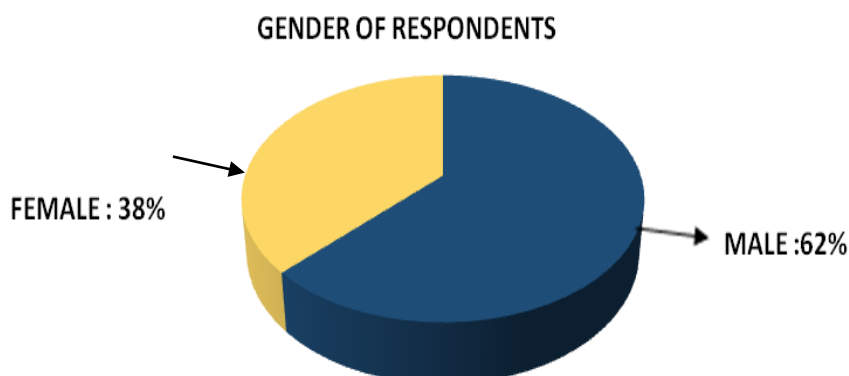


Fig. 3 Gender of Respondents

From the Fig. 3, it can be inferred that Majority if the respondents are male i.e., 62 % and only 38% are female respondents.

3) INTERVIEW TYPE PREFERRED

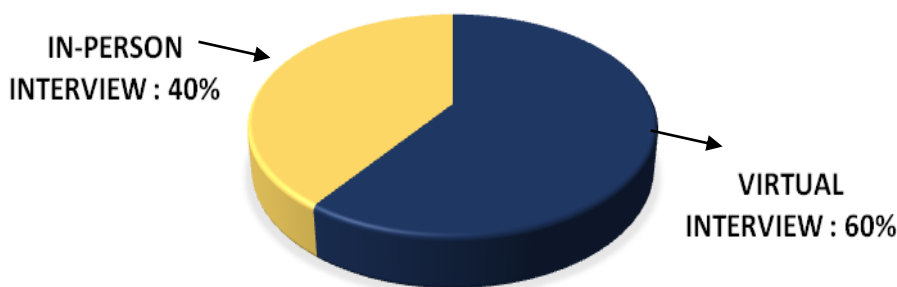


Fig. 4 Interview Type preferred

From the Fig. 4, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents prefer virtual interview as compared to face-to-face interview, i.e., 60% and only 40% of the respondents' face-to-face interviews.

EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

What are the general feelings of candidates towards Virtual interviews, and what are the patterns of reasons for desiring Virtual Interviews and the challenges faced in virtual Mode ?

With a view to studying the general feelings of candidates towards Virtual Interviews and identifying the patterns of reasons for desiring Virtual interviews and the challenges faced in Interviews through virtual Mode by respondents, the responses of the respondents have been inspected with the assistance of a factor analysis approach using the principal component technique with varimax rotation. At first, tests to check the sufficiency of the data for the application of factor analysis were conducted. The KMO measure of examining sampling adequacy was found to be 0.893, well above the prescribed 0.5 level (table 1). The total variable explained is given in Table 2 below. Table 2 below illustrates three rotated factor which together explains 68.738% of the total variance. The results of the rotated component matrix are in Table 3. Principal Component Analysis under the varimax rotation method in Table 3 shows that three factors may be extracted.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.893
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	963.049
	Df	45
	Sig.	0.000

Table 2. Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.290	40.502	40.502	7.290	40.502	40.502
2	2.137	11.874	52.376	2.137	11.874	52.376
3	1.309	7.273	68.738	1.309	7.273	68.738

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix

Items	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3
	Perspective towards Virtual Interviews	Motivation	Challenges
P2	0.818		
P4	0.805		
P10	0.791		
P5	0.783		
P1	0.756		
P7	0.700		
P6	0.685		
P3	0.671		
P8	0.666		
P9	0.650		
M4		0.869	
M6		0.827	
M2		0.822	
M3		0.805	
M5		0.765	
M1		0.625	
M7		0.600	
C4			0.815
C2			0.796
C5			0.791
C1			0.785

C6			0.758
C3			0.710
C7			0.622

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

FACTOR 1: PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Every day, more and more companies are conducting virtual interviews to connect with potential candidates. In this study, Perspective towards virtual interviews is one of the factors explored to study the general feelings of respondents towards Virtual Interviews. *Perception/perspective is defined as an intellectual process by which individuals select, organise, and interpret the input from their senses to give meaning and order to the world around them.*

This factor is loaded with P1 to P10. It accounted for a reliability of 91.2%. P2 has the highest factor loading of 0.818, which states "*Virtual interviews are more convenient than face-to-face interviews*" and is highly valued by the respondents among all other statements. It is followed by P4 and P10 with factor loadings of 0.805 and 0.791, respectively, which state "*Virtual Interviews are cost-effective*" and "*Virtual interviews are exciting and innovative*". It is further followed by P5 and P1 with factor loadings of 0.783 and 0.756 respectively, with statements like "*Virtual interviews provide a flexible schedule*" and "*Virtual interviews result in a faster hiring process*". It can be seen from Table 3 that all the factor loadings are above 0.5, which shows all 10 items highly influence and contribute to the overall factor "**Perspective towards Virtual Interview**". This factor accounted for reliability at 85.3%.

FACTOR 2 : MOTIVATION

In this Study, one of the factors explored is Motivation. This factor is loaded with Items M1 to M7. Candidates are Motivated towards Virtual interviews because of the obvious advantages. *Motivation can be defined as needs, desires, or drives within an individual.* Item M4 has the highest factor loading of 0.869, which states that "*Communication is more effective*" in a virtual setting with the interviewer as candidates feel less stressed and more confident than in face-to-face interviews. It is followed by Item M6 with a factor loading of 0.827, which states that virtual interviews "*Save time of commuting*" and that if the interviewee is located far away from the place of interview, virtual interviews are beneficial. It is followed by Items M2, M3 and M5 with factor loadings of 0.822, 0.805, and 0.765

respectively. Item M2 states "**Better Showcasing of skills and strengths**" in virtual interviews, Item M3 states "**Virtual interviews are more inclusive as Bias reduces between the candidates and the interviewer,** " and Item M5 states "**Virtual interviews allow candidates from far-flung areas to appear for interviews with their dream companies**". All the factor loadings from M1 to M7 are above 0.5, which shows all seven items highly influence and contribute to the overall factor "**Motivation**". This factor accounted for reliability 80.6%.

FACTOR 3 : CHALLENGES

Virtual recruitment does have challenges and obstacles associated with it. A clear pattern of challenges is explored in factor analysis, which is the third factor explored in the study. This factor is loaded with Items C1 to C7. Item C4 has the highest factor loading of 0.815. "**The better the technology, the more effective it will be**". However, many people are not familiar with the technological platforms being used or may face hardware or software challenges like connectivity issues, webcam issues, audio issues, etc. during the virtual mode of interviews, and thus the "**Technological barrier**" is considered a major challenge by the respondents. It is followed by Item C2, "**Background bias**", which is another challenge with factor loading of 0.796 whereby interviewees can be judged on the basis of the background in the home like socioeconomic status, presence of children, personal lifestyle choices, etc. during the virtual mode of interview. And it is followed by Item C5, which has a factor loading of 0.791 and states there is also a "**Challenge of developing a rapport with the interviewer**" due to a time limit in which making a positive impression can be challenging. It is followed by items C1 with a factor loading of 0.785 and C6 with a factor loading of 0.758, each of which states "**General discomfort or discomfort on online calls or videos**" and "**Distractions like a noisy background**", which makes it simpler to become disoriented during the online interview. It is followed by "**limited non-verbal cues**". Candidates may find it difficult to gauge the interviewer's reactions, body language, or subtle cues that are easier to perceive in face-to-face interactions. All the factor loadings from Items C1 to C7 are above 0.5 for the factor "**Challenges**", so all the items were retained. This factor accounted for 88% of reliability.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored the general feelings of respondents towards Virtual Interviews. The study also explored the patterns of reasons for desiring a virtual interview and the

challenges and obstacles faced in interviews in virtual Mode by candidates and job applicants. The results indicate that perceptions towards virtual interviews are positive, with high factor loadings for convenience, cost effectiveness, excitement, innovativeness, flexibility and reduces time to hire. The study also shows that effectiveness of communication, time-saving features of remote interviews, better Showcasing of skills and strengths, more inclusivity, elimination of stress and easy accessibility motivate candidates for the virtual mode of interview, which is absent in face-to-face interviews. Also revealed are the challenges faced by candidates, which are mainly technological limitations, background bias, general discomfort or distractions, insufficient time for rapport building, general discomfort during virtual interviews. Without human presence, it's hard to build trust. In addition, online interviews cannot convey the subtleties of eye contact or body language, which limits a more multi-faceted and nuanced understanding of the interviewees' words.

Virtual interviews are likely to become the norm in the near future and have an impact on all interviews moving forward. A face-to-face interview is always preferred over a virtual one. A virtual interview is not a replacement for a face-to-face interview. However, there are situations when benefits outweigh drawbacks. With the use of technology, time and money are saved, stress is reduced, skills and strengths are better highlighted, communication is more effective, bias is lessened, and several locations can interact simultaneously despite significant time zones. Companies are delaying campus recruitment drives in favour of cutting-edge technological alternatives like virtual interviews and online tests to find the right candidates. Therefore, it will be crucial for candidates to begin preparing for the new digital means to appear for interviews, as it is slated to become the future method of employment.

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