

# Recruitment, selection, and assessment: Are the CV and interview still worth using?

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Over the last decades, research on employee recruitment has increased dramatically. However, it remained that the two most popular instruments utilised in employee recruitment, selection, and assessment are the curriculum vitae (CV) and interview. Despite the unwavering popularity of these instruments, there has been much debate regarding their ability to reliably predict job performance. Two major trends in organisational psychology are to either 'fit the man to the job' (FMJ) or to 'fit the job to the man' (FJM), both aim to promote the recruitment of candidates who will give optimal performance in the organisations to which they apply to. This article seeks to analyse the literature in employee recruitment, selection, and assessment in order to assess whether the popular combination of unstructured interviews and CVs are a reliable combination in selecting employees in the labour market.

**Keywords:** employee selection; job interview; organisational psychology; recruitment policy; work performance

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The two most popular instruments utilised in employee recruitment, selection, and assessment are the curriculum vitae (CV) and interview (Zibarras & Woods, 2010). CVs (one type of 'biodata') are often used by employers and recruiters to select or promote employees into new positions in an organisation. Despite their popularity with employers, CVs have little research evidence supporting their use in recruitment, selection, and assessment procedures. The most obvious advantage of the CV is that it gives an employer instant access to a candidate's education level, qualifications, experiences, and overall skill set, which may be pertinent to the job being applied for (McEnitre & Green-Shortridge, 2011). One study by Wolgast, Bäckström, and Björklund (2017) reported that the recruitment of better candidates was influenced by the way in which CVs were assessed – participants who used structured sets of criteria when assessing CVs selected candidates that were better for an opening than participants not using similar criteria. However, even when adding structure to CV selection, the CV is still considered to be an unreliable instrument to recruit candidates. Estimates reveal that up to half of candidates exaggerate on their CVs (George & Marett, 2004), which in turn can result in financial implications for an organisation if a new employee is not performing as well as the employer would have expected.

Further to the general criticisms of the CV, discrimination is another conspicuous element that has been reported to have an impact on CV selection. There is a growing body of experimental and field evidence that supports the notion that minority groups (ethnicity, gender, sex, sexuality, religion, etc.) face 'penalties' when attempting to access the labour market when these protected characteristics are signalled on their CVs. In a study conducted in Sweden, Rooth (2010) has employers select from different CVs – the manipulation was if the candidate had a Swedish-sounding name of an Arab-Muslim-sounding name. Indeed, Rooth found that those individual employers with negative implicit attitudes towards Muslims (measured by using an Implicit Association Test; see Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003) were significantly less likely to make an offer to the candidates with the Arab-Muslim-sounding names. This effect was still prominent even though all of the CVs were controlled for in terms of their quality (as is the case in most studies of this kind). Another lab-based study of this kind was conducted by Beattie, Cohen, and McGuire (2013) who found that participants were less likely to choose a CV belonging to a fictitious candidate with an Afro-Caribbean-sounding name than those with a Caucasian name if they had negative implicit attitudes towards those who are black as opposed to white. Other characteristics such as sex, sexuality, attractiveness, and so forth have also been reported face 'penalties' when accessing the labour market (see Neumark, 2016 for a comprehensive review). Studies of this kind are a problem for employers as changing attitudes (especially on an implicit level) can be difficult to do, therefore it can be challenging for employers to not allow their attitudes to influence the process of assessing and selecting CVs.

Unstructured interviews are subject to a range of different biases too (McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994, p.159). Such biases include: the sex of the applicant (Bernard, Paik, & Corell, 2007); their race (Huffcutt & Roth, 1998), attractiveness (Kutcher & Bragger, 2004), etc. (see Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2013 for a review). Unstructured interviews are low in financial costs and are relatively simple to administer, as well as applicants reporting that they like them, thus maintaining their popularity (van der Zee, Bakker, & Bakker, 2002). Due to their issues, unstructured interviews are not an adequate technique to predict workplace performance – therefore their wide usage is not well-founded. Barrick, Shaffer, and DeGrass (2009) conducted a meta-analytical study in order to assess the impact of self-presentation tactics (such as appearance and attractiveness, self-enhancement, etc.) adopted by candidates on interview ratings as a means of examining how applicants falsely represent themselves in an interview. Their analysis concluded that appearance, verbal and non-verbal behaviour, and impression management behaviours had a positive relationship with interview ratings in an unstructured interview. The same paper reported that as CV structure increased, the significance of the aforementioned factors decreased. This evidence supports the contention that structured interviews may be more beneficial for employers to utilise (see Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994). A study by

Huffcutt, Conway, Roth, and Stone (2001) found that a structured interview has good criterion validity, thus giving way to predicting work performance.

Given this evidence, the most obvious alternative is for employers to adopt structured interviews during their recruitment, selection, and assessment processes (Relojo, 2012). Structured interviews are generally administered as either: (1) behavioural interviewing (Janz, 1989 as cited in Arnold et al., 2016, p.150) or, (2) situational interviewing (Maurer, Sue-Chan, & Latham, 1999). Behavioural interviewing – otherwise known as behavioural pattern description interviews (BPDIs) – involves applicants stating how they have acted in previous work situations and applying these experiences to the position that they have applied to. The rationale for this form of interview is based on a wealth of empirical evidence, which contends that previous behaviour is a predictor of future behaviour (Ouellette & Wood, 1998). It is the role of the interviewer to assess whether the applicant is able to replicate their previous occupational performances in the new position. BPDIs utilise behavioural anchored rating scales (BARS) – these are used in order to rate the responses given by the applicants against questions in the interview schedule. BARS aid interviewer objectivity by ensuring that interview questions (and how they are assessed) remain consistent between interviews as well as ensuring that the interview remains relevant to the vacancy (Reilly, Bocketti, Maser, & Wennet, 2006), this is possible because BARS are typically established around the job analysis for the position. Situational interviews, on the other hand, involve the candidate being presented with probable workplace scenarios whereby they must report how they would respond to such situations. The rationale for this format interview is based on research contends intention to behave predicts future behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The responses required from the candidates are compared to the responses acquired by experts who have event information of what they would expect from good employees (as well as poor and average employees) in the vacant position. An obvious issue underlying situational interviews is that they fail to consider how much prior experience the candidate has in previous roles, which may well be relevant to role that they have applied for. The most obvious solution here is to combine is a CV with a structured interview – a CV would allow for an overview of the candidate's experience (although the limitations discussed earlier still apply to the CV, e.g., biases).

Given the fact that many jobs are complex, especially in the graduate labour market, it would be best practice to administer aptitude tests. Aptitude tests measure different facets of cognitive ability, and a wealth of evidence has supported the contention that they are the best predictor of occupational performance (e.g., Gottfredson, 2002, p. 331; Sackett, Borneman, & Connelly, 2008; Salgado, Anderson, Moscoso, Bertua, & Fruyt, 2003). One key study by Ones (2005) provided in meta-analysis of meta-analytical studies, this study supported the argument that aptitude testing has the best predictability for a job performance. However, attitude testing should not simply be considered to always be the best method for recruitment, selection, and assessment. Ones and Viswesvaran (2003) reported that when a job was more complex (.58) as opposed to less complex (.23), the predictive increased (validity coefficients provided in parentheses).

In conclusion, employers should be cautious when adopting the popular combination of an unstructured interview and a CV, both of which have major flaws especially in terms of bias (thus reducing their predictive validity). The most cost-effective solution here is to increase the structure of the interview and then combine this with a CV. However, aptitude testing is considered to encompass what are the best methods in recruitment, selection, and assessment. These methods are best utilised when recruiting for more complex job positions.

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