Effect of Interview Question Type on Faking and Interviewee Reactions

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Abstract

Structured job interviews are often built around four 'better' question types: behavioural, situational, background, and job knowledge questions. This study provides the first comparative examination of these four question types in terms of interviewee faking and reactions. Prolific respondents (*N*=150) completed an asynchronous video interview comprised of eight questions (i.e., two of each type), then rewatched their responses and reported their faking and reactions. Overall, question type had a small effect on faking and a small-medium effect on reactions. Specifically, situational and job knowledge questions were associated with less faking than behavioural and background questions. Finally, background questions were associated with worse affective, utility, and procedural justice reactions, particularly compared to situational questions.

Keywords: job interview, faking, applicant reactions, interview question type

The job interview is one of the most popular selection tools (Macan, 2015), with organizations around the world using it to select employees (Roulin, 2017). When structured, job interviews are also one of the most valid predictors of job performance (Sackett et al., 2022). However, despite its popularity and overall predictive validity, a key question about the job interview remains: what are the best interview question types to minimize faking and maximize applicant reactions?

Campion et al. (1997) highlighted four 'better' interview question types: behavioural, situational, background, and job knowledge questions. These questions are considered to be 'better' because they inherently have a higher degree of structure and can potentially improve predictive validity, limit faking, and improve applicant reactions (Campion et al., 1997). Past research has compared the predictive validity of all four of these question types (Hartwell et al., 2019), and revealed superior validity for behavioural and situational questions. Although validity is of primordial importance, faking and negative applicant reactions can also undermine organizations' ability to hire the best job candidates because they can negatively impact validity and recruitment outcomes (Levashina & Campion, 2006; McCarthy et al., 2017). Unfortunately, comparisons of faking (e.g., Bill & Melchers, 2023; Bourdage et al., 2018; Levashina & Campion, 2007) and applicant reactions (e.g., Conway & Peneno, 1999; Day & Carroll, 2003) across question types have been largely limited to situational and behavioural questions. A more comprehensive comparison of all four question types is thus warranted. The present research uses a within-subjects design to provide the first examination of all four 'better' question types in terms of faking and interviewee reactions.

Question Type and Interview Faking

Faking is a form of deceptive impression management, and can be defined as "conscious distortions of answers to the interview questions in order to obtain a better score on the interview and/or otherwise create favourable perceptions" (Levashina & Campion, 2007, p. 1639). Faking may be a serious issue as applicants' attempts to misrepresent their qualifications or characteristics may lead to inflated interview ratings, ill-advised job offers, and poor work performance (Melchers et al., 2020).

Only a few studies offer preliminary empirical evidence about faking across question types. Levashina and Campion (2007) directly compared interviews using only situational questions or only behavioural questions, and they found more faking in the former. Bourdage et al. (2018) asked applicants to report whether those two question types were used or not in their last interview. Bourdage et al. found slightly less faking when applicants reported that situational questions were used (vs. not used), but no difference when past behavioral questions were used (vs. not used). However, Bourdage et al.'s (2018) findings are not directly comparable to Levashina and Campion's (2007), because they relied on high-stakes interviews from a variety of jobs, which might have included both 'better' question types, none of them, and/or other types of questions. Bill and Melchers (2023) also examined the effect of question type on faking, and they found no differences in intention to fake in a scenario study describing interview questions with higher vs. lower objectivity. Yet, they did not specifically use any of the four 'better' question types. Thus, the previous empirical literature does not offer any strong indication of how the four 'better' question types may differ in terms of faking.

We build on Levashina and Campion's (2006) model of interview faking to examine if the four 'better' question types are differentially associated with faking, and thus whether organizations could potentially rely on certain question types to reduce faking. Levashina and

Campion's (2006) faking model contends that faking is dependent upon applicants' capacity, willingness, and opportunity to fake. Furthermore, their model describes two conceptual mechanisms through which question type may influence faking. First, they propose that whether interviewees are willing to fake depends on their perceptions of the probability of getting caught (e.g., high versus low). For instance, interviewees may be less willing to fake on certain questions if they believe that their answers (e.g., claiming to have successfully led a team on an important project when responding to a behavioural question) could be verified after the interview (e.g., through the interviewer contacting that previous employer). Second, Levashina and Campion (2006) argue that the level of opportunity to fake depends on the type of question asked (e.g., situational versus behavioural), as questions differ in the extent to which they are transparent, hypothetical vs. objective/factual, and verifiable. Thus, Levashina and Campion's (2006) faking model suggests that question type may impact faking by affecting applicants' perceptions of their likelihood of being caught (which may impact their willingness to fake) and by affecting their opportunity to fake.

The four 'better' question types described by Campion and colleagues (1997) arguably differ in the extent to which they are hypothetical, transparent, and verifiable, which may impact applicants' opportunity and willingness to fake, and ultimately their faking. Situational questions ask interviewees to imagine being in a hypothetical work situation and having to address an issue, typically while facing a type of dilemma (Latham et al., 1980). For situational questions, faking would generally constitute interviewees exaggerating or lying about their intentions (i.e., consciously falsely stating how they would behave in the situation). However, situational question faking may also include interviewees incorporating falsified qualifications, attitudes, or experiences into their response (e.g., falsely stating that they have experience with the

situation/dilemma of interest). Given their hypothetical nature and thus the difficulty of interviewers verifying/challenging the response content during the selection process, situational questions may be more susceptible to faking than the other question types, such as behavioural questions that are based on actual events that may be verified in later stages of the selection process, such as with reference checks (Levashina and Campion, 2006). In addition, situational questions invite interviewees to describe their intentions - rather than their past behaviour or knowledge - which creates more opportunity to deceptively ingratiate with the interviewer or organization (e.g., pretending they would address the situation in line with the company's policies or values).

In contrast, behavioural and background questions are based on real events and experiences and may be verifiable with follow-up investigations (e.g., reference checks). Thus, these question types may result in less faking compared to situational questions due to decreased willingness to fake. However, applicants may think that any embellishment and deceptive ingratiation on behavioural and background questions may be difficult to detect, so they may still choose to fake to increase their chances of success albeit potentially at a lower level than they would fake on situational questions.

Finally, job knowledge questions might be particularly difficult or risky to fake given their high objectivity and verifiability. Indeed, they require candidates to describe or document their knowledge of a job-relevant topic (Campion et al., 1997). Such questions might thus offer less opportunity to fake (i.e., to embellish, lie, etc.) because they focus on knowledge rather than experience (e.g., as in behavioural and background questions; Hartwell et al., 2019). Interviewees may also be less willing to fake on such questions because they perceive an increased likelihood (Levashina and Campion, 2006) of being caught. For example, interviewees

may be particularly wary of falsely claiming familiarity with a concept or process and trying to explain it if they believe that the interviewer will be able to determine whether they are genuinely knowledgeable. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Interviewees will fake (a) more on situational questions, but (b) less on job knowledge questions, than the other 'better' question types.

Faking and Interview Performance

We are interested in examining the relationship between interview question type and faking because faking is assumed to be a source of error that inflates interview ratings and negatively impacts predictive validity (Levashina & Campion, 2006). However, while faking should theoretically increase interview performance, research has not revealed a straightforward relationship between faking and interview ratings (Ho et al., 2021; Melchers et al., 2020). Specifically, studies have been conflicting and shown both positive (e.g., Buehl & Melchers, 2017; Ingold et al., 2015) and negative (e.g., Bourdage et al., 2018) relationships. Several of these studies (e.g., Bourdage et al., 2018, Study 5) have also relied on applicants recalling past job interviews (e.g., within the past six months). Thus, these results may have been impacted by memory decay. Moreover, a recent meta-analysis reported an overall effect of faking on performance that approaches zero (Ho et al., 2021), but found wide credibility intervals (e.g., 80% interval with correlations ranging from -.09 to .16), which indicates that moderators may be present.

Although Ho et al. (2021) examined several potential moderators of the faking-interview performance relationship (e.g., interview medium, rating source, number of interviewers), the moderators were found to have no influence to a minimal influence. However, Ho et al. (2021) concluded that other moderators they did not examine might be at play. Importantly, they did not

examine question type as a moderator of the faking-interview performance relationship. We

contend that question type might be an important moderator to consider to better understand the

effect of faking on interview ratings. Indeed, it is possible that interviewees are effective at

deceptively influencing interviewers when answering some types of questions but not others. For

example, some question types could be more transparent in terms of the "ideal" or expected

response, and thus be more susceptible to performance rating inflation through faking. If that is

true, the near-zero relationship reported by Ho et al. (2021) could be partly explained by mixing

data from different question types. And, examining question type as a moderator would help

determine if faking on some question types translates more easily into higher performance

ratings. Thus, we propose the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between faking and interview performance?

RQ2: Is there a stronger relationship between faking and interview performance for some

question types than others?

Question Type and Applicant Reactions

In addition to examining the impact of question type on faking, it is important to examine

how applicant reactions may differ depending on the question type. Applicant reactions refer to

the attitudes, feelings, or beliefs a candidate may have about the selection process (Ryan &

Ployhart, 2000). Reactions (e.g., procedural justice perceptions) to selection approaches (e.g.,

question types) are important because they can affect applicants' likelihood of accepting job

offers and recommending the organization to other candidates (McCarthy et al., 2017). In this

study, we focus on three types of applicant reactions: affective reactions, utility reactions (i.e.,

perceived predictive validity), and procedural justice reactions. These three constructs were

chosen because they capture distinct elements of applicant reactions and because they can predict

important outcomes such as applicants' intentions to recommend an organization (McCarthy et al., 2017; Smither et al., 1993). Although past research suggests that there are no differences between question types (Bill & Melchers, 2023; Conway & Peneno, 1999; Day & Carroll, 2003), these studies have primarily compared situational and behavioural questions. No research has systematically compared all four 'better' question types.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) is valuable in understanding how question type may impact applicant reactions because it emphasizes what psychological needs are important for human satisfaction and motivation. SDT proposes that people's needs can be fulfilled (vs. thwarted) depending on how much *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness* they experience (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In an interview context, background questions may yield better reactions from interviewees because they allow them to feel a greater sense of control (and thus autonomy) by sharing personal experiences and qualifications in a more open-ended format than the other 'better' question types. Specifically, there is a reduced level of response constraint with background questions as applicants are typically asked employment history or personal questions about their qualifications for which they can draw on numerous past experiences. This low level of response constraint can be contrasted with the higher constraint inherent in situational questions (which require interviewees to handle a very specific hypothetical scenario) or job knowledge questions (which require them to convey knowledge of specific concepts or processes), or – to a lesser extent – behavioural questions (that ask them to recount a specific past work experience).

Overall, the increased sense of control that background questions provide would help fulfill the basic psychological need of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and thus may lead to higher affective reactions toward the interview process. Similarly, interviewees may perceive

such questions as the most useful, because they enable them to provide an excellent overview of their qualifications and positive job-relevant attitudes, and most procedurally fair, because they allow interviewees to speak more freely about their relevant experiences (i.e., higher opportunity to perform perceptions). In addition, background questions may also be less complex and more transparent (Bourdage et al., 2018), which may make them easier to prepare for and answer. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Background questions will result in more positive affective reactions than the other 'better' question types.

Hypothesis 3: Background questions will result in more positive utility reactions than the other 'better' question types.

Hypothesis 4: Background questions will result in more positive procedural justice reactions than the other 'better' question types.

In the next sections, we describe an empirical study using a within-subjects design to examine difference in interviewees' faking and reactions when facing the four 'better' question types.

Method

Sample and Procedure

An a priori power analysis recommended a sample of 144 participants to achieve a power of .80 and detect a small Cohen's *d* effect size of .20.[1] Participants (*N*=167) were recruited from the United States and Canada through the Prolific crowdsourcing platform and compensated £7.50. The final sample (screened for attention checks and completeness) consisted of 150

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[1] The study was pre-registered: https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=9YM_X3T ; All materials and an anonymized dataset can be found in the online supplement available in the OSF folder for the project: https://osf.io/g8kxv/?view_only=aa782a7a7c6a4d919ba0d400701d7464

participants. The mean age was 39.28 years old (SD = 12.80), half of the participants were

women (48.7%), and most participants were White (66%) and university-educated (68%).

Participants had completed 14.35 (SD = 12.68) prior in-person interviews and 2.59 (SD = 4.48)

asynchronous video interviews (AVIs) on average.

Although we relied on a mock interview paradigm, we took several initiatives to ensure a

high level of realism and participant motivation, and thus increase the external validity of the

study. First, we selected a Marketing Analyst job, and developed a realistic job description based

on real job advertisements. We also pilot-tested the job description with a group of graduate

students in industrial and organizational (I-O) psychology and it achieved a mean score of 4.0 on

realism (on a 1-5 Likert scale item). Second, we chose job-relevant interview questions, with one

teamwork-focused question and one marketing ability-focused question for each question type.

The interview questions were also pilot-tested with the group of I-O psychology graduate

students who confirmed that each question matched its question type (e.g., situational question)

and that each question was job relevant. Third, we pre-screened participants on Prolific to ensure

that they possessed prior work experience in Marketing and Sales. The screening process helped

ensure that the participants had relevant experience (and interest) in the position used in the

study. The median for marketing experience in the sample was 3 years. Fourth, in addition to a

base financial compensation for all participants (£7.50), we offered a bonus of £5 for the top ten

interview performers, thus almost doubling their compensation. Finally, at the end of the study,

participants completed an interview seriousness item ("I took the interview seriously") and the

mean was 4.73 out of 5 (SD = .50).

Participants were directed to an online AVI platform. They were instructed to imagine

that they applied for a Marketing Analyst position, and that they had received an interview

invitation. After reviewing a job description for the position, participants completed an AVI. An

AVI is a type of asynchronous interview that is conducted through the internet, which asks

applicants to video-record their responses to pre-determined questions (Langer et al., 2017).

AVIs utilize a very structured interview process, where all questions are asked in a standardized

way. The AVI consisted of eight interview questions (two of each question type), the order of

which was partially randomized via four different potential sequences, to avoid order effects.

Many of the eight interview questions were inspired by the four 'better' question type examples

presented in Campion et al. (1997). Interviewees were provided with 60 seconds of preparation

time for each question and could record up to 120 seconds-long responses, with no re-recording.

After completing the interview, participants watched their video responses for each of the eight

questions and completed measures of faking and interviewee reactions. Finally, they completed a

demographics questionnaire. Later on, trained student raters watched the video responses and

evaluated performance using behaviourally anchored rating scales (BARS). All the research

materials (e.g., job description, interview questions, survey items, BARS) are included in the

Online Supplement.

Measures

   Interview Faking. A four-item faking scale, inspired by Levashina and Campion's

(2007) faking scale, was created to measure interview faking. It included one item to measure

each of Levashina and Campion's (2007) four faking dimensions (slight image creation,

extensive image creation, deceptive ingratiation, and image protection). Each item was newly

created and designed to capture the core elements of that respective faking dimension. As an

example, the item "I slightly exaggerated or embellished my qualifications, experience, skills,

and/or attitudes to increase my fit for the position" was used to capture the three components of

slight image creation in Levashina and Campion's (2007) IFB scale (i.e., embellishing, tailoring, fit enhancing). Responses were provided on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *to no extent* to 5 = *a very great extent*). Although using a single item per construct has some limitations, it was chosen given that participants were asked to complete that measure for each interview question. The use of single-item measures is also supported by Matthews and colleagues (2022) who found that single-item measures can yield reliable and valid results for a variety of constructs. Internal consistency (α) for the four-item measure was computed for each of the eight interview questions and ranged from .82 to .88.[2]

Applicant Reactions. For each of the eight interview questions, we measured affective reactions with two items (e.g., "I enjoyed answering the interview question to a great degree"; α = .88-.94) and utility reactions with another two items (e.g., "My performance on the interview question was a good predictor of my ability to do the job"; α = .75-.88) adapted from Smither et al. (1993). Finally, two items adapted from Bauer et al. (2001) measured procedural justice reactions to each interview question (e.g., "I could really show my skills and abilities through this interview question"; α = .82-.89). Responses were provided on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Interview performance. Seven graduate students evaluated responses using BARS (one unique BARS per question) that ranged from 1 (poor) – 5 (excellent), with behavioural anchors and example responses for levels 1, 3, and 5. Prior to rating responses, raters completed a training session to ensure understanding of the BARS. Next, two raters were each assigned to

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[2] To confirm construct validity, we also conducted a follow-up study with an independent sample of (*N*=50) active job seekers from the Prolific platform who completed an interview in the last two weeks. They completed our four single-item faking measures alongside the IFB-S (Bourdage et al., 2018). Correlations between the two measures were all positive and significant, and ranged from .28 for extensive image creation to .68 for slight image creation.

rate each participant.[3] Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (ICCs; (2,4)) were calculated to

measure consistency among raters, guided by the methodology outlined by Ten Hove and

colleagues (2022). The ICCs were acceptable-good for the eight interview questions as they

ranged from .75-.81.

Results

Assumption checks revealed evidence of non-normality, skewness, and kurtosis. For the

faking outcome variables, logarithm transformations were performed, and Greenhouse-Geisser

corrections were used to interpret the ANOVAs when relevant. For the reaction outcomes,

logarithm transformations were not sufficient, and thus non-parametric tests were used. Outliers

were also systematically screened for prior to analyses, and all analyses revealed similar results

overall with and without outliers.

Question Type and Interview Faking

A repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine

Hypothesis 1, which predicted more faking for situational questions (H1a) and less faking for job

knowledge questions (H1b) compared to the other question types. The descriptive statistics for

all main study variables are presented in Table 1. The effect of interview question type on faking

was statistically significant, $F(2.76, 411.12) = 13.65$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$, suggesting that

there were differences in faking between question types.[4] Post-hoc pairwise comparisons

revealed that the situational questions ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .79$) were associated with less faking than

the behavioural ($M = 1.87$, $SD = .98$) and background questions ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 1.00$), $p < .001$

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[3] We originally had four raters who were assigned to evaluate responses and ICCs were computed based on double-rating 25 participants from the sample. However, following the recommendation of an anonymous reviewer, we recruited three more raters to obtain double-ratings for all participants.

[4] We report the results with the original faking variables for ease of interpretation, but they were identical to the findings with the log-transformed faking variables. For instance, we also found a significant effect of question type on faking, $F(2.75, 409.14) = 15.92$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$, with the same differences between question types. Findings were also similar when excluding deceptive ingratiation, $F(2.71, 403.63) = 14.13$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$

(for both), but not less faking than the job knowledge questions ($M = 1.68$, $SD = .92$), $p = .59$.

Contrary to H1a, the findings suggest that interviewees faked less on situational questions than

behavioural and background questions. However, the findings provide partial support for H1b as

the job knowledge questions resulted in less faking than the behavioural and background

questions ($p \leq .01$ for both) though not the situational questions[5].

Faking and Interview Performance

A Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between faking and

interview performance (RQ1), and the correlation was non-significant, $r = -.03$, $p = .67$. The

correlations between faking and interview performance were also compared for each of the four

interview question types to determine if question type may moderate the relationship between

faking and performance (RQ2 – see values in Table 1). The 'Cocor' comparing correlations

online tool (http://comparingcorrelations.org/) was used to conduct these analyses. The analyses

revealed that four of the six comparisons were significant (zs > $|2|$, ps < $.05$). Specifically, the

correlations between faking and performance were significantly different when comparing

situational questions ($r = -.10$) to behavioural questions ($r = .07$), $z = 2.01$, $p = .04$, or situational

questions ($r = -.10$) to job knowledge questions ($r = .08$), $z = -2.14$, $p = .03$. Similarly, the

correlations between faking and performance were also significantly different when comparing

background questions ($r = -.12$) to behavioural questions ($r = .07$), $z = -2.24$, $p = .03$, or

background questions ($r = -.12$) to job knowledge questions ($r = .08$), $z = -2.29$, $p = .02$. The

findings suggest that question type may moderate the relationship between faking and

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[5] The pre-registered study included two additional variables (i.e., perceived difficulty and risks to fake). We had predicted that situational questions would be associated with lower (and job knowledge questions with higher) perceptions of faking risk and faking difficulty than the other 'better' question types. However, the analyses did not reveal any differences across question types for those two variables. The full results of these analyses can be found in 'Supplementary Material H' of the online supplement.

performance, though the relationship between faking and performance is weak across all

question types.[6]

Interviewee Reactions – Affect

A Friedman test showed a significant effect of question type on affect, $\chi^2(3) = 13.67$,

Monte Carlo $p = .003$. A Wilcoxon-signed rank test with the maximum number of pairwise

comparisons (six) was also conducted to further test Hypothesis 2, which predicted that the

background questions would result in more positive affective reactions than the other three

question types. A Bonferroni correction was applied which resulted in a significance level set at

$p < .008$. There were no significant differences between the behavioural ($M = 3.54$) and

background questions ($M = 3.44$; $Z = -1.48$, Monte Carlo $p = .14$) nor between the job knowledge

($M = 3.63$) and background questions ($M = 3.44$; $Z = -2.52$, Monte Carlo $p = .01$). However,

there was a significant difference between the situational ($M = 3.70$) and background ($M = 3.44$)

questions; $Z = -3.71$, Monte Carlo $p < .008$, with a medium effect size: $r = -.30$. The difference

was surprisingly in the opposite direction as predicted and thus H2 was not supported. Overall,

the affective reactions findings suggest that participants enjoyed answering the different question

types to a similar degree, with the exception that they found responding to background questions

to be moderately less enjoyable than responding to situational questions.

Interviewee Reactions – Utility and Procedural Justice

Two Friedman tests were conducted to examine whether there were differences between

the question types in terms of utility and procedural justice reactions (Hypotheses 3-4). There

was a significant effect of question type on utility, $\chi^2(3) = 11.48$, Monte Carlo $p = .009$. Post-hoc

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[6] Following the suggestion of a reviewer, we also examined if performance was related to prior AVI experience. We found no difference in overall performance between participants who had not completed an AVI previously ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .80$) and those who had completed at least one ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .73$), $t(138) = -.09$, $p = .93$.

pairwise comparisons revealed a difference between only the background ($M = 3.50$) and situational ($M = 3.68$) questions at the Bonferroni-corrected alpha level of $p < .008$; $Z = -3.69$, Monte Carlo $p < .001$, with a small effect size: $r = -.30$. We also found a significant effect of question type on procedural justice perceptions, $\chi^2(3) = 8.51$, Monte Carlo $p = .04$. Similar to the results for utility, post-hoc comparisons only revealed a single pairwise difference in procedural justice, specifically between the background ($M = 3.50$) and situational ($M = 3.68$) questions at the Bonferroni-corrected alpha level of $p < .008$; $Z = -3.01$, Monte Carlo $p = .003$, $r = -.25$. The findings suggest that participants found the question types to be similarly useful and fair, with the exception that they perceived the background questions to be somewhat less useful (i.e., in terms of predictive validity) and less procedurally fair than the situational questions, which was contrary to our Hypotheses 3 and 4.

Discussion

Building on the work of Campion and colleagues (1997), this study provides the first comparative examination of the four 'better' question types in terms of interviewee faking and reactions. It complements recent efforts to examine the validity of those question types (Hartwell et al., 2019), as well as initial (but piecemeal) empirical attempts to compare them in terms of fakeability (e.g., Bourdage et al., 2018; Levashina & Campion, 2007) and applicant reactions (Bill & Melchers, 2023; Conway & Peneno, 1999; Day & Carroll, 2003). In addition, it empirically tests some of the key predictions about faking antecedents from Levashina and Campion's (2006) faking model. It also acts on the faking reduction recommendation of Roulin and colleagues (2016) to examine selection methods that may be more difficult to fake. Overall, we found that interview question type had significant but generally small effects on faking and small to medium effects on reactions.

First, situational questions resulted in less interview faking than behavioural and background questions while resulting in similar levels of faking as job knowledge questions. Theoretical models of faking (e.g., Levashina & Campion, 2006; Roulin et al., 2016) suggest that the less applicants perceive faking to be risky, the more likely they will be to engage in faking (via increased willingness to fake). Given that situational questions generate responses that are less verifiable (Levashina & Campion, 2006) and thus less risky to fake, it was expected that they would be associated with more faking. Our findings did not support that proposition, and also did not align with Levashina and Campion's (2007) results. However, they align with the more recent work of Bourdage and colleagues (2018) who found that applicants generally faked less when situational questions were used (vs. not used) but also found that the use (or not) of three other question types (i.e., behavioural, preference-based, and résumé-based) did not matter.

Second, we found that job knowledge questions resulted in less faking than behavioural and background questions (but not situational questions). This finding suggests that the increased objectivity and rigidity of a job knowledge question (e.g., "what factors should you consider when developing a marketing campaign?") may have provided less opportunity to fake compared to the more flexible behavioural and background questions.

The findings that the situational and job knowledge questions both resulted in similarly lower faking compared to behavioural and background questions suggests that the two question types may provide reduced opportunities to fake. Past research has found that situational questions primarily assess job knowledge and cognitive ability (Conway & Peneno, 1999; Day & Carroll, 2003), while job knowledge questions overwhelmingly assess job knowledge (Hartwell et al., 2019). Thus, it may be that interviewees reported faking similarly less on those two question types because there are fewer opportunities to fake job knowledge than past experience.

Alternatively, the lower reported faking for situational and job knowledge questions could be explained by the measures used. Indeed, our faking items – like other studies' faking items (e.g., Bourdage et al., 2018) based on Levashina and Campion's (2007) scale - were primarily designed to capture how interviewees embellished or invented information about themselves and their past (e.g., qualifications), rather than how they embellished their intentions or knowledge. For example, in terms of the situational questions, the faking items did not directly ask interviewees about the extent to which they exaggerated (slight image creation) or lied (extensive image creation) about their intentions when responding to the hypothetical dilemmas. Instead, the items focused on their stated qualifications, skills, experiences, and attitudes. Relatedly, it could also be that some interviewees responded to the hypothetical scenarios described in the situational questions in a way that could represent what they saw as the ideal approach to deal with the issue at hand, although it might not reflect how they would personally typically address it (i.e., similar to the distinction between maximal vs. typical performance). In such a situation, interviewees might not have considered their response as exaggerated, thus leading to under-reporting faking. Overall, while faking items based on Levashina and Campion's (2007) scale have been previously used with situational questions (e.g., Bourdage et al., 2018; Levashina & Campion, 2007), our findings might suggest that these items may not be well-suited for effectively capturing the full range of faking that may take place during situational questions.

Third, there was no significant relationship between faking and interview performance overall. This finding aligns with the meta-analysis by Ho and colleagues (2021), which found no relationship between faking and interview ratings based on 27 samples. Our results add to this knowledge by confirming that faking – while theoretically a way to increase one's interview performance and chances of being hired (Roulin et al., 2016) – does not consistently result in

improved interview performance ratings. However, we found that the relationship between

faking and interview performance does differ depending on the interview question type.

Specifically, the correlations between faking and interview performance were small and negative

for situational and background questions, but small and positive for behavioural and job

knowledge questions. In other words, faking on situational and background questions seems to

slightly hurt interviewees' performance ratings, while faking on behavioural and job knowledge

questions may slightly help them. It is important to emphasize the contrasting findings for

situational and behavioural questions, especially because these two question types are also the

most frequently examined in faking research (e.g., Bourdage et al., 2018; Levashina & Campion,

2007). If the difference between the two question types is consistent across studies, it may help

explain the wide confidence interval range (which crosses 0) for the faking-performance

relationships reported in Ho and colleagues (2021). Our finding may also be of interest to

practitioners because it suggests that while there are differences in the faking-performance

relationship across question types, no question type is particularly vulnerable to performance

inflation through faking.

Fourth, background questions were associated with lower affective, utility, and

procedural justice reactions than situational questions, but they did not significantly differ from

behavioural and job knowledge questions. It was expected that background questions would

result in more positive affect given that they conceptually offer more autonomy or control to

interviewees. Indeed, they are typically viewed as less structured (Campion et al., 1997), less

complex, and more transparent (Bourdage et al., 2018) than other question types, and thus we

hypothesized that they would be more enjoyable to complete. However, interviewees may not

have enjoyed completing background questions because they may have found them overly vague

or uninteresting. Background questions may have also resulted in lower utility reactions than the

situational questions because they were perceived as too general and less job-relevant, and thus

less adequate to determine their fit for the position. Finally, they may have resulted in lower

procedural justice reactions because, contrary to our beliefs, interviewees may not have felt that

the questions provided them with the opportunity to effectively demonstrate their person-job fit,

especially in comparison to situational questions which are more specific and perhaps more

clearly job-related. That said, it is important to emphasize that the means on the three applicant

reactions' variables were still positive (i.e., around or above 3.5 on a 5-point scale) for all

question types (including background questions), and that even the reactions' differences

between the situational and background questions were only small to medium.

Practical Implications

The finding that the situational and job knowledge questions resulted in slightly reduced

faking suggests that hiring managers may benefit from utilizing these two question types if they

are most concerned with obtaining honest and unembellished responses from applicants.

However, it is important to note that faking use was low across all question types and deceptive

interviewees did not receive higher interview ratings, and thus even behavioural and background

questions might still help gather valuable information about applicants' qualifications.

Practitioners could also consider incorporating situational questions over background questions

into their job interviews, as applicants might view situational questions as more enjoyable,

useful, and procedurally fair. In addition, if applicant reactions are of interest, practitioners could

consider incorporating behavioural or job knowledge questions as they resulted in similarly high

affective, utility, and procedural justice reactions as situational questions. However, when

considering both our findings and past work on the predictive validity of the 'better' question

types (i.e., with job knowledge questions not consistently predicting job performance; Hartwell

et al., 2019), practitioners could prioritize situational and behavioural questions. Indeed,

situational and behavioural questions are likely to provide an optimal combination of outcomes:

generally low faking, positive applicant reactions, and good predictive validity.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our study has with several limitations, which could generate meaningful directions for

future research. A first limitation was the reliance on a mock asynchronous job interview with

online participants. Although we aimed to create a realistic job interview process (e.g., with a

pilot-tested marketing analyst job description, the inclusion of only participants with marketing

experience, and a financial bonus based on performance), the faking means were quite low

(although consistent with past faking research) and performance means were average, which

suggest that participants may not have been strongly motivated to achieve high performance.

Thus, a study with real job applicants may provide a better indication of whether job applicants

fake more on certain question types. In addition, a mock study in which interviewees are

encouraged to fake across all four question types could be useful for determining if the 'better'

question types provide different levels of 'opportunity to fake.'

Another key limitation is that our study examined faking with items that focused on past

experiences, qualifications, skills, and attitudes, while neglecting intentions and knowledge.

Future research should develop, validate, and utilize items that incorporate intentions and

knowledge to better detect faking on situational and job knowledge questions. Third, our study

did not directly examine perceived opportunity to fake, which may represent a theoretically

relevant mediator in the relationship between interview question type and faking. Future research

should examine whether interviewees' perceptions of their 'opportunity to fake' is associated

with faking across question types. Fourth, our research was limited by its examination of only the AVI context. Future research could also explore different interview formats (e.g., in-person vs. synchronous online vs. AVI) and how that may influence faking or reactions across question types. Finally, our applicant reactions' scores may have been impacted by order effects such that reporting faking behaviour first could have subsequently impacted interviewees' perceptions of how much they enjoyed answering the interview questions, how useful they found them, and the extent to which they believed they were procedurally just. Future research could examine whether faking/recalling faking behaviour subsequently impacts applicant perceptions (e.g., affective reactions) of the interview experience (e.g., question type, interviewer, organization).

Conclusion

This work provides the first comparative examination of the four 'better' question types in terms of faking and interviewee reactions. The findings suggest that situational questions and job knowledge questions are slightly less likely to be faked. Furthermore, while there are differences in the faking-performance relationship across question types, no question type is very vulnerable to performance inflation through faking. Finally, background questions are somewhat less appealing to interviewees in terms of affective, utility, and procedural justice reactions, particularly compared to situational questions. Overall, this research is practically important as it can help practitioners design their job interviews in a manner that promotes honest responding and positive interviewee reactions.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Main Study Variables, Organized by Question Type

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Situational questions						
1. Faking	1.60	.79				
2. Affect	3.70	.91	-.23**			
3. Utility	3.60	.86	-.13	.66**		
4. Procedural Justice	3.65	.85	-.14	.58**	.86**	
5. Performance	3.05	.84	-.10	-.04	-.05	-.08
Behavioural questions						
1. Faking	1.87	.98				
2. Affect	3.55	1.03	-.35**			
3. Utility	3.54	.92	-.20*	.66**		
4. Procedural Justice	3.62	.90	-.12	.65**	.85**	
5. Performance	3.04	.85	.07	-.02	-.06	-.01
Background questions						
1. Faking	1.87	1.00				
2. Affect	3.44	1.05	-.29**			
3. Utility	3.40	1.01	-.25**	.67**		
4. Procedural Justice	3.46	.99	-.19*	.71**	.89**	
5. Performance	2.93	.92	-.12	.02	-.09	-.06
Job knowledge questions						
1. Faking	1.68	.92				
2. Affect	3.63	.95	-.28**			
3. Utility	3.54	.84	-.19**	.56**		
4. Procedural Justice	3.64	.83	-.15*	.53**	.80**	
5. Performance	2.79	.92	.08	.02	-.03	.04

Note. *p* < .05 and **p* < .01 (both 2-tailed). Pairwise *N* for faking, affect, utility, and fairness variables = 150. Pairwise *N* for performance variables = 142. SD = standard deviation.