

FEEDBACK REPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS

**The Impact of Virtual Background Characteristics on
Asynchronous Video Rating for Health Professions Education
Admissions**



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Unpacking Bias in Asynchronous Video Interviews: Key Insights for Hiring

Asynchronous Video Interviews (AVIs) have become a popular selection tool due to their flexibility and cost savings, especially with the rapid advancement of virtual interviewing technology. However, concerns have arisen regarding the potential for new forms of bias introduced by these technology-mediated interviews. This project delves into these potential biases, examining factors such as applicant completion decisions, video recording quality, background elements, and the role of evaluation standardization.

About the Research: This paper leveraged two complementary studies to investigate AVI-specific elements and interviewee characteristics. **Study 1** involved 626 participants completing mock interviews, evaluated by professional hiring managers. This low-stakes scenario provided initial insights into completion decisions, recording quality, and background elements. **Study 2** focused on 523 real applicants undergoing high-stakes interviews for competitive education programs, evaluated by trained raters using either standardized or unstandardized approaches. Both studies coded AVI elements like attire, room tidiness, technical issues, and background cues, comparing their impact on performance ratings to established biasing factors such as attractiveness, age, and gender.

Key Findings:

1 The research revealed that **interviewees tend to carefully consider their AVI setup**, striving for good lighting and high-quality audio and video recordings. The stakes of the interview significantly influenced completion decisions. For instance, in low-stakes mock AVIs (Study 1), 98% of participants dressed casually, while in high-stakes interviews (Study 2), most applicants chose business casual (47.2%) or business formal (18.2%) attire. Similarly, tidiness was more pronounced in high-stakes AVIs (97.3% tidy rooms) compared to low-stakes ones (72.7%). While room tidiness was generally unrelated to evaluations, attire was modestly linked to higher performance evaluations in high-stakes AVIs. Technical issues related to recording quality (video, audio, lighting) were relatively rare and had only a modest or inconsistent relationship with evaluations across studies, suggesting they are unlikely to have a major impact on performance evaluations, contrary to some theoretical predictions.

2 A crucial finding was the **very low prevalence of background elements signaling personal or legally protected statuses** (e.g., 2SLGBTQI+, political, religious affiliation, family status) in AVI recordings. Across both studies, political affiliation elements were never observed, and religious affiliation elements were seen in only up to 1.7% of recordings. Importantly, **the presence of these background elements was found to be unrelated to AVI performance evaluations**. This suggests that applicants are likely taking steps to keep their backgrounds neutral, consistent with common advice for virtual interviews.


3 The study also explored whether standardized evaluation approaches, such as using Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS), could mitigate biases. While the research did not find substantial support for standardized evaluations systematically reducing bias across all factors, it did reveal an important benefit: **standardized evaluations helped eliminate sex-based differences in ratings**. In Study 2, structured evaluations showed no sex effect, whereas unstructured evaluations showed slightly lower ratings for women. Additionally, attractiveness (coded only in Study 1) was positively related to performance evaluations, though less so than in past traditional in-person interview research. Age was found to be unrelated to AVI outcomes.

Practical Implications


The findings offer reassuring news for organizations: AVI completion decisions, recording quality, background elements, and applicant characteristics were generally **unrelated or only weakly related to interview evaluations**, and often less biasing than in traditional in-person interviews. This underscores the inherent benefits of AVIs being structured by design.

For Applicants: While background signals were largely found not to influence ratings, applicants are still encouraged to **carefully consider their attire, recording location, and technology**. Dressing professionally for high-stakes AVIs (e.g., business formal/casual) was associated with substantially higher performance evaluations, possibly signaling greater motivation and preparation.

For Organizations: AVIs offer advantages, but they are not entirely bias-free. The study encourages organizations to **use more standardized evaluations, ideally with question-level BARS**, to enhance reliability, validity, and legal defensibility, and to help mitigate biases, particularly sex-based ones. Further research on the criterion-related validity of AVIs, especially with actual high-stakes decisions and automated assessments, remains crucial.

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