Research has shown structured and standardized interviews help marginalized candidates get the position (Buckles, 2019; Arvey & Campion, 1982). A meta-analysis of 31 studies showed Black and Latinx applicants received lower interview ratings in low-structure interviews than they did in high structure interviews. Structured interviews have also been shown to reduce bias regarding pregnant applicants (Bragger, Kutcher, Morgan, Firth, 2002). This is because structure tends to remove the tendency towards bias, implicit or otherwise.

Researchers have identified the following 14 components of structure associated with interviews: (1) controlling supplemental information and impressions, (2) use of better questions, (3) consistent interview questions, (4) limitation of follow-up questions, (5) consistent interviewers, (6) consistent interviews, (8) longer interviews, (9) rating each answer, (10) "anchored rating scales," (11) detailed interview notes, (12) limiting discussion between interviews, (13) training, and (14) transparency about the process (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, Campion, 2014). As the interview process becomes less structured, the evaluation of the class of candidates becomes more ambiguous. If it is ambiguous whether one candidate is better than other candidates, then it is more likely that the selection committee will make the decision relying on their own biases and then rationalizing it in a way that reflects merit (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005).

Controlling Supplemental Information / Impressions

One area in which bias creeps into the selection process is by forming pre-interview impressions of the candidates through an informal "rapport building phase." The rapport building phase can occur either directly before the interview or in scheduling the interview. This is because a "rapport building phase" can form a decisive impression of candidates prior to any interview designed to find a qualified candidate (Barrick, 2010). Iowa State University should have some form of "rapport building phase" because eliminating this might form a negative impression of it as an employer (Chapman & Zweig, 2005). Iowa State University should make every effort to either limit this phase or to formalize it so that each applicant receives the benefit.

Use of Better Types of Questions

Iowa State University can improve the assessment quality of its interviews by using structured interview questions. In general, there are six different types of structured questions: (1) situational questions, (2) past behavior questions, (3) background questions, (4) job knowledge questions, (5) job simulations, and (6) questions asking candidates about deleterious job requirements (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997).

These types of questions stand in contrast to less structured questions which ask about a candidate to essentially give self-evaluations on nebulous criteria such as goals and attitudes. A situational question queries a candidate about scenarios that could occur if they received the job (Campion, Pursell, & Brown, 1988; Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997). Behavioral questions ask candidates about specific examples from their past work experience which aligns with the desired job requirements. (Green et al., 1993; Pulakos & Schmitt, 1995). Background questions focus generally on credentials such as past work experience, educational achievements, and certifications that may bear on the desired job requirements. Job knowledge requirements ask applicants to demonstrate specific technical mastery of the subject matter used in the desired job.

Consistent Interview Questions

Research has shown that consistently asking predetermined questions in a fixed order decreases discrimination in the interview process. (Bragger, Kutcher, Morgan, & Firth, 2002; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). This is because it makes it easier for interviewers to make comparisons and avoid cognitive overload (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997; Dipboye & Gaugler, 1993; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005).

Limiting Follow-Up Questions

Many interviewers believe that follow-up questions can improve the information gathered from applicants because it allows for clarification and justification of previous answers. Research has shown interviewers more consistently rated applicants when they were not allowed to conduct follow up questions (Schwab & Heneman, 1969). This may be because applicants who are asked to elaborate on previous responses tend to guess, lie, or to provide exaggerated responses (Sanchez & Morchio, 1992). Nevertheless, structured or pre-planned follow-up questions may provide structure and avoid these pitfalls (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014.) Search committees should be careful to develop the follow-up questions to elicit job-related information by either making answering the question more difficult or verifying their response in some other way (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014).

Consistent Interviewers

Hiring committees should make sure each interviewer is assessing candidates for the same job position. This is because interviewers tend to have different criteria for evaluating candidates and the absence of one interviewer can influence scores in a way that introduces bias (Dipboye, Gaugler, & Hayes, 1990; Gehrlein, Dipboye, & Shahani, 1993; Green, Altar, & Carr, 1993).

Number of Interviewers

This component can be achieved either horizontally by having multiple interviewers on a panel participating in one stage of the hiring process or vertically by adding additional interview stages. A higher number of interviewers increases validity by increasing the number of perspectives, improving information recall, and reducing biases held by any one interviewer. (Campion, Pursell, & Brown, 1988; Hakel, 1982; Dipboye, 1992). Horizontal structures may have more reliability because the panel gets the same information from the candidates at the same time. Vertical structures may be more reliable because it gives the opportunity to ask additional questions, although this benefit is limited by the following component of longer interviews.

Longer Interviews

Longer interviews tend to add structure and remove ambiguity from the determination of the most qualified applicant. Length of an interview can be measured either by the amount of questions asked or by the amount of time it takes to conduct the interview (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997). That is because as the interview becomes longer there is a larger amount of information that can be gathered from each applicant. Candidates who lack the qualifications necessary for the position will also have more difficulty exaggerating or misrepresenting their qualifications to appear qualified. Of course, these strengths for longer interviews are more apparent for positions which require more skills because there will be more information to evaluate (Tullar, Mullins, & Caldwell, 1979).

Limiting Candidate Questions

Research has shown that limiting a candidate's ability to ask questions during the interview itself can have many positive effects. Allowing a candidate to ask questions in the interview can radically change the structure and content of the interview in unpredictable ways and can change the control dynamics of the interview from the interviewer to the candidate (Tullar, 1989). A candidate will want to ask questions about the job itself and clarifying questions about how to respond to an interviewer's questions. Search committees can permit clarifying questions during the interview itself without experiencing the negative effects of permitting all questions. Search committees can also reserve a time after conducting the interview for questions the candidate may have about the job.

Rating Each Answer

The Office of Equal Opportunity recommends rating each answer as the interview occurs according to a pre-determined scale for each question (Campion, Pursell, & Brown, 1988.) This practice makes rating the candidates more accurate because there are not the memory problems inherent in recalling the interview after it has occurred. Studies have also shown that judgments regarding individual components tend to be more reliable than overall ratings (Armstrong, Denniston, & Gordon, 1975).

Anchored Rating Scales

Anchored rating scales provide a basis point to compare ratings on the candidate's answers in order to reduce ambiguity in the rating that occurs between interviewers and to focus the assessment. There are at least four components that may or may not make up an anchor:
(1) example answers, (2) descriptions of what is sought as the ideal answer, (3) a range of example answers with ratings (e.g. meets, exceeds, poor), (4) comparisons to other candidate answers by percentage (e.g., answer given by the top 10% of candidates)(Campion, 1997). Research has been mixed regarding the efficacy of anchored scales on providing more inter-interviewer rating accuracy over simple rating scales (Campion, 1997).

One difficulty with using anchored scales is that they are difficult to develop without conducting many previous interviews for the same position to gauge which answers align to a successful candidate (Green et al., 1993). Anchored scales can also be developed by questioning coworkers and supervisors aligned with the role.

Detailed Interview Notes

The Office of Equal Opportunity recommends interviewers take notes during the interviews for several reasons. Notetaking focuses interviewers on the candidates' answers and stores their impressions to decrease problems associated with memory. As such, notetaking reduces recency and primacy effects which would otherwise make selection more arbitrary in nature (Schmitt & Ostroff, 1986). It may also focus the candidates on job-related factors associated with the candidates' answers and away from illegal factors (Campion, 1997). Notes can also lend to the defensibility of a hiring decision because they are admissible evidence of it in court.

Limiting Discussion Between Interviews

There is a limited amount of research regarding this factor of structure, so it is unclear how much benefit is derived from limiting discussion between interviews. In theory, limiting discussion between interviews strengthens other components of structure such as having multiple interviewers. This is because discussion could contaminate other interviewer's opinions (Campion, 1997).

Training

In some ways training is not a separate component but is a means of undergirding other forms of structure in the interview process. A training program can reinforce the benefits of certain components of structure and ensure they are implemented effectively. However, training can also ensure that interviewers are aware of concepts related to equal opportunity laws such as reasonable accommodations, job-relatedness, and questions demonstrating bias (Gollub-Williamson et al., 1996).

Transparency About the Process

One way to provide more structure to the interview process is to be transparent about the process to all applicants. For instance, an employer can provide the factors it is looking at to determine whether they are qualified and provide applicants the list of questions prior to the interview. Research has been mixed whether being transparent about the process helps employers find the most qualified candidate. Some studies have found that higher levels of transparency in interviews led to higher interview ratings and higher perceptions of fairness (Allen, Facteau, & Facteau, 2004; Klehe, König, Richter, Kleinmann, Melchers, 2008; Day & Carroll, 2003; Maurer, Solamon, & Lippstreu, 2008). On the other hand, one study has stated the ability to determine unstated selection criteria is positively correlated with the successful candidate's interview rating and future job performance. By extension, these studies imply that transparency diminishes an interview's assessment value (König, Melchers, Kleinmann, Richter, & Klehe, 2007). This argument against non-transparent interviews is undermined by the proliferation of websites which list common questions posed in interviews such as www.glassdoor.com and www.vault.com.

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