

Interview guide for recruitment agency employees

Introduction

Purpose of the Interview

I am [interviewer] and [interviewer's role].

Dear [Participant], thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us.

As we have briefly mentioned in the email that we sent you before, we are in the early stages of a project that focuses on fairness in matching people to jobs: both with regard to the current practices in Jobindex and how we can support this using AI. We are interested in learning about different ways that job seekers, recruiters and companies may think about fairness. We have a number of questions we would like to go through to better understand how you perceive fairness in the hiring process, and focus on your personal work experience here at Jobindex.

Before we proceed, I want to stress that our findings will not be linked to any specific individuals. We will record the interview with your permission, and these recordings will not be shared outside of the research team. These recordings will be destroyed following transcription.

About the Participant

To start with, can you briefly describe yourself and explain your role at Jobindex?

<Their responses>

How familiar are you with the idea of using AI or computer programs to help with hiring decisions? Could you share any thoughts or experiences you have on how it might work in hiring?

<Their responses>

[Optional: If the participant is a recruiter]

- For which type of jobs do you match job seekers?
- Is there a specific industry, or do you match for any type of job?
- Which parts of CVs do you consult when making decisions about the relevance for a position, do you look at the structured representation (and which parts) and do you consult the PDFs? (personal descriptions that could reveal something about sensitive attributes of the candidates or contain proxy variables for this)

<Their responses>

[Optional: If the participant is a sales representative]

- Can you give me more details on your workflow, like what happens after you agree with the customer?

<Their responses>

Fairness Definition

Now, we would like to move to questions related to Fairness in general.

When would you consider the process of matching you to a job posting to be fair? What would have to happen for you to consider the process unfair?

<Their responses>

Our broad definition of fairness is:

Fairness considers the cases where recruiters or the platforms that they use (search engine, recommender system) perform differently for different groups (for example, different age groups, different genders, or people belonging to different racial groups) in ways that may be considered undesirable.

Reflection on hypothetical scenarios

To give you some more specific examples:

Job seeker-focused scenario

Imagine you are looking for an IT manager for a highly-paid management role and that the list of CVs returned by the search engine or recommender system only contains men in the top results. To find qualified female or non-binary candidates, you find that you need to scroll down all the way to the bottom of the results list. What are your thoughts about this specific example?

<Their responses>

Company-focused scenario

Imagine there are two similar job postings: one from a well-known and large organization, and the other one from a small, unknown start-up. You realize that the list of recommended or retrieved candidates for the big company includes more relevant candidates. What are your thoughts about this specific example?

<Their responses>

Lived experiences with (un)fairness

So, in the next part of the interview, I'd like to learn more about your lived experiences with (un)fairness.

Can you recall times that you or your team have experienced fairness issues in your tasks?

- [Could you briefly describe those experiences?]
- [How your team would go about whether or not to take action, and try to address the issue you'd found?]

What other types of unfair situations may occur while job seekers are searching for jobs or applying for jobs?

< Their responses>

EVALUATION BRAINSTORM

Now, I know that this is a difficult question, but based on all this conversation, discussion we had, imagine for a job opening around 20 job seekers have been selected for the next stage of the hiring process. How could you figure out or determine fairness of the set of candidates that are in this list?

[Optional: Let's say you have access to all the information about the candidates]

< Their responses>

Closing

So before we wrap up, is there something else you want to add or ask?

< Their responses>

Thank you again! This was extremely helpful.

Global Notes