

ABSTRACT

As virtual interviews grow in popularity among recruiters, a new question arises around the potential biases related to the backgrounds used by job candidates. In this study, two hundred thirty-six participants were asked to watch a two-minute pre-recorded virtual interview and to evaluate the candidate's interview performance and hireability. Using a between-subject factorial design, we tested whether the type of background and perceived place in the background affected interview evaluations. In parallel, we attempted to explain this effect by examining attributions of the choice of background and inferred dispositions. Results revealed that the type of background had no effect on ratings of the candidate's interview performance and hireability. The perceived place, however, had a significant effect whereby the candidate who was perceived to conduct the interview in a cafe was rated higher than in the study room and bedroom. However, this effect could not be accounted for by the attributions as they differed in the opposite direction. In fact, the candidate in the cafe was rated worse on attributions of internet quality, comfort and distractions. We reasoned that participants over-compensated in rating the candidate higher for the disadvantages of conducting the interview in a cafe as a less desirable environment.

Keywords: background, virtual interview, perceived place, blurry, real, videoconference, performance, rating, evaluation, hireability, attributions, dispositions.