

that follow. It is instructive to compare the structured job interview with an unstructured or psychological interview. This comparison will serve to highlight the differences between the two.

A typical unstructured interview has the following characteristics:

- It is often unplanned, informal, and quick, and the interviewer often spends little time preparing for it.
- Rather than being based on the requirements of the job, questions are based on interviewer "hunches" or "pet questions" in order to psychologically diagnose applicant suitability.
- It consists of casual, open-ended, or subjective questioning (e.g., "Tell me a little bit about yourself").
- It has obtrusive questions (e.g., "What type of animal would you most like to be, and why?").
- It has highly speculative questions (e.g., "Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?").
- The interviewer makes a quick, and final, evaluation of the candidate (often in the first couple of minutes).

Despite its continued prevalence—it remains the most widely used substantive selection procedure—research shows that organizations clearly pay a price for using the unstructured interview, namely, lower reliability and validity.¹⁰⁷ Interviewers using the unstructured interview are unable to agree among themselves in their evaluation of job candidates and cannot predict the job success of candidates with any degree of consistent accuracy.

Over the years, research has unraveled the reasons why the unstructured interview does not work well and what factors need to be changed to improve reliability and validity. Sources of error or bias in the unstructured interview include the following:¹⁰⁸

- Reliability of the unstructured interview is relatively low. Interviewers base their evaluations on different factors, have different hiring standards, and differ in the degree to which their actual selection criteria match their intended criteria.
- Applicant physical attractiveness has consistently been shown to predict interviewer evaluations.
- Negative information receives more weight than positive information in the interview. Research suggests it takes more than twice as much positive information as negative information to change an interviewer's initial impression of an applicant. As a result, the unstructured interview has been labeled a "search for negative evidence."
- Interviewers tend to make snap decisions—people's first impressions form after only 1/10 of one second, and the majority of interviewers make their decisions after the first few minutes of the interview.