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Anonymous Interviews: Gender Discrimination and Bias in Hiring

Employers are critical to the hiring process and success of a company's future. Like any other person, however, employers are susceptible to their judgement being influenced by implicit bias. Implicit bias is an inherent, subconscious attribute within all human beings that stems from one's interpretation of the world around them, such as what they see and hear, as well as the interpretations of the people they interact and surround themselves with most often. Due to this, employers are often unable to eliminate their own biases when they can see and make judgements about potential employees in an interview. This is significant when considering that, majority of the time, this bias results in women getting hired less than men. By implementing anonymous interviews, a more equal hiring process between men and women will be achieved, more qualified employees will be hired, and anti-discrimination laws that protect women will be better upheld.

By implementing anonymous interviews, the hiring process between men and women will become more equal. The article "Hidden Forces: The Power of Implicit Bias and Its Impact on Hiring" by Donna Orem provides evidence of this with a study from 2000, where researchers tried to identify if there was a hidden gender bias in hiring for symphony orchestras and whether or not blind auditions would eliminate that bias (Orem 10). In doing so, the researchers found that "...blind auditions increased the probability that a woman would advance from preliminary rounds by 50 percent" (10). This study signifies the impact that anonymous interviews have in

reducing implicit bias, as well as the positive effects they have in creating a more equal and diverse working environment. Orem then goes on to state that data showed that "...female [symphony] members increased from 10 percent in 1970 to 35 percent by the mid-1990s" (10). Although this increase seems significant, it reveals that blind auditions were able to increase the gender-gap in hiring by 15% in 5 years as opposed to 25% in 20 years without blind auditions. This means that blind auditions increased the percentage of women hired to 50% four times faster than regular interviews would have. These statistics also prove that without blind auditions, it would have taken another 20 years before the increase of women advancing from preliminary rounds of auditions reached 50 percent.

With a more equal hiring process from anonymous interviews, employers will then be able to hire more qualified employees without implicit bias guiding their decisions. According to David Hausman's article "How Congress Could Reduce Job Discrimination by Promoting Anonymous Hiring," a recent study from a large retail company, which implemented employment tests instead of interviews, found that this switch "...result[ed] in hiring more productive workers" (Hausman 1355). This is significant because the employment tests implemented in this study were anonymous, which reveals that implicit bias was not able to influence the hiring decisions of employers, therefore leading them to hire better-qualified employees. The article also states that anonymous interviews and employment tests "...help[ed] employers avoid the false influence of first impressions - while also preventing unconscious discrimination" (1355). This shows that using anonymous interviews discourages employers from relying on implicit bias to choose employees. By avoiding this bias completely, employers are then able to hire the most qualified candidates which, in turn, will allow them to maintain a more productive work environment in the long run.

Regarding anti-discrimination laws, many employers are often able to discreetly avoid them by screening resume's before calling a potential employee for an interview. By having anonymous interviews, however, resumes will therefore also be anonymous and will help make employers accountable for upholding anti-discrimination laws. A study from the article "Do Anonymous Job Application Procedures Level the Playing Field?" by Olof Åslund and Oskar Nordström Skans found that, before the use of blind interviews and resumes, "...employers select[ed] interviewees based on gender and ethnicity..." (Åslund and Skans 99). This finding reveals that even with anti-discrimination laws in place, employers still hold implicit bias and use it to select the candidates they want or do not want to interview. This article had another finding, though, which was that "...no corresponding differences between the groups [were found] when anonymous procedures [were] used... [which concludes that] anti-discrimination legislation is not sufficient to prevent discrimination [on its own]" (Åslund and Skans 99). This reveals that solely using anti-discrimination laws to combat implicit bias in the hiring process is not enough, and that incorporating anonymous interviews will help uphold these laws as well as reduce implicit bias from employers.

A counterargument to these points, however, comes from the journal "Gender Discrimination in Hiring: An Experimental Reexamination of the Swedish Case" by Ali Ahmed et al. The article aims to prove that men are more affected by gender discrimination from employers as opposed to women by using three different studies. Results from these studies found that there was no evidence of discrimination in jobs that were male-dominated or in jobs that had an even mix of male and female employees, but did find a large amount of discrimination against men in female-dominated jobs (Ali et al. 8). Although this may seem compelling, it shows that the men being discriminated against were already hired and working,

meaning that their employers did not have any implicit bias when interviewing them. This can then be refuted further, as the article goes on to state that the findings from these studies indicated “...that part of the discrimination could be attributed to customers’ [preferences rather than bias from employers]” (11). This finding reveals, again, that these men did not experience discrimination in the interview process and were able to advance from being interviewed to being hired, whereas the previously mentioned articles found that women were denied jobs based on implicit bias from employers. Due to this, it can be concluded that anonymous interviews will help bridge the gap between advancing women from being interviewed to being hired by eliminating employers’ implicit bias completely.

Through the use of anonymous interviews in the hiring process, the number of men and women hired will become more equal, employees that are hired will be more qualified, and employers will be more accountable for upholding and abiding by anti-discrimination laws. By comparing multiple studies, evidence shows that anonymous interviews have a positive impact not only in reducing implicit bias, but in helping employers create a more successful and diverse work environment. For example, the study from Donna Orem’s article showed that blind auditions for a symphony orchestra helped women move past the first round of auditions by 50 percent. The article by David Hausman also provided evidence that anonymous employment tests helped employers hire better-qualified workers as it reduced implicit bias. Olof Åslund and Oskar Nordström Skans’ article then showed that combining anonymous interviews with anti-discrimination laws provided employers with an easier way to abide by the laws already in place. Therefore, by reviewing the evidence and points throughout this essay, it can be concluded that anonymous interviews will be a successful solution to reducing implicit bias and gender discrimination within the hiring process.

Works Cited

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