

# The (null) effects of video questions on applicant reactions in asynchronous video interviews: Evidence from an actual hiring context

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## Abstract

Asynchronous video interviews (AVIs) are growing in popularity, but tend to suffer from negative applicant reactions, possibly due to lower social presence compared to other interview formats. Research has suggested that specific design features may influence applicant reactions by increasing perceived social presence. In this study, we manipulated the question format (video vs. text) during an actual hiring process ( $N = 76$ ), testing whether video questions influence social presence, applicant reactions, impression management, and interview performance. There was no evidence that video (vs. text) questions affected any of these variables. We discuss how specific AVI design choices may have affected our results and suggest that future research could investigate the additive and interactive effects of different AVI design features.

## KEYWORDS

applicant reaction, asynchronous video interviews, design features, media richness, social presence

## Practitioner points

- Using video questions did not increase social presence when also using an introduction video.
- Using video questions did not affect applicant reactions, impression management, or interview performance.
- Our results suggest that for organizations using an introduction video and offering flexibility in the asynchronous video interview process (e.g., the opportunity to rerecord responses), it may not be worth the effort and cost to produce video questions.

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Asynchronous video interviews (AVIs) offer numerous benefits such as time- and cost efficiency, location independence, and flexibility (Dunlop et al., 2022; Griswold et al., 2022) and are becoming increasingly popular for hiring processes (e.g., Jaser et al., 2022). However, they also have potential drawbacks, as AVIs appear to suffer from negative applicant reactions compared to other technology-mediated interview formats (Griswold et al., 2022; Langer et al., 2017). These negative reactions can lead to undesirable outcomes such as lower organizational attractiveness (Hausknecht et al., 2004), making it crucial for hiring organizations to consider applicant reactions to AVIs.

Research has shown that part of negative applicant reactions may be due to the low level of social presence of AVIs (Basch et al., 2020). Social presence can be defined as “the feeling of being there with a “real” person” (Oh et al., 2018, p. 1). Compared to other common interview formats, such as face-to-face (FTF) interviews, but also videoconference interviews, AVIs have a low level of social presence because they do not allow direct communication between interviewer and interviewee (Basch et al., 2020; Lukacik et al., 2022).

Fortunately, there are design features of AVIs that can increase feelings of social presence (Lukacik et al., 2022). In a recent study, Rizi and Roulin (2023) examined two such design features: video introductions and the question format. They compared three differently designed AVIs: (1) text introduction and text questions, (2) low-quality video introduction and low-quality video questions, and (3) high-quality video introduction and high-quality video questions. They found that the combination of video introduction and video questions increased perceived social presence, was associated with lower interview anxiety, facilitated both honest and deceptive impression management tactics, and improved applicants' interview performance. Media quality did not affect social presence and the other variables.

We conducted a study similar to Rizi and Roulin (2023) that differs in two aspects. First, we had the unique opportunity to experimentally manipulate the question format in a real hiring process. Second, all applicants watched the introduction video at the beginning of the interview, thus we only manipulated the question format. In line with Rizi and Roulin (2023), we expected that video questions would lead to stronger feelings of social presence. This may then have downstream effects particularly on applicant reactions but potentially also on other central interview variables such as interview anxiety and interview performance.

## 2 | HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 | Social presence

Social presence plays an important role in technology-mediated communication and is closely related to the concept of media richness (Oh et al., 2018). Media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986)

assumes that media differ in the amount of communicative information they can convey. A medium with higher media richness can transfer more communicative information, provides immediate feedback, transports verbal and nonverbal cues, and conveys personal emotions and feelings (Chapman et al., 2003; Daft & Lengel, 1986). Compared to FTF and videoconference interviews, AVIs are low in media richness because the interaction is one-way and there is no real-time communication or contact with the interviewer (Lukacik et al., 2022).

Media richness of AVIs can be increased through various design features such as video introductions or video questions (Lukacik et al., 2022; Rizi & Roulin, 2023). Specifically, video questions have the potential to create a sense of having a communication partner during an AVI, fostering a more natural conversational experience, and potentially boosting the perception of social presence. Therefore, the integration of video questions should theoretically increase social presence by increasing media richness (Lukacik et al., 2022). This has already been empirically tested by Rizi and Roulin (2023), who found a stronger social presence for the combination of a video introduction and video questions. In other domains such as online learning, video questions have also been found to increase social presence (Borup et al., 2012).

**Hypothesis 1.** The use of video questions leads to a higher perceived social presence compared to text questions.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2 | Downstream effects of video questions

Using video questions to increase perceived social presence may not be of primary interest for organizations using AVIs. The interest in the concept of social presence stems from the possibility that social presence influences important downstream variables (Basch et al., 2020; Lukacik et al., 2022); applicant reactions such as interpersonal treatment, applicants' impression management, and applicants' interview performance.

#### 2.2.1 | Applicant reactions

##### *Interpersonal treatment*

To explain how design features of AVIs may affect perceptions of justice and fairness, we draw on Gilliland's (1993) model of applicant reactions to personnel selection processes. Gilliland (1993) has distinguished several rules that can shape perceptions of justice and fairness. One rule is interpersonal treatment, which is defined as the applicant's feeling of being treated with respect and warmth during the application process (Gilliland, 1993).

The use of AVIs can impair perceptions of interpersonal treatment compared to videoconference interviews (Langer et al., 2017). One possible reason for this could be that there is no personal interaction in AVIs. Ultimately, this means that applicants are not treated badly, but rather not treated at all (Langer et al., 2017).

This could change by using video questions. In contrast to text questions, even short video questions can strengthen the feeling of being treated with respect and show that someone has put some effort into producing these videos.

**Hypothesis 2.** The use of video questions leads to a stronger perceived interpersonal treatment compared to text questions.

#### *Global fairness*

Global fairness in the sense of justice theory is often considered as an overall assessment of how positively or negatively applicants react to selection procedures (Colquitt et al., 2001; Gilliland, 1993). In other words, global perceptions of fairness are shaped by perceptions of procedural, informational, interpersonal, and distributive justice (Colquitt et al., 2001; Gilliland, 1993).

As we argued for Hypothesis 2, the use of video questions could improve perceptions of interpersonal treatment. Additionally, it could signal that the hiring organization is investing extra effort into the hiring process. It may help applicants to imagine that there is someone who will watch and evaluate their responses to the interview questions. Consequently, we expect the use of video questions to have an overall positive effect on applicant reactions (Bangerter et al., 2012). This overall effect can be efficiently captured by measuring global fairness perceptions.

**Hypothesis 3.** The use of video questions leads to a higher perceived global fairness compared to text questions.

#### *Interview anxiety*

AVIs may lead to higher levels of interview anxiety than FTF or videoconference interviews because applicants are confronted with an unfamiliar medium, do not receive immediate feedback on their performance, and do not receive verbal and nonverbal cues from the interviewer that might otherwise help reassure them (Lukacik et al., 2022). We expect that video questions, which can increase feelings of social presence, will reduce interview anxiety. Specifically, seeing a person before answering questions may feel more personal and warmer. This could provide some reassurance that helps to calm down interviewees during the interview.

**Hypothesis 4.** The use of video questions leads to less interview anxiety compared to text questions.

#### *Organizational attractiveness*

The use of video questions and the associated increase in media richness could also influence organizational attractiveness (Lukacik et al., 2022). Studies from the field of recruitment have found a relationship between media richness and organizational attractiveness. First, Baum and Kabst (2014) showed that media-rich websites (e.g., including videos of employees or a job search function) improve applicant attraction compared to printed advertisements. Second, media richness seems to be positively

associated with organizational attractiveness mediated by source credibility (Frasca & Edwards, 2017).

We propose that video questions can increase organizational attractiveness because seeing an employee of the organization may convey the feeling of meeting a real person from that organization. This provides an opportunity to give applicants a first impression of the organization, its values, or the organizational climate (Bangerter et al., 2012).

**Hypothesis 5.** The use of video questions leads to a more positive perception of organizational attractiveness compared to text questions.

### 2.2.2 | Impression management

Impression management includes several tactics that applicants use in job interviews to present themselves in a better way and to influence the outcome of the interview (Roulin & Bourdage, 2017). Moreover, impression management is considered a behavior that occurs in both, real or imagined social situations (Schlenker, 1980). Compared to FTF and videoconference interviews, applicants in AVIs seem to have a lower tendency to use impression management (Basch et al., 2020). There is evidence that this is due to lower levels of perceived social presence, which mediates the effect of the interview medium on impression management (Basch et al., 2020). In line with this, Lukacik et al. (2022) proposed that design features that increase media richness can also influence impression management. When using video questions where an employee asks the questions, an AVI may feel more like a social situation, leading to a stronger feeling of social presence. Consequently, applicants should have a stronger tendency to present themselves in a positive way, resulting in a stronger use of impression management.

**Hypothesis 6.** The use of video questions leads to more use of impression management compared to text questions.

### 2.2.3 | Interview performance

Interview performance ratings are often lower in technology-mediated interviews compared to FTF interviews (Basch et al., 2021; Blacksmith et al., 2016). The possible reasons for this are not yet fully understood, but a recent study showed that differences in social presence and impression management may contribute to the differences in interview performance ratings (Basch et al., 2021).

There are several ways how the use of video questions may affect interview performance. They all relate to the possibly higher perceived social presence that video questions in AVIs may cause. First, as Rizi and Roulin (2023) illustrate, applicants receive more social cues (verbal and nonverbal such as a more emotional tone) from the interviewer asking the questions and could react to these cues. Second, interview anxiety may negatively affect

applicant's performance (Powell et al., 2018; or see McCarthy et al., 2021 for a field study supporting the negative correlation between interview anxiety and applicant performance). As video questions may lead to lower interview anxiety (see Hypothesis 4), they could positively affect performance ratings. Third, as we argued for Hypothesis 6, the use of video questions may lead to more use of impression management. This, in turn, could lead to higher performance, as performance ratings are positively associated with honest impression management (Ho et al., 2021).

**Hypothesis 7.** The use of video questions leads to higher interview performance ratings compared to text questions.

### 3 | METHOD

#### 3.1 | Procedure

##### 3.1.1 | Overview

We collected data in cooperation with a medium-sized German company operating in the field of electrotechnical installations during a hiring process from July 2021 until the end of 2021. Applications were for different entry-level positions requiring different academic backgrounds (i.e., trainee positions requiring a university degree, vocational training not requiring a university degree).

Applicants received an invitation link to the AVI, which was conducted by an external provider. Applicants had 14 days to participate in the AVI. If they did not participate during this time, they were offered the option to conduct a telephone interview.<sup>2</sup> After completing the AVI, they were informed that the hiring process was over and were asked to voluntarily participate in a university research study. They were informed that these data would not be used by the hiring company and would only be available to the researchers.

##### 3.1.2 | Experimental design and AVI questions

In the AVI, all applicants first watched an introduction video,<sup>3</sup> in which a company employee wearing a t-shirt with the company's logo welcomed them and provided information about the AVI (e.g., why the company decided to use AVIs). Next, applicants participated in an AVI consisting of one tutorial question to familiarize them with the AVI interview format and five actual interview questions. Applicants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions.<sup>4</sup> In the video condition, applicants received the interview questions as text and additionally as a video in which a different employee of the company, again wearing a t-shirt with the company's logo, asked the question. In the text condition, applicants received the interview questions as text only. After reading the questions (text condition) or reading and watching the questions (video condition), applicants in all conditions recorded their answers. Applicants were allowed to re-watch their

recordings and could rerecord it up to three times before submitting. Applicants were also allowed to restart the entire AVI (we discuss the possible effects of the possibility to restart the entire AVI in Section 5). The preparation time and the time to respond to each question was 60 s.

#### 3.2 | Sample

We invited  $N = 188$  applicants to the AVI, 94 randomly assigned to each condition. Only participants who completed the relevant parts of the questionnaire were included in the final sample. In the video condition, 75 applicants attended the interview and 43 completed the questionnaire. In the text condition, 66 applicants attended the interview and 35 completed the questionnaire. Two of the applicants who completed the questionnaire reported their data should not be used for the study, thus the final sample consisted of  $N = 76$  applicants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 23.89$  years,  $SD = 5.54$ ). Most applicants reported German as their first language (75%), 44% held a university's degree (bachelor or master), and the rest had finished school but had no university degree. From the final sample, 8% had never participated in a job interview, 92% had participated in at least one job interview ( $M = 4.87$  interviews,  $SD = 5.15$ ), from which 11% had participated in an AVI before ( $M = 1.38$  AVIs,  $SD = 0.74$ ).

#### 3.3 | Measures

All items were measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).<sup>5</sup> If not otherwise mentioned, the items have been translated into German and checked using back-translation by the authors.

*Social presence* was measured using four items from Short et al. (1976). Applicants were asked to assess pairs of adjectives (e.g., "impersonal–personal") concerning the interview on a bipolar scale from 1 to 5.

*Interpersonal treatment* was measured using three items from the respective subscale of a German version (Warszta, 2012) of the selection procedural justice scale (Bauer et al., 2001). A sample item was "I was treated politely during the interview." *Global fairness* was measured using two items from Warszta (2012). A sample item was "Overall, the selection method was fair." *Interview anxiety* was measured using the scale by McCarthy and Goffin (2004). We used five items, one from each subscale (communication, appearance, social, performance, and behavioral anxiety). A sample item was "I felt queasy in my stomach during the interview." We measured *organizational attractiveness* using the slightly adapted version of the German version (Becker, 2008) of the organizational attractiveness scale from Highhouse et al. (2003). We used four items from the subscale attraction. A sample item was "This company is an attractive employer overall."

To measure *impression management*, we used one item from the honest self-promotion subscale from the impression management

scale by Bourdage et al. (2018). The item was "I made sure that they were aware of my skills and abilities." Interview performance was rated by HR professionals of the company. For each question, HR professionals rated applicants' job fit on a scale from 1 (*no fit*) to 5 (*perfect fit*). We calculated the average of the ratings of the five interview questions for the overall interview performance. Of the data, 82% of the questions were single-rated and 18% were double-rated (in these cases, we used the average ratings of both raters).

## 4 | RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the dependent variables. We conducted *t* tests to test our hypotheses. Table 2 shows the *p* values and effect sizes (Cohen's *d*). There were no significant differences for any of the dependent variables. With respect to our hypotheses, this means that video questions did not significantly increase social presence, interpersonal

treatment, global fairness, organizational attractiveness, impression management, and interview performance, and did not reduce interview anxiety.

An analysis of the effect sizes showed that most effects pointed in the opposite direction than predicted. This was the case for all variables except for organizational attractiveness and interview performance. Furthermore, the effect sizes were mostly small, ranging from  $d = -0.07$  for global fairness to  $d = -0.41$  for social presence.

## 5 | DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the influence of video questions on social presence and important applicant-related variables. Contrary to our expectations, the use of video questions did not increase social presence and did not lead to the predicted downstream effect on other variables. Because we considered social presence to be the

**TABLE 1** Means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the overall sample.

Variable	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Social presence	2.88	0.89	.82							
2. Interpersonal treatment	3.96	0.78	.32**	.90						
3. Global fairness	3.68	1.06	.61**	.48**	.82					
4. Interview anxiety	2.89	0.80	-.36**	-.15	-.27*	.75				
5. Organizational attractiveness	4.63	0.43	.20	.24*	.45**	-.10	.82			
6. Impression management	3.34	0.76	.26*	.20	.32**	-.12	.30**	—		
7. Interview performance	3.61	0.80	-.07	.12	-.05	.11	.13	.06	.93	
8. Experimental condition	—	—	-.20	-.03	-.04	-.07	.08	-.15	.03	—

Note:  $N = 76$ . Coding of experimental condition: 0 = text, 1 = video questions. Italic numbers in the diagonal represent Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the scales.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

**TABLE 2** Means, standard deviations, *p* values, effect sizes, and confidence intervals for the *t* tests.

Variable	Condition text ( $n = 34$ )		Condition video questions ( $n = 42$ )		<i>t</i> (74)	<i>p</i>	Effect size (Cohen's <i>d</i> )	95% CI for <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD				
H1 Social presence	3.07	0.91	2.71	0.85	-1.78	.96	-0.41	[-0.87, 0.05]
H2 Interpersonal treatment	3.99	0.78	3.94	0.79	-0.25	.60	-0.06	[-0.51, 0.39]
H3 Global fairness	3.72	1.05	3.64	1.09	-0.32	.62	-0.07	[-0.53, 0.38]
H4 Interview anxiety	2.96	0.84	2.84	0.78	-0.62	.73	-0.14	[-0.60, 0.31]
H5 Organizational attractiveness	4.60	0.46	4.67	0.41	0.71	.24	0.16	[-0.29, 0.62]
H6 Impression management	3.47	0.75	3.24	0.76	-1.34	.91	-0.31	[-0.76, 0.15]
H7 Interview performance	3.59	0.84	3.63	0.78	0.24	.40	0.06	[-0.40, 0.51]

Note:  $N = 76$ . The direction of the *p* values and the effect sizes *d* refer to the direction of the hypotheses.

Abbreviations: CI, confidence interval.

variable causing the downstream effect, we will mainly focus on social presence in this discussion.

## 5.1 | Theoretical implications, limitations, and future studies

Our findings are contrary to the recent findings by Rizi and Roulin (2023) and are not in line with theoretical propositions regarding the effects of media richness and social presence (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Lukacik et al., 2022; Oh et al., 2018). We see five possible explanations for our findings. First, we had limited statistical power with a sample of 76 applicants. Although having a sample of actual applicants is a unique characteristic and strength of our study, it also meant that we had a limited applicant pool and had to hope that applicants would participate in the voluntary questionnaire after completing an actual high-stakes interview.

Second, our study took place in an actual hiring process. It is possible that other aspects of the hiring process had a stronger effect on applicants than changing the question format (e.g., the overall length of the process; Hausknecht et al., 2004). If applicants considered the entire hiring process to form their reactions to the hiring process and the organization, this may have limited the effect of our relatively small intervention.

Third, a surprising finding was that the mean value of perceived social presence was higher in the text condition than in the video condition. This could indicate that video questions may also have negative effects. For example, it could be argued that video questions reduce efficiency for applicants, as loading videos and then watching them increases the time it takes to complete the interview.

Fourth, our study design was similar to that of Rizi and Roulin (2023), but there are notable differences that may have led to different results. Rizi and Roulin (2023) compared a text condition (text introduction and text questions) to a video condition (video introduction and video questions), which means that there was a group of applicants who never saw a representative of the organization in a video. In our study, all applicants watched an introduction video and we manipulated the question format (text vs. video). The fact that all applicants watched the introduction video may have increased media richness to a point where there is not much to be gained from additional video questions (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Lukacik et al., 2022). In other words, the availability of a video introduction may have already saturated the media richness of the AVI and additional video questions did not further increase media richness. Consequently, video questions did not have additional effects on applicants. Another aspect is that in the study by Rizi and Roulin (2023), the same actor recorded the introduction video and the video questions. As they argued, this could prevent unintended effects of different actors. In our study, different representatives of the hiring company recorded the introduction video and the video questions. This may have had unanticipated effects on our results.

Fifth, another explanation for the lack of differences between the conditions is that the hiring organization chose to give applicants a lot of flexibility in the AVI (e.g., the opportunity to re-watch their recordings,

re-record the responses up to three times, and even to restart the entire AVI). As the results by Dunlop et al. (2022) indicate, this kind of flexibility may be rare in practice, as other hiring organizations seem to offer less flexibility in AVIs (e.g., often no opportunity to rerecord even single responses). Possibly, the applicant-friendly design of the AVI in our study may have strongly affected applicants so that small features such as using video questions had no additional impact. Unfortunately, we have no data on how often applicants have used the flexibility features offered to them except for the number of restarts of the AVI. This option was chosen by 53% who restarted the AVI at least once. Of those who started the AVI at least once, there was a mean value of restarts of  $M = 4.62$  ( $SD = 4.99$ ) and a median value of 3.00 in the text condition, and a mean value of restarts of  $M = 3.84$  ( $SD = 4.44$ ) and a median value of 2.00 in the video condition.<sup>6</sup> The number of restarts did not differ significantly between the conditions ( $t(74) = 1.21$ ,  $p = .23$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.28$ ). Controlling for the influence of the number of restarts on the dependent variables did not affect our results.

Future studies could examine additive and interactive effects between different AVI design features. On the one hand, our study implies that two design features that both aim to increase media richness may not have additive effects. Instead, increasing media richness through one design feature (introduction video) may diminish the effects of the other one (video questions). On the other hand, our study may indicate that there may be limited effects of video questions when there is a flexible and applicant-friendly design of the AVI (e.g., allowing rerecordings or restarting the AVI). To date, there is little insight on additive and interactive effects of design features in AVIs because only a few studies have examined the combination of design features (e.g., Roulin et al., 2023).

## 5.2 | Practical implications

Organizations need to consider the costs and benefits of the different design features of AVIs. For example, the production of an introduction video and of video questions make AVIs more expensive. These costs must be considered against the expected and actual benefits of each design feature. Our results may indicate that organizations using an introduction video or that allow applicants some flexibility in the AVI process (e.g., allow to rerecord interview responses) may avoid the costs associated with video questions because they may not have additional desirable effects.

## 5.3 | Conclusion

AVIs are a promising alternative to other interview formats and offer a large range of design options. Our study investigated the impact of video questions on social presence and hypothesized downstream effects on applicants in an actual hiring process. The current findings contrast with those of a recent study (Rizi & Roulin, 2023), indicating that exploring effects of the combination of design features could be a promising avenue for future research.



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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data cannot be made available since this is data from an actual selection process.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The study was preregistered on AsPredicted [https://aspredicted.org/BGU\\_IPF](https://aspredicted.org/BGU_IPF) with the amendment <https://aspredicted.org/q266h.pdf>, which was added because the hiring organization slightly changed the hiring process in a way that for some positions, applicants first conducted the AVI and then an online test, while applicants for other positions received the invitation to the AVI in parallel to an online test and could choose which to start first.

<sup>2</sup> Data from telephone interviews were not included in this study.

<sup>3</sup> Before we started collecting data, we discussed with the company whether we could also experimentally manipulate the introduction video. In the end, the organization decided that all applicants should watch the introduction video.

<sup>4</sup> We also checked for possible imbalances in the assignment of participants to the experimental conditions that might have occurred despite the random assignment. We checked imbalances for demographic and other background variables (language, education, position applied for, experience with job interviews, and experience with AVIs). We did not find any imbalances. A table including the descriptive information of all these variables per condition can be found in the Supporting Information.

<sup>5</sup> In the preregistration, we mention additional hypotheses and additional measures. These measures were procedural justice (scales: chance to perform, consistency), deceptive impression management (slight image creation; single-item), privacy concerns, organizational identification, acceptance, time efficiency, flexibility of the interview process, perceived effort on the part of the company, and self-rated interview performance. We decided not to include part of the hypotheses and measures in this paper because (a) the theoretical basis for certain hypotheses seemed to weak, (b) some hypotheses had only been of interest in the context of telephone interviews (e.g., consistency), (c) certain measures were gathered for exploratory purposes or on request of the company, and (d) we decided to keep this paper a short research report.

<sup>6</sup> Descriptive information regarding the number of restarts per condition can be found in the Supporting Information.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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