

## Exploring the Effectiveness of Blind Recruitment as a Recruitment Method: A Critical Literature Review

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### Abstract

Recruitment, a pivotal function in human resources management, significantly influences organizational performance. However, a notable drawback lies in the potential bias introduced through factors such as demographics, appearance, and cultural differences during candidate selection. Existing literature reviews indicate a limited focus on blind recruitment, revealing a gap in knowledge. This study aims to address this gap by revisiting the concept of blind recruitment, with objectives including the identification of new themes, exploration of blind recruitment concepts, and a critical review of the approach.

The author adopts a desk research approach, conducting an extensive literature review through systematic review methods, integrating multiple research sources into a cohesive project. Data is gathered from past research articles relevant to the topic. Results suggest that blind recruitment serves as a viable solution to minimize bias in the recruitment and selection process. By eliminating characteristics that may lead to bias, companies employing blind recruitment can ensure the selection of the most qualified candidates for vacant positions. Key themes identified include hidden demographic data, skill-based selection, avoidance of social media pre-screening, and anonymization of initial interviews. Despite its advantages, criticisms in the practical context of blind recruitment are also acknowledged.

**Keywords** – Blind Recruitment, Bias, Skill-Based Selection, Recruitment Method, Diversity

### 1 Introduction

Blind recruitment involves the intentional removal of specific characteristics from resumes that could potentially trigger biases from hiring managers. Personal data such as name, age, gender, education, and years of experience are omitted, placing emphasis on job-related, transferable, and adaptable skills (Vivek, 2019). Recruitment is a critical organizational activity, impacting overall performance. Effective employee selection can result in high individual performance, contributing to increased organizational performance within the industry (Foley & Williamson, 2018).

Traditional recruitment processes are not without flaws, and biases stemming from demographics, appearance, and cultural differences can impede the selection of the best candidate. Such biases, whether conscious or unconscious, represent a significant drawback in the recruitment process. The introduction of "blind recruitment" serves as a solution to address these biases (Beattie & Johnson, 2012). By removing characteristics that may lead to biases, blind recruitment allows companies to ensure the selection of the most qualified candidates based on merit (Egeberg, Gornitzka, & Trondal, 2017).

Blind recruitment, by eliminating biases inherent in traditional recruitment, contributes to diversifying organizations and facilitates the selection of the right candidates for available positions (Krause et al., 2012). This paper delves into the concept of blind recruitment and its components through an exploration of literature and online information sources. Many organizations adopt blind recruitment as a universal method to implement a fair recruitment system and attract the most talented employees (Krause et al., 2012).

### Rationale and Problem Statement

The literature review underscores the significant positive impact of blind recruitment on organizational performance, attributing it to the enhancement of workplace diversity. By focusing on skills and merits rather than demographic variables, blind recruitment builds a workforce with higher skills, ultimately elevating organizational performance (Vivek, 2018; Åslund & Skans, 2012; Banerjee & Gupta, 2019). Besides improving performance, blind recruitment offers additional benefits such as increased choices for both employers and employees, emphasizing skills over discrimination, and promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce. The method is considered more scientific, using the same assessment for every candidate and eliminating unconscious bias (Derous & Decoster, 2017).

However, drawbacks exist that may compromise organizational performance and cost-effectiveness. Blind recruitment relies on an unbiased team, and if biases persist within the organization, the method becomes ineffective. It is emphasized that blind recruitment is not a magical solution for all diversity and inclusion issues, and its effectiveness is contingent on addressing broader organizational biases. Concerns are raised about potential negative impacts on recruitment staff morale, as the adoption of blind recruitment may be perceived as a lack of trust in their judgment (Banerjee & Gupta, 2019; Foley & Williamson, 2018).

The literature reveals inconsistency in existing sources regarding the benefits and drawbacks of blind recruitment. This study aims to investigate the concept of blind recruitment, identify its major elements, and present a systematic review-based critique of the approach. The primary objective is to discern the nuances of blind recruitment and provide a comprehensive understanding of its benefits and limitations.

## **2 Literature Review**

Blind recruitment stands out as an effective approach for mitigating bias in the recruiting and selection process. By eliminating characteristics that could contribute to bias, this method ensures that companies select the most qualified applicants for vacant positions, thereby fostering diversity in the workforce. The enhanced diversity achieved through blind recruitment can positively impact organizational performance by leveraging a variety of skills and talents among employees. This approach enables companies to navigate external challenges more effectively by tapping into the diverse perspectives within their workforce.

Blind recruitment serves as a powerful tool for eliminating unconscious bias from the corporate recruitment process when implemented correctly (Caers & Castelyns, 2011). The method yields several advantages for organizations, including diversity, improved applicant experience, time efficiency, and cost savings. Not only does blind recruitment address recruiting prejudices, but it also promotes diversity in the workplace by actively addressing conscious and unconscious biases related to race, ethnicity, gender, and age. The proposed study aims to delve into the concepts of blind recruitment, exploring its nuances and shedding light on its potential benefits, in alignment with the insights provided by scholars such as Foley & Williamson (2018) and Krause et al. (2012).

### **Blind Recruitment for Removing Bias Factors.**

Blind recruitment proves effective in minimizing biases during the skills acquisition process by removing information such as name, gender, religion, socioeconomic background, academic qualifications, and professional experience from resumes. This ensures that candidates are evaluated based on their merits rather than personal attributes or background (Vivek, 2019). The method contributes to increased diversity within organizations, aiding in the selection of the most suitable candidates for open positions (Behaghel, Crepon, & Le Barbanchon, 2015; Krause, Rinne & Zimmermann, 2012).

To optimize diversity, organizations should initiate inclusive recruitment processes, using job descriptions that encourage applications from diverse candidates and avoiding gendered language. Phrases and titles with gender implications, as well as words related to ethnicity and age, should be replaced with gender-neutral and skills-focused language (Erica, 2019; Collier & Zhang, 2016). Using tools like the Gender Decoder can help organizations eliminate gendered language and bias from job descriptions.

While demographic information may be crucial in some cases, organizations must carefully consider what information is truly necessary for the recruitment process. Names, zip codes, and headshots on resumes can provide identity clues that may counter the blind recruitment approach. Awareness of potential bias arising from the recruitment process is crucial, and organizations should adapt their practices accordingly (Foley & Williamson, 2018; Krause et al., 2011).

Academic information, traditionally considered a key factor, may not accurately predict job success. Blind recruitment advocates for focusing on candidates' skills rather than academic credentials, as success in the workplace is not solely determined by educational background (Åslund & Skans, 2012; Jones & Urban, 2013). This shift in perspective emphasizes the importance of evaluating candidates based on their relevant skills and experiences.

The review raises questions about the practical application of blind recruitment, emphasizing that its effectiveness depends on an organization's specific requirements. The debate continues on which factors should be hidden, the types of organizations that can implement this approach, and the stages at which it is most applicable. The decision to hide basic information from CVs is deemed worthwhile based on an organization's individual needs and objectives.

### **Blind Recruitment for Skill-Based Selection and Diversity Workforce**

Blind recruitment is widely employed during the screening stage, where applicants' skills and characteristics are assessed through various evaluations, and the results are compared against predetermined benchmarks. Despite its advantages,

blind recruitment has limitations, such as the potential for identity codes to be inferred from candidates' hobbies, sports, and volunteering experiences. Implementing principles during the screening and interviewing stages can also be challenging (Foley & Williamson, 2018).

To enhance diversity in their staff, organizations must initiate efforts at the beginning of the recruitment process. Inclusive job descriptions that encourage diverse candidates to apply should be used, avoiding gendered language and terms related to race or age. Emphasizing the skills needed rather than specific demographics is ideal for attracting diverse candidates (Åslund & Skans, 2012).

Pre-employment assessments play a crucial role in collecting data on candidates' softer skills, abilities, personality characteristics, collaboration, and integrity. These assessments can be conducted anonymously, providing organizations with accurate information for decision-making. Test assignments, completed by candidates at home, can be anonymized for review by the organization, contributing to a fair assessment of skills (Jones & Urban, 2013; Krause et al., 2011; Rinne, 2018).

When implementing new processes like blind recruitment, organizations need to track their effectiveness by comparing the before and after states. This involves evaluating standard demographics of candidates and hires before and after the introduction of blind recruitment practices. Regular tracking of these metrics over time allows organizations to assess the impact on diversity and make informed decisions on whether additional steps are needed to further reduce bias (Rinne, 2018). Regular recruitment cycles may provide more immediate insights, while less frequent cycles may require a longer timeframe for a comprehensive assessment (Erica, 2019).

### **Blind Recruitment for Removing Unconscious Bias**

Blind recruitment serves as a powerful tool for eliminating biases in the hiring process, contributing to increased workplace diversity. The objective of the study is to investigate the factors influencing blind recruitment, particularly addressing issues related to race, ethnicity, gender, and age (Foley & Williamson, 2018; Krause et al., 2012).

Despite individuals believing they are open-minded and unbiased, unconscious bias remains a pervasive influence. This theory suggests that a person's life experiences shape their thoughts and decisions without conscious awareness. Even highly recognizable individuals can be affected by unconscious bias, as discussed by Malcolm Gladwell in his book *Blink* (2006) (Dave Anderson, 2019).

In the contemporary recruitment landscape, scanning candidates' social media profiles has become a common practice. However, this process may introduce bias as the information obtained from social media can influence perceptions of candidates. Organizations should exercise caution and strike a balance when screening candidates through social media. While social media screening can provide valuable insights, it is advisable to conduct such checks after completing the first round of interviews. This approach ensures that candidates are initially evaluated based on their skills and qualifications without the influence of bias (Banerjee & Gupta, 2019; Rinne, 2018).

While social media monitoring can be a valuable tool in the recruitment process, finding the right balance is crucial. Certain information on social media profiles may contribute to unconscious bias, either positively or negatively impacting a candidate's chances. Screening social media profiles after the initial interviews allows organizations to assess candidates objectively based on their skills and qualifications, while also providing an opportunity to address any potential red flags that may emerge (Erica, 2019). This approach aligns with the goal of blind recruitment to ensure a fair and unbiased evaluation of candidates.

### **Anonymization of Initial Interviews**

Anonymized interviews are considered ideal for blind recruitment, yet their implementation poses challenges, and even phone interviews may introduce biases. Despite the questionable nature of anonymizing initial interviews, organizations can ensure unbiased candidate selection through various methods. One approach is to use email or live chat to obtain responses from candidates. Another emerging method involves automated interviewing robots, eliminating human intervention and potential bias in the interview stage (Jones & Urban, 2013; Krause et al., 2011).

Anonymizing interviews is inherently challenging, as telephone interviews may reveal key features such as gender or age that could lead to biases. While face-to-face interactions are eventually necessary, anonymizing the initial interview helps ensure the right candidates are selected without bias (Erica, 2019).

Several methods can be employed to conduct anonymous interviews, including emailing candidates a Q&A form or incorporating a live chat option for interactive communication. The use of automated robot interviewing is gaining

popularity, with the Chabot conducting and reporting back on the initial interview, thereby eliminating human bias from the equation (Erica, 2019).

In a systematic review, the researcher identified four thematic elements related to blind recruitment, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Thematic Model Table**

Theme 01	Blind Recruitment to Remove Bias Factors.
Theme 02	Blind recruitment for skill-based selection and diversity work-force
Theme 03	Blind recruitment to remove unconscious bias
Theme 04	Anonymization of initial interviews

### **Criticisms of Research Studies in Blind Recruitment**

Blind recruitment can be effective in mitigating unconscious bias during the hiring process, ensuring that strong candidates are evaluated solely based on their qualifications. However, achieving a completely blind recruitment process that eliminates all biases, including unconscious biases, is challenging. Despite efforts to minimize bias, it may still find its way into the interview process, especially considering the diverse backgrounds of candidates. To enhance the effectiveness of blind recruitment, organizations can integrate additional methods, such as establishing diverse interview panels and utilizing interview scorecards for comprehensive applicant assessments (Erica, 2019).

While techniques like blind recruitment contribute to reducing unconscious bias, they may not completely eliminate it. If biases persist within a team, even unconsciously, there is a risk of overlooking qualified candidates or experiencing gaps in the recruitment process (Erica, 2019). It is crucial to educate employees about unconscious bias, emphasizing its potential impact on the recruitment process and the overall success of the business. Providing examples of how bias can manifest, conducting training courses on recognizing biases, and fostering discussions among colleagues are essential steps in creating awareness (Erica, 2019).

Employees should be encouraged to adopt a perspective of substitution, asking themselves whether their perceptions would remain the same if one candidate were replaced by another. This self-reflection can help individuals recognize and challenge their biases. Ultimately, teams should be guided on how to collectively eliminate biases during the recruitment and interview process, fostering a fair and inclusive environment (Erica, 2019).

### **Critical and Reliable Information**

The existing research on blind recruitment has both strengths and limitations. Some key areas within blind recruitment lack critical and reliable information, and certain aspects have been insufficiently explored by previous researchers. While best practices for blind recruitment have been theoretically addressed, there is a scarcity of literature evidence on these practices, urging future researchers to delve deeper into this aspect.

Unconscious bias, a significant component of blind recruitment, has been moderately addressed in the literature. Although there are insights into how individuals may harbor biases unknowingly, there is room for more comprehensive information. Research has shown that HR managers may lack confidence in recruiting new workers without being influenced by biases, emphasizing the need for further exploration in this area.

The benefits of blind recruitment have received a moderate amount of research attention, highlighting advantages such as increased workforce diversity, improved language skills, and potential bottom-line growth. However, more research is needed to explore additional benefits and the broader impact on organizational performance.

On the contrary, the literature on the disadvantages of blind recruitment is limited. Identified factors include the potential hindrance of honest workplace recruitment, prolonged screening processes, and the risk of undermining diversity objectives. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct more studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the drawbacks associated with blind recruitment.

Despite these limitations, the definitions and nature of blind recruitment have been well-addressed in the existing literature. Blind recruitment involves the process of removing identifying details from resumes and applications to ensure a fair and unbiased selection process.

## 8 Conclusion, Implication and Recommendation

### Conclusion

It sounds like the study delves into the multifaceted aspects of blind recruitment, examining both its benefits and challenges. The focus on removing bias and increasing diversity aligns with the overarching goal of creating a fair and inclusive hiring process. The themes you mentioned, such as skill-based selection and the avoidance of social media pre-screening, underscore the various strategies employed in blind recruitment to foster an unbiased evaluation of candidates.

By exploring themes related to removing unconscious bias and anonymizing initial interviews, the study seems to address the nuanced complexities involved in implementing blind recruitment effectively. It's encouraging to see that the research investigates not only the advantages but also the potential drawbacks and challenges associated with blind recruitment, providing a more comprehensive understanding of its implications.

### Implications

It's impressive how the study aims to bridge the existing gap in research studies on blind recruitment and provides valuable insights into its benefits and drawbacks. By identifying themes as sub-elements and implementation steps, the study not only contributes to the practical understanding of blind recruitment but also offers a roadmap for organizations looking to implement this approach.

The emphasis on the importance of blind recruitment for enhancing the image of a business is crucial. In today's diverse and inclusive landscape, businesses that prioritize fairness and merit-based selection processes can indeed improve their overall reputation. The study's applicability to various types of organizations, including small businesses, highlights the universal relevance of blind recruitment in improving business performance.

Furthermore, the study's contribution to academic knowledge on blind recruitment and its potential implications for future research adds another layer of significance. By addressing inconsistencies in existing sources, the study sets the stage for a more comprehensive and nuanced exploration of blind recruitment in organizational management.

### Recommendations

The key recommendations for blind recruitment outlined in the study are indeed practical and align with the goal of promoting fairness, diversity, and merit-based selection processes. Let's break down these recommendations:

**Hidden Demographic Data:** By avoiding the inclusion of demographic data in resumes and other selection materials, organizations can minimize the potential for bias based on characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, etc. This contributes to a more equitable and inclusive hiring process.

**Skill-Based Selection:** Prioritizing skills over personal information ensures that candidates are selected based on their abilities and qualifications rather than factors unrelated to job performance. This approach can lead to a more competent and diverse workforce.

**Avoidance of Social Media Pre-screening:** Recognizing the limitations of social media in providing an accurate representation of an individual, organizations are advised to refrain from pre-screening candidates through these platforms. This helps prevent biases that may arise from incomplete or outdated social media profiles.

**Anonymization of Initial Interviews:** Introducing anonymization in the initial stages of the interview process can further enhance the objectivity of blind recruitment. By concealing personal information during the initial interviews, organizations can focus on evaluating candidates solely based on their responses and qualifications.

These recommendations collectively contribute to creating a level playing field for all candidates, promoting diversity, and fostering a more inclusive work environment. The emphasis on updating knowledge through the latest information sources reinforces the dynamic nature of recruitment practices and encourages organizations to stay informed about evolving strategies and best practices.

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