

Classifying Job Interview Questions Based on Multifunctional Purposes

Sasithorn Payakkapet¹, Suwaree Yordchim², Angvarrah Lieungnapar^{3*}

¹⁻³Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand
E-mail: ¹s64123405018@ssru.ac.th, ²suwaree.yo@ssru.ac.th, ^{3*}angvarrah.li@ssru.ac.th

Abstract

This study investigates the purposes of job interviews and examines how interview questions align with these objectives, with a particular focus on their multifunctional nature. A total of 346 commonly asked job interview questions were analyzed and categorized into six primary purposes identified through a comprehensive literature review: evaluating skills and abilities, assessing fit with the company, clarifying job expectations, building relationships, observing behavioral responses, and facilitating decision-making and compliance. The results reveal that the majority of questions (95.09%) focus on evaluating skills and abilities, with a notable emphasis on interpersonal skills (24.57%) and problem-solving (23.41%). Questions addressing motivation, cultural fit, and adaptability further highlight the strategic use of interviews to assess long-term compatibility and alignment with organizational goals. A key finding is the multifunctionality of many interview questions, where a single question serves multiple purposes, with some addressing up to four purposes simultaneously. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of interview questions in fulfilling diverse recruitment objectives and underscores the importance of a balanced approach that evaluates technical competencies, cultural alignment, and ethical considerations.

Keywords: Candidate Assessment, Job Interview Questions, Job Interview Purposes

1. Introduction

Job interviews are an integral part of the recruitment and selection process, serving multiple purposes for both employers and candidates. For employers, interviews provide a platform to assess candidates' qualifications, skills, and potential fit for the role (Isai et al., 2020). Interviews also enable the evaluation of interpersonal attributes such as emotional regulation, adaptability, and communication skills, which are often critical in determining hiring decisions (Urquijo et al., 2019).

From the candidates' perspective, interviews serve as an opportunity to gather insights about the organization, its culture, and the specifics of the role. This process allows candidates to evaluate whether the organization aligns with their personal values and career goals, which can directly impact their job satisfaction and long-term commitment (Kutcher et al., 2010). Moreover, candidates use interviews to clarify job expectations, understand team dynamics, and explore potential career growth opportunities (McCarthy & Cheng, 2014).

Beyond evaluation, interviews serve a relational purpose, facilitating rapport-building between candidates and interviewers. Candidates who can effectively communicate and present themselves authentically often leave a favorable impression, increasing their chances of success (Wilhelmy et al., 2020). Additionally, strong interpersonal connections established during interviews can influence hiring outcomes (Cuddy et al., 2015).

Although existing literature acknowledges the varied purposes of job interviews, research on classifying interview questions according to these purposes remains limited. Most studies focus on categorizing questions into types, such as technical, situational, or behavioral (Podsakoff, 2011). However, few address the alignment of questions with the overarching purposes of interviews, particularly the idea that a single question can simultaneously serve multiple purposes. This gap highlights the need to explore how interview questions fulfill different objectives, enhancing our understanding of their role in the recruitment process.

This study aims to bridge the gap in existing research by exploring the relationship between job interview questions and their intended purposes. Specifically, it seeks to identify all possible purposes of each interview question under the assumption that a single question could serve multiple purposes. This perspective is based on the understanding that the purposes of job interview questions are often complex and interconnected, making it difficult to pinpoint a single definitive purpose for any given question. By addressing these complexities, the study provides insights into how interview questions can be designed, analyzed, and interpreted to optimize interview effectiveness, ensuring they fulfill multiple objectives effectively. This study contributes to the understanding of the multifaceted roles of job interview questions, offering a framework for designing and interpreting questions that cater to diverse and overlapping interview objectives.

Objectives

- 2.1 To investigate and synthesize the purposes of job interviews as outlined in existing literature.
- 2.2 To classify job interview questions based on their alignment with the identified purposes, emphasizing the multifunctionality of individual questions in addressing multiple purposes.

2. Methodology

The research began with a thorough review of existing literature to identify and summarize the purposes of job interviews. Insights from this review were used to develop a framework for classifying job interview questions. A total of 346 commonly asked interview questions were gathered from 10 reputable websites known for featuring frequently used questions in the hiring process. The collected questions were systematically analyzed and categorized based on the purposes identified in the literature review, operating under the assumption that a single question could fulfill multiple purposes. To ensure the classification was accurate and impartial, three researchers independently reviewed and categorized the questions. Any differences in the categorizations were resolved through collaborative discussions until a consensus was reached. This iterative process ensured the reliability of the classification framework and allowed for a detailed analysis of how individual questions could serve multiple purposes.

3. Results

The analysis of existing literature revealed six overarching purposes of job interviews, each encompassing multiple subcategories. These purposes provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the objectives that job interview questions aim to achieve.

1. Evaluate Skills and Abilities

This purpose focuses on assessing the candidate's qualifications and potential to perform the job. It includes evaluating the candidate's overall suitability for the role (1.1), assessing their technical skills (1.2), analyzing their problem-solving abilities (1.3),

examining adaptability to change (1.4), evaluating interpersonal and communication skills (1.5), and identifying unique qualities or contributions the candidate can offer (1.6).

2. Assess Fit with the Company

This category determines whether the candidate aligns with the organization’s values and goals. It involves assessing compatibility with the company culture (2.1), evaluating alignment between the candidate’s career goals and organizational needs (2.2), and gauging the candidate’s motivation and commitment to the role (2.3).

3. Clarify Job Expectations

Interviews serve to establish mutual understanding of the role and responsibilities. This includes explaining the responsibilities and expectations of the position (3.1) and clarifying details in the candidate’s resume while addressing their questions (3.2).

4. Build Relationships

This purpose emphasizes creating a positive connection between the interviewer and the candidate. It involves establishing trust and rapport (4.1) and showcasing the company’s strengths and opportunities to attract talent (4.2).

5. Test Behavioral Responses

This purpose focuses on evaluating how candidates handle specific situations or challenges, particularly under stress or high-pressure scenarios (5.1).

6. Facilitate Decision-Making and Compliance

Interviews also support fair and informed decision-making while ensuring the hiring process adheres to ethical and legal standards. This includes aiding decision-making for both parties (6.1) and ensuring compliance with legal and ethical requirements (6.2).

The classification and analysis of 346 job interview questions revealed several important insights into how interview questions are aligned with their purposes and how they fulfill multiple objectives simultaneously (See Table 1).

Table 1 Categorization of Job Interview Questions Based on Job Interview Purposes

Purposes of Job Interview		No.of Questions	Percent
1. Evaluate Skills and Abilities (To focus on assessing the candidate’s qualifications and potential to perform the job)	1.1 Evaluate suitability for the role	62	17.92
	1.2 Assess technical skills	36	10.40
	1.3 Analyze problem-solving	81	23.41
	1.4 Examine adaptability	30	8.67
	1.5 Evaluate interpersonal skills	85	24.57
	1.6 Identify unique contributions.	63	18.21
	Total	329	95.09

2. Assess Fit with the Company (To Determine whether the candidate aligns with the organization's values and goals)	2.1 Assess company culture fit	40	11.56
	2.2 Evaluate alignment with career goals	27	7.80
	2.3 Gauge motivation and commitment	48	13.87
	Total	115	33.24
3. Clarify Job Expectations (To ensure mutual understanding of the role and responsibilities)	3.1 Explain responsibilities and expectations	14	4.05
	3.2 Clarify resume details/questions	25	7.23
	Total	38	10.98
4. Build Relationships (To focus on creating a positive connection between the interviewer and the candidate)	4.1 Establish trust and rapport	23	6.65
	4.2 Showcase company strengths	10	2.89
	Total	33	9.54
5. Test Behavioral Responses (To evaluate how the candidate handles specific situations or challenges)	5.1 Observe response to stress	40	11.56
	Total	40	11.56
6. Facilitate Decision-Making and Compliance (To support fair and informed decisions while ensuring ethical standards)	6.1 Support decision-making	59	17.05
	6.2 Ensure legal/ethical compliance	6	1.73
	Total	65	18.78

The analysis of job interview questions reveals their diverse purposes, reflecting the strategic role they play in recruitment. The majority of questions (95.09%) are designed to evaluate skills and abilities, emphasizing the importance of assessing candidates' qualifications and potential to perform the job. Within this category, questions focused on interpersonal skills (24.57%) and problem-solving abilities (23.41%) are the most prominent, highlighting employers' prioritization of these critical competencies. Additionally, questions addressing unique contributions (18.21%) and suitability for the role (17.92%) indicate that interviewers aim to understand candidates' distinct value and alignment with the role's requirements.

Questions aimed at assessing fit with the company account for 33.24% of the total, underscoring the significance of cultural alignment and long-term compatibility. Among these, questions targeting motivation and commitment (13.87%) and cultural fit (11.56%) are

particularly important. This suggests that employers value candidates who share the organization's vision and demonstrate enthusiasm and dedication to their roles, which are key factors for employee retention and satisfaction. Questions designed to clarify job expectations (10.98%) highlight the need for transparency in defining roles and responsibilities. These questions help ensure that both employers and candidates have a clear understanding of job requirements, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and enhancing satisfaction post-hiring. Although fewer in number, questions targeting building relationships (9.54%) reflect the interpersonal aspect of the interview process. By focusing on establishing trust and rapport (6.65%) and showcasing the company's strengths (2.89%), these questions contribute to creating a positive impression of the organization and improving its attractiveness to candidates. Behavioral testing questions (11.56%) play a crucial role in assessing candidates' ability to handle high-pressure situations, providing insights into their emotional regulation and problem-solving skills. Additionally, questions under the category of facilitating decision-making and compliance (18.78%) emphasize the importance of ethical and well-informed hiring practices. A significant proportion of these questions (17.05%) support decision-making by helping interviewers gather comprehensive data to evaluate candidates fairly and accurately.

4. Discussion

The analysis of job interview questions reveals the multifaceted purposes they serve, emphasizing their strategic role in assessing candidates on multiple levels. These categories—such as qualification assessment (Qin et al., 2023), behavioral evaluation (Raisova, 2012), cultural alignment, and problem-solving skills—provide interviewers with a comprehensive tool to evaluate candidates' suitability for a role. One of the most significant findings is the multifunctionality of these questions, where a single question often serves multiple purposes. For instance, questions about handling past challenges not only assess problem-solving skills but also gauge adaptability, enabling interviewers to gather deeper insights without increasing the number of questions. This aligns with the broader goal of interviews to evaluate a candidate's competencies efficiently and effectively. The prominence of skill and competency-focused questions reflects the critical need for candidates to meet the technical and interpersonal demands of modern roles. This finding aligns with research by Aeka and Mee Suksabai (2023) and Nambiar (2017), which highlight competencies such as leadership, communication, and analytical thinking as essential in today's workplaces. The ability of these questions to assess both technical expertise and interpersonal skills demonstrates their value in determining how well candidates align with organizational goals. This dual focus ensures that employers can identify candidates who are not only qualified but also capable of thriving in collaborative and dynamic work environments. While questions addressing cultural alignment and work-life balance were less common, they provide essential insights into long-term compatibility and employee well-being. These findings reflect a growing awareness of the importance of work-life balance in sustaining productivity and job satisfaction. By addressing these aspects, interviews contribute to a more holistic evaluation process, considering not only the candidate's immediate fit but also their potential for long-term success within the organization.

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