

How Digital Preparedness and Communication Friction Shape Candidate Engagement and Future Acceptance of Technology-Mediated Job Interviews

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Abstract:

Technology-mediated job interviews offer organisations speed, geographical reach and scheduling convenience, but their functional advantages do not necessarily ensure a positive candidate experience. This study develops and tests an Opportunity–Capability–Friction (OCF) framework explaining candidate engagement in technology-mediated interviews. Digital Interview Preparedness (DIP) represents capability; Accessibility (ACC) and Flexibility (FLX) represent opportunity; and Digital Communication Barriers (DCB) represent friction. Interview Engagement (ENG) is positioned as the central experiential outcome and as an antecedent of Future Online/Hybrid Mode Preference (FMP). Primary data from 250 respondents with experience of technology-mediated job interviews were analysed using reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations and multiple regression. All six multi-item measures demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .868-.885$). The four OCF antecedents jointly explained 32.7% of the variance in interview engagement, $F(4,245) = 29.73$, $p < .001$. Preparedness ($\beta = .191$, $p = .001$), accessibility ($\beta = .217$, $p < .001$) and flexibility ($\beta = .221$, $p < .001$) were positive predictors of engagement, whereas communication barriers were a substantial negative predictor ($\beta = -.374$, $p < .001$). Engagement was strongly associated with future online/hybrid mode preference ($r = .608$, $p < .001$) and, when entered alone, explained 36.9% of its variance. A robustness model including engagement, accessibility and flexibility explained 40.4% of future mode preference. The findings show that candidate acceptance of digital interviewing is not driven by convenience alone: the quality of communication and the candidate's ability to participate effectively are central to engagement. The study extends efficiency-centred research by integrating opportunity, capability and friction within a candidate-centred explanatory model.

Keywords: technology-mediated interviews; online interviews; digital preparedness; communication barriers; accessibility; flexibility; interview engagement; applicant reactions; hybrid recruitment

1. Introduction

Technology has altered the architecture of recruitment and selection. Videoconferencing, asynchronous video platforms, online assessment systems and digitally mediated screening allow organisations to interact with applicants across geographical boundaries while reducing travel, scheduling and coordination costs. These advantages have made technology-mediated interviewing an increasingly important component of contemporary selection systems. Yet the interview is not merely an information-transfer mechanism. It is also a social encounter in which candidates attempt to communicate competence, motivation and interpersonal suitability while simultaneously forming impressions of the organisation.

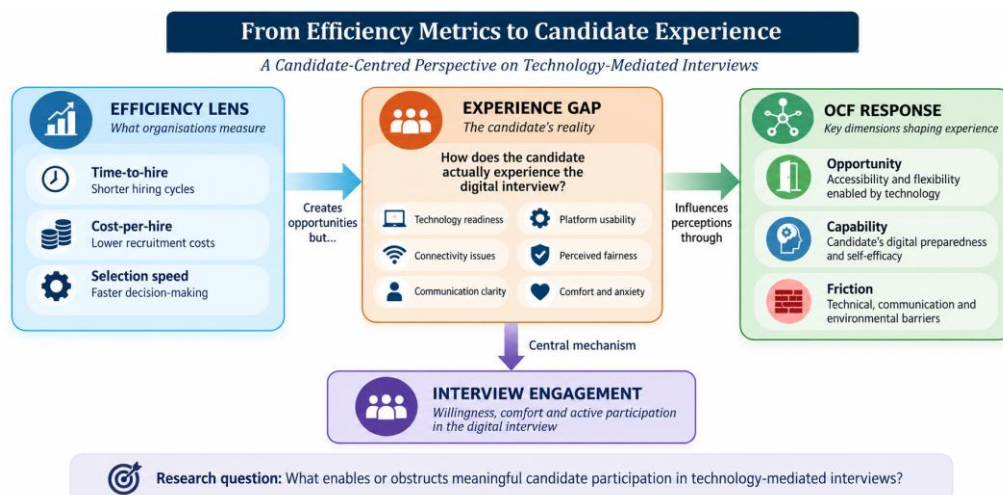
Research has therefore cautioned against evaluating digital interviewing only through organisational efficiency. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that technology can change applicant reactions and interviewer ratings, while studies of asynchronous and videoconference interviews point to differences in fairness, social presence, impression management and perceived usability (Blacksmith, Willford, & Behrend, 2016; Basch & Melchers, 2019; Basch et al., 2020, 2021). Applicant-reaction research more broadly shows that candidates' perceptions of selection procedures are related to organisational attractiveness, intentions and behavioural responses (Gilliland, 1993; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004).

Technology-mediated interviews create a distinctive combination of benefits and constraints. They can improve accessibility by removing travel requirements and can provide flexibility in scheduling. At the same time, technical disruption, audio-video delay, reduced eye contact and weaker interpersonal cues may interfere with communication. Candidates also differ in their preparedness to use digital platforms and present themselves effectively through a screen. These conditions suggest that the candidate experience is produced by a balance between what digital interviewing enables and what it obstructs.

The present study conceptualises that balance through an Opportunity–Capability–Friction (OCF) framework. Accessibility and flexibility are treated as opportunities created by the digital medium. Digital interview preparedness represents the candidate's capability to operate effectively within that medium. Digital communication barriers represent friction that can interfere with interaction. Interview engagement is positioned as the central experiential outcome through which these conditions become meaningful, and future preference for online or hybrid interviewing represents downstream acceptance of the mode.

This study also extends the authors' earlier efficiency-oriented work on online interviewing. Rather than revisiting time-to-hire, cost-per-hire or selection speed, the present paper shifts the unit of explanation to the candidate and asks a more specific question: under what conditions do technology-mediated interviews produce an engaged candidate who is willing to use the mode again?

1.1 Research Gap



Visual 1. Research gap: moving from efficiency metrics to candidate experience.

Three gaps motivate the study. First, convenience and communication quality are frequently discussed as separate features of digital selection rather than as simultaneous forces. Second, access to a digital interview is not equivalent to preparedness to perform in it; opportunity and capability should therefore be analytically distinguished. Third, much of the literature examines applicant reactions, fairness or acceptance without explicitly positioning engagement as the proximal mechanism connecting interview conditions with future mode preference. The OCF framework addresses these gaps by combining enabling opportunities, candidate capability and communication friction within a single candidate-centred model.

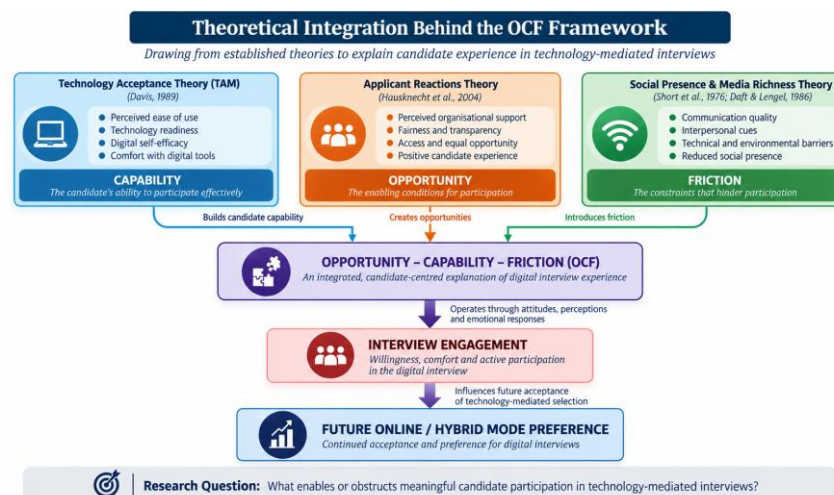
1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between Digital Interview Preparedness and Interview Engagement.
2. To assess the relationship between Digital Communication Barriers and Interview Engagement.
3. To determine whether Accessibility predicts Interview Engagement.
4. To determine whether Flexibility predicts Interview Engagement.

5. To examine whether Interview Engagement predicts Future Online/Hybrid Mode Preference.

6. To evaluate the explanatory usefulness of an integrated Opportunity–Capability–Friction framework for technology-mediated job interviews.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation



Visual 2. Theoretical integration underlying the Opportunity–Capability–Friction framework.

2.1 Applicant Reactions and Procedural Justice

Gilliland's (1993) organisational justice model established applicant reactions as an important part of selection-system effectiveness. Selection procedures are evaluated not only by organisations but also by candidates, who form judgements about opportunity to perform, consistency, information, interpersonal treatment and job relatedness. Hausknecht et al. (2004), in a meta-analysis of 86 independent samples, showed that favourable applicant perceptions are associated with more favourable views of the organisation and stronger behavioural intentions. More recent research on digital selection continues to emphasise procedural justice as a central mechanism through which technology affects applicant responses.

2.2 Technology Acceptance and Digital Preparedness

The Technology Acceptance Model proposes that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use shape technology acceptance (Davis, 1989). Brenner, Ortnner and Fay (2016) applied technology-acceptance reasoning to asynchronous video interviewing and found that perceived usefulness and ease of use predicted attitudes toward the technology. In the present study, Digital Interview Preparedness moves from general technology acceptance to interview-specific capability: readiness to operate the platform, manage the digital environment and communicate effectively through the medium.

2.3 Social Presence and Communication Friction

Social presence concerns the degree to which another person is experienced as psychologically present in mediated interaction (Biocca, Harms, & Burgoon, 2003). Technology-mediated interviews can alter eye contact, conversational timing, feedback and impression-management opportunities. Basch et al. (2020) linked perceptions of technology-mediated interviews with social presence and impression management, while Basch et al. (2021) showed that videoconference interviews can differ from face-to-face interviews in performance ratings and interviewee perceptions. These findings provide a basis for treating communication barriers as friction rather than as a minor technical inconvenience.

2.4 Accessibility and Flexibility as Opportunity

Digital interviews can reduce geographical and travel barriers and can make scheduling easier for both organisations and candidates. Basch and Melchers (2019) found that explanations emphasising flexibility improved usability perceptions of asynchronous video interviews. Accessibility and flexibility are therefore conceptualised as opportunities: they lower the practical cost of participation and may allow candidates to engage with the process under more manageable conditions.

2.5 Interview Engagement and Future Mode Preference

Interview Engagement refers here to focused attention, active participation, psychological involvement and perceived ability to express oneself during the interview. It is more proximal than global satisfaction and captures whether the candidate is effectively participating in the selection encounter. Future Mode Preference captures willingness to accept online or hybrid interviewing in subsequent recruitment. The model proposes that candidates are more likely to accept the mode in future when the present interview enables meaningful engagement.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The OCF framework treats technology-mediated interviewing as an environment in which opportunity, capability and friction operate simultaneously. Preparedness should strengthen engagement because candidates can devote more attention to interview content rather than platform management. Accessibility and flexibility should strengthen engagement by reducing practical constraints. Communication barriers should weaken engagement by disrupting information exchange and interpersonal connection. Engagement, in turn, should increase willingness to use online or hybrid interviewing in future.

Hypothesis	Proposed relationship	Expected direction
H1	Digital Interview Preparedness → Interview Engagement	Positive
H2	Digital Communication Barriers → Interview Engagement	Negative
H3	Accessibility → Interview Engagement	Positive
H4	Flexibility → Interview Engagement	Positive
H5	Interview Engagement → Future Online/Hybrid Mode Preference	Positive

H1: Digital Interview Preparedness is positively associated with Interview Engagement.

H2: Digital Communication Barriers are negatively associated with Interview Engagement.

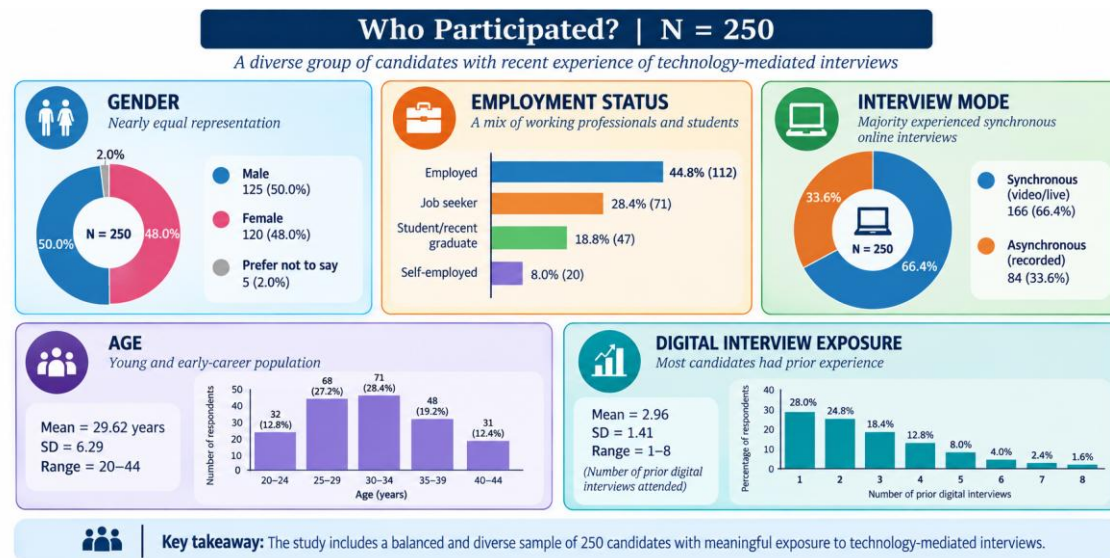
H3: Accessibility is positively associated with Interview Engagement.

H4: Flexibility is positively associated with Interview Engagement.

H5: Interview Engagement is positively associated with Future Online/Hybrid Mode Preference.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Sample



Visual 3. Respondent profile at a glance.

A quantitative, cross-sectional design was used. The analysed dataset contains 250 respondents with experience of technology-mediated job interviews. The individual candidate is the unit of analysis. Respondents ranged from 20 to 44 years of age ($M = 29.62$, $SD = 6.29$). The dataset includes both synchronous and asynchronous video-interview experience.

4.2 Measurement

Six constructs were measured using four Likert-type items each on a five-point response scale. Construct scores were computed as the mean of their four items: Digital Interview Preparedness (DIP), Digital Communication Barriers (DCB), Accessibility (ACC), Flexibility (FLX), Interview Engagement (ENG), and Future Online/Hybrid Mode Preference (FMP). Higher scores represent higher levels of the named construct.

Construct	Role in OCF model	Items	Score range
Digital Interview Preparedness (DIP)	Capability / Predictor	4	1–5
Digital Communication Barriers (DCB)	Friction / Predictor	4	1–5
Accessibility (ACC)	Opportunity / Predictor	4	1–5
Flexibility (FLX)	Opportunity / Predictor	4	1–5
Interview Engagement (ENG)	Central experiential outcome	4	1–5
Future Mode Preference (FMP)	Downstream acceptance outcome	4	1–5

4.3 Statistical Strategy

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the sample was described using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Second, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Third, Pearson correlations were used to examine bivariate associations. Fourth, ordinary least squares regression was used to test the hypotheses. Model 1 regressed Interview Engagement on DIP, DCB, ACC and FLX simultaneously. H5 was tested using a separate ENG-only regression predicting FMP. A supplementary robustness model then entered ENG, ACC and FLX together to examine whether engagement remained predictive when two opportunity variables were controlled. Variance inflation factors (VIFs) were inspected for Model 1 to assess multicollinearity.

5. Results

5.1 Respondent Profile

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	125	50.0
	Female	120	48.0
	Prefer not to say	5	2.0
Employment status	Employed	112	44.8
	Job seeker	71	28.4
	Student/Recent graduate	47	18.8
	Self-employed	20	8.0
Interview type	Synchronous video interview	166	66.4
	Asynchronous video interview	84	33.6

Industry representation was distributed across Education (17.2%), Banking/Finance (16.8%), IT/Technology (16.4%), Manufacturing (12.4%), Retail/Services (10.8%), Healthcare (10.4%), Consulting (8.0%) and Other industries (8.0%). Respondents reported an average of 2.96 prior digital interviews (SD = 1.41; range = 1–8).

5.2 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Digital Interview Preparedness	3.045	1.071	.868
Digital Communication Barriers	3.008	1.058	.873
Accessibility	3.002	1.064	.873
Flexibility	2.979	1.113	.885
Interview Engagement	2.990	1.093	.876
Future Mode Preference	2.983	1.074	.872

All six scales exceeded the conventional .70 threshold for internal consistency, with alpha coefficients ranging from .868 to .885. The construct means clustered near the midpoint of the five-point scale, indicating substantial variation rather than ceiling or floor concentration.

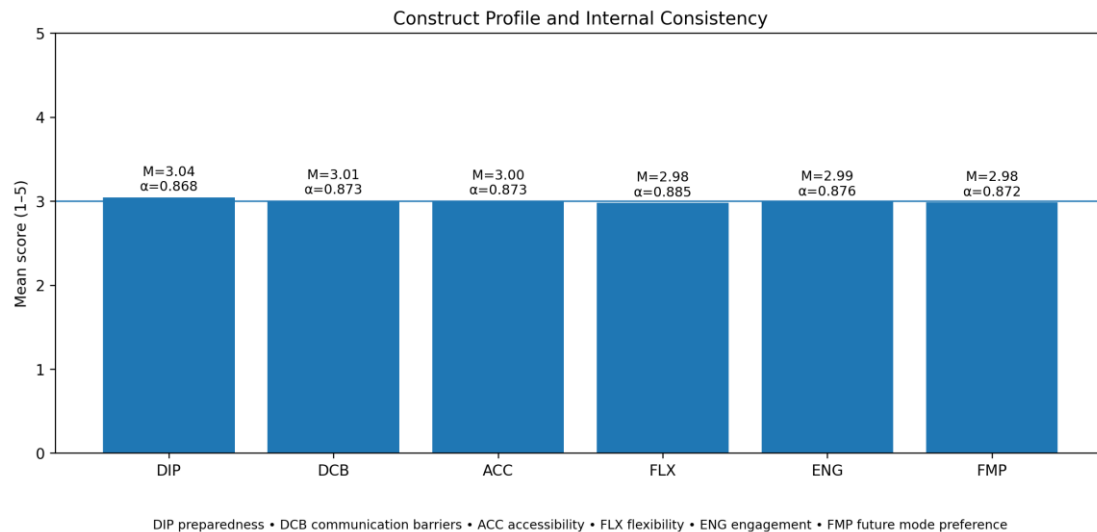
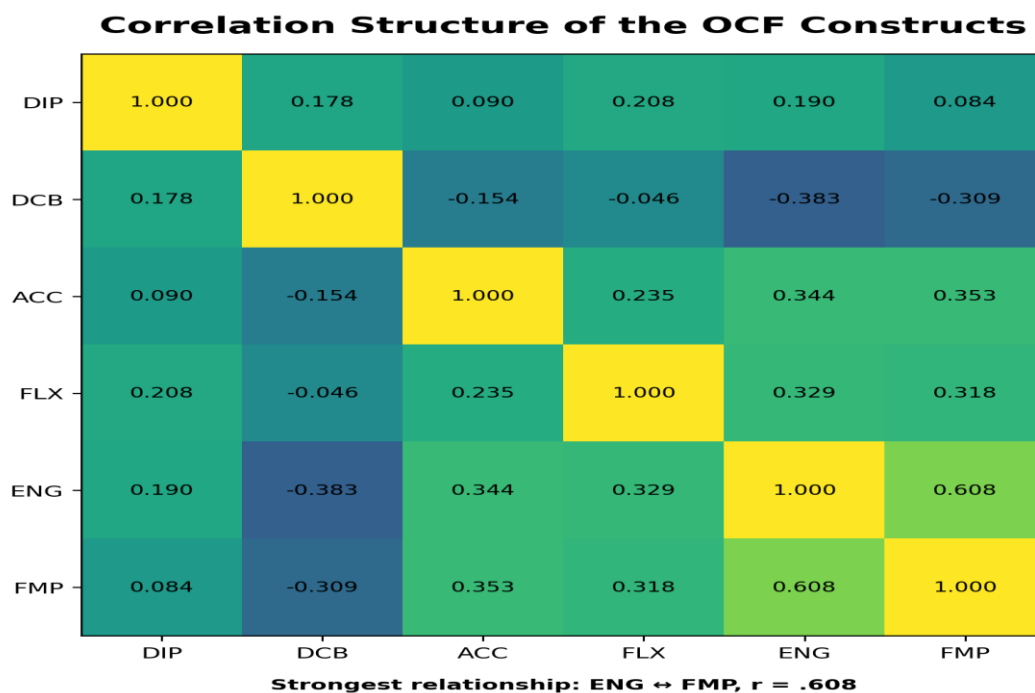


Figure 1. Construct means and Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

5.3 Correlation Analysis



Visual 4. Correlation structure among the six OCF constructs.

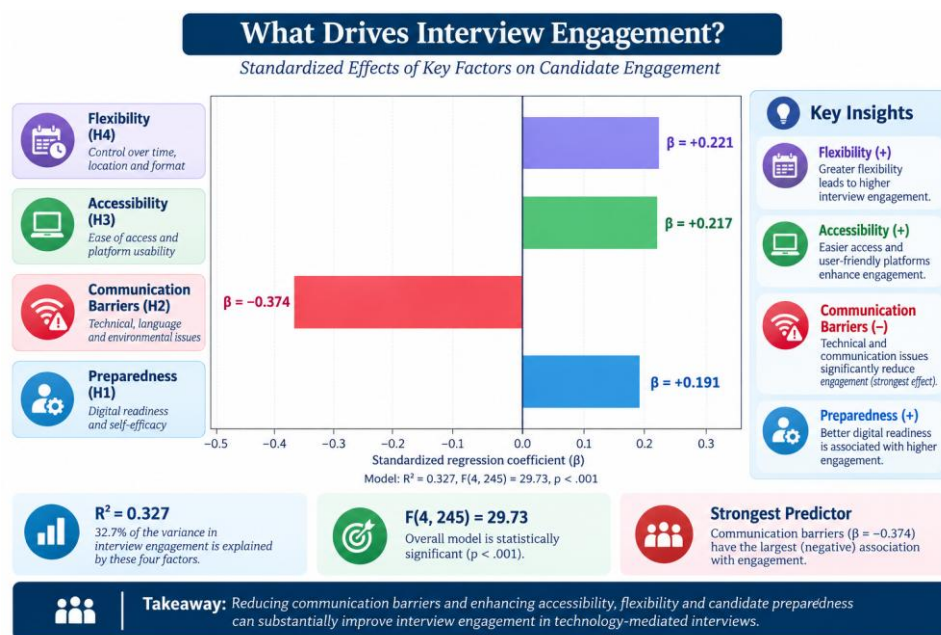
Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. DIP	1					
2. DCB	.178**	1				
3. ACC	.090	-.154*	1			

4. FLX	.208**	-.046	.235***	1		
5. ENG	.190**	-.383***	.344***	.329***	1	
6. FMP	.084	-.309***	.353***	.318***	.608***	1

Note. N = 250. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The correlation pattern is consistent with the proposed framework. Interview Engagement correlated positively with preparedness ($r = .190$, $p = .003$), accessibility ($r = .344$, $p < .001$) and flexibility ($r = .329$, $p < .001$), and negatively with communication barriers ($r = -.383$, $p < .001$). Engagement showed the strongest bivariate relationship in the matrix with Future Mode Preference ($r = .608$, $p < .001$). Communication barriers were also negatively associated with future preference ($r = -.309$, $p < .001$).

5.4 Regression Model 1: Predicting Interview Engagement



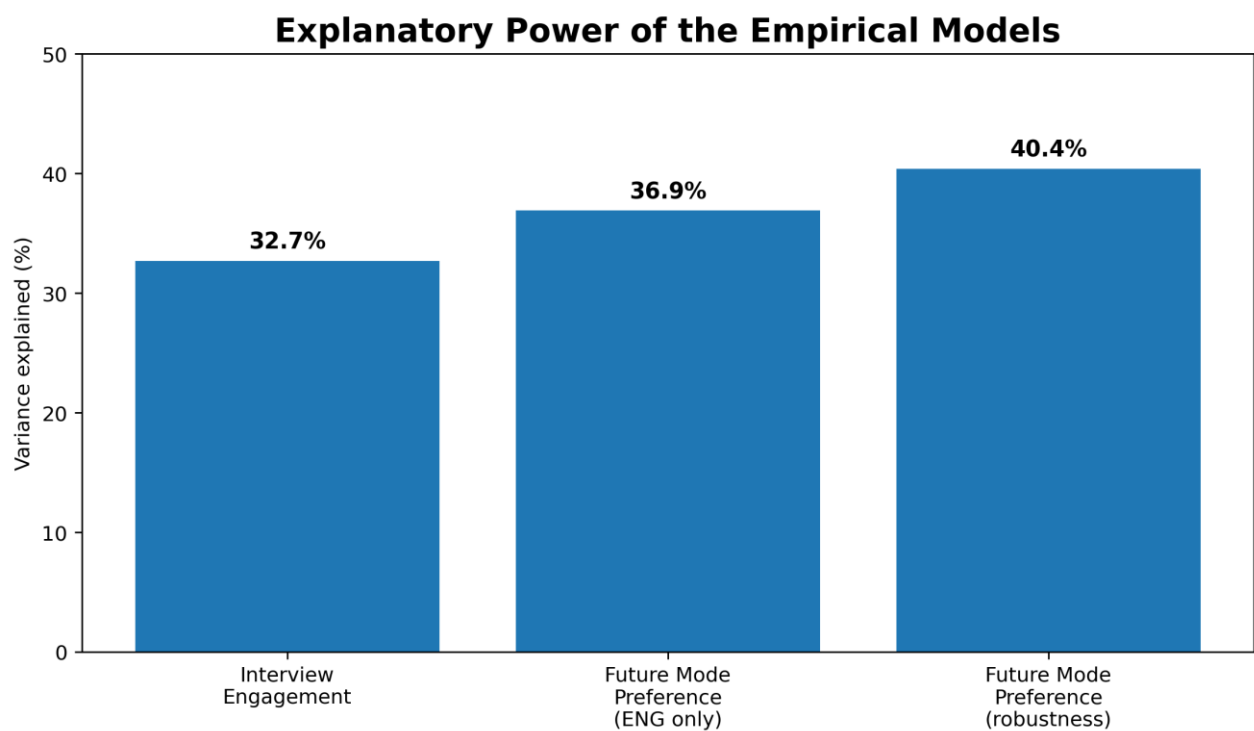
Visual 5. Standardized effects of OCF antecedents on Interview Engagement.

Predictor	B	SE B	Standardized β	t	p	95% CI for B	VIF
Constant	2.242	.298	—	7.535	<.001	[1.656, 2.828]	—
DIP	.195	.056	.191	3.490	.001	[.085, .305]	1.09
DCB	-.386	.056	-.374	-6.900	<.001	[-.496, -.276]	1.07
ACC	.223	.056	.217	3.967	<.001	[.112, .333]	1.09
FLX	.217	.054	.221	4.018	<.001	[.111, .324]	1.10

Model 1 was statistically significant, $F(4,245) = 29.73$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .327$, adjusted $R^2 = .316$. Thus, the four OCF antecedents jointly explained 32.7% of the variance in Interview Engagement. VIF values ranged from 1.07 to 1.10, indicating no meaningful multicollinearity concern.

Digital Interview Preparedness positively predicted engagement ($\beta = .191$, $p = .001$), supporting H1. Digital Communication Barriers negatively predicted engagement ($\beta = -.374$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. Accessibility positively predicted engagement ($\beta = .217$, $p < .001$), supporting H3. Flexibility also positively predicted engagement ($\beta = .221$, $p < .001$), supporting H4. In absolute standardized terms, communication barriers showed the largest association with engagement in the model.

5.5 Regression Model 2: Engagement and Future Mode Preference



Visual 6. Variance explained across the empirical models.

To test H5 directly, Future Mode Preference was regressed on Interview Engagement. The model was statistically significant, $F(1,248) = 145.11$, $p < .001$, and explained 36.9% of the variance in future mode preference ($R^2 = .369$). The standardized coefficient for engagement was $\beta = .608$ ($p < .001$), supporting H5.

Model	Predictor	Standardized β	p	Model R^2	Model F
H5 direct model	Interview Engagement	.608	<.001	.369	145.11***
Robustness model	Interview Engagement	.520	<.001	.404	55.49***
	Accessibility	.148	.006		
	Flexibility	.112	.034		

A supplementary robustness model included Interview Engagement, Accessibility and Flexibility simultaneously. This model explained 40.4% of the variance in Future Mode Preference, $F(3,246) = 55.49$, $p < .001$. Engagement remained the dominant predictor ($\beta = .520$, $p < .001$), while accessibility ($\beta = .148$, $p = .006$) and flexibility ($\beta =$

.112, $p = .034$) retained smaller positive associations. The result indicates that engagement explains future acceptance beyond the direct convenience-related advantages of the digital mode.

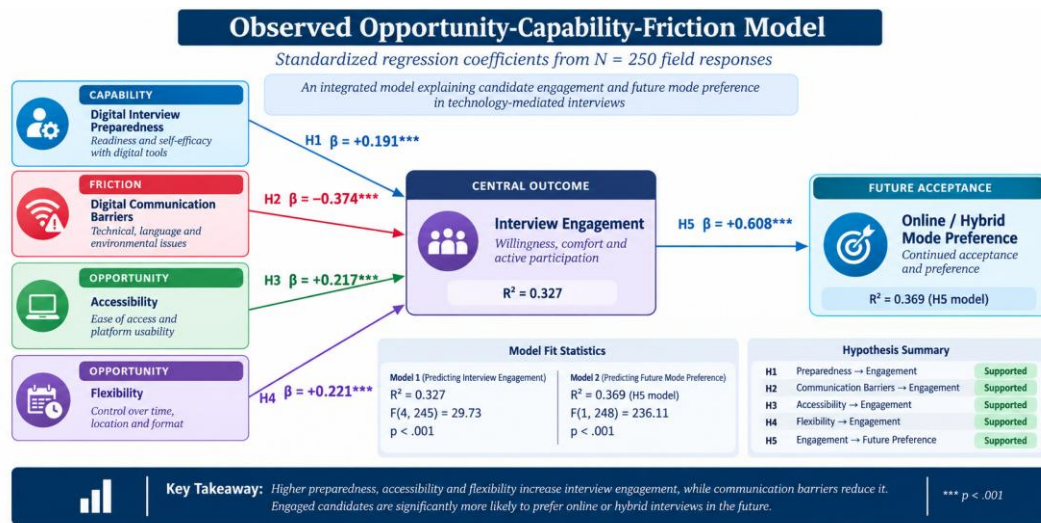
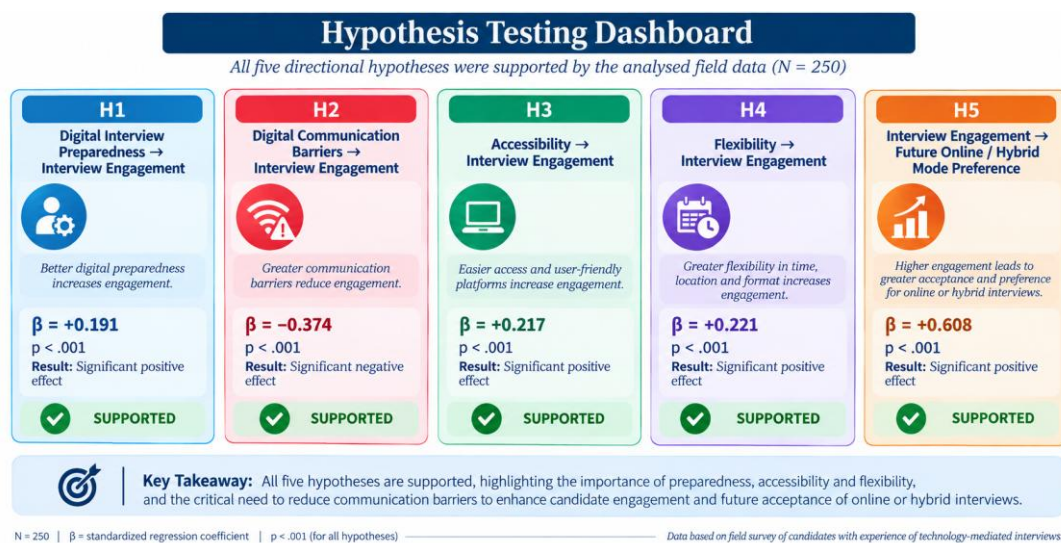


Figure 2. Observed OCF model. Standardized coefficients shown; *** $p < .001$.

5.6 Hypothesis Summary



Visual 7. Hypothesis-testing dashboard.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result	Decision
H1	DIP → ENG	$\beta = .191, p = .001$	Supported
H2	DCB → ENG	$\beta = -.374, p < .001$	Supported
H3	ACC → ENG	$\beta = .217, p < .001$	Supported
H4	FLX → ENG	$\beta = .221, p < .001$	Supported
H5	ENG → FMP	$\beta = .608, p < .001$	Supported

6. Discussion

The findings support the central proposition of the OCF framework: candidate engagement in technology-mediated interviews reflects a combination of enabling opportunity, individual capability and communication friction. All four antecedents were statistically significant when entered simultaneously, and together they explained approximately one-third of the variance in engagement. The results therefore suggest that candidate experience cannot be reduced to convenience or technical access alone.

6.1 Preparedness as Candidate Capability

Preparedness showed a positive association with engagement. Candidates who were better prepared for the digital environment were more likely to report stronger engagement. This finding is consistent with technology-acceptance research showing that ease of use and perceived ability to function within a system matter for attitudes toward digital selection (Brenner et al., 2016). In practical terms, the interview platform becomes less cognitively intrusive when the candidate knows how to use it. Preparation can therefore be understood as a capability resource that allows attention to remain on interview content rather than on platform management.

6.2 Communication Barriers as the Strongest Friction

The largest standardized coefficient in Model 1 belonged to Digital Communication Barriers, and the relationship was negative. This is theoretically important because it shows that the interpersonal and communicative quality of the interview can matter more than any single convenience benefit. The result aligns with research on social presence and technology-mediated interviews, where reduced eye contact, weaker interpersonal cues and altered impression-management opportunities have been linked to less favourable perceptions (Basch et al., 2020, 2021). Communication quality should therefore be treated as a central design issue rather than a secondary technical concern.

6.3 Accessibility and Flexibility as Enabling Opportunities

Accessibility and flexibility both predicted engagement positively. Digital interviewing can remove travel barriers, broaden geographical participation and make scheduling more manageable. The findings support the view that these features create genuine opportunity for candidates. However, their positive effects coexist with the negative effect of communication barriers. This coexistence is precisely why the OCF framing is useful: a process can be convenient and still produce friction at the point of human interaction.

6.4 Engagement as the Bridge to Future Acceptance

The strongest bivariate association in the study was between Interview Engagement and Future Mode Preference. Engagement alone explained 36.9% of the variance in future preference, and it remained strongly predictive when accessibility and flexibility were added. This indicates that candidates' future acceptance of online or hybrid interviewing is linked not only to convenience but also to whether they feel meaningfully engaged during the interaction. The result extends a simple technology-acceptance account by identifying an experiential mechanism between interview conditions and future willingness to use the mode.

6.5 Extension of Earlier Efficiency-Oriented Research

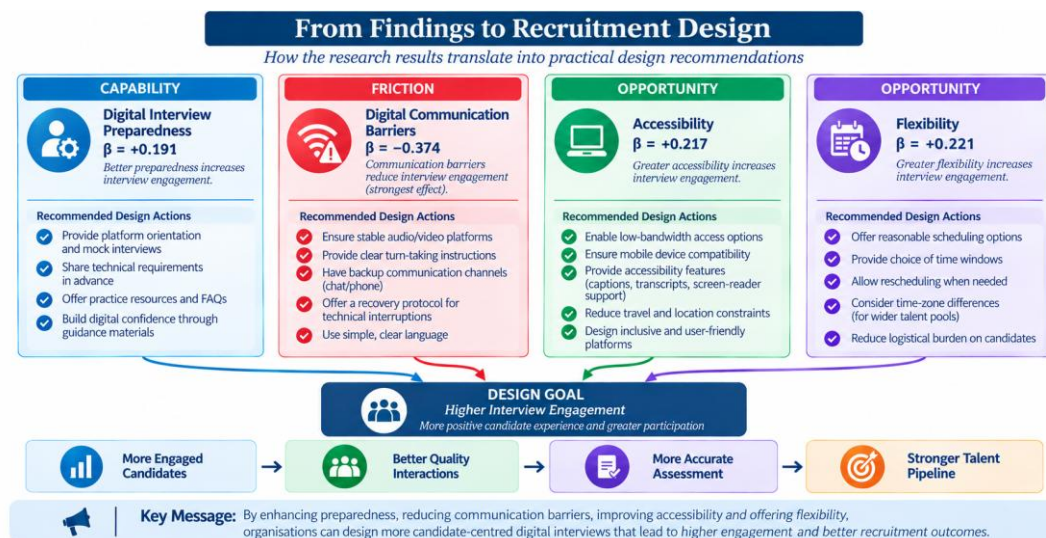
The present findings complement earlier work by Panwar and Arya (2026), which examined online interviewing through time-to-hire, cost-per-hire, selection speed and recruiter productivity. Efficiency remains important, but the present study shows that a complete evaluation of digital selection also requires candidate-side variables. A process may be operationally efficient while still creating communication friction. Conversely, a well-designed digital interview can preserve efficiency while strengthening preparedness, access, flexibility and engagement.

7. Theoretical Contributions

The study makes three contributions. First, it integrates opportunity, capability and friction within one explanatory framework rather than examining convenience, technology acceptance and communication quality independently. Second, it separates access from preparedness. A candidate may be able to attend an online interview but may not be equally prepared to perform through the medium. Third, it positions engagement as a proximal experiential

mechanism associated with future acceptance. This helps shift the literature from asking whether candidates like digital interviews to asking why some digital interviews produce stronger engagement than others.

8. Practical Implications



Visual 8. Translating empirical findings into recruitment-design actions.

For recruiters and HR managers, the results imply that digital-interview design should be evaluated on two dimensions simultaneously: logistical efficiency and interaction quality. Organisations can improve candidate capability by providing clear platform instructions, pre-interview system checks, short practice opportunities and contingency procedures. Accessibility can be protected through mobile-compatible systems and realistic bandwidth requirements, while flexibility can be maintained through reasonable scheduling options.

The comparatively strong negative association of communication barriers with engagement deserves particular attention. Stable audio-video systems, clear turn-taking norms, interviewer training for camera-mediated interaction and rapid recovery protocols for technical disruptions can reduce friction. In asynchronous formats, instructions, preparation time and response constraints should be designed to preserve a sense of control and opportunity to perform.

For candidates, preparation should go beyond checking the internet connection. Familiarity with the platform, camera positioning, concise screen-mediated communication, practice with response timing and strategies for recovering from minor disruptions can improve readiness for the medium.

9. Limitations

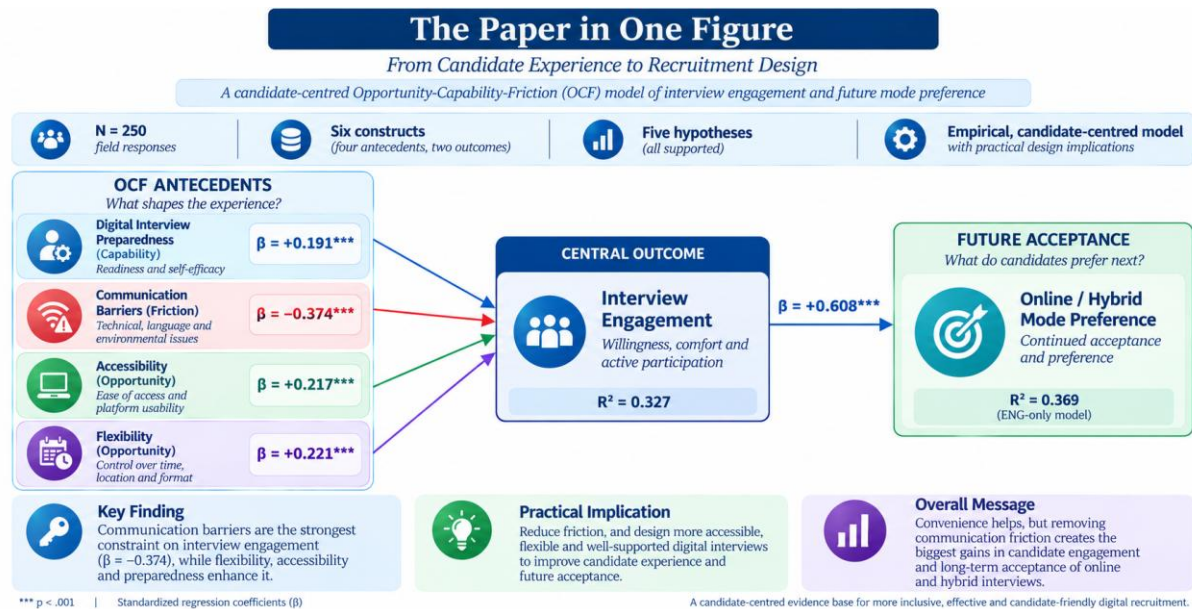
The study is cross-sectional, so the regression coefficients should be interpreted as predictive associations rather than definitive causal effects. All focal constructs are based on self-report, creating potential for common-method and recall bias. The sample combines synchronous and asynchronous interview experience even though these formats differ in interaction, timing and social presence. The analysis also focuses on candidate perceptions rather than objective selection outcomes such as interview scores, offer decisions or subsequent job performance. Future research should address these limitations through longitudinal designs, multi-source data and mode-specific comparisons.

10. Future Research

Future studies can extend the OCF framework by incorporating procedural justice, interview anxiety, trust, organisational attractiveness, opportunity to perform and actual recruitment behaviour. Multi-group analysis could test whether the model differs between synchronous and asynchronous formats, industries, career stages or levels of prior digital-interview exposure. Experimental work could manipulate preparation support or communication

quality to establish causal effects. Longitudinal research could examine whether engagement predicts later withdrawal, offer acceptance, recommendation intentions or willingness to reapply.

11. Conclusion



Visual 9. Integrated visual summary of the study.

Technology-mediated interviews are not defined by convenience alone. They create a selection environment in which opportunity, capability and friction operate simultaneously. In this study of 250 respondents, digital preparedness, accessibility and flexibility were positively associated with Interview Engagement, while Digital Communication Barriers showed the strongest negative association. Engagement, in turn, was strongly related to Future Online/Hybrid Mode Preference. The findings support the OCF framework and show that organisations seeking sustainable digital recruitment should preserve the access and flexibility advantages of technology while actively reducing communication friction and strengthening candidate preparedness. The central implication is straightforward: candidates are more likely to accept digital interviewing when the process does not merely connect them to an interviewer, but enables them to participate effectively.

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