

ECPE Reading Practice

Name: _____ Date: _____

Read the passage carefully and choose the best answer (A, B, C or D) for each question.

The Myth of Objective Hiring

Few organisations would openly admit that their recruitment procedures are anything other than fair. On the contrary, most employers insist that their decisions are based exclusively on qualifications, experience, and measurable performance. Yet an increasing body of research suggests that the concept of a completely impartial recruitment process may itself be something of a misnomer. While employers genuinely strive to evaluate applicants objectively, they remain, like all human beings, fundamentally fallible.

Psychologists have repeatedly demonstrated that first impressions are remarkably powerful. A candidate's appearance, tone of voice, or even surname may unconsciously influence an interviewer's judgement long before any meaningful discussion has taken place. Ironically, the very professionals who confidently dismiss the possibility of personal bias often answer questions about their own objectivity rather glibly, assuming that years of experience automatically protect them from subconscious influences. The evidence, however, points in the opposite direction.

One particularly influential study culminated in a surprising conclusion. Experienced recruiters were asked to evaluate a series of identical résumés, each accompanied by different personal details. Although the applicants possessed virtually the same qualifications, some consistently received stronger recommendations and even informal endorsement from the selection panel. Researchers later attributed these differences not to competence but to unconscious assumptions about social background, age, or appearance. Such findings seriously undermine the widespread belief that hiring decisions are based solely on merit.

Critics have understandably expressed dissent, arguing that laboratory studies cannot accurately replicate the complexity of real-world recruitment. Nevertheless, behavioural scientists deprecate attempts to dismiss these findings too quickly. Even if employers have no intention of discriminating, subtle forms of bias may still result in the infringement of equal-opportunity principles.

The consequences extend far beyond individual applicants. A company's reputation may be permanently tarnished if employees or the wider public begin to suspect that promotion and recruitment decisions are influenced by anything other than ability.

Fortunately, creating a fairer system does not necessarily require an ample budget. In many cases, relatively simple reforms suffice. Recruiters are also encouraged to examine evidence warily, recognising that instinctive judgements are not always reliable.

1. Which of the following assumptions does the author challenge throughout the passage?

- A. Most employers deliberately discriminate against certain applicants.
- B. Professional experience alone is sufficient to ensure objective decision-making.
- C. Recruitment procedures should be identical across all industries.
- D. Academic qualifications should be considered more important than work experience.

2. The author mentions the résumé experiment primarily in order to...

- A. demonstrate that hiring decisions are influenced by factors recruiters may not consciously recognise.
- B. argue that anonymous applications should replace interviews entirely.
- C. prove that laboratory experiments are more reliable than workplace observations.
- D. illustrate why applicants should avoid including personal information on their CVs.

3. Which statement is best supported by the passage?

- A. Organisations that ignore research findings inevitably violate employment law.
- B. Bias in recruitment is often the result of deliberate prejudice.
- C. Fair recruitment depends as much on recognising human limitations as on improving procedures.
- D. Structured interviews guarantee completely objective hiring decisions.

4. The author's attitude toward experienced recruiters can best be described as...

- A. openly critical of their professional competence.
- B. cautiously sceptical of their confidence in their own objectivity.
- C. sympathetic toward the difficulties they face but doubtful about scientific research.
- D. dismissive of the value of practical experience.

5. In paragraph 6, the author suggests that anonymous applications and structured interviews...

- A. eliminate bias by preventing recruiters from making subjective decisions.
- B. represent practical steps that reduce, rather than remove, the effects of unconscious bias.
- C. are effective only when organisations can invest substantial financial resources.
- D. have become standard practice in every developed country.

6. Which of the following would the author be most likely to disagree with?

- A. A recruitment process can become fairer even if it never becomes perfectly objective.
- B. Human judgement is influenced by factors that people may fail to recognise.
- C. Confidence in one's own objectivity is, by itself, evidence of objective judgement.
- D. Improving recruitment procedures can strengthen public trust in an organisation.