

Workshop Proposal

Designing the “Perfect” Hiring Intervention: Evidence-Based Strategies to Reduce Gender Disparities in Hiring

Workshop Type: Interactive Co-Design Workshop

Intended Audience: Scholars, PhD candidates, early-career researchers, and practitioners interested in gender disparities in the workplace, personnel selection, hiring processes, and organizational interventions

Workshop Overview

Gender disparities in the hiring process remain a persistent challenge across organizational contexts with research documenting bias or structural inefficiencies in the hiring process (e.g., Fernandez-Mateo and Fernandez, 2016; Leung and Koppman, 2018). This research commonly argues that the hiring context is prone to disparate outcomes because decisions leading to disparities are made under high uncertainty and are more difficult to detect in the beginning of the employment relationship than at later points in time (Petersen and Saporta, 2004). While much of this research has focused on diagnosing disparities and identifying bias in evaluators, we want to conceptualize hiring interventions that reduce gender disparities in the hiring process without undermining organizational (performance) outcomes or triggering employee resistance.

Conceptual Foundation

We conceptualize hiring as a multi-stage process (Fernandez-Mateo, 2025; Fernandez-Mateo and Fernandez, 2016). The process resembles a funnel: organizations decide which jobs to hire for, they source candidates, shortlist, invite for interviews, and make final hiring decisions. This simple sequence highlights that decisions are made at each stage by employers. Gender disparities may arise at each of these stages from two main sources. Differential treatment, when applicants with equal qualifications and productivities are differentially treated because of their gender (Reskin, 1998), and disparate impact, when applicants are treated equally within the given set of rules and procedures but the latter are constructed in a way that they favor one gender over the other (Pager and Shepherd, 2008; Reskin, 1998). Effective hiring interventions must be evaluated not only on whether they reduce gender disparities, but also on whether they preserve or enhance decision quality and organizational-level outcomes.

Workshop Structure and Format

This workshop is designed as an interactive co-design session rather than a traditional paper presentation. Drawing on the submitted papers, participants will be grouped around shared empirical, theoretical, and/or methodological interests in hiring research.

Each group will use one or more of the submitted studies as a starting point to examine how gender disparities emerge in concrete hiring contexts and at specific stages of the process. Groups will be asked to (1) articulate the mechanism(s) implied in the paper(s), such as differential treatment by selectors or disparate impact generated by selection rules and procedures; (2) locate these mechanisms within the hiring funnel (e.g., sourcing, screening, interviewing, final selection); and (3) collaboratively develop an intervention that could

potentially target the identified mechanism. For each proposed intervention, groups will assess both its expected effectiveness in reducing gender disparities and its likely implications for decision quality, organizational-level outcomes, and legitimacy.

Rather than evaluating individual papers, the workshop emphasizes synthesis across contributions, with the goal of extracting generalizable design principles for gender-equitable hiring systems. The session will conclude with a plenary discussion that integrates insights across groups and identifies promising directions for future research on interventions in hiring.

Expected Contributions and Outcomes

This workshop aims to contribute to the research on gender disparities in hiring by shifting attention from documenting gender disparities to systematically thinking through how hiring interventions can be designed to work. By engaging with participants' own research, the workshop is expected to generate a set of analytically grounded design principles for interventions in the hiring process, specifying when and why particular approaches are likely to reduce gender disparities.

A key outcome of the workshop will be greater conceptual clarity about how different sources of disparities, differential treatment and/or disparate impact, call for different types of interventions at different stages of the hiring process. In doing so, the workshop will help integrate insights from research on gender disparities with work on personnel selection and human resource management, highlighting the role of valid selection tools, defined evaluation criteria, and structured decision-making processes in shaping equitable hiring outcomes.

For participants, the workshop will provide an opportunity to situate their own work within a broader framework focused on intervention design, unintended consequences, and organizational performance. More broadly, the workshop aims to lay the groundwork for future research agendas and collaborative projects that move beyond diagnosing disparities toward developing and testing scalable, evidence-based hiring interventions.

This workshop directly aligns with the EDI 2026 theme by fostering evidence-based dialogue on one of the most consequential organizational practices: hiring.

Conference Organizers

Soo Min Toh
Professor Organizational Behavior & Human Resource Management
University of Toronto
soomin.toh@utoronto.ca

Almasa Sarabi
Assistant Professor Human Resource Management
University of Amsterdam
a.sarabi@uva.nl