Gender Dynamics in Search Frictions in Online Job Matching in Bangladesh

Ashley Pople

University of Oxford

28 June 2021

Job matching technologies and their potential

- COVID-19 pandemic has introduced **new barriers** to the labour market, disproportionately affecting women and young people.

- New **job matching technologies** offer the opportunity to overcome these barriers.

- While the focus has been predominantly on high-skilled jobs to date, new technologies have been developed for **low-skilled jobs**.

What would be the best way to design these technologies?

- It remains an open question about how to best design online matching markets.

- Technology aims to reduce all "frictions" or application costs, but the effect is ambiguous.
  - On the one hand, lower frictions mean that **it is easier for jobseekers to apply** for jobs and for firms to sift through applications
  - On the other hand, there are **high volumes of ill-targeted online applications**, and it is difficult to filter for "good fit"

- Firms rely on referrals and proxies to filter through applications, which tend to be inequality-enhancing

Five lessons from a qualitative study in Dhaka

1 Employers receive too many applications and demand holistic filtering

Five lessons from a qualitative study in Dhaka

1 Employers receive too many applications and demand holistic filtering

2 Education qualifications are known to be poor proxies of job fit

Five lessons from a qualitative study in Dhaka

1 Employers receive too many applications and demand holistic filtering

2 Education qualifications are known to be poor proxies of job fit

3 Interview attendance rates are low and there is high offer rejection rates and turnover rates (high rate of job shopping)

Five lessons from a qualitative study in Dhaka

1 Employers receive too many applications and demand holistic filtering

2 Education qualifications are known to be poor proxies of job fit

3 Interview attendance rates are low and there is high offer rejection rates and turnover rates (high rate of job shopping)

4 There is enormous variation in preferences and aspirations across jobseekers

Five lessons from a qualitative study in Dhaka

1 Employers receive too many applications and demand holistic filtering

2 Education qualifications are known to be poor proxies of job fit

3 Interview attendance rates are low and there is high offer rejection rates and turnover rates (high rate of job shopping)

4 There is enormous variation in preferences and aspirations across jobseekers

5 Entry-level jobseekers hold high aspirations and misaligned expectations for their first job
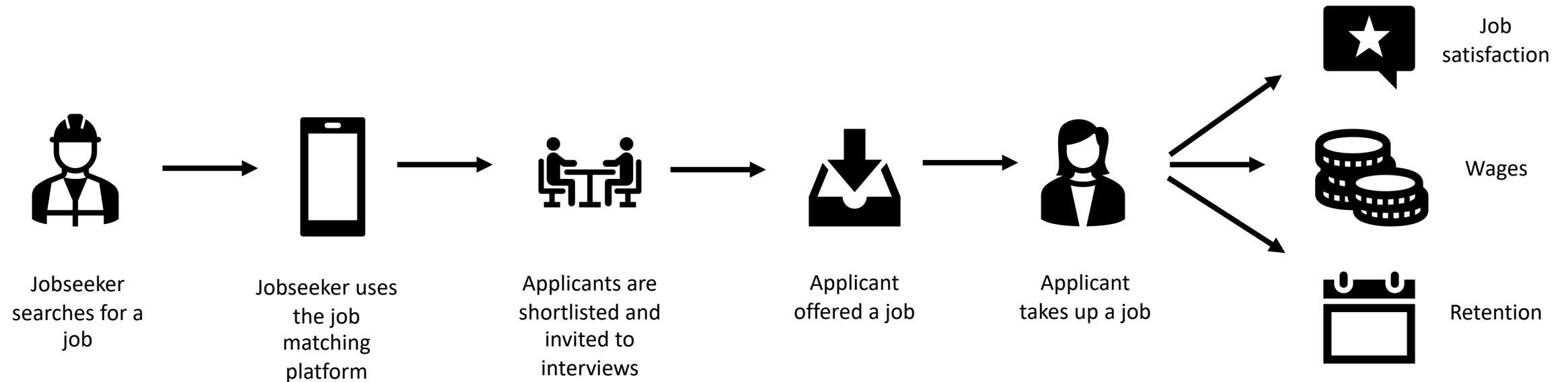
Research questions

1. How are job matching technologies being used to support jobseekers find jobs in the service sector?
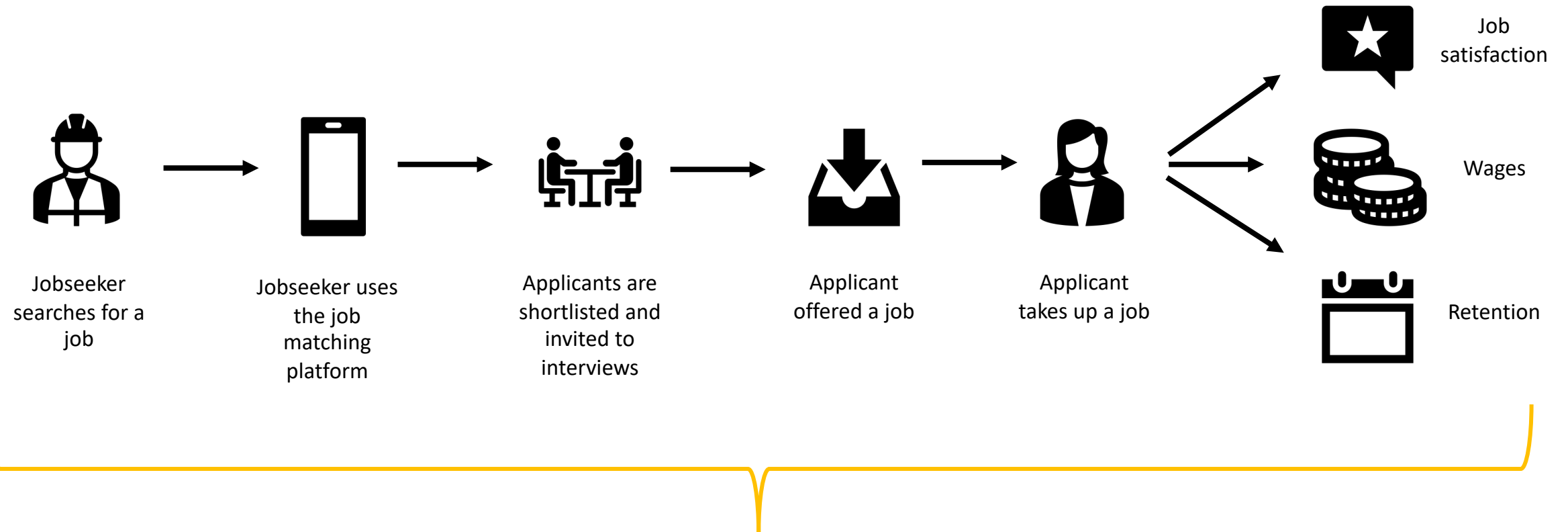
Research questions

1. How are job matching technologies being used to support jobseekers find jobs in the service sector?

2. Can positive frictions result in better matches between firms and jobseekers and reduce inequality for women and other marginalised jobseekers?

How are job matching technologies being used to support jobseekers find jobs in the service sector?
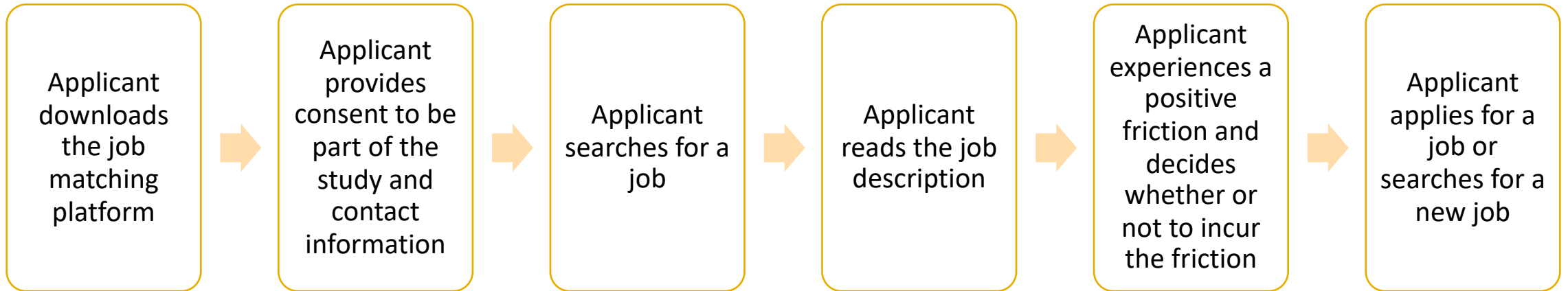

Jobseeker searches for a job → Jobseeker uses the job matching platform → Applicants are shortlisted and invited to interviews → Applicant offered a job → Applicant takes up a job → Job satisfaction / Wages / Retention

How are job matching technologies being used to support jobseekers find jobs in the service sector?

Jobseeker searches for a job → Jobseeker uses the job matching platform → Applicants are shortlisted and invited to interviews → Applicant offered a job → Applicant takes up a job → Job satisfaction / Wages / Retention

How does these outcomes differ by gender?

The positive friction appears before applicants apply

Applicant downloads the job matching platform → Applicant provides consent to be part of the study and contact information → Applicant searches for a job → Applicant reads the job description → Applicant experiences a positive friction and decides whether or not to incur the friction → Applicant applies for a job or searches for a new job

Research design: A randomized control trial

2000 jobseekers per treatment arm

Small positive friction

One multiple-choice question about the job description during the application process

Large positive friction

Three multiple-choice question about the job description

Competency test

One multiple-choice question about the soft skills required for the job

Control group

No positive friction

Outcomes of interest

Disaggregate by gender

Short term

Drop-off rates, application rates, and shortlist to hire

Medium term

Interview attendance, job offer, job take-up

Long term

Retention, wages, job satisfaction

Outcomes of interest

Disaggregate by gender

Short term
Drop-off rates, application rates, and shortlist to hire

Medium term
Interview attendance, job offer, job take-up

Long term
Retention, wages, job satisfaction

Collected via the platform

Outcomes of interest

Disaggregate by gender

Short term
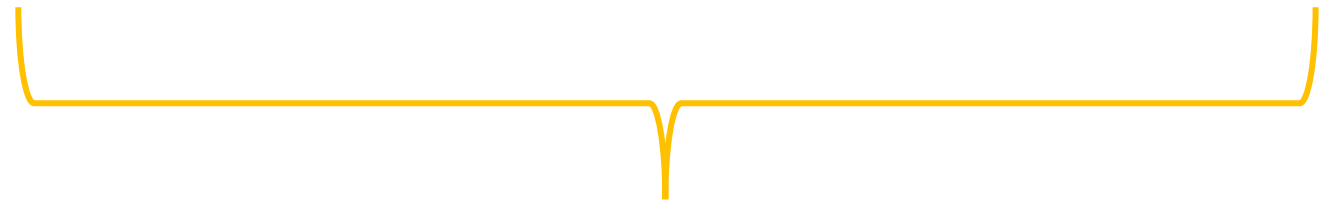
Drop-off rates, application rates, and shortlist to hire

Medium term

Interview attendance, job offer, job take-up

Long term

Retention, wages, job satisfaction

Collected via surveys with jobseekers and firms

What are the implications for policy?

This project seeks to:

1 Provide granular insights into **how jobseekers are using a job matching technology**

2 Explore **how this experience differs by gender and other dimensions proxying for exclusion** (urban vs rural)

3 Explore **how best to design a job matching platform** and leverage behavioural tools to broaden the information used to match jobseekers and employers.