

Improving the police investigators' quality of investigative interviews via simulated interview software EIT (Empowering Interview Training)



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Theoretical background

- Investigators tend to ask still a few invitations ('Tell me what happened') from a child victim or witness
- It is known that transferring best practice knowledge of investigative interviewing into practice is difficult

Current project

- Repeated feedback in simulated investigative interviews with computerized child avatars (a software called Empowering Interview Training, EIT) has shown to improve the quality of interviews conducted with real children
- In cooperation with the Police and Border Guard Board in Estonia along with State Prosecutor's Office, we carried out a project to assess the effectiveness of EIT among police officers who interview child victims and witnesses in physical and sexual abuse cases

Sample

- 22 police investigators participated in the study
- Half of them received feedback (to question types and also overall correctness of their conclusion about what happened to the avatar) during 4 simulated avatar interviews
- Half of them received no feedback during 4 interviews followed by another 4 interviews after which they also received feedback

How the training with the software works 1

- The investigator read a short description of a probable crime and provide initial account of what may have happened
- After that, the investigator had 10 minutes to interview the avatar victim or witness about what has happened, and then provide the final conclusion
- The operator codes the question type asked by the investigator after which the software launches appropriate answer file with correct or incorrect details based on the algorithms from previous scientific studies

How the training with the software works 2

- Feedback group receives feedback to 2 good quality and 2 poor quality questions
- Each training session involved interviewing 4 avatars
- Avatar interviews as well as transcripts of the real interviews with actual child victims and witnesses both before and after the training were coded for interview quality

Results

- Receiving feedback after EIT training increased the proportion of recommended questions, i.e. free recall ('Tell me what happened') or open questions ('what, where, who, how') compared to not receiving the feedback
- In real interviews, the proportion of recommended questions increased by 23% (from 48% before EIT training to 59% post-EIT training) in the group receiving feedback during the avatar training

Conclusion

- Overall, this study demonstrated for the first time transfer of learning from simulated interviews to actual investigative interviews conducted by police investigators

Read more in detail



Transfer of Avatar Training Effects to Investigative Field Interviews of Children Conducted by Police Officers

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