

First step in improving child forensic interview in Taiwan- Knowledge improvement

Introduction

In Taiwan, a systematic way and integrative system for interviewing child victims or witnesses has yet to be established. Child victims or witnesses still have to go through a long process when involved in the legal system. They are typically interviewed several times by various systems (first by social worker, then police officers, yet again prosecutors and even medical or mental health professionals) with different approaches.

Amongst various protocols developed to safeguard best practice to interview children, the protocol developed at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) by Lamb, Orbach, Hershkowitz, Esplin and Horowitz (2007) has been supported by the most empirical evidence and tested in many countries (see Fallor, 2015 for review). Therefore, a group of researchers at National Taiwan University translated the NICHD protocol into Mandarin, and provided training workshops for practitioners to help improve the current forensic interview practice.

Method

Sample

A total of 43 social workers, police officers, and prosecutors participated in the 2-day-long NICHD training workshop and filled out the pre-and-post training quiz.

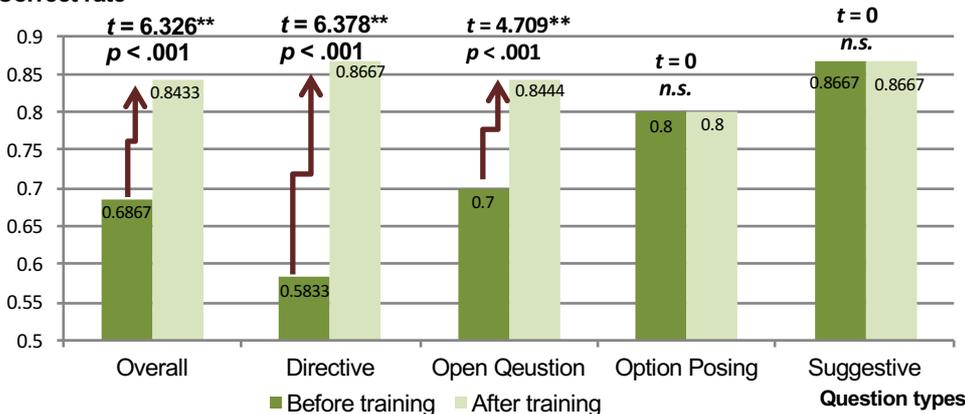
Procedure

The training workshop content included children's cognitive, linguistic and psychosocial development; memory, suggestibility, appropriate interview questions and techniques, and practical sessions to use the NICHD interview protocol to conduct mocked interviews. The participants filled out the **quiz before and after** the workshop. They also filled out a feedback form after the workshop.

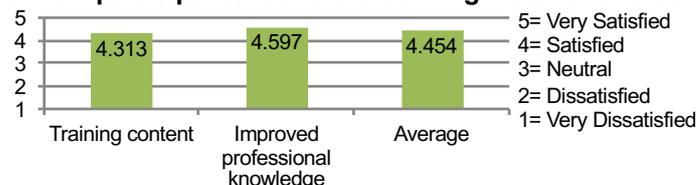
Results

1. Practitioners knowledge improvement regarding types of questions

Correct rate



2. How participants found the training material and content



Discussions

The current study showed encouraging preliminary results of the NICHD training workshop in improving the practitioners' knowledge. However, whether practitioners can successfully transfer knowledge into practice awaits future field study's confirmation. Besides, due to sociocultural reasons, Taiwanese children tend to be more compliant to adults (Huang & Lamb, 2014), practitioners interviewing Taiwanese children shall be even more cautious regarding the interview dynamic to safeguard best practice.

Current Study

The types of questions interviewers asked during the forensic interview play a decisive role in the accuracy of information retrieved by the child interviewees. Therefore, the current study aimed to assess practitioners' knowledge improvement in the types of questions asked, as this would be the first step to improve their interview practice.

Research Questions

1. After finishing the NICHD interview protocol training, did practitioners improve their knowledge regarding different types of questions?
2. How did the practitioners find the training material and content?

Measures

- **Question types quiz:** The quiz composed of 10 items. The first 9 items asked the participants to choose the correct question types from the choices, and the final item requested the participants to change a directive question to open question.
- **Feedback form:** The feedback form contained 3 items (5 point Likerts scale, 5- very satisfied and 1- very dissatisfied) and 2 open questions regarding suggestions or comments.

Question Types:

- **Directive questions** elicit specific, focused or targeted answers from the interviewees. E.g., **Wh**-questions (who, where, when, why, what) and **How**.
- **Open questions** encourage interviewees to give **non-targeted** answers and give **more complete descriptions**. E.g., Tell me what happened; tell me everything about that.
- **Option posing** questions requires interviewees to **choose the answer from the given options** within the questions. E.g., Was he touching you over or under your clothes? Did he touch you?
- **Suggestive questions** contains information that was not mentioned by the interviewee before.

Finding summary

1. The NICHD training workshop showed promising preliminary results in improving practitioners' knowledge in interview question types, particularly in directive and open questions.
2. The participants' feedback showed that they were satisfied with the training content which improved their professional knowledge.

References

- Fallor, K.C. (2014) Forty Years of Forensic Interviewing of Children Suspected of Sexual Abuse, 1974–2014: Historical Benchmarks. *Social Sciences*, 4, 34-65.
- Huang, C. Y., & Lamb, M. E. (2014). Are Chinese children more compliant? Examination of the cultural difference in observed maternal control and child compliance. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 45(4), 507-533.
- Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., Hershkowitz, I., Esplin, P. W., & Horowitz, D. (2007) Structured forensic interview protocols improve the quality and informativeness of investigative interviews with children: A review of research using the NICHD Investigative Interview Protocol. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 31, 1201-1231.