

Examining police officers' preparedness and attitude in conducting investigative interviews in the Philippines

Eroll Tañola¹, Jan Carlo Marquez², Zyra Jane Dauplo³,
Sherilyn Daang⁴, Joseph Nacionales⁵, Norberto Claridad⁶

Eastern Visayas State University, Philippines^{1,2,3,4,5,6}

²Email: jancarlo.marquez@evsu.edu.ph

Abstract - The field of police examinations has made great strides shifting towards a more ethical and basic aspiration of amplifying the quality and volume of data from suspects, rather than the narrow focus on carrying a concession of guilt (Milne & Bull, 2002). In recent studies, analysis of the inquiry-based practices of interviews with suspects and accused persons showed that appropriate practices are not being used often (Snook et al, 2012). It revealed that most of the officers used counter-productive and risky questions that limited narrative responses from the youth offenders (Rosario & Lintao, 2018). By using qualitative research through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), this study aims to examine the attitudes employed and the preparations done before conducting an investigative interview. Nine transcripts of audio-recorded interviews from various investigative officers of Tacloban City police officers were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results yielded reveals that there are positive relations between the police officers' attitudes and presentation in conducting investigative interviews. Participants who can build rapport and are equipped with necessary tools and information can generate reliable and more extensive information.

Keywords: police officers; preparedness; attitude; investigative interview

I. INTRODUCTION

The field of police examinations has made great strides shifting towards a more ethical and basic aspiration of amplifying the quality and volume of data from suspects, rather than the narrow focus on carrying a concession of guilt (Milne & Bull, 2002). In order for the field to continue the advancement from an accusatorial method to an inquisitorial approach, there must be a paradigm shift that is morally and ethically driven. Such a standpoint is exercised as far back as 1940 when Kidd (see Fyfe (ed.), 1982; cf. Nicoletti, 1991), in his controversial police manual, *Police Interrogation*, asserted, "The man who is suspected of a crime does not make him less of a person."

Investigation is a heart policing. Interviewing victims, eye-witnesses and accused is core to the accomplishment of an investigation and the bar that sets the standards need to be maintained. Forces need to hone and ensure the valuable resource of a competent interviewer. Interviews that are administer professionally and quality assured realize various benefits to solve a case.

According to Sage Journals, an investigative interview is an interview administered to evoke proof or information from a person (i.e., substantiation, victim, suer, or suspect) during the procedure of an examination. Investigative interviews carried on by police can differ greatly in purpose, range and content. The common ideal of all investigative interviews, nonetheless, is to evoke the most accurate, comprehensive and thorough account of a circumstance in question. The interviewing of the accused is an intent-exertion that is goal-driven. Amongst the potential targets of the interview include the collection of relevant data and the extraction of confessions (Gollwitzer et al, 1990).

Police officers' investigative interviews have greatly contributed in unravelling the truth in every case. In the study of Diaz (2019) revealed that police-respondents who view themselves to be good in investigative workshop and have attended a number of technical trainings in disquisition are more likely to be competent. Overall, the study points out that the wider experiences a police officer has, the better he possesses investigative/detective skills and competencies. Furthermore, it is considered as a method to deduce extensive and on-point information because of fresh events relatively available to a person's memory (Powell et al, 2011).

On the contrary, recent local and foreign studies oppose what is mentioned above in eliciting data with respect to workshops and training. In the study conducted by Rosario and Lintao (2018), which focused at evaluating the inquiry strategies administered by the officials in the conduct of investigation with adolescents, interviewers failed to allow the convicted to talk with freedom. Generally, the officers asked some leading, repetitive, numerous and forced-choice questions. Additionally, Snook et al (2012) where they examined the real-life investigative interviewing skills of police officers revealed that most of the officers used counter-productive and risky questions that limited narrative responses from the youth offenders. To address the gaps of the present literature, this research aims to examine the police officers' preparations before conducting an investigative interview as well as their attitudes on the said activity process. In connection to the present investigations, the researchers stand that a preparation beforehand of the interview is efficient and effective in collecting factual data. The researchers further argue that officers who employ a positive attitude can secure cooperation and generate more information.

This study aims to bridge the gap in addressing these issues and to contribute to the current argument. Specifically, the study aims to provide answers on the following questions (1) What preparations are made by police officers before conducting investigative interviews? (2) What attitudes are employed by police officers in conducting investigative interviews?

II. METHOD

As a result of understanding the objectives of the previous research, the qualitative method was used in this study. Qualitative research is defined by Denzin et al (2012) as a research-situated activity that places the observer's position in the world. Furthermore, the study employs interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is a qualitative research method devoted to examining how people interpret their significant life experiences (Smith & Obsorn, 2015). Participants are nine (9) competent interviewing investigators working in various police station offices in Tacloban City, namely: Police Station 1 (San Jose), Police Station 2 (Abucay), and Regional Highway Patrol Unit 8. The majority of the participants are seven male officers dominating at 78% and two women consisting of 22%. In this study, semi-structured questions were asked which are related to the research questions. In the data analysis procedure, the researchers used thematic analysis. To analyze data using thematic analysis, the following phases were followed in accordance to Braun and Clarke (2006): data familiarization, creation of preliminary codes, theme search, theme review, theme definition and name, and report creation. By identifying themes and patterns, researchers can present their findings in a clear and concise way, which can be easily understood by others.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Preparations before conducting investigative interviews

The findings revealed that there is a positive correlation with the preparations made before conducting investigative interviews as suggested by the participants. The researchers crafted five themes which are dominant in preparation before the conduct of investigative interview: (1) Gathering information of persons involved, (2) Building safe space, (3) Discretion of identity, (4) Preparing the requisites and preserving the rights of the clients, (5) Display of professionalism.

3.1.1 Gathering information of persons involved

Before conducting an investigative interview, police officers usually ask the personal information of the persons involved. Some statements of the officers are as follows.

"In investigating, a pen and a paper would be enough as long as we are able to get the personal information of the parties involved." P1

"First we ask his/her Identification Card to verify his/her identity especially if he/she is the suspect of the investigation." P2

"Just like that, we ask for the identification card, however if still in doubt we could go to the barangay that would justify his/her claim..." P2

The results yielded shows that gathering information about the persons involved and verifying that information are essential aspects of the interview. The findings are supported in the study of Launay et al (2021a/2021b) which are important aspects of police questioning. Investigators also need to assess the reliability of the information collected. It is believed that investigative interviewers cover a scope of reliability factors (Wilford et al, 2014) while exercising the interview, by asking specific questions related to the interviewee.

3.1.2 Building safe space

Police officers ensure that the victim is open about their feelings and makes them comfortable in which understanding is a preparatory step in an interview. Few statements are cited as follows:

"We're aiming for their trust and confidence because the complainant won't readily share their negative experiences, if they lack trust in us. Because their experiences are very sensitive to divulge. So, the main preparation we made was to prepare our emotions and to understand their situation" P3

The rest deduced that building a safe connection to the client helps to generate information in conducting interviews. The findings are strengthened by Klein et al (2015) wherein

they have established a frame named Good Strangers to gauge the critical skills such as gaining voluntary compliance, building rapport, and acknowledging the side of civilians instead of coercive and increasing tensions in situations to have an effective investigation.

3.1.3 Discretion of identity

As for private investigations, police officers tend to disguise themselves as civilians whenever they are in the target area for the purpose of investigation. The statement can be deduced as follows.

"Before we go to the area, we disguise ourselves and do not wear our uniform. For instance, we act as vendors so that we will not be known". P4

The result contributes to having an effective interview through deception or fictitious identities. This is supported by the study of Joh (2019) in which private policing essentially involves deception, which in return often leads to the involvement in activities that appear to be illegal. In each of these instances, undercover police officers engaged in seemingly unlawful activities to prove or to maintain their fictitious identities. Subsequently, they accept justifiable and often necessary aspect of covert policing.

3.1.4 Preparing the requisites and preserving the rights of the clients

Before the interview proper, police officers drafted some interview questions beforehand and made sure to preserve the rights of the interviewee as well. Few statements are deduced as follows.

"...whenever there are incidents and we have the suspect, we actually preserve first their rights and we follow a certain process for us not to violate their human rights..." P9

"The interview questions will be prepared and the purpose will be identified beforehand."P8

"...in every incident, we already initially formulated questions in our mind based on our past investigative interviews that relate to the current situation."P9

The results show that drafting questions before the exercise of the interview generates more information. The findings are supported by the study of Chin et al (2022) which evaluated the relationship between pre-interview planning, behaviours and outcomes. The findings revealed that there was a positive relationship between the pre-interview planning, interview-based attitudes and positive results. It provides concrete evidence that planning their interview tends to achieve more positive outcomes.

3.1.5 Display of professionalism

One of the preparations of the police officers before conducting an investigative interview is to make sure that they are wearing the proper uniform and getting ready with the knowledge, respect, and necessary materials before conducting an interview. Few statements of the officers are cited as follows.

"...The tools we prepare are simply a handbook, then a notice meter which is all information that is relevant there..." P6

"...we make sure that we are wearing our complete uniform and we look neat and presentable..."P7

The results reveal that having the necessary tools and wearing proper uniform gives authority and positively engages for the exercise of the interview. The findings are supported by the study of Mount and Mazerolle (2021). According to this paper, the method of delivering investigative interrogation training's structural design, instruction, and evaluation techniques, and behaviours directly affect engagement levels and the depth of interviewing skills that are acquired. The study implies gathering information that is relevant to solving the situation when

you give clear instructions and employ techniques during interrogation.

3.2 Attitudes Employed by Police Officers

The findings revealed that there is a positive correlation with the attitudes employed by police officers as suggested by the participants. The researchers highlighted five prevailing themes in preparation before the conduct of investigative interview (1) Showing confidence, (2) Building rapport, (3) Adaptive and Discretion of Identity, (4) Showing Patience (5) Giving Sympathy to the Client.

3.2.1 Showing Confidence

Police officers ensure to show confidence when conducting investigative interviews. They make sure that they are equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills. A statement was cited as:

"...in our field, there are appropriate seminars and training. In that way, you are knowledgeable and will be able to properly apply or use it in your designation"

Training and seminars have a significant positive impact on each person's professional development. Professionals who receive the required training will have a clearer grasp of their responsibilities and will be able to perform their job efficiently. As suggested by Hill and Moston (2011), interviewing must be viewed as a skill that requires ongoing maintenance, supervision, and evaluation. The research in this article shows the need of giving supervisory feedback to help practice, practice in judging interview quality, and examples of effective interviewing strategies. In addition, Diaz (2019) stated that wider experiences a police officer has, the better he possesses investigative/detective skills and competencies.

3.2.2 Building Rapport

One of the attitudes employed by police officers is building rapport. They make sure to establish a connection or relationship between them and their clients. Few statements of the officers are cited as:

"...asking what we can do to help. Like that, you should feel at home".

"No matter how tiring your job is, you should still be approachable".

The results obtained show that being adaptive to the environment with different people and posing as someone else helps to generate information specially in private investigations. As suggested in the related study, the ability to interact successfully involving a variety of people, from suspects and casualties to co-workers and leading scientists, are the most crucial aspect of investigative interviews (Westera et al, 2016).

3.2.3 Adaptive and Discretion of Identity.

In conducting an investigative interview, police officers instil adaptability and discretion of their identity. Some statements are selected as follows.

"...being able to adapt." P4

The results obtained show that being adaptive to the environment with different people and posing as someone else helps to generate information. The ability to interact successfully involving a variety of people, from suspects and casualties to co-workers and leading scientists, are the most crucial aspect of investigative interviews (Westera et al, 2016).

3.2.4 Showing Patience

One crucial attitude that a Police Officer should possess in attaining a successful interview is showing patience. Patience exerts a powerful and primary influence not just in tactical operations, but in all aspects of policing. Few statements are deduced as follows.

"...long patience and calm when talking". P4

The results deduced help to conclude that being patient to the clients gives them safe space and allow them to speak freely. This is strengthened by Cherryman & Bull (2001) wherein this approach rests on ethical principles, signifying that the individuals show respect and patience and treat each other as equal human beings with the same rights to dignity, self-determination, and free choice. It also emphasizes empathy, which means treating each other from the perspective of mutual understanding.

3.2.5 Giving Sympathy to the Client.

In conducting investigative interviews, one of the attitudes employed by police officers is to give sympathy to the clients. It can be deduced in the following excerpts.

"...we just let them cry, we comfort them, give them advice until they feel fine" P7

"...know how to listen to your client because in that way, they will feel safe and they will be able to share comfortably what really happened" P7

According to Goodman-Delahunty & Martschuk (2020) interviewers who are not forceful and derogatory and who give politeness secure cooperation in developing rapport in achieving its goals. According to the statement, it is important to make sure that your client is comfortable or they feel at ease before conducting an interview. Through employing these attitudes, your interviewee will feel safe, appreciated, and would feel important.

IV. CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to determine police officers' attitudes and preparedness for conducting investigative interviews. Although the findings were based on the experiences and thoughts of a limited number of police officers, all of the data acquired was sufficient to offer adequate findings for the study. These steps were given by the interrogated police officers who were invited to conduct an interview. The findings of the study revealed that most of the police officers create plans before the conduct of the investigative interviews such as formulating the questions to be asked, proper uniforms and tools necessary. They also instill safe space for their clients making sure that they are comfortable while exerting long patience and maintaining a good environment free from tension and coercion. After the findings and development of conclusions, a number of recommendations were disclosed based on the study's data and literature. There are a number of knowledge gaps around public involvement in research that result from our findings and might benefit from further research. This study may be useful to future researchers in learning about the initial steps and attitude displayed by police officers before an investigation interview. Future research may involve a large number of people in order to learn more about the preparedness and attitude of an interviewer police officer in order to obtain enough information about the case. Make sure you have enough pertinent information to support your findings. Future researchers may additionally inquire about police officers' procedures to ensure that they have enough details regarding the particular incident. These significant issues, which were not addressed in the current study, may be addressed in future research.

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