

Review

Investigative interviews with individuals who perpetrated sex crimes: A scoping review

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ABSTRACT

Sex crimes (CS) are a global public health problem with profound negative consequences for victims, their families, and society. The perpetrator's testimony is crucial for case outcomes because sexual offenses are frequently underreported, often due to limited evidence and lack of victim testimonies. Therefore, perpetrator investigative interviews play a decisive role in criminal investigations. The aim of this scoping review is to identify and describe evidence-based investigative interview techniques for gathering testimony from SC perpetrators using a structured methodology. Studies were identified through manual reference checking and in five electronic databases: Scopus, B-On, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and PubMed. Eight studies met the inclusion criteria. Most of the studies focused on rape and child sexual abuse. Five studies presented interview protocols, while three focused on interview techniques that interviewers should employ to elicit more information. It was possible to conclude that both the presented interviews and the techniques share a similar general structure. Clinical, forensic, and criminal implications are elaborated.

1. Introduction

Given the profound impacts on victims, families, and society, as well as the significant prevalence rates, sex crimes are a concerning phenomenon.^{1–5} According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 20 % of women and 7.7 % of men report experiencing sexual abuse before the age of 17, and 6 % of women aged 15–49 have experienced sexual violence at least once since reaching the age of 15.⁶ However, sexual violence against men is a very sensitive and neglected area of study, which has resulted in wide variations in reported prevalence.⁶ Furthermore, a recent systematic review regarding the global prevalence of sexual assault revealed that among the 22 studies reporting past-year prevalences, rates varied from 0 % to 59.2 % for women, .3 %–55.5 % for men, and 1.5 %–18.2 % for samples of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals.⁷

Literature has highlighted the discrepancy between official rates of sexual crimes and self-reports, with several cases going underreported due to different factors that also can be influenced by the victim's age and gender,⁸ namely fear, shame, stigma, the severity of the victim's

assault, not labeling the experience as a sexual assault, and a lack of support and understanding from others.^{8–10} Moreover, besides the absence of victim testimony, in some instances, there is a lack of physical or biological evidence of the abusive acts,¹¹ or physical evidence may not consistently serve as a reliable corroboration for the victim's account due to significant time constraints.¹² Then, one of the most reliable methods to establish perpetrators' guilt may be through their confession.¹³ Since the testimony of identified or alleged individuals who perpetrated sex crimes is of extreme importance to the case outcome, the investigative interview plays a decisive role in the criminal investigation.

An investigative interview serves as a tool to collect evidence that will help to determine whether a criminal act has taken place and, if so, to establish the context, nature of the act, and the person responsible.¹⁴ It aims to elicit information concerning an individual's history of sexual offenses from the perpetrator's perspective, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the sequence and nature of the acts and their relationship to various predisposing conditions.¹⁵ Consequently, investigative interview also serves as a tool for identifying the "modus

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operands" of a specific perpetrator, facilitating the clarification of criminogenic needs and the assessment of the risk of sexual recidivism.¹⁶

The techniques used with individuals who perpetrated crimes have evolved over the years. During the 1930s, certain jurisdictions, such as the United States, utilized physical pressure techniques in interrogations. However, in subsequent years, confessions obtained through physical coercion were ruled inadmissible as evidence in criminal proceedings. Nevertheless, the use of physically coercive tactics in suspect interrogations did not completely cease,¹⁷ which can elicit false confessions (e.g., 18–19]. In response to this issue and following a 2016 resolution by the UN General Assembly, principles for effective interviewing in investigations and information gathering were developed, known as "the Mendez Principles". These principles, formulated by 80 experts from over 40 countries, establish that: (1) effective interviewing is guided by science, law, and ethics; (2) it is a thorough process aimed at collecting accurate and reliable information while upholding legal safeguards; (3) it necessitates recognizing and addressing the needs of vulnerable interviewees; (4) it is a professional activity that demands specialized training; (5) it requires institutions to be transparent and accountable; and (6) its implementation calls for strong national measures.¹⁷

Literature has revealed that investigative interviews should address both a "scientific" and an "artistic" dimension to maximize the quality of the perpetrator's information.²⁰ The scientific approach suggests structured interviews to reduce information variance and cover a wide range of behaviors, historical events, and personal experiences, including sexual fantasies and urges. The authors suggest that limiting questioning to known judicial information may result in concealing relevant information.¹⁵ Moreover, the "artistic" aspect of interviewing individuals who perpetrated sex crimes relies on the evaluator's skill in establishing a "working alliance" with the perpetrator, even when faced with adversarial perspectives, such as treating the examinee with respect and neutrality.¹⁵ Moreover, Read et al. (2009) stated that investigative interviews with individuals who perpetrated sex crimes should contain the five elements common to all investigative interview protocols, namely (1) establishing rapport; (2) introducing the topic of concern; (3) eliciting narrative detail; (4) clarification/specific questioning, and (5) closure.²¹ Establishing rapport is similar to the 'artistic' aspect mentioned earlier, referring to a relationship that is conducive to good communication. It is important that the individuals who perpetrated sex crimes perceive they will be heard, understood, and not judged.¹⁴ The elicitation of a free narrative is one of the most crucial elements, wherein the individuals who perpetrated sex crimes have the opportunity to report what happened with little encouragement from the interviewer.²¹ Moreover, the closure of the interaction should not be underestimated, as it determines the future cooperation of the suspect.¹⁴

2. Current study

The literature suggests high levels of underreported sexual offenses, partly due to limited evidence and lack of testimony from victims and perpetrators. Moreover, this type of perpetrator is less likely to plead guilty compared to perpetrators of other types.^{22,23} This situation emphasizes the importance of conducting effective investigative interviews. Furthermore, a comprehensive investigative interview of individuals who perpetrated sex crimes could highlight their criminogenic needs and the risk of sexual violence, which are essential for assisting courts in determining their sentence and the most appropriate treatment.^{24–26}

Despite the importance of investigative interview with individuals who perpetrated sex crimes, there is a lack of literature in this area compared to other respondent groups, such as child witnesses and adult witnesses.²⁷ Then, the current scoping review examines the following research question: Which investigative interviews are used to assess individuals who perpetrated sex crimes? Specifically, this study aims to (1) identify and summarize investigative interview techniques used to

assess sex crime perpetrators; (2) reflect on the evolution of these procedures; and (3) recognize and address existing gaps in real-world forensic interview practices.

3. Method

3.1. Protocol and registration

The Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) methodology and its extensions for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR)²⁸ were utilized in this scoping review. Additionally, it was registered on the OSF REGISTRIES (reference: [10.17605/OSF.IO/PHWRD](https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/PHWRD)).

3.2. Eligibility criteria

Empirical studies, theoretical and reviews that explored the type of approach used in forensic procedures to collect the testimony of women and men convicted or suspected of sex crimes was considered. For inclusion, studies had to be (a) based on empirical data (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) or theoretical studies or reviews; (b) written in Portuguese, Spanish, or English; (c) included women or men convicted or suspected of sex crimes; (d) published in a peer-reviewed journal. No restrictions regarding the year of publication were made. For exclusion, one or more of the following criteria need to be presented: (a) studies addressing clinical interviews; and (b) case studies and commentaries or letters to editors.

3.3. Information sources and search process

A literature search using Scopus, B-On, Web of Science, PsycInfo, and PubMed was performed, using the following equation search: ("child abuser*" OR "child sexual abuser*" OR "child pornograph*" OR "child molest*" OR pedophil* OR paedophil* OR "internet sex* offend*" OR "sexually offend*" OR "sex* offend*" OR "sex* offen*" OR "sexual abuse*" OR rapist* OR sex* aggress* OR sex* molest* OR sex* assault* OR sex* crimes OR sex* offense*) AND ("forensic interview*" OR "investigative interview*" OR testimon* OR interrogation) NOT (victim*). The equation was run by two reviewers in January 2025. In addition, the reference lists of several studies and specialized journals were scrutinized to identify studies that might not have been included in the databases searched.

3.4. Study selection

The identified studies were imported into Rayyan software,²⁹ where duplicates were removed. Thereafter, studies were screened by title and abstract by two authors independently to ascertain whether they fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Authors' disagreements were discussed until a consensus was reached to determine which papers would undergo full-text analysis.

3.5. Data extraction and analysis

The two reviewers independently charted data from the included studies using a codebook to collect the following topics: (a) study identification (i.e., title, author(s), year of publication, and journal); (b) perpetrator sample characteristics (i.e., sample size, gender, age, ethnicity, and disabilities); (c) victimization characterization (i.e., type of victimization, victim–abuser relationship); (d) interviewer characteristics (i.e., sample size, gender, age, ethnicity, profession, training, and number of interviewers per interview); (e) forensic interview procedures (i.e., setting of the interview, type of interview, number of sessions, duration, and record); (f) measures/type of interview (type of questions etc); (g) type of outcome; (h) main findings. Following PRISMA recommendations, we calculated interrater agreement, which

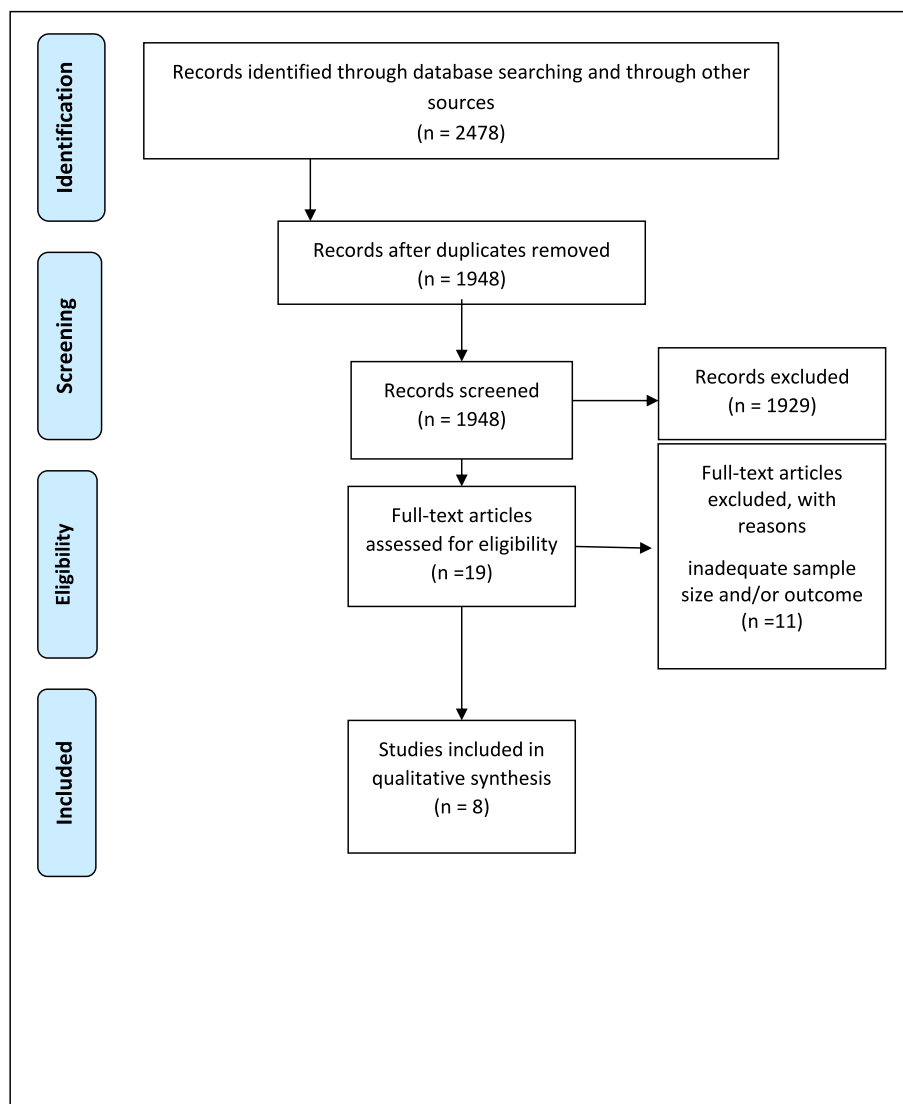


Fig. 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process.

strongly agreed with Cohen's Kappa coefficient ($K = .76$).

The studies included in the review were analyzed through a qualitative synthesis, which is detailed in the "Results" section. The findings were presented both narratively and in table format, with key results summarized, and their significance highlighted.

3.6. Quality assessment

The risk of bias in the included studies was evaluated using the Quality Assessment Tool for Studies with Diverse Designs (QATSDD).³⁰ This tool comprises 16 items, including two indicators specifically for qualitative studies and two for quantitative studies. Each item is scored from 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating greater methodological rigor. Total scores on the QATSDD range from 0 to 42 for qualitative and quantitative studies and up to 48 for mixed-methods studies. To facilitate comparisons between articles, three quality categories were established: low quality ($\leq 50\%$), acceptable quality (51%–74%), and high quality ($\geq 75\%$).³¹

4. Results

A total of 2478 studies were found through database searches and manual reference checking. After eliminating duplicates, 1948 studies

were screened based on their title and abstracts. From this analysis, 1929 did not meet the eligibility criteria and were therefore excluded. The complete texts of 19 studies were evaluated based on the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Ultimately, eight studies met the criteria and were included in this scoping review, with data extracted from each. Fig. 1 shows the PRISMA flow diagram, detailing the number of studies included at each stage of the selection process and the reasons for their inclusion or exclusion.

4.1. Quality assessment

In this systematic review, we included articles with low quality ($n = 2$), acceptable quality ($n = 1$), and high quality ($n = 5$). The study by Read et al.¹⁴ had the highest quality score (88.89%), followed by the study by Hershkowitz and Lamb³² with a quality score of 85.42%, and the study by Giles et al.³³ with a score of 81.25%. Additionally, two studies had quality scores of 77%^{34,35} and one had a score of 66.67%.³⁶ Lastly, the studies by Gudjonsson³⁷ and Ellis³⁸ had scores of 44.44% and 22.22%, respectively.

4.2. Characteristics of the included studies

Among the included articles, four studies were empirical and four

were theoretical. The studies' publication years ranged from 1954³⁸ to 2024.³² The empirical studies included were conducted in different countries: three in the United Kingdom (33, 34, 36), and one in Israel.³²

4.3. Perpetrators sample characteristics

The sample sizes in the empirical studies varied, ranging from 14³⁴ to 198 suspects of committing sex crimes.³² Only one study reported the average age, which is 33.17 years³⁴ while two studies reported the age range, which varied between 12 and 59 years (32, 34). One study did not specify the average age or the age range.³⁶ The theoretical studies addressed tips for collecting the CSA perpetrator's testimony; therefore, sample size and the age of perpetrators were not mentioned.^{14,29,37,38}

Thereby, two studies included both juveniles and adults in their samples,^{32,34} while two focused solely on adults.^{33,36} The theoretical studies did not specify this type of information. Regarding gender, two studies included both women and men,^{32,33} and two included only men.^{34,36}

4.4. Victimization characterization

Six studies addressed child sexual abuse and rape victimization, while the remaining studies addressed only child sexual abuse.^{32,33}

4.5. Interviewer information

In the empirical studies, the interviews were conducted by police officers ($n = 2$) and investigators ($n = 2$), with one study specifying that in almost all the interviews a secondary interviewer was also present.³⁶ Almost all the studies reported that the interviewers had training in the interview methods.³²⁻³⁴

4.6. Forensic interview procedures

4.6.1. Interviews protocols

Of the eight studies, five described interview protocols, namely the Observing Rapport Based Interviewing Technique (ORBIT),³³ the Standard NICHD Suspect Interview Protocol (SSP), the Revised NICHD Suspect Interview Protocol (RSP),³² the P.E.A.C.E investigative interviewing approach^{34,36} and the investigative interview.¹⁴

Observing Rapport Based Interviewing Technique (ORBIT). This protocol is based on the premise of 'responsiveness', which involves, firstly, the reduction in counter-interrogation strategies and disengagement (e.g., aggression, complete silence, or 'no comment') and, secondly, an increased yield of information of evidential value.³³ The ORBIT includes Motivational Interviewing skills (MI)^{39,40} and the Interpersonal Behavior Circle (IBC).⁴¹ MI includes fostering rapport through a collaborative environment, rather than a confrontational one, eliciting information from the client rather than demanding it, and prioritizing the client's autonomy over emphasizing the counselor's authority. The IBC emphasizes that effective interviewers were conditionally sensitive to the interpersonal requirements of the context within which they were operating. In sum, the ORBIT assumes that individuals who are both versatile (knowing when to use different forms of interpersonal responses) and competent (employing adaptive rather than maladaptive variants) will facilitate, rather than hinder, communication and more information.

Standard NICHD Suspect Interview Protocol (SSP). The protocol is a structured framework encompassing all stages of the investigative interview. Initially, interviewers are required to elucidate the interview's objective and recite the suspects' rights, cautioning them that their statements may be utilized in subsequent legal actions. Subsequently, it is imperative to establish rapport with the interviewee prior to addressing the allegations. During the interrogation phase, a preference is given to open-ended questions, progressing to more directive queries that offer choices and clarify inconsistencies as necessary.

Nonetheless, whenever feasible, interviewers are instructed to solicit elaboration on information provided in response to more specific questions.³²

Revised NICHD Suspect Interview Protocol (RSP). The RSP is an improvement on SSP and is distinguished by a heightened focus on developmentally appropriate and supportive interviewing techniques. The RSP places more emphasis on informing the suspect of their rights and uses a wider range of rapport-building techniques. Moreover, the RSP prioritizes exhaustive probing using free-recall prompts and, minimizes the use of directive and option-posing questions, incorporates non-suggestive supportive comments to reinforce the juvenile's efforts, which is not highlighted in the SSP.³²

Specifically, the knowledge provision phase was tailored to suit young people's comprehension levels. Interviewers are directed to read each segment individually, verify the young person's understanding, and then assess comprehension by asking them to restate the content in their own words. Should the young person fail to do so accurately, the interviewers are instructed to offer a simplified explanation and reassess comprehension. Secondly, the RSP guides interviewers to employ relationship-building practices to establish a meaningful connection with the youth, fostering comfort, trust, and cooperation before explaining the basic rules. This includes welcoming greetings, showing interest in the youth's well-being, and providing supportive statements. Throughout the relationship-building phase and the interview, interviewers are trained to identify and respond in a non-suggestive manner to the youth's expressions of reluctance and emotion. The RSP encourages interviewers to thoroughly probe juveniles' memories using free recall instructions before asking directive questions, limiting options-based questions to necessity. Interviewers should delay clarification requests and present them non-confrontationally, focusing first on omissions or inconsistencies in the juvenile's statement, then on those compared to the alleged victim's statements, and finally on external evidence. Lastly, the RSP instructs interviewers to use non-suggestive supportive comments to reinforce juveniles' efforts, offer support, encourage them during difficulties, and provide help or goodwill gestures. Interviewers are also guided to recognize, echo, and explore the juveniles' expressed emotions and to elicit emotions if not mentioned spontaneously.

PEACE. PEACE method is an acronym for 'Planning and preparation', 'Engage and explain', 'Account', 'Closure' and 'Evaluation'.^{34,36} The initial phase of the PEACE model emphasizes planning and preparation for the interview. This includes making practical arrangements, such as creating a timeline of events, formulating an opening question, and outlining the interview structure. In "Engage and explain", investigators adopt a conversational approach, explaining the interview process and building rapport through self-disclosure and professional, considerate behavior. Importantly, this step is not intended to coerce confessions but aims to establish a relationship and atmosphere conducive to a productive working alliance. Concerning the "account" phase, the process starts with a yes/no question about the suspect's involvement in the alleged offense. If the response is yes, open-ended questions follow to gather a full account. If the response is no, open-ended questions on various themes, like the suspect's whereabouts, are asked. Closed-ended questions are minimized to encourage an uninterrupted narrative. If the suspect does not provide a free account, investigators use pre-planned open-ended questions to obtain detailed information. Lastly, after asking all their questions, investigators summarize the main points of the interview, giving suspects an opportunity to correct, modify, or add information.

Investigative Interview. Read et al.,¹⁴ stated that investigative interviews could be used with individuals who perpetrated sex crimes and should focus on five elements: (1) establishing rapport, (2) introducing the topic of concern, (3) eliciting narrative detail, (4) clarification/specific questions, and (5) closure. In the "establishing rapport" phase, interviewers should ensure the interviewee feels heard, understood, and not judged. Guidelines for this phase include being

direct, not assuming prior information is true, and avoiding contentious issues. In the “eliciting narrative detail” phase, interviewees should be given the opportunity to report what happened with minimal prompting and at their own pace. Open-ended questions help steer the interview and encourage further narrative information. Non-verbal encouragement, such as nods and pauses, reinforces the interviewer’s role as an interested listener, enhancing the effectiveness of the questions. The next phase involves gathering critical details omitted from the narrative and clarifying inconsistencies. Specific questions should be non-leading and non-suggestive, adhering to legislation and judicial rules to avoid suggestibility and ensure admissibility. Lastly, the interview information is summarized to allow the interviewee to correct any misunderstandings, and the suspect is informed of future processes.

4.6.2. Interview techniques

Moreover, the studies also describe techniques that should be used by the interviewers. Three studies highlighted the importance of establishing rapport, with the interviewer being friendly, respectful, accommodating, empathic, and understanding towards the suspect.^{35,37,38} A study also highlighted that the lack of confidentiality is a significant drawback. It is crucial that the suspect perceives the interviewer as non-punitive and understands that our objective is to comprehend not only whether the incident occurred, but also the underlying reasons for its occurrence.³⁸ Moreover, one study highlights the way in which questions should be asked and their order, namely that questions about relationships are less embarrassing and can help the person feel more at ease and then ask questions about the sexual component.³⁸ Lastly, one study also emphasized that interviewers should appeal to the suspect’s good character or conscience to encourage truth-telling. This involves providing reassurance, discussing the potential benefits of confessing, calmly presenting the witness’s account of events, introducing evidence gently, and using strategies to minimize shame.³⁷

5. Discussion

This scoping review explores the investigative interviews utilized to interview individuals who are suspected of or perpetrated sex crimes, aiming specifically to identify and summarize the protocols and/or techniques employed in interviewing these individuals.

One of the major findings emphasizes the limited research on this topic, with only eight studies included and only five of these presenting investigative interview protocols. These results corroborate the idea that the literature in this area is less extensive compared to other respondent groups, such as child witnesses and adult witnesses.²⁷ For instance, Fernandes et al.²⁷ focused on investigative interview protocols predominantly used in offline sexual abuse cases, identifying 146 studies and 30 distinct procedures for gathering testimony from child victims. The scarcity of literature in this field may mean that many of the protocols/techniques used are not the best to collect information. Firstly, research shows that some individuals falsely confess the crimes they did not commit, and certain interrogation techniques can raise the risk of eliciting a false confession.^{18,19} Secondly, in cases where victims are unable to testify, the absence of testimony may compromise the collection of an accurate statement from the perpetrators of the crime. This highlights the critical necessity for enhanced investment in the identification and development of evidence-based forensic psychological methods to tackle the complexities associated with the testimonies of individuals who perpetrated sex crimes.¹⁵ Moreover, half of the studies were published in recent years (2021–2024), suggesting a renewed interest in this field. Israel and the United Kingdom were prominent in the research, together contributing to the four recent empirical studies. This highlights the critical need for cross-cultural research to understand and compare how clinical, forensic, and criminal systems refer to and assess perpetrators of sex crimes, globally.

Additionally, half of the empirical studies addressed juveniles and

adults who perpetrated sex crimes, encompassing both women and men. Moreover, most of the included studies focused on protocols and techniques aimed at addressing individuals who perpetrated rape and/or child sexual abuse. However, the literature indicates that individuals who commit sex crimes form a heterogeneous group with distinct characteristics, psychological profiles, and methods of operation.^{22,39,40} However, one of the widely used interviews (i.e., Cognitive Interview)⁴¹ emphasizes that protocols must be tailored to the characteristics and developmental stages of the interviewees.⁴¹ Therefore, distinct interview protocols may be necessary for young people and adults who have perpetrated sexual crimes. Considering the overrepresentation of individuals with intellectual disabilities in this group, an assessment of their intellectual capacity to understand the procedures should also be conducted, and the evaluation and collection of their testimony should be adjusted accordingly.⁴²

The protocols and techniques suggested in the included studies exhibit notable similarities. It highlighted that (1) interviewers should start by stating the rights of the person; (2) develop a rapport with the interviewee; (3) elicit a free narrative using open-ended questions; and (4) at the end, interviewers should summarize the main points of the interview, giving suspects an opportunity to correct, modify, or add information. Notably, the emphasis on establishing rapport was prevalent, with interviewers being advised to approach suspects in a friendly, respectful, accommodating, empathetic, and understanding manner.^{14,35,37,38} Moreover, a study suggested that interviewers should appeal to the suspect’s good character or conscience to encourage truth-telling. These techniques are aligned with the Mendez principles for investigative interviews with individuals who have committed crimes as well as the PEACE method, which are mentioned in two studies.^{34,36} According to Mendez’ principles, the goal of investigative interviews is to gather valid information rather than obtain confessions. Consequently, rapport-building facilitates the collection of accurate information during investigative interviews. In contrast, coercive tactics are likely to impair individuals’ memory retrieval capacities, thereby decreasing the quality of their episodic memories and, consequently, the information they provide.¹⁷

Another important technique was the advice to use open questions.^{14,38} Specifically, one study suggests that, in addition to considering the type of questions, they should be sequenced such that less intrusive questions are addressed first.³⁸ These results align with the guidelines for investigative interviews targeting other types of perpetrators^{43,44}. However, research indicates that these guidelines are not consistently adhered to, in practice⁴⁴. For instance, a study of questioning practices within 80 suspect interviews, conducted by a Canadian police organization, revealed an almost exclusive reliance on closed and probing questions, with open questions rarely used⁴⁴. These results seem to suggest that it may be necessary for professionals to be trained in investigative interview models, which can enhance the effectiveness of interviewers⁴³.

This scoping review acknowledges specific limitations that researchers should take into account when designing future studies. Firstly, data collection was limited to peer-reviewed studies in English, Spanish, or Portuguese, potentially excluding valuable insights from other languages. Secondly, the review focused on assessment procedures. Examining the effectiveness of these procedures and expanding the scope to encompass therapeutic interventions for perpetrators of sex crimes could be beneficial.

6. Conclusion and implications

The literature indicates that sexual offenses are significantly under-reported, largely due to insufficient evidence and the absence of testimonies from both victims and perpetrators. Additionally, individuals who commit these offenses are less inclined to plead guilty compared to those committing other types of crimes.^{22,23} Then, using investigative interviews is crucial to collect the testimony of these persons. However,

Table 1

Key findings of the systematic review.

Key Findings
A limited number of investigative interview procedures and techniques for collecting testimony from CSA perpetrators were identified.
Most studies were conducted in Israel and the United Kingdom.
The empirical studies focused on juveniles and adults who committed sexual offenses, including both females and males, involving rape and CSA.
The protocols are generally structured in phases: (1) introduction; (2) rapport building; (3) free recall; (4) questioning; and (5) closure.
Rapport building and the use of open questions was prevalent in the studies.

Table 2

Implications for research, practice, and policy.

Implications
Further research is needed to develop protocols for collecting testimony from perpetrators of CSA, because they constitute a heterogeneous population.
These protocols/techniques need to be methodically incorporated into risk assessments.
Research is necessary to investigate the effectiveness, empirical validity, and reliability of each method used to collect testimony from CSA perpetrators.

the application of evidence-based approaches and structured methodologies in real-world judicial procedures for collecting testimony from sexual crimes perpetrators has not been thoroughly identified. To address this gap, we conducted a scoping review, marking the first direct attempt to explore and fill this area of research.

The review identified a limited number of investigative interview procedures and techniques for collecting testimony from individuals who perpetrated sex crimes. However, we conclude that their basic structure is generally similar. Specifically, the included studies emphasize the importance of starting with an introduction where the interviewer explains the legal procedures. Following this, it is necessary to build rapport with the perpetrator. Subsequently, the interviewer should allow the perpetrator to freely recall their experiences using open-ended questions. Finally, the interview should conclude with a summary of the information gathered (see Table 1).

Despite this, the review underscores the necessity of developing protocols that address the specific characteristics of those who commit these crimes, as they constitute a heterogeneous group with diverse needs (e.g., 22, 42, 43). Additionally, there is a need for research that evaluates the effectiveness, empirical validity, and reliability of each procedure used to collect testimony from sexual crimes perpetrators.

These protocols/techniques should be systematically integrated into risk assessments, also helping, in cases where individuals are guilty, to define their juridical measure. Research has shown that sentences are often influenced more by the severity of the crime rather than the risk posed by the perpetrator, a situation that could impact their rehabilitation²⁶ (see Table 2).

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Declaration of competing interest

None.

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