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Can physical characteristics in the interrogation room aid the witness in recalling what happened?

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ABSTRACT

Background and aim – Police interrogations tend to be very stressful. This comes at the expense of the effectiveness of interrogations as stressed suspects and witnesses provide less extensive and accurate statements. A more comfortable environment probably leads to more effective interrogations for all persons involved. The aim of this research is to determine whether particular aspects of the physical environment of an interrogation room may enable self-disclosure and improve accuracy of the recall of information.

Methods / Methodology – An experiment using a 2 x 2 between subjects design was performed investigating the impact of two variables, wall colour (blue/red) and seating comfort (chair/stool), on self-disclosure, and accuracy of information of participants who played the role of witnesses during a simulation of a police interrogation.

Results – Results showed that indeed stress was induced during the experiment. The stool was perceived as less comfortable than the chair, and participants experienced significantly different emotions between the blue and the red wall. However, no significant differences could be shown regarding self-disclosure and accuracy of information in 2x2 design. Possibly, the limited number of participants has influenced the results. A repeat study with a larger sample is recommended.

Originality – Currently, there are limited studies within the field of police interrogations that study the role of the physical environment. This is the first study to show that a (too) comfortable police interrogation room might be not beneficial for the effectiveness of the interrogation.

Practical or social implications – The experiment showed that using physical aspects to appeal to users' emotions is a means of increasing comfort.

Type of paper – Research paper (full)

KEYWORDS

Self-disclosure, accuracy of information, police interrogation, stress.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, interrogators aim to collect as much accurate information as possible (Shepherd & Griffiths, 2013; Rispens & van Amelsvoort, 2016; Dekker & Feigenson, 2020). However, suspects still experience high levels of stress during police interrogations (Gudjonsson, 2003). As a result, suspects might struggle in providing details about the alleged crime (May et al., 2021), respond in a defensive way (Verschuere et al., 2004) or even make a false confession (Kassin & Kiechel, 1996; Klaver et al., 2008; Vrij, 2008). This applies to suspects and witnesses. Research focuses mainly on psychological interrogation techniques to lower stress (Vrij, 2008). However, the physical environment might play a role as well.

Generally, the police interrogation room itself is designed in a way that guarantees safety for all persons but thus far little attention has been paid to the atmosphere. Several studies have been performed

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about the effect of the physical environment on people's well-being within other disciplines like general hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and schools (Karlinn & Zeis, 2006; Dijkstra et al., 2006). However, research in the context of police interrogations is very limited as only a few studies were found (Dawson et al., 2017; Hoogesteyn et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2019). A recent study by Hoogesteyn et al. (2020), postulated that a decorated interrogation room, instead of a standard and rather Spartan one, "corresponded with what the majority of participants described qualitatively to be an environment that promotes disclosure, which should be relaxing, include comfortable chairs, decorations, and appear home-like". However, effect of such an interrogation room on witness' disclosure is absent. Relaxing, comfortable and home-like maybe interpreted as being more hospitable, based on the Experience of Hospitality scale developed by Pijls et al. (2017).

The limited findings regarding the physical environment within police interrogations and the rising need of the Dutch Police Academy regarding knowledge on this subject formed the motivation for this research. This study focuses on the effect of the physical environment by measuring stress, self-disclosure and accuracy of recall among participants while they stay in a room with either a red or blue wall colour, and either a comfortable chair or an uncomfortable stool. The colours blue and red were applied, as literature shows that blue is seen as a calm colour and red as the opposite as it increases stress. Seating comfort was chosen as it is part of the way how we assesses the environment (Knapp et al., 2013), and several studies focussed on seating comfort which could be used as fundamentals for this study. These variables are relevant as a more comfortable environment probably leads to a more effective interrogation, especially since the current environment is far from comfortable.

STRESS AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

In a police interrogation room, suspects and witnesses are placed in an environment with which they are not familiar and in which they do not feel in control (Schrantz et al., 2021). This commonly generates stress. There are many different forms of stressors, for instance traumatic events and daily hassles (Wheaton & Montazer, 2010). However, this study focuses on stress coming from life changing events, which relates to acute stress, resulting in high levels of stress, which is usually referred to as 'distress'. Distress starts with stressors (impulses caused by being in the police interrogation room), in combination with the context of the moment (the alleged crime) and coping with the situation (to what extent the person is able handle the situation).

Being distressed during a police interrogation leads to several changes in behaviour, which can be differentiated into two categories. Experiencing distress during an interrogation affects *self-disclosure*, as suspects and witnesses feel insecure and anxious (May et al., 2021), experience concentration difficulties (May et al., 2021) and respond in a defensively manner (Verschuere et al., 2004), resulting in less extensive statements. Moreover, distress affects the quality of statements (e.g. Morgen III et al., 2004), i.e. it decreases the *accuracy of statements*.

Stress is related to the physical environment as assessing the environment can generate stress (i.e. stressors). This aligns with the theory of Cohen et al. (1997), who link stressors to behaviour. Assessing the environment can, in general, be subdivided into five dimensions (Knapp et al., 2013). The first dimension is *familiarity* of the environment, as people are cautious in a less familiar environment. The second dimension is *constraint* perceptions. The feeling of freedom within the environment influences the level of comfort. The third dimension is the perception of *warmth*, which relates to the psychological feeling of the environment. Fourth, the perception of *privacy* influences behaviour of people as they are more willing to reduce the sitting distance and disclose more personal information in contrast to rooms with less privacy. Behaviour is also affected by *physical and emotional distance*, which is the fifth

dimension. This can be influenced by the distance between seats, but also by the sitting position of people by taking a forward attitude or leaning backwards (Thomas & Tsai, 2012).

The current information gap lies within two of the aforementioned dimensions. Warmth, particularly the creation of a warm feeling, is the first dimension. Within the context of police interrogations creating a warm feeling is most easily achieved by manipulating the wall colour, as previous research shows that colour affects mood and can therefore create a warm perception (RiosVelasco, 2010). Adding loose objects could also influence mood (RiosVelasco, 2010), but could potentially cause harm. To examine this, two contradicting colours have to be selected.

In general, the colour blue is related to calmness and relaxation while red is distressing and increases heart rate (Liu et al., 2014; AL-Avash et al., 2016). However, this needs to be examined. Blue, as a calm colour, and red, as an arousing colour, have been used in other experiments to increase the chance for an effect (Kwallek et al., 1997). An important note to consider is that colour preference can differ between people based on, among others, cultural background (Adams & Osgood, 1973; Gao et al., 2007) and personal preferences (Dijkstra et al., 2008). For instance, the experiment of Weller and Livingston (1998) showed that participants felt more comfortable reading a violent crime from a pink paper than from a blue one while blue is generally seen as more comfortable. Further research is required to find out whether colour also affects suspects and witnesses during police interrogations. Therefore the following hypotheses regarding colour have been formulated:

- H1 There is an effect of wall colour (red or blue) on the amount of information disclosed by the participants.
- H2 There is an effect of wall colour (red or blue) on the number of disclosed details of participants.

The second information gap concerns the dimension physical and emotional distance. Lam et al. (2011) advocate that seating distance together with the seating quality determines the seating comfort perceived by the user. Manipulating seating distance is challenging within this study considering the required presence of a jury or interrogator(s). Moreover, Hoogesteyn et al. (2019) already investigated the effect of seating distance but no effect was found. Therefore, only seating comfort was manipulated in this study.

No literature has been found regarding seating comfort within police interrogations. That is remarkable as studies in other disciplines show that seating influences feeling comfortable, which might be interpreted as the opposite of feeling stressed. Pijls et al. (2019) examined this in a restaurant by manipulating a comfortable chair and a uncomfortable stool. In addition, the study of Krahé et al. (2018) shows that people who are feeling relaxed, which could be related to feeling comfortable, experience less frustration and therefore less anger and aggression. They manipulated feelings of comfort by focussing on the seating position of people, by comparing the leaning position of participants.

While choosing two kinds of seating furniture to create different perceptions of stress levels, two elements were considered. First, users need to perceive a difference in comfort while seated. Feeling uncomfortable can lead to feeling stressed which is applicable within this study. Second, people sitting on a chair are likely to take a reclining position in contrast to a stool which has no backrest and therefore stimulates a forward position (Krahé et al., 2018). This leads to the following hypotheses:

- H3 There is an effect of seating comfort (chair or stool) on the amount of information disclosed by the participants.
- H4 There is an effect of seating comfort (chair or stool) on the number of disclosed details of participants.

PRE-TEST ENVIRONMENTAL MANIPULATION

In this experiment we manipulated two room characteristics: seating comfort and wall colour. A manipulation check was performed several weeks prior to the experiment to ensure that participants would indeed perceive the experimental conditions to be different. For the perceived effect of the wall colour it was particularly important to make sure that participants would only perceive differences between the colours themselves and that the level of brightness and the intensity of the colours were perceived to be the same. Participants (ranging from $N = 25$ to $N = 61$) gave input to get to the right level of intensity and brightness, and perceived them to be the same after adding 20% more black to the blue colour (RGB 0, 201, 255), and adding 20% white to the red colour (RGB 255, 0, 0). In addition to testing the brightness and intensity, a small pilot was conducted among 61 participants. They assessed blue and red in a Dutch-formulated survey via a 5-point Semantic Differential Scale, which was inspired by the paper of Hanyu (2000). Results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Moods associated with the colours, * indicates $p < .001$.

$N = 61$	Blue		Red		T-statistic
Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>
Pleasant – unpleasant	2.20	1.08	3.02	.99	-4.24*
Exciting – boring	3.36	.82	2.21	.80	7.61*
Relaxing - distressing	2.36	1.10	3.56	.96	-5.49*
Safe – fearful	1.97	.89	3.37	.99	6.73*
Interesting – uninteresting	2.80	1.00	2.51	.94	1.59
Active – inactive	2.87	1.09	2.13	1.06	3.49*

The only difference that was not found between the two colours concerned how interesting the colours were assessed by participants. The significant effects confirm the findings from Liu et al. (2014) for the Dutch population, that blue can be seen as the calm colour in contrast to the arousing red. This is relevant since the experiment of the present study looked for variables which, in general, can be perceived in a comfortable and stressful manner.

Regarding *seating comfort*, the same chair and stool (Figure 1) were chosen as Pijls et al. (2019) used in their experiment in studying the role of, among others, seating comfort in relation to the experience of hospitality in a restaurant setting. The difference in comfort was evaluated via a manipulation check in which ten participants assessed the chair and ten other participants assessed the stool by rating thirteen statements on a 10-point Likert scale. Of these statements, four measured the level of comfort (to what extent the chair/stool feels comfortable, supports the body well, feels soft, feels okay to sit on for several hours) while the nine other statements measured positive emotions in relation to the seating (relaxed, laid-back, unstressed, light-hearted, amused, bright, cheerful, happy, pleased). All four statements regarding seating comfort showed significantly higher comfort of the chair in comparison to the stool, thus the chair can be assumed to be more comfortable than the stool (Table 2). At the same time the chair did hardly elicit more positive emotions than the stool as only one significant effect was found. Participants felt more unstressed while sitting on the chair ($M_{chair} = 6.7$, $SD = 1.06$) in comparison to the stool ($M_{stool} = 5.4$, $SD = 1.6$; $t(18) = 1.43$, $p < .001$, two-tailed). Consequently, using this chair and this stool proved to be suitable to use as environmental manipulation during the experiment.



Figure 1 Chair with backrest and stool without backrest.

Table 2 Perception of seating comfort, * indicates $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$, *** indicates $p < .001$.

<i>N</i> = 20	Comfortable chair		Uncomfortable stool		T-statistic
<i>Variable</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>
Comfort	5.8	.92	2.7	1.6	5.22***
Support	5.6	1.9	2.5	1.9	3.65**
Softness	4.1	2.02	2.3	1.64	2.19*
Being able to sit on for hours	5.5	1.58	1.9	.99	6.10***

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and experimental conditions

The experiment took a 2 (seating comfort) x 2 (wall colour) factorial between subjects design (see Figure 2). Seating comfort was manipulated by the type of seats. Participants were seated on either an uncomfortable stool or a comfortable chair and faced either a red or a blue wall (see Figure 3). The experiment was carried out in June 2021. A convenience sample was drawn among students, faculty, and visitors in the building of Saxion University of Applied Sciences, location Deventer. No quota were used while recruiting participants, i.e. no distinction was made regarding the demographics of potential participants. In total, 52 persons participated in the experiment of whom most were students ($N = 48$). Others were employees ($N = 2$) or visitors ($N = 2$). All participants were from Dutch origin, so the cultural differences described in the literature review are less relevant for the current sample. Being randomly assigned over the groups, each groups contained twelve to fourteen participants. All but one participant finished the experiment. The mean age of participants was 21.8 years and 61.5% were women.

		Seating comfort	
		Chair	Stool
Wall colour	Blue	Setting 1	Setting 2
	Red	Setting 3	Setting 4

Figure 2 Experimental set-up



Figure 3 Experimental groups.

Procedures

Figure 4 depicts the procedures used in the experiment. Before the start of the actual experiment, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental groups. While participants were reading and signing the consent form in the neutral room, the researcher performed the randomisation in the experimental room by randomly picking a table tennis ball which contained the number of the

experimental condition. Next, the experimental condition was adjusted by swapping the wall colour (painted canvas) and/ or swapping the seats.

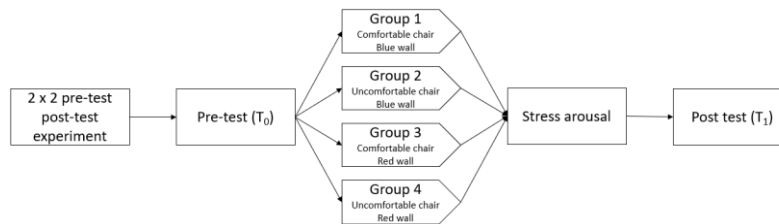


Figure 4 Experimental design.

The first step of the procedure, at T_0 , took place in a neutral (pre-experimental) room, where stress levels of participants ($N = 52$) were measured. In this neutral room participants were shown a picture of a suspect for ten seconds via a tablet, then filled in the stress questionnaire before the start of the experiment (moment T_0), and lastly were asked to describe the suspect in order to measure their abilities to describe a suspect, mimicking a witness testimony. See Figure 5 for photos of the suspects.



Figure 5 Photos of the suspects

In step 2, participants were seated in the experimental room (Figure 6), facing either a blue or a red wall, and sitting on either a comfortable chair or an uncomfortable stool. To be able to measure the (calming) effects of seating comfort and wall colour, stress was induced using a variant of the Trier Social Stress Test. Participants had to perform three tasks of each two minutes (preparing a pitch, performing a pitch, performing a difficult math task). During the final step of the experiment, participants filled in the stress questionnaire with adjusted questions (moment T_1). They also again described a suspect, mimicking a witness testimony.

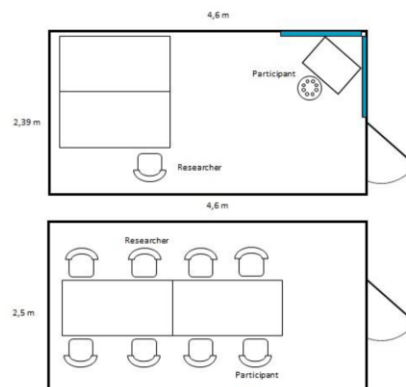


Figure 6 Set-up of the neutral room (bottom) and the experimental room (top).

Measures

Four variables were measured during the experiment: characteristics of the experimental room, stress level, information disclosed and number of details. The characteristics of the room were treated as the independent variable, stress was treated as a constant and information disclosed and number of details were treated as dependent variables. Stress, information disclosed and number of details were measured using a Dutch-language survey based on current English-language measurement instruments.

Stress was measured using the questionnaire of Mendes et al. (2007) that measures acute stress and distinguishes a pre-test and post-test, which enables the researcher to compare stress levels at moment T_0 with stress levels at moment T_1 . The questionnaire contains several 5 point Likert scale statements regarding the perceived amount of stress (e.g. demanding nature of a task, feeling uncertain, expecting a lot of effort) and to what extent participants assume they can handle stress (e.g. having the abilities to perform well, feeling in control). To prevent test effect bias, statements were formulated differently and randomised. Disclosed information was measured by counting the number of spoken words and time while describing the suspect. This measurement is based on the study of Hoogesteyn et al. (2019). Finally, the number of details was measured via a list with the 46 most common facial descriptions of the suspects. This list was created by Klare et al. (2014) and measures the number of details in the description of the suspect, irrespective of the correctness of the details. As more details provide more help for policemen in identifying suspects, this was seen as a suitable measurement.

Analysis

Levels of stress measured at moments T_0 and T_1 were compared using a paired-samples t-test to check if stress levels did indeed increase. Next, to test the effects of room characteristics on disclosed information and number of details several statistical techniques were used. An independent t-test was performed to analyse the differences between groups, together with an ANOVA and MANOVA analysis, but these two techniques did not show any significant effects.

RESULTS

Manipulation (stool/chair and red/blue wall colour)

An independent-samples t-test was performed to compare the difference in comfort between the chair and the stool. Only one of the four statements regarding the difference in comfort of the chair and the stool were significant. Results showed a significant difference in how well the body was supported between the chair ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 2.03$) and the stool ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.32$; $t(50) = 4.47$, $p < .001$, two-tailed). None of the three other statements was significantly different (to what extent the chair/ stool feels comfortable, feels soft, feels okay to sit on for several hours). Thus, the manipulation of seating comfort was less successful than in the pre-test. Maybe this is due to the fact that the tasks participants performed required an active posture, so they were less bothered by an uncomfortable chair.

Regarding colour, the emotions related to the colours were measured. Compared to the red wall, the blue wall was perceived to be more pleasant ($M_{blue} = 2.32$, $SD = 1.07$, versus $M_{red} = 3.52$, $SD = 1.05$; $t(50) = 4.07$, $p < .001$, two-tailed). Moreover, red was assessed as more exciting ($M_{red} = 2.48$, $SD = .96$, versus $M_{blue} = 3.16$, $SD = .94$; $t(50) = 2.55$, $p < .05$, two-tailed), more distressing ($M_{red} = 3.59$, $SD = 1.12$, versus $M_{blue} = 2.32$, $SD = 1.03$; $t(50) = 4.26$, $p < .001$, two-tailed) and more fearful ($M_{red} = 3.37$, $SD = .93$, versus $M_{blue} = 2.16$, $SD = .75$; $t(50) = 5.16$, $p < .001$, two-tailed). No significant difference was found in interestingness or activeness between the two colours. Thus, the blue wall was perceived as calmer in comparison to the distressing, arousing red colour, which aligns with the theory in the literature review.

Regarding the stress level, it was crucial for the experiment that participants perceived stress, as this is common for interrogation sessions and the effects of seating comfort and wall colour are specifically expected for participants who experience stress. A paired-samples t-test showed that the stress induction was successful as statements regarding stress scored higher after performing the stress-test. Participants within the comfortable exerted more effort during the tasks than expected ($M_{t0} = 2.69$, $SD = 1.11$, versus $M_{t1} = 4.23$, $SD = .60$; $t(11) = 4.17$, $p < .001$, two-tailed), similar to the uncomfortable setting ($M_{t0} = 2.77$, $SD = .73$, versus $M_{t1} = 4.00$, $SD = .58$; $t(11) = 4.79$, $p < .001$, two-tailed). Furthermore, as the sample was limited, an ANOVA was used to find out whether the four groups showed significant differences in stress at T_0 ¹. No significant differences in stress were detected, which means that the initial level stress was the same for all groups. Results regarding the hypotheses are shown in table 3.

Table 3 Results T-test Hypotheses 1-4.

Hypothesis	Variable	Mean	S.D.	Significance
H1 (red/blue)	Time	Red: 50 Blue: 49	Red: 24 Blue: 26	.85
	Word count	Red: 94 Blue: 97	Red: 57 Blue: 56	.88
H2 (red/blue)	Details	Red: 7.8 Blue: 6.9	Red: 2.4 Blue: 2.5	.19
H3(stool/chair)	Time	Stool: 45 Chair: 55	Stool: 17 Chair: 30	.18
	Word count	Stool: 110 Chair: 82	Stool: 43 Chair: 65	.085
H4 (stool/chair)	Details	Stool: 7.6 Chair: 7.1	Stool: 2.6 Chair: 2.3	.48

Information disclosed and number of details

Results of ANOVA showed no main effects of seating comfort and wall colour on the dependent variables (the information disclosed and the number of details). This may be due to the limited size of the sample. This means that the results show no support for the hypotheses. For further analysis only the two most extreme conditions were taken into account, namely the participants who were assigned to the chair and the blue wall (comfortable setting) and the participants assigned to the stool and the red wall (uncomfortable setting). These two groups were thought to show the largest effect, being the combinations with the least comfortable setting (stool and red wall) and the most comfortable setting (chair and blue wall).

Likewise, no significant differences were found between group 1 and 4 in the amount of disclosed information (number of spoken words and spoken time). However, the effect on the number of details approached significance ($M = 5.9$, $SD = 1.7$; $t(24) = -2.04$, $p = .052$, two-tailed). Participants in the uncomfortable group mentioned more details ($M = 7.3$, $SD = 1.8$) than participants in the comfortable group. Although this effect is not significant, it is worth noting because given the difference in the mean score, a larger sample is likely to show a significant effect. Further research should show whether there

¹ The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the questions regarding stress level after the stress induction was .62 which is a moderate internal consistency according to Pavot et al. (1991). Therefore, determining a mean stress level was considered justified.

is no effect, or whether establishing this effect as a significant effect requires a much larger sample size. Thus, although wall colour and seat comfort separately had no effect, the combination of wall colour and seating comfort seem to have an impact on the number of details. However, the effect was contrary to what was expected. This indicates that, contrary to the expectations, participants in the uncomfortable room provided more elaborate witness statements.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

First of all, the present research shows that the experiment has successfully created stress, which means that a realistic interrogation setting was created that is important for the ecological validity of the study. However, the results did not lead to evidence that wall colour and/or seating comfort influence disclosing information (H1 and H3). Also no evidence was found for the influence on both independent variables on the number of details of the suspects (H2 and H4). However, the combination of seating comfort and wall colour showed an effect that approached significance. When the two conditions were compared that had a maximal difference, namely the chair and the blue wall, and the stool and the red wall, surprisingly participants within the uncomfortable setting conveyed more details than participants in the comfortable setting. Since stress was not statistically different between these groups no factor can be mentioned, based on the present study, which caused or mediates this effect. Perhaps people need an arousing environment, to a certain limit, in order to function well during a police interrogation. Possibly, the level of comfort within an police interrogation can be described as an optimum curve, as the current environment is too stressful but too much comfort neither supports the effectiveness of interrogations. More research is needed to further examine this effect and the role of arousal and stress in this potential effect. It should be noted that the effect was close to being significant ($p = .052$), which is probably being caused by the small magnitude of the sample. This is another reason to carry out a follow-up study with a larger sample size to further investigate the effect of the comfort of the setting and the number of details mentioned during a eye-witness testimony. Furthermore, wall colour and seating comfort are just two variables related to the experiences comfort in the interrogation room. Also, other factors may be relevant, such as lighting, personal distance, air quality and background noise (e.g. Frontczak & Wargocki, 2011; Okken, 2012).

As to the manipulations, this study strengthens the evidence regarding the moods evoked by the colours blue and red. Like results from Liu et al. (2014), it was found that blue is perceived as more comfortable than red. The outcome of the manipulation effect of seating comfort turned out differently during the experiment than expected beforehand. Although the pretest of the environmental manipulation and the study of Pijls et al. (2019) provided evidence of the differences in comfort between the chair and the stool, participants during the experiment assessed the comfort of the chair much lower. The researchers expect that the chair in the neutral room played a role, as it was probably too comfortable which changed the context for participants. On top of that, participants in the study of Pijls et al. (2019) were eating in a restaurant (relaxed setting), while participants within the present study were sitting upright in a stressful setting. Although the chair was rated as slightly more comfortable than the stool, results could have been more favourable had this bias been prevented. For future research, it is recommended to select a chair that scores much higher in terms of comfort than the T_0 chair, and a stool that is much less comfortable than the T_0 chair.

This study has several limitations. The sample was limited to 52 participants, as due to Covid measures and lack of resources for financial rewards it was not possible to recruit more students in the time available for the experiment. Comparable experiments (Dawson et al., 2017; Hoogesteyn et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2019) had a considerably higher number of participants. It is possible that the effect of wall colour and seating comfort would have been significant had the sample been (much) larger. Additional research is suggested to study the role of environmental factors that create comfortable versus uncomfortable settings for performances during police interrogations.

Furthermore, the experimental design carries the same limitations as the experiment of Hoogesteyn et al. (2019) as this experiment was conducted in a university, which is a familiar environment for students. Although stress was induced to the participants, this might have limited the ecological validity as the feeling of a police interrogation was not fully mimicked, which means that the results might not be fully representable. Think of the dimensions of Knapp et al. (2013) in which the dimension familiarity refers to people being cautious in a less familiar environment, which is highly applicable for police interrogations, but not for students in their own university.

Future research is recommended to confirm that participants in the uncomfortable setting mentioned more details while participants in the comfortable setting mentioned less details, using a larger sample size. Furthermore, it would be interesting to research what causes this effect, and whether the level of comfort relates to an optimum curve in order to perform well. The research does show that aspects of the environment (colour, seating) affects people, but also that one cannot assume that the effect is as expected; decision regarding design should be evidence-based not intuition based.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Although the present study is limited, mainly because of the limited sample size due to the Covid pandemic, the paper contributes to the FM field. Firstly, it creates awareness that the environmental setting of the interrogation room may have an impact on the quality of eye-witness testimonies. Both literature and indications in this study suggest that environmental factors inducing (dis)comfort may have impact on at least the number of details witnesses are able to provide during a police interrogation. So we must realise that not only interrogation methods, but also the environmental setting seems relevant. Secondly, this study is quite unique in its methodology due to its experimental design, which allows for the identification of specific characteristics of the interrogation room that may be relevant to the quality and richness of eyewitness testimony. Hopefully, this approach will inspire others to investigate this unexplored area further.

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