

Childhood trauma, psychopathy, and identification with the aggressor in a serial rapist: the case of Roberto Martínez “El Tila”

Trauma infantil, psicopatía e identificación con el agresor en un violador serial: el caso de Roberto Martínez “El Tila”

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Abstract

This article presents a theoretical approach based on a narrative review, illustrated by a paradigmatic case study. The objective was to explain the relationship between childhood trauma, psychopathy and identification with the perpetrator, through a well-founded dialectical argument and conceptual analysis based on recent scientific research in criminology, victimology and forensic psychology, using the case of Roberto Martínez Vásquez, a serial rapist nicknamed ‘El Tila’ in Chile, as a reference. Furthermore, the study reflects on the role of the forensic psychologist in such cases, advocating a critical and projective perspective based on criminological and victimological analysis of cases in which a current offender has a history of childhood maltreatment, abuse and violation. The issue arises from the assumption that these cases can be explained solely by the offender exhibiting psychopathic traits; however, this research challenges this premise, as it lacks a multifactorial understanding that is relevant to addressing such a complex case from a forensic psychology perspective. Finally, it is emphasised that a critical perspective in psycho-legal intervention has ethical and political value, given that professional work with children and adolescents who are currently victims of rights violations represents, at the same time, an effort to prevent future criminality.

Keywords: Childhood trauma, identification with the aggressor, psychopathy, criminology, victimology.

Resumen

El presente artículo corresponde a un abordaje teórico basado en una revisión narrativa con uso ilustrativo de un caso paradigmático. El objetivo fue explicar la relación que existe entre el trauma infantil, la psicopatía y la identificación con el agresor, a través de una argumentación dialéctica fundamentada y el análisis conceptual desde la investigación científica reciente en criminología, victimología y psicología forense, teniendo como referencia el caso de Roberto Martínez Vásquez, un violador serial apodado “El Tila” en Chile. Asimismo, se reflexiona acerca del rol del psicólogo/a forense en este tipo de casos, instando a una visión crítica y proyectiva desde el análisis criminológico y victimológico de casos en los que un actual agresor carga con una biografía de maltrato, abuso y vulneración infantil. La problemática se instaura desde considerar que estos casos se explican únicamente porque el infractor presenta rasgos psicopáticos; sin embargo, esta investigación critica dicha premisa, por cuanto adolece de una comprensión multifactorial que sea pertinente para el abordaje de un caso así de complejo desde la psicología forense. Finalmente, se destaca que la óptica crítica en la intervención psicojurídica tiene un valor ético y político, al considerar que el trabajo profesional con NNA¹ que son víctimas de vulneración de derechos en la actualidad, representa, a la vez, un esfuerzo por prevenir la criminalidad a futuro.

Palabras clave: Trauma infantil, identificación con el agresor, psicopatía, criminología, victimología.

¹ NNA = Niños, niñas y adolescentes.

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Introduction

A mark on Chilean history—and above all on the study of criminology and forensic sciences—bears the name ‘El Tila.’ He has been portrayed as a social monster, evoking only horror, repudiation, and incomprehension in popular discourse and sensationalist media coverage (Čekić, 2024; Rozas, 2003; Vidal, 2009). Yet, as an iconic case of violent crime, his story offers valuable material for criminological and victimological analysis and for the work of forensic psychologists.

Roberto José Martínez Vásquez was an offender who stood out primarily for the cruelty and coldness of his *modus operandi* and his treatment of his victims, for being a psychopathic serial rapist—as classified by experts in forensic psychology and psychiatry (Vidal, 2009)—and for the social criticism he voiced once he became well known and was able to express his views to the media and state authorities. Roberto or José, as he was also called, experienced a highly adverse and traumatic childhood. His father abandoned the family and his mother had schizophrenia. At around three years of age, he was mistreated and abused by his uncles—described as ‘transvestites’² (Palazzo, 2025)—who left him tied up at night until they returned home.

At the age of four, he was detained for the now-repealed offense of vagrancy³, during his attempts to escape that home and the abuse he experienced there. He went to live with his grandmother in Valdivia, in southern Chile, where he also suffered physical abuse. He later returned to Santiago, Chile, where everything worsened. He committed property offenses and was placed in the National Service for Minors (SENAME), from which he escaped and committed a robbery and rape of a teacher in Santiago with an accomplice while he was an adolescent.

Consequently, at age 16 he was incarcerated with adult prisoners, where he was repeatedly raped, sexually abused, and physically and psychologically mistreated (Palazzo, 2025). By age 25, with a history of substance dependence, violations of his rights in childhood and adolescence, and the commission of various offenses, he had raped more than five women, attempted to murder a minor, and kidnapped couples living in the eastern sector of Chile’s Metropolitan Region. He would break into homes at night, tie up his victims, and rape the women in front of their partners, taking time during his crimes to sleep, eat, and even try on clothes. One of his most macabre known crimes was the murder, mutilation, and burning of the remains of his 16-year-old partner, including an episode of cannibalism in which he ate parts of the victim’s organs, according to Roberto Martínez’s own account (Rozas, 2003). His life ended by suicide through asphyxiation—hanging—in a solitary cell at Colina II prison in Santiago, Chile, on December 13, 2002, before he could be tried for his crimes; he was 26 years old.

Thus, using the illustrative case of ‘El Tila’ as a reference, this study argues that offenses committed through a *modus operandi* marked by cruelty and coldness, such as the assaults perpetrated by Roberto Martínez, alias ‘El Tila,’ cannot be attributed solely to his psychopathic traits, nor can that variable be regarded as essential or absolute in the etiology of his criminal behavior. Rather, the psychopathy present in his personality converged with other biographical variables that reinforced later offending over the course of his life, including childhood trauma.

Therefore, from a critical criminological perspective, psycho-legal or forensic intervention with children and adolescents whose rights are being or have been violated is not only a victimological intervention in the present; it also helps prevent future crime when the current victim—depending on multiple additional variables—might develop violent criminal behavior. According to the evidence reviewed in this study, such behavior may be linked in part to childhood trauma associated with maltreatment and abuse (Agustino et al., 2021; Benavides, 2021; Fariás, 2019; Real et al., 2023; Sánchez et al., 2022; Yao, 2023), psychopathic or antisocial traits (Agustino et al., 2021; Braga et al., 2017; Čekić, 2024; De Ruiter et al., 2022; Leone, 2026), and the mechanisms of identification with the aggressor in the offender (Cerna, 2021; Delboy, 2024; Yao, 2023).

Methodology

Using a narrative review illustrated by a paradigmatic case, this article addresses the problem of treating psychopathy as the only variable involved in the commission of these offenses. This premise has been circulated and misunderstood in social and media discourse for years, creating social myths about psychopathy (Čekić, 2024; Rozas, 2003; Vidal, 2009)

² The term has been used to refer to people who wear clothing that, within traditional and stereotypical norms, is worn by another gender in their culture.

³ Historically, this refers to living without an established home, employment, or regular income and wandering through different parts of a city or country. It was considered a crime in Chile until 1998.



Consequently, the objective of this research is to explain, through a well-founded dialectical argument and a conceptual analysis of criminological scientific evidence, the relationship between childhood trauma, psychopathy, and identification with the aggressor, in light of analytical excerpts from the life course and criminal development of Roberto Martínez Vásquez, a serial rapist known in Chile as ‘El Tila’ or ‘the psychopath of La Dehesa.’ The study also seeks to reflect on the role of the legal-forensic psychologist in such cases, advocating a forward-looking perspective grounded in criminology and victimology.

Development

1. What is childhood trauma?

In the historical development of psychology and the study of the etiology of childhood trauma, an early version of trauma theory, advanced from Freudian psychoanalysis, proposed that the etiology of neurosis was linked to sexual experiences in childhood. This became known as the traumatic theory of seduction, although Freud later rejected it in favor of a fantasy component in the etiology of trauma and subsequently, at the dawn of the second drive dualism, offered an economic explanation of trauma as an excess of energy that the psychic apparatus could not manage (Ansaldo & Barraza, 2025; Berrios, 2025; Freud, 1893/1991a; 1898/1991b; 1899/1991c; 1920/1992; Pérez, 2025). Nevertheless, this study emphasizes the relational factor in understanding childhood trauma: the importance of the other in the traumatic experience, or, in other words, the response of the environment. Berrios (2025) describes this as what ‘Winnicott, Aceituno, and Ferenczi bring into view through the presence of the other adult, the caregivers’ (p. 242).

In this context, Ferenczi (1932/2008; 1933/1984a; 1934/1984b) highlights the significance of disavowing an experience that is intolerable for the subject as a traumatic factor. Trauma is therefore understood as occurring in two moments: first, the unbearable experience; and second, the disavowal, silencing, disbelief, indifference, blame, denial, or invalidation that completes the traumatic process and produces lifelong consequences (Bayer & Pérez, 2025; Berrios, 2025; Ferenczi, 1933/1984a; 1934/1984b; Frankel, 2008; Pérez, 2024; Sassenfeld, 2024). According to Ferenczi (1932/2008), ‘traumatic confusion is most often reached only when the attack and the response are disavowed by the guilt-ridden adult’ (p. 241). Referring to Ferenczi’s contribution to the understanding of trauma, Beyer and Pérez (2025) state that his most notable contribution was:

the introduction of the process by which the victim’s account is disavowed as the second moment of the traumatic scene. Thus, trauma may be constituted not only by an unconscious fantasy or a real event, but also by abandonment by others (Beyer & Pérez, 2025, p. 15).

Continuing in the Ferenczian tradition, Donald Winnicott (1963/2006a; 1965/2006b; 1965/2007) incorporated environmental failure as a fundamental component of trauma (Alcaide, 2025; Del Olmo, 2020; Gómez, 2013; Leone, 2026; Sáinz, 2017; Pérez, 2026). ‘The term trauma implies a collapse of faith. The baby or child has developed a capacity to “believe in something,” and the environmental provision first adapts to this and then fails’ (Winnicott, 1993/1965, p. 180, as cited in Gómez, 2013); not the other way around, one might add. Alcaide (2025) describes the relationship between environment and trauma in detail:

In Winnicott’s work, the concept of trauma refers both to a failure in the average expectable environment and to an environmental intrusion that interrupts going-on-being while penetrating the core of the self and distorting its physical, emotional, cognitive, and psychological development.

It also refers to the fact that trauma is not caused only by a single, sudden, and unforeseeable event. More often, it arises from a series of mismatches between the needs of childhood and the environment’s capacity to hold and welcome them. Finally, trauma involves the infant’s reaction to the destruction of the purity of their individual experience (Winnicott, 2006 [1965]). For Winnicott, in addition to environmental failure, trauma encompasses the loss of reliability or the series of intrusive mismatches among childhood needs, inadequate care and child-rearing practices, and the individual’s response to that state of affairs. With each mismatch, failure, or intrusion, existential continuity is obstructed and the core of the self is attacked (p. 311).



Finally, from a contemporary relational psychoanalytic perspective, Sassenfeld (2024) integrates disavowal and the environment into a broad definition of childhood trauma:

An experience of dysregulation becomes traumatic when the relational environment responds with a lack of recognition, invalidation, denial, blame, or an evident lack of affective attunement. Instead of receiving a humane response of welcome, validation, empathy, and support, accompanied by actions congruent with that response, the person also experiences disregard or even dismissal of their suffering and is left defenseless, isolated, and alone with what has been inflicted on them. They must cope with a state of bodily-affective dysregulation without the necessary tools and with the further impact of an invalidating response—this is to ask the impossible of a young child (p. 32).

In this regard, to provide a concrete representation of situations experienced in childhood that constitute traumatic experiences, it is important to reflect on the present, explicit, and serious nature of the different manifestations of child maltreatment:

Sexual assault, abandonment, neglect, blows, and insults by parental figures toward restless or even quiet children are extremely common features of everyday life in our societies. Abuse of children includes blows to the head, blows with blunt objects, biting, pulling hair and ears, pushing, slapping, beating with belts, burns, and brutal beatings; humiliation, insults, disparagement, threats, and intimidation; inappropriate sexual contact, exposure to pornography or direct sexual acts, sexual abuse, and rape; lack of medical care, unhygienic living conditions, deprivation of adequate nutrition and education; parentification and emotional blackmail, exposure to domestic violence, and denial of emotional expression (Alcaide, 2025, p. 298).

Consequently, the biographical history of 'El Tila,' presented in the introduction, reveals various experiences from childhood that were traumatic within a life marked by physical violence and abuse perpetrated by different adult figures from early childhood onward, along with the environment's constant disavowal of his needs and suffering.

2. The relationship between psychopathy and childhood trauma

First, in light of the findings of various studies on psychopathy (Bergstrom & Farrington, 2022; Garrido, 2025; Hikal, 2022; Picón, 2021; San Juan Guillén, 2024; Turvey, 2012), it is broadly plausible to describe a psychopath as a social predator who frequently harms and manipulates others at will, feels no guilt for their actions, and lacks feelings for other people: 'a person who enjoys what most people would consider horrible and atrocious acts, fully aware of the harmful impact of those acts on others, yet unable to stop or feel remorse' (Turvey, 2012, p. 449). Consequently, an analysis of Roberto Martínez's criminal history, modus operandi, signature, and behavior leaves little doubt that, at a minimum, he fits the classification of a serial sexual offender with psychopathic traits (Agustino et al., 2021).

Within this epistemic context, and given the premise that 'El Tila' was assessed and classified as a psychopath, deeper understandings and explanations of why he behaved as he did are often overlooked.

It should be emphasized that not every psychopath is a serial killer or commits crimes, and psychopathy is not a prerequisite for breaking the law (Bergstrom & Farrington, 2022; Garrido, 2025; Picón, 2021; San Juan Guillén, 2024). Some authors even study the integrated or successful psychopath: a person who meets the personality criteria for psychopathy but does not engage in crime, instead tending to harm others while remaining integrated into legitimate and legal social spheres such as family, politics, or work (Gao & Raine, 2010; Garrido, 2025; San Juan Guillén, 2024; Redondo & Garrido, 2013). Therefore, the claim that this individual committed these crimes because he was a psychopath is insufficient to establish a logically coherent causal relationship.

Even if one were to accept the premise that only an offender with psychopathic traits could commit such crimes, the etiology of psychopathy remains under study and its precise causes are unknown, although recent research clearly indicates that biological, interpersonal, and environmental factors influence its development (Picón, 2021; San Juan Guillén, 2024). Consequently, when asking what may have influenced the development of 'El Tila's' psychopathy and later criminal behavior, Roberto's traumatic childhood must be considered. Childhood trauma is understood as encompassing 'experiences of abuse and neglect suffered by a minor. Abuse may be physical, sexual, or emotional, and neglect may be physical or emotional' (Benavides, 2021, p. 6).

As Picón (2021) explains, ‘two aspects turn a psychopath into a psychopathic serial killer: exposure to violence at an early age and antisocial behavior and its persistence’ (p. 87). This is consistent with Čekić (2024), who argues that traumatic childhood events—including psychological and physical maltreatment, sexual assault, neglect, rejection, and feelings of loneliness—can pave the way for serial-killer behavior. De Ruiter et al. (2022) likewise note that several studies report an effect of child maltreatment on the development of psychopathy itself, while their meta-analysis yielded results linking the two variables.

In a forensic evaluation of an inmate imprisoned for several offenses against sexual integrity and property—specifically, a psychopathic serial rapist who had committed robbery with intimidation and exhibitionism, a profile similar to Roberto Martínez—Agustino et al. (2021) found that the biographies of various sexual offenders may include abandonment, sexual abuse, deviant sexual fantasies, high impulsivity, and low self-esteem. These factors may distort the experience of reciprocal, consensual sexuality and affectivity. In some cases, sexual pleasure may become linked to the instrumental use of sex to dominate another person, with little or no empathy for the victim (Agustino et al., 2021), as observed in ‘El Tila’s’ *modus operandi*.

In another empirical qualitative study based on interviews with incarcerated people, Mega and Eliasta (2025) examine the transformation of victimization experiences into criminal behavior. This may be understood as the victim-offender overlap (Berg & Schreck, 2021): an ontological dialectic between being a victim and becoming an offender, mediated by time. In particular, adverse childhood experiences such as repeated sexual abuse and exposure to violence at an early age may, together with other variables, be associated with criminal behavior in adolescence and adulthood. ‘In the field of victimology, a close relationship between victimization and criminal behavior is postulated, with victimization directly contributing to aggression and constituting its *sine qua non*’ (CAVAS, 2003, p. 88).

Evidence reviewed by the Metropolitan Center for Assistance to Victims of Sexual Assault (CAVAS, 2003) indicates that many pedophiles were victims of sexual abuse or abandonment in childhood. This is consistent with recent studies reporting that these variables, together with physical or psychological maltreatment, are major predictors that a victimized child or adolescent may be at risk of becoming an offender (Basto et al., 2022; Grady et al., 2017; Hébert et al., 2023; Karlsson et al., 2021; Kuo et al., 2022; Miley et al., 2020; Muñoz, 2022). They may also represent a risk factor for antisocial behavior (Braga et al., 2017), given that adolescents who experience family violence may reproduce psychological harm in other settings (Vera & Alay, 2021).

It must be noted, however, that these ideas are not general rules without exceptions, and that a criminal future is by no means an inescapable fate for a person who has been victimized. Rather, this is proposed as a phenomenological understanding of different possible outcomes, while nonetheless highlighting victimization as one of the variables that must always be considered in the development of future criminal behavior.

3. From victim to perpetrator: identification with the aggressor as a defense mechanism

From another perspective, an important subject for study—where childhood trauma, psychopathy, and future criminal behavior may converge—is identification with the aggressor, a concept originally proposed by Sándor Ferenczi (1984). It refers to a defense mechanism observed in situations of power asymmetry that seeks to promote the victim’s survival through emulation, introjection, and fusion with the aggressor’s behavior and experience (Sultana & Lahav, 2023). The victim undergoes a process of psychological subordination in which they anticipate the aggressor’s tastes and wishes and attempt to gratify them (Lahav, 2022).

Another account of identification with the aggressor, presented by Anna Freud (1936/1954), differs in its central premise from Ferenczi’s proposal (1933/1984). It holds that the defense mechanism consists of the victim assuming the role of the aggressor—that is, imitating aggressive conduct and taking on the aggressor’s characteristics and attributes to cope with feelings of inferiority, submission, and lack of control; the victim may therefore become someone else’s aggressor, leaving the sphere of vulnerability to become the person in control (Delboy, 2024; Frankel, 2002; Lahav, 2022).

Both accounts of identification with the aggressor—Ferenczi’s and Anna Freud’s—thus help explain how early exposure to trauma may lead victims to replicate dynamics of abuse and maltreatment, and even criminal behavior (Lahav, 2022). This is where professional support and social intervention can be especially valuable.

According to Cerna's (2021) reading of Ferenczi (1984), in cases of physical, psychological, or sexual abuse of a child, the child is at a complete disadvantage and wholly subjected to an adult's authority, strength, voice, and actions. Feeling inferior and dominated, the child responds through a defense mechanism known as identification with the aggressor, introjecting the aggressor's figure so that it becomes established intrapsychically and may later be expressed in multiple ways by the original victim. On the one hand, the victim may introject the aggressor's guilt and therefore wish or feel deserving of punishment; on the other, it may be 'understood in Anna Freud's sense as a psychic movement through which the aggressor's attributes are assumed, so that the threatened person becomes the person who threatens' (Cerna, 2021, p. 262).

Specifically, a child abused during childhood may become an abuser or bully at school, in adolescence, or in adulthood, attacking people they know or strangers in an attempt to escape the submission of their traumatic childhood experience by seeking control through the mistreatment of others (Cerna, 2021; Delboy, 2024; Ferenczi, 1984; Freud, 1954/1936). This leaves room to consider that repeating traumatic childhood memories is linked to identification with the aggressor, not as working-through but through procedures and actions embodied in aggression directed toward another person; in other words, repetition entails a memory of trauma that has not been worked through (Freud, 1914/1991d).

Returning to the case analysis from the perspective associated with Sándor Ferenczi (1984)—that is, the introjection of guilt and acting as the aggressor expects the victim to act (Cerna, 2021; Delboy, 2024)—helps explain Roberto Martínez's submissive attitude in prison toward inmates who continued to abuse him sexually, physically, and psychologically during adolescence and adulthood. There is evidence that, while incarcerated in Puente Alto, Santiago, Chile, he was treated and subjugated as a *perkin*⁴ while incarcerated in Puente Alto, Santiago, Chile:

Like a jungle filled with bars and oppressive spaces, the young men had their own system of rules dictated by the strongest. The person who inspired the most fear prevailed. There was room for only two 'races': the 'choros' and the 'perkins,' the powerful and the subjugated (...) The slaves were nicknamed 'perkins,' and their fate was suffering. They had to satisfy the wishes of the 'choros' and their friends. They were constantly raped, but not just in any way.

They had to perform the full seduction game, behave like women, and entice the boss to 'turn him on.' The humiliations were constant, but everyone knew this was part of that world's irrational code (...) Roberto, short and slight, had to endure that role (Vidal, 2009, pp. 66-67).

Considering the other pathway of identification with the aggressor—that associated with Anna Freud's perspective (1954/1936), in which the former victim takes on the role of aggressor toward others (Cerna, 2021; Delboy, 2024), or internalizes the violence witnessed and experienced in childhood and mimics it through criminal and violent behavior against the self or others (Lahav, 2022; Yao, 2023)—it is reasonable to argue that 'El Tila' emulated his aggressors' practices, now directing them at his own victims to control them.

According to experts, individuals like Tila seek to control their victims. 'They want their victims to revere and obey them. The victims must place themselves on a lower plane so that they can assert their superiority. They believe they are entitled to this, and if the people around them do not pay tribute willingly, they will have to do so by force. They are usually incapable of equal relationships, so this struggle to impose themselves may trigger physical or psychological aggression' (Vidal, 2009, p. 91).

From childhood and throughout his life, Roberto understood social and sexual interaction in terms of domination, violence, and control. Together with psychopathic traits such as coldness, calculation, justification of his most vile acts, and lack of empathy, this enabled him to select people whom he could subjugate, brutalize, and rape—generally women and one boy with social, cultural, and economic capital that he never possessed and that fueled his desire for revenge—or perhaps merely served as discursive manipulation arising from his psychopathic personality. All of this involved seeking pleasure not so much from sensations that were strictly sexual, but from a sense of control and domination that allowed him to escape the position of victim or subordinate.

⁴ This term labels individuals who are subjugated by others and available to carry out errands in prison, although its use has spread to everyday interaction in Chilean society. One proposed origin links it to the English surname 'Perkins,' used for butler characters in various works. It therefore makes sense that a person dominated and ordered about by more experienced criminals would be told 'they treat you like a perkin' or 'you walk around like a perkin.' See Leone (2026) for a discussion of the imperative to be-vioh, the ideology of streetwise cleverness, and coa, or Chilean criminal slang.



His fantasies would always follow this pattern. In a sense, they involved delusions of grandeur that had to be exorcised by humiliating others. Thus, individuals like him would seek to leave their victims entirely at their mercy, surrendering control of themselves into their hands so that they could do whatever they pleased (Vidal, 2009, pp. 91-92).

4. The role of the forensic psychologist: a call for a forward-looking perspective from criminology and victimology

One consideration regarding the role of the forensic psychologist, in light of the review of 'El Tila's' case, concerns violence risk prediction (Echeburúa et al., 2011). The forensic psychologist's role is important insofar as they can develop a comprehensive profile and conduct the relevant assessments to determine the likelihood that a violent offender will reoffend. In Roberto Martínez's case, consideration of his biography, traumatic childhood, and personality traits could have supported preventive and follow-up measures to reduce the possibility that he would assault more people after his first periods of incarceration—accompanied, of course, by structural changes in the justice system and society itself. Echeburúa et al. (2011) note that 'forensic psychological assessment has expanded into many fields. To confine ourselves to criminal matters, judges, prosecutors, and attorneys commonly request expert opinions on possible mental disorders in perpetrators of serious crimes (intimate partner violence, sexual assault, homicide, etc.) and on predicting the risk of future violence in people who have committed a violent offense.' This is especially relevant when considering predictors of a serial rapist such as 'El Tila' and the assessment and prevention needs of an offender with similar characteristics, as in the forensic psychological evaluation conducted by Agustino et al. (2021).

Another relevant point in the context of forensic interviews with victims of sexual offenses is Maffioletti's (2009) observation that investigating and establishing the motivations for a sexual offense may be decisive in profiling an offender. This should be combined with an evaluation of the offender's personal history, traumatic experiences, and environment. Assessing whether the motivations are less sexual than predominantly related to a struggle for power within a logic of domination/submission/control may help identify patterns characteristic of psychopathy or antisocial personality disorder associated with a high rate of recidivism.

In their statutory definitions, both rape and sexual abuse include the description of a lustful act as the central concept. This excludes the abusive and/or coercive situation from the core of the offense, because the legislature focuses on the nature of the act rather than the aggression or abuse underlying any offense in which the victim is drawn into a constrained or improper sexual context (Maffioletti, 2009, pp. 232-233).

Finally, in conducting forensic evaluations and expert assessments, psychologists must consider that a child or adolescent whose rights have been violated—specifically, one who has experienced physical abuse and/or sexual assault—could become an aggressor in the future. It is therefore essential to intervene not only in the immediate situation of the young person victimized 'today,' but also from a perspective of social commitment, with the forensic psychologist working to prevent future offenses that the current victim might commit in the absence of sufficient protective factors. In other words, helping prevent violations of children's and adolescents' rights today also means preventing possible crimes tomorrow: an intervention at two points in time.

Conclusion

The arguments presented in this article support the thesis that psycho-legal intervention with children and adolescents whose rights are being or have been violated is not only a synchronous intervention for that young person; it also helps prevent potential future crime. This follows from the analysis of Roberto Martínez Vásquez, known as 'El Tila' or 'the psychopath of La Dehesa.' His childhood was marked by traumatic experiences of physical and psychological abuse and sexual violence; he displayed psychopathic traits and criminal behavior motivated not only by lust, but also by domination, control, and power. These variables, together with identification with the aggressor, may form part of the profile of a serial rapist or serial sexual offender such as 'El Tila.' In this context, the forensic psychologist's role is fundamental: first, in predicting the risk of recidivism in an offender who has committed violent crimes; second,



in distinguishing the offender's motivations for serious crimes such as those committed by 'El Tila'; and third, in intervening at two points in time—now, with the victimized child or adolescent, and in the future, with potential victims against whom a person traumatized as a child by sexual violence, maltreatment, or abandonment might retaliate.

This is also valuable for understanding the forensic psychologist's role, especially from the standpoint of professional ethics and from a social perspective on the psychologist's work in criminology and victimology. By participating in interviews that reveal different manifestations of subjectivity, forensic psychologists encounter different ways of being, including those considered most undesirable by society. Yet this also allows them to understand the biographical causes of criminal conduct as aberrant as Tila's. That professional setting therefore becomes an opportunity to promote public programs and policies for the social prevention of crime. The professional ethics of the legal psychologist's role must be present even in everyday practice, with a view to social commitment and removed from the criminalization and exclusively individual attribution of responsibility based solely on the punitive logic that an act matching a criminal definition must equal the imposition of a penalty. Continuing with this purely punitive and simplistic approach to crime could entail a regression toward the proposals of jurists who preceded the positivist criminologists of the nineteenth century and whom the latter called the 'Classical School.'

Finally, it is legitimate to move epistemologically toward critical and cultural perspectives—or at least social ones—in theoretical and methodological approaches to criminological and victimological knowledge within forensic psychology, with the aim of contributing to social transformation. Moreover, 'Social Responsibility' forms part of the Professional Code of Ethics of the Chilean Psychological Association (2008/1999).

Awareness of the social, cultural, and structural impact of forensic psychologists' work is therefore fundamental when establishing ethical principles and a professional duty toward others. It must always be borne in mind that the evaluation, expert assessment, and psycho-legal and/or clinical intervention with a child or adolescent who has experienced sexual assault—as in the case of 'El Tila'—may help prevent the actions of a serial rapist tomorrow. Such intervention is social in essence because it supports and protects both the affected individual and society itself.

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Authors' Contributions

Authors	Contribution
Dionisio Leone Brynjarsson	Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Writing—original and final draft.