

Institutional Representatives' Perspectives on Violence and Child Abuse in Residential Child Protection Centers: A Document Analysis

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Abstract

This study analyzes institutional narratives surrounding the persistence of violence and child abuse in residential care centers for children in Chile. Using a qualitative methodology with a hermeneutic-interpretive approach, the research examines interviews and public statements made by institutional representatives responsible for child protection policies between 2002 and 2024. The analysis identifies a series of key components that emerge directly from the discourse of these actors, including: the influence of external factors, crisis situations, systemic deficiencies, structural problems, negligent practices, the presence of complex profiles among children and adolescents living in residential care, dynamics of clientelism, concealment, and the existence of sexual exploitation networks. These elements have contributed to the reproduction and perpetuation of abuse within the system over time. The findings highlight the urgent need for critical review and comprehensive reforms to address the violence and abuse experienced by children and adolescents under state custody. The study emphasizes the importance of strengthening the management of residential centers, not only in material terms, but also with regard to the ethical and professional training of caregivers, always prioritizing the rights of children and adolescents. These results aim to contribute to the development of effective public policies and to promote systemic changes oriented toward ensuring the respect, protection, and well-being of children and adolescents under state care.

Plain Language Summary

What Authorities Say About Violence and Child Abuse in Residential Care Homes in Chile

This study looks at what authorities say about the ongoing violence and abuse in residential care homes for children in Chile. Using a qualitative method, interviews and public statements from institutional representatives responsible for child protection policies between 2002 and 2024 were reviewed. The analysis found several important themes in their words, such as: the influence of outside factors, crisis situations, system failures, structural problems, negligence, the presence of complex cases among children living in these homes, favoritism, cover-ups, and the existence of sexual exploitation networks. These factors have helped keep violence and abuse going inside the system over time. The results show an urgent need to critically review and make full reforms to address the violence and abuse children suffer under state care. The study highlights the importance of improving how residential centers are managed, not only in

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material ways but also by ensuring ethical and professional training for caregivers, always putting children's rights first. These findings aim to help develop effective public policies and promote changes in the system to ensure respect, protection, and well-being for children in state care.

Keywords

institutional child abuse, residential care centers, structural violence, public policies, child protection

Introduction

Child maltreatment and abuse refer to deliberate acts committed by parents or caregivers that result in physical or emotional harm, or even the death of a child or adolescent (McCoy & Keen, 2022). This issue has sparked considerable concern in Chile in recent decades (Riquelme et al., 2020), especially in a context where human rights and child protection have become increasingly important, particularly following the Chilean State's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. Most recently, the Law on Guarantees and Comprehensive Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (Law No. 21.430, 2022; Ruiz-Muñoz, 2025) was enacted.

Although public policies aimed at preventing and eradicating child mistreatment and abuse have been implemented in Chile, it remains a persistent challenge in terms of both public health and rights violations (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2021). This is because these guidelines have mainly focused on intervening in family dynamics that generate violence against children (Tolentino, 2020). Violence and abuse perpetrated by institutions responsible for the care of children have received less attention from State policies and academic research.

In the Global North, this problem has been studied for several decades under the term institutional child abuse (ICA). According to Powers et al. (1990), ICA refers to mistreatment and other forms of violence that children and adolescents experience within hierarchical systems of power. The concept encompasses situations in which people in positions of authority—within religious, educational, governmental, community, or youth service institutions—abuse their position to violate the personal boundaries and rights of children and adolescents in their care (Ozanne et al., 2023; Powers et al., 1990). ICA may manifest in multiple forms of violence, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, emotional or psychological abuse, neglect, and other behaviors that threaten the integrity of children and adolescents (Wright, 2017).

ICA varies significantly depending on the context and nature of the institution. For example, in residential child protection centers (RCPCs), it has been documented that

3.9% of children and adolescents have been victims of some form of abuse (Timmerman & Schreuder, 2014).

Assini-Meytin et al. (2024) retrospectively analyzed the prevalence of child sexual abuse, as well as behaviors that violate the personal boundaries of children and adolescents, across five types of organizations (4-H program, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of the USA, and the YMCA of the USA) focused on serving this population: organized sports, religious institutions, arts or music programs, and educational institutions. They compared victimization rates between two national cohorts of young adults (aged 18–22, $N = 3,174$) and adults (aged 26–32, $N = 3,237$). A total of 3.75% ($n = 363$) of the participants reported experiencing sexual abuse in one of these settings. Furthermore, young adults reported a lower proportion of abusive experiences compared with adults (29.1% vs. 44.5%; $p < .05$).

ICA in the Chilean Child Protection System

In Chile, 7.8% of children aged 7 to 12 admitted to the child protection system report having experienced various forms of abuse. For example, some reported being touched in their intimate parts while residing in state-run child protection centers administered by the National Service for Minors (SENAME)—the main child protection agency until 2021. Furthermore, 5.2% reported having been forced to touch the intimate parts of others (SENAME, 2011).

With respect to physical abuse, 15.7% of children and adolescents reported being hit by adults within the RCPCs while 19.9% reported having witnessed adults physically assaulting other children (SENAME, 2011). Similarly, a report by the Investigations Police of Chile revealed that 88.3% of RCPCs had documented cases or complaints of rights violations, 28.5% of which were attributable to maltreatment by adults linked to those facilities (Espinosa et al., 2018).

Moreover, the Investigative Commission of the Cámara de Diputadas y Diputados de Chile (2022) reported that 80.4% of RCPCs had recorded cases of intra-residential abuse. In 58.3% of these facilities, the

perpetrators were members of the caregiving staff, demonstrating a profound systemic failure to ensure children's safety and well-being. The report also uncovered networks of child sexual exploitation operating within some shelters, occasionally with active staff complicity. For instance, in a severe case reported in a northern Chilean residence, 24 girls were sexually exploited by two residential workers, who were later prosecuted and convicted.

Other reports, such as those issued by the Office for the Protection of Children's Rights, have highlighted the prevalence of emotional violence within RCPCs. According to this source, 50% of institutionalized children and adolescents have been victims of psychological abuse by their caregivers or staff members (Observatorio de Derechos, Defensoría de la Niñez, 2022).

In this context, the Cámara de Diputadas y Diputados de Chile (2022) reaffirmed that violence persists nationwide. For example, in 2005 alone, 878 deaths were documented within the residential protection system. By July 2016, only 347 of these cases had been investigated, and 185 had been closed through administrative or judicial resolutions. As of March 2022, only five convictions had been issued, underscoring the severe deficiencies in access to justice for victims (Observatorio de Derechos, Defensoría de la Niñez, 2022).

These data highlight the magnitude of the problem of ICA and the importance of addressing it through academic research. In this article, the focus is specifically on child abuse in RCPCs, an area where information remains limited and requires further research.

Consequences of Institutional Maltreatment

The State, which should act as the guarantor of children's rights, has been negligent in its actions, directly and profoundly affecting the lives of those who enter RCPCs, including cases resulting in death. The majority of these children and adolescents have been placed under State care owing to previous violations of their rights, with the aim of ensuring protection and reparation. Unfortunately, far from finding a safe environment, they are often exposed to new forms of violence and abuse, which intensify the harm resulting from their previous traumatic experiences (Smith & Freyd, 2014).

Freyd (1996) coined the concept of betrayal trauma to describe the psychological impact that occurs when a person suffers abuse, mistreatment, or a breach of trust by someone on whom they depend emotionally or physically, such as a family member, close friend, or caregiver. Smith and Freyd (2014) subsequently developed the concept of institutional betrayal to account for experiences in which institutions responsible for ensuring well-being—such as schools, hospitals, or child protection

systems—violate the trust of children and adolescents and fail in their responsibilities to care for and protect them. This form of betrayal occurs when such institutions perpetuate, allow, or cover up acts of violence and abuse, causing profound harm to those who depend on them. For children and adolescents in State care, this approach helps understand how violence experienced within protection centers represents not only a violation of rights but also institutional betrayal by the State itself.

Furthermore, the scientific literature shows that a significant percentage of children and adolescents who enter protection services present with complex trauma (Tarren-Sweeney & Nunn, 2025), a form of trauma resulting from prolonged and repeated experiences of abuse or neglect. The consequences of this trauma manifest as chronic mistrust, mental health disorders, difficulties in emotion regulation, impacts on cognitive and academic development, feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem, dissociation, and high vulnerability to revictimization, among others (Herman, 2024). Additionally, the damage associated with complex trauma can extend into adulthood, profoundly affecting long-term well-being (Blakemore et al., 2017; Carr et al., 2020; Ozanne et al., 2024). In this context, the core of the traumatic reaction often lies in the violation of trust, initially manifesting as betrayal trauma and evolving, in many cases, into institutional betrayal trauma, with both overlapping.

Institutional betrayal may contribute significantly to the maintenance or worsening of symptoms associated with complex trauma (Noll, 2025), especially when children and adolescents have been victims of multiple episodes of abuse or maltreatment that have been ignored, minimized, or poorly managed by the institutions responsible for their protection. Instead of offering specialized and restorative protection, the system often exacerbates the harm, severely impacting the physical and mental health of children and adolescents under its care. This underscores the relevance of the problem and, consequently, the urgent need to address it from a research-based and technical–professional perspective.

The Current Study

The persistence of institutional violence and abuse in Chilean RCPCs is a matter of historical and social concern (Rojas Flores, 2010). For over two decades, national scandals covered by the press have highlighted serious violations of the rights of children and adolescents under State care. These events, documented since at least the beginning of the 21st century, have sparked public debate about the role of child protection institutions and the structural conditions that perpetuate these violations despite preventive measures (Donoso & Salinas, 2019; Muñoz, 2021).

We analyze the narratives of institutional representatives (IRs) of Chilean child protection services regarding the conditions that produce these situations of violence and abuse. Examining institutional accounts is essential for understanding how individual, organizational, regulatory, or cultural factors contribute to or sustain dynamics of violence and abuse. Despite stated political efforts to reform the system, such as the creation of the National Specialized Protection Service for Children and Adolescents (Ministry of Social Development and Family, 2022), violations continue to occur (Pinto-Cortez et al., 2024), reflecting ongoing failures in the State response.

Furthermore, this approach is relevant because it enables the identification of how official explanations have evolved—or remained unchanged—over time, offering a critical perspective on institutional transformations. Although violence in these spaces may have existed prior to the first media reports, the recent institutional and public narratives are crucial for understanding resistance to change and areas for improvement in child protection (Cordero, 2020).

The following research questions arise from the above considerations: What are the perspectives of IRs on the factors that favor or perpetuate violence and child abuse in Chile's RCPCs? Although this question can be approached from different perspectives, we draw on the voices of those who, acting on behalf of the State, are mandated to implement child protection policies and their potential transformations aimed at fostering improvements. These actors will be referred to as IRs of child protection services. Thus, we aim to analyze the perspectives of IRs regarding the factors that contribute to maintaining or promoting institutional child abuse in Chile's RCPCs.

Considering the arguments presented, the assumptions guiding this study are as follows. First, the narratives of IRs will reveal structural aspects of the Chilean child protection system that help explain why implemented reforms have not succeeded in addressing longstanding problems. Second, for IRs, the accounts they construct about violence and abuse in RCPCs not only describe events but also operate as explanatory frameworks that justify, minimize, or problematize these situations. These narratives will make it possible to understand how resistance to change is shaped and how the conditions that perpetuate institutional violence are interpreted

Methodology

Study Context

This analysis is situated within the framework of the RCPC system in Chile, characterized by a longstanding history of crises and public scrutiny regarding violations of the rights of children and adolescents under State

custody. This context has been shaped by an ongoing process of legal and organizational transformation, most notably the creation of the National Specialized Protection Service for Children and Adolescents in 2021, replacing SENAME, an institution established in 1979 and previously responsible for the institutional care of children and adolescents.

The political and social debate concerning State responsibility for institutional maltreatment has created a scenario marked by structural tensions and ongoing demands for reform, situating the narratives of IRs within a framework of accountability and continuous improvement. Within this context, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights recognized the international responsibility of the Chilean State for violations of the rights of children and adolescents confined in SENAME facilities, issuing a ruling in November 2024.

As a measure of reparation and acknowledgment of these violations, in December 2024 the Chilean State established the Truth Commission on Childhood and Adolescence under State Custody, mandated to document and address cases of abuse and institutional violence suffered by those residing in SENAME facilities (Decree No. 150, 2024). Incorporating this historical–legal context is essential to interpret institutional narratives, as it allows them to be understood as part of a web of structural tensions, State responsibilities, and ongoing processes of reform within the child protection system.

Design

A qualitative methodology with an interpretive approach aimed at understanding the meanings constructed around institutional child abuse in Chile was employed. Given the temporal focus, documentary analysis was used. The interpretive–hermeneutic approach focuses on the analysis of deep and situated meanings of data. It seeks to recognize and incorporate the multiple intentions, understandings, prejudices, practices, and latent meanings that underlie complex social phenomena, such as institutional abuse (Fuster, 2019).

Additionally, the thematic analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed, enabling patterns or themes within the data to be identified, analyzed, and reported. This approach provides a systematic reading of the explicit and implicit content of institutional discourse, facilitating a deep understanding of how the phenomenon of child abuse is represented and reproduced within the protection system.

Observation Units

The corpus consisted of audiovisual, written, and digital documents obtained from publicly accessible media

sources, including broadcast television, national print press, and digital media. Differentiated procedures were applied to each source; broadcast television: news archives and online investigative programs were reviewed, selecting those that included interviews or official statements; print press: newspaper articles from national circulation outlets (available online and in digital archives) were identified, focusing on those containing statements by authorities; digital media: official press releases and interviews published on institutional websites and freely accessible electronic platforms by IRs of the Chilean State between 2002 and 2024 were collected.

The inclusion criteria for the corpus were as follows: (a) documents available to the public in audiovisual or written format via the web or digital media; (b) published between 2002 and 2024; (c) including interviews or statements by public officials or politicians with institutional representation or management functions in the field of child rights protection; and (d) explicitly addressing media reports of institutional violence or abuse in the protection system, including shelters. A total of 25 documents that met these criteria were included in the final text corpus. The inclusion criteria were kept consistent, although the sampling was adjusted to the nature of each format. In total, 25 documents were included, containing 28 interviews, as one document—a newspaper feature from a weekly outlet—contained four interviews. This selection incorporated the voices of various relevant State authorities and actors at different historical moments in the protection system, providing a representative overview of institutional discourse over time.

The selection reached a point of theoretical saturation when the discourses began to show recurrence in explanatory patterns and institutional justifications. This criterion ensured that the identified themes reflected the diversity and density of meanings present in the study period. In addition, we drew on Guest et al.'s (2020) guidelines regarding how to assess thematic saturation in qualitative research. These authors suggest that, using a 5% new information threshold, between six and seven interviews capture the majority of themes in homogeneous samples (six interviews to reach 80% saturation), and that 11 to 12 interviews may be required to achieve 95% saturation.

Analysis of the Information

The thematic analysis followed the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First is familiarization with the data and language used. Second is generation of initial codes, which includes the systematic coding of significant elements of the text. Third is the search for themes, which arises from the codes grouped into potential themes. Fourth is the review of themes, to validate them

based on their internal consistency and differentiation. Fifth is the definition and naming of themes, including limits and meanings, as well as sub-dimensions, which are consistent with the issue studied. In this case, it was decided to present the nine emerging themes in an integrated manner, without internal subdivisions, for reasons of coherence and internal density. Finally, production of the report is carried out through an analytical narrative that integrates the identified themes, their justifications, and their relationships with the theoretical framework.

An Excel matrix and NVivo 15 software were used to organize and visualize the codes, themes, and connections. All findings were reviewed and validated by the research team upon completion of the process.

Data Quality

The coding and thematic grouping process was carried out by at least four researchers for each observation unit to ensure quality and interpretative validity. Disagreements were discussed until a consensus was reached. In cases of insufficient agreement, the units were excluded from the final analysis. Analysis quality was ensured through several procedures, as follows:

1. **Credibility:** triangulation among the researchers allowed for the review and consensus of coding; additionally, an iterative process of comparison between data and categories was maintained.
2. **Reliability:** a systematic coding procedure using NVivo 15 was implemented, and an audit trail of the process was kept.
3. **Transferability:** a detailed description of the study's context and conditions was provided, allowing for the assessment of the applicability of the findings to other settings.
4. **Confirmability:** analytical decisions were based on documented empirical evidence and collective team discussions, minimizing individual biases.

Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to the ethical principles of qualitative research involving the analysis of publicly available secondary sources (Silverman, 2021). The principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013) were followed. Given that the corpus consists exclusively of audiovisual, written, or digital documents publicly disseminated through the media between 2002 and 2024, no direct contact with individuals was involved and no confidential or sensitive private information was accessed.

However, ethical criteria were adopted to guarantee respectful treatment of the individuals mentioned in the

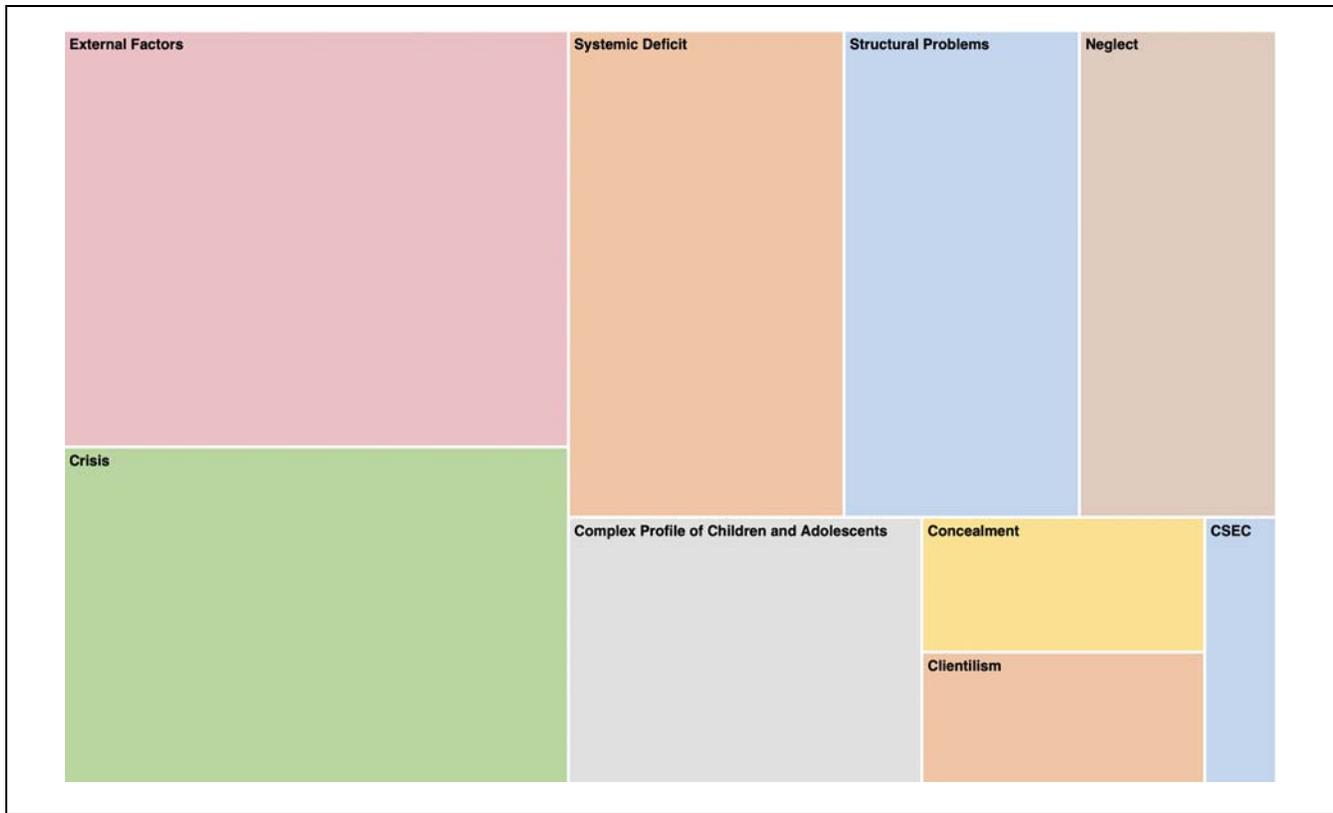


Figure 1. Hierarchical structure of factors associated with institutional child abuse.

Note. CSEC = Commercial sexual exploitation of children.

statements. First, the statements used were made by public figures who acted as IRs of the Chilean State and are therefore considered of public interest and subject to academic scrutiny. Nevertheless, their names were anonymized. Second, the selected documents were approached from an interpretative and analytical perspective, refraining from personal judgments and safeguarding the integrity of the individuals mentioned. Although informed consent was not required owing to the absence of direct participant involvement, methodological transparency was ensured, and a commitment to contributing to the improvement of public policies for the protection of children's and adolescents' rights was maintained.

Results

This section summarizes a qualitative analysis of interviews with IRs of child protection services, who shared their accounts of ICA in child protection facilities. The thematic analysis identified nine main themes in the institutional discourse on the factors that perpetuate or facilitate ICA in Chile. These thematic areas represent a set of interconnected components that provide insight into the

complexity of the phenomenon from the perspective of institutional actors. The following analysis begins with a hierarchical map of the main thematic areas (Figure 1). This map provides an overview of the general structure of the thematic areas identified in the corpus, their hierarchical relationships, and their relative weights in terms of coverage or frequency.

What follows is a detailed description and analysis of the nine main issues identified.

External Factors

The analyzed institutional discourses reveal a tendency to attribute abuses and negligence to conditions external to the RCPC. A common strategy for shifting responsibility involves delegating it to other collaborators or to external investigative and validation bodies—such as the Public Prosecutor's Office or similar entities—to legitimize the service's actions in the eyes of the public. This dynamic was illustrated by interviewee 10 when asked about the death of a child in State care:

We must always report these incidents to the Public Prosecutor's Office and ensure that external bodies,

specialized entities, can attest to the public that our actions were appropriate. These unfortunate incidents have different origins and causes, and that is why, once I assumed [the highest position], I made some changes to the guidelines regarding allegations of deceased children. The two cases in [city where the child died] involve children who were in a residence—a collaborating residence—for children with special needs, as they were children with disabilities or many illnesses and could, therefore, have died prematurely owing to those conditions. The new guidelines that have been in place since I took office and that I have sent to each of our collaborators—to our entire network of collaborators throughout Chile and our SENAME centers—state that we were only informing at the time, just as a public official would do when they believe there has been an illegal or improper act, and therefore we report it. We have established this standard of reporting for each deceased individual, even in complex health cases where it is understood or expected that they may pass away promptly. We have cases of severe hydrocephalus or multiple complex illnesses, so (E.10, 2016)

Similarly, a procedural logic is reinforced, insisting on institutional actions under protocols and transferring the burden of interpretation and resolution to external judicial bodies:

We must make it clear that all protocols and processes were followed as required, and it is for this reason that subsequently and on the instructions of the national director, whenever an incident of this kind occurs, it must be reported to the Public Prosecutor's Office. (E.10, 2016)

The interviewee avoids assuming direct responsibility for the death, attributing it to an external cause, while defending the institution's actions by asserting that protocols were followed and shifting responsibility for the investigation to external bodies, such as the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Finally, external studies and surveys that reveal violence and abuse in the residences are questioned, which also serves as a strategy to invalidate critical findings:

This confirms what we have always said about the UNICEF survey and shows that the SENAME residences are not the hell that some have wanted to portray. We express our concern about the questionnaire used and the methodology employed. (E.11, 2013)

On this occasion, they attribute the problem to the UNICEF survey as the source; however, these statements feed a narrative that minimizes the possibility of critical reflection on institutional practices, shifting responsibility to external factors and, consequently, the potential solution to the problem.

Crisis

Some representatives highlight a crisis that has affected the child protection system in Chile. This crisis is described as a factor contributing to violence within residential facilities, positioning it as a contextual issue that exceeds institutional response capacity. Interviewees describe a historically weakened system that has failed to provide adequate conditions for the care and protection of children and adolescents and does not respond comprehensively to children's needs, creating a situation of generalized risk for children living in the centers:

It is a system that is currently not responding to children's needs. (E.1, 2018)

The narrative of the crisis within the system is also used to legitimize institutional reform processes, portraying abuses not as the result of specific practices but as the inevitable effect of a deteriorated structure; this is mentioned by Interviewee 3 when asked about the recurrence of abuse situations:

The serious and critical situation that has affected vulnerable children in Chile for decades, and particularly SENAME. (E.3, 2020)

By situating the root causes of abuse within the context of a long-standing crisis, these discourses highlight the need for systemic change while simultaneously diluting the direct responsibility of institutional actors. The crisis operates as a transversal narrative that, while acknowledging the existence of the problem, can also serve as a systemic explanation that limits the identification of specific responsibilities or underlying causes.

Deficiencies in the System

Multiple weaknesses persisting in the child protection system have been identified. The current legislation has been called into question, as has the design and implementation of care programs, which are said to fail to respond effectively to the complexities of the rights violations experienced by children in residential care. Notably, the need to modernize protocols, professionalize teams, and guarantee minimum quality standards with adequate funding is emphasized. The interviewees agree that the deficiencies of SENAME have not been thoroughly addressed with the creation of the new service, which perpetuates a logic of temporary solutions to long-standing structural problems. Interviewee 1 refers to these components when asked about situations of violence and abuse in the RCPC:

Team training is deeply significant because if we want to change the way we provide specialized care, we have to train teams through a system of continuous education, personalized care, and guaranteed rights. You are not going to achieve that in a residence where you have 30 children. So, how do we create lasting conditions for improvement rather than quick fixes to get through the crisis? We must ensure that rights and standards are defined, and we must determine how those standards will be financed. What is needed is personalized care, with rights guaranteed and profound changes in the way the State takes responsibility for the protection and reparation of children whose rights have been seriously violated. With qualified teams to care for children, Restructuring the foster care program, which is crucial, and the entire specialized protection system with qualified teams to provide comprehensive care for children, is essential. (E.1, 2018)

Furthermore, the need to strengthen mental health care for children and adolescents as well as for professional teams is highlighted as a cross-cutting shortcoming. Progress toward comprehensive models that consider the well-being of children and adolescents, but also of those who care for them, as a basic requirement is proposed. Thus, Interviewee 3 attributes the lack of mental health care for professionals/caregivers in particular as a factor associated with deficiencies in the behavioral and emotional management of children, which can lead to situations of abuse:

We have got a long history dealing with this and tackling it requires some serious steps. Mental health is a trans-sectoral issue present in various contexts across the country. We look after 120,000 kids. If we just look at the situation of children in residential care, which is what the public knows most about, we are talking about a figure of over 60% with some kind of mental health issue, and this is also true in the adult world. Therefore, in the academy (the service's internal academy), one of the main focal points is looking after the caregiver. It is not just about training technical skills but also about programs related to team care and self-care because when you look at international evidence, all intervention models have this as a basic principle. If caregivers are not cared for, it will be challenging to provide adequate assistance tailored to the characteristics of children and adolescents. (E.3, 2023)

This vignette reflects how system deficiencies manifest not only in the direct care of children and adolescents but also in the lack of support and care for the caregivers themselves. The interviewee highlights that, without internal strategies promoting self-care and comprehensive staff training, it will be difficult to provide effective interventions tailored to the needs of minors, revealing a structural gap in the management of well-being for both professionals and system users.

Structural Problem

The collected statements reveal a widespread understanding that the deficiencies in Chile's child protection system are not merely operational, circumstantial, or the result of a long-standing crisis but rather structural. From this perspective, the interviewees emphasized the need for a profound—one that moves beyond temporary solutions and reactivates political will capable of transcending government cycles. This political will, through public action, would strengthen the system and prevent critical situations of violence and abuse; this is what Interviewee 2 hints at:

I believe that the president is committed to establishing this issue as a structural priority for the Chilean State, not just for this administration. I am also determined to ensure that this is the case. Among our short-term goals, we will ensure that there are no technical or administrative management issues in these 11 CREADs. What I propose is that we strive to do the job properly from the outset, and that requires a multisectoral effort. The alerts must function properly, and the programs must operate effectively. Mistakes will undoubtedly be made. However, we are currently facing problems throughout the entire system. (E.2, 2018)

It has been recognized that, although efforts have been made toward a new paradigm focused on personalized care and family support, tensions persist between the implementation of this model and the systemic conditions that limit its effectiveness. The increasing complexity of cases and challenges in prevention and adoption are identified as areas where the new service still needs to strengthen its response capacity. In this regard, violations within residential facilities are acknowledged; however, foster families are seen as a suitable solution.

There has been an effort to improve (...) today we are facing a more complex challenge due to this increase in referrals and complexity, but I also believe that we have the opportunity to make a change by focusing primarily on foster care and adoption processes. We are on the right track. The change of model, the paradigm shift toward much more personalized and family-focused care, I believe is the right answer. (E.12, 2024)

Fragmentation in public policy and institutional responsibilities has also been identified. For example, there is fragmentation between prevention and specialized protection from violence against children, which weakens the intersectoral coordination required for a comprehensive response to violence and institutional abuse.

Prevention today is not the responsibility of the service [referring to the National Protection Service]. Prevention is

the responsibility of the Undersecretary for Childhood, as it oversees the prevention and promotion of the rights of all children and adolescents. (E.19, 2023)

This statement highlights a structural division in responsibilities, where prevention and direct protection are managed by separate institutions. Such fragmentation can create gaps in service delivery, limit the effectiveness of coordinated interventions, and pose challenges for ensuring that all children and adolescents receive timely and comprehensive protection.

Complex Profile of Children and Adolescents

The interviewees pointed out that many children and adolescents under State protection have experienced multiple rights violations, which translates into complex manifestations of psychological, behavioral, and physical harm. These conditions significantly increase the challenge of providing care and reparation within the system. Interviewee 13 refers to this point when asked about the emotional crises that some children have experienced within the residences and the behavioral management used by workers to contain them, as these strategies have been questioned after causing the death of a girl in a protection center:

The multiple and systematic violations they have experienced in their short lives cause certain symptoms of trauma to manifest. These symptoms are evident in mental health issues and problematic alcohol and drug use, especially among adolescents over the age of 14, and unfortunately, this is on the rise. (E.13, 2021)

Some discourse suggests that the psychosocial profile of children and adolescents could be linked to these critical incidents, as well as to the behavioral management required. For example, it describes how severe emotional or behavioral dysregulation can be triggered by specific factors such as canceled family visits or progress in therapeutic processes that bring up previous traumatic experiences:

No, based on the records we have gathered so far, this is a case of severe behavioral decompensation in a child. Today, we went to check for possible physical injuries, and according to the report, the minor has no visible injuries. (E.13, year 2021)

This testimony highlights that, in this specific case, no inappropriate behavioral management was applied to contain the child's crisis. The interviewee emphasizes this distinction because behavioral management strategies are constantly questioned, as previous instances have resulted in physical abuse. The clarification aims to

differentiate between a natural decompensation in response to traumatic factors and abusive practices by the staff.

The incident is currently being treated as a case of behavioral decompensation in a child. There are no visible physical injuries. Essentially, this is an escalation in his behavior, where his anger and frustration are leading to violent actions. This dysregulation may be due to various reasons: sometimes it occurs because of visits that the child was eagerly awaiting; other times, it is related to a reparative intervention process that touches on issues that are very sensitive for him, leaving him deeply distressed. (E.3, year 2023)

In this sense, it is important to understand the behavior of children and adolescents from a complex trauma perspective, which requires specialized technical and emotional training on the part of care teams and an adaptation of the care model to these realities to provide adequate support and prevent abusive behavior:

It is crucial to understand that it is not unusual for these children to have been through the protection system or to be part of it. As in many cases, violations of the law are the result of systematic harm associated with rights violations, situations of repeated abuse, complex trauma, among other factors. (E.13, year 2021)

This quote highlights how transgressive behaviors should not be interpreted in isolation, but rather as manifestations of a background marked by accumulated adverse experiences and rights violations. Therefore, understanding complex trauma becomes essential to avoid simplistic punitive responses and instead move toward comprehensive and reparative interventions.

Negligence

The interviewees acknowledged that mistakes had been made on multiple occasions while providing care to children and adolescents in residential facilities. These mistakes resulted in omissions or inadequate responses to situations of violence or abuse, which led to institutional negligence. Interviewee 2 highlights this:

I am shocked by this distressing regime, this model of a massive prison-like or old orphanage-like system, where children are treated as if they were locked up. The authorities say that if they are not locked up, they will escape. However, the children are not prisoners; they are being protected. We should be able to get them to stay, not because they are forced to, but because we are helping them solve their problems. (E.2, 2018)

In this regard, it was highlighted that a significant proportion of children and adolescents did not have

adequate follow-up on their work plans, which compromised the process of restoring their rights and demonstrated a lack of commitment and planning in addressing their personalized care needs.

One-third of children lack adequate follow-up on their work plans to support the restoration of their violated rights. In addition, for one in four children, there are no objectives aligned with their diagnosis. (E.2, 2018)

Furthermore, institutional negligence extends to the lack of response to situations of abuse within the residences. A case that exemplifies this situation involves a man with the initials G.P., a representative of a corporation collaborating with SENAME and Servicio Mejor Niñez, who was named in judicial investigations for cases of child sexual abuse against girls residing in the protection home of the corporation he represented. Despite previous warnings about the situation, neither were measures taken to protect the girls and adolescents involved nor were the relevant complaints filed. Interviewee 5 states:

Although SENAME had been warned of the situation, the relevant circulars were not issued, nor was the relevant complaint filed at the time. Furthermore, although the Public Prosecutor's Office was aware of the facts based on the information included in the case file, only the statements of the residence staff were taken, with no statements from the girls or psychological reports being submitted. (E.5, 2023)

It should be pointed out that this collaborating agency had been awarded a new contract for a protection center despite its representative being the main person involved in sexual assaults against girls in State care. This type of negligence highlights the urgent need for a more rigorous and ethical approach to the management and supervision of protection centers, ensuring that the rights of children and adolescents are always prioritized and respected.

Clientelism

Interviewee narratives suggest the existence of political clientelism practices in the appointment of positions within the protection system, especially regarding accredited collaborating organizations and politically appointed positions. They also indicate the protection of malpractice within the institutional structure, which affects the quality of services provided to children and adolescents and has repercussions regarding situations of abuse. An example of these practices is the appointment of people to positions without the necessary merits, which has generated criticism from various political sectors.

When someone with no qualifications is appointed to a position as important as SENAME, based solely on personal connections, that is what we are seeing here. When we say that we are committed to doing things right, that the best people will be appointed to government, we realize that this is not the case. (E.4, 2021)

Additionally, some interviewees mentioned that there is a network of influence that, according to reports, has been a central factor in the SENAME tragedy. It is suggested that, without this network, the country would have been able to detect in advance the irregularities and abuses that occurred within the system, highlighting the importance of transparency and autonomy in appointments and resource management.

There is a network of parties, coalitions, and collaborating institutions that is, unfortunately, in my view, at the heart of the tragedy that has occurred at SENAME. (E.17, 2017)

These clientelistic practices underscore the need for reforms in the hiring process and the political management of institutions involved in child protection, ensuring that positions are filled with qualified individuals committed to the well-being of children.

Concealment

The data reveal a widespread perception that various powerful actors within the child protection system are involved in covering up abuse. This cover-up includes unions, senior managers, and State agencies that do not show a genuine interest in prosecuting and punishing these acts. There is a lack of progress in judicial and administrative proceedings, which contributes to impunity and hinders the clarification of responsibilities.

Interviewee 6, former director of one of the institutions responsible for the protection of children and adolescents, recounted the pressure he was subjected to after attempting to dismiss educators questioned for abuse. In June 2016, when several educators from [name of the residence] were expected to be dismissed, the interviewee ordered a new summary investigation into events that had occurred in another residence. As a result, employees of [name of the residence] took over the center for two months:

The unions have become a kind of mafia that takes action to achieve their goals, which is to protect themselves. The workers' associations blackmail you: "We will accuse you of abuse, of persecuting employees, of not being objective, of manipulating the proceedings." If they did not have that power to intimidate the authorities, we would not be dealing with the abuse that exists today. (E.6, 2018)

Similarly, some interviewees reported that a sector of the State and people involved in the system stand in the way of thorough investigations. Interviewee 6 also mentioned this aspect:

I think there is a sector of the State and people involved who do not want this to be investigated. They do not want the system to change. Otherwise, it would have changed 20 years ago. (E.6, 2018)

The above statement reveals how institutional resistance and the interests of certain actors have contributed to the perpetuation of a lack of structural transformation. The explicit reference to 20 years without substantial changes highlights political and institutional inertia that favors maintaining the status quo and hinders the implementation of effective measures for child protection.

Sexual Exploitation Networks

Among the concerning findings was the mention by IRs of the presence of child sexual exploitation networks, some of which are believed to be linked to organized crime. The interviews suggest that children and adolescents in protective custody have become a frequent target of these groups, which are operating with increasingly sophisticated methods. The most notable case was that of R.V.W., a veterinarian accused of child sexual exploitation who operated within a network that, according to some interviewees, proved challenging to dismantle. Although SENAME filed its first complaint at the end of 2000, the investigation progressed slowly. The perpetrator's whereabouts were only discovered after 2 years of investigation, owing to a complaint filed by a member of parliament. Interviewee 10 commented on the difficulty of investigating these cases and the lack of response from the authorities.

It is still difficult to ascertain the extent of the protection network surrounding the pedophile veterinarian, R.V.W. What is certain is that it has been complicated to investigate cases, even though SENAME filed its first complaint at the end of 2000. (E.10, 2002)

This highlights the structural complexity and institutional limitations that hinder investigations of child sexual exploitation networks. It reflects how a lack of coordination and adequate resources can significantly delay the identification and sanctioning of perpetrators, increasing the vulnerability of children and adolescents under State protection.

Moreover, the problem of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents reflects broader social phenomena:

There has been an increase in risk factors associated with vulnerable children and adolescents in the country. The service is not oblivious to what is happening in terms of crime, sexual exploitation, and harmful drug and alcohol use in the Chilean society. (E.14, 2016)

This testimony situates sexual exploitation within a broader social framework, indicating that individual vulnerabilities intersect with societal phenomena such as crime and harmful substance use, requiring comprehensive prevention strategies beyond the institutional scope.

Sexual exploitation continues to occur in Chile today. There are individuals actively perpetrating these crimes, and, unfortunately, residential care facilities have become a focal point for these illicit activities. (E. 26, 2024)

The quote emphasizes that residential care facilities, which should be spaces of protection, have become critical points for exploitation. This highlights the need to strengthen supervision and protection measures within these institutions to prevent repeated victimization.

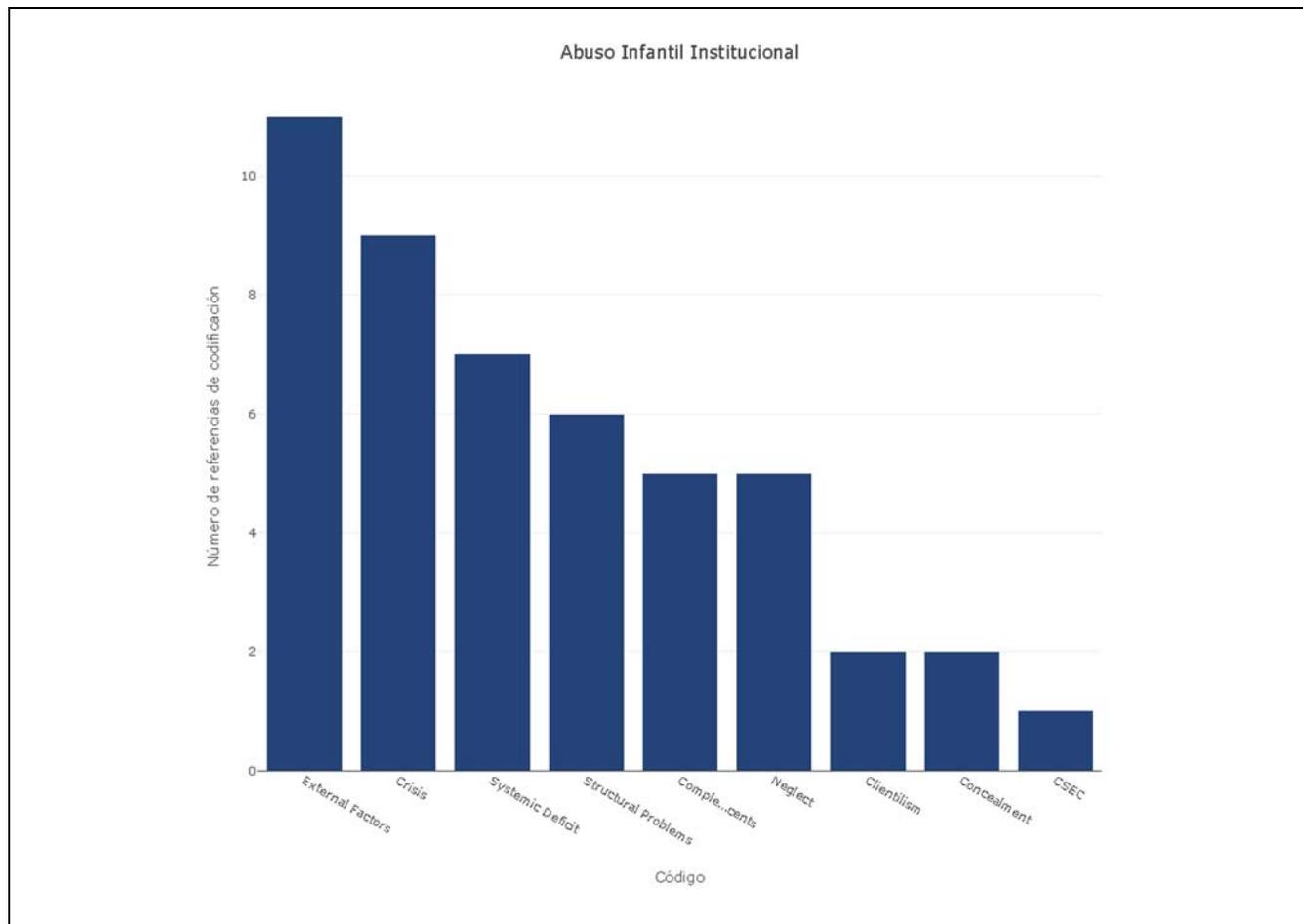
Recently, there has been an increase in reports of crimes related to sexual exploitation, mainly against girls and female adolescents who are in the care of the State in residential centers. What we have seen nationwide is that contact with victims in these centers often occurs through apps or social media. Additionally, different exploiters recruit these girls and adolescents from their immediate surroundings. (E.27, year 2024)

This testimony underscores the adaptation of exploiters to new technologies and the expansion of their actions through social networks, as well as the importance of the immediate environment in victim recruitment. It highlights the urgency of digital and community-based prevention strategies, alongside the physical protection of minors in custody.

These networks identify and continuously monitor residential facilities, many of which do not have the necessary tools to detect these threats—let alone to treat complex trauma and provide care for the girls when needed. (E.28, year 2024)

More generally, Interviewee 10 already described in 2002 situations similar to those later reported by other interviewees (even 2024), in terms of the presence of organized crime and the difficulty of addressing it structurally. What has changed over time is the sophistication of the methods used, particularly through digital means, which have expanded and diversified the ways children and adolescents are sexually exploited.

These statements underscore the urgent need to strengthen investigative and protection capacities,



Graph 1. Frequency of mentions by category in institutional representatives' responses. This graph illustrates the frequency of each category in the analyzed quotations, highlighting the most recurring themes in institutional narratives.

especially concerning criminal networks that exploit children and adolescents within the protection system.

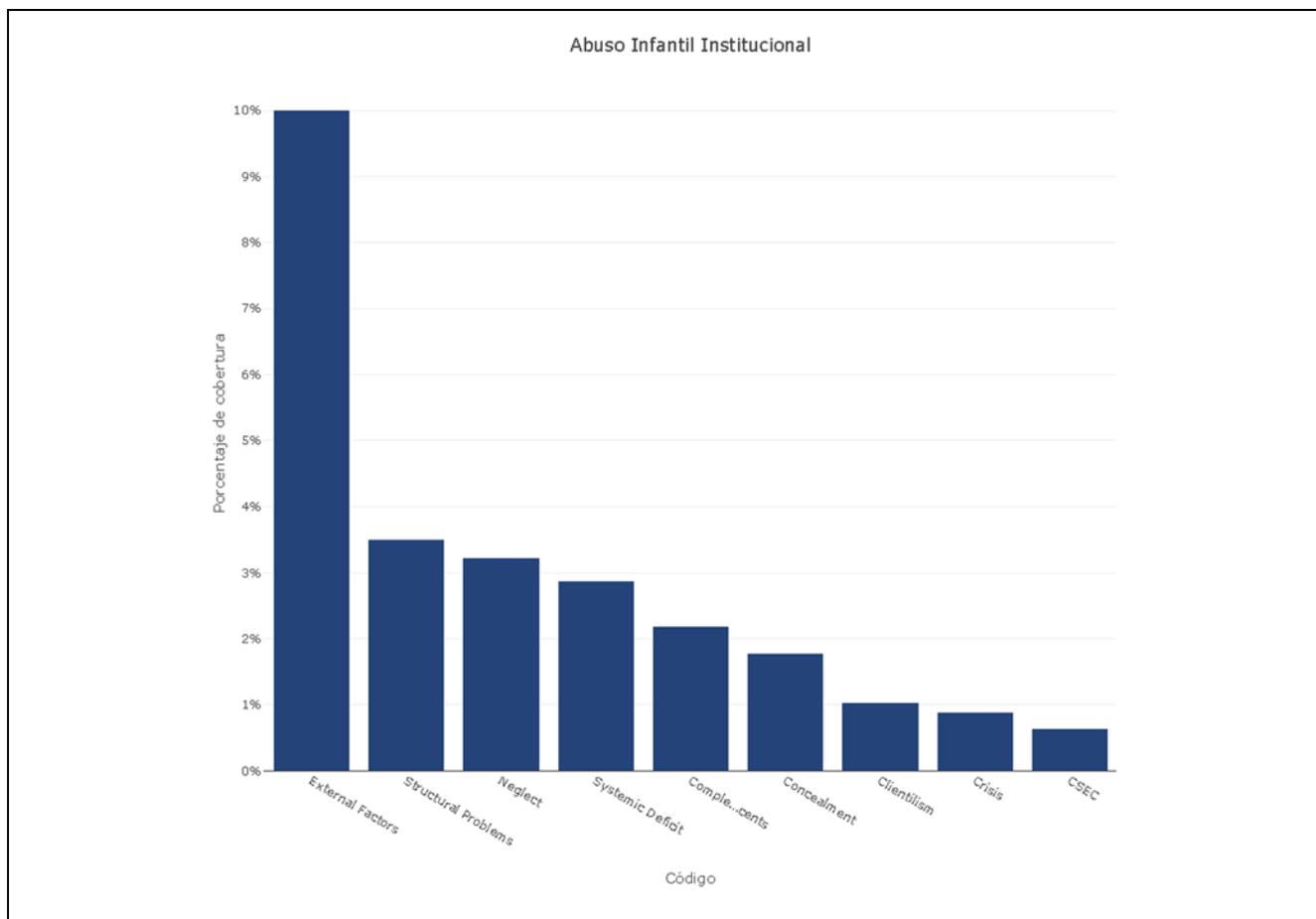
The following graphs present the analysis of the issues identified based on two quantitative indicators provided by the NVivo 15 software: the number of coded references and the percentage of coverage. Graph 1 illustrates the frequency with which a given issue was identified in the corpus, indicating its recurrence across the different observation units. Graph 2, meanwhile, refers to the proportion of the total text that was coded under a given node, providing an estimate of the extent to which or depth with which that topic was developed in the discourses analyzed. Both indicators were used in a complementary manner to guide the interpretation of the results and prioritize emerging issues. However, for specific topics, weight was given to frequency because of its interpretive value. For example, in the case of the topics Negligence and Cover-up, a lower frequency does not

imply lower relevance, as the coverage reveals a more in-depth discourse.

Discussion and Conclusion

We aimed to analyze the perspectives of IRs on the factors that contribute to the occurrence of violence and child abuse within RCPCs in Chile. The analyzed interviews addressed the participants' impressions and opinions on incidents of violence and abuse that occurred in RCPCs in the context of their roles as senior public officials or those with hierarchical responsibility within the framework of the national child protection policy.

The significance of this study lies in placing institutional discourses at the center, as they not only describe reality but also produce it. Analyzing these discourses reveals whether the phenomenon of institutional violence is problematized, explained, justified, attributed to



Graph 2. Percentage of coverage based on references in the responses of institutional representatives.

structural or individual factors, or rendered invisible (Wright, 2021). As Gorostiza (2021) argues, language not only represents the world but also constructs it. For example, beyond creating symbolic realities, the discourse of IR can influence the world of ideas, which can translate into concrete decisions, such as the design and implementation of public policies. Therefore, it is essential to highlight, analyze, and challenge these dominant narratives to create space for alternative visions and solutions that enable the construction of consensual realities.

This study reveals that IRs view violence and abuse in RCPCs as problematic, regardless of when they held office. Notably, the interviewed IRs served in various periods, spanning from 2002 to 2024, under administrations of differing ideological political orientations (left and right). The discourses analyzed present a standard line of argument oriented toward the incipient recognition of these aggressions; however, the explanations they provide about the factors that favor or perpetuate

violence and abuse are diverse. The use of an interpretive approach in this study was fundamental in revealing the deeper meanings underlying IRs' accounts. The incorporation of subjectivity into the analysis is a constitutive and essential element for understanding social actions, personal narratives, or cultural practices that, in this case, form the basis of an insufficient system (Fuster, 2019).

The findings highlight a series of structural and organizational factors that, from the perspective of the IRs, explain the persistence of these violations. Among the most notable elements are *external factors*, that is, shifting the causes of abuse and violence to conditions beyond their control, such as external systems, other state administrative bodies, or other factors. Within this discourse, there is also a tendency to attribute abuse to the individual characteristics of children and adolescents, who are described as “complex,” “difficult,” or “problematic” as a result of their life trajectories marked by abuse. This discursive construction of a *complex profile of children*

and adolescents would explain, for example, according to the IRs, the use of “physical restraint” strategies by caregivers. These strategies often cross a blurred line between restraint and physical abuse without the latter being recognized as such.

Following this logic of externalizing responsibility, the *problem of children’s sexual exploitation* is also mentioned as a form of abuse present in the residences. However, the IRs—especially those who have held positions in recent years—tend to frame this phenomenon within a broader and more recent social context, highlighting the complexity of organized crime and the proliferation of sexual exploitation networks over the last decade. From their perspective, this would explain the phenomenon’s increased visibility in the current public agenda.

This argument adds an important nuance to the analysis but also risks shifting the focus away from State responsibility to external factors, overlooking the fact that child sexual exploitation in State care settings has a long history in Chile (see González Rodríguez, 2003). This perspective also overlooks the State’s explicit mandate to ensure the effective protection of children and adolescents in its care. This phenomenon of externalization could be understood, though not endorsed, from the theory of system justification (Jost & Bajani, 1994), which argues that people who belong to a given system (in this case, the protection system) tend to justify, defend, and maintain the existing social, economic, and political system, even if it harms them or places them at a disadvantage. From a social psychology perspective, this would be an unconscious motivation to believe that the world is fair, stable, and predictable. These motivations lead people to rationalize inequality, accept the status quo, and resist change (Jost & Bajani, 1994). At the level of child protection, the assumption that denial and the belief that everything is working well also influence this dissonance could be added.

Paradoxically—and sometimes contradictorily—the statements of the IRs also address *negligence* as a contributing factor. Although responsibility is often externalized, the IRs acknowledge, in certain instances, the existence of institutional omissions and errors that have contributed to situations of violence, particularly negligence toward children and adolescents. This apparent contradiction may be explained by cultural beliefs and values that tend to view neglect as a “less serious” form of violence. This perception may enable IRs to assume some responsibility in such cases, as opposed to other types of active mistreatment, such as physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. This perception, however, is not consistent with the abundant qualitative and quantitative

evidence available, which indicates that neglect can have serious consequences similar to other forms of mistreatment (Haslam & Taylor, 2022).

Likewise, the IRs refer to a *crisis* in public policy on child protection, which has a direct impact on the management of RCPCs. This crisis, contextual and transversal, exceeds the system’s capacity to provide adequate support and guarantee the restoration of children’s rights. This framework also highlights *deficiencies in the system* that are directly linked to this crisis, both materially and functionally. Consequently, the discourse articulates a broader understanding of the phenomenon by pointing to a *structural problem*: it is not just a matter of individual failures or isolated cases but rather a systemic problem deeply rooted in how the social, political, economic, and institutional structure relating to children in Chile is organized (Ruiz-Muñoz, 2025).

The IRs highlight other elements, such as *clientelism*, referring to the political changes that governments undergo each time they win elections, which consequently lead to a series of hirings of political party activists in protection systems. Although Chilean law does not prohibit the hiring of political party members within the public service, the criticism voiced by the IRs regarding violence and abuse within the RCPC relates to cases in which people lacking adequate training are hired to address highly sensitive issues—such as the care of children and adolescents whose rights have been violated. The concern, therefore, is not political affiliation or public service per se, but rather the assignment of individuals to roles for which they are unprepared or unsuited (España & Obach, 2023). Finally, the IRs refer to a relational system of *cover-up* within protection services, in which various actors exercise power in ways that often facilitate silence, complicity, or the perpetuation of abuse. This occurs, for example, when higher-level authorities are questioned by workers’ groups for attempting to report abusive acts, or when certain situations are silenced to safeguard the interests of staff—actions that ultimately undermine the protection of children’s rights.

Historically, child protection systems have been insufficient and, despite reforms, present a long-standing critical reality. The discourses of the IRs analyzed are generated in response to the ineffectiveness of these systems. While they highlight the need for transformation, they also dilute the direct responsibility of institutional actors. These narratives follow three main lines:

- Issues associated with an attempt to distance themselves from direct responsibility for specific

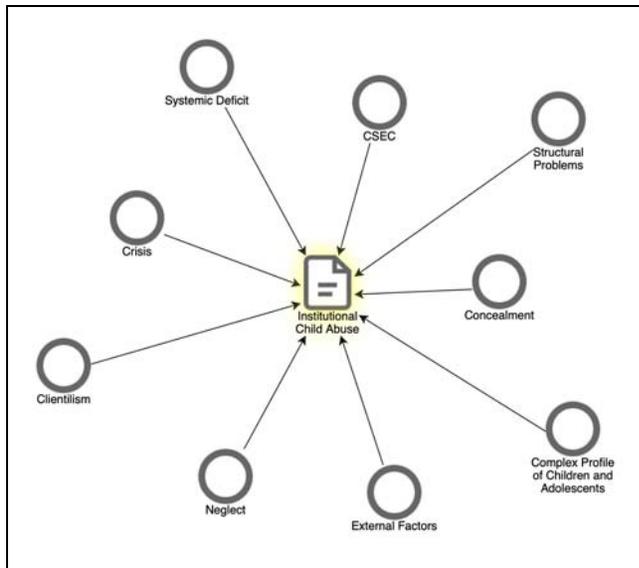


Figure 2. Thematic categories identified in institutional discourses on child abuse in residential care.

Note. CSEC = Commercial sexual exploitation of children.

events or for the failure of the broader model: external factors, complexity of children and adolescents' profiles, crisis in the system.

- Issues associated with the identification of problems at different levels: negligence, structural problems, and the existence of sexual exploitation networks.
- Issues related to the flow of power that sustains the problem: patronage and cover-ups.

Power dynamics hide problems, especially those that could result in sanctions for individuals or organizations that wield power. Structural problems create and sustain the crisis over time, and efforts to establish better policies fail owing to difficulties in design or implementation. Failures will be covered up and the most serious problems that directly affect children and adolescents, such as sexual exploitation and the consequences of neglect, will persist.

This study's findings demonstrate that ICA cannot be understood as an isolated event but rather as the result of a structural, political, and social framework that sustains and perpetuates it. As illustrated in the Figure 2 issues such as neglect, systemic flaws, deliberate cover-ups, and cronyism are part of an institutional ecosystem that, rather than safeguarding children, exposes them to significant abuse. The complex profile of the children and adolescents served, combined with external factors (such as social crises or contexts of vulnerability), further exacerbates this situation, creating scenarios where

institutions perpetuate the harm they are intended to prevent. Institutional abuse thus emerges not only as an act but as a predictable consequence of a dysfunctional system.

The persistence of these factors highlights the seriousness of the connection between discourse patterns and the concept of institutional betrayal. As Smith and Freyd (2014) point out, institutional betrayal refers to situations in which an institution fails to adequately protect, support, or care for the people who depend on it, especially when they have been victims of violence, abuse, or discrimination. The betrayal becomes even more serious when the institution not only fails in its duty but also covers up, perpetuates, or normalizes the harm (Smith & Freyd, 2014). This exposes a tension between discourse and structure—for instance, when considering the mission statements of Chile's main child and adolescent protection services, which are explicitly or implicitly echoed by their IRs. SENAME, established in 1979, had a mission to provide protection and care to children and adolescents in vulnerable situations, promoting their comprehensive development and social reintegration.

Furthermore, in 2021, following the comprehensive child protection reform, the new National Specialized Protection Service for Children and Adolescents (Servicio Mejor Niñez) was created with the mission of protecting, restoring rights, and repairing the harm caused to children and adolescents who are seriously threatened or violated, placing children and their families at the center of institutional action and strengthening their comprehensive development through teams of professionals and specialized programs. Here we find, as previously mentioned, the tension between discourse and structure, between the State's desire to protect and the concrete facts that become factors favoring violence and institutional abuse while also impacting the process of institutional betrayal that perpetuates the harm done to children in State care (Noll, 2025). Notwithstanding, it is also important to mention the State's inaction and slowness in implementing significant comprehensive protection reforms, which date back to 1979, with a significant change in 2020 and the recent approval of the comprehensive child protection law in 2022.

This study's narratives engage with various theoretical frameworks. First, from the perspective of complex trauma (Courtois & Ford, 2009; Herman, 1992), it is possible to interpret the prolonged violence, neglect, and abandonment experienced by children and adolescents in RCPCs as not only isolated traumatic events but a systematic form of chronic victimization within supposedly protective environments. Similarly, structural violence (Farmer, 2004; Galtung, 1969) is evident in the analyzed

discourses, which reveal how systemic factors—such as institutional precariousness, political instability, clientelism, and a lack of specialized resources—create an environment of normalized violations. Theoretically, this discussion also contributes to social constructionism and critical discourse perspectives, which maintain that language both reflects social realities and shapes power relations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Deacon, 2002; Fairclough, 1992; Foucault et al., 2001). From this standpoint, the institutional discourses analyzed are not mere descriptions of events but practices that shape public and political understanding of violence in RCPCs, influencing the allocation of responsibility and the formulation of institutional responses toward the most vulnerable groups, in this case, children and adolescents whose rights have been violated. The institutional discourses, therefore, contribute to the institutional components that render these effects invisible, reinforcing the need to deeply reconsider the role of the State as an effective protector of rights and as an agent of change in the face of the damage caused, particularly in the Chilean context.

Practical Implications

This study's findings may inform protocol redesign by considering the institutional components identified and thus preventing violence and abuse against children and adolescents within State care. They could also inform public policy and serve as a foundation for developing quantitative tools to evaluate residential facilities based on specific indicators, thereby improving the living conditions of children under State protection and contributing to a cultural shift away from an adult-centric and exclusionary view of childhood. Given the tension between the drive to create policies and actions that enable change and the tendency of the State to avoid taking responsibility and addressing the real needs of children and adolescents, it would be strategic to make changes to the supervision carried out by the Better Childhood Service on the RCPCs, adopting a more frequent advisory and support approach and the changes that are required.

It is also suggested that oversight be strengthened and that a specialized comptroller's office be created for child protection. In addition, this study's findings can contribute to the development of policies from a bottom-up approach, incorporating the voices of children and adolescents, workers, and professionals within the system to inform plans and programs at the central level.

Limitations

This study was conducted in northern Chile, which limits the generalizability of its findings. The analysis was based on public discourse from secondary sources; that

is, having conducted a documentary analysis, only the existing content was analyzed. Furthermore, we did not perform triangulation with testimonies from children and adolescents or other key actors. All these limitations are expected to be addressed in the second part of this project, which adopts a more comprehensive scope.

In conclusion, this study reveals how the discourse of IRs over time tends to externalize responsibility for violence and abuse in RCPCs, often minimizing the State's role in these dynamics. Even though they acknowledge certain instances of negligence and systemic failures, IRs tend to justify or minimize the problem through structural explanations, attributions to the children and adolescents themselves, or contextual factors. This discursive ambivalence reinforces the notion of institutional betrayal, perpetuating the harm done to children and adolescents. The tensions between official discourse and actual practices are evident, raising questions about the effectiveness of the implemented reforms. This study shows how institutional narratives can influence public policies without necessarily leading to effective change. Thus, institutional violence and abuse appear to be a complex problem sustained by discourses, omissions, and structures.

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This study was approved by the relevant institutional ethics committee.

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Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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